

PRESS RELEASE

January 10, 2025

United We Walk celebrates its 31st event Sunday, January 19

West Bloomfield School District (WBSD) is honored to announce United We Walk will be celebrating its 31st event on Sunday, January 19, 2025. The event's keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Roy Bishop, Jr., a highly respected educational leader and administrator. Dr. Bishop serves in a district where Dr. King once delivered a stirring version of his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech, lending profound personal and historical significance to his words.

Dr. Bishop is the founder of The Be Team, a leadership development organization that provides inspiration, empowerment, consultation, and coaching to a growing community of educational and organizational leaders. Driven by his firm belief that no leader or learner should navigate their journey alone, Dr. Bishop is dedicated to ensuring everyone has access to the support they need. "It's not a matter of if we'll need support on our journeys, but when," he often says, underscoring the importance of building a network of connection and care before you need it.

WBSD students have already been participating in activities related to this annual community event that is attended by hundreds if not thousands each year. Elementary students participated in a button contest, with the winning entry (shown here) chosen from 250 entries. The winning entry was from Karina Mangrulkar, a 5th Grader at Scotch Elementary School. West Bloomfield Middle School and West Bloomfield High School students also had the opportunity to participate in an oratorical contest. Entries in the oratorical contest were judged on tone, articulation, presentation and originality. Those selected will be presented during the event January 19. Both contests focused on this year's theme, "Continuing the Dream: Building Bridges of Unity."

Community members are also encouraged to participate. They can drop off boxes of oatmeal packets or ramen noodles at the schools the week prior to the event, or bring donations of cleaning supplies or plastic bags January 19th to the event. And they are certainly invited to walk with us. We will walk inside the middle school in inclement weather.

"We invite you to join us at the 31st event," said Sonja James, this year's co-chair of United We Walk with Jonathan Warshay. "We will gather at West Bloomfield Middle School at 2 p.m., where there will be a short presentation with our keynote Dr. Bishop, and student and staff involvement. Then at 3 p.m., we as a community will indeed walk in unity along Orchard Lake Road as a visible reminder of all Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood for."

"As leaders, learners, and advocates for action, we have a responsibility to embody Dr. King's vision," Dr. Bishop shared. "My daily challenge to myself and others—'Be a Leader. Be a Learner. Be Kind.'—resonates deeply with this year's United We Walk theme. Together, we can build bridges of unity and continue the dream with bold and intentional action for generations to come."

Student Co-Chairs who have worked all year to build bridges include:

- Moriah Culver- 12th
- Kate Mandel- 11th
- Riley McCaskill - 11th
- Samiya McPherson-11th
- Daniel Owens - 11th
- Inaya Qureshi - 11th

Established in 1995, United We Walk's shared mission is to celebrate annually the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by embracing the continuing influence and impact of Dr. King's dream of creating a beloved community that values diversity, promotes unity, and underscores the worth of every person. This year United We Walk received a generous grant from Youth Service Award which is being used for the community service and student artwork activities that day.

For more information on the event itself or how you can be a part of [United We Walk](#) activities throughout the year, please contact sonja.james@wbsd.org.