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IMPORTANT DATES

Board of Education Meetings

Thursday, Aug. 9 & 23, 2018
7 p.m.

Administration Building
1220 Howard St.

For more information, call
(269) 337-1572

First Day of School

Sept. 4, 2018

K-12 attend a.m. only

No half-day kindergarten

First Full Day of School K-12

First Day for Half-Day Kindergarten

Sept. 5, 2018

Winter Break

Dec. 24, 2018-Jan. 4, 2019

Spring Break

April 1-5, 2019

“We are now able to stand up for what we believe in ... We will not let anything get in the way of our successful future. We have been coached to be able to stand up and fight through tough times.”

*Da'marius Harp,
Phoenix HS*

Congratulations to the Class of 2018

Special graduation edition: See inside for the names of graduates, photos, and selected student stories.

Number of Graduates Rises for Fifth Year in a Row

Kalamazoo Public Schools has generated a 52 percent increase in the number of graduates from the summer of 2005, just before the Kalamazoo Promise was announced, to the summer of 2018.

It is the fifth year in a row that the number of graduates has risen in the district.

“Congratulations to our record-setting 2018 graduates, who did us proud,” said KPS Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice. “Our 2018 graduates continued a trend of higher achievement over the last several years.

“Thanks to our teachers, support staff, administrators, community members, community organizations, and students themselves for their efforts toward this achievement.”

In 2005, KPS had 454 graduates, while in June the district had 688 graduates. During

that same period the school district experienced a 24 percent increase in enrollment.

This year, Kalamazoo Central High School had 318 graduates. Loy Norrix High



Jada Lassiter, Loy Norrix High School, Class of 2018.

School graduated 272 students. Phoenix High School had 87 graduates. The Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program had 11 graduates.

For Kalamazoo Central, that number was the highest number of graduates since the announcement of the Kalamazoo Promise in 2005. The numbers of graduates at Loy Norrix and Phoenix were the second highest in the Promise era. KILP is in its second year. The Kalamazoo Promise is a scholarship that pays for up to 100 percent of post-secondary tuition and fees for all KPS graduates, who enroll in the district by at least ninth grade.

In 2017, Kalamazoo Public School’s four-year graduation rate rose to 72.9 percent, a 10 percent increase since President Barack Obama attended the K-Central commencement in 2010.



Kalamazoo Central’s Walaah Alnakhli leads her class into the graduation ceremony at Wings Event Center.

“No matter where the currents take us, into the workforce or into college, we must be sure to make the world a better place, leaving kindness and tolerance in our wake.”

*Abigail Guimond,
Loy Norrix HS*



Nicholas Srodes, left and Payton Spinney march into Wings Event Center during the Loy Norrix commencement.

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Class of 2018 in the Spotlight



Davyn Thomas marched in the Kalamazoo Central High School graduation.



Zaviona Woodruff raises her arms in victory at the Loy Norrix High School graduation.



Phoenix High School seniors pose for a group photo at Chenery Auditorium.



Kalamazoo Central graduates Morgan Dantzler, Artrell Davis, and Kevin Davis pose with their diplomas.



Jenny Castaneda-Garcia, Alexis Garcia-Nonato, Judith Castaneda-Garcia, Daniela Garcia posed with Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice at the Loy Norrix High School 2018 commencement.

“You can’t win the lottery without buying a ticket. You can’t get a job without applying. And you can’t get your dream job without working hard to prepare for it for many years. You can’t graduate from college without studying and studying and studying. Nothing worth anything in life comes free. Raise your hand, if you intend to take advantage of the Kalamazoo Promise.

“Remember graduates, the Promise is like everything else. It doesn’t come free. You have to work it—for it to work for you.”

*Dr. Michael Rice, superintendent,
Kalamazoo Public Schools*



At the Phoenix High School graduation, counselor Stephanie Tomkowiak high fives Luanna Muhammad. Next to them is Nakia Turman. Walking down the steps are Kwamari Phillips, left, and Kiwoa Whitfield.

“We consider it a privilege to have you with us today. We consider it a privilege and we take pride in knowing that in the future, we will read about you, hear about you, listen to you, because you are indeed world changers. We want you to know you are ready. You are ready for the next big thing, ready to face that stumbling block and turn it into a stepping stone.”

*Valerie Boggan, principal,
Kalamazoo Central HS*



Performaing at the Kalamazoo Central graduation: Charlotte Olmstead, Michael Schirripa, Ellie Matuz, and Jennifer Aguilar.

Chancellevie Asumani: School is Life for Recent Immigrant

Eighteen months ago Chancellevie Asumani didn't speak English. In late May, she was sitting down to talk with an interviewer who knows only English.

Asumani, 18, graduated with the Kalamazoo Central Class of 2018 in June.

"I was born in Congo and came to the United States. We lived in Illinois for six months, then moved to Kalamazoo," she said. "The reason we came here is my uncle, who showed my dad these schools. He said it was good and we could study here. My dad said it was OK."

She lives in Kalamazoo with her parents Patrick Valancio Asumani and mother Lilian Nkenge, who Asumani said "help me with everything," and six younger siblings, brothers Patrick and Jordan (twins) and Japhet, and sisters Nathalie, Jockebed and Valvalie. Her father works in Grand Rapids, while her mother has a job in Kalamazoo.

"We come here because in Congo life is not good," she said.

"People don't have good jobs. There is no money. Kids can't study."

Since coming to the United States, her focus has been on studying and learning English. The shy, soft-spoken girl smiles and giggles as she tries to find the right words, the vowels proving a little tricky. Sometimes she reaches for a piece of paper because it is easier to write down the word she is thinking of rather than to say it.

"I love school. It can help me in the future, if I study," she said. "The first time I come here, it was difficult for me because I didn't know how to speak English. Then I learned English. Mr. LaBudda helped me to learn how to speak English. Now, it's OK."

If it is OK, that is because of the work Asumani has put into her studies. Kalamazoo Central bilingual educator Ryan LaBudda said, "Chancellevie is an exceptional student. She has overcome so many challenging obstacles and continues to face each day with a bright smile. Chancellevie is a strong, inde-



Chancellevie Asumani, who is from Congo, graduated from Kalamazoo Central this year.

pendent person who cares so much for her family and friends. She will go above and beyond in every opportunity."

Asumani attended school in Congo, where she said there is no public education. Families must pay for schooling starting with kindergarten. She is fluent in French and the African language Lingala. She began studying English as a junior in a school in Illinois.

Language wasn't the only challenge she faced when they moved. As the oldest child in her family, she left behind the most in terms of friends and history. She said she was happy to move to the United States, but when she arrived she faced the reality of no friends and no language skills to make friends.

"When my dad sees me sad or my brothers or sisters sad, he tells me don't be sad," she said.

"We say, 'Dad we don't know how to speak English. We don't have any friends. We think this country is no good.' My dad says, 'Don't say that. Now you can think it is no good, but after you will change what you said.'"

"Now, it's true. I have friends. I love my teachers. They are so nice."

Ask her what her favorite classes are, and it appears as if all of them are her favorite: algebra, history, English, design. She would like to go to Western Michigan University and someday become a doctor and be able to return to her homeland to help the people there.

"My dad tells me when you go to school it is to study, not to play. Don't be like other students who don't like studying," she said. "If he sees my grade is no good. He'll be mad. He doesn't want me to have a 'C,' just 'A' or 'B.' I can explain to him why I have a 'C' or why I have work missing, and he says, 'Come sit down here and do it with me. He says school is life. I think it is true.'"

Adult Education 2018 GED Graduates

Oksana Akhmetgaleeva	Alyssa Engelhardt	Heather O'Connor
Kristen Bowers	Roberto Gamez	Skyler Pratt
Timothy Boyd	Juan Garcia	Myles Preussel
Tomisha Brown	Megan Gibbs	Brier Pride
Theodore Burchette	Marybeth Griffin	Francisco Roman
Saul Castaneda	Tyler Harris	Cameron Rootes
Heather Chalker	Lewis Janik	Ray Sager
Gifford Charleston	Antonio King	Jeremy Shilts
Latesha Clay	Kassandra Klomp	Skyler Slack
Naomi Collier	Angelica Mahone	Samantha Slumkowski
Daniel Conant	Matt Main	Liam Stacer
Jasmine Conley	Jose Martinez	Courtney Struble
LaSparkle Crosby-Moore	Abril Marure-Cabanas	Cordell Thompson
Zakariyah Davis	John McCarty	Jordan Vallier
Colton Dellinger	Theron McClenton	David Wiggins
Heather Dubay	Rodney McElvain	Dominique Wilder
Shanice Duckett	Merrill McMullen	Cody Williams
Tracy Eason	Patresse Moore	Shakeera Wimes
	Caleb Murdock	Kamin Esther Yago

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Thomas "Jake" Fales: A Senior Year Detour Inspired by Tragedy

Sometimes senior year doesn't go quite as planned.

The grades, the sports, the volunteering, the anime, the photography — all of that is going as usual.

Then the world happens and takes things slightly off course.

That's what happened for Thomas "Jake" Fales, 18, valedictorian of the Kalamazoo Central Class of 2018.

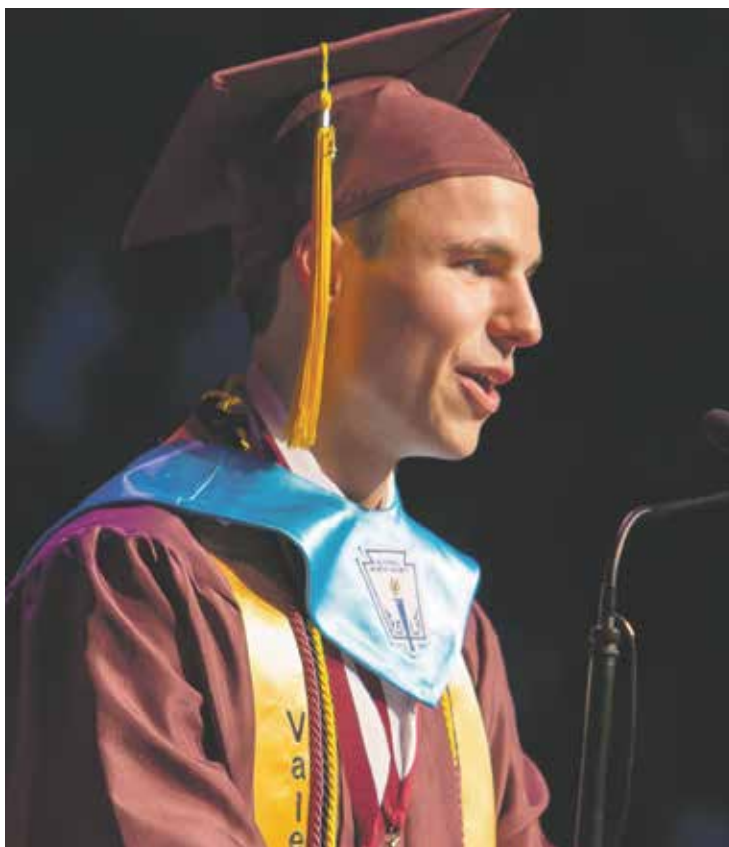
Fales, the son of Sue and Bill Fales, had a pretty standard education — albeit one marked by exemplary academic achievement. He attended King-Westwood Elementary School and Linden Grove Middle School.

