

Kalamazoo Public Schools

EXCELSIOR

www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

August 2026 • Volume 30, Issue 1

New El Sol to Open in 2028

(SEE STORY AND PHOTOS ON PAGE 8)

More Fresh
Food Options
on the Menu
with
New District
Kitchen
pg. 18



Back to
School
Guide
CENTER
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Behind the Scenes: How KPS is Preparing to Welcome Students Back on August 31

A Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Darrin Slade



WHILE July and August are traditionally times for families to enjoy sunny days at the beach, backyard cook-outs, and relaxing afternoons under a shade tree, things are buzzing behind the scenes at Kalamazoo Public Schools. Since the previous school year wrapped up in early June, our dedicated teams have worked tirelessly throughout the summer to ensure a seamless, exciting, and safe return for all staff and students.

Here is a look at how our various departments are preparing for the 2026-27 school year.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PREPARING EMPLOYEES BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS

Our Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Department is busy receiving instructional resources and designing meaningful, high-impact training sessions for our teachers' first week back. The district also holds beginning-of-the-school-year professional development for secretaries, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, new administrators, food service staff and other employee groups.

HUMAN RESOURCES: JOINING THE KPS TEAM

A great school year starts with great people. It is not too late to join the KPS family for the 2026-27 school year. If you or someone you know is looking to make a difference, explore open positions and apply today at kpsjobs.com.

STUDENT SERVICES: WELCOMING EVERY LEARNER

Our Student Services Department is busy enrolling new families into the district and finalizing support plans. They are dedicated to ensuring that students with special needs have all necessary

resources, accommodations, and staff in place.

KPS partners with healthcare providers to ensure all state-mandated health and school-readiness requirements are met, including vaccinations, vision and hearing screening, and the kindergarten oral health assessment. Sports physical clinics are also being held in August to ensure our student-athletes are ready to play.

FACILITIES: TRANSFORMING OUR SCHOOLS

Our Facilities Management Department is managing an ambitious summer of construction, renovations, and school transitions. This summer's projects include the media center remodeling at Hillside and essential roof replacements across the district.

Additionally, several long-term projects will continue throughout the school year. Northglade Montessori is receiving a number of upgrades, including a new, modern HVAC system. Construction is underway at Woodward School to physically connect the two buildings.

TRANSPORTATION: GETTING ROLLIN' SAFELY

Our Transportation Department is prepping a fleet of over 100 buses to ensure students are picked up safely on August 31. This complex puzzle involves mapping out routes for our drivers and putting every single bus through rigorous safety inspections.

TECHNOLOGY: POWERING DIGITAL LEARNING

Learning in the modern world requires reliable tech. The Technology Department is configuring, updating, and deploying Chromebooks and charging carts so they are ready for student use. They are also working in classrooms throughout the district to ensure projectors and other audiovisual equipment are ready for teaching and learning.

FOOD SERVICES: FUELING MINDS AND BODIES

Our Food Services team is hard at work designing delicious, nutrient-dense menus. They are stocking our school kitchens and finalizing local agricultural partnerships. KPS is proud

to continue to offer breakfast and lunch daily to all students at no cost as part of the USDA's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

SAFETY & SECURITY: SAFE AND SOUND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The safety of our students and staff remains our absolute highest priority. Over the summer, our Safety and Security team is updating our emergency operations protocols, testing building security systems, and refining secure-entry technology across district facilities. Our security personnel are also undergoing training to ensure that our campuses are not only physically secure, but are welcoming, positive environments where students feel safe to learn and grow.

BUSINESS OFFICE: BALANCING THE BOOKS

The Business Office is managing the district's financial health by processing payroll, paying vendor invoices, and meticulously preparing and implementing the new annual budget to maximize the impact of every dollar spent on our students.

COMMUNICATIONS: KEEPING YOU INFORMED

From updating the district website with vital back-to-school information to printing calendars, our communications team is working hard to keep families informed. You'll also see them out and about assisting with numerous community outreach events all summer long.

Every ounce of effort poured into these summer months has a singular focus: ensuring that our buildings, infrastructure, and personnel are fully equipped to provide our students with the best possible educational experience.

