

Kalamazoo Public Schools

EXCELSIOR

www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

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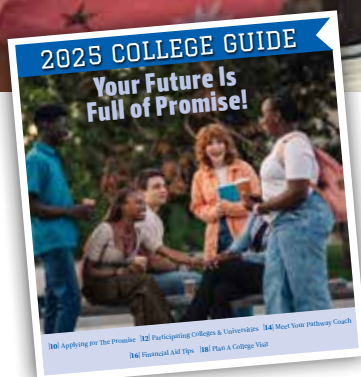
Help Your Child Start Kindergarten with a Smile

(STORY AND PHOTOS ON PAGES 6-8)

2025 COLLEGE GUIDE

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Reap the Rewards of Putting Screens in Their Place

A Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Darrin Slade



ON MARCH 5, enrollment opens for kindergarten and PEEP: A Great Start Readiness Program, the district's pre-kindergarten program. Indeed, you will find the enrollment link on our website opens for all grade levels that day.

Some of our wonderful kindergarten teachers are featured in this edition of the Excelsior. They have tips to help parents think about some of the habits and skills that will help our youngest children have a great experience when they begin their kindergarten education.

I appreciate these suggestions, because they are rooted in years of knowledge about what helps students engage in learning, feel more confident, and succeed in building the skills necessary to thrive in school.

One suggestion stands out to me — and that is to limit screen time for students.

Smartphones, tablets and computers seem inescapable. Their flashing designs, catchy games and smart algorithms are so alluring. Screen time is certainly problematic for older children, but there is a special danger for young children who spend too much time on devices.

Quite simply spending too much time in front of screens diminishes young children's speech and language development, can affect their reading, inhibit their motor skills and negatively affect their social and emotional well being. Study after study reinforces that.

Studies show children are spending hours on devices — far in excess of the half-hour to hour limit that is recommended for children 3 to 7 years of age. A National Institutes of Health study launched in 2018 has found that children who spend more than two hours a day

on screens scored lower on language and thinking tests.

Dr. Jennifer Cross, a pediatrician at New York-Presbyterian Komansky Children's Hospital sums up why screen time can be detrimental in a NY-Presbyterian newsletter: "When I see children walking with a parent or being pushed in a stroller, they are often playing on a smartphone or a tablet and not paying attention to anything else around them. They will not learn about the world around them if all they're doing is looking at a smartphone. This will not just affect their ability to learn new things, but also how they interact with others and how language develops."

What we need to think about is not just how much time children are spending on devices — but how much less time that means they're spending on other activities: playing outside, reading books, manipulating toys, playing board games and learning to get along with friends, drawing, painting, singing a song, cutting

with scissors— or any of the other activities our teachers suggest like going on picture walks, counting, or talking about their feelings.

Technology obviously offers the world — and children — many benefits, but at a fundamental level interacting with a screen cannot replace interacting with their parents or other caring adults — or the real world.

Interacting with a screen cannot replace interacting with you — your child's first and best teacher. It cannot replace reading a book together, talking about their favorite cereals in the grocery store, playing I Spy on a car ride, imagining what the characters in your favorite movies might do next. It cannot replace all the lessons that might be shared just by paying attention to each other instead of the screen.

Give your child the gift of time away from the screen — and give yourself the gift of time with them talking, reading, sharing, and learning together.

GOT A LEAK? WE'RE HERE TO HELP!



At **Community Homeworks**, we're dedicated to helping income-eligible homeowners in **Kalamazoo County** stay safe in their homes. We provide **no or low-cost support** for repairs like plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and other health and safety issues. If you're a homeowner in Kalamazoo County, call or email us at **(269) 998-3275** or **info@communityhomeworks.org** to find out if you qualify today!



Visit **CommunityHomeworks.org** for more information.

This activity is brought to you in partnership with the City of Kalamazoo, LISC, Kalamazoo County, and support from other grant funding partners.

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2Gen

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[Ages 14-24]

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 - Development of Essential Skills
 - Customized Action Plans



Scan the QR code to submit an application or learn more about our summer programs at Career Connect!



KALAMAZOO RESA

Career Connect

Explore | Engage | Experience

ARTISTS' CORNER

King-Westwood Elementary School artists have been very busy this year creating beautiful works with their art teacher **Misty DeNoon**. Fourth grade artists like Jeremiah Stark were challenged with learning about one-point perspective drawing. They created a cityscape, which included a jaguar, which is the King-Westwood mascot. Can you spot the jaguar?

Second grade artists learned about creating collages by using cutting and gluing skills. Students like Emmett Trevino and Kenzie Walden created "snowpeople" using collage techniques and printing circle snowflakes in the background.



Jeremiah Stark



Emmett Trevino



Kenzie Walden



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Dr. Darrin Slade

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NOTICE

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

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

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

Director of School Improvement, Title I and Assessments

Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0180

All other inquiries should be directed to:

Director of Human Resources

Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0177

District Directory at:

www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

Recipe

from the KPS Food Service, Chartwells



Kirsten Strong,
registered dietitian
nutritionist

Chicken Salad

SPRING is right around the corner, which means things will start growing again! In Michigan, some of those early crops include green onion, radishes, and dill, all of which are all included in the recipe this month.

The dijon mustard gives the mayonnaise an extra punch and together they bring out the flavor of the dill. The radishes provide a wonderful crunch and peppery boost to the salad. Make this recipe early in the week and you can enjoy it for several days.

It's helpful to keep high protein nutritious meals and snacks easily accessible, so you are less likely to grab chips or other empty calorie foods.

KPS Food Service Launches Video Series

Check out the new **Excelsior Recipe Rundown** video.

Follow this QR code for a video demo of this month's recipe by the KPS Food Services team of Executive Chef Josh Kerby and Resident Dietitian Kirsten Strong. These videos will be available monthly to show you how to recreate the Excelsior recipe, step-by-step. They'll also include tips on safety, health, and other hacks for everything inside the kitchen.