In middle school he attended the Academically Talented Youth Program and did so well in the program, which allows students to complete four years of high school English in two years of middle school, that he was invited back as a high schooler to be a grader for the program.

"I am really competitive. I've always liked school," Fales said. "I make it a competition with other people but also with myself. I've always had the expectation that if I'm able to do something, I should do it. There's no reason why I shouldn't get an 'A' in a class as long as I do the work. I put the expectation on myself that anything less than what I'm expecting is a failure."

ATYP English teacher Becky Cooper said Fales stood out even among the very talented students in the program.

"He's an intrepid scholar, a great listener, a careful critic — someone who remains energized by new ideas, someone who proves especially motivated to discover how his studies hold relevance to the world we live in," Cooper said. "Whenever we explored a new author, Jake sought to improve his understanding of different perspectives with great energy



Thomas "Jake" Fales was the valedictorian of the Kalamazoo Central Class of 2018.

and enthusiasm."

The hard-driving pursuit of academic excellence paid off. In addition to being named valedictorian, Fales received a prestigious Heyl Scholarship, which will provide a full ride to Kalamazoo College, where he plans to study math and economics. He has also committed to play lacrosse, which he played for four years at Kalamazoo Central.

But his senior year took an unexpected turn following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. On Feb. 14, Nikolas Cruz, a troubled former student at the school, killed 17 people using a .223-caliber AR-15 rifle that he carried on campus in a soft black case.

The massacre and resulting activism by Marjory Stoneman Douglas students inspired others to denounce gun violence, including students at Kalamazoo Central.

After discussing the shooting in the Kalamazoo

Central Advanced Placement Comparative Government class, a group of students, including Fales, formed the advocacy group Students for Gun Legislation.

"Just in the last few years, we've gone through so many different mass shootings," Fales said. "You hear about it, and you talk about it, and you say that it's tragic. Everyone gets riled up and you think this will be the time someone does something. We always think that. We think,

"You hear about it, and you talk about it, and you say that it's tragic. Everyone gets riled up and you think this will be the time someone does something. We always think that."

'Finally, Congress will take a stand.' They never do."

This time the shooting was especially hard hitting for students, because of the use of social media. Students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas used social media during the assault, sharing their fears and videos.

"That got to us," he said. "These were kids just like us."

Students decided if adults were not going to do something about this, "we need to put our voice out there and put pressure on them to move and get things done."

The group put together a Change.org petition called "Students Fighting Guns Since Adults Won't." The goal of the petition was to pressure lawmakers to create a comprehensive and responsible gun control policy to create safe schools.

The students were hoping for a couple thousand signatures, but teacher Rex Hafer told them they should shoot for 500,000.

"We were like, that's a hefty goal," Fales said. By the Friday after posting the petition, the students had 3,000 signatures and had captured the attention of local and national media, as well as Parkland students themselves.

"Suddenly we went from 3,000 to 75,000 signatures. Now, we're at 280,000-plus. There really was a domino

effect," he said.

Fales said he never would have guessed that political activism would play such a major role in his senior year. It tested his time management skills adding to a schedule packed with studying for AP classes, planning prom, and going to lacrosse practice. It opened his world in terms of social awareness.

"I learned there are so many different experiences outside of school that help you learn more than what you learn in school," he said. "You can take as many government classes as you want, but until you actually are in the political process and talking to legislators and seeing it in action from the inside, you'll never really have a full grasp of how it works."

Cooper said, "It's no surprise to me that he continues to find opportunities to take leadership positions on key social issues and that he strives to make space for more voices. I always knew he would make a difference. I love the fact that he is showing us that there isn't an age restriction to serving our communities and engaging in positive change. In this way, Jake embodies the best of what ATYP hopes to provide students: engagement, enlightenment, and empowerment."

Students For Gun Legislation is still active and trying to position itself to remain a high school movement. The Class of 2018 is hoping juniors take on the cause and successfully grow the group to other school districts.

"As kids we can't vote, but just because you can't vote doesn't mean you're disenfranchised from the process," Fales said. "This was an issue we always cared about, but we thought we were powerless to change things. We thought adults will take care of it. But, when we realized they wouldn't, we had to say let's actually do something about it."

Kalamazoo RESA 2018 Outstanding Senior Awards

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:

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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
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District Directory at :

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The Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) honored several seniors from Kalamazoo Public Schools at the 2018 Outstanding Senior Awards Breakfast that was held on April 26, at the Radisson Plaza Hotel at Kalamazoo Center.

Students participating in Education for Employment (EFE) and Education for the Arts (EFA) were recognized for their outstanding participation, performance, and leadership in their program. EFE and EFA have approximately 3,500 students in over 40 programs.

These programs provide students with skills that are in high demand for high-wage careers and occupations. Students were awarded scholarships from community businesses, organizations, educational institutions, and private donors. High school students have the option of participating in EFE and EFA programs on and off campus. Students interested in participating in EFE or EFA programs should contact their high school counselors.

Kalamazoo Central honorees were:

Lenzy Bell, Jr., for marketing;
Justin Bradley for carpentry;
D'Anthony Ford for marketing;



Cornez Bell



Lenzy Bell



Justin Bradley



Judith Castaneda-Garcia



Bethany Dunham



D'Anthony Ford



Ryan Halloran



Hassan Ismaili-Alaoui



Tyler Keown



Tabia McClenton



Adrianna Mielke



Spencer Miner

Ryan Halloran for business, management, and administration;

Tyler Keown for accounting;

Spencer Miner for construction trades;

Xavion Murphy-Gill for marketing;

Kyra Niehus-Staab for conservation biology; and

Trevon Reason for business, management, and administration.

Loy Norrix honorees were:

Cornez Bell for business, management, and administration;
Judith Castaneda-Garcia for



Xavion Murphy-Gill



Kyra Niehus-Staab



Trevon Reason



Brooke Teeter



Brianna Wieferrich

early childhood education; Bethany Dunham for accounting;

Hassan Ismaili-Alaoui for electronics and robotics, Tabia McClenton for business, management, and administration;

Adrianna Mielke for culinary arts;

Brooke Teeter for business, management, and administration; and

Brianna Wieferrich for conservation biology.

Thanks goes out to the following EFE and EFA instructors: Rob Roy and Michelle Claybaugh from Kalamazoo Central; and Atiba Ward, Beth Soisson, Cindy Goss, and Kharlen Shelton at Loy Norrix, and other county-wide instructors helping students develop skills for the real world.

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Rising of the Fury

By Ardriques McFerrin (read at the Phoenix High School commencement)

A life full of blood, sweat, and tears

A quiet classroom and unfamiliar faces are where we face our fears

A smiling teacher and a proud parent are what we wish to see

**Happy and praised are what we wish to be
I know that a million steps don't equal a mile
but I'll walk a billion if it makes you smile**

In your hearts, you have the courage to strive.

If you can't do it for yourself

Do it for the five

**We are the future of everyone's hopes and dreams
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When life pushes you down with this loss get
back up and remember: Still we rise.**

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Loy Norrix High School Class of 2018

Griffin Douglas Abbott
Lydia Grace Achenbach
Jasmine Alisia Alcocer
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Leondre Parrish
Anderson
Sydney Eva Apperley
Andrew Donovan
Armenta
Aquariez Xzayvair Atlas
Trinity Rene' Austin
Regghan Lim Seung Bailey
Nyla Isoke Baker
Grace Ashlynn Barrett
Evelyn Ann Bartley
Raymundo Salas Basurto
Taijjanaye Domineke-
Lashay Beamon
Cornez Trevon Bell
Jannell Lasha Bell
Cameron James Belson
Tihnae Rayann Bennett
Catherine Claire
Bernhardt
Kijah Nate' Berry
Henry Edward Bieszk
Calissa Jenae Binion
Fremiyah Wayneice
Bishop
Garrett Spencer Bloom
Jessica Louise Boer
Gaia Bogan
David Adel Rezkalla
Gresa Bektor
Hailey Ann Bosier
Blaise Jerrel Boulding
Tiana Robbi Jean Boyd
Jeremiah Rashaud
Branscomb
Ahmad Savon Branson
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Andrew Brendan Brown
Mikkala Maricela Brown
Deandre Jalen Parker
Buchanan
Tristen Soraya Buchino
Julien Maximillion
Burdick
Kaleigh Brianne Burnett
Ian James Burns
James Liam Burns
Jose' Luis Auseklis
Campos
Evelyne Aubry Capt
Jordyn Duane Carlton



Loy Norrix High School graduation at Wings Event Center included moments of laughter.

Abigail Ramirez
Castaneda
Anthony Castaneda
Judith Castaneda
Maria Guadalupe
Chavarria-Jeronimo
Cadauhn Clarke JR
Bela Cole Coats
Flavia Cocchi
Annie Cassidy-Quinn
Colburn-Jaynes
La'quan Lamont
Coleman-West
Quianna Lashae Collier
Tre Vonn Kyshon Collins
Kanejia Lynnette Marie
Conner
Nicholas Scott Cosgrove
Jackson David Couch
Princess Cheyanne Cross
Abigail Louise Dantes
Jazman Maree
Davenport
Alexa McKenzi Davis
Bryce Cameron Davis
Sonata Matisse Davis
Kiernan Mark Dean-Hall
Joshua Michael Dearman
Isabel Marie Deary
Marah Alexandra Deary
Branden Keith Delaney
Eva Marianne Ruth
DeYoung

Fati Gail Diallo
Dai Dreiona Jas'mona
Dixon
Madison Sierra Doonan
Adam Joseph Dorstewitz
Madison Nicole
Downham
Bethany Rose Dunham
Leah Kate Dunham
Brandy Lynn Dunigan
Kendra Elyse Eaton
Malaysia Chevonne
Edwards
Delaney Hicks Eller
Grace Pickett Erway
Tyarra Diamond
Espinoza
Adrienne Joy Evans
Clayton Louis Falese
Emma Lynne Fergusson
Jose Flores-Nunez JR
Kenzie Madeline Fox
Sophie Helena Fox
Samantha Marie Fuller
Alexis Garcia Nonato
Christal Izbth Garcia
Daniela Garcia
Destiny Garcia
Andrew Jacob Gaunt
Eduard Godayol-
Carceller
Jennifer Nicole Gonzalez
Alexander Ryan Gray

Jordan Thomas Gray
Taylor Rose Gray
Seth Raymond Gruber
Abigail Theresa Guimond
Madeline Mae Guimond
Lillian Jane Gulliver
Chad Michael Harvey
Adam Fadi Hassan
Jerome William Hawkins
Kolton Thorn Hazen

