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IMPORTANT DATES

Board of Education Meeting

Thursday, Feb. 8 & 22, 2018
7 p.m.

Administration Building
1220 Howard St.

For more information, call
(269) 337-1572

Jan. 31 – Feb. 1
High School
Parent-Teacher Conferences

Feb. 1
Middle School
Parent-Teacher Conferences

Feb. 23
Mid-Winter Break
Schools Closed

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Orchestra Rouh: Refugee Children Build Community, Become Community Through Music

Two Western Michigan University international graduate students noticed something about the immigrant and refugee children they were helping settle into Kalamazoo.

The children, who attend Kalamazoo Public Schools, were having their basic needs met. There was housing. Parents were getting help finding jobs. Health problems were getting medical attention. Children were enrolling in school. Everyone was learning English.

But the children were feeling out of place. They were at loose ends.

So Ahmed Tofiq and Bashdar Sdiq turned to the one unique tool they had to help these children build a community, to find a place to fit in: music.

“I found that the music is the best way to encourage them, because music is the universal language. When they play the music, everyone can understand them,” Tofiq said.

Tofiq, a violinist, and Sdiq, a cellist, along with Western Michigan University Arabic instructor Hend Ezzat Hegab, approached the KSO in February 2017 and asked for help in establishing a new ensemble for the children.



Roshen Ahmad, Ali Al Wajidi, Kafa Domani, Naser Maaz, Marah Alsbaie, Abdul Alsbaie, Sanaa Ahmad, Rukia Al Wajidi are members of Orchestra Rouh, which is made up of immigrant and refugee children from Syria and Iraq.

Photo courtesy of Colin Howe.

It was christened Orchestra Rouh, rouh meaning “hope” and “spirit” in Arabic.

The orchestra consists of 19 children between the ages

(continued on page 4)

Hillside Names Cafeteria, Road in Honor of Former Principal Dorothy Young

Believe. Achieve. Succeed.

That was the theme of Dorothy Young’s tenure as principal at Hillside Middle School, and it was the theme of the celebration remembering her career with Kalamazoo Public Schools and the renaming of the school cafeteria and the road behind the school in her honor on Dec. 16.

Karika Parker, a former student and a minister who helped organize the event along with Young’s daughter, LaWanda Conger, praised Young



Loy Norrix High School sophomore Kamaria Tilley performed at the ceremony honoring Dorothy Young. Kamaria was accompanied by her manager Michael Robinson.

for creating a loving, supportive environment for students.

“She showed us love,” Parker said. “Love is not what we say with words, it’s what we do. She hired and chose classroom teachers that did that. She surrounded us with excellent educators. On her watch we were safe. We were cared for. We were loved. She modeled a standard.”

Young worked for KPS for 37 years, which included 17 years as principal at Hillside,
(continued on page 5)

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Much to Learn from the Civil Rights Struggles of the Past

As distant as many of our young people feel from the civil rights struggles of the past, there are many lessons to learn from these struggles — and many issues today to which to apply yesterday’s lessons.

In January, we celebrated the anniversary of the birth of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The 50th anniversary of his assassination is in April. Many of our young people today have trouble connecting to efforts of civil rights activists of the 1950s and 60s to open up schools, colleges, and universities to black students; to desegregate restrooms, water fountains, and parks; to permit blacks to use public beaches and department store lunch counters; and to permit blacks to vote and to live where they choose.

The many contributions of organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

(SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the NAACP itself, among many other organizations, helped make this a more just country. Yet our children today have trouble imagining a world in which rights they take for granted didn’t exist.

Between 1954 and 1968, enormous progress was made to right historic wrongs in this country.

In 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously set aside Plessy v. Ferguson and declared unconstitutional de jure

segregation in schools in Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education.

In 1955, the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott began. A year later, the Supreme Court would rule that segregated seating in the town’s municipal buses was unconstitutional.

In 1957, Congress would pass the first of three civil rights acts in 11 years, with an ambitious Southern senator leading the charge in the U.S. Senate.

In 1960, the first lunch counter sit-in took place in Greensboro, North Carolina. College students forced lunch counters across the South to desegregate in the ensuing half decade.

In 1961, the first Freedom Ride began in Washington, D.C. with the goal of reaching New Orleans two weeks later. Freedom rides, their resultant violence, and their public consciousness-raising led to desegregated public transportation.



Michael F. Rice, Ph.D.
Superintendent

At the end of his life, Dr. King had moved from being a civil rights activist to a civil and human rights activist.