INGREDIENTS

1.5 lbs (about 4 cups)
boneless skinless
chicken breasts, diced
or shredded (about 4
cups)
½ cup radish, sliced
2 tablespoons green
onion, chopped

¾ – 1 cup mayonnaise
¼ – ½ cup dijon mustard
2 tablespoons fresh dill,
finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Crackers, tortilla wrap,
bread of your choice, or
salad greens for serving

PREPARATION

1. Dice or shred your chicken, slice your radish, chop your green onion, and chop your dill.
2. Add all ingredients to a mixing bowl and mix until evenly distributed. Taste and decide if you

want to add more mayo or mustard depending on your desired moisture. Add salt and pepper to your taste.
3. Serve as a sandwich, on crackers, or over greens as a salad.



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Ready, Set, Go:

Preparing for the Kindergarten Adventure

KINDERGARTEN is one of the most exciting times in a student's life — and one of the most nerve-wracking too. But as with most things in life, a little preparation can help ease the experience. Here are tips offered by some of the wonderful kindergarten teachers at Kalamazoo Public Schools to help a child successfully transition into kindergarten:

COURTNEY HORN

Lincoln International Studies School

One of the biggest things I want parents to know is that kindergarten teachers are working hard to build a foundation of academic and social success for students. The teacher and the parent must be partners in educating the child. We are on the same team and must trust each other. It is important for the teacher to not only build a positive relationship with the children they serve, but also with the families of those children. I want my parents and family members to be ready and open for that partnership. It is powerful.

These are skills I believe to be important for beginning kindergarten students:

1. Students who can write their name and know a handful (or more) of letter names and sounds are primed to meet the demands of the rigorous kindergarten curriculum. Singing the ABC song is often mistaken for knowing their letters. This is not the case. Families should talk about letters out of order. They can make flashcards, beginning with the letters in their child's name and then add more once those are mastered.



2. Parents can help prepare their child for the rigor of K is by reading to them as often as they can. Nursery rhymes are excellent for children to listen to, because of the rhyming. Hearing rhymes and being able to rhyme is an important skill for kinders.

3. Count, count, count!! Count aloud with your child. Make counting fun by taking a small handful of exciting objects and helping your child count them. Counting is easy to insert into different activities during the day. One-to-one correspondence and number sense are both important foundational skills kindergarten students need in order to be successful in math.

Some other ideas for incoming kinders include limiting screen time. It may seem like a child on a screen has great stamina for sitting, this is not the case. The changing frames, bright colors and busy content rewire the brain in ways that make sitting still and paying attention in school settings difficult for children (and adults)!

And, talk to your child and encourage them to answer questions in complete sentences. Help them learn how to ask questions to better understand something. Model for them and over-explain everything! The more you engage with your child, the more they learn from you.

Never forget that you, the parent, are your child's first teacher!



Cyncere Coleman reads by a pretend campfire in Sneha Gardner's kindergarten classroom at Parkwood-Upjohn.

CI'ERAH HOLMES

Northeastern Elementary School

Here are my tips for incoming parents and students:

Recognizing and Writing Name

It is important that little ones are able to identify their name by the first day of school. One way to get them ready would be to have your child go on a name hunt!

Write their name on pieces of paper and tape them around your house and have them go on a hunt for their name. To help with writing their name, write their name with a yellow or orange marker on a piece of paper and have them trace over it in another color. Lastly, their names can be a great introduction to letter identification.

Emotional Regulation

Your child feels safe with you as their parent and will show you their emotions, big or small. While they are doing so, it is important to name those feelings, so they can express how they are feeling once they are in the classroom.

It would be helpful to give your child tips to cope with their feelings, so that they can express them safely. If they are upset, have them verbally express how they are feeling with your help, then introduce



Kindergarten Adventure (cont. from pg. 6)



Nobyl Knapp takes a break from reading to share a kindergarten smile at Parkwood-Upjohn.



Friends make classwork easier. Hadley Dibble-Valette and Franklin Haulenbeek work on finding letters together.

them to tools to get them back into a positive mindset. Those tools can include drawing a picture, asking for a hug, time in a quiet place, or looking at pictures in a book.

Emotional regulation and learning go hand-in-hand. If they are able work through their emotions, they will be able to have a positive outlook on learning when faced with challenges.

ON THE COVER: Marley Hunter and Kehlani Gardenhire share a laugh with teacher Amanda Brown during a visit to the Woods Lake Elementary library.

Picture Walks

Reading with your little one can help with their love of reading, increase their vocabulary, and enhance their communication. A great way to help foster their love of reading and to spend some quality time with your child is with picture walks.

Picture walks are when you go through a storybook and talk about the pictures. You can make connections to the story based on the pictures and discuss objects that initiate learning new vocabulary by talking about the characters and how they are feeling throughout the story. Picture walks build background knowledge and initiate comprehension.

AMANDA BROWN

Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts

Here are some tips that will help students make an easier adjustment to life as a kindergartener:



1. Students should have or be working on these basic skills:
 - They should be able to use bathroom independently.
 - Students should be able to put on their own socks and shoes.
 - It is helpful if they can recognize their first name in print. When students learn to read their names it helps them begin to identify some letters of the alphabet (especially letters in their first name).
 - It is helpful for students to be able to write their first name.
 - Work with your student on how to count to 10, which is a good foundation for kindergarten math skills.
 - Help your student to recognize basic colors and shapes (square, circle, rectangle, triangle).
 - Students should have some experience using scissors.
 - Students should be able to open packages on their own, such as items they might have in their lunch.

2. Reading to your child each night increases their interest in reading, exploring books and words in print. Using sidewalk chalk or large crayons will help support grip development as they learn how to hold

(continued on page 8)

Kindergarten, PEEP Orientation Set for March 5

KINDERGARTEN and PEEP: A Great Start Readiness Program will be holding orientation on March 5 at all Kalamazoo Public Schools elementary buildings. Sessions will be held at 9:30 a.m. and at 5:30 p.m. Families are invited to attend the events to register, meet staff, tour schools and learn about the kindergarten and Pre-K experience at KPS.

Online enrollment for all grades for the 2025-26 school year also opens March 5. **Enrollment information can be found at [kalamazoopublicschools.com/enroll](https://www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/enroll)**

Students who will be 5-years-old by Sept. 1 may enroll in kindergarten. Waivers are available for students who will be five between Sept. 1 and Dec. 1. All KPS elementary schools offer full-day kindergarten. Students are initially assigned to schools based on their home addresses.