Until then, enjoy these remaining weeks of summer break! If your household needs any assistance preparing for the start of school on August 31, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Kalamazoo Public Schools

2026-2027

SCHOOL YEAR BREAK SCHEDULE

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL	August 31, 2026
WINTER BREAK	Dec. 21, 2026 - Jan. 1, 2027
SPRING BREAK	March 26 - April 2, 2027
LAST DAY OF SCHOOL	June 11, 2027

Find the full 2026-2027 school year at kalamazoopublicschools.com



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ARTISTS' CORNER

Maple Street Magnet art teacher **Gayle James** has always loved the act of creating. A native of Port Huron, Michigan, Gayle earned a BA in Arts Education and English Education at Western Michigan University in 1995. In 1998, she was one of 21 applicants from all

over the U.S. to be accepted into Syracuse University's Independent Study Degree Program, where she earned her M.A. in illustration. Although the majority of Gayle's past artwork is ink and watercolor, she is currently learning how to paint using acrylics.



"Shadow of Her Former Self" conveys the theme of navigating grief.



"Time to Grow" represents advancement, whether it be spiritual, mental, physical, relational or professional. It is about positive change.



"Bloom" depicts the act of BECOMING.



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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.

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

www.kalamazoocity.org/UtilityHelp

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Dr. Darrin Slade

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NOTICE

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

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

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

Director of School Improvement, Title I and Assessments
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0180

All other inquiries should be directed to:

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

District Directory at:
www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

Recipe

from the KPS Food Service, Chartwells

Josh Kerby,
executive chef

Kirsten Strong,
registered dietitian
nutritionist

Grilled Corn & Peach Burrata Crostini

THERE IS nothing quite like Michigan in the peak of summer, especially when fresh corn and juicy peaches are in season. This recipe packs a symphony of complementary flavors with a smoky, charred finish for the ultimate summer bite. It's the perfect excuse to fire up the grill on a warm evening; after all, those winter months will be back before we know it! Be sure to check out the Kalamazoo Farmers Market to find your fresh basil, corn, peaches, artisan bread, and local honey! Scan the QR code to see a food demo video of this recipe from Kirsten and Josh!



INGREDIENTS

(6–8 servings)

3 ears of corn, shucked
3 peaches, halved and pits removed

8 oz burrata (or shredded mozzarella, or cream cheese)
¼ cup basil, thinly sliced (see video)

1 French baguette, cut in half then sliced horizontally
2 cups arugula
Olive oil or butter
Salt and pepper to taste

Jalapeno-Garlic Honey

1 cup honey
3-5 garlic cloves, chopped
2 jalapenos, sliced with seeds

Vinegarette

Juice from ½ a lime
Juice from ½ a lemon
1 cup olive oil
1 tsp salt

PREPARATION

1. Heat your grill
2. Add honey, garlic, and jalapeños to a small saucepan over medium heat. Once bubbling, remove from heat and let steep for 15 minutes to 2 hours.
3. Whisk together all vinaigrette ingredients (you will have a lot leftover)
4. In a medium mixing bowl, drizzle arugula with vinaigrette and toss to evenly coat leaves
5. Drizzle olive oil over peaches and corn
6. Season with salt and pepper
7. Grill corn and peaches for 10-15 minutes, flipping halfway through so that you have grill marks on both sides. Remove from heat.
8. Brush olive oil onto your bread
9. Grill bread 5-10 minutes, cut side down, until it is toasted and has grill marks
10. Remove corn from the cob with a knife
11. Dice your peaches
12. Slice your burrata
13. Toss together peaches, corn, and basil; season with salt and pepper
14. Build each crostini by layering in this order: arugula, burrata, peach/corn mixture, then drizzle generously with the jalapeno-garlic honey and enjoy!


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From Veteran Educator to New Loy Norrix Athletic Director

LOY NORRIX High School enters a new chapter in its athletic program with the appointment of April Rocco as the school's new Assistant Principal and Athletic Director.

Officially appointed to the position at the April 23, 2026, Board of Education meeting, Rocco brings a wealth of experience to the role, drawing on 27 years of service within the Kalamazoo Public Schools district. She most recently served as a teacher and assistant athletic director at Loy Norrix High School. She previously served as a special and general education teacher at Washington Writers' Academy and Milwood Middle School, and as a CTE Teacher Academy Instructor at Loy Norrix.

Ms. Rocco earned a bachelor's degree in K-12 special education from Central Michigan University and a master's degree in educational leadership from Western Michigan University.

