

Kalamazoo Public Schools

# EXCELSIOR

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June/July 2025 · Volume 27, Issue 6

## Congratulations!

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and  
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Excellence  
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# Graduates' Talent, Grit Inspire Hope for the Future

## A Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Darrin Slade



**W**HEN YOU read through this edition of the *Excelsior*, you will see stories about students who have accomplished some amazing things in their young lives.

One young person has composed works of classical music. One of his pieces was performed for hundreds at the concert we organized to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Chenery Auditorium this spring. He has created works of art, classical pieces of music. I am not sure how one would begin to undertake such a task.

Another student earned 16 varsity letters. I understand the process of how one would go about earning a varsity letter - but 16!?! You would have to have the skill and commitment and the physical prowess to tackle - no pun intended - numerous sports each year of high school.

It would have been a nonstop effort of running, tackling, throwing, jumping, diving, swooshing, hitting and kicking. My 50-plus, school administrator's body can only wish that I had the energy and the strength to play four sports a year.

Other students rose to the challenge of taking advanced classes in high school, either by enrolling in numerous Advanced Placement classes or by attending the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center. Most of the students who took AP classes completed multiple classes, to earn college credits while still in high school. Some students attended KAMSC, located in the Community Education Center, to take an accelerated course of study with rigorous math and science classes.

Not only did these students rise to the intellectual challenge of taking these classes — but they learned focus, drive, and time management skills while juggling those courses and participating in extracurricular activities.

For other students their experiences included tremendous personal chal-

lenges, such as coming from another country and having to learn another language to begin their studies here. Some of these students faced incredible hardships in their family lives. Rather than quit, rather than giving into the feelings of despair or fear, they kept going, kept believing in themselves. They persevered. They graduated.

This group of graduates in particular represents the group that finished their middle school studies during the Covid pandemic. They lived through a period of intense anxiety and insecurity — and then plunged immediately into the challenges of high school. And still they persevered. They graduated.

I am certainly not suggesting they did it alone, and I know they would not suggest that either. Every student has someone they thank or acknowledge for providing support, guidance, inspiration, and love. It might have been the parent who wouldn't let them quit — the parent willing to drive them to practice or rehearsal or to a study group, the teacher who

took a moment to really listen and learn about who they were and their dreams, the coach or director who nurtured their talents.

There are people who have nominated them for awards and told them that they could accomplish amazing things. Those caring adults also did the hard work of helping them persevere and succeed. To all of the family members, and teachers and other staff, and community members who have lifted up these students so they could become the best version of themselves, thank you.

To the Class of 2025, know this, you are amazing. We look at you and we see so much potential and hope for the future. You have accomplished much in these first few years of life. We look forward to seeing what you will accomplish in the future when you draw on the same grit, determination, hard work and sense of adventure that you have displayed over the last 13 years. We are proud of all you have accomplished, we are excited for your next achievements.

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# Courtney Gardner: Being Center Stage Has Always Been a Thrill

**Name:** Courtney Gardner, 18

**Parents:** Kiawana and Aaron Gardner

**KPS Schools:** Spring Valley, Linden Grove, Kalamazoo Central High School

**In the Fall:** She will be attending the University of Michigan – Dearborn to study secondary education. “I’ve watched teachers who have taught me and been inspired by them.”

**Yearbook Title:** Drama Queen (In a Good Way). Last fall, Gardner received the Adam F. Carter Young Artist Award as part of the Community Arts Awards sponsored by the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo.

According to the Arts Council, she began performing at the age of 8. Her first appearance on stage was in “Disney’s Mulan Jr.” at Center Stage Theatre in Comstock, where she has appeared in 11 productions. She has been in six Kalamazoo Civic Theatre productions and several shows at Kalamazoo Central.

She serves on the Center Stage Theatre Youth Board, has been on the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre Playwriting Committee, and is a member of the KC Improv Team and the KC Hawthorne Singers.

“I was both surprised and honored to win the



**Courtney Gardner, Kalamazoo Central 2025. At right, Gardner in the “Six, The Musical: Teen Edition” at the Kalamazoo Civic.**

award,” Gardner said. “I wasn’t expecting that. The Civic nominated me and I was like, ‘Wow, there are so many other people.’ To be

thought of was really nice and surprising.”

**Getting Her Start:** “I started with a choir class. I had this teacher named Don Dillon. He had a choir that I performed with in elementary school, and he introduced me to Center Stage Theatre. That’s where I performed my first musical ‘Disney’s Mulan Jr.’”

And that was all it took for her to catch the acting bug.

“It was fun to perform for other people and to entertain them. People will say ‘Ooh, it must be difficult to be up in front of hundreds of people,’ but not really. It looks difficult to other people, who aren’t performing. To me, it’s the easiest thing I’ve ever done.”

**Shows:** Some of her favorite roles have included Irving in “Sleep Hollow,” Skipper in

“Madagascar Jr.,” Maui in “Moana Jr.” and Anne Boleyn in “Six, the Musical: Teen Edition.”

She’s also appeared in “Honk Jr.,” “Into the Woods,” “Frozen,” “Polka Dots,” and “Lion King.”

“I just try to be the best that I can. I try to be funny. Most of the characters I’ve played have been comedic. I really like doing this. It’s not a commitment if you like what you’re doing. I always try to give the best that I can, even if I’m tired.”

**Choir and more:** It all started with choir and choir remains a key creative outlet for Gardner. She sang in middle school and at Kalamazoo Central she has been a part of the Advanced Mixed Choir and the Hawthorne Singers. She has also been a member of the Link Crew and National Honor Society.

**Advice for students:** “Get involved with stuff. Don’t wait until you’re a junior or senior. Start early. Keep your grades up. Focus on them early if you want to have a relaxed senior year. And don’t skip the fun stuff like the pep rallies and the football games. Those who do really miss out.”

**Thanks to:** “I have to thank my parents who support me in everything. They take me to all the rehearsals. I’d say thanks to Don Dillon for introducing me to theater and to all of my Center Stage and Civic families. I have to thank Mrs. (Julie) Pelligrino-Hartman. She’s a very good choir director. She likes to see you succeed.”



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# Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program 2025 Graduates

Alhalmoushi, Mohamad  
Mohamad Saleh  
Armstrong, Ash  
Banks, Kayla Nichole  
Bostick, Kamora Chrishayla  
Unique  
Bus, Austin James  
Byrd, Brook Anne  
Carter, Kyrell Mar'Quan  
Coleman, Iesha Lashay  
Dawson, Devon Aric  
Diaz Ocampo, Mary Jane  
Dunn, Andrew Scott

Fuentes Sican, Lilian Nayely  
Garcia, Milagros  
Glenn, Janiya Nicole  
Grubbs, Olivia Jade  
Henderson, Ka'mirah Kellis  
Hoggan, Ariel Nicole  
Irizarry, Anthony Douglas  
Jett, Annie Marie  
Kemp, Camille  
Kleinbrink, Jack David  
Lee, A'Myra Danielle  
McShan, Elijah LyVell  
Morrow, Kamirah Kamari Marie

Nath, Sidhartha  
Perry, Julia Elizabeth Leyan  
Quick, Mitchell Evan  
Rolland, Zacchaeus Gabriel  
Schaberg, Kaiden Isaac  
Simon, Kallen Dacey  
Smith, Levarn William  
Stevenson, Ariana Mae  
Thomas, Taariq Corday  
Wilkin, Emmet Giacomo  
Williams, Dezire De'Shy  
Woodburn, Cameron John  
Young, Jucari Immanuel



Annie Jett walks onto the Chenery Auditorium stage.

# Adult Education 2025 Graduates

Abdulazim, Ola  
Banks, Arionna  
Baptista, Shadrake  
Batts, Jared  
Brewer, Joseph  
Brown, James  
Callighan, Kelli  
Carter, Jamani  
Cockerham, Chandler

Crusemeyer, Brianna  
Doubley, Marquel  
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Evans, Seth  
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Galinis, Konner

Geib, Christopher  
Gladney, Trenton  
Heady, Rakyiah  
Hedin, Naomi "Nick"  
Howard, Jacorveon  
Hrab, Holly  
Huff, Kailee  
Hux, Alysen  
Knobloch, Joshua

Lamb, Jonathon  
Leos, Daniel  
Meersma, Erik  
Munyaneza, Olivier  
Niles, Sasha  
Reed, Jr., Audie  
Rey, Darcelle  
Robinson, Timothy

Seals, Jozlin  
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# Obed Gonzalez Aguilar: Unlocking the Secrets of English Through Choir, Musicals

**O**BED Gonzalez Aguilar, 18, was feeling stuck. He'd been in the United States for several months and enrolled as a junior at Loy Norrix High School.

But after his first trimester in mostly English as a Second Language classes, he didn't feel like he was making the progress he wanted.

"I think it's because I like to learn by myself. I consider myself a quick learner, so I think I was getting stuck on the basic stuff. And, sometimes when you're surrounded by people who are still speaking your same language, you don't feel there is a need to take the risk to learn a new language," Aguilar said.

He was born and raised just outside of Mexico City. His parents and younger siblings moved to the United States in August 2022 for his father's work as a minister. He followed in March 2023, finishing that school year online with his school in Mexico.

He said he'd taken a few English classes in Mexico, but nothing that helped him actually communicate with others.

His second trimester at Norrix he chose to join general education classes instead of ESL classes. His counselor placed him in a choir class — which he



**Obed Gonzalez Aguilar, Loy Norrix 2025**

immediately thought about dropping.

"I'm a musician but I didn't have any interest at all in being in choir. Once I got to know my teacher and all of the people who were in choir, I fell in love with it," he said. "The reason why it helped me a lot is because my choir teacher Marissa Bergh was one of the first teachers who didn't teach me like I was less than other people just because I was learning.

"I think she really cared about me. I can say she's been like a second mom to me here in school. She cares about all of her students. She helped me with my pronunciation and even my social skills. Miss Bergh has been my most influential teacher. You can tell she loves what she does. She's not here just to teach us how to sing but how to speak for ourselves. More than anything, she's just a great human being."

Choir has helped the baritone with his English language skills. He has worked his way through Mixed Choir, Advanced Choir and Master Singers, the last having a demanding repertoire of music in other languages. It has helped with his pronunciation, diction and overall confidence.

It was Bergh who inspired him to audition for the school musicals. "The musical theater people here at Norrix were so warm and welcoming. Teacher Dan Lafferty was also really supportive and patient with me. He gave me a chance with the musicals. I fell in love

with the choir and theater program here at Norrix."

Aguilar had roles in Norrix productions of "Urine-town," "Oklahoma," and "Romeo and Juliet." His success there inspired him to audition for and get a role in the community musical "17 Again" at the Kinderberger Performing Arts Summer Festival. This year he enrolled in the Education for the Arts musical theater class and studied with Denene Mulay Koch, one of the founders of Farmers Alley Theatre.

"Because my environment was full of people who only speak English," he said, "I forced myself to learn English."

