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IMPORTANT DATES

Board of Education Meetings

Thursday, Aug. 13 & 27, 2020
7 p.m.

Administration Building
1220 Howard St.

For more information, call
(269) 337-1572

**First Day of School
Monday, Aug. 31**

**Labor Day Weekend
No School
Fri., Sept. 4 – Mon., Sept. 7**

INSIDE

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KPS enrolling
new students now
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outstanding seniors
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Back-to-School Plans Being Developed

Kalamazoo Public Schools is working on three possible plans for educating students this fall:

- in-person classes
- 100 percent virtual classes
- a hybrid model in which

students attend school for a limited number of days each week, and continue their learning with online classes.

All three options will allow students to retain their eligibility for The Kalamazoo Promise.

Since Gov. Gretchen Whitmer closed schools in March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the district has been re-inventing the way instruction is

delivered to children.

“There are still many unknowns,” Superintendent Dr. Rita Raichoudhuri told KPS Board of Education trustees at its July 9 meeting. “What we do know is that the upcoming school year will be like no other school year in history. We will need to be flexible, creative, and responsive as we prepare for an unprecedented and difficult 2020-21 school year.”

The district will release its plan on Aug. 3. The KPS Board of Education will vote on the plan at its Aug. 13 meeting. A final plan must be submitted to the State

of Michigan on Aug. 17, with the first day of school scheduled for Aug. 31.

In her report to the board, Dr. Raichoudhuri said that as the district moves forward with developing plans for the upcoming school year:

● Safety for all is the district’s first priority in planning. Face coverings, hand washing, distancing, screening, disinfecting, and signage will all be addressed and funded.

● KPS will offer choices to families. Families have been and will continue to be surveyed frequently over the coming weeks

to gather information, which will help guide the district.

● All planning is being viewed through an equity lens. Marginalized communities have suffered the greatest learning loss due to lack of access to devices and connectivity. The plan for the upcoming school year will consider every child the district serves and how KPS can provide the best opportunities for them.

● The district will be intentional when reopening schools. Staff plans to spend days, if not weeks, addressing

(continued on page 3)

Congratulations to the Class of 2020

Special graduation edition: See inside for more photos and selected student stories. Look for more stories in September.



**Antoinette Puca, Loy Norrix
valuedictorian, 2020**



**Quincy Ellis, Loy Norrix
Class of 2020**



**Cormac Roth, Kalamazoo
Central valedictorian, 2020**



**Makayla Harris, Kalamazoo Central
Class of 2020**

Kalamazoo Public Schools is Hiring.

Find information at <http://www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/Departments/HumanResources/EmploymentOpportunities>

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Congratulations to Our Graduates

The moment you realized your identity (one of many) as the Class of 2020 either as a graduating eighth grader or even before, you had lots of ideas, dreams, and notions that went along with it. All of which you were looking forward to with anticipation and excitement.

High school years can be filled with exploration, growing understanding of ourselves and the world around us, deepening relationships, thinking about the future and much, much more. And, of course, your senior year not only marks the end of an era, it is studded with rites of passages that have been the norm for generations of students. You, of course, didn't expect to be the one exception to the rule among the ranks of seniors who came before you — and those we hope will be able to return to traditional graduations in the future.



Rita Raichoudhuri, Superintendent,
Kalamazoo Public Schools

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I also didn't expect my first senior send-off message as superintendent to be the one I'm about to write to you. But, here we are.

UNFAIR — the first word that comes to mind when I think about all that you are entitled to and deserve, but all that has been snatched from you by something

"...be proud, be strong, be undefeated, because the unique circumstances that belong to just your generation brings with them lessons that you have learned that nobody can ever take away."

that we can't even see with our naked eyes — all those rites of passages: prom, graduation, writing fond notes in each other's yearbooks to be cherished and shared with grandchildren, spending time with friends and teachers before we all spread our wings and fly away to new places, and new opportunities, and, of course, the loss of communal learning that you were so accustomed to.

RESILIENT — that's the second word that comes to mind

when I reflect on how all of you have embraced the current situation with grace, and how much you had to change your day-to-day lives to make the most out of the situation you found yourselves in. I've heard stories about how you have lifted each other up and encouraged fellow classmates in virtual classrooms, how you have expressed your gratitude to your teachers and counselors, how you are supporting your parents and guardians by taking care of younger siblings

during these difficult times.

So, really, what you are doing is growing as human beings as a result of this crisis. There is a saying that I like that advises us to "never let a crisis go to waste." And you, Class of 2020, are doing just that. You will be better for it. Yes, you will never get back the things that you have lost as a result of this disaster, and some of you will continue to be impacted by it for years to come.

But, you have also gained perspective, patience, and perseverance. These skills and badges of honor will serve you well throughout your lives. So, be proud, be strong, be undefeated, because the unique circumstances that belong to just your generation brings with them lessons that nobody can ever take away.

Congratulations, Class of 2020. May you persist and thrive today, tomorrow, and always.



BOOKWORMS

Tuesday, August 11, 4–5 pm
KPL Online Event
Register at: kpl.gov



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Thursday, August 13
Children: 2:30–3:30 pm
Teen: 4–5 pm
KPL Online Event
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**Back to School Plans
Being Developed**
(continued from page 1)

students’ social and emotional concerns first. Relationships need to be established or re-established and strengthened to connect students to school. KPS will also be mindful to provide resources for staff about their own self-care, including resiliency strategies. KPS will continue its restorative practices, supporting family-school partnerships that emphasize relationship building and engagement to enhance building climate and culture.

“We realize there will be a lot of communication needed between now and Aug. 31 about the choices families have and about new operational procedures,” Dr. Rai-choudhuri said. “There will be biweekly community updates and weekly board updates on the planning process.”

In drafting a reopening plan, the district has consulted guidance documents and studied what other countries and school districts are doing, engaged in daily work sessions, and sought input from stakeholders.