She replied to questions about her transition into this new leadership post, the lessons she's learned as a student-athlete and educator, and her goals for fostering success for every Loy Norrix student.

Why are sports/athletics important — especially in a school setting?

Being on a team is a great way for students to learn discipline, teamwork, and how to succeed and fail in a safe environment. Athletics also offers students the opportunity to form friendships within their team, other athletes at the school, and those they compete with. The games we host provide a nice community event. It is always great to have students, alumni, and community members come together to support our student athletes.

What is the value for students from being a part of a team?

Being a part of a team helps students have a safe activity and friend group to belong to. It provides additional caring adults to help guide them, and it supports an active lifestyle.

What would you say to a student who has never played a sport before? Where is a good place to start, and how do you try high school athletics?

There are lots of opportunities for students to explore athletics. Some of our teams are very competitive and difficult to earn a spot on the roster, while other teams are considered no-cut sports and fairly



April Rocco, Assistant Principal and Athletic Director, Loy Norrix High School.

easy to join. We had a group of girls join our bowling team on a whim two years ago, and they had a blast. I would encourage anyone interested in joining a team to participate in the off-season workouts.

How may your previous roles, especially as a former coach, affect your work as a high school athletic director?

I served as the athletic director at Milwood Middle School and as the assistant AD at Loy Norrix. That experience has allowed me to feel comfortable stepping into this new role. Having coaching experience also helps me understand the challenges faced by our coaches.

What were your experiences as an athlete?

While in high school, I played basketball, volleyball, and ran track. I had the good fortune to attend a school with a strong commitment to athletics. Our volleyball team won a State Championship (the state championship game was actually played at Kalamazoo Central), and I was a State Champion in the high jump. After high school, I went on to high jump at Central Michigan University. With support from coaches, tutors, and upperclassmen, I learned to manage my time, lift weights, train year-round, and stay mentally focused. While at CMU, I was a two-time Mid-American Conference Champion. I have continued to stay involved with athletics as a coach, middle school ath-

letic director, assistant athletic director at Loy Norrix, and parent to athletes.

What are your favorite sports now to play or to watch?

I can't deny that track and field remains my favorite sport; however, I am pretty much a sports junkie. It is special to help teams and athletes meet or surpass the goals they have set for themselves.

How will your different experiences in KPS inform your work as AD and assistant principal?

The majority of my teaching experience has been with at-risk learners. I also struggled as a student and knew how valuable it was to have adults in the building who were willing to support me and hold me accountable. I look forward to continuing to build relationships with all Loy Norrix students and families to help them prepare for their next opportunity.

Has Norrix had a female AD before?

I will be the first female athletic director at Loy Norrix. I will be joining Karyn Furlong from Gull Lake as the second female athletic director in the SMAC Conference. The National Federation of State High School Associations estimates that less than 25% of high school athletic directors are female. I am proud to provide representation as a leader in academic and athletic administration.

What are some goals and objectives that you have for the Loy Norrix athletic department?

I want Loy Norrix to continue to use athletics to provide unique leadership opportunities and to support athletes' academic success. On the competitive side, I would like to see us continue improving our standing in the SMAC conference and postseason tournaments. To do this, we will work to increase athletic participation, expand off-season development opportunities, and strengthen the development and partnerships with our feeder programs.

Your family has a strong connection to KPS, doesn't it?

Yes, my whole family is strongly invested in KPS. My husband Frank is the principal at Woodward School. All three of our sons were multiple-sport athletes and graduated from Loy Norrix. Godson Bishop Robinson was in the class of 2013, James Rocco was in the class of 2023, and Jason Rocco was in the class of 2025.

Kalamazoo Public Schools Honors 2025–26 KPS Retirees

THIS PAST May, Kalamazoo Public Schools hosted a special retirement dinner to celebrate the incredible careers of its 2025–26 retirees. The district is deeply grateful for their years of dedicated service and unwavering commitment to our students. Thank you for your hard work, your care, and the lasting impact you have made on the children of Kalamazoo. We wish you the very best in your retirement!