Documents required to enroll in Kalamazoo Public Schools:

• **Original certified birth certificate.** All new enrollments, in any grade, are required to provide the district with a certified birth certificate within 30 days of enrolling. If the parent/legal guardian fails to provide a

birth certificate within 30 days, the district is required by law to notify law enforcement. The original birth certificate should have a raised seal.

• **Immunization record.** A copy of the student's immunization records signed by a physician or health facility must be provided. Since 1978, state law requires each new entrant to the school district to present a certificate of current immunization at the time of registration or by no later than the first day of school. In addition to the documents listed above, kindergarten students must provide proof of hearing and vision screening, as well as a dental assessment.

• **Court papers** allocating parental rights and responsibilities, or custody. (if appropriate)

• **Two pieces of proof of residency.** Students must reside with a parent or legal guardian who resides in the Kalamazoo Public School district (or they must be accepted by the district as a School of Choice 105/105c student). Proof of residency is mandatory and can consist of the following documents — as long as they list the parent or guardian's name and street address and are dated within the last 30 days.

- Lease agreement
- Home purchase agreement
- Rent receipt
- Utility bill

Kindergarten Adventure (cont. from pg. 7)

a pencil for school work. Draw straight, zig zag, and curvy lines for your child to trace with crayon and use scissors to practice cutting the paper.

3. Kindergarten is filled with fun, hands-on learning opportunities. Students will explore, create, build, solve, write, read, and develop lasting friendships. Enjoy this new adventure together by talking about school every day.

SNEHA GARDNER

Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary Schools

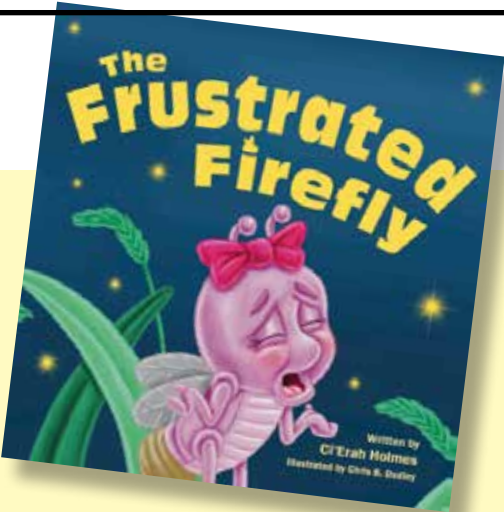


Here are a few of the tips that I have for parents of our incoming kindergarten scholars:

- Help your children develop some familiarity with the concept of going to school: Create opportunities for your child to become familiar with the location of the school, take a tour of the school, visit the playground, drive around the school’s surrounding area, and help your child identify landmarks close to school.
- Begin fostering a sense of independence: Allow your child opportunities to practice tasks on their own. Some tasks that they can use to gain a sense

Kindergarten Teacher Pens SEL Book

Ci’Erah Holmes, a kindergarten teacher at Northeastern Elementary School, has authored a children’s book, “The Frustrated Firefly.” Faye the firefly is struggling to meet new friends, because she is having trouble with shining her light. This brings on a huge emotion. Throughout the night, she learns three ways to deal with her frustration. This social-emotional learning book



will help children understand what it means to be frustrated and how to cope with the feeling.

of control over their environment and their learning include: zipping their coat, tying their shoes, using a pencil to write, coloring a picture, talking about a book, and using words to express their feelings.

- Engage in activities that support learning. Your child is going to learn and grow SO much this year in kindergarten! Please take time to set the foundation at home to show your scholar how much fun learning can be.
- Fun learning activities can include singing the ABCs; counting; reading books; singing songs; writing their name; drawing a picture; finding letters, words and numbers in their daily lives; having

conversations about feelings; taking nature walks, learning about places in our community and around the world; practicing mindful moments; and taking movement breaks.



Enrollment info can be found at www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/enroll

KALAMAZOO / PORTAGE

Ranked
#5
of 10 most
ARTS VIBRANT
MEDIUM-SIZED COMMUNITIES
in the
NATION

For the second year in a row, our great community has been ranked #5 on the list of the most Arts-Vibrant medium-sized communities in the nation, according to the national arts research center SMU DataArts. Have you taken advantage of all of the amazing artistic happenings going on around Kalamazoo & Portage? Check out KalamazooArts.org

TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

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• KVCC/WMU/VoTech Programs	• Travel Training

Visit us at Kmetro.com for information on transportation options to increase student access to educational opportunities throughout the community!

2025 COLLEGE GUIDE

Your Future Is Full of Promise!



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|16| Financial Aid Tips **|18|** Plan A College Visit

How to Access and Utilize Your Kalamazoo Promise

So, you’ve narrowed down the colleges and programs you are interested in, you have considered taking or have taken the SAT or ACT, and you have researched or visited campuses that fit your needs and wants. Time to take the next steps to utilize The Kalamazoo Promise.

The Kalamazoo Promise is a scholarship that covers tuition and mandatory fees at all Michigan public universities and colleges, community colleges, Michigan College Alliance (MCA) private colleges and some institutions that provide industry recognized certificates for graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools. (For a list of these, see “The Choices Are Endless,” page 12.)

Apply for and activate your Kalamazoo Promise in 3 easy steps:

The Promise has made it simple for KPS seniors to apply for and get the tuition and mandatory fee funds credited to their college accounts.

How much of The Promise am I eligible for?

The Kalamazoo Promise covers tuition and mandatory fees based on how many continuous years you attended and lived in the KPS district:

Grades you attended & lived in KPS	How much benefit you’ll get
K-12	100%
1-12	95%
2-12	95%
3-12	95%
4-12	90%
5-12	85%
6-12	80%
7-12	75%
8-12	70%
9-12	65%
10-11-12	None

1 Apply for The Promise in the fall of your senior year

Students apply for The Kalamazoo Promise at the beginning of their senior year of high school. The Kalamazoo Promise has Pathway Coaches at each high school who work in collaboration with guidance office staff to help students navigate the scholarship process. (See “Meet Your Kalamazoo Promise Pathway Coach” on page 14.)

2 Register for your Kalamazoo Promise account through the online portal:

<https://portal.KalamazooPromise.com/signup>

You will simply need your KPS ID number and to provide a personal email address (please do not use your Kalamazoo Public Schools email because it will end after you graduate). If you do not have another email account, you can create one for free with many services including Google, Yahoo, Microsoft Outlook and others. You will complete your Kalamazoo Promise application through the online portal and this form is used to determine and confirm your percentage of eligibility.