In 1963, the non-violent efforts of SCLC and others to desegregate Birmingham and to permit blacks to gain employment in the city led to additional violence and consciousness-raising. A year later, Congress passed the second and most important of its civil rights acts in an 11-year period, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which would prohibit racial segregation in employment, schools, and other

public accommodations.

In 1965, political organizing and the Selma-to-Montgomery marches for voting rights would generate more violence and more consciousness-raising. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to eliminate racial discrimination in voting in the wake of these historic marches.

In 1968, Congress passed its third civil rights act in 11 years. The Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act, would prohibit discrimination in housing on the basis of race, religion, or national origin.

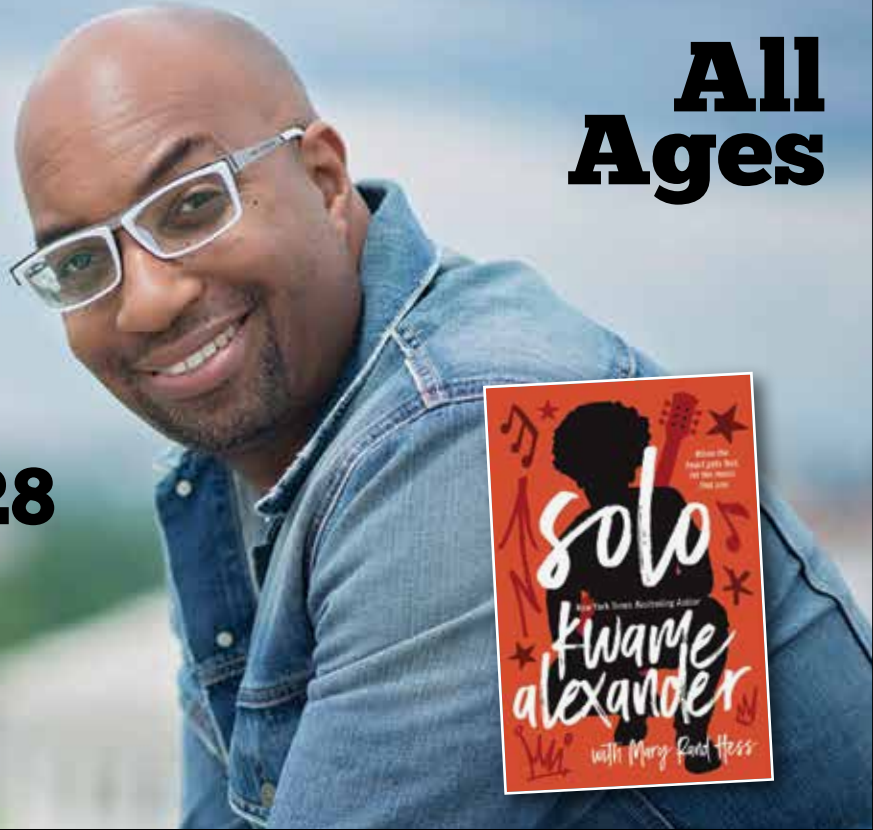
At the end of his life, Dr. King had moved from being a civil rights activist to a civil and human rights activist. In the face of skepticism from many in his religious-political circle, he began to argue against the Vietnam War in early 1967 and to organize a Poor People’s Campaign
(continued on page 3)

MEET THE AUTHOR:

Kwame Alexander

Wednesday, February 28
6 pm | Central Library

Van Deusen Room
315 S. Rose St.



All
Ages



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Public Library
kpl.gov



Kwame Alexander is an award-winning poet, educator, and *The New York Times* bestselling author of 24 books, including *Solo*, a Young Adult Novel. Join us for an author talk and book signing.

Much to Learn from Civil Rights Struggles

(continued from page 2)

in Washington in 1968. One could easily argue that these struggles were logical outgrowths of the civil rights movement. At a minimum, they were connected struggles, ones that also worked to raise the issues of inequity and inequality.

Many of the specifics of civil rights struggles during King's life appear dated, historical. If you didn't live them, it is hard to imagine what life was like for those who did. And yet many of the same struggles exist today, albeit in different forms.

Poverty is significantly greater now than when President Johnson declared the War on Poverty in 1965 and Dr. King began to organize a Poor People's Campaign in 1968. When one in five U.S. children lives in poverty—a poverty that cuts across ethnic lines, though disproportionately affecting black and brown families—there remains work to do nationally.

While legal housing segregation has been eliminated, de facto housing segregation still exists, and homelessness has become a substantial issue in this country over the last 30 years.