Susan Beechler - Multilingual Specialist, Administration Building
Inger Bergman - Teacher, Arcadia
Matthew Covault - Teacher, Maple Street
Misty DeNoon - Teacher, King-Westwood
Beth DeRyke - Food Service Manager, District Kitchen
Gerald Doult - Teacher, Hillside
Carol Eaton - Parapro, Woods Lake

Mary Foster - Teacher, Arcadia & Greenwood
Cynthia Gardner - Parapro, Milwood Middle
Hoagy Gaston - Custodian, El Sol
Dana Gay - Teacher, KILP
Renee Haden - Parapro, Milwood Middle
Julie Hahn - Teacher, Virtual Program
Jodi Heaney - Teacher, Virtual Program
Jesse Herron - Mentoring Program, Administration Building



Pictured above are attendees of the retirement dinner.

William Hopewell - Teacher, Northeastern
Pamela Ide - Teacher, Winchell
Kimberly Kirshman - Principal, KILP & Virtual Program
Nancy Klee - Teacher, Academically Talented
Tim Kubiak - Teacher, Linden Grove

Andrew Laboe - Assistant Principal/Athletic Director, Loy Norrix
Craig LeSuer - Principal, Milwood Elementary
Linda Mah - Specialist, Communications
Rene Martin - Parapro, Spring Valley
Mindy McNulty - Teacher, Parkwood-Upjohn
Andrea Melvin - Teacher, Parkwood-Upjohn
Kelly Moore - Teacher, Milwood Elementary

Paula Morgan - Teacher, Hillside
Kimberly O'Brien - Teacher, Academically Talented
Tisha Pankop - Teacher, Loy Norrix
C. Scott Patrick - Network Manager, Information Technology
Gregory Pigeon - Plumber, Facilities Management
Christie Sidwell - State Pupil Accounting Administrator, Information Technology

Jill Sikaundi - Teacher, Spring Valley
Timothy Smith - Teacher, Winchell
Steve Spybrook - Counselor, Linden Grove
Prudence Terbeek - Teacher, Spring Valley
Maria Trevino - Parapro, Arcadia
Patricia Tyler - Teacher, Loy Norrix
Tony Wine - Teacher, Linden Grove

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KPS Breaks Ground on New El Sol, Paves Way for Expansion

KALAMAZOO Public Schools broke ground on the new El Sol school on July 7, ushering in a new era for bilingual education in Kalamazoo.

In January 2025, the KPS Board of Education approved plans to build El Sol at 1428 Baker Drive. The new location provides room to expand El Sol’s dual-language immersion program and design a state-of-the-art educational facility.

The 75,000-square-foot school will be built on 12.1 acres of land, which was formerly home to Brucker Elementary School. The new building will be large enough to allow the dual-language program to expand from its current K-5 curriculum to a PreK-8 program, helping students maintain their Spanish language skills and more seamlessly continue their language studies in high school. The new school is expected to be open in August 2028.

“It was never the district’s intention to build the new school anywhere but at the same location at the corner of Oak and Vine,” said Karen Jackson, Director of Facilities. “But after months of programming, we quickly learned that we were forcing the building to fit on a site that did not allow for many of the characteristics of our new buildings — safe separation of cars and buses, district standard-sized classrooms, room to expand the pro-

“
... we quickly learned that we were forcing the building to fit on a site that did not allow for many of the characteristics of our new buildings.
”

Karen Jackson
Director of Facilities



Principal Natalie Wilson expressed excitement and gratitude in both English and Spanish.

gram, and increased outdoor space. Moving El Sol to the vacant land KPS owned on Baker Drive was not an easy decision, but it was the right one.”

The space will allow for amenities such as an outdoor learning lab, soccer field, and separate bus and parent drop-off areas.

Designs for the new building have been completed, and construction bids were awarded on June 25, 2026. The construction is being funded from a nearly \$200 million bond approved by voters in 2022.

El Sol currently occupies a 100-year-old building in the Vine neighborhood. The district plans to seek community input before making any decisions about its future regarding the current El Sol Elementary School building.



Aerial view of campus; Vista aerea del campus. Rendering courtesy of TowerPinkster.



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Back to School 2026



Events and groups offering free backpacks, supplies and more

There are a number of community and district events that can help students and families have a smooth and fun transition to the new school year. Many of these events provide free resources such as school supplies, shoes and personal care items. Here are some of the events in which KPS families can participate listed in order by date:

By Appointment Sports Physicals

Knights Health Center
Loy Norrix High School, 606 E. Kilgore Road

Provides free physicals for Kalamazoo County students participating in middle and high school sports activities. The center is open from 7:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Monday–Friday and an appointment is needed. To make an appointment, call 381-2843 or visit www.kalcounty.gov/1227/Knights-Health-Center. (See ad on page 12.)