3 Complete the Kalamazoo Scholarship acceptance form and start survey

The second online form needed is The Kalamazoo Scholarship acceptance form, which lets The Promise know which college you will be attending so the scholarship can be applied to your account at that school. Students submit this form once they have been accepted to the college or university that they wish to attend and must include the student identification number assigned to them by the college. (When you are accepted, colleges will assign you a student ID number for that specific campus; this is the College Student Identification Number that should be placed on this form.)

You will have to complete this form only once, unless you attend summer school at a different institution or if you decide to transfer to another college or university that meets The Promise criteria.

For more information, scan this QR code to go to www.kalamazoopromise.com. ■



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The Choices Are Endless

Colleges & universities that participate in The Promise

There are more than 60 colleges, universities and institutions across Michigan that you can attend as a Kalamazoo Promise Scholar. From the very large to the very small, private and public, community college, technical and vocational, your educational options are expansive and exciting. These are the participating colleges and universities, the city they are located in, and their websites:

- Adrian College (MCA)**, Adrian, www.adrian.edu
- Albion College (MCA)**, Albion, www.albion.edu
- Alma College (MCA)**, Alma, www.alma.edu
- Alpena Community College**, Alpena, www.alpenacc.edu
- Andrews University (MCA)**, Berrien Springs, www.andrews.edu
- Aquinas College (MCA)**, Grand Rapids, www.aquinas.edu (See ad page 15)
- Bay College**, Escanaba, www.baycollege.edu
- Bay Mills Community College**, Brimley, www.bmcc.edu
- Calvin College (MCA)**, Grand Rapids, www.calvin.edu
- Central Michigan University**, Mount Pleasant, www.go.cmich.edu
- College for Creative Studies**, Detroit, www.ccsdetroit.edu (See ad page 14)
- Delta College**, University Center, www.delta.edu
- Eastern Michigan University**, Ypsilanti, www.emich.edu
- Ferris State University**, Big Rapids, www.ferris.edu
- Glen Oaks Community College**, Centreville, www.glenoaks.edu
- Gogebic Community College**, Ironwood, www.gogebic.edu
- Grand Rapids Community College**, Grand Rapids, www.grcc.edu
- Grand Valley State University**, Allendale, www.gvsu.edu (See ad page 15)
- Great Lakes Maritime Academy**, Traverse City, www.nmc.edu/maritime
- Henry Ford College**, Dearborn, www.hfcc.edu
- Hillsdale College (MCA)**, Hillsdale, www.hillsdale.edu
- Hope College (MCA)**, Holland, www.hope.edu

What is an MCA School?

The colleges and universities listed with (MCA) next to their names are part of a partnership between The Kalamazoo Promise and the Michigan Colleges Alliance, an alliance of 14 private liberal-arts colleges in Michigan.

Through this partnership, Kalamazoo Promise scholars can attend these liberal arts colleges and enjoy the same tuition and fee benefit they would at Michigan public universities and community colleges. The MCA institutions have agreed to fund the difference in costs between their institutions' tuitions and attending a public university for Kalamazoo Promise scholars.

- Jackson College**, Jackson, www.jccmi.edu
- Kalamazoo College (MCA)**, Kalamazoo, www.kzoo.edu (See ad page 16)
- Kalamazoo Electrical JATC (Apprenticeship)**, Kalamazoo, www.kalamazoojatc.com
- Kalamazoo Valley Community College**, Kalamazoo, www.kvcc.edu (See ad page 11)
- Kellogg Community College**, Battle Creek, www.kellogg.edu
- Kendall College of Art & Design of Ferris State University**, Grand Rapids, www.kcad.edu (See ad page 19)
- Kirtland Community College**, Roscommon, www.kirtland.edu
- Lake Michigan College**, Berrien County, www.lakemichigancollege.edu/
- Lake Superior State University**, Sault Ste. Marie, www.lssu.edu
- Lansing Community College**, Lansing, www.lcc.edu
- Macomb Community College**, Warren, www.macomb.edu
- Madonna University (MCA)**, Livonia, www.madonna.edu (See ad page 17)
- Michigan Career and Technical Institute**, Plainwell, www.michigan.gov/mdhhs
- Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights**, Detroit, Reno, Saginaw, Wayland, Grayling, Neguantee, www.hammer9.com

Michigan State University , East Lansing, www.msu.edu	Siena Heights University (MCA) , Adrian, www.sienaheights.edu
Michigan Technological University , Houghton, www.mtu.edu	Southwestern Michigan College , Dowagiac, www.swmich.edu
Mid Michigan Community College , Harrison, www.midmich.edu	Spring Arbor University (MCA) , Spring Arbor, www.arbor.edu
Monroe County Community College , Monroe, www.monroeccc.edu	St. Clair County Community College , Port Huron, www.sc4.edu
Montcalm Community College , Sidney, www.montcalm.edu	University of Detroit Mercy (MCA) , Detroit, www.udmercy.edu
Mott Community College , Flint, www.mcc.edu	University of Michigan Dearborn , Dearborn, www.umdearborn.edu
Muskegon Community College , Muskegon, www.muskegoncc.edu	University of Michigan Flint , Flint, www.flint.umich.edu
North Central Michigan College , Petoskey, www.ncmich.edu	University of Michigan , Ann Arbor, www.umich.edu
Northern Michigan University , Marquette, www.nmu.edu (See ad page 17)	The University of Olivet (MCA) , Olivet, www.uolivet.edu (See ad page 13)
Northwestern Michigan College , Traverse City, www.nmc.edu	Washtenaw Community College , Ann Arbor, www.wccnet.edu
Oakland Community College , Bloomfield Hills, www.oaklandcc.edu	Wayne County Community College , Detroit, www.wcccd.edu
Oakland University , Rochester Hills, www.oakland.edu	Wayne State University , Detroit, www.wayne.edu
Saginaw Valley State University , University Center, www.svsu.edu	West Shore Community College , Scottsville, www.westshore.edu
Schoolcraft College , Livonia, www.schoolcraft.edu	Western Michigan University , Kalamazoo, www.wmich.edu (See ad page 20)

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13

Meet Your Kalamazoo Promise Pathway Coach



Kalamazoo Promise Pathway Coaches are available to support students at each Kalamazoo Public Schools high school. They work closely with school guidance staff to help students navigate The Kalamazoo Promise scholarship application process.