Jadyn Michael Hazzard
Maria Jenine Heath
Martin Julius Heath
Cristina Marie Hernandez
Mackenzie Elizabeth Hill
Trentin Joseph Hohler
McKenzie Nichole
Hollenbeck
Kristina Courtney
Hubbell
Michael Lamont Hughes
Hassan Ismaili-Alaoui
Jaylin D'Allen Ivy
Kayla Mone Jackson
Alexander Robert
Johnson
Lauren Christine
Johnson
Kiana Shiann Jones
Lee Antwon Jones III
Paul Jacob Juriga
Mayamiko Kadaluka
Carter James Keck
Ava Karen Keller
Kiera Carneisha Kelly
Megan Elizabeth
Klemchuk
Ian James Klesz
Erin Noel Kloostra
Edward James Mckenna
Knudsen
Aubrey Patricia Kopec
Lucas Allen Krupianik
Anna Kerr Kushner
Valerie Kay Lamb
Jordan Michael Larkin

Jada Kristine Turquoise
Lassiter
Dayton David Lay
Nuru Cumi Lewis
Jordan Jenna Lewis-
Brown
Emily Ann Lewman
Abigail Esther Lindblade
Maxwell Scott Link
Joshua Irvin Lipsey
Antonio Lopez JR
Liana Marie Luciano
Amarra Jolie Lyons
Taya Marie Mackenzie
Reilly Turner Malpass
Mitchell Edward
Mansfield
Thomas Austin
Margeson
Irma Esmeralda Martinez
Lopez
Nyteria Antonia Massey
Rylen Sawyer Colby
Matheison
Ashley Marie Maxwell
Erica Sylvan Marie
Mayville
Tabia Monae McClenton
Yalayah Unique McGee
Devin Marcus McMartin
Lilianne Marie Mead
Adrianna Mae Mielke
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John Trenton Mitchell
Caitlyn Michelle Moon
Trevor James Morgan
Sarah Elizabeth
Morrissey
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Sofe Jaeger Nehlsen
Natalie Renae Nelson
Marcia LaShaun Nesbitt
Caeleigh Ana Nooney
Harrison Arthur Norder
Gabriela Ocampo Sierra
Alina Venitia Offerman
Kristin Nicole Oliver
Ferrer Marie Olmsted-
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Robreauna LeChelle
Antoinette Peals
Ariel Nicole Peck
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JR
Tramae Alamure Acacia
Powell
Madison Marie Preussel
Karina Ramos
Molly Ann Ratliff
Tay'sha Keyana Raven
Fredy Herrera Raymundo
Angelica Razo
Joshua Nathan Reas
Deisiana Reece
William Beh Ritter
Tyler Steven Rivera
Fletcher Andrew Eli
Robbins
Jalen Kendale Roberts
TaMara Leigh Robertson
Drucilla Yvonne
Robinson

“This year, I did something very, very hard for me. I put my phone down. There is so much in this world to do, so many places to travel, 325.7 million people I could meet. Places to eat — because I love me some food. And, so many college events to go to. Put down your phone and go outside....
“I’ve done so much this year, because I put my phone down. I’ve enjoyed every minute of it. I was part of the bowling team. I was part of Link Crew. I was in the musical. Put down your

phone and be involved in the world around you.
“The reason I put down my phone is because I recognized life is a journey, and on that journey, we all make mistakes. Nobody is perfect — except for Beyonce. I just want all of you to know it’s alright to make mistakes as long as you don’t continue to make those mistakes. Learn from them, grow. These next four years can be the most productive and enjoyable you can have. They can also go by very, very quickly.”

*Zaviona Woodruff,
Loy Norrix High School*

(continued on page 7)

Loy Norrix High School Class of 2018 (continued)

- Julius Dejuan Robinson JR

Kaylan Nacota Robinson

Sebastian Rodriguez

Cesar Rodriguez-Zarate

Julia Grace Rudlaff

Karina Salazar Ponce

James Anthony Samuelson

Diego Andres Sandoval

Mariah Demetra Sarelis

Diamond DarShell Shannon

Josie Rau Shephard

Zackary David Sims

Zachary Shane Skinner

Alex Kevon Smith

Alexander Bradley Smith

Australia Shaniya'le Smith

Dreon Dewayne Smith

Hayden Jay Smith

Henry Sullivant Snapp

Esbeydi Amalinally Soria Parra

Payton Clark Spinney

Nicholas Scott Srodes

Catherine Elizabeth Stamper

Hunter Robert Stoken

Ava Nicole Stoops

Drew Harold Strand

Amariah Simone Talley
- Brooke Noelle Teeter

Rusber Iban Torres Lopez

Joseph Alexander Trimner

Jayden Mickyayla Ubl

Maya Rae Veeder

Sava Michele Velkoff

Alex J. Verity

Naomi Lee Verne

Alex Sebastiaan Gill Vonhof

Jordan Lee Wallace

Amorae Dejanek Perriell Ward

Clifton Leon Washington JR

Zhi Tian Wee

Joseph Stephen Welch II

Steven Andrew Welch

Brandon Lee Whitmore

Brianna Michelle Wieferich

Isabella Cecelia Wikle

Emily Rose Wilger

Cody Todd Wilkins

Falon Anique Williams

Matthew Valle Williams

Darius Traumaine Willis

Michael Dale Wilson JR

Mey Ly Wong

Zaviona Aiyana Woodruff

James Andrew Youngs

Heyl Scholarship Recognizes Achievement in Math and Science

Thirteen Kalamazoo Public Schools graduates have been awarded the F.W. and Elsie L. Heyl Scholarship, which provides a full ride to students studying the natural sciences, mathematics or computer science at Kalamazoo College or nursing at the Western Michigan University Bronson School of Nursing.

This year's KPS Heyl recipients are:

- Evelyn Bartley, Loy Norrix

Kaleigh Burnett, LN

Eva DeYoung, LN

Leah Dunham, LN

Thomas Jacob Fales, Kalamazoo Central

Sophie Fox, LN

Madeline Guimond, LN

Lillian Gulliver, LN

Alina Offerman, LN

Ferren Olmsted-Meade, LN

Samuel Ratliff, LN (Class of 2018)

Molly Ratliff, LN

Tatianna Tyler, KC

Most of this year's winners will attend Kalamazoo Col-



Kalamazoo Public Schools 2018 Heyl Scholars, who will attend Kalamazoo College and the WMU School of Nursing. Front row, from left: Sophie Fox, Samuel Ratliff, Molly Ratliff, Lillian Gulliver. Second row, from left: Evelyn Bartley, Ferren Olmsted-Meade, Kaleigh Burnett, Tatianna Tyler. Back row, from left: Eva DeYoung, Leah Dunham, Madeline Guimond, Alina Offerman, Thomas Jacob Fales.

lege, except for Fox, Dunham, Olmsted-Meade, Gulliver, and Burnett, who will attend WMU.

KPS high school seniors — or seniors from other area high school or home school programs, who also earn certificates of completion from the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center — are eligible to apply for the Heyl. KPS alumni from the class

of 2009 or later are also eligible to apply for the award.

Heyl winners typically have a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher; a challenging high school curriculum that includes a year each of biology, chemistry, and physics, and four years of math; an interest in science, math or nursing; strong writing skills; and strong teacher evaluations.

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August 2018

EXCELSIOR

7

Phoenix High School Class of 2018

DaVaughn Anderson
 Jaisha Anderson
 Tarqua Benjamin
 Tuesday Bennett
 Marcuse Bowden
 Tyshayvious Brown-Tubbs
 Haily Buchanan
 Kentajaha Burch
 Jalin Burton
 Amarii Carter
 Caleb Chavez
 Toryano Cooks
 Elizabeth Davis
 Maricela Delgadillo
 Megan DeRyke
 Jameer Emory
 Carlos Estrada
 Chynna Fry
 Dominique Gordon
 La'shae Grays-Coleman
 Da'marius Harp
 Aleena Hawkins
 Frederina Howell
 Dane Jacko
 Breija Jackson
 Raekwon Jackson
 Carington Jenkins
 Deshaun Johnson
 Dondre Johnson
 Siance Johnson
 Quenten Karn
 James Keown
 Ronne' Lee
 Indiaah Leedle
 Tyrese Ligon
 Olivia Lockett
 Destiny Marshall
 Ardriques McFerrin
 Zairre McKinley
 Ian McLeod
 Emmanuel Melchor
 Damar Metcalfe



Phoenix High School graduate Jaisha Anderson accepts her diploma.

Luanne Muhammad	Brad Smith
Alexia Muller	Jada Smith
Ali Naeem	Kailah Smith
Courtney Nelson	John Spoone
Latayvia Nelson	Dakota Stulp
Alani Palmore	Michael Sykes
Malik Palmore	David Taylor
Rashan Parker	Margaret Terlesky
Chyan Perry-Horn	Zakeura Thomas
Kwamari Phillips	Rayven Thompson
Shantell Primer	David Tomkowiak
Ian Pryor	Taysha Trice
Kennedy Rabb	Nakia Turman
Faustino Ramirez	Milo Van Dyk
TaMya Raymond	Phines Vaughn
Niomi Reardon	Lashawna West
Keaira Rivera	Alysha White
Josiah Rockette	Lamya White
Jose Rodriguez	Kiwoa Whitfield Jr.
Ryan Rose	Dyondria Whitmore
Marisa Salinaz	LeeAna Wicks
Trisann Samuels	Ariyona Wilson
Dondrell Servant	Ayanna Ace Young

“A doctor isn’t going to stop surgery because things go wrong. She’s going to continue to save your life. A pilot, when flying an airplane, doesn’t let go of the wheel because things are crazy. He or she is going

to continue until they land the plane. Why is it in education that we feel that we should not fight with our students to the finish? We should always be fighting to the finish with our young people.”

Mark Hill, principal, Phoenix High School

Keaira Rivera: Huge Change, Huge Commitment to Graduation

Keaira Rivera has one very good reason for graduating.

Her daughter, Paris Love.

“I thought to myself, I have to get prepared to have a child, because it’s a big responsibility,” Rivera said. “A baby is someone you have to take care of for the rest of your life. You’ve got to be there for them physically, mentally, everything.”

Rivera, 18, graduated this year from Phoenix High School. She attended Woodward School for Technology and Research and Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts, and Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts. She started high school at Loy Norrix High School before transferring to Phoenix.

She transferred to Phoenix, because she knew she needed something different than the traditional high school setting.

“I just was not doing good at Loy Norrix; I really didn’t get good grades there. I was unfocused,” Rivera said. “I’ve liked Phoenix every since I’ve started here. The classes are smaller. The students are less talkative. There are fewer students, and there is more help from teachers.”

She was supposed to graduate in 2017, but her pregnancy put a pause on her plans. After giving birth, she thought she might pursue a GED, but realized she wanted an actual high school diploma.

“I only had a few months left and I thought, I might as well finish,” she said. “As soon as I came back, I got on top of my classes and turned everything in. I’m very happy I did it. It felt like I wasn’t going to graduate, so this feels like a big accomplishment.”

But she knows she didn’t do it alone. She gives credit to



Keaira Rivera graduated from Phoenix High School this spring.

her mother Rachelle Rivera and grandmother Melissa Rivera. They supported her through her pregnancy and help care for Paris, while Keaira’s at school and at work.