Aguilar is the son of Ezequiel Gonzalez and Evelyn Aguilar and plans to attend Hope College in the fall. He plans to major in music education, and minor in theater and worship ministry.

Aguilar said he is a Christian and has long served on the worship team of his father's church. He plays drums, bass guitar, and has basic skills on piano and guitar — although, now, he considers his voice his main instrument.

"I am a religious person," he said. "Through singing and music, I feel it is the most honest way I can express the love and conviction that I have for the church and for God. I have always felt that I have something to say and singing in choir has given me a way to say that I want. I just love it.

"If I am having a rough day or a really not good week, just performing on stage or singing in the church and being part of the worship services is something that keeps me grounded."

Aguilar said his best advice for high school students: Be grateful.

"I think most seniors and juniors are so focused on what's next. They're waiting to be done with high school and want to start their lives. I disagree. I think you have started your life a while ago. Some people do not realize the giant privilege and opportunity it is to be in KPS and be in a school that gives you the option to go to college and you don't have to pay any part of your tuition. You can go to community college or take EFAs or CTEs that show you what your careers could be.

"My parents have been my biggest support. I know if it wouldn't be for them, I would not be here and I couldn't have done everything that I have done. I just want to make them proud — not in a toxic way — but just to give back some of what they gave me. My best advice is be grateful for what you have. Be humble and make the most of what you have."

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# Maggie Spybrook: Finding Her Power in the Pool, at KAMSC

**A**T A certain point in her swim career, Maggie Spybrook had to ask herself, “What if I really tried?”

Her answer: The Kalamazoo Central graduate won her first ever state title this spring at the MHSAA Division 1 state swimming meet, claiming first-place finish in the 100-yard butterfly with a time of 55.60 seconds.

“Winning at state was so exciting. I knew it was going to be close. Going into the prelims on Friday, I was seeded fourth, and I was seeded first going into the finals. The energy in the pool was so exciting. I don’t know how I stayed so calm.

“My junior year I was way more stressed. I had all of these college visits and I thought, ‘I have to show coaches good times’ and I was tense. I came back this year with a new mindset. It could not have gone any better honestly.”

Spybrook, 17, has committed to swim for the University of Toledo in the fall. She is the daughter of Jessica and Steve Spybrook, who is a guidance counselor at Linden Grove Middle School.

Spybrook said she has been swimming for 10 years. She was drawn to swimming as a member of Kalamazoo United and inspired by her mother who swam for Columbia University.

In addition to the 100 fly, she swims the 100 backstroke, the 200 fly and the 200 back. She’s also swum the 200 medley relay and the 200 free relay.

When she started swimming, she immediately started winning. “I thought, ‘Ohmigosh, I’m so good,’” she said with a laugh. “Then when I hit 11 or 12, my times started staying the same. I had thought I would just continue to drop time and continue winning.”

She played softball and swam until eighth grade, when she dropped softball because she realized she had to really commit to swimming to reach her goals.

“I feel like a lot of people burn out from swimming because it takes so much time, but it’s always been super fun to me. I enjoy going to practice and I like working hard,” she said. “I really focused and worked really hard. I started practicing a lot more. When I got serious, I saw I could get a lot faster.”



**Maggie Spybrook, Kalamazoo Central 2025**

She credits Coach Jim Center’s rigorous approach to training with helping her reach her goals. There were dry land morning workouts from 6 to 7 a.m. most weekdays, swim meets every Tuesday night and some Saturdays (with mandatory practices before the meets), and afternoon practices in the water from 3 to 5 p.m.

“Me and coach were pretty close,” she said. “We would talk a lot. I always want to know about the training and the meets and the plans. I like to talk about that stuff, like lineups for the meets. He always saw me as a good leader. He definitely helped me become a better leader by talking about leading by example and by leading outside of the pool.

“He’s a very strict coach. No nonsense really. I feel like I work really well with that. It was exciting to win it this year at the end as a senior. He was super excited for me and the school and the team.”

In addition to swimming, Spybrook works as a swim instructor and attends the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center. The combination of KAM-

SC and the rigors of training was challenging for the young swimmer. .

“I have super long days. I have practice in the morning, then I’m here at Central. I go home, eat lunch, and then I go to KAMSC, then go to practice in the afternoon. I’m out of the house the whole day,” Spybrook said. “I feel like I’ve learned so much about time management and using my time wisely.”

She’s also learned about being a good competitor. She said the secret lies in the training and the practice. By the time it comes to the actual race, “I focus less on actually swimming and more on just racing. The more I focus on the actual swimming, the more tense and stressed out I would get. I need to be able to get in the water and just race.”

While she seems to have ultimate confidence in the pool, she said she had a lot of doubts about KAMSC and its advanced math and science courses.

“I assumed everyone was so smart and I was just ... there,” she said. “Through the years, I’ve gained confidence in myself. I ask questions and raise my hand. I learned to apply myself. I took AP Chemistry this year to prove to myself that I could take the harder class. I would not have called that when I was younger.”

She cites KAMSC biology teacher Colleen Chapoton as her most influential educator. “Miss Chap always believed in us as students. I think that when I thought I am not as smart as everybody else, like this research is hard, this test is hard — she was so supportive and helped us gain confidence. Her class is hard. It also taught me a lot about how to study and how to manage your time and how to be a better student.”

Being at KAMSC on top of swim took some adjusting her freshman year, she said. “I would get super stressed. I’d think, ‘I have to do all this and I have a meet and practice’ and all of that. It’s definitely a bit of a sacrifice because you do have to make more time to study, but I wouldn’t change it. I would go to KAMSC again if I had to do it again.”

And, she loved that AP Chemistry class so much, it has provided inspiration for her future studies. At the University of Toledo she will be enrolling in a six-year doctorate of pharmacy program.

“My advice for freshmen would be just don’t stress about everything so much. It’s all going to work out as long as you keep working hard — but have balance and perspective on everything. That’s definitely something I learned over the last year.”

# More than Two Dozen KC, LN Students Commit to College Athletic Programs

CONGRATULATIONS to the following Kalamazoo Central and Loy Norrix high school students who have committed to continuing their athletic endeavors in the post-secondary arena.

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Albion College  
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### Sahriah Casey

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### Elliott Anderson

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### Jack Nicolai

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### Will Dominianni

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### Eiden Jonaitas

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### Cristian Vargas

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Soccer

### Zelda Molitar

Kalamazoo College  
Soccer

### Ke'yosha Blackwell Robinson

Kalamazoo Valley  
Community College  
Track

### Rashad Waller

Olivet University  
Football

### Xander Frost

University of Arizona  
Wheelchair Tennis

## KALAMAZOO CENTRAL

### Annalise Alkema

Grand Valley State  
University  
Cross Country and Track

### Bryce Billings

Aquinas College  
Track and Field

### Bode Brill

Kalamazoo College  
Football and Lacrosse

### Madison Bush

Michigan State University  
Cheer

### Kaiden Claussen

Olivet University  
Football

### Malaysia Davis

Kalamazoo Valley  
Community College  
Basketball

### Jeremy Dixon

Michigan State University  
Track and Field

### Eugene "Tro" Fellings

Purdue University  
Baseball

### Colin Hoenle

Kalamazoo Valley  
Community College  
Baseball

### Madison Jones

Grand Valley State  
University  
Swimming

### Avio Lateef

Olivet University  
Football

### London Rabb

Kalamazoo College  
Softball

### Cor'nise Shepard

Albion College  
Basketball

### Maggie Spybrook

University of Toledo  
Swimming

### Maurice Streeter

Hope College  
Football

### Austen Tigues

Lead Prep Academy  
Football

### Connor Vandam

Lead Prep Academy  
Football

### Olivia Westley

Siena Heights University  
Soccer

### Dwayne Yarborough

Kalamazoo Valley  
Community College  
Basketball



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Anna Whitten Hall on the Arcadia Commons Campus

#### Session 2

Aug 5 - 8, Aug 12 - 15, Aug 19-23  
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Anna Whitten Hall on the Arcadia Commons Campus



# Sofia Bogard: Challenging Herself on the XC Course, and the Classroom

**Name:** Sofia Bogard, 17

**Parents:** Agatha and David Bogard

**KPS Schools:** Loy Norrix High School

**In the Fall:** University of Michigan, on the premed track

**Yearbook Title:** Roadrunner or AP Girl

**Running, Running, Running:** Bogard's family moved to Kalamazoo in 2021 before the start of her freshman year. They were attracted in part by The Kalamazoo Promise — and by the opportunity to move closer to family in Illinois where Bogard was born.

She began running in middle school in Arizona, inspired by her father's own high school running career. Once she moved to Kalamazoo, running helped her find a friend group and community.

"I love the team. I love my teammates. I feel like we're super, super close, because it's not a very big team. We're always having pasta parties. We go to each other's house to eat before big races. Everyone is so supportive of each other."

Coach Brad Schmidt was an important part of that community, she said. "He's a great coach. He made practices really great. When I was new and didn't know anyone, he'd run beside me and talk to me. He puts so much work into track and cross country."

Bogard was named MVP her junior and senior years and this fall she set a personal best of 19.38 for the 5K at a state meet in November.

"I do cross country because it comes naturally to me and I'm pretty good at it," she said. But, to move from being the second best on the team in her freshman and sophomore years to being the best took a commitment.

It's easy, she said, to drop from 28 minutes to 25 minutes — but much harder to drop from 25 to 20 minutes for a 5K. "It's a lot harder as you get faster." She began running everyday, logging around 40 miles a week in the summer, and she began going to an indoor track instead of taking a break over the winter.

"And, I just mentally got a lot better. I learned how to actually race and be a competitor. You have



Sofia Bogard, Loy Norrix 2025

to mentally plan out how your race is going to end up, what splits you're going to do per mile. You focus on keeping your

form and keeping your pace.

"Your brain will tell you that you want to stop. You have to tell yourself the whole 19 minutes that you have to keep going."

In addition to cross country, she also ran track, competing in 4x800, the 4x400 and the 1600. She is also a member of the National Honor Society.

**Never Met an AP She Didn't Like:** The focus she puts into running also plays out in her studies. Bogard has taken seven Advanced Placement classes while at Norrix: U.S History, Chemistry, English Language, Spanish Language, Biology, European History, and Calculus A/B.

"I really like the academic rigor. I like that people in the classes are academically focused, which allows you to go more in depth in the topics. And you can be with the same teacher all year long, so you develop a better connection with your teachers and your classmates."

**Best Advice:** "It's important to try things outside of your comfort zone. It's important to try clubs and sports. It's never too late to join something like cross country as a senior. I know people who have done that and they wish they'd done it sooner. It just kind of makes you enjoy school a little more. At the end of the school day you have practice and you are going to train and do something that you love. You get to know so many people through running."



The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo, along with the cities of Parchment, Portage, Allegan, Oshtemo Township, Vicksburg and Kalamazoo, as well as numerous venues, artists and the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation are thrilled to bring you the 2025 Summertime Live concert series! All types of musical genres are represented, so there's truly something for everyone! Best of all, each concert is FREE of charge so bring your family and friends.