The district held 12 online input sessions June 29–July 1. More than 900 people participated in the virtual sessions and a Northside Ministerial Alliance forum that was live streamed on the Mt. Zion Baptist Church’s YouTube channel and Facebook. The forum video has been viewed by almost 4,000 people.

The most common themes expressed in the sessions were that the past few months have been difficult for families and staff; choice, quality and equity are important to all families; the district must recognize the social and emotional needs of the students; and clear communication is key for the success of the district’s plan.

Class of 2020 in the Spotlight



Miranda Goodison, Loy Norrix



Patrick Gleaton, Kalamazoo Central



Derrell Mabon, Loy Norrix



Rhajani Shepherd, Kalamazoo Central



Aaron Dickason, Kalamazoo Central



Lydia Snapp, Loy Norrix



Dejah Burch, Kalamazoo Central



William Lonsbury, Loy Norrix



Jayvon Robinson, Loy Norrix



**Elizabeth and Morgan Boyd,
Kalamazoo Central**



**Breyana Wilson, Loy Norrix
senior class president**



Megan Rushlau, Kalamazoo Central

Cormac Roth: A Jack of All Trades — and Master of Them Too

Cormac Roth has the demeanor of a laid-back gamer — and the drive of a top-notch student, who also happens to be an accomplished musician, computer geek and slam poet.

Cormac is the valedictorian of the Kalamazoo Central Class of 2020 and a graduate of the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center. He was named a Kalamazoo County Excellence in Education winner and an Outstanding Senior in Education For Employment. In the fall, he'll be attending the University of Denver where he plans to double major in game design and oboe.

“There are not too many programs around the country that do game design, which is one of my intended majors,” he said. “While I was narrowing my search I was also looking for a strong music program. I was blown away by their facilities for music. It opened up the possibility of the double major.”

His combination of interests is not that unusual, he said. He has always enjoyed gaming with friends and for him good game design requires great programming, graphics, storytelling and music.

Much of his focus at KAMSC has been on computer programming, and through a scholarship from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, he attended a game design course at Harvard University during the summer before his sophomore year. He also found an outlet for his interest in programming through the Education For Employment electronics and robotics class at KC, which allowed him to work on lighting projects and an underwater robot.

“It was a lot of hands-on classroom work where you can work at your own pace. There's not a lot of added stress. You just come in and work on cool stuff and Mr. (Ken) Briggs is super fantastic.”

Cormac's interest in music predates his interest in computer science and game design. An



Cormac Roth, Kalamazoo Central, is an oboist with the Kalamazoo Symphony Junior Orchestra.



Inspired by his late English teacher Christopher Bullmer, Cormac has performed slam poetry at Fire Arts Collective.

oboist, he counts his years with the Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra as the highlight of his high school career. He had to juggle his course load at KAMSC and Central with practicing and rehearsals but says it was worth it.

“Nothing comes close to the rush you feel when you finish a concert and you know it was a really good one,” Cormac said. “Being a part of a group with so many talented people was crazy. It was awesome to make music with them.”

His other extracurricular activities have included volun-

teering with Peace House, an Eastside nonprofit that provides afterschool programs for neighborhood children, playing travel soccer, and serving as a youth soccer referee. He also performs slam poetry with the Fire Arts Collective.

He's enjoyed all of those activities and the friends that he's made, but he has no qualms about leaving the familiar behind next fall.

“I'm ready to go out and see new people, to do new things, to go out there and have new experiences.”

Name: Cormac Roth
Age: 18
Parents: Megan and James Roth

Schools attended: Kalamazoo Central, Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center

Best teacher: Becky Cooper, English teacher in the Academically Talented Youth Program. I had her for seventh through ninth grade. She's just been a source of advice. She helped me grow a lot as a person.

Biggest challenge and best advice: Time management was the biggest hurdle. I coasted and did things last minute through middle school. I had a rude awakening during my

freshman year at KAMSC. Getting myself to do the work on time was the biggest struggle. I realized mentally that it was something I needed to do.

I got a lot of advice from teachers and learned you have to do things in short chunks and to not procrastinate. I had to realize I was going to get destroyed if I didn't do that. It was going to be a trainwreck if I did things 20 minutes before the deadline.

If you don't manage your time properly, you don't have time to do what you enjoy. I decided I was going to balance my work and play so it was not all one or the other.

Commencement

I can't remember exactly when I realized I was graduating, evolving into the next step of my life. There's an acute terror in it, watching the guardrails fall away, but there's a much stronger joy in having room to spread my wings. This is the next leap we're meant to take. We may feel unsteady in our completion. Spent months inside our homes, calendar countdowns ignored, losing more moments than we thought we could bear missing. But we're still standing. We're still strong enough to keep moving forward. We lost out on much, but we're ready.

Friends, classmates, peers, we've spent our five thousand hours Growing. Growing as students, as people, as the future of society. And we are not done. We've started to bloom and still have more growing to do. It's our moment to rise to the occasion, rise to the challenges the world sets before us. And we're ready.

Shoulder to shoulder, cap and gown like armor, one graduating class entering the world together. We've got each other's back because that's how we made it through these years. Countless victories as the class of 2020. And I am So excited to see what comes next.

— **Cormac Roth, Kalamazoo Central High School, Class of 2020, valedictorian**

NOTICE

Kalamazoo Public Schools welcomes all students and staff of any religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, gender identification, height, weight, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability.

The District will not tolerate or condone any act of bias or discrimination toward any person on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, gender identification, height, weight, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability in any of its activities, hiring practices, programs or services.

Inquiries by students and/or their parents/guardians should be directed to:

Director of Student Services
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0161

All other inquiries should be directed to:

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0177

District Directory at :
www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

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Jyla Bell: Pushing Toward Success Despite Health Issues

Jyla Bell missed a lot of school, but when she was there, she made an impact on those around her.