While the Vietnam War ended decades ago, there have been other wars subsequently — in Iraq and in Afghanistan particularly — whose legitimacy have been sharply questioned. Bellicose talk and action make war with North Korea an increasing possibility today.

While the right of blacks to vote has been unequivocally enshrined in law for the last 50

years, efforts to suppress voter participation of citizens of color and of younger people are rife throughout the country, and gerrymandered districts across the country undermine the intent of one person, one vote.

While lynchings of blacks don't take place in the South as they did in the century following slavery, the indefensible killings of black men by police officers indicate that we are a long way from the just society that we need to become.

While many of us are a part of a proud immigrant tradition in this country, some are still threatened with imprisonment and/or deportation for the acts of family members.

While legally segregated educational facilities — either in K-12 school districts or in colleges/universities — are no longer of issue, inadequate funding and quality of K-12 schools for children of all ethnicities across the country remain an issue.

It is true that the civil rights struggles of yesteryear are historic ones. Yet the roots of today's many struggles can be found in the struggles of the past, as can the means to address these struggles.

As we reflect on Dr. King's life and work this year, we would do well to recall how much thanks we owe to Dr. King and the civil rights activists of the 1950s and 60s, not simply for what they accomplished, but also for what they inspire us to do to improve today's world.

Maple Street CIS Opens Food Pantry for School Community

Maple Street Magnet School students and families in need have a new way to access the services of the Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes food pantry — through the school itself.

The food pantry opened in October with the help of Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo.

"We really saw this as a way to better serve families," said Phillip Hegwood, a CIS after school coordinator for Maple.

CIS senior site coordinator Emily Demorest had long advocated to establish a food pantry to serve the school community.

"I have always kept a small number of donated snacks in my room from Loaves and Fishes for the students," said Demorest, who left Maple at the end of December. "There were always a significant number of children who mentioned how much they missed food packs from elementary and were eager to take items from the pantry home in their backpacks."

"The purpose of the pantry is two-fold. One, we want to provide an opportunity to further



Phillip Hegwood shows some of the food available in the new Maple Street Magnet School food pantry.

engage parents of Maple Street families in the school building. Our hope is that helping parents do 'one-stop shopping' for both their academic and food needs will reduce stress and running around and, two, obviously, we want to ensure that our Maple Street students have a reduction in their food insecurity."

About 18 families have signed up to use the Maple Street pantry, Hegwood said. Not only can parents come in to select food, Hegwood said, but students can bring food home to their families. The food is placed in backpacks for discretion, and to remove some of the stigma

that may be attached with using the pantry, he said.

"Kids have told me they love the different food options," Hegwood said.

The pantry is open 7:30-10 a.m. Mondays, and noon-3 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays. Parents can access the pantry during those hours. The pantry is part of the Loaves and Fishes network, but parents do not have to call the Loaves and Fishes food line to use the Maple pantry. They call the CIS office at Maple Street at (269) 337-0730, ext. 407 to make an appointment. Drop-ins are accepted, but appointments are encouraged.

Golden Legacy:

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Orchestra Rouh: Refugee Children Build Community, Become Community Through Music *(continued from page 1)*

of 7 and 14, all from Syria and Iraq. A rehearsal is an exercise in controlled chaos. Floating through the air are strains of Kurdish, Arabic and English, along with the notes of violins, violas and cellos, running through familiar Suzuki training songs such as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” Middle Eastern folk songs, and Christmas music.

And, because these are children, there is chatter and laughter as they pull out cellphones to take selfies.

Sisters Roshen and Zeinab Ahmad are in the orchestra. Roshen, a seventh-grade violinist at Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts, and Zeinab, a sixth-grade cellist who attends Maple, are studying with Tofiq and



Roshen Ahmad, a seventh grader at Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts, plays violin in Orchestra Rouh. Photo courtesy of Colin Howe.

Elizabeth Youker, respectively. Youker took over cello instruction after Sdiq returned to his homeland of Iraqi Kurdistan,

from which Tofiq and he come.

The girls began music lessons in March, just one month after moving to Kalamazoo. Neither had played an instrument before.

“It’s fun,” Roshen said. “We are happy when we play.”

Zeinab’s favorite song is “Can Can,” while Roshen likes “Jingle Bells.”

The hardest part, said Roshen, is putting your fingers on the right place on the strings and keeping the song in tune. Zeinab said the hardest part of learning to play is how your fingertips hurt from pushing down on the strings.

But now, Zeinab said, “It’s easy peasy.”