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# Jeffrey Deloney III: From 'Good, Smart, Bad Kid' to Graduate

**Name:** Jeffrey Deloney III, 18  
**Parents:** Sharnika Mills and Jeffrey Deloney Jr.  
**KPS Schools:** Edison Academy, Milwood Magnet School, Loy Norrix and Phoenix high schools  
**In the Fall:** Kalamazoo Valley Community College to pursue culinary arts. He hopes to join his father's food truck business and to use a degree in culinary arts from KVCC to help expand that effort.

**Yearbook Title:** Most Likely to Tough It Out  
**School Was Not His Thing:** Deloney was one of the speakers at the Phoenix High School graduation. Perhaps no one would have been more surprised by that fact than his younger self.

Deloney describes himself as a “good, smart, bad kid. I didn’t have a good school life.” He always found a way to be there, but “I was always that kid in the corner who was mad, or sad, or emotional.”  
But his parents were always there and always supportive. In elementary school, he might be having a bad day, but his father would pull up to the school with pizzas or cupcakes and “just make the whole day better.”  
By seventh grade it had gotten really bad; he didn’t have any patience or interest in school, but his parents insisted that he keep going and forced him

to continue his education.  
“If it wasn’t for them, there wouldn’t have been Jeffrey Deloney walking across the stage.”

**Finding the School that Was His Thing:** He spent his freshman year at Loy Norrix, but it wasn’t easy. Coming out of the Covid lockdown and remote learning, a bad situation was only worse. He said he couldn’t concentrate among the distractions of a large high school program and it was hard to figure out how to study in that group setting again.

“I think Covid made us forget how to learn in person and meet people. And, I think we were all overthinking what life was going to be like in the future. I think my anxiety was worse trying to figure out what life was going to be after virtual and hoping I wouldn’t catch an illness or anything.”



Phoenix Principal Ajamian Gardner congratulates Jeffrey Deloney III, Phoenix 2025.

Then a relative, who had been at Phoenix, suggested to him and his mother that he try Phoenix starting in the fall of 2022.  
**Finding the Path to Graduation:** The smaller, more intimate learning experience was a good fit, he said. “It was positive and comforting. You have to get the work done but they feel like a family. The teacher might feel like a brother or an auntie. The security guard was like a nice uncle — and he’ll be the security guard.”

Deloney said he especially appreciated Principal Ajamian Gardner, who joined the school in the 2023-24 school year.  
“Mr. Gardner was more than a principal. He was a caregiver. Before I even shook his hand, I noticed he was a caregiver first. He made sure you were alright outside of school. I respect that a lot. It was almost like he knew everything, he knew your moods and everything going on.”  
“I would 100 percent recommend Phoenix for people who are struggling with anxiety or education issues or who have lost their focus in school. I definitely feel Phoenix can help.”



City of Kalamazoo  
241 W South St  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

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The City of Kalamazoo is making critical investments in our water and wastewater systems. These investments are funded by all of us through the rates we pay. Rates in Kalamazoo remain low compared to other communities, but we understand that rising costs may create hardships for some households. Financial and other aid options are listed below.

Payment plans and due date extensions are available. Call 311 or (269) 337-8000 for help. The Community Action Agency of Southwest Michigan can help low-income households pay overdue bills. Call 211 or 1-877-422-2726 for more information.

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[www.kalamazoocity.org/UtilityHelp](http://www.kalamazoocity.org/UtilityHelp)

Si necesita ayuda para pagar su factura de agua o alcantarillado, hay ayuda disponible. Para obtener información en español, llame al 311 o al 269 337-8000.



# Isabella Morris: Succeeding in School – and Finding Purpose Outside of School

**Name:** Isabella Morris, 17

**Parents:** Elizabeth Swarthout and Jason Morris

Her father is her most influential person, she said. “He has the best advice, especially for me being a Black woman. That’s a huge part of my identity. I’ve run into a lot of experiences that tore me down in a way and he always helped me pick myself up.”

**KPS Schools:** Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School, Milwood Magnet School, Loy Norrix High School and the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center

**In the Fall:** She will attend the Michigan State University Lyman Briggs College with plans to start a pre-med track, studying human biology and Spanish.

**Yearbook Title:** Doing Well and Doing Good.

**KAMSC Kid:** Growing up she always liked math and science, but she says she wasn’t always good at math. However in the eighth grade, she was placed in advanced math during the lockdown.

“I’m thankful I was, because otherwise I wouldn’t be in KAMSC. I did well and my math teacher suggested that I apply for KAMSC. I was like, ‘I might as well.’ I’d heard about it from other people. I wanted to go to U of M at the time, and I heard that a lot of people

who went to KAMSC got into U of M.”

**Harder than You Think:** “I feel like it’s known for being rigorous. You go there expecting that, but it’s also a lot more challenging than people think. It’s like you’re being put in college classes at 14. I feel like a lot of people aren’t ready for that. I don’t know if I was either.

“One of the benefits of attending KAMSC is that you eventually learn how to study, if you want to succeed. Students also learn to be self-driven and motivated. Students learn how to overcome their fears and advocate for themselves in the classroom. That can be intimidating not just because of some of the teachers, but because the other students seem really smart.

“The most challenging thing for me was being able to ask for help. I guess in middle school, I didn’t need to ask for help. I understood everything and I got good enough grades. When I got to KAMSC, it was like ‘oh this is really hard.’ I needed to learn to ask for help and learn not to be afraid to do that.”

**Making KAMSC Better:** Ultimately, she is glad she attended KAMSC because of the rigorous learning environment and the friends that she made there. If she could change one thing about KAMSC, she’d like to see a more diverse student population.

“I made friends with all of the Black students in my class. We found each other for a sense of normalcy. I would say that’s the worst thing about KAMSC. I think they get a lot of kids from different backgrounds but they don’t know how to support them. I think they have been working on that.”

**Making a Difference:** Morris said when she goes to college, she will look for those student groups that support underrepresented populations in the sciences and hopes to help by offering tutoring for other students.

Community involvement became a key issue for her during her freshman year at Loy Norrix. She felt a need to do more than just study. It was around this time that she became interested in being involved in the Black Lives Matter movement. A friend introduced her to the Kalamazoo County Youth Cabinet (the youth



Isabella Morris, Loy Norrix 2025, with her parents Jason Morris and Elizabeth Swarthout when she received her Social Justice Youth Award at Kalamazoo City Hall.

advisory board for Kalamazoo Youth Development Network).

“That experience motivated me to apply for other leadership positions. Before, I was really shy. The cabinet and working with and meeting people in the community really helped me come out of my shell.”

Since then, she’s built an impressive volunteerism resume with:

- 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
- Treasurer on the Loy Norrix Executive Board
- National Honor Society
- Girls Investigating Science and Math Opportunities (GISMO) for middle schoolers
- Earlier this year, she was named a recipient of one of the City of Kalamazoo’s Social Justice Youth Awards for her community service.

“It’s been busy, but a good busy. I feel like you kind of have to find what you’re passionate about and go for it. School is really important, and you should keep your grades up. But, if you’re doing nothing outside of that, it just gets kind of boring. I feel you miss a lot of opportunities to find yourself as a person.”

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# Congratulations!



Ja'Moni Williams addresses the Kalamazoo Central Class of 2025 during commencement at Wings Event Center.



Haneef Hampton prepares to walk across the stage at graduation.



Loy Norrix graduates celebrate graduation with



Phoenix High School Principal Ajamian Gardner congratulates J'Toryin Patterson at graduation.



Jeffrey Deloney III, Phoenix 2025, speaks at the commencement ceremony.



Principal Christopher Aguinaga congratulates Tobin Waling, LN 2025.



Phoenix students stand proud with staff before commencement. Front row from left, paraprofessional Antrell Langford, and tutor Desmond Gilbert. Back row from left: Javeon Lewis, Dennis Edmonson,



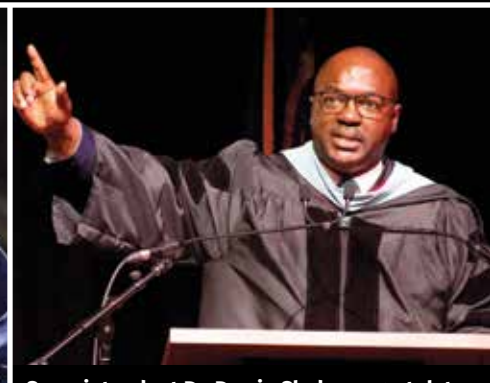
KILP Principal Kim Kirshman presents Austin Bus with his diploma.



Kalamazoo Central Valedictorian Sophia Barnard addresses her class.



Board of Education Trustee Patti Sholler-Barber congratulates Eleanor Cook, LN 2025.



Superintendent Dr. Darrin Slade congratulates the students at the Kalamazoo Central commencement.





the traditional tossing of the mortarboards at the end of the ceremony.



KILP Salutatorian Levarn "Lee" Smith enters Chenery Auditorim for graduation.



onal Daquayvion Wilson, Jeffrey Deloney III, Nehemiah Lewis, and Randy Hamilton II.



Martayvion Heard prepares to walk during commencements with teacher Deon Kelley.



Connor VanDam and Austen Tígues congratulate each other at the Kalamazoo Central commencement.



Emmet Wilkin, Taariq Thomas, Levarn "Lee" Smith, and Jucari Young celebrate together after the KILP graduation.



Ariyanna Hall and Kyriana Hinton proudly show off their Phoenix regalia before walking in the commencement ceremony.