Pathway Coaches are available at the high schools on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They offer both in-person and virtual office hours to assist seniors and their parents/guardians with:

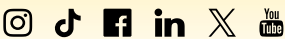
- Post-secondary planning, applications and enrollment steps
- Completing Promise-related forms
- Filing Promise Appeals
- Accessing resources for the FAFSA and other scholarships
- Connecting students with community resources and opportunities

Students can schedule an appointment with their Pathway Coach via email or in person.



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Loy Norrix

Melissa Nesbitt
(Interim Pathway Coach)
Pathway Coach Manager
mnesbitt@kalamazoopromise.com



Kalamazoo Central

Trenae Dunigan
tdunigan@kalamazoopromise.com



Phoenix & KILP

Breyana Wilson
bwilson@kalamazoopromise.com

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Applying for Financial Aid


Even with The Kalamazoo Promise covering tuition and mandatory fees, college comes with additional costs such as room and board, books and supplies and a computer. You may qualify for federal, state and institutional financial aid to help cover these expenses.

The U.S. Department of Education provides federal student aid, which is accessed by completing the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. Many states and colleges also use FAFSA information to determine eligibility for additional aid, including grants and scholarships. Even if you think you won't qualify for federal aid, **it's important to complete the FAFSA** — you may still be eligible for other forms of financial assistance.

FAFSA Delays & What You Can Do

Due to issues with the new FAFSA form, students may receive their financial aid package later than usual, possibly in **March or April**. This delay may impact your final college decision timeline.





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Student-Athlete
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Here's what you can do in the meantime:

- 1 File the FAFSA as soon as possible.** Visit www.FAFSA.gov to complete your application. In previous years, the FAFSA became available on October 1, but the new release timeline has shifted. The sooner you file, the sooner you will receive an award letter.
- 2 Visit colleges you've been accepted to or are considering.** Exploring campuses will help you make an informed decision. (See page 18 for tips on visiting colleges.)
- 3 Estimate your financial aid and compare costs.** Use the FSA Student Aid Estimator (www.studentaid.gov/aid-estimator) to get an idea of your potential aid package. Then, compare costs using the net price calculator at www.collegecost.ed.gov/net-price.
- 4 Apply for scholarships.** There are many scholarships available beyond federal aid. Visit www.tiny.cc/scholarships2024 for a list of opportunities and their deadlines.
- 5 Attend financial aid webinars.** The MiStudentAid program offers free online sessions about financing college. Register at www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid to attend live or receive a recording afterward.
- 6 Need help with the FAFSA? If you're experiencing issues with the FAFSA form:**
 - Use the **live chat** feature at www.studentaid.gov.
 - Email customerservice@studentaid.gov (Include screenshots if applicable to explain the issue clearly.)
- 7 Get quick access to all resources.** Scan this QR code to access direct links to all the websites mentioned in this article. ■



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Plan a College Visit

One of the most important things to do when deciding where to go to college is to visit the colleges you are interested in. College visits are easy to schedule; just reach out the college or university's Admissions or Enrollment Management Office. Some colleges will set up weekends or other days for groups of students to visit which will include tours and the opportunity to experience college life.

Visiting a college campus will tell you so much more than a brochure or website can. You can learn how diverse the college is and what the physical campus is like, and see the buildings you'll be taking classes in. It also gives you an opportunity to ask questions and meet the faculty that could be teaching you in the future.

Here's how to have a successful campus visit:

- Consider the best time to visit. If possible, try to visit on a weekday when classes are in session. You're not as likely to get a true feel of the institution if there aren't any classes for you to attend. It will also give you a feel for how busy the campus is.

- Phone the college to schedule an appointment for a guided tour, information session, or both. Be sure to ask for recommendations on what to wear for the visit. If the institution is farther away, ask about hotels in the area and parking passes.

- Once you get to the college, pick up brochures, financial aid forms and a campus map. Try to sit in a classroom, if possible, and get a feel for the environment. Talk to students about campus life and to faculty about courses you are interested in. Gather contact information from professors and admissions faculty in order to ask follow-up questions, if needed.

- Be sure to take your own tour of the campus, as the guided tour probably won't show the less attractive features of the institution. It will also give you an idea of how close or far away your classes will be to where you live.

- Save the schools you're really interested in to visit last. By the time you get to these picks, you will have figured out what is most important to you and how you can better gauge campus life.

Get an understanding of campus life by:

- Visiting dorms, dining halls, libraries, the student union and other campus facilities.

- Talking to current students at the college about their transition from high school to college, college courses, how they get home for breaks and whether there is campus transportation.



- Learning about campus services for students, including mental health counseling, academic advising, IT support, financial aid, medical care, academic support and religious services.

- Finding out what's happening on campus and what students are thinking about by looking at the institution's social media accounts, student-run publications, and campus radio station.

Ask LOTS of questions, such as:

- What are the class sizes like?
- Why did you choose this institution?
- What do you do in your free time or on the weekends?
- Do graduate students, juniors, seniors or professors mentor students?
- What is the graduation rate?
- What does the campus do to promote volunteering, student involvement in campus groups, and extracurricular activities?
- What are housing options and are first-years required to live on campus?
- Am I allowed to have my own transportation or can I bring my car on campus?
- Are there work-studies or part-time jobs available?

For Parents/Caregivers:

If a parent or caregiver is planning to visit campus with you, here are some questions they can ask:

About Financial Aid

- What are the financial aid options available?
- What is the year-to-year tuition increase? When is the next increase expected?
- What percentage of students were awarded financial aid in the past academic year?
- What additional costs should we anticipate?
- What are the work-study opportunities?

About career and employment opportunities

- What opportunities exist for undergrad internships?
- How many job fairs and recruiters are scheduled for each department?
- Are there mentorship programs? Are they free?
- Is academic counseling available? Is it easily accessible?

About health and campus safety

- What kind of counseling and support groups are available? What is the student-counselor ratio?
- What are the campus health and counseling services? What does the college health insurance cover?
- How is communication between faculty, students, parents and counselors facilitated and encouraged?
- How are roommates chosen? Can a student switch roommates due to compatibility issues?