Phoenix helped also. The classes are smaller and more focused, and she likes the fact that the work is heavily focused on completing the requirements for graduation. While 26 credits are required to graduate from Loy Norrix or Kalamazoo Central high schools, Phoenix requires 19 credits.

“You don’t have to worry about anything extra,” she said. “You’re focusing on your core classes. The more serious you take it, the quicker you’ll be done. If you play around, the longer you’re going to be here. It’s not bad.”

The last year of high school as a new mother has been challenging, but Rivera says Paris is worth it. There was a period in her pregnancy, when they worried that Paris might have a birth defect, but she was born healthy, and that’s all Rivera cared about.

“It’s so worrying for them to tell you something might be wrong with your baby and there’s nothing you can do about it,” she said. But Paris is a “healthy, playful, happy baby. She makes silly faces and she laughs so much.”

Rivera is proud of herself for graduating. It’s been difficult, but she wanted to do it for herself and for Paris.

“It’s been kind of a challenge for me going to school to work to home to take care of a baby. I work from a couple hours after I get out of school until midnight. It’s so good that my family is willing to help me, so I can work and provide for her.”

Jordan Larkin: The Power of Sports Helped Him Stay on Track

Jordan Larkin admits it. He was a bad kid. “I didn’t want to be, but I didn’t care for school at the time,” Larkin said. “I just didn’t take it seriously.”

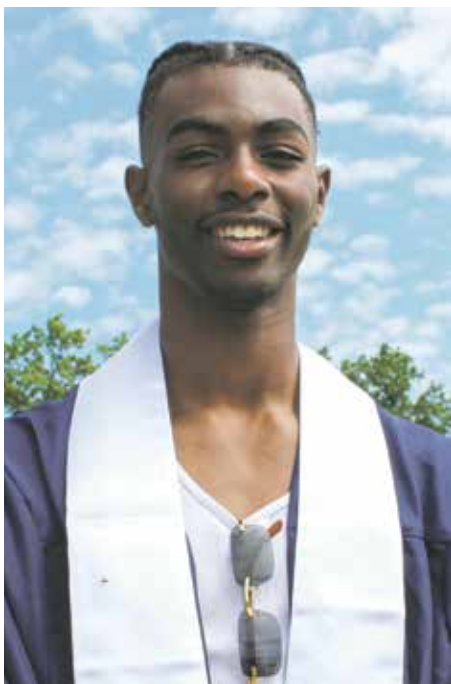
One thing helped him find focus and change his trajectory: sports.

Larkin, graduated this spring from Loy Norrix High School. When he leaves high school, he’ll leave a hole in several sports. He was a cornerback on the football team as a junior and senior. He played basketball in ninth and 12th grade. He ran the 200, the 4x100 and the 4x200, and participated in high jump in his junior and senior year.

“My freshman year, I barely made the basketball team because of my grades,” Larkin said. “I needed to get serious but I still messed up after that.”

It was his junior year and making the football team that turned things around for him.

“When I met Jordan he seemed to be pulled in a lot of directions,” said football coach Terry Farmer. “His commitment to the football program



Jordan Larkin poses for a photo following the Loy Norrix High School senior candlelight ceremony.

at that time seemed to propel him into some consistency. After that I saw him continue it on basketball, then

track. I really do believe in this case his dedication to his sports teams helped solidify all his achievements.”

Larkin said, “The coaches helped a lot.” Farmer helped him stay on his game and he made him keep his grades up. Basketball coach Matt Covault was always talking to him, offering positive advice. Track coach Ted Duckett, told him “Nothing in life will come to you. You have to go get it.”

“Plus, I was seeing everyone graduate,” he said. “It made me want to stay with my grade.”

“Once I grew one year, it seemed like I just started taking it real serious, so I could get where I am today.”

Larkin graduated in June and plans to attend Kalamazoo Valley Community College in the fall. He’ll try for a walk-on position with the basketball team.

“He has made tremendous growth as a student, as an athlete, and as a person during his four-year high school experience at Loy Norrix which is a testament to the entire staff at Loy Norrix who have helped him along the way, his

family who have done a phenomenal job raising him, and most importantly a testament to Jordan for making the decision to grow, and putting forth the consistent effort it takes to make it a reality,” Covault said. “Jordan is a really good athlete but more important, he’s an exceptional human being.

“Athletically, he was always a great teammate and was a pleasure to coach because he has a tireless work ethic, he was humble, and he was always willing to listen and improve.”

In addition to his coaches, Larkin said it was his friends and fellow seniors who got him through school, from Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School to Milwood Magnet School to Loy Norrix. His best friends included Darius Willis, Lee Jones, Xavier Gillon, Deandre Buchannan, Trevonn Collins, Deontae Brooks, Dreon Smith, and C.J. Washington.

“They’re teammates. You get a good bond with them,” he said. “It’s fun playing with someone that you’re cool with. I call them my brothers.”

Kalamazoo Central High School Class of 2018

Fatimah Raed Abdullah
Yasmin Aaliyah
Abdullah-Bush
Jada Imen Abraham
Jennifer Aguilar
Malek Abdulrahman
Hussein Ahmed
Hanan Ali Habeeb Alattar
Tyreese Darnell Touche
Alexander
Walaa Abdullah Alnakhli
Briana Juliet Alvarado
Arif Hussain Amini
Aaron Quintel Anderson
Anthony Quintet
Anderson
Tyrese Trevon Anderson
Zanae Sharee Anderson
Zara Samone Anderson
Arielle Elizabeth Andrews
Thomas Michael Ankley
Chancellevie Ann
Asumani
Saquaya Jhane Baker
Luis Raziel Barbosa
Andrew Somoring
Barkman
Audrey Harriet Barnard
Riley Joseph Barnum
Olivia Marie Battani
Adam Michael Bau
Jillian Rose Bell
Lenzy Duray Bell
Thomas Sheridan Berkley
My'kail Ramon Bigby
Christopher Braley
Blackmore
Jenna Marie Bowker
Dillon Patrick Boyd
Naiila Ski Boyd
Derek Marshall Bradley
Justin Paul Bradley
Elijah Malik Bragg
Meshia Marie Branson
Tyanna Ashlee
Brodhagen
Jordan Amber De'Nayah
Brooks
Dailon Alexander Brown
Daquasha Arlean Brown
Kayleisha Marie Brown
Krysten Marie Brown
Tania Alexis Brown
Diamond Mercedes
Buchanan
Ceintia Maria Buissa
J'lin Lee Burns
Zion Kierre Burton
Keegan T Cahill



Kalamazoo Central graduates, and best friends, Craig King, Jeffrey Hall, Aiden Stacer, and Jacob Seager pose after commencement at Wings Event Center.

Allen Chris Camarillo
Andru Devon Carlisle
Alaiyah Ashley-Renee
Carpenter
Jaden Terrell Carter
Zjanice Chanel Sharonne
Carter
Nolan Tyler Casey
William Mitchell Cathcart
Maya Louise Chappell
Tomeajia Alayzanae
Chatman
Deztanee Alfreadia Cobb
Lamontre Kaewaun
Coker
Iyannah Khaliya Collins
Aviounce Compton
Destinne Ariah-Janae
Cotton-Smith
Aliyah Shianne Cox
Earl Lee Cox
Steven Bernard Crawley
Abram Eugene Dancer
Warren Eugene
Dandridge
Morgan Nicole Dantzler
A'trelldemil R Davis
Kevin Duane Davis
Sean Cameron Davis
Jacob Wayne Derr
Benjamin Christopher
Dickens
Nichole Ariyanna
Dickerson
Djoremma Corillo Dill

Aliyah Nicole Dunigan
Raynard Alan Dunigan
Tamia Callie Nicole
Dunigan
Shaqlia Rageen Dunning
Kamari Aneko Earl
Airel Elizabeth Echols
Talia Naomi Edmonds
Owen Henry Edwards
Keontae Jaquan Embra-Hobbs
Megan Andriece
Engelman
Andreas Scott Engstrom
Amr Muneer Faraj
Masoud Estanbooli
Kenry Lee Evans
Thomas Jacob Fales
Aaron Stewart Felcyn
Anthony Augustino Filer
Josephine Elle Fonger
D'Anthony O'neil Ford
Kiara Shawnice Ford
Aaron Andre Fox
Breanna Lee Franks
Calvin James Freeland
Sean Michael Freeling
Haley Margaret French
Ontario Paul Fry
Alliyah Kellis Gardner
Frida L Gascon
Julia Ghazal
Myannah Ahmier Gibbs
Brady Thomas Kimseng
Gibson

Bria Suzanne Gibson
Kenya Ode Gilbert
Shayla Joan Gilland
Maurice Javay Gilmer-Jackson
Shyanna Marie Givans
Reuben Arturo Glasser
Nathaniel Hadi
Goenawan
Jennifer Esmeralda
Gonzalez-Diaz
Kennedy Grace Goudie
Robqueze LeSiah Green
Ethan Scott Gregory

Grayson Olivia Grove
Victoria Elizabeth Guanon
Anna Elaine Gunnerson
Helen Bahia Haddad
Noah Parker Haines
Elizabeth Ann Hall
Jeffrey Jermyn Hall
Ryan Patrick Halloran
Kamarria Danyale
Hampton
Nate' Adrionna Harris
Ethan Andrew Haskins
Connor Anthony
Havenaar

Anaia Lachelle Hawkins
Tyce Thomas Wayne
Hawkins
Malik God'Di Hawkins
Samuels
Phillip JeQwan Heard
Makenna Sue Henke
Matthew Richard
Hennessy
Jackson Maurice Henning
Peri Jane Herder
Turner Alexander Hice
Nick Rowan Hill
Madyson Reilly Hoffman
Claudia Kathryn
Holewinski
Keiasha DaShae Holloway
Benjamin Robert Holmes
Brooke Adaline Hoover
Najasha Ashanae' Horn
Osazuwa Idemudia
Mohammed Majed Jaber
Taylor Kathryn Jansheski
James Albert Jeffries III
Allison Marie Jimenez
Cian Hall Johnson
Hunter C Johnson
Iesha Rakia Johnson
Jakaria Keymon Johnson
Jeremiah Irwin Johnson
Erin Ree'nai Jones
Jalen Lamar Jones
Zoe Francine Jonker
Jacob William Juhnke
Victoria Lynn Kalisiak
Andy Kaliyati
Corshawn Dontrell Kates
Jeyvona Jtoi Kelley

Austin Michael Kelley
Genovese
Del Eugene Steven Kelly
Julia Tressa Kemple-Johnson
Tyler Mathew Keown
Breanne Michelle
Killingsworth
Craig James King
Marshall Munroe Klein
Alena Thea-Marie
Kocefes
Kennedy Joy Kubiak
Kristen Nicole Kuhtic
Sydney Anne Lajiness
Bryanna Nikole Lamb
Jacob Mitchell-Molitor
Lampros
Tyler James-Molitor
Lampros
Gregory Tim Langsdale
Hailie Whitney Launius
Tyra Gabrielle Lee
Larry Leon Leipzig-Freed
Mayra Alejandra Leon
Torres
Jeffrey Lance Lillard
Austin Zeeau Lim
Kennedy Grace Livers
Thomas Earl Lockhart
Monyea Carmen Logan
Mikayla Shiree London
Rigoberto Lopez
Jarel Lasairian Luckett
Alyssa Rachel Mabry
Keyana Ashayla Lavinia
Mackerel
Ashlynnne Brianne
Maneke
Troy Allen Marble
Anna Louise
Mastenbrook
Ellie Kathryn Matuz
Jordan Renell Mays
Tianna Janell McClenton
Isreal David-Amir
McCurtis
Adrian Don McGill
Noah Joseph McGuire
Keaginn Joseph Michael
McKeon
Spencer Ronald Miner
Andrejs James Talbot
Minka
Victoria Karen Talbot
Minka
Eddie Elijah-Harrison
Mitchell
(continued on page 11)

“Runners are fascinating creatures. We bond through appreciation and pain and acknowledging one another with a slight nod as we pass each other on the same trail — or when every single runner passes me.

