

Kalamazoo Public Schools

EXCELSIOR

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Exploring Campus, Careers with Bronco Buds

Photo Courtesy of Mark Bugnaski, Western Michigan University.

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Alumni Remind Us of the Power of Consistent Effort

A Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Darrin Slade



IN DECEMBER, Kalamazoo Central and Loy Norrix high schools invited graduates back for Alumni Day, when former students return to their alma maters to visit with old friends, talk to their favorite teachers, and speak to current high school students about how to make the most of their high school years and how to prepare for transitioning to post-secondary life.

Many of these graduates are current college students or college graduates and they can share insights on getting along with roommates, choosing a major, staying organized and getting involved. Some alums have chosen other paths and share their experiences in the trades, the military or the world of work.

Often, when these graduates talk to students they use words such as “organization” — get a planner! They emphasize “involvement” — join as many clubs as you can, meet as many people as you can. They talk about “responsibility” — such as in “You are responsible for you.” Mom is not there to wake you up in time for class, your professor will not provide friendly reminders to turn in your assignments.

Our alumni may have more influence on high school students simply by virtue of their age and the fact that not long ago they were sitting in those same high school desks. They wear the same clothes, listen to the same music, share the same language — and that has a huge impact. Thank you to the many alumni who took time to lift up the students who are following in their steps.

This year there was a buzzword that several students shared and that is “consistency.” It is not a particular new or exciting concept. I imagine some younger students might not appreciate the wis-

dom of this advice, but it was heartening to hear our graduates sing the praises of being consistent.

“Stay consistent,” said Loy Norrix graduate Jada Roberts, who is pursuing her master’s degree at Eastern Michigan University. “Stick with your passion. Just try your best even when it gets difficult.”

Jaden Lipsey, a full-time musical artist who graduated from Norrix said, “My best advice for students is consistency. Whatever you do — doesn’t matter what it is — just make sure you’re doing it every day, as much as you possibly can, to perfect it.”

Consistency does not sound like an exciting concept, but these graduates have learned that the results one gets from being consistent with intention, effort, and focus pays off in exciting ways, especially when applied toward tackling your goals.

One example that showcases the power of consistency is school attendance. Consistent attendance, being at your desk every day, for the entire day is the foundation for greater achievement. That

is why as a district we have put a renewed emphasis on attendance, with supports in schools and at the district level. Students can learn only when they are at school, ready to learn, each and every day.

Consistency is not boring. On the contrary it is exciting in the way that it shows how setting goals and working meticulously toward those goals lay the foundation for achievement. You can’t skip leg day at the gym and expect to win the race. You can’t hit the free throw if you don’t dedicate time outside of games to practice. You can’t become proficient at reading unless you are reading (or having someone read to you) every day. Becoming a calculus all-star is predicated on consistently taking the time to master addition and subtraction, multiplication and division.

Thank you to our alumni for reminding us of the power of this concept. As Kalamazoo Central graduate Jayden Kwei, who is studying finance at Michigan State University, put it, “You only get results from consistency in effort.”

Celebrate **Black History Month**

Families:



The History of the 102nd United States Colored Troops **Monday, February 9**

6-7:30 pm | EAS/Community Room

Join Maurice Imhoff as he presents his new book, *The 1st Michigan Colored Regiment: Free Men Who Fought Slavery*.

Teens:



Graphic Novel Club **Tuesday, February 17**

5-6 pm | CEN/Teen Studio

Join us to discuss *Ghost Roast* by Shawneé and Shannelle Gibbs. Copies are available. You can keep the book after the meeting!

Children:



Paint a Rainbow: Inspired by Alma Thomas **Thursday, February 19**

4:30-5:30 pm | OSH/Community Room

Explore the joyful, colorful art by Alma Thomas, then create your own!



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Learn more about our spring events: kpl.gov/events





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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
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District Directory at:
www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

Recipe

from the KPS Food Service, Chartwells

Josh Kerby,
executive chef



Kirsten Strong,
registered dietitian
nutritionist

Michigan Pasties

TAKE A TRIP to the Upper Peninsula without leaving your kitchen. Originally crafted for Cornish miners working in the iron mines, these handheld pies were the ultimate portable lunch, sturdy enough to be kept in a pocket and even reheated on a shovel over a fire. Today, they remain a beloved staple of Northern Michigan. This specific recipe comes directly from a U.P. native. These cozy, filling pockets are a delicious piece of heritage in every bite.