About campus life

- Is the level of competition — social and academic — manageable?
- Are there any campus role models or student organizations to guide my student?
- If you belong in a minority community, are there minority community organizations? What is their presence?
- Is the cafeteria menu diverse enough to serve students from different ethnicities? What are other dining options?
- Is the campus population mostly local or out-of-state? Is campus populated on weekends? ■

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From Bronco freshman to Forbes

**Tinashe C. | B.S.'18 | University Studies
Loy Norrix graduate**

After graduating from Western, Tinashe founded Sosani Studios, an influencer marketing company that has worked with celebrities like Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson and Alicia Keys, earning him a spot on the 2025 Forbes “30 Under 30” list.

Now, Tinashe is giving back to Kalamazoo through Project 30-30-30, a program he created that will give 30 Kalamazoo-area high school and WMU students a \$3,000 scholarship and admission into a prestigious mentorship program.



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Payment Plans & Due Date Extensions are available. Call 311 or (269) 337-8000 for help.

The Community Action Agency of SW Michigan can help low-income households pay overdue bills. Call 211 or 1-877-422-2726 for more information.

Consumers Energy offers a free home analysis that can help customers save money by reducing energy and water usage. Call 1-888-316-8014 for more information.

www.kalamazoocity.org/Residents/Water-Sewer-Service/Help-with-Utility-Bills

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City of Kalamazoo Honors Young Activists with Social Justice Awards

THE CITY of Kalamazoo honored the winners of the 2025 Social Justice Youth Award in late January. Eight high school students received the award: six from Kalamazoo Public Schools and two from Portage schools.

The awards celebrate the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and recognize outstanding youth who are truly living his values and inspiring our community. This tradition honors eight outstanding young residents along with Dr. Lewis Walker and the program's sponsors.

All recipients received a certificate, cash award and a one-year membership to the NAACP.

The Kalamazoo Public School winners are:

Layla Hemphill, Kalamazoo Central High School, senior. Nominator: Dr. Deveta Gardner. Parents: Dontrae and Ebony Hemphill. Her award was presented by Patsy Moore, president, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Iota Sigma Omega.

Moore said: Layla exemplifies the spirit of social justice through her unwavering dedication to improving the rights and quality of life for others. Whether in her academic pursuits, community service, or peer interactions, she consistently challenges those around her to strive for excellence.



What sets Layla apart is her ability to see people as individuals deserving of kindness and compassion. From volunteering with individuals with physical and mental disabilities to organizing drives to support the homeless and raising funds for Alzheimer's research, Layla embodies the true meaning of selflessness. She approaches conversations with openness and respect, a quality that stood out during recent discussions among her peers on critical topics like women's reproductive health and K-12 education reform.

Layla is actively involved in several organizations within the Kalamazoo community. She serves on the leadership team for Confident Sole and is a dedicated member of the Ivylettes — the teen affiliate of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Winter Owens, Kalamazoo Central High School, senior. Nominator: Dr. Harold Swift, program director for Jeter's Leaders. Mother: Sabrina White. Her award was presented by Ineke Way of the Kalamazoo Nonviolent Opponents of War

Way said: In the community, Winter has served over 400 hours volunteering with Jeter's Leaders. In this role she has been an active mentor at the Boys and Girls Club for the past three years, and she has helped prepare provoking and engaging lesson plans.



She has joined in social change trips to volunteer in Washington D.C., New Orleans, and Atlanta. Winter has been on the honor roll during her high school years. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Student Council, Dance Team, and the Link crew. In addition, she has been on the basketball and track and field teams. Winter has been an active participant in community programs, including Girls on the Run and the Out of the Darkness Suicide Walk.

Winter has held a number of leadership roles. She was nominated by her peers to serve as Senior Representative on the Executive Council for Jeter's Leaders. She is currently working with several peers to present a workshop on racism in America and how that impacts youth, to be presented to peers from across the country.

Michael T. Scott II, Kalamazoo Central High School, senior. Nominator: Sadie Miles. Parents: the Revs. Michael and Tamara Scott. His award was presented by John Pinkster, director of South Operations for Life EMS.

Pinkster said: Michael T. Scott II is a compassionate young leader, having been grounded in the core beliefs of faith, family, and service. He has an outstanding focus on embracing and improving the Kalamazoo community through his involvement in academic teams, volunteering, and peer tutoring.



A naturally high achiever, Michael has been able to let his light shine through his leadership having

spent many years actively involved in the community through organizations such as the Kalamazoo Deacon's Conference, Southwest Food Bank and Dorothy Hobbs Food Pantry Ministry.

As a dedicated member of the Galilee Baptist Church, Michael serves in several capacities. Chief among these is his work with the congregation's media ministry which reflects his passion for digital arts and his desire to combine technical skills with his commitment to the faith community. Michael is also an active participant in the Progressive National Baptist Convention Youth Ministry.

Beyond his church and community work, Michael is a member of DECA, a business-based club that prepares emerging leaders for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management.

Isabella Morris, Loy Norrix High School, senior, Nominator: Rebecca Joyce, Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center. Parents: Jason Morris and Elizabeth Swarthout. Her award was presented by Dr. Betty Dennis on behalf of her husband Tony Dennis and the Lodge-Dennis family.

Dennis said: Nominated by Rebecca of KAMSC, Isabella is a definite leader at Loy Norrix High School and in our community. Isabella cares deeply about supporting other students. She is part of Powered by Youth, a Kalamazoo Youth Development Network program in which youth learned about and revised the Youth Program Quality Volunteerism and Community Service 1 of 2 Assessment to improve programs outside of school.



Isabella demonstrates leadership through several ways. She is in Girl Scouts, co-president of the KAMSC Ambassadors where she facilitates a group of 11th and 12th graders who communicate with all ninth graders to make them feel welcome and included at KAMSC regardless of what school or background they are from. She's on the Kalamazoo County Youth Cabinet (the youth advisory for Kalamazoo Youth Development Network), the treasurer on the Loy Norrix Executive Board, KAMSC Sizzling Summer science camp assistant teacher and

(continued on page 23)

Social Justice Awards *(continued from page 22)*

National Honor Society volunteer. She also is on the Girls Investigating Science and Math Opportunities (GISMO) for middle schoolers, makes blankets for the Gospel Mission, and helps with the school food drive.”