July 30 KPS Enrollment Event

1–4 p.m.
Greenwood Elementary School, 3501 Moreland Ave.

Offers assistance for enrolling students in Kalamazoo Public Schools including vision and hearing screenings and vaccinations. There will be refreshments and translation services available. (See ad on page 16.)

July 30 Love Week Kalamazoo

6-7:30 p.m.
Upjohn Park, 1018 Walter St.

Sponsored by Valley Family Church, this event will have free backpacks filled with school supplies for K-12 students, groceries and fresh produce, as well as diapers, formula and stuffed animals. Children must

be present to receive a backpack, and supplies are limited.

There will also be free food, inflatable games, face painting and activities. For more information, visit www.valleyfamilychurch.org/loveweek.

Aug. 14 Back To School Bash

11 a.m.–7 p.m.
Kanley Track & Field, Western Michigan University, 1903 W. Michigan Ave.

Sponsored by the Family Health Center, this carnival-like celebration offers food, games, petting zoo, raffle prizes and live DJ music. Every child receives a new backpack filled with school supplies and personal care kits. In order to participate, students must have an up-to-date well-child examination, age-appropriate immunizations and dental screenings.



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- Develop skills for home and future learning
- Caregivers benefit, too!
- Connect with others, ask questions, and gain insights into Montessori practices.

Program Information

When: Thursday Mornings (9:00 - 10:30 am)
Duration: 6-Week Sessions
Session 1: September 10 - October 22, 2026
Session 2: November 5 - December 17, 2026
Session 3: February 6 - March 13, 2027
Session 4: April 8 - May 13, 2027
Where: The Montessori School (750 Howard Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49008)
Cost: \$175 per 6 week session

For more information scan here:

(269) 349 - 3248 www.themontessorischool.org



LEARN, GROW, THRIVE.



Give your child a head start this Fall with youth programming designed to keep kids active, learning, and thriving all season long. Everyone belongs at the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo, and we are committed to accessibility—Financial Assistance is available to ensure all can participate.

Scan the QR code to view our Youth Programming options for Fall.

YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo



Scan here! 

For more information and to register, visit fhkzoo.com/back-to-school-bash. (See ad on page 13.)

Aug. 15
Back to School Picnic / Community Day

1–3 p.m.
New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ
1904 N. Church St.

This event has traditionally offered food, clothing, free haircuts, school supply giveaways. For more information, visit the church’s FaceBook page.

Aug. 18
Sweet Start Back to School Event for Head Start /GSRP

4:30–6 p.m.
Don Cooney Cultivation Center
Kalamazoo Farmer’s Market, 1234 Bank Street

For families already enrolled in KRESA’s Head Start/Great Start Readiness Program, this event will provide a chance to meet their child’s Pre-K

teachers; get information on immunizations, events and resources; have a free dental exam or lead test; and enjoy a cupcake.

Aug. 29
Young Kings and Queens Back to School Jam

Noon–6 p.m.
Farrell Park, 809 N Rose St.

For 10 years, this event has helped local youth and families prepare for the upcoming school year by providing free backpacks, school supplies, food, entertainment and access to community resources.

For more information visit www.youngkingsandqueens.org.

Aug. 24–Sept. 16
First Day Shoe Fund

First Day Shoe Fund provides new athletic shoes to students at Kalamazoo County public elementary schools at no cost.

(continued on page 12)

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2026-27 Registration

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- Chinese dance team
- Chinese yoyo (diabolo) team
- Lion dance troupe
- Chinese chess club
- Cultural events (Lantern Festival, Moon Festival)



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BACK TO SCHOOL 2026

Back-to-School Events (continued from page 11)

Online ordering will be available at www.first-dayshoefund.org/order from Aug. 24–Sept. 16. Shoes will be fitted during late September or early October.

In addition, organizers confirmed this event is happening but didn't have details by press time:

UncLee's Free Haircuts,

UncLee's Barber Shop, 1909 W Main St.

On a designated day in August, Uncle Lee's will provide free haircuts and backpacks stocked with school supplies for students from pre-kindergarten through high school. First come, first served. Email uncleesbarbershop@gmail.com or call (269) 808-8950 for formation.