Scan the code to watch how to make pasties.



INGREDIENTS

(servings: 12)

Dough

5 cups flour
2 cups butter or shortening
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups cold water
½ cup milk

Filling

6 cups potatoes, small dice
1¼ cup carrots, small dice
1¼ cup rutabaga, small dice
¾ cup onions, small dice
2½ cups ground beef
3-4 tablespoon powdered beef base
Pepper to taste

PREPARATION

1. Cut butter into cubes and return to the refrigerator for at least 20 minutes to cool.
2. In a large mixing bowl add flour and salt and mix to disperse.
3. Add cold butter to flour. Mix the dry mix and butter with your fingers, smashing butter pieces into the flour. The goal is to get the butter cut into the dry ingredients as much as possible.
4. Once the mixture is dispersed and crumbly, add the cold water. Continue to mix with your hands until the dough comes together. Use the QR code for a visual of this step.
5. Cover and cool the dough for at least an hour.
6. In the meantime, mix diced veggies, ground beef, powdered beef base, and pepper.

7. Cut cooled dough into 12 even balls.
8. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
9. Roll out each ball until it is 7-8 inches in diameter. Dust your rolling pin and the rolling surface with flour as necessary to keep the dough from sticking.
10. Use about ¾ cup of the filling for each pastie. Place the filling on one side of your rolled out dough and fold the other side over the top of the filling. It will look like a half moon. You will want about 2 inches of extra dough around the curved edge of the crust. Pinch the dough and use your thumb to pull the pinched dough over to create a decorative edge. Repeat for the entire curved edge. Again, use the QR code for a visual of this step. It is easier than it sounds.

11. Make two small cuts into the top of each pastie so steam can escape during the baking.
 12. Right before baking, brush the tops of the pasties with the milk so they turn golden brown.
 13. Bake at 350°F for about 45 to 60 minutes until the middle gets to 165°F for at least 15 seconds.
 14. If you want to freeze pasties for later, do not brush them with milk or bake. Double wrap them in foil and freeze. When you are ready to eat them, unwrap them, brush with milk and bake them from frozen at 350°F for about 60 to 75 minutes, or until the middle reaches 165°F for at least 15 seconds.
 15. Some people eat their pasties with a basic beef gravy and some use ketchup. It's your choice!
- Tip:** Use premade pie crust if you want to skip making the homemade dough.

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Arcadia Fifth Graders Share Adventures, Learning at Sherman Lake YMCA

EVERY YEAR, hundreds of KPS fifth graders enjoy camp at Sherman Lake YMCA Outdoor Center. Arcadia Elementary School shared photos of their students' camp experiences in November.

Sherman Lake's activities are built around themes of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility. They fall into broad themes, such as:

- **High-Adventure & Skill Building** with activities such as wall climbing and archery.

- **Waterfront & Nature Exploration** through activities that emphasize safety and environmental

stewardship. Students develop outdoor living skills by learning how to build fires, construct shelters, and cook outdoors.

- **Creative & Academic Enrichment** which can include arts and crafts.

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)** at Sherman Lake is a nationally recognized "integrated education" program, which uses camp as a classroom for developing life skills such as team building, character, leadership and community.



Camden Benton reaches new heights on the Sherman Lake rock wall.



Ximena Barraza takes aim on the archery field.



Arcadia students Eleen Elashkar, Jana Al Rahal, Ximena Barraza, Malaysia Casey, Chrisiah Nabors, Dempsey Skeltis-Prestidge, and Gul Naz Rahimi build new friendships at camp.



DeQynn Gibson learns how to build a campfire.



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KPS Freshmen Experience Campus Excitement During WMU Bronco Buds

KALAMAZOO Public Schools high school freshmen experienced the fun and excitement of living and learning on a major college campus during the annual Western Michigan University Bronco Buds program in November. KPS students from Loy Norrix, Kalamazoo Central, Phoenix and Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program visited WMU on Nov. 13 and 20. Students kicked off their visits with a pep rally in Read Fieldhouse, had a meal at the Valley Dining Hall, and toured various academic colleges based on their interests.