“Jyla has taken her education by storm, being driven, hard-working and determined,” said Loy Norrix Principal Chris Aguinaga. “She faced every obstacle like a warrior and along the way, she inspired many.”

In the fall, she plans to attend Kalamazoo Valley Community College to become a medical assistant, inspired by the health care providers who have helped her through the years.

Jyla’s health issues, which she prefers to keep private, kept her from fully participating in school, but she said she was able to graduate this year with the support of her family and her teachers, who worked together to ensure she was successful in her studies.

“Attendance had the biggest effect on me. My health issues blocked me from being in school a lot,” she said. “Oftentimes, I needed to go homebound. My teachers knew my health issues and never had an issue with



Jyla Bell inspired others at Loy Norrix.

getting work to my mom. They’d email my mom to see how I was doing and if I needed any work.”

She got off to a rocky start at Norrix. The transition from middle school to high school was much harder than she anticipated.

“Don’t come in slacking your freshman year,” Jyla warned. “That’s what I did. I really messed up my freshman year. Don’t focus on your social life. I really thought having friends was going to get me through high school. I needed to focus — that’s what really gets

you through high school — and definitely there were some teachers who made a big difference.”

Her favorites include: Anna Gutman, her caseload teacher, who was there for “anything and everything. She would talk to me and my mom about anything.”

Psychology and sociology teacher Rebecca Layton, who “is the one teacher who tells you when she knows you’re slacking. She doesn’t want to see you mess up. She wants you to have goals.”

English teacher Lisa Jensen

is “just a real down-to-earth person. She was very funny at a time when I had a lot going on and taking a toll on me in school. I had a breakdown in class and walked out, and she was right there and just listened to everything going on. Even when I wasn’t in her class, I could go to her and talk about anything.”

“Sometimes you just need someone in your life that is very supportive,” Jyla said. “They wanted me to keep pushing even though I had a lot of challenges in life.”

Name: Jyla Bell
Age: 18
Mother: Amy Bell
Schools attended: Milwood Elementary, Milwood Magnet School: A Center for Math, Science and Technology, Loy Norrix High School
Most influential people: My mom and my brother (Cornez Bell) are my biggest influences, since it’s just the three of us. Having a good support system like your family can help you a lot.

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Antoinette Puca: Finding Her Place Among Two School Communities

Antoinette “Anna” Puca lived in two high-school worlds: Loy Norrix and the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center, and both helped define her and her future.

The Loy Norrix 2020 valedictorian has divided her time between the two school environments and that is part of the reason she is enrolling this fall in the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, where she hopes to pursue math or data science along with the humanities.

KAMSC helped drive her interest in math and science. There she participated in several research projects, most notably the Wearable White Cane, a vest with sensors to help people who are visually impaired detect objects and obstacles in three dimensions in their surroundings, such as low-hanging tree branches or fences. Working with Western Michigan University engineering professor Pnina Ari-Gur and her KAMSC student partner Julia Strauss, Anna helped code the vest’s mobile app, which they

called The Smart Cane. “The app uses a lot of audio instructions. We tested it to make sure the audio was saying what we thought was necessary and what would help visually impaired people recognize the obstacles,” she said. “We also had to research the different things you could run into when you’re out walking and figure out what would be the correct distances for warnings on the app.”

Anna and Julia were able to take the project to the International Intel Science and Engineering Fair, where they witnessed an impressive array of interesting and helpful projects.

“I got to see how research can help people,” Anna said. “That project was one of my best experiences in high school.”

While she enjoyed that math and science rigor at KAMSC and the opportunities it provided to

do research and develop higher-level math and computer programming skills, she is equally enthusiastic about Loy Norrix.

“I was challenged at both schools in different ways and I really liked that,” she said. “I’ve



Antoinette Puca participated in research to assist people with visual impairments.

known for a while that I want a career in math and science, but Norrix helped me appreciate the humanities, so I want to continue studying foreign languages and learning about history.”

At Norrix, Anna played varsity soccer for four years and varsity basketball for three. She was a member of the National Honor Society and competed in DECA, the business club.

DECA helped her compete in another research project. She and student Chanel Wilson created a dress shirt for amputees. Through their research they found that most shirts for amputees were casualwear. Anna

and Chanel created a dress shirt with Velcro behind the buttons and with adjustable sleeves to accommodate different amputations. Not only did they research and design their project, but they learned the business aspects of finding investors for inventions.

Right before schools closed because of the pandemic, the girls took their project to the state DECA competition.

She said there are a lot of opportunities through Kalamazoo Public Schools. Even if students aren’t enrolling in KAMSC, they can challenge themselves with Advanced Placement classes, dual enrollment, and Early/Middle College, which allows students to complete a five-year high school program to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate’s degree.

“People can choose the specific things that work for them,” she said. “You just have to be the one that wants to take the extra step.”

She feels lucky to have had both experiences and communities to help her map out her future.

“My family, friends and teachers helped me figure out what I wanted to do,” she said.

“I liked having friends at Norrix and KAMSC, because each group challenged me in different ways. Being surrounded by people who were motivated at both schools helped keep me going. Your community is really important.”

Name: Antoinette Puca
Age: 18
Parents: Deanne and Michael Puca
Schools attended: Winchell Elementary School, Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts, Loy Norrix High School, Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center
Best high school memory: One of my favorites was winning our homecoming game senior year. It was our last homecoming game, our last football game, so it was pretty exciting. And, my junior year in DECA, we won state’s and competed in Orlando after that. Just having all of my teammates cheer me on was exciting.
Best teachers: Christina Holmes. I really liked her because not only did she make me comfortable speaking Spanish, she would often give us life advice.