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M - F 7:30 am - 3:30 pm
- Sports physicals
by appointment for
Kalamazoo County residents
- Loy Norrix High School
606 E. Kilgore Rd, Kalamazoo

healthyknights@kalamazoo.gov
269-391-2841

Scan here to view/download required forms before your visit




KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT
Kalamazoo Public Schools

COMMUNITY

PIANO LABS

Kalamazoo

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14 WEEK FALL SEMESTER



Develop your piano skills in a relaxed, group environment

- Classes for all ages
- Financial Aid available

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Where Confidence Comes to Life!

Every leap, tumble, turn, and first step is an opportunity to discover new strengths, celebrate progress, and grow together.



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BRANCH GYMNASTICS

- Camps
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MOMENTUM DANCE

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- Hip Hop
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FALL REGISTRATION
NOW OPEN!
EASY, ONLINE REGISTRATION PROCESS!

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☎ 269-544-3000

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2026 Back To School Bash

Come celebrate 20 years of
The Kalamazoo Promise with us!

Friday, August 14, 2026 | 11 AM - 7 PM
WMU Kanley Track & Field Complex

Carnival Rides • Food • Prizes Personal Care Kits
School Supplies • Backpacks



Making the Most of Out-of-School Time

Working parents and caregivers know that getting their kids ready to go back to school is just one component of preparing for a new school year. The other is figuring out how to engage and care for kids during their “Out-of-School Time (OST),” those hours before and after the traditional school day and other times when school is not in session.

Access to quality OST programs, particularly for children from low-and middle-income families is a challenge. According to the Centers for Disease Control, only about 7.7 million U.S. children go to after-school programs. A 2025 study by Afterschool Alliance revealed that parents of nearly 30 million children want afterschool programs, yet 22.6 million kids still don’t have access.

How kids spend their out-of-school time is important. The CDC research shows that good quality OST programs not only provide safe, supervised

environments for kids but can support academic achievement and may help reduce health disparities. Those OST programs aimed at improving youth’s personal and social skills have been linked with positive social behaviors.

OST programs run the gamut when it comes to types and focus, and can include:

- academic programs focused on reading or math;
- specialty programs such as sports teams, arts enrichment, or Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); and
- multipurpose programs with an array of activities, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and programs administered through Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo.

How to Find an OST Program

In Kalamazoo, one of the easiest and best ways to find out-of-school time options is through KYD

Network’s online Afterschool Program Finder at www.kydnet.org.

KYD Network (Kalamazoo Youth Development Network) partners with organizations that provide out-of-school time programming, assessing these organizations and providing professional development and coaching opportunities to create high-quality OST programs.

KYD Network’s Afterschool Program Finder lists dozens before- and after-school programs in Kalamazoo and Calhoun County. The finder includes information on the program’s focus, grade level, cost, neighborhood location and whether transportation and meals are provided.

For more information and a scannable QR code that will take you to the Afterschool Program Finder, see KYD Network’s ad on page 16.

(continued on page 16)





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Music instruction for all ages & abilities!

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Music Together® Mixed Ages
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Epic Center, 359 S. Kalamazoo Mall, Suite 12
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Explore the Pediatric Center.
pinerest.org/pediatric-center





HELPING K-12 STUDENTS UNDERSTAND MATH, BUILD CONFIDENCE, AND ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.



PERSONALIZED LEARNING PLANS
customized instruction to meet your child's unique needs



EXPERT MATH INSTRUCTORS
Caring instructors who make math make sense and build confidence.



PROVEN METHODS THAT WORK
Our approach helps students improve skills, build confidence, and raise their grades



GRADES K-12
Helping students of all grade levels succeed in math.



GIVE YOUR CHILD THE CONFIDENCE TO RAISE THEIR HAND—AND THEIR GRADES.

Whether your child needs to catch up, keep up, or get ahead Mathnasium is here for you!

At Mathnasium, we create personalized learning plans that help students build strong foundations and develop skills that last.



START THE SCHOOL YEAR STRONG.

Schedule a **FREE** Math Skills Assessment and discover how Mathnasium can help your child succeed all year long.



MATHNASIUM
The Math Learning Center

7055 S WESTNEDGE AVE,
PORTAGE, MI 49002

(269) 220-0603

www.mathnasium.com/portage

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Start your journey today at alma.edu/apply



ALMA COLLEGE



Out-of-School Time (continued from page 14)

In addition, some KPS schools have onsite OST programs administered by other organizations.