“But that didn’t matter. What mattered was finishing the race, and I did, eventually finish a race. I was the last person to finish, but when my feet touched the finish line, I received praise because I didn’t give up. I chose to never give up. Why start something if you’re not

willing to finish?
“Change is going to happen. I think change must begin with the future of thoughtful and engaged individuals who are willing to work hard and conquer those obstacles that may stop you from finishing the race. And now the future is sitting right in front of me. We are the change to carry Kalamazoo and America into the future. Class of 2018 go forth and be changers of the world.”

*Jeremiah Johnson,
Kalamazoo Central High School*

Kalamazoo Central High School Class of 2018 (continued)

Mohammad Arian	Chamique Nichole Perry	Michael Dennis Schirripa	Damonte' Terryonce	Assia Janea Watson
Lavanway Mohmand	Da'najah Sade Perry-Gibson	Mia Claire Schwartz	Kaman Streeter	Noah Charles Weiss
Ryan James Monk		Jacob Andrew Seager	Jonathan Keegan Sullivan	Artrelle D White
Di'Amond Daion Moore	Madeline Joy Peterson	Abigail Jane Seiler	Archie Rozelle Swindle	Desiree Nicole White
Jonathon Tyler Moore	Nathan James Peterson	Mitchell James Seiler	Hunter Blake Tanner	Tyreese De Ontae Whitfield
Nejaya Vanessa Moore	Constantin Nikos	Delores Deva Shackelford	Deidre Love Taylor	DaSante' Lamar Whitley
Anacaren Morales	Philopoulos	Ethan Bradley Sherfield	Orlando Mario Taylor	Aliah Kaylee Nikia Williams
Chasara Charmae Morgan	Alma Rosa Piccone	Noah Alexander Sherman	Davyn Symone Thomas	Dontavia Shaquaya Williams
	Almonacid	Rachelle Calinda Sims	Erica Marie Thomas	Kamarey Monna Williams
Jackson Clark Morrison	Samara Shay Portrum	Rochelle Calisa Sims	Kayla Angel Thomas	Kendric Don Juan Williams
Amayah Nasha Morton	Khyreef Kofi Powell	Gurparkash Singh	Kareem Harrison Thorpe	Brendan Caleb Willoughby
India Cheyenne Mullen	Trinity Nicole Powell	Melissa Camille Smaling	Kiara Latrice Thurman	Makenna Marie Wilson
Destiny Rose Munoz	Darius D'mon Pruitt	Arieanna Ceantel Smith	Michael Anthony Todd	Brandon Michael Wolfe
Xavion D Murphy-Gill	Marc Anthony Pulphus	Ashley Marie Smith	Ramiro Torres-Ventura	Markiela Monea Woodson
Makayla Ann Myles	Trevon Rayshawn Reason	Jalen Micheal Smith	Jeffery Lee Trainer	Delsin Jelani Wright
Erich Ryan Naidoo	Sodiq Rahimi	Marcus Terrell Smith	Tatianna Alicia Tyler	Shontay Dasnay Wright
Julia Ragual Naranjo	Amyah Nycole Reed	Shaun Michael Smith	Nathan Lawson Vanderberg	Shayonae Yarbrough
Kyra Leigh Niehus-Staab	Naya Jazzlyn Reynolds	Patrick James Smoker	Austin Samuel Joseph VanTuyl	Jhakiyah Jhashay Yarbrough-O'bryant
Ashley Marie Northrop	Bianey Magdalena Ricardo	Christopher Edward Snyder	Staje Sonice Vanzant-Hadley	Gabriel Ian Ybarra
Benedict Rugendo		Caleb Madison Sokolowski	Justin Taylor Varda	Mohamad Nour Ahmad Zabib
Nsenga		William Joseph Soltes	Emily Nicole Vargas	Alexa McKenzie Zach
Maria Isabel Nunez		Niajha O Spurlock	Kennedy Diane Walker	Alexandra Jade Zaczek
Owen Cyrus O'Neil		Aidan Daniel-Meixner Stacer	Sarah Marie Wallace	Yarely Isabel Zamora
Charlotte Nichole Olmstead		Darryn Emory Dominic Steele	Robert Dishon Ware III	
Lindsey Marie Oostema		Ty'rell Antonio Stegall	Amir Dontae Washington	
Lesley Alayne Ovalles		Patric Alan Stevens	Lakaria M Washington	
Alexa Ja'net Paiz Osorio		Kanequewa Dayi Joyce	Ashton Cole Watkins	
Kendra Leigh Parkman			Alexandrea Angela	
Luis David Paz			Michelle Watson	
Niyah Khaliah Perin-Taylor				

Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program 2018 Graduates

Jackeline Guadalupe Amezcua-Gascon
Robert William Brown
Nathan Michael Campbell
Mikiesha Davionya-Darcia Clark
Devin Keith Corner
Nathaniel Lee Johnson
Jada Monaa-Dynashia Mitchell
Flor Celeste Roman-Ocampo
Dominique Elizabeth Ollis
Bradley James Chaldwell Whitlock
Xavier Jadan Louis Williams



Nathaniel Johnson shakes hands with Kalamazoo Public Schools Board Vice President Carol McGlenn at the commencement ceremony for the Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program.

Enroll in The Loy Norrix Child Care Center for 2018-19

Is your child ready for pre-school? The Loy Norrix Child Care Center, a five-star rated Kalamazoo County Ready 4s program, is accepting applications for childcare and pre-school for 2018-19.

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 \$160 a week for full-time care, \$105 a week for half-day care, and \$43 a day. Two snacks and lunch are provided for full-time students.

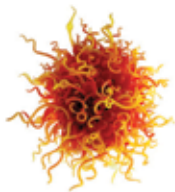
The school accepts 3- and 4-year-olds. Students must be toilet-trained. School district residency is not required for the program, which is open to the public.

For more information, call Stephanie Ludwig at (269) 337-0264.



LNCCC is open to any child, regardless of residency.

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11-8 Free admission
6-8 Free concert by Nashon Holloway
beverages available for purchase



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OR THE KIDS

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Alexander Smith: Life Is a Song — An Aria To Be Exact

One day after church Alexander Smith spent some time talking to a family friend who was making a career as an opera singer.

Afterward, his mother asked him, “Would you ever want to do that?”

He remembers saying, “They’re like ... OK, but no.”

The friend happened to be opera singer Meredith Arwady, who has sung with the Metropolitan Opera, the San Francisco Opera, and Oper Frankfurt. She graduated from Loy Norrix High School, which is where Smith graduated from this spring. In the fall, he is attending Oberlin College & Conservatory to study vocal performance, which in his case means ... opera.

“It’s funny how things work out,” Smith said. “As I grew up I had a new appreciation for it. The way that they are able to produce such a sound is incredible. Hearing people sing live is a whole different experience, that gave me a whole new perspective to singing opera.

“When you hear a special voice, it’s like something out of this world. I don’t want to sound like super out there, but it’s really something special whenever I hear someone like Meredith sing. It’s a whole new inspiration.”

This summer Smith spent five weeks studying with the Oberlin in Italy Program, studying Italian and performing the role of the King of Scotland in Handel’s opera “Ariodante.”

“It will be my first real exposure to singing opera versus a recital with just you on stage. I’m really excited to be a part of that.”

Smith, 18, grew up surrounded by music. His mother Wendy Rose is a professor of bassoon at Western Michigan University. His father Brad Smith is an oboist and English horn player and supervisor of the woodshop at WMU’s Gwen Frostic School of Art. Smith attended Winchell Elementary School and Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts. While a student at Loy Norrix, he dual enrolled at WMU.

His first instrument was cello, which he began playing with instructor Grace Fields and the Suzuki Academy of Kalamazoo when he was 3.

He made his stage debut as an actor when he was 8 in a performance of “Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day” with the Kalamazoo Civic Youth Theatre. Whenever he felt the need to expand his horizons, he’d try another Civic show.



Alexander Smith was the Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra concerto winner in 2017, and played with the KJSO as a cellist.

It was during one of those auditions, that someone suggested he begin taking voice lessons.

He began lessons when he was a freshman and for the past several years has studied with Dr. Ken Prewitt, chair of the voice area at WMU.

“Alex Smith is a remarkable talent. His voice is mature, rich and beautiful. He is also a good musician, able to learn difficult music and make sense of it, singing with beauty and understanding,” Prewitt said.

Although his focus is now

on voice, Smith still plays cello and recently finished his sixth season with the Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra.

“When playing the cello, you use the bow back and forth with phrasing,” he said. “With the voice, it’s sort of a similar thing. There’s no bow involved, but you really have to think of the phrases. Sometimes when I’m singing, I can visualize phrases as if I were playing them on the cello and vice versa. And for my voice, because I’m a baritone, I feel like my sound is really reminiscent of a cello.”

One of his challenges is that as a singer, his “instrument” is still developing.

“Your voice changes so much,” Smith said. “When I started I was a tenor. Now, I’m like a bass baritone. I don’t know where I’ll go from here. It could go up to a tenor again or down to a full bass. Right now I’m doing baritone repertoire. I’m just doing the best that I can.”

He started by singing art songs, which he still performs. He’s hoping for more opportunities to sing opera, while at the same time being protective of his voice as it continues to grow and mature. He said he might look at doing more musical theater, but right now he’s taking care to focus on the healthy growth of his voice as he seeks more training.

Wherever the future takes him, he said he’s grateful for one thing: his parents.

“They would support me doing anything. They’d be behind me. When I was younger I thought I wanted to be in the biomedical field. They were supporting me through that. At different phases, I thought maybe I wanted to study law or history, and they were like, ‘Oh yeah, then you should do that.’ It’s really awesome to have that.”



At the Kalamazoo Central graduation; front from left, Da'najah Perry-Gibson and Samara Portrum; back from left, Alexandria Watson and Assia Watson enjoy hanging out before the ceremony begins.

“I want to honor those who go through high school and barely get recognition for anything. I want to recognize the students with tough backgrounds, who use their past struggles as motivation to become something. These students use their backgrounds as motivation to give their future children more than they had growing up. I want to recognize the students who have to work eight hours a day in addition to school to help their families. I want to recognize the students whose parents can’t take them to school or who don’t even have parents to take them to school.