Michael Sinclair at KAMSC. I was lucky enough to take three classes with him: calculus AB, physics and geology. He made me like them all because of the way he taught. I would sit in his class before school with friends. I’d eat lunch with him. I’d talk to him about not just academics but what’s going on in the world.
Best advice: Just ask questions. That was something I had to learn. At the KAMSC orientation they say, if you’re confused, ask questions, normally other students are thinking the same things. I realized how important it is. I would have struggled more if I hadn’t asked teachers to clarify things or if I hadn’t gone in after school to talk to teachers.

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Loy Norrix Valedictorian Antoinette Puca: Pandemic Has Brought Us to a Crossroads

Being a student in Kalamazoo Public Schools from kindergarten to senior year, I have been fortunate to see how the community has overcome challenges and welcomed new people. I appreciate being a part of this school district, because it focuses on providing students with an education to use in their careers and supports and encourages students from different backgrounds. Seeing the empathy Kalamazoo students have for each other based on their differences allows me to be optimistic that graduates from our school and others around the country can help make fundamental changes to the problems we face today. As we have seen throughout history, changes are made by coming together and listening to each other, and I am hopeful that we have the capacity to lead this change, starting from the social interactions and academics we

have been given in Kalamazoo.

While the world has tried to adjust to the coronavirus pandemic, many people have stated that they cannot wait for the situation to return to normal. Yes, as a country we have missed activities we have been able to do before: concerts, nightly football games, and school dances, and, for the class of 2020, graduation. But going back to “normal” is not good enough. If the situation was back to “normal,” school shootings on campuses would continue to be a problem without laws that prevent more from occurring. Similarly, the “normal” before was that police officers were not held accountable for their violence against African Americans. The movement against police brutality and other forms of systematic racism has inspired many Americans to speak up, demanding our leaders pass laws to help address this issue and, hopefully, helping to

“In just a few months, the coronavirus has revealed many problems that have long existed. As a country and a generation of future leaders, we need to work together now to fix these issues.”

make America a much safer place for minorities. Within just days of factories being closed down because of the pandemic, air pollution was reduced globally. While companies are starting to open again, there need to be precautions to protect the health of people and the environment as well. Poor leadership and the divisions in our society have limited our ability to respond effectively to the pandemic.

In just a few months, the coronavirus has revealed many problems that have long existed.

As a country and a generation of future leaders, we need to work together now to fix these issues.

It is okay to be upset over how our personal lives have been affected during this pandemic. As a school district, Kalamazoo is known for its diversity and acceptance of others. As graduates, it is necessary for us to keep this empathy and connection with those different from us — just as we have done in years of our education. We must apply these lessons to demand reform and work to fix

these problems.

Yes, it does seem unfair that as a generation we have to fix problems that have existed since before we were born. It will be difficult, but we do have the capability of making the world a better place, and we should. There are so many ways that we can help. Vote, join the Black Lives Matter movement, find ways to reduce your carbon footprint, follow the safety guidelines for coronavirus, make change by using your voice and listening to others, and understand the importance of using an education. We are fortunate to come from a community that values education and the power of coming together. There is so much we can still learn. By sharing information and experiences, we can make lasting changes that can benefit future generations.

We must do better. And we will do better.



We've been busy working to ensure Kalamazoo youth have access to high quality in-person and virtual programs.

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Use the KYD Network Program Finder to find programming this fall.

Watch for more information on our advocacy and family fun run/walk. Lights On Afterschool October 2020

www.kydnet.org

Congratulations to the Class of 2020!

More congratulatory messages will appear in the September Excelsior.

Congratulations, Class of 2020! You have made your family, friends and community members very proud. This milestone, though an important one, is only the beginning of your amazing journey. The lessons you have learned throughout your lives bringing you here, will be the foundation you will need to live successful, happy lives.

It brings me comfort knowing that you all are the generation that will make a significant change in this world. Your commitment to having a voice and demanding a better society filled with love, acceptance and understanding is commendable. Remember, that you are in a position to help shape the lives of those who are coming up behind you. Always embrace this role and find ways to mentor young people and be a positive role model.

I am sorry you were not able to experience the tradi-



tional senior festivities. However, the year of your graduation, 2020, will be one of the most important years in history. You have the ability to become a catalyst for change and unite this world. I look forward to watching you confront the issues we are facing right now and making them better, in a way

that only you and your peers know how. Your contributions are necessary and I have no doubt that you will change the world for the betterment of all. Best of luck and keep making us proud!

Derek Jeter

**Kalamazoo Central, 1992
Baseball Hall of Fame, 2020**

Celebrations for the Class of 2020 will be different this year, but your friends, families, neighbors, and our entire community are no less proud. To earn your high school diploma you have shown commitment, resilience, and ambition, and now a world of opportunities awaits. Find a career or cause that you are passionate about and be a force for positive change in whatever you choose to pursue. Do not let obstacles or challenges discourage you — you have already shown that you have what it takes to overcome and adapt. Enjoy this moment, but stay focused — our community and our country need your talents, ideas, and energy to create a brighter future that everyone can share. We are all proud of you and excited to see what your futures hold. Congratulations on this achievement!



Jim Rusema
City Manager, Kalamazoo

will inspire others to join you. I know you will lead us in the right direction and continue to make us all proud. Congratulations!

David Anderson
Mayor, City of Kalamazoo

I am especially proud of this class. As a parent of a 2020 graduate, I have been on this journey with you since the beginning. You are resilient, forward-thinking, and creative.

The class of 2020 had an opportunity to collectively learn a lesson that many people don't realize until well into their adult lives. That is a lesson in what matters. When everything you waited for and planned for doesn't happen, you're faced with a choice. The choice you made was to persevere.

Life is defined by moments that turn into memories. Cherish them and use them to fuel your fire and to continue to become the very best version of you! With experiences comes the opportunities to learn and grow. The things that we place value on are what determine our successes in life. The motivation, determination, and celebration sometimes has to come from within.