# Loy Norrix High School 2025 Graduates

Abdul-Mutakallim, Hawwa Zakirah  
Adalbert, Brody TR  
Agdanowski, Dimitri Alexander  
Agnello, Charlotte Mae  
Agnello, Emerson Kate  
Aguilar, Edward  
Albarran-Trujillo, Jisela  
Albertson, Kaitlyn Anne  
Alexander, Zachary  
Alhasan, Yousef Subhi  
Allen, Ian  
Almendarez-Cazares, Anthony  
Anderson, Elliott Nathan  
Asbeury, Mario  
Ashbaugh, Dylan Cody  
Barrett, Evelyn Hazel  
Basurto-Rojas, Yadira Bello, Manuel  
Bennett, Hunter Thompson  
Bennett, Jackson Daniel  
Bierlein, Avery James  
Bierlein, Elizabeth Ann  
Blackwell-Robinson, Ke'yosha Alexis  
Bogard, Sofia Michaela  
Bond, Layla Ashton Marie  
Boothby, Hannah Emily Lynn  
Borick, Grayson Michael Josef  
Bowen, Audrey Nevae  
Bowerman, Bella Madison  
Brady, Daisy Elenore  
Bragg, Noah Christian  
Braun, Fiona Therese  
Brockman, Alanna Christina  
Brown, Christopher  
Brown, Moses Sherrod  
Buchanan, Laila Ann  
Buck, Audrey Jane  
Burnett, Odisey Nakeia-Shanee  
Burns, Caleb Steven  
Burrel, Nevaeh Samone  
Burton, Isaiah Michael  
Cabrera-Schram, Sabrina Remi  
Caldwell, Aubrianna Marie  
Campos-Jones, Marcus Alexander Zachary  
Carter, Reana Leea  
Cartwright, Liam Seth  
Casey, Sahriah Renee  
Castillo-Gyllstrom, Edmundo Antonio  
Chheu, Kent  
Chupp, Addison Grace  
Ciokajlo, Edwin Joseph

Coats, Tayla Marie  
Cole, Heaven Rae  
Coleman, Trumaine Antione  
Compton, Ramiah Teshawn  
Cook, Cale James  
Cook, Eleanor Grace  
Cook, James Evan  
Coppage, Kamari Syrai  
Courtney, Anna  
Courtney, Erik John  
Crookston, Liam Isaiah  
Cruz-Salazar, Yamilet  
Daniels, Macy Marie  
Davis, Dajuan Lamarial  
De La Garza, Jullius Ahmad  
Dennis, La'Mya Danielle-Denise  
Doerschler, Charlie Benjamin  
Dominiani, William G.  
Driz, Jethro Isaiah Evangelista  
Drzick, Ruby Xu Jun  
Dugger, Brynn Noel  
Dunfee, Eloise Amy Peterson  
Dunigan, Eyonna Nicole  
Dunn-Smith, Aubary Carroll  
Durham, Lucas Anthony  
Easter, Zhion Christopher  
Eberhard, Logan Tyler  
Eberhard, Peyton Jaymes  
Echavarria, Sofia Lorena  
Edmonds, Georgia Elizabeth  
Edwards, Emerson Shepherd  
Eggleston, Jyazz Evan-Ethan  
Ellis, Kiara Emalia  
England, Saphira Kae  
England, Sarinity Ellen  
Estey, Alexander Gabriel  
Euceda, Christian Manuel  
Evans, Jalen Maxwell  
Evans, Nadia Jah'Nyne  
Evans, Za'Raya Kay-Shawn  
Faria, Anelka Fernando  
Firdavsi, Farkhunda  
Fletcher, Samuel Charles  
Flores Contreras, Berenice  
Foster, A'Quan  
Fredericksen, Sadie Frances  
Freeman, Ciarra  
Fried, Luke James  
Frink, Catherine Olivia  
Frost, Alexander  
Gann, Arianna Lynn  
Garcia, Roberto Adan  
Gardner, Addisen Amber  
Garza, Brayton Duane  
Gero, Eric Matthew  
Gistelinc, Renee Jolie



**Dr. Darrin Slade congratulates Bo Velarde-Chan at the Loy Norrix graduation on May 28.**

Gonzalez Aguilar, Obed  
Goodrich, Allie Elizabeth  
Goossen, Derrick Lee  
Gorham, Xander Michael  
Gorman, Harper Jane  
Goschke, Emma Violet  
Graciliano, Krystalin  
Gray, Emma Sophia  
Greene, Lucas Drew  
Greer, Jaydah Paris  
Greilick, Connor Avery  
Grubaugh, Amaris Joy  
Guerrero Jamaica, Gary  
Haase, Fletcher Cade  
Hall, Morgan L.  
Hamid, Elham Muzamel  
Hamid, Elias Musawir  
Hamilton, Audrey Nikole  
Hampton, Haneef Emmanuel  
Handley, Vayda MaKay  
Hanley, Lana Gene  
Hansen, Claudia Adalena  
Harper, Flora  
Harris, Cayden Marshall Scott  
Harris, Devin Lee  
Harris, Gracie Elizabeth  
Hasan, Wajeeh Ul  
Hausman, Carter Lee  
Hawver, John Elliot  
Hayworth, Jayde Marie-Renee  
Heath, Anderson John  
Heath, Brady William  
Heath, Carter David  
Helms, Cavan Preston  
Henry, Jaylen Isaac

Herrera-Villalobos, Axel Johan  
Heyart, Alicia Rose  
Heyart, Samantha Grace  
Hitchcock, Kayla Makia  
Holtz, Erica Lynn  
Hostiguin, Lilyanna Maria  
Hudson, Aniyah Monay Marie  
Huerta Angel, Emiliano  
Hunt, Noah James  
Hunter, Olivia Rose  
Ikeria, Yapelengo Lucie  
Jackson, Anaviah Yanice  
Jackson, Jada Joyce  
Jager, Keegan Gage  
Jamieson, Ryan Alexander  
Jefferson, Pierre  
Johnson, Ari Gabriel  
Johnson, Isabella C.  
Johnson, Madison Michelle  
Johnson, Ziyah Lenae  
Jonaitis, Eiden  
Jones, Erykah Neveah  
Jones, Riley LaShawn  
Jones, Sayani  
Juarez, Joselyn  
Kaplan-Neumann, Violet Elizabeth  
Kays, Sasha Eva  
Kelley, Nevin Scott  
Kelley, Ryan Michael  
Kelly, Matthew Kevin  
Khallawi, Teef Hossin  
Kilduff, Shayla Rae  
Kimbrough, Naomi Rachael Sue  
Kinsler, Aurora Lee

Kiplinger, Nolan Charles  
Korth-McDonnell, Izaak John  
Lafuente, Dominic Isac  
Lara, Jonathan  
Lawler, JaNyiah Deshae  
Leighton, Liliana Isabell  
Lesley, Quince' Ramone  
LeSuer, Simone Gabrielle  
Lewis, Elsie Jean  
Lewis, Ne'Caryous Niel  
Lindblade, Hope Ann  
Link, Elyse Abigail  
Lipsey, Kayla  
Little, Ethan Isaiah  
Locke, Mary Elizabeth  
Longtin, Lily Mae  
Lopez, Ashley Connie  
Lowry, Hailey Nicole  
Lucas-Mejia, Luis Alberto  
Maize-Scaife, Raylee Ann  
Markovich-Edwards, Oscar Joseph  
Martin, Jordan Alicia  
Martinez-Martinez, Jesus  
Martinez, Adamariz  
Martinez, Ruben Gabriel  
Masterson, Efreem James Goodwill  
Masterson, LuElla Belle  
Mathews, Jayson Fay  
Matthews, Trae'Vion Laquinn  
McClellan, William Lee  
McClinton, Terrell Lamar  
McCord, Arianna Monae  
McFarlen, Joseph Clark  
McKee, Camille Diane  
McNair, Jireh Shaki  
McNamara, Isabel Anita

Medina-Juarez, Yadira Joselyn  
Meek, Jordan Douglas  
Mendez-Rodas, Jennifer  
Miedema, Anna Elizabeth  
Mielke, Tatum Grace  
Miller, Chase Evan  
Mizner, Henry Elias  
Molitor, Zelda  
Moncrief, Amilyah La'Rose  
Moore, Carlie Lynn  
Moore, Nadia Sofi  
Moore, Sebastian Atreyu  
Morris, Isabella Evelyn  
Mortimore, Johanna Rose  
Mullins, Nola June  
Murphy, Emmalee Danielle  
Nelson, Bjorn Scott  
Newman, Quinn Anthony  
Nicol, Owen Robert  
Nicolai, Jack Edward  
Nordmark, William Caleb  
Nowling, Jayvon Darnell  
Nshuti, Merveille  
Nuyen, Connor James  
Ortega, Nahir Danae  
Ortiz, Venelope Roselyn  
Osborne, Renn  
Painter, Jackson Quinn  
Palmore, Ashari  
Peake, Richard Deandre  
Perry, Brynnlee Grace  
Perry, Unique Shy'ann  
Pifer, Arthur Miamoto  
Pinks, Aleisha  
Pirochta, Maddox  
Porter, Reginald Davon  
Pyle, Jonathon Janak  
Qosimzoda, Abubakr  
Quinn, Holland Aisling  
Rackley, Gideon Xander  
Rahimi, Zahra  
Ramirez-Garcia, Nila Riel  
Ramos Lopez, Edwin Yahir  
Reed, Jadarion  
Reeves, Ellie Aspen  
Richardson, Nuiyen Daimon  
Richter, Penelope Lianna  
Ritenour, Ava Etienne  
Robinson, Omarion Deshon  
Rocco, Jason Robert DiMaggio  
Root, Mirei Fury  
Rose, Solomon James  
Ruegsegger, Jackson Robert  
Ruelas, Jesse Michael  
Russell, Lucie Brown  
Safi, Saman  
Salinas, Sophia

Sanchez Salazar, Juan Manuel  
Sanders, Kayvionna Marrie  
Sang, Sri  
Santiago, Mia  
Scavarda, Isaac Thomas  
Schnell, Samuel George  
Sedore, Andrew Joseph  
Severino, Addison Mae  
Shaffer, Cameron Early  
Shanahan, Edi Jo  
Shannon, Austin Richard  
Shirzai, Shir Shah  
Simbron-Garcia, Omar  
Simonian, Zaynah Marie  
Smith, Khaniel Aliana Renee  
Somerville, Miracle A'Jhanay  
Sparks, Leah Renee  
Spinney, Cole Steven  
Ssebugwawo, Jaden Robert  
Stapp, Christian Alexander  
Sternberg, Josi Esther  
Stewart, Armaree  
Sutton, Keylee Jaide  
Tate, Audra Allen  
Tellez, Leslie Abril  
Therkildsen, Evan Edward  
Thomas, Owen Terrence  
Thompson, Hayden Jo  
Thompson, Robin Clinton  
Thrasher-Hagerty, Jayden Lee  
Torres-Antonio, Arely  
Treadwell, Michael  
Trost-Bailey, Clementine Constance MacDonald  
Trujillo, Jessica Joselin  
Vargas, Cristian  
Vasquez, Jahir  
Velarde-Chan, Bo Tsuen  
Vera Montoya, Bryan  
Vihamba, Daniel  
Vizcaino-Machado, Dylan Alexander  
Wagner, Leland Robert  
Waling, Tobin Isaac  
Waller, Rashad Marshawn  
Ware, Mariah Lajean  
Webb, Alaun Monee Sade  
Wells, Jaylin Lavantae  
Weston, Westlee Miles  
White, Alexis Rane  
Williams, Keshawn  
Willis, Janeya Lenique  
Wilson, Jaida Rene  
Yarworth, Nia Isabelle Laura  
Zirkelbach, Kaylee  
Zollner, Matthew Gerald