COMMUNITY EFFORT

It can sometimes take years for efforts like this to organize, but in this case, the new ensemble was born in a matter of weeks, with lessons and rehearsals beginning in March.

“It was really time sensitive,” said Youker, the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra vice president for education and community partnerships. They knew Sdiq would be returning home when his studies were completed at WMU. “If it was going to happen, it had to happen then.”

It took a coalition to bring the program together. Orchestra Rouh is offered under the umbrella of KSO Education Programs in partnership with the



Rayan Maaz, Zeinab Ahmad, Erjuwan Al-Khafaf, Farah Alsbaie take time out from rehearsal for a selfie at the Suzuki Academy of Kalamazoo. Photo courtesy of Colin Howe.



Zeinab Ahmad, a sixth grader at Maple Street Middle School for the Arts, plays cello with Orchestra Rouh.

Suzuki Academy of Kalamazoo. Instruments have been provided by Meyer Music of Kalamazoo. The Irving S. Gilmore Foundation provided start-up funding. The students have individual lessons, participate in group lessons, and attend orchestra rehearsals.

“All of the volunteers are American, and they have been very supportive of the kids,” Tofiq said. “They want a better life for the children and encourage them to practice. They help them prepare for their class.”

Sometimes the students participate in group lessons and rehearsals with students in Kalamazoo Kids In Tune (KKIT), another KSO student ensemble, housed at Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts. That program combines music lessons with academic tutoring and support. KKIT is a partnership among Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo Public Schools.

A strong component of Orchestra Rouh has been the inclusion of Arabic music performed on traditional

instruments or sometimes sung. It allows the students to celebrate music that is important to the children and their families’ home cultures, Youker said.

None of the children had previous musical experience before beginning the lessons.

“A number of the families had been in refugee camps, so there was not a lot of opportunity for basic education, let alone extras,” Youker said.

The orchestra gives the children an opportunity to learn music, but to also have some place to speak their native language and to be with others who share their experiences. Most are not in school together, so rehearsals and lessons are a unique chance to meld a new experience while retaining a sense of language and culture.

There have been many requests to have the kids perform from community members wanting to welcome and showcase the kids. That has been a wonderful thing, Youker said, not just because it allows the community to welcome the children and to learn about them as more than refugees, but because the young performers feel a sense of pride in performing and giving back to the community.

“A lot of help is needed for these families, but they are also able to contribute to our community as well,” Youker said. “It’s been a wonderful thing for all of us. It’s helping everyone gain some deeper understanding of the experience our new neighbors are having here.”

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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

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Hillside Names Cafeteria, Road in Honor of Former Principal Dorothy Young (cont. from page 1)

before retiring in 2003. The celebration brought together her former students and staff members, as well as community members.

Among Young's former students was KPS Board of Education Trustee TiAnna Harrison, who said she took the city bus to Hillside every morning after her family moved out of the school's boundaries, which meant she sometimes arrived before the start of the school day, but Young was always there and would let her in the building.

"I was determined to rise but afraid to soar," Harrison said. "Mrs. Young saw in me not only what I was at the time but what was to come. She had the ability to do this not only for me but for every student."

She had the ability to do that for parents too, to expect a person to "be the best version of yourself," said Kalamazoo City Commissioner David Anderson, who delivered a city proclamation declaring it "Believe, Achieve, Succeed Day" at Hillside.

He was a quiet parent who drove a junky pick-up truck, when Young told him, "I think



Former Kalamazoo County Commissioner Eva Ozier, left, and real estate agent Willie Mae Pierson, right, greet former Hillside Middle School principal Dorothy Young.



Former Hillside Middle School Principal Dorothy Young greets artist James Palmore.



LaWanda Conger poses with mother Dorothy Young at the renaming ceremony at Hillside Middle School.

you could be on the PTSO, and I think you could be president of the PTSO."

"And it was not really an ask, but what she saw in me," he said. "As a consequence, that was the beginning of my entire life in politics. It changed the course of my life. Without her complete confidence in me, I don't think I could have done it ... even though

that was the easiest election I ever had. That set me on path of believing in myself that I could participate in my community."

KPS Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice recognized Young for influencing the lives of thousands of students over half a century of service to the education community.

"We continue to be fortunate

she helps make the point to this day that children can be more than they are at any given point in their lives, that we are all works in progress, that we believe without exception in the capability of every single one of our young people. No exception," Rice said. "For her leadership, for her role modeling, for her inspiration, we thank her today."

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Exhibition organized by Backdoor Gallery, Walnut Creek, CA.