Dontray Hemphill Jr., Kalamazoo Central High School, junior. Nominator: Ebony Hemphill. Parents: Dontray Hemphill and Ebony Hemphill. His award was presented by Judy Woolsey, assistant to Marc Schupan of Schupan & Sons.

Woolsey said: Dontray is an active ambassador in our community as a youth leader in Bent Not Broken, an organization that advocates for young people involved in the criminal justice system.

DJ leads by example and his own journey has given him a better understanding of the challenges our young people face. He embraces diversity by creating spaces where all young people, regardless of their background, can feel welcomed, understood, and empowered.

DJ is also a fellow at the Justice Fellows program at the Lewis Walker Institute. He has courageously



told his personal story and is an advocate for juvenile justice reform. DJ has also participated in a visit to Café Momentum, a nonprofit restaurant model providing justice-involved youth with holistic support and career opportunities.

Paul Evans, Loy Norrix High School, junior. Nominator: Chris Aguinaga, principal of Loy Norrix High School. Parents: Lisa Evans and Delano Evans. His award was presented by Dr. Lewis Walker.

The Social Justice Awards were launched as the Lewis Walker Award in recognition of Walker’s work as a social justice advocate and professor at Western Michigan University

Walker said: Paul attends Loy Norrix where he is very busy serving as the current chair of the Student Senate Advancement Committee; president of Loy Norrix Black Student Union; and president of Loy Norrix Class of 2026.

Paul works to ensure all people, regardless of color, gender or religion are treated equally and without prejudice. He is known to be a vocal leader for equity at Loy Norrix High School. He is also an advocate for students of color and un-



derrepresented groups of students as part of State Rep. Julie Rogers Youth Advisory Council. Paul also serves on the Michigan Department of Education Student Advisory Council — specifically the historical justice committee.

A few of the organizations that represent his broader community work include Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan, DAYUM Urban Book Committee, Michigan Department of Education Student Advisory Council, Kalamazoo County Youth Cabinet, Community Peace Gun Violence Project Historical Justice Committee, Inner City Youth For Change, Kalamazoo Youth Action Council, and Kalamazoo Community Foundation Grantmaking Youth Advisory Council.

Two students from Portage Public Schools were also recognized at the awards ceremony: Ava Tate, Portage Central High School, was honored by Consumers Energy. Omar Elghawy, Portage Northern High School, was honored by Fifth Third Bank.

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Happy 100th Anniversary for Chenery Auditorium

CHENERY Auditorium may have been built as a high school auditorium — but it was never “just” a high school auditorium. Since opening its doors 100 years ago in 1924, the auditorium has served Kalamazoo as one of the city’s premier cultural spaces.

Kalamazoo Public Schools will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Chenery Auditorium with a community concert at 7 p.m. March 22.

The event is free and open to the public, but guests are asked to reserve tickets at chenery100.eventbrite.com.

The event will feature performances by members of the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra, Kalamazoo Concert Band, students from The Gilmore Piano Festival Piano Lab, and combined choir, orchestra and band ensembles from Kalamazoo Central and Loy Norrix high schools.

Lynn Houghton, regional history curator at the Western Michigan University Zhang Legacy Collections Center, will provide historical commentary about the building between musical performances.

Houghton said the auditorium impacted the cul-

“ [Artists] loved to come here because they loved the superb acoustics. Many of the European conductors told us it was just like playing at home. ”

**Edna Stanley
a long-time president of
the Kalamazoo Community
Concerts**



tural life of Kalamazoo by giving artists a quality performance space and providing the city with a big enough venue to welcome large crowds.

“I don’t think there is any question that it helped broaden the performers, speakers, and presenters that came to Kalamazoo and certainly brought Kalamazoo a new level of prominence,” Houghton said.

“Kalamazoo seemed to have an active artistic

community,” she said. “Traveling shows and local organizations were in place for many years. Venues such as the Academy of Music and a number of local theaters would host outside groups.”

The city also had a number of groups that hosted

“ Chenery Auditorium is such an incredible concert hall, one of the most beautiful in the whole of America. You feel you can whisper on stage and everything will be heard. ”

**Leif Ove Andsnes
Gilmore Artist**

performances such as the Michigan State Armory, First Presbyterian Church, and even the auditorium at Lincoln Elementary and Junior High School, which was completed in 1922. But, none of those spaces were as large as the Central High School auditorium.

“One of the impacts the auditorium had on Kalamazoo is the wide variety of artists that came to perform there,” Houghton said. In the early days, the space hosted everyone from

architect Frank Lloyd Wright to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, historian and philosopher Will Durant, and aviator Amelia Earhart.

Houghton wrote a history of the auditorium in 2010 after a major renovation of the facility. The timeline and quotes are drawn from her work.

(continued on page 25)



In 1960, Chenery held seats for 2,577 patrons. Now it holds seats for 1,550.



Chenery Auditorium hosted this Kalamazoo Central student extravaganza in the 1940s or 1950s.

Happy 100th (continued from page 24)

KEY DATES

- 1833 — Kalamazoo Public Schools began.
- 1857 — The district purchases property at the corner of Westnedge Avenue and Vine Street.
- 1859 — The district opens the Union School, for grades one through 12.

- 1922 — Proposition for new auditorium passes after two previous attempts fail.
- 1924 — The Kalamazoo Central High School Auditorium opens. Designed by Rockwell LeRoy and built by the DeRight Brothers, the auditorium has 2,700 seats — amost double the number of students at Kalamazoo Central High School. Dedicatory

Week activities include a Central High School band concert; presentation of a bronze memorial plaque by Paul Todd; speech by Dr. Marion Leroy Burton, president of the University of Michigan; performance of “Carmen” by the Geraldine Farrar Grand Opera Company.

(continued on page 26)

The Legacy of Howard Chenery

WHEN THE Kalamazoo Central auditorium was renamed Chenery Auditorium in February 1973, Kalamazoo Gazette reporter Tom Haynes wrote: “It is only fitting that the auditorium carry the name of Howard Chenery. The auditorium, they say, is one-of-a-kind in character and quality. And they all say the same thing about Howard Chenery.”

Born in 1895, on a farm near Comstock, Howard Chenery was perhaps destined to have an auditorium named after him given his lifelong interest and involvement in the theater. As a young man, he worked as a traveling salesman, performed with a traveling theater troupe, and served as a courier in France during World War I.