“I want to recognize the students who ride the school bus or even the city bus and sit on that bus twice a day and do their homework, some of them because they have a household and a family to take care of when they get home. These students tonight may not have cords on their gowns, or NHS hoods on their shoulders, or medals on their chests, but just like every other student, they have earned their cap and gown and diploma and that truly is something amazing.”

*Julie Naranjo,
Kalamazoo Central High School*

Adam Dorstewitz: Excelling — While Learning that Perfect Isn't Always Possible

Sometimes the most valuable lesson may be learning you're not the best after all.

Adam Dorstewitz was always a good student — well, better than good. He knows that people would talk about how smart he was and how they expected him to have the best test scores.

That's a nice feeling, but it's also an unrealistic view to have of yourself.

For Dorstewitz, his most important learning experiences have been situations in which he had to accept his limitations.

Dorstewitz graduated in June from Loy Norrix High School and the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center. He attended Winchell Elementary and Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts. This fall he plans to attend Kalamazoo College.

"For most of my school life, people reacted strongly if I didn't get a perfect score or when they do better than I do. There's this shock reaction, which has been interesting," he said. "I've made this joke for years. There are these twins, Maddy and Abby Guimond. Those two were often the standard of excellence back when I was at Winchell. I felt like I was always trying to chase them. I was like, 'Hey, they're smart.'"

Dorstewitz said that he long recognized that part of what made school easy for him was an incredible memory. Some students need to be given an equation and practice problems so they can understand how to manipulate the math.

"Up until Algebra II, pre-calc, if you showed me an equation two times, and I got a practice problem, that was it," he said. "I could memorize it. I could use it. That was all I needed."

That changed when he enrolled in KAMSC.

"The first 30 seconds were all I needed to realize I was not even in the Top 10 percent,"

he said. "The kids here are phenomenal. So, it's been an interesting experience finding my place within the system and recognizing that you can be smart and you can be fantastic at one thing, but you don't have to be the best at everything."

In many ways, he says he was prepared for the KAMSC experience, because he also participated in the Academically Talented Youth Program. That program, which provides accelerated high school math and English classes for middle school students, was the initial eye-opener, the first real lesson that memorization would get him only so far.

Still, his freshman and sophomore years at KAMSC were a learning curve.

"I worked really hard to achieve the standards, I thought I was going to be able to maintain," he said. "I realized shortly afterwards that even if I maintained that work level, my grades wouldn't necessarily substantiate it. I could still make a couple of mistakes on a test that would drop my grade."

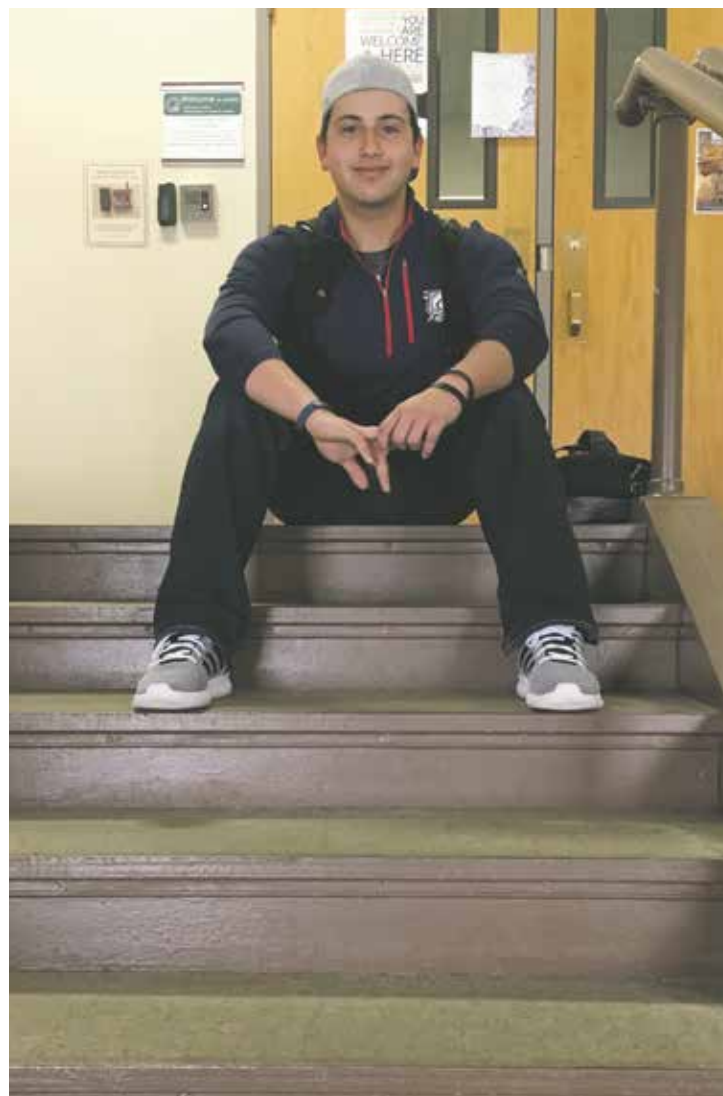
"I had to find a way to be happy with grades that at one point in time I would have thrown a tantrum over, because I just didn't accept a grade any less than an A."

Chemistry. Physics. He didn't always get the grade that he wanted, but he got grades he could be proud of.

"My goal at KAMSC was to achieve the highest grade that I could in everything, but to recognize that it's not a tragedy or awful if you don't get the best grade. It's a lesson to be learned and then move on," he said.

That can be a hard lesson — especially if you're highly competitive.

"If I were to name my most fatal flaw, it would be that I want to compete at everything," he said. "There was an adjustment period when I came to KAMSC and expected to be the best and I tried to compete with these kids



Adam Dorstewitz graduated from Loy Norrix and KAMSC. He sits at the top of KAMSC's iconic 84 steps — the four flights of stairs every KAMSC student climbs to enter the math and science program.

who had a couple of extra years of math or just had a better understanding of the teacher or material. I had to learn to compete just against myself."

But everyone handles the challenge differently, he said.

"I know other students who drive themselves into the ground out of worry and the need to get that exceptional

letter grade," Dorstewitz said. "But, I'm fine with backing off a little bit and knowing that I'm human and cannot be perfect at everything."

That sounds insightful and mature for an 18-year-old, but perhaps not that amazing when he explains that academics have never really been his great love. It was important,

and his parents Gail and Troy Dorstewitz were always there encouraging him, quizzing him on math and science facts, telling him school came first.

But in his heart, sports were his first love. He remembers he loved hockey first, then basketball, but it was baseball that became his sport starting in first grade.

"I got into Little League and that was it. I have not missed playing a season since then," he said. "And, starting in sixth grade, I played on multiple teams. Baseball is my everything."

Not only did Dorstewitz love to compete in athletics, it's been a great motivator in his studies — whether it was his parents telling him that he had to keep his grades up to play sports or him using sports as a reward for writing that paper or doing 15 more minutes of physics review.

"Sports are my reset," he said. "I'll write a page of a paper then set a timer and play basketball for 15 minutes."

The lefty pitches and plays first base because he said, he's "too slow to go anywhere else." He played four years for Loy Norrix (as well as three years of varsity tennis). He hopes to play baseball for Kalamazoo College.

Loy Norrix coach Rob Pincus said he has been lucky to have Dorstewitz on his team not only because of his baseball skills but because of who he is.

"He's a good baseball player and a heck of a pitcher. If you compare his stats to others in the league he's up there with some of the better pitchers in our division and conference," Pincus said. "And, he's a leader and a student of the game. He gives 100 percent on the field. He is one of our most respectful and dedicated players."

"As a coach, especially at the high school level, that's all you can ask for. I was blessed as a coach to have him. He's a great kid."

"Seniors you are a talented group of individuals that can truly bring it. You can bring it in academics, art and athletics. As I told you at our candlelight ceremony, continue to be respectful, responsible, and resilient. There is a big world out there. Know who you are. Remember to change the world, and don't let the world change you."

*Johnny Edwards, interim principal,
Loy Norrix HS, KPS director of secondary education*

Madison Holmer: Exploring Early Middle College, Finding Rewards

Madison Holmer doesn't remember a lot about the first Early Middle College meeting she attended.

"I'm pretty sure that along with most people, when they said it's a fifth year of high school, I stopped paying attention," she said with a smile. But she took the materials home, and her mother saw the information and told her to take a closer look at the program.

"She said this looks like it could be really good for you since you don't know what you want to do. Use this as a stepping stone, a back-up plan," Holmer said.

Holmer, 18, walked in the Loy Norrix High School graduation in June, although technically, she won't graduate until next year when she completes Early Middle College next year. By enrolling in EMC for two or more years, students can earn a high school diploma and professional certificate or an associate's degree from Kalamazoo Valley Community College in 35 subjects ranging from welding to culinary arts to biology. When Holmer finishes next year, she will have not only her high school diploma but also a certificate in graphic design.

The costs of the program are covered by the school dis-

trict, and students who graduate still have the full 10 years of the Kalamazoo Promise for further study.

Holmer said it wasn't too difficult for her to give up time at Loy Norrix to attend KVCC classes. "If anything, I bragged about the fact that I wasn't in high school for this (past) year," she said. "The thing that is really different for me, is that everyone wants to be here (in the KVCC classes)."

At KVCC, she focused on art classes for her graphics design certificate, taking art, Adobe Illustrator, typography, and ad concept development. Although she initially planned to earn an associate's degree in graphic design, late in the 2017-2018 school year, she took a psychology class as part of her general education requirements. She enjoyed the class so much, she shifted gears to earn a design certificate and will focus the rest of her time at KVCC on completing general education requirements in preparation for enrolling in an undergraduate program in psychology at Alma College in the fall of 2019.

EMC helped her adjust to college life. The program includes "pathway advisors," who meet with students and help them navigate the college



Madison Holmer says she bragged about attending Kalamazoo Valley Community College while still in high school. Most of her classes have been at KVCC's New Media Center in downtown Kalamazoo.

experience, answering questions and offering guidance on tasks such as registering for classes.

Starting college as a high school junior can be overwhelming, "but my suggestion is just talk to everyone when you need them. They're there to help you. Make sure you use your support system," she said.

While she was removed from Loy Norrix, she kept up

ties with friends and extracurriculars. She took forensics as a freshman and began competing that year with the Norrix forensics team. She started in dramatic interpretation, moved to prose as a sophomore and competed in duo as a junior and senior.

"I really enjoyed taking forensics because that got me into theater, which has become a huge part of my life,"

Holmer said. "Pretty much all of my friends are people I've met through shows. I'm getting recognized in the community because I've done shows at the Kalamazoo Civic."

Some of her past productions have included "Bye Bye Birdie" at Loy Norrix, and "A Midsummer's Night Dream" at Norrix and the Kalamazoo Civic.

Holmer moved to Kalamazoo Public Schools in third grade, attending Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School, Milwood Magnet School: A Center for Math Science and Technology, and then Loy Norrix. Her parents are Heather and Tom Holmer, and she works part-time in the family business Rocket Fizz, a candy and soda store in downtown Kalamazoo.