Dulce Pinzon, Superman from The Real Story of the Superheroes series (detail), 2005-10, photograph, 16 x 20 in.

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Friday, February 2, 5-8 pm
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Cosplay + costume contest

First Friday Art Hop, 5-8 pm Art-making, refreshments, and exhibitions for all
February 2, March 2, April 6

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KC XC: Boys Cross Country Team See Years of Commitment Pay off in 2017

It was a very good year for the Kalamazoo Central Boys' Cross Country team, which brought home a SMAC Conference Championship for the first time since 1996, won the MHSAA Regional Championship meet for the first time since cross country adopted the 3.1 mile race format, and finished fourth and second, respectively at the MSU Spartan Invitational and the Cougar-Falcon Invitational.

In addition, three runners, Habtom Haish, Jackson Henning, and Cian Johnson qualified as All-Conference, and Haish and Henning qualified as All-Regional.

But this good year has been three years in the making, according to runners and Coach Rex Hafer.

"The great success that the 2017 Kalamazoo Central boys' cross country achieved did not start this year but rather three years ago when a group of now six senior boys were sophomores. It was that year that those sophomore boys started to buy into what they could accomplish if they



Kalamazoo Central Boys' Cross Country team poses at Portage West Middle School after the MHSAA Regional Meet. Front row left to right: Cian Johnson, Owen O'Neil, John Sidwell, Habtom Haish, Jalen Smith, Jackson Henning, and Nicholas Doane. Back row left to right: coach Jonathan Langworthy, Ethan Morgan, Jonathan Sullivan, Idrees Schieber, Robert Kloosterman, coach Rex Hafer, Matthew Bau, Nathan Peterson, Caleb Billings, Benjamin Meyer, Constantin Philopoulos, August O'Neil, and Ian Pardee.

started working hard to achieve their full potential," said Hafer who was assisted by Jonathan Langworth and Megan Poolman.

Hafer said he started to see more runners participate in the winter running days. Summer running was no longer limited to the more motivated runners, rather a majority of the team

turned out every day.

"The mentality that if they wanted any success, they would have to work harder than other teams and harder than they had been willing to work really started to take hold," Hafer said. "From the beginning of the season the team set their goals as winning the conference meet and qualifying for the state meet. It was amazing to watch them achieve that and so much

more."

Senior Idrees Schieber said it was definitely a building process, starting with those sophomores who made it a goal to some day qualify for state as a team.

That sense of team was strong this year, said senior Jackson Henning, with the upperclassmen providing inspiration and motivation for the younger runners.

The team fielded 21 runners,

with the Top 7 fastest forming the varsity team. While that was certainly the school's largest team in years, it's also fairly small compared to schools of similar student populations, said senior Jalen Smith.

Smith said that worked to the team's advantage. "We were able to focus on each runner and to form close connections."

"What was impressive about our success this year is that we don't have a history of winning," Scheiber said. "Portage Central, Portage Northern, they have bigger teams and a history of succeeding. We were really the up and comers, no one was paying any attention to us."

Hafer said while others may have not realized KC had potential, the team certainly did. They knew they had a nice balance of runners — both in terms of depth from the senior class and from a very strong group of sophomores.

"This combination of top runners with a strong group to back them up would spell success all year long," Hafer said.

The team was led by Henning, Smith, Schieber, Habtom Haish, Cian Johnson, Owen O'Neil, John Sidwell, Nicholas Doane, Jonathan Sullivan, Caleb Billings, Matthew Bau, Ethan Morgan and several other runners.

The team definitely trained harder than ever before, but "the team grew as much mentally as physicality and endurance," Henning said. "We just realized we could be that Top 10 team."

Schieber, Smith and Henning said that even as the team loses that core of seniors this year, they have confidence in the program they're leaving behind. There is a ton of talent and room to grow.

"The sophomores have definitely inherited our drive and are going to go even further," Smith said.



Kalamazoo Central High School cross country runners celebrate at the MHSAA Regional Meet at Portage West Middle School in the fall, from left, Owen O'Neil, Jalen Smith, John Sidwell, Nicholas Doane, and Jackson Henning.



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Fresh flower bouquets by Schafer's Flowers available at the door while supplies last.