# Kalamazoo Central High School 2025 Graduates

Abbott, Aysha Lynn  
Acosta, Eva Victoria  
Adams, Layla Hanaan  
Ahmed, Hamza Naeem  
Al Faraj, Batool  
Al Hasan, Shahed  
Abdulraheem  
Al Hasan, Yaqoub  
Abdulraheem  
Al-Gharib, Barra Abdullah  
Saleem  
Alberts, Christopher Justin  
Alexander, Crystal Diane  
Alfaraj, Hassan Basim  
Alhasan, Lin Emad  
Alkema, Annalise Mae  
Alkema, Nicholas David  
Alnajjar, Rana  
Alvarez, Ibi Asiri  
Anderson, Azlyn Grace  
Anderson, Se'Anna Nicole  
Andrzejewski, Bridgette Anne  
Annis, Connor Jay  
Arabi, Nadine I  
Averhart, Kaelyn Nakole  
Awad, Wasem Nidal  
Azevedo, Nina Nichole  
Babineaux, Kimyah Lanai  
Bacalia, Addison Mae  
Bailey, Cecilia Rose  
Barnard, Sophia Marjorie  
Maria  
Barroso, Albert James  
Barrow, Zaria Raneer  
Bartley, Martel T  
Bassuny, Sarah B  
Bates, Jade Blossom  
Bayyapuneedi, Raj Krishna  
Bean, Kimani Latrell  
Bennett, Conner Treyvon  
Bigby, Keimareya Sari  
Billings, Bryce Zachary  
Blair, Kathryn Irene  
Blue, Aneliece LiMei  
Brill, Bode Alexander  
Brooks, Layne Michael  
Broughton, TyJanae Nicole  
Brown, Janae McKayla Nicole  
Monae  
Brown, Kalayla Alysia  
Bryans, Hazel Christine  
Buch-Price, Serenity Rose  
Burnett, Ronnell Jahmier  
Burney, Keelan  
Bush, Azzi'reara Samir-  
LaMiyaa Mijuan  
Bush, Giuliana Amanda  
Bush, Madison Jane  
Bush, Tymel Tayshawn

Buttar, Govind Singh  
Call, Claire Elizabeth  
Carpenter, Samara Rose  
Carter, Ineisha Terrell  
Castaneda, Abraham  
Castaneda, Alonso  
Castillo, Stephanie Michelle  
Chaj-Garcia, Odilia Elizabeth  
Chaudhry, Syeed Malik  
Chavez-Hernandez, Noelia  
Arcelia  
Childs, Maya Elizabeth  
Cisek, Honorah Jayne  
Clarke, Keegan Sue  
Claussen, Kaiden Andrew  
Coleman, Domonick  
Marquay  
Colvin, Bryce Albert  
Conroy, Hayden Sophia  
Contreras, Sean Carter  
Cooney, Tara Roisin Marisol  
Cottrell, Madison Nicole  
Coulter, Triston Louis  
Cox, Amelia Elizabeth  
Cox, Jasmine Renea  
Coy, Cameron Marais  
Cramer-Erbes, Olivia Marie  
Crigger, Kiara Sue  
Crumell, Alexandria Yvonne  
Cruse, Kenneth Edgar  
Cubbison, Jaylin Antonio-  
Isaiah  
Cullifer, Gavin Daniel  
Currier, Cedar James  
Darwiche, Lila Elizabeth  
Davis, Malaysia  
Davis, Niza Nicole  
Denham, Antonio  
DeWaele, Clara Helen  
DeYoung, Hope Elizabeth  
Dezsi, Jackson Stanley  
Dixon, Jeremy Ollie  
DuBois, Keira Renee  
Dunn, Aaliyah Aarie Pamela  
Dyson, Caleb Jeremiah  
Eaton, Layla Jay  
Edwards, Skylar Brielle  
Evans, A'Naijah-Naye'  
Dionne Jahquii  
Evans, Jayden Ja'Ron  
Eversole, Chloe Magdaline  
Fellings, Eugene James  
Ford, Aminah Khadijah  
Foster, Anaesia Lakay  
Frank, Maurice Darnell  
Frederick, Isabella Rosemary  
Gajewski, Maggie LeeAnne  
Garcia, Angel Gabriel  
Gardner, Courtney Cierra



Kalamazoo Central students march into Wings Stadium during graduation on May 29.

Garrett, Jazmine Marie  
Gates, Denaja Clenice  
Gauthier, Madeleine Elise  
Goodwin, Nathaniel Shemar  
Rah'Kim  
Grady, Camri Sade Gloria  
Gray, Aza Zakiya Noni  
Greis, Wyatt Jackson  
Grice, Rachel Elizabeth  
Gross, Sofia Marie  
Gumbis, Jared A.  
Gunderson, Ryann Sofia  
Haggar, Alana Marie  
Hale, Aaron James  
Hale, Jlyn Kiya  
Harmon, Morgan Kymborlee  
Harris, Makiyah Elizabeth  
Dariah  
Harris, Melodi Alaya-Faith  
Hartman-Ponicki, Marina Mae  
Harvey, Alayna Brooke  
Hassnawi, Mahdi  
Haus, Mazal Vered  
Hay, Arria Aileen  
Hegelmann, Aiden Werner  
Hemphill, Layla Michelle  
Herbert, Sophia Marie  
Hernandez, Candelaria  
Ismene  
Hill, Deray J  
Hoenle, Colin Joseph  
Hoffman, Lincoln Ross  
Holt-Klaver, Evelyn Elaine  
Hoover, JYcear  
Hoover, Yeroc Justyce  
Hopper, Aidan Eran  
Howard, Honesty  
Hudok, Benjamin Xander  
Huyck, Charlotte Laney  
Illa, Nafissa Souley  
Jaber, Nadeen  
Jackson, Azzaria Winter  
Jackson, Julissa Marie  
Jackson, Raynadia Artai  
Jauregui, Carlos Roy  
Jn Baptiste, Yvie Gaelle

Johnson, Isaiah Antonio  
Thomas  
Johnson, Jayden Jamar  
Johnson, Maxwell Edwin  
Jones, Diontae Terell  
Jones, Madison Kay  
Kappenman, Logan Fox  
Keller, Molly Lillian  
Kelly, Nasiya Daryonna  
Kheyari, Almar Abdul Alim  
Kibezi, Regina  
Killingsworth, Samar Arvon  
King, Travis Lowell  
Kirk, Nia Arie  
Kirschensteiner, Katherine  
Noelle  
Kleis, Malia Kisakye  
Knight, Elijah  
Knight, Ezekiel  
Knox, Quella Jania Seville  
Koning, Noah Thomas  
Kroes, Olivia Lynne  
Krotz, Phoenix Rai  
Kwete, Mardochee  
Lumbamba  
Kyle, Kinaya  
LaForest, Caleigh Marie  
Lake, Dane Alexander  
Lange, Madison Genevieve  
Langford-Gonzalez, Maliyah  
Sanii  
LaPorte, Callie Joslyn  
Lateef, Avio Elias  
LaVanway, Josslyn Marie  
Lavender, Amaya Marie  
Lee, Jasmin Deseray  
Lehmann, Addison Marie  
Leslie, Olivia Arija  
Linares, Giovanna Jaritza  
Lindsey-Allen, Azaylin Olivia  
Little, London  
Longoria, Thomas James  
Lopez-Chavez, Carlos Oscar  
Lopez-Chavez, Stephanie  
Lovell, Asia Kelise Ann  
Luwela, Lameck

Maaz, Naser Dyaaldin  
Maldonado, Edgar David  
Marroquin, Jordi  
Martinez Maldonado,  
Isabelle Magdaline Grace  
Mathews, JaVaughn Maurice  
McClain, Sha'nece La'Nay  
McDaniel, Michael Jaleel  
McDonald, Ny'Ellis  
McKinney, Makai Jerrell  
McNeely, Kosygin Dobrayan  
Mechtenberg-Berrigan,  
Jonah Thomas  
Melchor, Mia Mairey  
Merkling, Jamison Alexander  
Mielke, Lillian Grace  
Miles, Evangaline Lucille Mae  
Mills, Saira Kennedy  
Mischen, Camille Ann  
Molina, Haley Lynn  
Montague, Nyah Coby  
Montoya Galvan, Valeria  
Moore, Ma'Kye Juson  
Morrow, Michael Owen  
Mughazy, Miriam Mustafa  
Muha, Atreyu Ethereal-gage  
Nguyen, Danny  
Nguyen, Justin Bao-quan  
Nickens, Ja'Juan Lamaar  
Eugene Lynn  
Nunez-Santizo, Kate  
Estefania  
Nyirenda, David Anthony  
Oram, Cailynn Grace  
Osuki, Otasowie Randy  
Owens-Anderson, A'ziahya  
Marie  
Owens, Demarcus Ja'Rea  
Owens, Winter Neveah  
Ozanich, Kaitlyn Mae  
Patterson, Kynnedi Lynn  
Pawlowski, Davon Lee  
Peplinski, Xavien  
Polk, Jazmine  
Pollard, Henry James  
Pollock, Emerson Taylor

Pompey, Azaria Rosa  
Powell, Khaliah Sharon  
Praise, Enoch Prince  
Prater, Hailey Christine  
Presley, Trellina Karakia  
Punschke, Jase Matthew  
Rabb, London Kay  
Rand, Mar'Shawn Gregory  
Reaume, Grayson Neil  
Reeder, Magdalena Tzigana  
Reeg, Donovan Michael  
Resh, Addison Elizabeth  
Reynolds, Danielle Arianna  
Rhodes, Katelyn Mae  
Richardson, Antonio Jamal  
DeVonte  
Richardson, Ava Michelle  
Richardson, Danae' Sharrie  
Emone  
Richardson, Daniella Liberra  
Ring, Isabella Marie Deanda  
Risley, Katherine Sophia  
Rivera-Jimenez, Evelin Gisel  
Roberts, Dorian Michal  
Roberts, Saige Isabella  
Routhier, Brynn Laurel  
Rufus, Tyvon Da'Mari James  
Ruiz, Kiana Alayna  
Salinas Perez, Adaysi  
Sanchez-Moreno, Bryant  
Savage, Chaneayl Leshae-  
Renee  
Schuetz, Estella Katherine  
Scott, Michael Thomas  
Secord, Andrew  
Shaw, Octavis  
Shell, Alyssa Elizabeth  
Shepard, Cor'Nise Daviyah  
Sheppard, Samaria Ne'shay  
Sherrill, Prince Damon  
Simmons, Preston Joseph  
Skuratowicz, Sean Ronald  
Smith, Ayanna Leann  
Smith, Paige Katherine  
Snell, Kendrae Rio  
Snyder, Josette Guinevere  
Soule, Spencer Charles  
Spada, Joseph William  
Spaulding, Carter James  
Spencer, Dominic Daniel  
Spiller, Aliya Sophie-Lanelle  
Spybrook, Maggie Kennedy  
St. John, Jordan David  
St. John, Sylvia Fay  
Stamp, Kristopha Kasembe  
Stanfill, Matai Hakeem  
Stewart, Kehion Malakiye  
Stoll, Colton John  
Stormer, Jordan Darcell