Whatever comes at your way, you have what you need to not only succeed but to thrive. I am so proud of you and I look forward to the greatness you all will continue to unleash in this world. To the graduating class of 2020: Congratulations!

Patrese Griffin
Kalamazoo Vice Mayor

(continued on page 9)

SUMMERTIME

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SUNDAY, AUG 30TH
4:00 PM • BRONSON PARK

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For Full Summer Schedule: KalamazooArts.org

Congrats to the Class of 2020! *(cont. from page 8)*

Congratulations on your high school graduation! You did it; you should be proud of yourself. Given the current times, you were not able to experience your senior year as you had planned. However, you stand out because you were able to chart new and innovative ways to celebrate this milestone in your life.

Today, I encourage you with Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” As you enter the new season of your life, be encouraged and remember all your lessons learned, the education received, and experiences lived out. You have been trained to take on the world. Be mindful of the purpose God has placed in you. Use it wisely and remain faithful in your new journey. Your passion and abilities will take you to your ultimate purpose in life.

I will end with a quote from Michelle Obama, “Success isn’t about how much money you make. It’s about the difference you make in people’s lives.” And, one final Scripture of encouragement— Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding, and he will show you which path to take.”

**Dr. Addis Moore, Pastor
Mt. Zion Baptist Church
President, Northside
Ministerial Alliance**

Congratulations to the Class of 2020! On behalf of our Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo team, I want to share that we are extremely proud of what you have accomplished. We know this journey was not an easy one. Each one of you had your own unique challenges and obstacles that you overcame to get to this point.

Please know that each challenge you encountered and con-

quered has added depth to your lives. One day, they will be a source of strength, knowledge and experience that you will draw from to help yourselves and others fulfill your destinies. With great expectation, we at CIS look forward to the wonderful things you will accomplish in college, your careers and in your lives!

**James Devers
Executive Director,
Communities In Schools
of Kalamazoo**

Your success is the result of years of your hard work and the support of teachers, school staff, parents, and community. You’re ready to embark on your next steps, whether that’s additional learning utilizing The Kalamazoo Promise, or going into national service, a skilled trade, or the workforce.

You are facing a set of challenges not seen for a century. You’re living through a global pandemic and economic instability. However, as we have seen with many moments of great challenge, we can see great change. Your generation is committed to service and compassion. You’re willing to tackle the threats we face as a country and a world — from ending gun violence to solving the climate crisis.

We will move forward from this moment stronger as a community because of the fearlessness and strength your class shows. Be brave. Face our challenges boldly. Use all the tools at your disposal to build the world you want.

We are proud of you, Kalamazoo Public Schools Class of 2020. Congratulations.

**Jon Hoadley,
State Representative
Michigan’s 60th District**



Derrell Mabon: Triple Threat in Football, Track and Basketball Taking Talents to Ferris State

Derrell Mabon is a classic triple threat in sports.

Sports have defined his career at Loy Norrix High School. He played four years of varsity football, four years of varsity basketball and four years of track. He took one detour in his extracurriculars to take a leading role in the school’s production of “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?” in the fall.

What was scarier: facing down an opponent on the field or standing on stage on opening night?

“Definitely opening night,” he said. “I wanted to try something new. I had a really good time doing it as well.”

Mabon will be attending Ferris State University in the fall. He hopes to study electrical engineering and to play football while in Big Rapids. He was the winner of the Schupan Award and the Desmond Family Scholarship — both of which are given to outstanding scholar athletes.

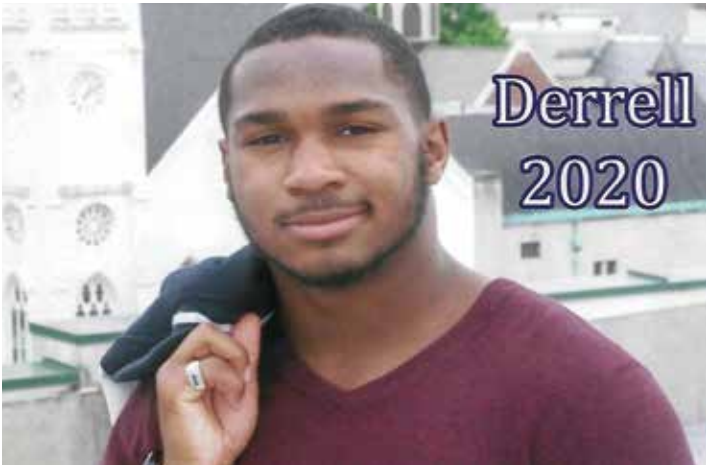
“The thing I like about sports is the competition,” he said. “I’m a real competitive person. I like to test my might against others to see how much more I can do to keep going.”

His favorite sport is definitely football, which he’s been playing the longest, starting with Rocket Football in elementary school and continuing as a player for Linden Grove.

The football field served as the location of the favorite high school memory for the running back.

“My best high school memory was my sophomore year when we played against Kalamazoo Central at home and I sealed the game with the last catch,” he said. “We were up by a touchdown. It was the third down and we had to get a first down to end the game or they could get the ball and score.

“He passed to me straight down the middle and I caught it with one hand to get the first down.”



Derrell Mabon was a triple threat in athletics at Loy Norrix.



Derrell Mabon on the football field.

Name: Derrell Mabon
Age: 17
Parents: Naomi Jones and Derrell Mabon Sr.
Schools attended: Northglade Montessori Magnet School, Edison Environmental Science Academy, Linden Grove Middle School, and Loy Norrix High School.
Most influential person: My father is a big influence. He has always been there for me and pushed me to do better

and better things. He’s an amazing person.
Favorite teachers: Ted Duckett, Niambi Pringle, and Paige O’Shea
Best advice for students: You just have to set your priorities. You can think about ‘Oh, I have to be with my friends’ or ‘I’ll have time later and the work can wait.’ Your work can’t wait — you have to do that first.