Spicy Sweet Potato-Pepper Soup

Hi Kalamazoo! I am here to warm your soul with a soup recipe for the very chilly month of February. Please try out this Spicy Sweet Potato-Pepper Soup. Some red and orange fruits and vegetables have some of the highest amounts of Vitamin C — red bell peppers being one of them. Enjoy in good health with family and friends, and stay warm! Best Regards, Chef Shaun



Shaun Robinson is the district chef for Chartwells at KPS Food Service.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into small pieces
2 ribs celery, chopped
2 shallots or 1/2 red onion, chopped
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1 12-ounce jar roasted red peppers, drained and rinsed
4 to 5 sun-dried tomatoes
4 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
2/3 cup sour cream
2 tablespoons of Sriracha
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1/3 cup shredded pepper jack cheese
4 sourdough dinner rolls

Directions

1. Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven or pot over medium-high heat. Add the

potatoes, celery, shallots, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and pepper to taste and cook, stirring frequently, until the potatoes begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the red peppers, sun-dried tomatoes, chicken broth and 1 cup water. Cover and bring to a simmer, then uncover and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes.

2. Use an immersion blender to purée, or purée in a blender, being careful when opening the blender because the hot soup can spray. Add Sriracha and stir in. Season with salt and pepper and stir in half of the cilantro. Divide among bowls and sprinkle with the cheese and the remaining cilantro.

3. If desired, add grilled chicken, shrimp, steak, or whatever protein you enjoy. Serve with the rolls.

Total time: 35 minutes

Yield: 4 servings



Literacy Nights Coming March 7 and 8

Kalamazoo Public Schools will celebrate books, reading, and the power of literacy with its annual Literacy Nights on March 7 and 8.

Elementary schools will hold Literacy Night on March 7, while the middle school celebrations will be the evening of March 8. Each school will have special hands-on activities and family learning opportunities. Check with your school for the specifics of its celebration. A complete list of school events will be in the March edition of the excelsior.

Literacy Night began as a celebration of the life of children's book author Dr. Seuss.

Kalamazoo Public Library representatives will be at the literacy night celebrations to sign up new library card holders. A parent or guardian with a photo ID must accompany children wishing to register for a card.



Miljana Canda, 8, copies down facts about Australia, while her sister, Calaya Gordon, 3, watches during the 2017 Edison Environmental Science Academy Literacy Night, which had an international flair.

KRESA Open House Introduces Students to EFA, EFE, Early/Middle College

Kalamazoo County eighth through 10th graders and their families are invited to learn more about the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency's Education for the Arts, Education for Employment and Early/Middle College programs at an open house 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 6, at the Air Zoo, 6151 Portage Road.

Education for the Arts (EFA) offers arts-intensive courses in theater, music, dance, as well as visual and literary arts, and more. Learn more at kresa.org/efa.

Education for Employment (EFE) offers career and technical education courses to prepare today's students for tomorrow's careers. Learn more at kresa.org/efe.

Early/Middle College (EMC)

offers students the opportunity to earn an associate degree while dual-enrolled at KVCC for free with an extra year of high school. Learn more at kresa.org/emc.

Students and their families are invited to learn about these free programs, connect with EFA and EFE instructors, and discover EMC options.

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Kalamazoo Central Helps Unveil New Online, Career Exploration Tool

The skills gap is caused in part by a career awareness gap.

But a new online career exploration tool is designed to help the state overcome that awareness gap and help students, veterans and other job seekers match their skills and interests to the needs of employers and the post-secondary education opportunities in Michigan.

Officials stopped by Kalamazoo Central High School in December to unveil Pathfinder, the state's new online career exploration tool, which KC students had the opportunity to test drive.

"As Gov. Snyder has said, our citizens must better understand that they have new career choices in Michigan today," said Sammie Lukaskiewicz, deputy director of marketing for the Michigan Department of Talent and Economic Development. "No other source exists with such rich Michigan-specific career planning data."

Pathfinder can be found at pathfinder.mitalent.org. It includes detailed job projec-



Six Kalamazoo Central students show onlookers what Pathfinder can do. They are, from left, Jasmine Shea, Darius Pruitt, Ryan Halloran, Leasia Posey, Terrence Bell, and Emalyn Dohner.

tions, annual openings, growth potential, salaries, and information on Michigan schools linked to those career options.

Lukaskiewicz said the state envisions the tool being used by students and parents, guidance and career counselors, and

veterans seeking employment.

"It best matches users' skills to career paths and to jobs," she said.

Six Kalamazoo Central students gave the system a test run and spoke with the media about the online tool. The students were:



Dave Campbell, superintendent of Kalamazoo RESA, addresses the media while introducing speakers and students at a press conference to discuss Pathfinder, the state's new online career exploration tool.

seniors Darius Pruitt and Ryan Halloran, and juniors Terrence Bell, Jasmine Shea, Emalyn Dohner, and Leasia Posey.