Students curious about nursing careers had the opportunity to see the College of Health and Human Services and interact with faculty, while aspiring entrepreneurs checked out Schneider Hall, home to the Haworth College of Business, and those interested in physics went to see the tandem Van de Graaff accelerator located in Rood Hall.

WMU students hosted the high schoolers, offered music, dance and cheer routines during the

pep rally and led students on tours of the campus during Bronco Buds, which is a long-standing collaboration between KPS and WMU. The program was on hiatus during the pandemic and the years immediately following. Bronco Buds was reimaged and restarted last spring as an immersive college experience for high school students. It is designed to expose students to the opportunities available at Western and to teach younger students about the

Dr. Matthew Cavalli, associate dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, tests the stability of a tower designed by Loy Norrix students attending the 2025 Bronco Buds program at Western Michigan University.



Photo Courtesy of Mark Bugnaski, Western Michigan University.



KPS freshmen get into the spirit of a WMU pep rally. Front row, left to right; Jaxson Hamilton, Labreya Overton, Makayla Yanez, and Gisele Ransom.

Next row, left to right; Zoe Pankey, Annalise Jubenville, and Tamarea Lindsey.

Zinab Ghntawi, Inas Alhasan, and Linda Kwayes show peace signs and smiles at WMU.



Photo courtesy of Mark Bugnaski, Western Michigan University.

ON THE COVER: Andrew Nicolai, left, and JaVary Smith tackle an engineering challenge to build a weight-bearing tower during the 2025 Bronco Buds program, which introduces KPS freshmen to life on the Western Michigan University campus.

steps they need to take to prepare for college life. “For students who have never been on a college campus, this program allows them to experience the excitement of living and learning on a vibrant campus like Western Michigan University,” said KPS

Superintendent Dr. Darrin Slade. “And, all students benefit from being exposed to a variety of curricular programs and expanding their understanding of the career opportunities that await them with a *(continued on page 10)*



KPS Superintendent Dr. Darrin Slade addresses students attending Bronco Buds at Western Michigan University.



J'Ryah Smith from Kalamazoo Central is interviewed by WWMT about Bronco Buds.

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Bronco Buds *(continued from page 9)*

college education. KPS is excited to continue this partnership with WMU to ensure students are able to envision their future selves thriving on a college campus.”

Slade welcomed students to campus along with Dr. Chris Cheatham, WMU’s interim provost and vice president for academic affairs, and Von Washington Jr., CEO of The Kalamazoo Promise.

“We’re excited to welcome these students to Western and show them the possibilities ahead of them,” Cheatham said. “Whether they already have a concrete plan for their future or they’re just starting to explore, we’re ready to meet students where they are, ignite sparks of curiosity about potential future paths and start that process of preparing for the next step — wherever it takes them.”

		<p align="center">“EXCELLENCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION” AWARD</p> <p align="center">2026 Nomination Form</p>	
<p>The “Excellence in Special Education” Award is sponsored by the Kalamazoo RESA Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (PAC).</p> <p>The PAC invites you to nominate an individual for the Excellence in Special Education Award. This honor recognizes those who exceed the expectations of their role to provide outstanding support for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). We encourage parents, guardians, and students to share their stories of excellence by completing this form or submitting online at: www.kresa.org/PACNomination</p> <p>Nominees must be currently employed by a school district within Kalamazoo County or by Kalamazoo RESA. This award honors those who go above and beyond to support, inspire, and empower students with disabilities to reach their fullest potential.</p>			
<p>TO NOMINATE, PLEASE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete this page and the required supporting criteria form (attached) • Return both the nomination form and supporting criteria by Friday, February 27, 2026 <p>Return Electronically to: Kristin.ghiringhelli@kresa.org</p> <p>Or Send by US Mail to: Kristin Ghiringhelli KRESA 1819 E Milham Ave. Portage, MI 49002</p>		<p>Questions? Contact Anyone listed below:</p> <p>Victoria Bower (PAC Chairperson) victoriasbower@gmail.com</p> <p>Latrieva Boston (PAC Vice Chairperson) latrievab@askforkids.org</p> <p>Kristin Ghiringhelli (Executive Assistant KRESA) kristin.ghiringhelli@kresa.org</p>	
<p>NOMINEE INFORMATION</p> <p>Name of Nominee (First and Last Name): _____</p> <p>Position/Title (e.g., Teacher, Parapro, Therapist, etc.): _____</p> <p>School District: _____</p> <p>School/Building Name: _____</p>		<p>NOMINATED BY</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Relationship to Student: _____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p> <p>Email: _____</p> <p>Does your student have a current IEP or IFSP in Effect Yes No</p> <p>Information can be shared with the Nominee Yes No</p>	