Stovall, Airah Dior  
Street, Aneje' Ray'Shawn  
Streeter, Maurice Lauary'ae  
Stubbs, Richard Lee  
Sunner, Ekroop Kaur  
Swindle, Kamarionna  
Dashawn  
Taylor-Harris, Alaiya Nichole  
Taylor, A'aniya Chrishelle  
Mazie  
Thaumanavar, Kaljona Zhezha  
Thompson-Clark, Eboni  
Tidd, Sawyer Jay  
Tien, Calista Marie  
Tigues, Austen Jace  
Tipton, Kentia Kaylynn  
Todd, Amelia Ann  
Tomlinson, Danika Lee  
Totten, Grace Maree  
Trejo, Jesse Yair  
Trejo, Juliana Jimena  
Tutak, Emin Bugra  
Vallar, Alexis Nicole  
Van Zoest, Elijah Teshar  
VanDam, Connor Joseph  
VanLent, Brianna Nicole  
Vega, Renato Enrique  
Velten, Natalie Luisa  
Veral-Cabrera, Luis  
Warner, James Hayden  
Washington, Gavin Dewayne  
Watkins, Reginald Darnell  
Weaver, Dante Byrne  
Weddington, Na'Vieyah  
Wesley, Olivia Christine  
Westbury, Astrid MacGreggor  
Westcott, Andrew Daniel  
White, Brice James  
Whitman, James Gearhart  
Wilburn, Charles  
Wild, Caley Marie  
Wilfong, Chase Christopher  
Williams, Addison Marie  
Williams, Cameron Jakob  
Williams, Ja'Moni Tre'Shawn  
Williams, Kardierre Maurice  
Williams, Kristin Gabrielle  
Williams, Makiyah  
Williams, Olivia May  
Woods, Johnique Takyia  
Wozniak, Dominick Austin  
Yarbrough, Dwyane  
Yarbrough, NyAree Crystal  
LeeAnn  
Young, Aniya Nicole  
Young, Ariana Marie  
Yuag, Samma  
Zduniak, Hope Mary  
Zummach, Olivia Micaela

# Bode Brill: Sweet 16 Varsity Letters in Four Years

**W**HEN Bode Brill's older brother came home in 2021 and told the family that he had broken the record for the number of varsity letters earned by a Kalamazoo Central student, his little brother Bode was impressed.

"I thought that it was so cool," said Bode Brill, 18. "About 10 to 15 seconds later, I decided, 'Oh wait, I can beat that.' So, that's been my goal since eighth grade."

This year Bode Brill graduated with 16 varsity letters — beating his brother's record of 15.

That was four years of football, two years of swimming, four years of lacrosse, three years of soccer and one year each of skiing, bowling and golf — and it doesn't count the one year on JV soccer.

This fall, he will attend Kalamazoo College, where he will be playing football and lacrosse. He is the son of Michelle Brill and Bradley Brill. In addition to his brother Breven, who is a senior at Kalamazoo College, he has a sister Kiana, who attends Western Michigan University. Michelle Brill and the siblings moved here when Bode Brill was 10 so the family could take advantage of The Kalamazoo Promise. He attended King-Westwood Elementary School, Linden Grove Middle School, and Kalamazoo Central High School.

Brill said he's always loved sports — ever since his first days playing soccer at his preschool in Japan.

"It's exhilarating knowing that I can play my heart out and win the game for my team," he said. "Like, in football, I have the chance to kick the winning field goal, or in soccer, I have the chance to create an opportunity for my team to score. In lacrosse, I do faceoffs, which is like in hockey when they start off with the puck in the middle. I can dictate whether we win the ball. A lot of times my position can really dictate how a game goes."

And, yet, while those moments thrill him, Brill said he has not always been a confident player.

"I used to be when I was little and I was obviously better than the other kids, but as the years progressed, I was less confident. I would become scared to go into games," he said.

Freshman year everything was new and exciting, but he didn't start on varsity soccer and it rattled him. "I had a fear that I wasn't going to be playing good enough and that I was going to be benched."

He said he addressed the fears head on, the simplest way he knew how: by working harder.

"I make sure that I always give it 100 percent in practice, that I make sure I'm getting better as a player. I just take care of what I can do for myself to be-



come better," he said.

When he's on the field, or in the pool, or on the course, he tries to start off strong. He knows that is key for him — otherwise he gets stuck in his head worrying about the negatives or any mistakes he's made.

Every sport has a story for Brill. His favorite sport may be football, because it allows him to use his brawn. He's a kicker so he can use the strength in his legs, but he likes to use his upper body to make tackles — he's made 20 throughout his high school career.

"I like the physicality of the sport. In soccer, I tend to push other people around the field, and sometimes I get called for that. In football, I can hit someone and it's fully legal. I love that part of the game," he said. "Everyone tells me I was not meant to be a soccer player; I was meant to be a linebacker."

But, his favorite sports memory is from soccer — scoring a goal in the last minute of a game versus Portage Central High School last year.

Lacrosse is a game he developed a love for during

Covid lockdown, when he and his brother would toss the ball back and forth during long family walks through the neighborhood. And while he loves football the best — his lacrosse teammates are his favorite.

"They have been my favorite team throughout all of my sports," he said. "They're incredibly loyal and super funny. They've just been a good environment for me to be around."

He joined skiing because he'd always wanted to get on a hill. Bowling was just incredibly fun and he got to bowl for free throughout the winter. And golf — well, he did golf specifically to put him one over his brother's record.

While it wouldn't seem like he had time for any other activities, Brill was also a member of the National Honor Society, and this year competed in DECA, the business club, making it to the state finals in sports and entertainment management.

If there is one person who has helped him accomplish all of his athletic feats, that would have been "Coach Mom." She wouldn't let him quit, which he admits wasn't always easy. There were definitely times he wanted to, like when he was nursing a broken foot and couldn't leap off the starting block in swimming. He didn't want to compete because he didn't want the handicap of the slower water start — but she pushed.

"It's a great feeling now. It wasn't always a great feeling. There was a lot of stress involved. Sometimes I just didn't want to play a season, but my mom pushed me," he said. "Without her I probably wouldn't have broken the record — maybe not even matched it. She was adamant on me beating my brother because she knew I was always in the shadow of how great my brother was."

"My mom is the most influential person in my life. Without her, I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you. I wouldn't have the school record. I wouldn't have met nearly as many people. I wouldn't have nearly as many connections. I wouldn't be close with some of the people who are some of my best friends now."

**Bode Brill, Kalamazoo Central 2025, has committed to playing lacrosse and football at Kalamazoo College.**



# Keylee Sutton: Graduating Was a Promise to Herself and Her Brother

**K**EYLEE SUTTON is a success story. And, while there have certainly been people who have helped along the way, one can't help but feel that it was her own resilience that has been most important to her success.

Sutton, 18, recently graduated from Loy Norrix High School through the KPS Virtual Program.

Sutton attended Northeastern Elementary, Milwood Magnet School, Loy Norrix High School and KPS Virtual. Asked if she enjoyed school, she says the answer is more complicated than "yes" or "no."

Growing up, her parents were addicted to drugs and alcohol, and because of that, she missed a lot of school. Then Covid happened, during which her little brother Leonard, who she called "Mookie," died from complications from epilepsy and cerebral palsy.

"I was angry all the time. I didn't know how to talk about my emotions," she said. "I wanted to do all of these things to avoid my feelings. I did all the things teenagers shouldn't do."

In addition to continuing her attendance problems, when her father got sober, Sutton chose to move in with her mother who was still struggling with addiction. The lack of structure, the challenge of starting school and trying to fit in after having been in remote learning, were not a good combination.

"Loy Norrix was definitely great. The people were great. All of the teachers, counselors and principal all of them were great," she said. "But it was hard. We went into virtual at the end of seventh grade because of Covid and then freshman year happened and we didn't really have middle school.

"We went from sitting at home doing virtual all the time and not socializing. You become very antisocial when you're stuck in the house all the time and can't see anyone and you can't do anything."

When her then-boyfriend enrolled in the Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program, she tried to follow, but found that she didn't really need the credit recovery program. Luckily KILP Principal Kim Kirshman told her about the virtual program.

"Once I got in, I loved it and I stuck with it," she said.

For Sutton, who has lived on her own since she was 16, KPS Virtual allowed her the flexibility she needed to keep working full time. In addition to the online classes, she would meet as needed with counselor Phylecia DaSilva.

"Virtual is challenging. You have to be able to do a lot of stuff by yourself," she said. "You don't have someone telling you need to do this or you need to do that. You can get really behind. I've always had to put work



Keylee Sutton, KPS Virtual/Loy Norrix 2025

and money first. I didn't think I was going to graduate this year. Miss DaSilva was my push through. She was there every step of the way. She'd tell me 'You know you're better than this. You have to push yourself.'"

Sutton, ironically, works at a rehab facility as a recovery technician. She helps patients with their day-to-day activities. She helps them learn life skills or shares information about community and educational opportunities. She serves as everything from a community navigator to a shoulder to cry on.

Her desire to help others is in part inspired by peo-

ple who have helped her such as DaSilva, and Aaron and Stephanie Perry. Aaron Perry, who was one of her middle school teachers at Milwood and now teaches at Maple Street, and Stephanie Perry, who is the dean of students at Norrix, and their "whole family really impacted my life. They still check up on me and send me emails here and there. They were shouting for me at my graduation. They stepped up to be that school dad and mom that I always wanted."

Now that she's graduated, she's planning for the future. She said she's working on college applications with DaSilva. She'd like to attend Western Michigan University, which is close to her home and to her work.

On one of her brother's birthdays, "I remember talking about making a promise to my brother to be better than my parents were. I wanted a brighter future. No one in my family has graduated from college. No one in my family had a good job. They didn't have credit. They didn't make it through to what they wanted to be. For the longest time, I thought it was all going to be a dream for me too. But, no. The cycle needs to end. I feel my brother is a part of that. I will live for him. I will do all of these things for him.

"I would tell other students to believe in yourself 100 percent. If you don't believe in yourself, you can't do anything. You have to have that drive. If you think you can do it, you really can. All your teachers and counselors say the same thing. I never believed them — until now."

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# Chris Brown: Finding His Stride as He Reached for Excellence

**Name:** Chris Brown, 18

**Parents:** Tomika and Christopher Brown

**KPS Schools:** Prairie Ridge Elementary, Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts, Loy Norrix High School

**In the Fall:** Western Michigan University, aerospace engineering

**Yearbook Title:** Striker

**Chris Is His Name, Bowling's His Game:** Brown has been bowling since he was a young child, but he stopped during his middle school years. When high school rolled around, he was looking for a sport after his mom told him that he had to stay active. "She would not allow me to stay home. She said I had to get out of the house."

Bowling was a natural choice. All of the Browns bowl, and he knew coach Myke Brandt from a children's league at the old Pinz bowling alley. Brandt made all the difference in Brown's high school bowling career.

"He was really helpful and helped us to do better. He didn't focus so much on winning. He wanted to focus more on having fun. That's a really core concept that I love about most sports. If you're not having fun, you're really not winning." The team did win first place in the region his sophomore and junior years, and placed second in his senior year.

And since his mom insisted he have a sport each season, Brown also played tennis and ran track. In track, he initially ran the 100 and 200, but Coach Ted Duckett slowly brought him up to the 400 and 800 because "he said I have the stride of a gazelle" and simply



Chris Brown, Loy Norrix 2025

didn't cycle through his strides quick enough to sprint.