Pruitt and Halloran said they think the new system could be very useful for middle school students and high school underclassmen.

Halloran, who will be attending University of Detroit Mercy in the fall to study sports management, said the system provides useful information about colleges and universities, and it would be a great tool to help students compare colleges on specifics such as cost and acceptance rates.

Pruitt, who will be attending Wayne State University and hopes to study physical therapy, said students should start using the system in middle school, so they can chart their path through high school and ensure that they have properly prepared for life after high school. The system provides valuable information about wages and which schools offer the majors a student might be interested in pursuing.

"We didn't have anything like this when I was in middle school," Pruitt said.

Also attending the event

were State Rep. Jon Hoadley and State Sen. Margaret O'Brien. Hoadley said today's economy demands more skilled and better trained workers, and Pathfinder will give people a dynamic way to explore career options, while O'Brien said the system can hopefully help veterans transition from military life to the civilian workforce.

Kalamazoo Public Schools Superintendent Michael Rice spoke about the district's goal of expanding career exploration and awareness in upper elementary through high school. Already, the district participates in MICareerQuest Southwest, an interactive career fair with more growth planned in coming years.

"Pathfinder helps expand the exposure of our students to a greater breadth of careers than most would encounter otherwise," Rice said. "In so doing, it gives students greater options for their lives. This is particularly important in school districts with high concentrations of working class and poor children with limited exposures in their communities. They need the broadest range of exposures at school, and Pathfinder helps in that regard."



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WMU Donates \$5,000 to Washington, Woodward as Part of MAC Program

Western Michigan University donated \$5,000 to Kalamazoo Public Schools as part of a new grant from the Mid-American Conference to each of its 12 member institutions.

KPS will use the funds to purchase diverse classroom reading sets for six elementary school classrooms at Washington Writers' Academy and Woodward School for Technology and Research.

During the 2017-18 academic year, the MAC is providing \$5,000-\$60,000 for each athletic program to support academic initiatives at elementary or secondary schools in an effort to build positive relationships within

each campus community.

Funding for the grant is provided through the MAC's partnership with the College Football Playoff Foundation, and the conference plans to make the grant an annual contribution.

"I am extremely pleased to see the diversity of community programs our athletic programs have partnered with for this upcoming season," said MAC Commissioner Dr. Jon A. Steinbrecher. "Our students, coaches and athletic administrators support their campus communities with events throughout the year and this opportunity only enhances our support within each community."

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Artists' Corner

Third- and fourth-grade students have been working with art teacher Danelle Drake to learn about printmaking. Third-grade students created rotational prints, where the printing

block is printed four times around the center of the paper. Fourth-grade students created reduction prints, where part of the printing block is cut away and then printed again on top of the first print.



Marleth Guerrero Hernandez, third grade



Elias Vega, third grade



Eduardo Lucas-Mejia, fourth grade



Clementine Trost-Bailey, fourth grade

Fourth-grade students at Lincoln International Studies School have been exploring the elements of architecture. Students visualized and created their own houses inspired by homes in the Kalamazoo community. Their art teacher is Abbey Ruffer.



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Caldecott Medalist Javaka Steptoe Inspires Woods Lake Students

Anything you can imagine can be turned into a story or a piece of art, a Caldecott Medalist told students at Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts in December.

Author and illustrator Javaka Steptoe, the 2017 Caldecott Medal winner for the book “Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat” was a special guest speaker at Woods Lake and led the school’s fourth graders in an art project. His visit was sponsored and organized by the Kalamazoo Public Library.

The Caldecott Medal is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children. In addition to winning the Caldecott, “Radiant Child” was winner of the 2017 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award and was an ALA Notable Book for Children. It made the list of 2016 Best Books list of National Public Radio, the Washington Post, Kirkus Reviews, Publishers Weekly, and the School Library Journal, among others.

The School Library Journal review of “Radiant Child”



Author and illustrator Javaka Steptoe talks about his award-winning book “Radiant Child” at Woods Lake Elementary.

said, “One extraordinary artist illuminates another in this textured, heartfelt picture book biography of the 1980s cultural phenom. Employing signature features of Jean-Michel Basquiat’s work — vibrant colors, found objects, repeated motifs — Steptoe allows his own emotionally rich style to shine through the artistic and biographical references dotting the illustrations.”

Steptoe’s other books include “In Daddy’s Arms I Am Tall” and “Jimi Sounds Like a Rainbow: A Story of the Young Jimi Hendrix.”

He told the students that all of his books are illustrated using

collage, in which he combines everything from wood to pictures to rocks to leaves.