WMU EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Bronco Buds was an introduction to Western for many KPS students — but students will have new opportunities to explore campus this year. Western’s Office of Precollege Programming is increasing opportunities for high school students to interact with the university.

This spring, the office will pilot three career pathway visits for 11th graders from Loy Norrix High School.

Up to 150 students interested in majors within WMU’s College of Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, and Haworth College of Business will spend an entire day at the respective colleges interacting with faculty and learning about potential career paths.

They’ll explore areas such as the Communication and Social Robotics Lab and the Finch Greenhouse, sit in on engineering senior design presentations, or visit Sleeping Giant Capital in downtown Kalamazoo with one of its co-founders, WMU associate professor of management Dr. Doug Lepisto. At Sleeping Giant Capital, WMU students work alongside business professionals.

“It is our hope that these highly interactive and detailed pathway visits will intensify these high school students’ interest in post-secondary opportunities, allowing them to see themselves in careers they might not have before,” said Dr. Erika Carr, director of precollege programming.

“As a first-generation college student myself, I know how important it can be to see the possibilities that lie ahead, and we want to open not just windows but doors for all the youth we work with.”

ARTISTS' CORNER

Erin Brott, art teacher at Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts, has been introducing her students to Impressionist landscapes. Students learned about Claude Monet and studied some of his landscapes and waterscapes featuring bridges. Brott said the students then looked at major bridges in Michigan.

These young artists learned about warm and cool colors and chose color schemes that fit their specific time of day, using tempera sticks and watercolors to create their own Impressionist landscapes with bridges. These works were created by second graders, from left, **Nakhyiah Walker**, **Kenya Evans**, and **Aniyah Bosby**. All three of these paintings will be featured as part of the upcoming Bronson Methodist Hospital Promising Artists exhibition, which opens on Feb. 24.



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www.kalamazoocity.org/UtilityHelp

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Loy Norrix, Kalamazoo Central Alums Return to Inspire Students

KALAMAZOO Central and Loy Norrix high school graduates returned for the schools' annual alumni day celebrations before the start of the winter break. Alumni met with former teachers and administrators and visited classrooms to talk with current students. The alumni shared their experiences in college, the world of work, and life in the military, and they offered their advice on how to make the most of high school and how to succeed in the post-secondary world.

LOY NORRIX



Trevor Watts, 2023

• Junior at University of Detroit Mercy, studying architecture

A piece of advice I have is to join any organization on campus just to get yourself out there. Make sure you meet different people and just be active on campus.



Tom Clark, 2023

• Junior at Kalamazoo College, studying business, playing on the tennis team

My best advice for Loy Norrix students is to just show up, go to events, different games, festivals, whatever. Make your presence felt.



Carlos Morales, 2021

• Recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Michigan

I'm currently looking for a job and I'm excited for what the future holds for me. My best advice for students is to find your passion in school — or not in school — and go for it. You'll find out how wonderful life can be.



Zoe Bierma, 2023

• Studying psychology at University of Michigan, plans to pursue a master's degree in social work

Just stay organized. I know everything can be overwhelming. And, trying to get a grasp on everything is helpful.



Jada Roberts, 2021

• Working on a master's degree in mental health counseling at Eastern Michigan University

Stay consistent. It's hard, but stick with it. You're there for a reason. Stick with your passion, your education, even when it gets hard. Just try your best even when it gets difficult. It's not easy, but it's worth it.