"I respect Coach Duckett. He's an amazing person and I want to do my best for him — always."

**His Favorite Competition Was Academics — but**

**Not at First:** Coming out of the Covid pandemic, Brown said he really lost a lot of drive. He'd been in the National Junior Honor Society in middle school, but during remote learning he became disconnected from school and started hanging out too much on Discord,

the online chat forum used by gamers.

"I didn't care. I acted like my freshman year didn't matter and I blew it as if it were nothing."

His parents took extreme measures to change his behavior: They took his phone. They took his PlayStation. It worked, and now he is grateful that they stepped in.

**Working It Out:** "My freshman year, I had a 2.63 grade point and my junior year I had a 4.0. They set me up to come into my junior year and really be ready to take on AP classes and to do school."

"Every year counts. You have to put in your effort from the get-go. It's like a race. You can't start jogging your first 100 meters in the 400. That's your placement. You want to get out strong, maintain for the next 200 meters, and then have a full out sprint for the last 100 meters."

His junior year he took AP Physics and AP European History. His senior year, he took AP Calculus, Chemistry and Literature. The math and science classes were his favorites and they were taught by his favorite teachers, Dr. Jamie Weaver and Michael McCauley, who have helped him to reach for his goal of becoming an aerospace engineer.

"In elementary school I wanted to be an astronaut, then I wanted to be like Neil deGrasse Tyson, an astrophysicist. Then, my junior year, I thought 'I don't want to look at the stars, I want to send things to the stars.' My dream project in aerospace engineering is to create an inter-atmosphere space vehicle that would work both in the atmosphere of Earth but also be able to function in the vastness or emptiness of space."



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# Hamza Ahmed: Writing the Soundtrack for His Future

**Name:** Hamza Ahmed, 17

**Parents:** Emily Strong and Naeem Ahmed

**KPS Schools:** Woodward School, Milwood Magnet School, Kalamazoo Central High School

**In the Fall:** He will attend Western Michigan University to study music composition.

**Yearbook Title:** Class Composer. The Kalamazoo Central band has performed several of his musical compositions, including "A Day and A Night," which the band played at its spring concert and at the Chenery Auditorium 100th Anniversary Concert.

**How he got his start in music:** "Basically they put me in band in the eighth grade. I didn't intentionally join. By then, I knew I liked music to some extent. I was like 'why not let it happen and try it out.' I picked a French horn because in orchestras the horn melodies always sounded really cool to me.

He also played the mellophone for three years in marching band.

**Composing journey:** In middle school, "I just started messing around; I didn't compose seriously for a while. They performed one of my pieces in 10th grade, but it wasn't the best music ever written. It

wasn't until later in my junior year that I felt like it was pretty good."

Ahmed said there is composing software that can help a young composer. It also helps to listen to a lot of music to learn about the sounds that appeal to you and to see how other composers might combine the sounds of different instruments. He is inspired by Romantic era music, such as Tchaikovsky and late Beethoven.

"It's music with longer, prettier melodies. It's the stuff I like to listen to and is most like the stuff that I like to make."

**On hearing his music being performed:** "When I got started it was kind of weird. It was what I imagined — and now it's happening. Since I'm in the band, I'm also playing it. It's cool of



Hamza Ahmed, Loy Norrix 2025

course. Once your music begins to be actually played by people, you have a lot of pressure. Not only do you wonder 'Are they going to be able to play it?' but you're putting yourself out there. Hopefully, your music is artful. That can be kind of scary; that really takes confidence."

**Advice for other students:** "Get to know other people, students and teachers. They might teach you some things and make you grow as a person. Also, it makes high school more enjoyable if you have friends. And get enough sleep. You might think you can survive for a while, but eventually it builds up, and you're not getting enough sleep ever."

**Most influential people:** "Mr. (Ryan) Kasperski. Without him, I wouldn't have gotten any performances. I wouldn't be known at all. And, everyone in band who played the music. My parents are pretty cool for supporting me."

A large graphic for the "Color Our World" game board. It features a vibrant, multi-colored chameleon (blue, green, yellow, orange, red, purple) perched on a brown branch. The background is a light green with a hexagonal pattern. The text "Color OUR World" is prominently displayed in large, bold letters, with "OUR" in a darker shade. Below it, "June 1 to August 30" is written. To the right, there is a smaller image of the game board, which includes a chameleon and a globe. Text on the right side of the graphic reads: "Pick up your game board at any KPL location. Read all summer long and win prizes!". At the bottom, a dark brown banner contains the text "Learn more at kpl.gov/summer" and the Kalamazoo Public Library logo and name.

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World  
June 1 to August 30

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# Kalamazoo RESA Presents Outstanding Achievement Awards Across Host of Programs

THE KALAMAZOO Regional Educational Service Agency (Kalamazoo RESA) hosted its annual Outstanding Achievement Awards April 30 at the Radisson Plaza Hotel.

Selected by the Kalamazoo RESA Foundation in collaboration with Career Connect staff and instructors, student honorees represent the top achievers from a pool of over 3,000 individuals participating in more than 30 high school programs, including Career & Technical Education (CTE), Education for the Arts (EFA), Early/Middle College (EMC), and Career Pathway Planning Programs. Also recognized are children of Kalamazoo RESA employees who have prioritized educational excellence. All awardees share a common commitment to investing in their futures and to realizing their career goals.

In the program for the awards ceremony, Dr. Dedrick Martin, superintendent of Kalamazoo RESA wrote, “This year marks the 39th annual event where we gather to celebrate outstanding achievements and award more than 70 individuals with scholar-

ships provided by our generous donors. The Kalamazoo RESA Board of Education, Kalamazoo RESA Foundation Board of Directors, and staff applaud you for the dedication, hard work, and exceptional resilience you have displayed in your programs.”

This year’s honorees from Kalamazoo Public Schools were:

## KALAMAZOO CENTRAL

**Annie Alkema**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Eaton Corporation & Fabri-Kal Foundation

**Angel Garcia**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Jack & Sue Martin

**Layla Hemphill**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Bronson Methodist Hospital and Kalamazoo RESA Gayl F. Werme Memorial

**Dane Lake**  
Scholarship: World of Work

**Valeria Montoya Galvan**  
Scholarship: Burdick-Thorne Foundation and DQ Hunter Memorial

**Kynnedi Patterson**  
Scholarship: Alpha Delta Kappa; Michigan Alpha Delta Kappa

**Aliya Spiller**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo Association of Retired School Personnel

**Ja’Moni Williams**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Paul & Betts Wollam/Stephanie Jo Harris

**Kardierre Williams**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Home Builders Association of Western Michigan

## LOY NORRIX

**Audrey Buck**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Tammi Mallos Memorial

**Brynn Dugger**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Irving S. Gilmore Foundation in Memory of Gayl Werme

**Haneef Hampton**  
Scholarship: YOU Scholarship

**Joselyn Juarez**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Nate Pollard Memorial

**Elizabeth Jonaitis**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo Association of Retired School Personnel

**Ashley Lopez**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo Association of Retired School Personnel

**Jireh McNair**  
Scholarship: Burdick-Thorne Foundation

**Edwin Ramos Lopez**  
Scholarship: Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Tom & Marsha Conor

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# Phoenix High School 2025 Graduates

Abdalla, Heba Albager Dauod  
Abmed  
Ackerman, Tyrus Darnell  
Ahmadi, Gull Bahar  
Al Diab, Yasmine  
Alhasan, Joudi Bashar  
Altayara, Mohammad  
Tameem Wahid  
Alvarado Gutierrez, Nereyda  
Alvarado-Gutierrez, Miriam  
Anderson, D'Zire Nevaeh Lynne  
Aviles, Giovanni Ilias  
Betts, Ziarra Jazoni  
Beville, Natavia Faith  
Blackmon, Briasha Armonie  
Bloodworth, Kiana Ariyah  
Branson, Shubar Ali  
Broughton, Ty' Prei' Oannia  
Nicole Shanell  
Brown, Michelle Janay  
Burney, Michael Devon  
Cannon, Alexander Ensign  
Carter, Jer'Marion Sin'Cera  
Carter, Karmela Ayanna  
Casey, Tory Deshon  
Chandler-Williams, Xavion  
Taye  
Clay, Darnell Dupaul  
Cole, Gauge Joseph  
Coleman, Ariel Jhanay  
Cuba, Na'dayia Ophia  
Degrote, Aidan Jaxion  
Deloney, Jeffrey Allen  
Drown, Zachary Preston  
Edmonson, Dennis Dwayne  
Evans, Moriah Juliet  
Faria, Firia Esperanca  
Ford, Amonie S  
Fuller, Christian James  
Fuller-Smith, Kaliyah Zian  
Gallardo, Anthony Abdias  
Garcez, Cecilia Faith  
Ghozlan, Abdulrahman Hlal  
Gibson, Keyniya Kelise  
Gordon, Saniyah Michelle  
Guerrero, Jazmin Guadalupe  
Gul, Samiullah  
Hall, Ariyanna Denise  
Hamilton, Randy George  
Hanof, Omar Khaled  
Haskell, Ashley Annetta  
Herrera, Sage  
Hinton, Kyriana Cecilia  
Hughes, Destiny Denise  
Isham, Natalie Kaylynn  
Jackson, Shunta Leon  
Jamar, Khadafi Duval  
Johnson, Aaliyah Tasha Marie



Phoenix students march across the stage at Chenery Auditorium for the start of commencement.

Johnson, Corey Pommeroy Johnson, Kenyouri Demetrius Kheyari, Huzaifa Abdul Alim Knox, Quanna Janai Seville Lal, Sohumi Ryan Langford, Antrell Antonio Langston, Antwan Jamar Lewis, Javeon Armani Lewis, Marquis Skyler Lewis, Nehemiah Ti'yon	Mabon, Akyra Rashae' Cimone Marshall, Jaidyn O'Shea Martell, GracieMae Melody Mata Juarez, Amy McCone, Da'nyiah Moire McCorkle, Ka'Miya Rozalynae McCrary, Arionna Maria Mejia Garcia, Gerson Joel Merino, Jayla Shaylin	Monroy, Adriana Jaquelyn Moore, Sirlen Andre Mumararungu, Tety Muvunyi, Charles Noori, Humaira Shah Orta, Osdy Esau Patterson, J'Toryin Andreis Peake-Wright, Natasia Niara Faith Pitts, Michael D'Juan	Reyes Armijo, Jesus Alberto Rosenthal, Kendrick Devante Rukundo, Kevin Salarzai, Nadiya Selemani, Anastazia Sherrod, Lashaun Leigh Simmons, Kennedy Michelle Smith, Jahkai Anthony Tapia, Cheri Teschfaghi, Abraham Thompson, Kimora Ly Tipton, Semaj Ysiad Trejo, Jose Antonio Underwood, Blake Russell Vankrimpen, Braylon Thomas VanNiman, Nicholas Vaughan-Hughes, Jona Walker, Latonya Renae West, Annashawnda Talissa Whitfield, Kaliyah Michelle Whitfield, Trevahya Unique Whitmore-Holmes, Nikiyonna Amunika Casandra Wiggins, Dillan Huston Wilborn, Delacia Monae Woodson, Ah'marrie Word, James Allen Wulu, Jahmari Raishon Zada, Zobaida Mosa
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## Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center 2025 KPS Graduates

CONGRATULATIONS to the following students who completed their studies at their home high schools as well as the advanced math and science curriculum at the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center.