“As long as it doesn’t make my house stink, I’ll use it,” he said.

Steptoe said he attended the High School of Art and Design in New York and earned his bachelor’s degree from Cooper-Union College. His life as an artist was inspired by his parents. His father John Steptoe was twice a Caldecott Honors winner for his books “The Story of Jumping Mouse” and “Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters.”

He said he originally worked in illustration, but was attracted to collage because of the textures and the complexity of the images. Collage transforms found objects.

After talking to the students, he handed out paper figures and allowed them to create collages. He walked around with scissors and glue and offered suggestions for creating characters with stories behind them.

“Objects in a collage bring a story. Sometimes you can see their original use and sometimes that use gets transformed into something else,” Steptoe said. “Through collage, children can see things in their environment in a different way.”



Author and illustrator Javaka Steptoe helps Woods Lake students Cambria Tackett, left, and Sariah Lawrence work on their collages at Woods Lake Elementary.

Enroll in The Loy Norrix Child Care Center for 2017-18

Is your child ready for preschool? The Loy Norrix Child Care Center, a five-star rated Kalamazoo County Ready 4s program, is accepting applications for childcare and preschool for 2017-18.

The center is located inside Loy Norrix High School, 606 E. Kilgore Road. Open 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., LNCCC offers full-day and half-day enrollment, as well as a daily rate. Tuition is \$155 a week for full-time care,

\$100 a week for half-day care, and \$42 a day. Two snacks and lunch are provided for full-time students.

The school accepts 3- and 4-year-olds. Students must be toilet-trained. School district residency is not required for the program, which is open to the public.

For more information, call Mary Hentschl-Early at (269) 337-0264, or email hentschl_earlym@kalamazoopublicschools.net.



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Hillside Students Give Back to Community

Hillside Middle School students took the opportunity to help others with several activities in the fall.

In September and October, Hillside students and families

worked together to raise \$180 to help with relief efforts for victims of Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. The money raised was donated to the American Red Cross.

On Sept. 20, Hurricane Maria devastated the island of Puerto Rico, leaving millions of people without electricity, food, water or shelter. When students in Kary Mack's Spanish classes learned

about the disaster, they were eager to make a difference. They volunteered to sell bottled water during all three lunch hours. They raised \$64, which was donated to the UNIDOS Disaster Relief

and Recovery Program with the Hispanic Federation.

On Nov. 6, eighth-grade leaders of the student-to-student mentoring program, Where Everyone Belongs (WEB), took part in Rake and Run. They raked leaves at houses located near Hillside to positively contribute to the community. Approximately 20 students helped with the project.

Later that month, the Hillside Student Senate collected new and slightly used coats to help others through Operation Warm-Up.



Hillside students and families donated \$180 to the American Red Cross to help with hurricane relief. Pictured, from the left, are an American Red Cross representative and students Breeze Edle, Aubrey Pomeroy, Ayanda Ndlovu, Jaala Irvine, Maryjane Watts, Allanah Haveenar, Mercedes Sokolowski, Darianna Browning, Assistant Principal Dana Heyl, Kylin Brunick, and Paris Fluker.



Hillside Middle School students participated in Rake and Run and helped rake leaves in neighborhood yards. Participants included, left to right: Jackson Brown, Le'montae Daniels-Thompson, Marshall Nesbitt, and Suhib Bedoor.

Hillside Middle School students sold water to raise hurricane relief funds for Puerto Rico. Front row, left to right: Emily Scholten, Addison Todd, Allanah Havenaar, Caitlynn Herman, Amanda Nickell, and Emma Brandt. Back row, left to right: Kylin Brunick, Heaven Logan, Amber Callendar, Lane Greis, Otto Gustafson, and Robert Wheeler.

American Legion Gives Greenwood New Flag — and Civics Lesson

American Legion Joseph B. Westnedge Post 36 visited Greenwood Elementary School in November to present a new American flag to the school. The visit was also a civics lesson about the history of the flag and its meaning.

Post members, who served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force, discussed their service and gave the children copies of "Our Country's Flag," a comic book that shows the Pine Tree Flag, the Gadsden Flag and other historic flags that served the country.

The visit was organized by former Greenwood student Kristine Lassitter. Other post members who visited the school were Jennifer Erwin, James Saur, Jake Rukli, David Sytsma and Tom Paccionne.



Maxwell Hollifield, left, raises the new flag at Greenwood Elementary school, with the help of James Saur and David Sytsma of American Legion Post 36, which donated the flag to the school.

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