Daniel Nguyen: Problem Solving For Fun Is the Key to Success

Robotics is a family affair for Daniel Nguyen.

The Kalamazoo Central and Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center graduate's two older brothers were involved in robotics, his younger brother participates, and his dad has coached all of their teams. This fall, Daniel plans to attend Michigan State University to study computer science.

"I liked the whole problem solving aspect of it, thinking through problems and then thinking through solutions," said Daniel, who serves on the programming side of the team

rather than the building side. "It's fun to work on a team toward a common goal.

"I heard someone say, 'It's the hardest fun you'll ever have in your life.' I like that."

Nguyen has been a member of the Zoobotix robotics team for four years. He was also a member of varsity tennis for four years and a member of the National Honor Society. This spring he was named an Excellence in Education winner. Nguyen was also a commendation winner in the National Merit Scholarship program.

The highlight of the robotics season are the competitions. In his junior and senior years, his team went to states. One of his favorite memories is from the 2017 competition.

"We were doing really badly," he said. "But in robotics, the teams work in groups. The second-place team chose us way out of the bottom. We ran it all the way back with them and won by two points in the last game."

Robotics is the perfect activ-



Daniel Nguyen continued his family's success in robotics while at Kalamazoo Central.

ity to get kids involved in computer programming, Daniel said. "The robots are cool, and everyone is excited about the competitions. There could be basic programming classes in all of the

middle schools."

Daniel took an unusual path during high school, enrolling in KAMSC as a junior to take advantage of higher level math classes. The rigor of the program was in-

tense, but it taught him a valuable lesson about time management.

"There's a ton of homework and it's hard to stay on top of it. There is really a lot of discipline there," he said. But, at the same time he learned to seek balance to succeed.

"Enjoy these four years of your life. Don't let the homework overwhelm you."

Name: Daniel Nguyen

Age: 18

Parents: Phuong and Hiep Nguyen

Schools attended: King-Westwood Elementary School, Hillside Middle School, Kalamazoo Central High School, Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center

Most influential person: My dad. He's always teaching me the importance of hard work and to persevere.

Best teacher: Rex Hafer. He is the AP comparative government teacher. All of his classes are really fun. He goes beyond the curriculum and teaches you a ton.

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Community Partnership Will Provide Free Internet Access to Kalamazoo Families

A new community partnership will provide Wi-Fi routers and free, unlimited Internet service to 1,000 Kalamazoo households.

Digital Access For All (DAFA) is a partnership between Kalamazoo Public Schools, The Kalamazoo Promise, Kalamazoo Public Library, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the City of Kalamazoo, and The Foundation for Excellence.

"I believe that digital access should be a public good made available to all," said KPS Superintendent Rita Raichoudhuri. "Until that becomes the norm, KPS along with its partner organizations is committed to narrowing the digital divide as much as possible."

Cindy Green, assistant superintendent for Teaching and Learning Services said the district greatly appreciates the community support for the project.

"Our students need Internet access in order to navigate online learning. We are so excited that the community is coming together to offer services needed so that there is equitable access to educational services," said Green, who sits on the DAFA committee.

KPS students who do not have access to the Internet will be eligible for the hotspots and service. To be eligible, students must have a OneCard, which is the combined student school ID and library card program that launched in 2018. Students can check out hotspots from the library using their OneCard. Only one device per street address and residence will be permitted.

DAFA was formed in April, shortly after schools were closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Wi-Fi inequities became more apparent as schools, libraries and businesses, which families often relied on for Internet



Robin Greymountain, homeless liaison and Title I literacy facilitator, organizes Chromebooks for distribution to students.

access, were closed as the pandemic wore on.

"As we have worked together to navigate teaching and learning during this unprecedented time, we have come to recognize that access to reliable home internet is a basic human need," said Geoffrey Howe, director of Title I, School Improvement and Assessments for KPS. "Having reliable, high-speed internet access opens a world of resources that are otherwise unavailable to students and their families."

On June 15, the Kalamazoo City Commission amended the city budget to allocate \$200,000 from the Foundation for Excellence Aspirational Fund for DAFA. In addition, The Promise and KPS will each provide \$50,000 to the project. This spring KPS distributed more than 7,500 Chromebooks to students to use during the crisis.

"It was imperative that The Promise and community partners collaborate to address unequal access to Wi-Fi, both now and into the future," Von Washington Jr., executive director of community relations for The Kalamazoo Promise said in an interview with MLive. "For Kalamazoo to truly be an education community, our actions must stop the deepening of inequities already present in our society. We are responsible for reducing barriers that have long stifled the educational outcomes of marginalized communities."

KPS Enrolling Now for 2020-21 School Year

In-person enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year will be held 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Aug. 5 at the Kalamazoo Public Schools Administration Building, 1220 Howard St.

Enrollment is also available by appointment by contacting Student Services at (269) 337-0161 or student_services@kalamazoopublicschools.net.

Plans for in-person, virtual classes, and hybrid learning for KPS students are being developed and will be finalized by Aug. 3. Students who participate in any of the learning plans and meet residency requirements are eligible for The Kalamazoo Promise.

Parents of new students — or students who are re-enrolling — can refer to the list below to know what to bring to enrollment.

Other forms and information can be found on the KPS website at <https://www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/Departments/StudentServices.aspx>.

Spanish translation services will be available at all registration times. If additional language assistance is needed, please contact the Bilingual Department at (269) 337-1579 to make an appointment.



ENROLL FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR!

NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT

KPS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
1220 HOWARD ST. (W/ SAFETY MEASURES)

8:30 A.M.-3:30 P.M. WEDNESDAYS

THROUGH AUGUST 5

To schedule an appointment on a different day or for more information, contact KPS Student Services at (269) 337-0161 or at student_services@kalamazoopublicschools.net

Spanish translation will be available. If additional language assistance is needed call the Bilingual Department at (269) 337-1579.