• **YMCA Prime Time** offers before- and after-school care at KPS's King-Westwood, Milwood, Parkwood-Up-john, Prairie Ridge and Winchell elementary schools and at the YMCA's Maple Street location. The programs runs Monday-Friday from 6:30-8:45 a.m. and 3:45-6 p.m. Weekly fees are \$58 for mornings and \$64 for afternoons, with scholarships available.

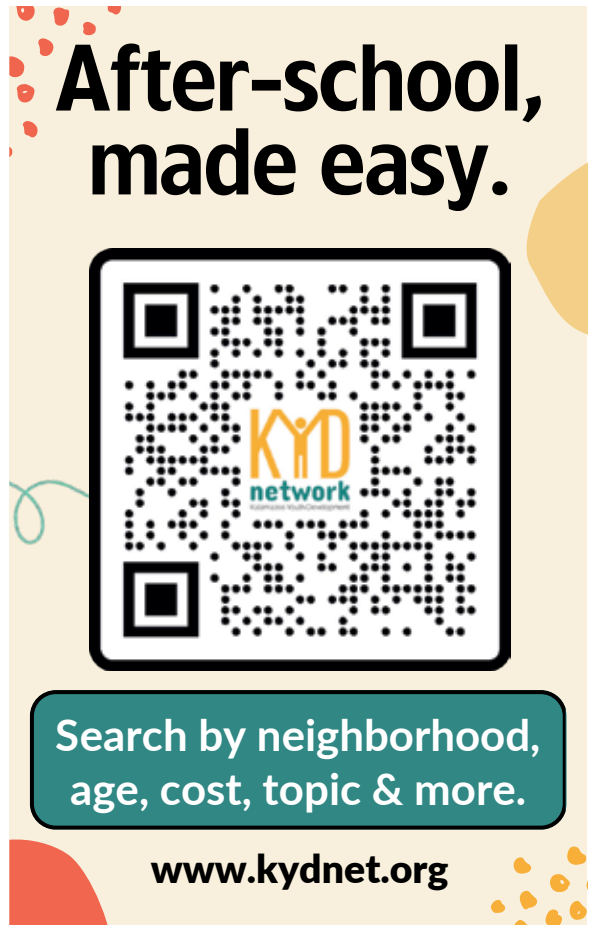
Students from KPS elementary schools without onsite OST programs can be picked up and dropped off at the schools with the OST programs through KPS transportation. Students at Indian Prairie and Arcadia elementary schools attend King-Westwood's OST program, students at Greenwood Elementary attend the OST Program at Milwood Elementary, and students at Woods Lake, El Sol, and Northglade elementary schools and Edison Academy attend the OST program at the Maple YMCA.

For more information, visit www.kzooymca.org/youth-development/out-school-time-programs.

• **YMCA Youth Center at Maple**, located at 1001 W Maple St. across from Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts, offers older youth a dedicated space with scheduled activities from 2-7:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 2-5 p.m. Friday.

• **Kalamazoo Kids in Tune**, an intensive after-school music and orchestra program offered by the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, is hosted at Woods Lake Elementary and Milwood Magnet School for grades 3-12. It provides free, 4-day-a-week instruction and instrument use. For more information, visit www.kalamazoosymphony.com/education/kalamazoo-kids-in-tune.

• **Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo** operates directly within KPS schools to mobilize community resources and provide wrap-around, after-school, and mentoring support for at-risk youth. They offer after-school services at 11 KPS elementary schools. In addition, many KPS school's have a CIS coordinator who can connect students and families to resources like tutoring, mental health services, and basic needs support. Find more information at www.ciskalamazoo.org.





When fathers are present and involved, multiple protective factors for infants improve simultaneously, from prenatal care access to safe sleep adherence.



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info@fatherhoodnetwork.org
www.thefatherhoodnetwork.org



“Dads are most ordinary men
turned into heroes, adventurers,
storytellers and singers of song.”
– Pam Brown

More Fresh Food Options on the Menu with New District Kitchen

FOR KALAMAZOO Public Schools’ executive chef Josh Kerby and resident dietitian Kirsten Strong, the new District Kitchen is more than just a beautiful facility — it is an opportunity to rethink food service for students.

The new \$8.5 million kitchen held a grand open-

ing on June 11. Located at 6750 Chime St., the former site of Chime Elementary School, the new building has more space to prepare made-from-scratch meals than the old kitchen that was located in the Community Education Building.