Her performing life and her nontraditional experience with EMC have taught her that, "everyone is so focused on themselves, a lot of times they aren't going to judge you for who you are. Even if they do, you have to realize that when they're judging you for who you are, that just means they're not comfortable with themselves."

Susan Benton, a retired Loy Norrix counselor, said, "Madison was really courageous and willing to explore new opportunities as a student in the EMC program. She has such a friendly, cool, and collected manner, you'd never know she is balancing a lot at a young age. Madison has earned a 4.0 in all of her college classes this year. She has really set an excellent example and has paved the way for others to follow in the EMC program."

Taking the new path, Holmer said, can be exciting and rewarding.

"I definitely suggest it to other people, because I know a lot of people who aren't quite sure what they want to do, but they have things that interest them. They could definitely do what I'm doing."



Erin Klooststra gets a hug after the Loy Norrix High School commencement.



Colton Dellinger, teacher Dana Gay, and Kristen Bowers pose for a photo before the Adult Education commencement 2018.

Julia Kemple-Johnson: The Fire-In-Her-Blood Girl

At the National Mock Trial competition, a Reno attorney was looking for Julia Kemple-Johnson.

She told people she was looking for the “fire-in-her-blood girl.”

Kemple-Johnson liked that description so much, she used “fire-in-her-blood” to decorate her cap for graduation.

Not bad for a girl who almost gave up on mock trial after her freshman year, when she was designated a team alternate. This year, she bested 150 other students to be named the Best Attorney in the national competition. Last year, she was named Best Witness.

The 2018 Kalamazoo Central High School and Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center graduate will be attending Michigan State University in the fall, entering the James Madison College. She hopes to study constitutional law and computer science.

In addition to studying at KC and KAMSC, she attended Spring Valley Center for Exploration, King-Westwood Elementary School, and Linden Grove Middle School. Her parents are Chrissie Kemple and Jeremiah Johnson, and she has five brothers and sisters.

Mock trial is an extracurricular activity in which students study the legal system by preparing both sides of a court case and arguing the case against other student teams. While part of the competition is performance, it also requires an understanding of the Federal Rules of Evidence.

“You study the entire case and prepare both sides,” she said. “When we first read through the case, we come up with different legal routes to take.

“In competition, each round you’re randomly assigned a side. The case isn’t always argued the same, so you have to adjust on the fly.”

Kalamazoo Central has

been a powerhouse in the event for decades. The team has won 20 state championships and has represented its state at nationals more than any other team.

This year’s national championship was held in Reno, Nevada, and Kalamazoo Central took fifth in the nation. Last year the team placed second in the nation, as it did for three straight years from 2006 to 2008. It won the national championship in 1996.

Although Kemple won the title of Best Witness in the 2017 national contest, that’s not her favorite role.

“I like being an attorney and exploring the flaws in (the opposition’s) argument. I like the critical thinking aspect of it,” she said. “I like to show off.

“When you’re doing the direct examination, you’re not the star. On the cross examination, you’re the star. And when you’re closing, all eyes are on you. You get five minutes to pull it all together and to make your case sound bulletproof.”

Mock trial coach Francis Bilancio said if there were a mock trial hall of fame, Kemple-Johnson would have a place in it.

“Any time Julia sets foot into the well of the courtroom, she quickly earns the well-deserved respect of any opposing team and the judges,” Bilancio said. “It is no accident that Kalamazoo Central’s last three



Julia Kemple-Johnson poses with the trophy she won at the National High School Mock Trial Championship held in Reno, Nevada, this spring.

state championships correspond with Julia’s participation on the team. I haven’t superlatives enough to describe Julia’s work ethic, leadership and her level of mastery of all aspects of our mock trial competitions.”

Mock trial has certainly taken up most of her time in school, (“We joke that we’re a

mock family. We spend more time with the team than our actual families.”) but she’s made room for other studies and activities as well. This year, she also put her interest in the law and social justice to a real world test. She was one of the students who helped lead the student body’s work on a petition call-

ing for gun control and a student protest on gun violence.

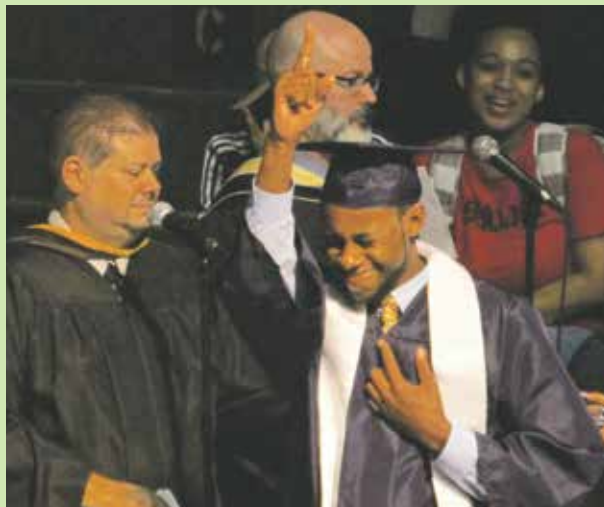
Until her senior year she was active in sports, at various times playing softball, volleyball and swimming. She was in National Honor Society, volunteered with Link Crew, and attended KAMSC.

In the wake of the Cambridge Analytical scandal on Facebook, she hopes to combine her interest in law with her background in computer science to help craft laws regarding technology.

“The law definitely hasn’t kept up with the technology,” Kemple-Johnson said. “Whatever you do, of course you want to make money, but you also want to do as much good as you can.”

Kalamazoo Central social studies teacher and NHS advisor Rex Hafer does not doubt that she will succeed on both counts.

“She not only brings the traditional strong knowledge of content but also strong empathy as well as the ability to understand what is going on in other parts of the world,” Hafer said. “Every day she shows how her determination and passion have shaped her character and outlook on life. I most appreciate how despite anything else that goes on in life, she will not let herself be brought down or fail at anything that she puts her mind to.”



Jalen Roberts marches in the Loy Norrix High School commencement.



Phoenix High School graduates smile together, from left, Aleena Hawkins, Chyan Perry-Horn, Tyrese Ligon, and Amanii Carter. In the back is Quenten Kam.

Alexandrea Watson: School Supports Inspire a Desire to Study Social Work

Alexandrea Watson wants to be a social worker, because she knows first hand how important they can be in a young person's life.

Watson, 18, graduated from Kalamazoo Central this spring. She plans to attend Southwest Michigan College and then transfer to Ferris State University to earn a degree in social work.

For the past five years, she has lived in foster care. There were times, she said, she really struggled and thought about dropping out. But it was relationships with caring adults that helped her stay on track and to graduate.

Among those who were influential were principal Valerie Boggan, Community in Schools KC coordinator Deb Yarborough, and teacher Michelle Baarda.

"Alexandrea is the picture of resilience, maturity and perseverance," Yarborough said. "Alexandrea has faced some challenging situations throughout



Alexandrea Watson was in foster care throughout her high school career, but she said caring teachers and staff helped her graduate despite the challenges of her home life.

her life, however she's risen and moved forward with conviction."

Watson remembers her sophomore year as being particularly challenging. She was skipping class and getting in trouble for fighting, including several suspensions.

"My first foster mom had to talk to me," she said. "If you keep doing this, you're going to get on punishment and it's not hurting anyone but yourself. When you become a senior and they say you can't graduate, you're going to be mad and hurt. You need to get yourself together and graduate."

Luckily, she said, she found advocates in Boggan and Baarda. Boggan went out of her way to form a bond with Watson. Baarda helped her navigate school, giving her advice and guidance to stay on top of her work.

Most importantly, "She was always hearing me out," Watson said. "She was telling me what I was doing wrong and

what I was doing right."

Teachers need take time to understand their students and their problems, she said. She knows teaching is a hard job, but sometimes, she said, "you have to stick with the kid through it all. Eventually, they'll crack and tell them what's going on. You should get to know the kid before you think they're such a horrible child. A lot are just going through a lot and crying for help."

Watson took that advice herself, when she found that some of her younger siblings were struggling in school. She knew they were dealing with the same frustrations and disappointment of being separated from their mother.

"I kept pushing through for my siblings. I didn't want them to feel like, my mom did this and my sister is going to do the same. I wanted to be a role model for them. I had to stop doing what I was doing so they could do better."

Kevon Williams: Finding His Way Through Multiple Losses

Loss is hard for anyone, but especially for a young person.

Kevon Williams experienced not one but two monumental losses in the seven months before the start of his senior year of high school — and the grief almost derailed his graduation.

Williams, 18, graduated this year from Kalamazoo Central High School. He plans to attend Kalamazoo Valley Community College in the fall.

Williams grew up in Kalamazoo attending Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet School for the Arts and Linden Grove Middle School. His parents are Kevin Jones and Shirley Williams, and he has seven siblings.

But the relative who spoiled him the most, the one who made him always feel special was his grandmother Ernestine Williams.

"She called me Bumblebee when I was little, because I had chubby cheeks," Williams said. "I was the baby of the family. I was always the golden child. She spoiled me with snacks, and money sometimes. When the ice cream trucks went by, she always got me ice cream. On birthdays, she always gave me the most."

But in January 2017, fire broke out at her home on Sunnyside Drive, on Kalamazoo east side. She died from smoke

inhalation, while her daughter Patricia Williams was injured in the blaze.

"I just couldn't believe it," Williams said.

Unable to describe his grief and to share his thoughts, he pulled inside. He overslept every day, and he started missing a lot of school.

"I just wasn't motivated to do anything," he said.

Eventually, his mom helped pull him out of the downward spiral by reminding him that his grandmother's expectations for him lived on.

"My mom was telling me that this is not what my grandmother would want me to be. She was telling me that I should do better — for her."

Then seven months later, the week before school was set to begin, tragedy struck again.

Five young people died in a high-speed car crash on East Main Street on Sept. 2.

Williams knew four of the five victims: his cousin Cortavian Murphy, 16; his ex-girlfriend Elexus Hillsman, 16; and friends Jaquarius Hegler, 15; and Deztanee Cobb, 17. The fifth victim was Marshawn Williams, 15.

He remembers Cortavian as a good boy, who was struggling to stay on the right track. Elexus was the girl with the



Kalamazoo Central student Kevon Williams overcame personal loss and tragedy to graduate with the Class of 2018.

beautiful smile. Deztanee was there for him when his uncle passed away. And, Jacquarius was the friend who as like a little brother.

"I really didn't know how to feel. I didn't want to go anywhere," he said. "I didn't want to be with anyone. I was just shocked. I went right back down again. I

couldn't handle it."

He started missing school again. He couldn't control his anger.

"It changed me a lot," he said. "I don't show a lot of emotion, and I was getting emotional around people I don't really show emotion around. I really separated myself from my family."

But at school, there were people who refused to give up on him. Patricia Yarborough, the Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo coordinator, helped him find a grief support group. English teacher Linda Lee noticed the change, and kept reaching out to him, telling his cousin to call him and tell him to come back to school — every day.

"It helped a lot. It helped to know someone cared," Williams said.

"You can't hold it all in. It will just make it worse. That's one thing I did. I held everything in until I started talking with Miss Yarborough and Miss Lee. Then it just became easier. I started going back every day to talk to them."