WHAT TO BRING:

- Certified birth certificate
- Immunization record
- Two pieces of proof of residency such as mortgage statement, lease agreement, or utility bills (NO driver's license or cell phone bills please)
- Transcript (high school)
- Hearing/vision screening (Kindergarten)
- Current IEP or Section 504 Plan (if applicable)

Plans for in-person and virtual learning for KPS schools are being developed and will be finalized by Aug. 3

Luis Gutierrez: Do All that You Can; Don't Leave with Any Regrets

Loy Norrix High School Principal Chris Aguinaga calls Luis Gutierrez “an all-around great kid.”

Gutierrez takes the praise with humility. He liked school. He liked his teachers. He liked playing basketball. He counts himself lucky – he has so many good memories about high school that it’s hard for him to choose a favorite.

In the fall, he plans to go to Western Michigan University to study business.

During his time at Norrix, Luis took Advanced Placement classes in Spanish and psychology, studied auto technology through Education For Employment, and played basketball as a small forward for three years after focusing on football as a freshman. He was also a member of the National Honor Society and participated in volunteer activities.

He took AP psych and AP



Luis Gutierrez says he's lucky to have so many good memories of Loy Norrix.

Spanish as a sophomore, mostly because he was friends with upperclassmen who told him that was the route he should take.

“The teachers I had were amazing. I had Senora (Christina) Holmes for AP Spanish. She’s a great teacher who creates a safe and fun environment for learning about culture,” he said. “Mr. (Sean) Bergan taught me a lot about psychology. And, there

were just day-to-day things that he would teach us. A lot of those things stuck with me.”

But his favorite teachers were by far business teacher Atiba Ward and Jim Leander, the EFE automotive technologies teacher.

“Mr. Ward would always encourage students to be the best that they can be. He was always resourceful and helped students

learn more. He’d go out of his way to talk with you,” Luis said.

His junior year, he signed up for automotive technologies because of his longtime interest in cars.

“That class was probably one of my favorite memories of my junior and senior years,” Luis said. “We got to do a lot of hands-on work, lifting up cars, changing oil. I made a lot of friends, and Mr. Leander was not just a teacher, but almost a friend.”

Luis says there were a lot of great people and great teachers at Norrix. His senior year didn’t end the way he imagined it would and that leaves him with a sense of regret and some advice for younger students.

“Just do the most that you can when you’re in high school,” he said. “Now that I’m out of high school and with the way it ended for me due to the coronavirus, I wish I had done a little more and spread my wings. I

didn’t know the day I left that it was going to be my last day. Do the most you can, so you don’t have any regrets leaving there.”

Name: Luis Gutierrez
Age: 18
Parents: Betty and Luis Gutierrez
Schools attended: Winchell Elementary, Hillside Middle School, Kalamazoo Central and Loy Norrix high schools
Best high school memory: The Loy Norrix vs. Kalamazoo Central basketball games played at Western Michigan University’s Read Fieldhouse. It was pretty awesome playing on a college court in front of all of those people.
Most influential people: My family. They push me to do a lot of things and to be the best that I can be. They have high expectations for me and that motivates me to keep going.



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This position provides delivery of Communities In Schools After School Program, funded through Michigan Department of Education (21st Century Community Learning Centers).

Damarrior Simmons: Loss Fueled His Drive Toward Success

Damarrior Simmons does it all for Deztanee.

Deztanee Cobb was his best friend. The cousin who was like a big sister. His biggest fan.

Cobb, 17, died in a fiery car crash in 2017 just days before the start of her senior year. The crash claimed the lives of four others as well.

“When Deztanee passed away, I was very negative,” Damarrior said. “I told everyone I was done playing football, I was done playing sports. When I lost her, I lost a lot of feeling for the game.”

His story is a story of how football is more than a game and how teammates make as big a difference off the field as they do on the field.

“The bond we had was incredible. It was everything,” he said. “After she died, I quit and gave up on myself. But my teammates kept telling me to come out and my mom kept pushing me. My friends surrounded me and understood me — those were my teammates.”

Sports have always been im-



Damarrior Simmons, Kalamazoo Central HS, 2020



Damarrior Simmons, Kalamazoo Central, 2020, with Deztanee Cobb.



on an athletic scholarship.

“At first, sports were to keep me on track with school, so I did not fall into the wrong neighborhood crowd and do wrong things,” he said. “Then I started to believe sports could take me somewhere. My coaches pushed me. My teammates created a bond. It was way more than athletics.”

The support he received from his teammates and teachers is something he tried to share as a student leader at Kalamazoo Central.

“A lot of kids looked up to me, because they knew what I’ve been through, so I tried to do what’s right. I just made sure they always had a friend to talk to,” he said. “I made this an ex-

ample a lot — just know that whenever you’re down there’s someone who has it rougher than you. You might be upset that you didn’t get a pair of shoes, but somebody else doesn’t have even one pair of shoes.”

Damarrior enjoyed KC, and he’s excited to move on, but as he prepares for the future, Deztanee is never far from his thoughts.

“I think she’d be proud. It’s all for her: school, graduation, playing football, and going to college. She was really smart. She never got to walk the stage. I want to do that for her.”

Name: Damarrior Simmons

Age: 17

Mom: Meagan O’Bryant

Schools attended: Washington Writers’ Academy, Woodward School for Technology and Research, Hillside Middle School, Kalamazoo Central High School

Best high school memory: Making Second Team All-Conference in football and winning Winterfest, which I also won in 10th grade. And right before coronavirus started, I had actually done something for my senior year. The first trimester I tried my hardest to get a 4.0. I got all A’s and two A-minuses so I got a 3.83, but I pushed myself.

