



BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the 2024 national theme for Black History Month, *African Americans and the Arts*, acknowledges the paramount influence that African Americans, including African, Caribbean and Black American lived experiences, have played in the fields of visual and performing arts, language, film, music, culinary and other forms of cultural expression, which are all important opportunities offered to students in our schools through regular coursework and CTE programs and which are regularly celebrated by the Salem-Keizer community; and

WHEREAS in 1926, Carter G. Woodson laid the foundation for Black History Month to shed light on the important developments and Black experiences throughout history that merit recognition ("Association for the Study of African American Life and History," 2024); and in 2024, we continue to recognize the importance of being vigilant and resisting attempts to erase Black and African American history in public schools and in society today; and

WHEREAS Salem-Keizer Public Schools partners annually with Safe Routes to School to celebrate Ruby Bridges and honor her bravery as a Black child and pioneer who was the first to integrate segregated white public schools in the 1950s, like in 2023 when eight Salem-Keizer schools participated in the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day to educate the next generation and preserve her legacy; and

WHEREAS SKPS has support from local partnerships supporting our underrepresented students and families, such as the Salem-Keizer branch of the NAACP and faith-based organizations, who empower students and families to thrive in education and life and grow the next generation of leaders in the community; and

WHEREAS voting rights, equal housing, employment, access to quality education and healthcare are core to the "liberty and justice for all" as mandated in the United States Constitution and in the Declaration of Independence, which states "...these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," although Black and African Americans did not realize this truth until June 19, 1865, celebrated as Juneteenth, a national holiday and state holiday in Oregon, as their Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS more than 2,100 students identify as Black and African American in Salem-Keizer Public Schools, and the district's ongoing commitment to creating safe spaces inspires our students to be proud of who they are and stand in their truth of being themselves; and

NOW, THEREFORE, the Salem-Keizer Public Schools Board of Directors proclaims February 2024 to be Black History Month. In our ongoing effort to expand full understanding of all cultures that make up Salem-Keizer Public Schools, the board will continue to engage in shared learning opportunities and will strive to garner a deeper understanding of the richness of Black and African American culture and its influence on the arts globally, nationally and in our state as we embrace liberty and justice for all. The board also expresses that these ongoing celebrations are not limited to one month but serve as reminders during their nationally recognized period of celebration of the importance of culture to maintaining inclusive and welcoming environments for all students and families to thrive in our schools.

Karina Guzmán Ortiz, Chairperson
Board of Directors, Salem-Keizer Public Schools

February 13, 2024

Date

References:

Association for the Study of African American Life and History. (2024). Black History Themes. Retrieved from https://guides.library.cornell.edu/citing_us_gov_docs/executive