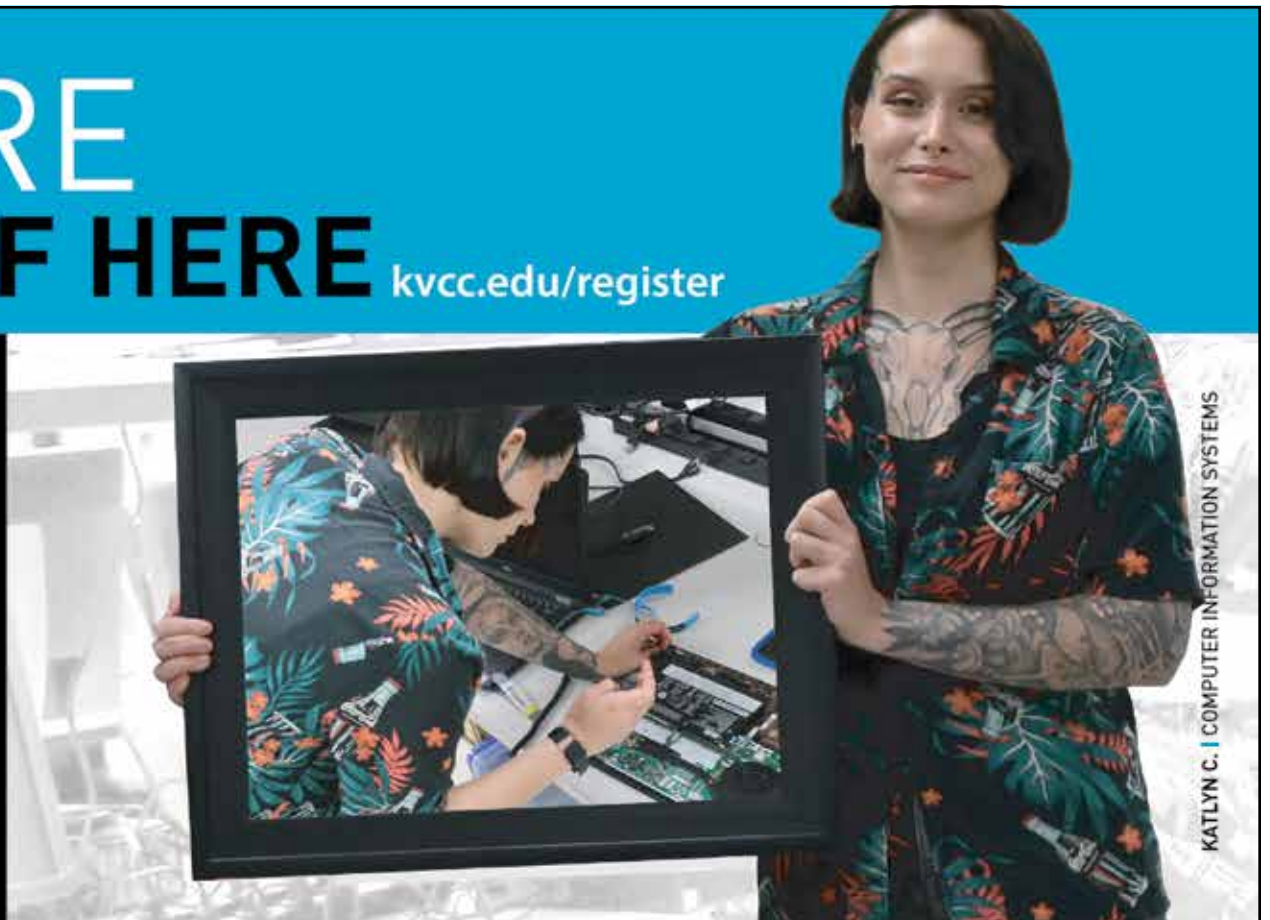
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Alums Return *(continued from page 12)*



Thomas Bannon, 2023

• A junior at Michigan State University, studying chemical engineering

My best advice for students who want to go to college is find what you're interested in and put in consistent effort.



Jaden Lipsey, 2023

• Full-time musical artist.

My best advice for students is consistency. Whatever you do, doesn't matter what it is, just make sure you're doing it every day as much as you possibly can to perfect it, get better at it and get paid for it.



Lana Hanley, 2025

• Studying nursing at Western Michigan University

My biggest advice for students is to not procrastinate and to get your work done.

KALAMAZOO CENTRAL



Oluwaseun Olagbemi, 2024

• Studying computer engineering

My best advice for students is to not take your teachers for granted and to show how grateful you are. And, just be kind to everyone. That kindness goes forward and can only benefit you in your future endeavors.