Most influential people: My mom and her sister Tracey Taylor (Deztanee’s mother). They raised me together. They are just so, so strong.

Favorite teachers: Coaches Carlton Brewster and Montrell Baker, English teacher Linda Lee, law teacher Michelle Frederick, and English teacher William Santilli.

Best advice: Always push yourself in class or on the field or on the court. Never give up. Believe in yourself. When I actually tried on the football field and in the classroom, it all paid off.



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KRESA Outstanding Seniors Excel in EFE and EFA Programs

The 2020 Kalamazoo RESA Outstanding Senior Awards celebrated 76 Kalamazoo County students from Kalamazoo RESA's Education for the Arts (EFA) and Education for Employment/Career and Technical Education (EFE/CTE) programs, awarding a total of \$67,000 in scholarships.

The seniors graduated from schools across the county and have worked diligently in the classroom, as well as the local community. Each was awarded a scholarship made possible by the generous contributions of 46 donors.

"Outstanding seniors, you have been living in a historic season of disruption from the COVID-19 experience, which has caused much anxiety and has impacted you in your final months as a senior. I am confident that we will be a resilient community and that each of you will not only press on but will develop plans, grow and prosper," said Deb Miller, Kalamazoo RESA assistant superintendent of secondary programming. "We are proud of you and your accomplishments and look forward to seeing you flourish in your next steps."

The Kalamazoo RESA Outstanding Senior Awards is a collaborative effort between many partners: public and non-public school districts, Kalamazoo RESA, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Western Michigan University and more than 400 businesses.

The KPS award winners are:

Myles Baker
Parents: Dave Baker and Heidi Graham
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Electronics & Robotics

Matthew Bau
Parents: Michael and Andrea Bau
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Business Management & Administration

Morgan Boyd
Daniel and Angela Boyd
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Aviation Technology

Finn Brent
Parents: Patrick and Heather Brent
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Conservation Biology

Makayla Carpenter
Parents: Shane and Neva Carpenter
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Construction Trades

Nihveah Cruz
Parents: Montrell Taylor and Gretta Wilkins
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFA Intermediate Dance

Nicholas Doane
Parents: Jonathan and Christy Doane
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Business Management & Administration

Seth Douglas
Parents: Stephen Douglas and Felicia Mims
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Cosmetology & Barbering

Melissa Dumas
Parents: John and Angel Dumas
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Accounting & Finance

Emily Edlefson
Parents: Kevin and Amy Edlefson
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Art & Design Career Skills

Quincy Ellis
Parents: Sidney and Renita Ellis
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Business Management & Administration

Griffin Gheen
Parents: Christian and Grace Gheen
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Marketing & Entrepreneurship

Lucas Henry
Parents: Matt and Silvia Henry
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Computer Science

Tanner Jacobs
Parents: John and Laurie Jacobs
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Accounting & Finance

Ella Ledbetter-Newton
Parents: Charles Ledbetter and Erin Newton
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Law Enforcement

Marta Mejia Sanchez
Parents: Ceslo Mejia and Elba Sanchez
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Business Mgmt. & Administration

Michael Modugno
Parents: Mike and Catherine Modugno
Loy Norrix High School
EFA Advanced Multi-Media Arts

Belen Moreno-Aguilar
Parents: Juan Moreno and Alma Aguilar
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Health Science

Kimberly Roberts
Parents: Mark and Verna Roberts
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Acct. & Finance

Cormac Roth
Parents: James and Megan Roth
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Electronics & Robotics

Kamayia Smith
Parents: Darran and Kara Smith
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Teacher Academy

Trynity Wafford
Parents: Steffon and Aliah Wafford
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Marketing & Entrepreneurship

Mikayla Williams
Parents: Joseph France and Cheri Kroupensky
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Fundamentals of Health Science

Breyana Wilson
Parents: Bobby Wilson and Molli Kornak
Loy Norrix High School
EFE Business Management & Administration

Jordan Woodrum
Parents: Darold Weld and Patricia Woodrum
Kalamazoo Central High School
EFE Marketing & Entrepreneurship and
EFE Veterinary Science



Myles Baker



Matthew Bau



Morgan Boyd



Finn Brent



Makayla Carpenter



Nihveah Cruz



Nicholas Doane



Seth Douglas



Melissa Dumas



Emily Edlefson



Quincy Ellis



Griffin Gheen



Lucas Henry



Tanner Jacobs



Ella Ledbetter-Newton



Marta Mejia Sanchez



Michael Modugno



Belen Moreno-Aguilar



Kimberly Roberts



Cormac Roth



Kamayia Smith



Trynity Wafford



Mikayla Williams



Breyana Wilson



Jordan Woodrum

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KRESA Virtual & Innovative Collaborative

VIRTUAL LEARNING, REIMAGINED

KRESA Virtual & Innovative Collaborative (KVIC) is a virtual learning program operated jointly by the Kalamazoo Regional Service Agency (KRESA) and participating local school districts. KVIC is built upon a virtual learning model that has been operating locally for nearly ten years — it provides a free, personalized and challenging online learning plan for every student in the KRESA service area.

For students and families that cannot, or choose not to, engage in traditional face-to-face schooling, KVIC provides an excellent alternative, offering personalized learning, multiple course options and innovative learning platforms that best meet the needs of all learners.

This Kindergarten through 12th grade program was designed with a rigorous, aligned curriculum and is taught by highly qualified teachers from your local districts.

Enrollment is Free, Always

Families must officially enroll their child in their local school district. All enrolled students will have one or more content teacher(s) to facilitate the learning of the online material and one mentor who supports the overall academic progress.

Please contact your local school district for additional enrollment information.

KVIC will be available for the following school districts:

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| ■ Comstock | ■ Kalamazoo | ■ Schoolcraft |
| ■ Galesburg-Augusta | ■ Parchment | ■ Vicksburg |

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