But eventually, he returned to Kalamazoo to study at Western State Normal School (now Western Michigan University). He began his career teaching English and drama at Kalamazoo Central. He departed again briefly to tour the country as a performer. The stock market crash of 1929 put an end to those travels, and he returned to Kalamazoo, becoming the full-time dra-

ma teacher at K Central, a position he held until his retirement in 1961.

During his time at Kalamazoo Central, it was reported that he directed more than 300 plays and musicals — and early in the life of the auditorium he sometimes mounted up to 10 plays a year.

In a historical booklet about Chenery Auditorium, Lynn Houghton of the Western Michigan University Zhang Archives, wrote, “Chenery loved working with young people, commenting that they ‘... were always so stimulating for me.’

“He wrote plays for his students in the belief that there was not enough appropriate material for them. For years, along with teaching, he managed the auditorium that now bears his name. It will never be known how much time, effort and even money he poured into the structure. Any profits from high school productions were plowed right back into the building.”

Running the auditorium was a family affair. Chen-



Howard and Ruth Scott Chenery, 1966.

ery was assisted by his wife Ruth Scott Chenery. For almost 40 years, she handled the business office for the auditorium.

He helped establish the Richland Village Players, which evolved into the Barn Theatre. He was a frequent actor on the Kalamazoo Civic Auditorium stage. And he authored numerous plays, including “The Ferguson Family,” which was performed on Broadway, as well as books about theater.

He understood the entertainment value of the theater but also championed it as more than mere entertainment.

In a 1999 Kalamazoo Gazette article, writer James Sanford said Chenery once spoke to a group saying, “There is a deeper underlying purpose (to theater) that should be recognized. That plays should contribute something to American life is as true today as at any time in the history of theater.”



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Happy 100th *(continued from page 25)*

1926 — The Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra moves from the Masonic Temple to the High School Auditorium.

1933 — The Kalamazoo Community Concerts move to the auditorium.

1959 — The auditorium begins work on a \$200,000 facelift thanks to a grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Completed in 1960, the renovation included new ceiling chandeliers, an orchestra pit, aisle carpeting, new auditorium doors, dressing rooms, lighting, ivory and gold interior colors. The number of seats is reduced to 2,577.

1997 — Millage pays for another renovation, which resulted in more legroom for patrons. The number of seats was reduced again to 1,889.

2007 — The Friends of Chenery forms to raise private funds to renovate the auditorium.

2010 — after an \$8 million renovation, the auditorium now seats 1,550 patrons with improved sight lines, created a “sound lock” between the auditorium and the lobby, and enhanced the auditorium’s famous acoustics. In the remodel, the auditorium installed



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- **Flushing does not affect the safety of the water system.**
- Tap water may temporarily appear cloudy right after flushing as minerals are stirred up, but this isn't harmful. Run your water in a bathtub or utility sink until it runs clear again.
- If you have scheduled construction during hydrant flushing or have questions related to the program, please call 311 or (269) 337-8000.
- Most flushing will take place at night between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. If necessary, daytime flushing will occur between 7 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.
- Avoid doing laundry immediately after flushing as some fabrics could become discolored.



View a larger interactive map at
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20 YEARS OF THE FRETBOARD FESTIVAL: THE VIDEO STORY

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UPCOMING EVENT FREE

THE 20TH ANNUAL FRETBOARD FESTIVAL

Friday, March 21 | 6 - 8 p.m. | Kickoff event with Brian Oberlin: The Artistry and History of the Mandolin. Two performances at 6 and 7 p.m.

Saturday, March 22 | 9:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. | Live music performances, regional luthier vendors, and workshops with local professionals.

For more information, visit kalamazoomuseum.org.



EXHIBIT NOW - AUG. 31 | FREE

THE ART OF ADVERTISING



Highlighting nostalgic signs and advertisements from local businesses from the permanent collection of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum, "The Art of Advertising" offers up an eclectic mix of advertising paraphernalia from bygone eras.

EXHIBIT NOW - AUG. 31 | FREE

COLORFUL COLLECTIONS

This new exhibit features items from the permanent collection of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum displayed in a rainbow of hues. Delve into the color spectrum like never before as you enjoy some of the brightest and boldest examples from the KVM's collection.



EXHIBIT NOW - APRIL 27 | FREE

RAY HARRYHAUSEN: MINIATURE MODELS OF THE SILVER SCREEN

Over 100 original and magical artifacts from the collection of animation filmmaker Ray Harryhausen are on display, showcasing his extensive career and the importance of his contribution to the art of stop-motion animation.

• **Film screenings:** Enjoy stop-motion animation films by Ray Harryhausen at 1 p.m. March 30, April 6, April 13! Visit the museum's website for the titles.

• **Lecture:** Hear the Scotland-based exhibit's curator at 1 p.m. April 27! *The Ray & Diana Harryhausen Foundation (Charity No SC001419)*



PLANETARIUM EXPERIENCE | MARCH SHOWS | \$3 PER PERSON

Visit kalamazoomuseum.org for details. Note: No shows on Saturday, March 22.

One World, One Sky: Big Bird's Adventure | 11 a.m. Sat.

30 min. | Pre-K - Grade 1

Join Big Bird, Elmo and their Chinese friend, Hu Hu Zhu, exploring the sky they share. Discover the Big Dipper and North Star, and take an imaginary trip to the moon.



Habitat Earth | 1 p.m. Sun. | 25 min. | Grades 4 & up

Explore the living networks and environmental connections that exist on our planet and affect our daily lives, and discover what it means to live in a connected world.

The Sky Above Us | 2 p.m. Sat. & Sun. | 35 min. | Grades 4 & up

Learn about some of the "celestial wonders" that can be seen overhead in Michigan in this live, season-focused program.

HOURS: Tuesday - Saturday | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Sunday | Noon - 4 p.m.

FREE GENERAL ADMISSION

SPECIAL NOTICE: The museum will be closed March 7

Note: Some areas of the museum may be closed due to exhibit changes, staffing needs, special programs or collections care. We thank you for your patience.

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and is governed by its Board of Trustees.



230 N. Rose St., Kalamazoo
kalamazoomuseum.org | 269.373.7990