**LOY NORRIX**  
Alexander, Zamari J.  
Castillo-Gyllstrom,  
Edmundo A.  
Dunfee, Eloise A.  
Edmonds, Georgia E.  
Jonaitis, Elizabeth J.  
Kaplan-Neumann, Violet E.  
Lange, Madison G.  
Lawler, JaNyiah D.  
Longtin, Lily M.  
Molitor, Zelda V.  
Morris, Isabella E.  
Reeves, Ellie A.  
Scavarda, Isaac T.  
Shaffer, Cameron

**KALAMAZOO CENTRAL**  
Adams, Layla H.  
Barnard, Sophia M.  
Gunderson, Ryann S.  
Johnson, Maxwell E.  
Ozanich, Kaitlyn M.  
Risley, Katherine  
Spybrook, Maggie K.  
Thaumanavar, Kaljona Z.

**KPS VIRTUAL**  
Lange, Madison G.

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# Excellence in Education Recognizes Student Achievement Across County

THE KALAMAZOO County Excellence in Education program is a far-reaching recognition program that has honored students from across the county since 1986. It is facilitated by a countywide committee comprising representatives from local school districts, Kalamazoo RESA, and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Thanks to the support of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, as well as a challenge grant from the Monroe-Brown Foundation, the program continues to recognize graduating high school seniors and educators. It also awards Educator Incentive Grants to enhance learning in Kalamazoo County schools.

Since its inception the program has given 738 educators professional development awards totaling \$578,791. Student Scholarships worth \$1,415,199 have been awarded to 1,889 students in both public and private schools.

Each April, the Excellence in Education program holds a reception to recognize students for their academic achievements and provide them the opportunity to honor those educators who have contributed to their success.

This year's Kalamazoo Public Schools Excellence in Education winners were:



**Nick Alkema**  
Kalamazoo Central High School, KVCC  
Parents: Katherine and Steve Alkema  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Business  
Significant Educator: Kimberly Mansfield



**Sophia Barnard**  
Kalamazoo Central High School, KAMSC  
Parents: Anja and Ken Barnard  
College: Stanford University  
Major: Biology w/ a Neuroscience Concentration  
Significant Educator: Colleen Chapoton



**Hannah Boothby**  
Loy Norrix High School, KVCC  
Parents: Janelle and Mark Boothby  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Chemistry  
Significant Educator: Pamela Cook



**Eleanor Cook**  
Loy Norrix High School, KVCC  
Parents: Carrie and Luke Cook  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: English Language and Literature  
Significant Educator: Gregg Stevens



**Clara DeWaele**  
Kalamazoo Central High School, WMU  
Parents: Jennifer and Michael DeWaele  
College: University of Chicago  
Major: Biology/Bio-Chemistry or Environmental Studies  
Significant Educator: Phyllis Tiftt



**Eloise Dunfee**  
Loy Norrix High School, KAMSC  
Parents: Amy and Jeffrey Dunfee  
College: Michigan State University  
Major: Environmental Studies  
Significant Educator: Brianna English



**Georgia Edmonds**  
Loy Norrix High School, KAMSC  
Parents: Rebecca and Ian Edmonds  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Biochemistry  
Significant Educator: Sandra Gagie



**Bjorn Nelson**  
Loy Norrix High School, KRESA EFA & WMU  
Parents: Anne Engh and Keith Nelson  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Film, Television, and Media  
Significant Educator: Laura Citino



**Kate Risley**  
Kalamazoo Central High School, KAMSC  
Parents: Julie Lorenz and John Risley  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Data Science and Biology  
Significant Educator: Jessica Hagen



**Brynn Routhier**  
Kalamazoo Central High School, KVCC  
Parents: Amy and Brett Routhier  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Biology  
Significant Educator: Josh Gottlieb



**Isaac Scavarda**  
Loy Norrix High School, KAMSC  
Parents: Kate and Tom Scavarda  
College: Hillsdale College  
Major: Finance/Statistics/Computer Science  
Significant Educator: Michael Sinclair



**Andrew Westcott**  
Kalamazoo Central High School, KVCC & WMU  
Parents: Schuyler and Daniel Westcott  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Nuclear Engineering  
Significant Educator: Joshua Gottlieb

# Heyl Scholarship Winners Include Four KPS Students

EACH YEAR, the Heyl Science Scholarship provides support to high school students from Kalamazoo Public Schools or the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center, who are interested in beginning their careers in STEM at Kalamazoo College or in nursing at the Western Michigan University Bronson School of Nursing.

The highly competitive scholarship covers tuition,

mandatory fees, room, and a book allowance. The scholarship is renewable for up to four years.

Since 1971, more than 400 Heyl scholarships and/or fellowships have been awarded to promising scholars, many of whom have continued on to advance the scientific community.

This year's Heyl winners from Kalamazoo Public Schools, who will attend Kalamazoo College are:

- **Eiden Jonaitis** — Loy Norrix High School and KAMSC
  - **Stephanie Castillo** — Kalamazoo Central High School
  - **Kaljona Thauanavar** — Kalamazoo Central High School and KAMSC
- The scholarship winner who will be attending WMU Bronson School of Nursing is:
- **Fiona Braun** — Loy Norrix High School



# KPS Meet Up and Eat Up Begins June 23

**K**ALAMAZOO Public Schools announces the beginning of the Summer Food Service Program for children. Free meals will be made available to children 18 years of age and under or persons up to 26 years old who are enrolled in an educational program for the mentally or physically disabled that is recognized by a state or local public educational agency.

The meals will be provided without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability, and there will be no discrimination in the course of the meal service. The only stipulation for the free meals is that the meal be eaten on site.

### USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant’s name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

**mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or  
**fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or  
**email:** Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Meals will be provided at sites listed below. Sites and times are subject to change. **All sites will be closed July 4.** Meals are free for children 18 and younger. No proof of income or application is required. Meals must be eaten on site. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Date	Location/Program	Breakfast	Lunch
6/23-8/7	ATP, WMU Rec Center, 2000 W. Michigan Ave.	9:30-10am	12-12:30pm
6/23-7/31	Arcadia KIT, 932 Boswell Lane	8:15-9:30am	11am-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	CEC, 714 S. Westnedge Ave.	N/A	12-12:45pm
6/23-8/7	Douglas B&G, 1000 W. Patterson St.	N/A	1-1:30pm
6/23-8/7	Fox Ridge, 1320 Fox Ridge Dr.	N/A	1-1:30pm
7/7-7/31	Greenwood, 3501 Moreland St.	8:15-9:30am	11am-12pm
7/7-7/31	Hillside, 1941 Alamo Ave.	8-8:30am	10:45am-12pm
6/23-8/7	Interfaith, 1037 Interfaith Blvd.	N/A	12:30-1:00pm
6/23-8/7	Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, 448 N. Burdick St.	N/A	12-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	LaCrone Park, 535 W. Patterson St.	9:15-9:45am	12:15-12:45pm
6/23-8/7	Mayors’ Riverfront Park, 251 Mills St.	9:15-9:45am	12:15-12:45pm
8/4-8/7	Milwood United Church, 3919 Portage St.	N/A	12-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	Mt Zion Seeds, 120 Roberson St.	N/A	12-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	New Genesis/Stones, 1225 W. Patterson St.	8:15-9:15am	11:30am-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	New Village, 2500 Albans Way	9:15-10am	12:15-1:15pm
6/23-7/31	Northeastern B&G/CIS, 2433 Gertrude St.	8:15-8:45am	11:30-12:30pm & 1-1:30pm
6/23-8/1	Northglade YMCA, 1914 Cobb St.	8:05-8:35am	12-12:30pm
7/7-7/31	Phoenix High School, 1411 Oakland Dr.	7:45-8:15am	10:30am-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	Rockwell Park, 1106 Trimble Ave.	9:15-9:45am	12:15-12:45pm
6/23-8/7	Salvation Army, 1700 S. Burdick St.	9-9:30am	12-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	Southside Park, 2012 Race St.	9:15-10am	12:15-1pm
6/23-8/7	Upjohn Park, 1018 Walter St.	9:15-9:45am	12:15-12:45pm
7/7-7/31	Woods Lake Elementary, 3215 Oakland Dr.	8:15-9am	10am-12:30pm
6/23-8/7	YMCA Maple, 1001 Maple St.	8:45-9:15am	11:30am-12:30pm



# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE



**FREE EVENT**

**WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS  
NOW - AUG. 30**

## RAIN GARDEN TOURS | 20 - 25 min.

This family-friendly tour shows how rain gardens in urban settings and simple landscaping changes can have a significant positive impact on the environment. (No tours Wednesday, June 4.)



**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.



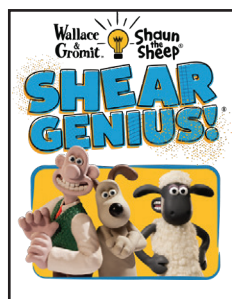
**NEW EXHIBIT**

**NOW - AUG. 31 | FREE**

## WALLACE & GROMIT AND SHAUN THE SHEEP: SHEAR GENIUS!

Step into the environments of Wallace & Gromit and Shaun the Sheep to explore their contraptions, antics and escapades through dramatic play and interactive opportunities.

*Wallace & Gromit™ and Shaun the Sheep™: Shear Genius! was created by Minnesota Children's Museum and Aardman Animations™ Limited © 2025*



**UPCOMING EVENT**

**THURSDAYS, JUNE 19 - JULY 24  
1 - 3 p.m. | FREE**

## SUMMER BREAK: INVENTIVE ADVENTURES

Embark on a whimsical journey with Shaun the Sheep and Wallace & Gromit with summer break events packed with fun, creativity and laughter, bringing the beloved characters to life through engaging activities and interactive exhibits.



## PLANETARIUM EXPERIENCE | JULY SHOWS | \$3 PER PERSON

Visit [kalamazoomuseum.org](http://kalamazoomuseum.org) for details.

### 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.



### The Sky Above Us | 1 p.m. Sat. & 2 p.m. 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.

### Magic Tree House: Space Mission | 1 p.m. Sun. | 30 min. | Grades 3 & up

Travel with siblings Jack and Annie in their Magic Tree House as they discover a note that asks them to answer questions about space.

### The Queen Light Show | 2:30 p.m. Sat. | 38 min. Grades 5 & up | Enjoy a memorable experience of Queen's biggest hits, such as "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Another One Bites the Dust" and "You're My Best Friend."



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

**Sunday | Noon - 4 p.m.**

## FREE GENERAL ADMISSION

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](http://kalamazoomuseum.org) | 269.373.7990