And, he began to move past the grief to remember the hopes and dreams others had for him.

"My grandma always told me that she wanted me to be better or to do better, so I use that for motivation every day. She wanted me to be successful, to take a different route."

Craig King: KC Football Kept His Focus Despite Losing His Biggest Cheerleader in Life

Craig King lost his biggest cheerleader when he was 16.

His mother, Angela King, died in October 2016.

She was in early 40s and went to bed saying she wasn't feeling well. That night he woke to sounds of his dad screaming his name, telling him to come help him. They called an ambulance but the paramedics were unable to revive his mom.

Now, he has "RIP Mom" tattooed on his bicep.

"It's kind of hard for me," he said. "I've had all of these things go through my mind. She won't see me walk the stage. She won't be able to see me play football again.

"But I just stayed mentally strong, stayed on track with everything, lived up to what she would have wanted."

King, 18, graduated this spring from Kalamazoo Central High School. He attended Spring Valley Center for Exploration and Hillside Middle School. He lives in Kalamazoo with his dad Tracy King. He has two sisters Mary, who is a junior at KC, and Raeanna Goedhart.

He's committed to join the Western Michigan University football team in the fall, but he knows that his biggest fan won't be there to watch him play.

Football wasn't King's first sport. He started out as a wrestler at the improbable age of 5.

"My dad was a big wrestler when he was in school. He thought he should get me into it," King said. "I turned out to be really good at it."

Size probably helped, he admits. He was a bit taller and "built" as a 5-year-old.

"I had to wrestle guys who were a little bit fatter, so that made it a little easier," King said. "They see a built 5-year-old out there, and they don't know what to do. All it was, is I went out there, grabbed the guy and threw him to the ground. I was able to hold him there and



Craig King, who was a Kalamazoo Central wrestling and football standout, has committed to play football at Western Michigan University.

get the win."

Wrestling was the main way he bonded with his father.

"He turns into a different guy when he sees me wrestle," he said. "He's like my No. 1 fan."

He didn't try football until the seventh grade. His mom was at every game, excited to see him take the field. She'd be in the stands yelling and screaming louder than anyone else.

He decided to drop wrestling as a high school freshman, having lost his love for the sport. But his high school football coach, Dana Chambers, told him that would be a mistake. College coaches like wrestlers and they like dual sport athletes.

King found that the two sports meshed well physically.

"Wrestling really gets you prepared for football," he said. "It just really conditions you. You have to have a lot of gas in your tank to wrestle. You won't ever get tired in football if you wrestle. Football is more like short bursts, but in wrestling you have to use everything for long periods of time.

"What some people don't understand is wrestling is one of the hardest sports to keep up

with. It's really physical and it can do a lot on your body but it's really beneficial."

He said he wouldn't mind wrestling in college, but he also harbors the dream of maybe playing professional sports, so football made more sense. If that doesn't happen, he is planning to study criminal justice with the hopes of going into police work.

"I just want to help people and make a difference," he said. "There all of this talk about police violence and whites on blacks. I think being a minority like myself, I could help change that and give people different ideas about what they think about the police."

Chambers said King has the fortitude and focus to succeed in college and beyond.

"Craig was an outstanding leader, team player and a great mentor for our young players" Chambers said. "He has a great work ethic and will be very successful in college and in life. When his mom passed away, it was tough for him and his family, but he stayed focused and stayed a strong leader for us. I'm sure that he wanted to make his mom proud of his accomplishments and he did."

King is excited to report to WMU training in August. He's looking forward to college, to get on campus, meet new people, take the next step.

"But I'm also really excited to meet some of the new guys and to make new bonds. I've already talked to some of the new guys and they seem really excited to have me come up."

If there is one thing that will be difficult, it will be leaving behind some of his KC friends, guys like Jacob Seager, Jeffrey Hall and Aiden Stacer.

"They were there through all of the emotional stuff," King said. "They were more than best friends. They were basically brothers."

KalamazooVALLEY™ Museum

RAIN GARDEN RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY

September 7 | 5-7 PM

Celebrate the inaugural Rain Garden growing season.

Planetarium show: Pink Floyd's Wish You Were Here. 6PM | \$3

SUNDAY SERIES, SCIENCE

September 9 | 1:30 PM

Native Plants, Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones

SENSORY SATURDAY

September 15 | 11AM

Understanding the Diagnosis of Autism

SUNDAY SERIES, HISTORY

September 23 | 1:30 PM

Beautiful Historic Bikes! Brandon Apmann, Collector

CHEMISTRY DAY

October 13 | 12-4 PM

Chemistry in Outer Space

SUNDAY SERIES, SCIENCE

October 14 | 1:30 PM

Kalamazoo Goes Green! Paul Abueva, Abueva Builders

GHOULISH TRANSPORTATION

October 27 | 12-4 PM

Arts and Crafts with a Halloween Spin!

SUNDAY SERIES, HISTORY

October 28 | 1:30 PM

The Sins of Kalamazoo: Murderers and Fallen Women.
Tom Dietz, KVM Curator Emeritus

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: ARCHITECTURE OF THE INTERIOR

September 8 – December 9

Featuring designs of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The 28 drawings and photographs displayed show Wright's distinct and "organic" style and why he is considered the greatest of American architects. This exhibition was organized by the International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC, in cooperation with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ.

FREE GENERAL ADMISSION

Monday-Saturday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Art Hop Fridays 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Sunday + Holidays 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Closed: Easter, Thanksgiving,
Christmas Eve, Christmas Day

KalamazooVALLEY™ Museum



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Kendra Parkman: Singing a Song of Accomplishment and Thanks

Kendra Parkman took choir every single trimester of every year of high school at Kalamazoo Central.

She sang with the school's Hawthorne Singers. She was in all the school musicals, including lead roles as Evillene in "The Wiz" and the Fairy Godmother in "Cinderella."

But, when she goes to Wayne State University in the fall, she plans to major in pre-law.

She loves singing but ever since she was little she wanted to be involved in law. First, she thought she might be a police officer, then she thought about being a prison warden — she's not sure why, then a court administrator. Recently, she's turned her focus toward practicing law.

"Everyone says, 'Oh, you're not doing anything with singing?' she said with a laugh. "I really do plan to join a choir or be in some musical at Wayne. It will help me get around thinking about school work all the time.

"Music makes me feel calm. It's a stress reliever. And I feel like I have a nice voice, so why not use it?"

Parkman graduated from Kalamazoo Central in June. She lives in Kalamazoo with her parents Eric and Sheila Parkman. Her older sister Kiera Parkman graduated from KC in 2016.

She began singing with the First United Baptist Church youth choir when she was a preschooler. When she reached Hillside Middle School, she met Theresa Williams-Johnson, who would be her choir teacher all through middle school and high school.

"Kendra is a true joy to have in my music program," Williams-Johnson said. "She's an outstanding musician and student. It's hard for me to see her leave."

Choir became a second family, especially after she joined the Hawthorne Singers, Parkman said.

"It gave me a connection with people who had the same interests and goals as I had — to improve my singing, to perform for the school, to be a good representative for Kalamazoo Central," she said. "It has been an anchor in my career."

She said that through choir she's pushed her vocal range and her understanding of music, singing choral works in Russian and Latin "all the time." But, more importantly, music has been a valuable tool for reaching others.



Kendra Parkman performed at the Kalamazoo Central 2018 commencement ceremony.

"I've really learned you can connect with people through music," Parkman said. "You can empathize and sympathize with people that you probably never would be able to communicate with if you were just having a face-to-face conversation."

She acknowledges it will be difficult to leave the safe and nurturing environment at Kalamazoo Central, a place where her name was cheered when called at graduation.

She's loved the pep rallies, with their epic tug-of-war battles. She's loved the way the students came together to rally against gun violence. She loved the way everyone supported each other after the death of a beloved teacher. She loves the fact that she went to school with the same two best friends, Davyn Thomas and Morgan Dantzler, since kindergarten at Northglade Montessori Magnet School.

"I feel like Kalamazoo Public Schools get a bad rap and that Kalamazoo Central is right in the center of the negative vibes," Parkman said. "But Kalamazoo Central is actually a really great school for education and for diversity. We're really intertwined with each other.

"Everyone has the same goal: to set our footprints on the world and to be world changers."

Judith Castaneda: Hoping to Go from Student to Teacher

Education matters.

That's what Judith Castaneda believes as a student, and what she's planning to preach as a future teacher.

"Education is the key to success," she said. "Students have to value their educations more. With our education we have everything we need to succeed in life."

Castaneda is a 2018 graduate of Loy Norrix High School. She was named Education For Employment's (EFE) 2018 Outstanding Senior in Early Childhood Education. EFE is a program of the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency that provides students with hands-on experience in various careers.

Castaneda and her twin, Jenny, plan to enroll in Kellogg Community College this fall to earn associate's degrees in early childhood development and to then earn bachelor's degrees in education from Western Michigan University.

As a senior, she participated in the KRESA program to explore her interest in teaching and found that she loved it. She worked at El Sol Elementary School, which happened to have been her first elementary as a child.

"It has been the greatest experience I've ever had," she said. "These children are my motivation. When I'm down or sad, they are my reason to be. They make me happy. They make me forget about the little things and make me value the love and smiles. I love to see how they learn on their own and it makes me want to help them."

She enjoyed working at El Sol for numerous reasons. Her little brother Willie was in third grade at the school, she had the chance to work with teachers who influenced her as a child, and she was able to use her dual language skills.

She appreciated El Sol's focus on bilingual education — English and Spanish. Her own family, with mom and dad Aurora and Nicolas, twin sister and little brother — is bilingual. She was excited to help children learn in both languages.

"There's a benefit to having two languages," Castaneda said. "You're able to express yourself in two languages. It's something to take advantage of."

First-grade teacher Danielle Jn Baptiste served as Castaneda's teacher mentor at El Sol was impressed with Castaneda's enthusiasm for the classroom.

"Judy is a driven young woman who

is an exemplary EFE student," she said. "Her natural talents to be an educator shone through as she worked with small groups of students, redirected students, and planned lessons and activities for them, as well. I was extremely impressed with her professionalism."

Castaneda's inspiration to pursue education comes not just from her love of children, but from the many positive experiences she's had as a student.

"I love the way my teachers teach, the way when I need help they're there for me, to support me, to explain things to me," she said. "They won't let me struggle



Judy Castaneda poses next to the mural in El Sol Elementary, and points to a picture of herself that she painted when she was a third-grade student at the school.

by myself. They'll keep teaching until you get it. The won't just leave and move on."

She has trouble citing the most influential teacher in her life, but among the standouts at Loy Norrix have been Lisa Jensen, Jameeka Johnson, Randy Rowe, and Sally Wagenaar.

"I have like 10 favorites," she said. They made me realize I have to love the education I have."

Two other people have inspired her as well: her parents.

"They've been the biggest supporters for me and my sister. I feel this now more than ever as we're finishing high school. I know they won't always be there with me, but they'll always be in my heart. They've been the biggest blessing that God could have given me, and I want to make them proud."

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