Jayden Kwei, 2024

• Finance student at Michigan State University and a day trader

You only get results from consistency in effort. And when you try things, the reward will be reached.



Justin Irankunda, 2024

• Studying to become a commercial electrician.

The best advice I would give students is don't stop on one thing. Try different things. Try everything. That's going to benefit you.

(continued on page 14)

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Alums Return *(continued from page 3)*

Ritika Verma, 2024

• Studying industrial engineering and sustainability at Western Michigan University

My best advice for incoming college students is to stay focused on your academics but also be very



involved on campus. Always look for ways to grow and have fun while you're on campus.



Ian Pardee, 2021

• Bachelor's degree from Michigan Tech University, pursuing a master's degree in electrical and computer engineering through a Science, Math, Research Transformation Scholarship.

Talk to as many people as you can. You never know who you're going to meet. I know people from across every sector of industries.



Destiny Spencer, 2023

• She recently graduated from Kalamazoo Valley Community College with an associate's degree in baking and pastries.

Don't give up. It's going to get hard, you're going to have hard times. As long as you have a good support system, you'll be alright.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE



EVENING EXHIBIT FRIDAY, FEB. 6 | 5 - 7 P.M. | FREE

BLACK COWBOYS

Enjoy a rare opportunity to peruse an exhibit at the museum in the evening in honor of Black History Month. Kalamazoo Valley Community College's Center for New Media Arcus Gallery nearby on the Kalamazoo Mall will also be open with a special art show. The college operates both institutions.

EVENT FRIDAY, FEB. 20 | 1:30 - 2:30 P.M. | FREE

ILLUSTRATED MUSE(INGS)

Step into an afternoon of creation at Illustrated Muse(ings) — a gathering of artists creating in real time. Listen to a live musician or watch a live dancer and draw whatever moves you. No pressure, just good vibes. More information can be found at kalamazoomuseum.org/events.



EVENT HEALTHY BABIES AT THE MUSEUM

- **HEALTHY BABIES COUPLES DAY!** | SATURDAY, FEB. 7 | FREE
- **HEALTHY BABIES AT THE MUSEUM** | THURSDAY, FEB. 19 | FREE

Bundle up baby and join us for a morning of education and activities focused on infant health and well-being! These are the first in our Healthy Babies at the Museum series of events in partnership with Kalamazoo County.

NEW EXHIBIT NOW - JULY 26 | FREE

BLACK COWBOYS: AN AMERICAN STORY

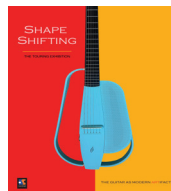


This traveling exhibition invites visitors to explore the lives and work of the numerous Black men, women and children — enslaved and free — who labored on ranches and participated in cattle drives from before the Civil War through the turn of the 20th century.

Black Cowboys: An American Story was developed by the Witte Museum, San Antonio (WitteMuseum.org). The exhibition is presented by Bank of America and generously supported by the John L. Santikos Charitable Fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation, H-E-B and Ed Rachal Foundation.

NEW EXHIBIT NOW - APRIL 26 | FREE

SHAPE SHIFTING: THE GUITAR AS MODERN ARTIFACT



This new exhibit presents 40 instruments that embody the art of the guitar, displaying it as both an instrument and as a physical canvas for artists and builders.

"SHAPE SHIFTING: The GUITAR As Modern ARTifact" is a Touring Exhibition of The National GUITAR Museum.

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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.



BEYOND THE SUN | 1 P.M. SUN. | 26 MIN. | GRADES 1 & UP

Join Celeste on an adventure to explore the universe, find new Earths and discover exoplanets.

THE SKY ABOVE US | 2 P.M. FRI., SAT. & SUN. | 35 MIN. | GRADES 4 & UP

Discover the "celestial wonders" that can be seen overhead in Michigan in this live, season-focused show.



FREE PLANETARIUM SHOW!

SATURDAY, FEB. 14, ONLY | 2 P.M.

150 YEARS OF THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY: CHEMISTRY IS EVERYTHING

Discover the unseen chemistry in space in this seasonal planetarium show, traveling from the solar system to the distant wonders of the universe.

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 | 269.373.7990