The kitchen was planned for in the district’s 2018

bond, but it was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain issues. Chime was torn down in 2024, with construction of the kitchen beginning in November 2024.

“I am excited to be able to increase our food

(continued on page 19)



Blast freezers allow for fresher meals.



The district’s new commercial kitchen.



District kitchen staff (front row l to r): Lyndsey Ritchie, Jennifer Grooten, Kimberly Morey, and Kirsten Strong; (back row l to r): Matt Kusmack, Josh Kerby, Tristan Koole, and Jonathan Smith.

Try something *new!*

At Kalamazoo Public Library we offer:

- Popular reads, graphic novels, cookbooks, and skill-building materials
- Movies, streaming services, and entertainment for all ages
- Seeds from the Seed Library
- Language learning with Mango Languages
- Passport services
- Many activities and programs for all



Kalamazoo
Public Library
kpl.gov



New District Kitchen *(continued from page 18)*

quality and options,” Kerby said. “We were really limited on what we could do based on storage and equipment before. This state-of-the-art kitchen enables us to explore a whole new world of recipes that were basically off limits to us before.”

Strong, who develops many of the district’s recipes, said, “I am excited to create menus that students genuinely want to eat. My hope is that the culinary freedom trickles down to the students. This shift is all about them. By serving fresh, ‘real’ food, we hope to inspire healthier eating choices long after they leave our schools. The idea of that excites me.”

KPS serves about 15,000 meals each day — which amounts to more than 2.5 million meals across more than 40 locations every year, including KPS elementary schools, Kalamazoo RESA programs and Head Start classrooms. KPS middle schools and high schools have larger kitchens and prepare meals in-house.

The new kitchen features commercial equipment designed for large-scale output. The equipment allows the staff to bring in and store raw produce and other ingredients for recipes. An example, Strong said, is taco meat. Staff can now cook raw ground turkey for taco filling — rather than using a prepared product, which might contain fillers.

The new space allows the staff to use a “cook-chill” system to prepare large quantities of made-from-scratch meals. Staff will prepare meals, then use a blast freezer — which cools food quickly by blasting it with high-velocity, subzero air. Standard freezers are designed to keep frozen foods cold, but a blast freezer drops the temperature of food to a deep-freeze much more quickly.

“The food that we will prepare and chill using the blast freezer will replace a lot of the processed foods we were previously using,” Kerby said. “For example, instead of purchasing the more expensive boil-in-a-bag beef chili, we will now be able to make a chili from scratch, bag it with our food pump, blast freeze it, then send it to our schools to be finished in our ovens.”

Strong has been busy developing new recipes for the district that focus on this fresher menu-planning approach. After creating a recipe, she’ll bring it to Kerby and the staff for testing, asking questions such as: how will it taste once it’s frozen and reheated, or what equipment might be needed to

prepare the meal, and how many batches would be needed to create 5,000 to 6,000 servings? She is also busy coordinating with local growers and Kalamazoo Valley Community College’s ValleyHUB local food-processing service to gather the freshest ingredients for meals.

“My goal is to pair familiar favorites with new, exciting flavors, challenging students to expand their palates while still providing the comforting meals they love,” Strong said. “Above all, keeping meals delicious, fresh and local — when possible — is at the forefront of every menu.”



**SUMMERTIME
Live
2026**

**113 CONCERTS 13 VENUES
FREE TO ATTEND!**

The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo, along with the cities of Parchment, Portage, Richland, Oshtemo Township, Texas Township, Vicksburg and Kalamazoo, as well as numerous venues, artists and the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation are thrilled to bring you the 2026 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.

For Full List of Concerts, visit **KalamazooArts.org**

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COUNTY
FAIR**



Fair Food



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Family Fun

August 4-8, 2026

Complete Event Schedule: www.kalamazoocountyfair.com

Kalamazoo Public Schools Annual Notifications

NOTIFICATION REGARDING STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Under federal law, parents have the right to request information on the professional qualifications of their children’s classroom teachers and the qualifications of any paraprofessionals who provide services to their children. Parents may request and receive information about: (a) whether the teacher is state-certified, (b) whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or another provisional status, and (c) the baccalaureate major of the teacher and any other graduate degree or certification. Parents may request information on the level of achievement of their child in each of the state academic assessments.

If a student attending a school that receives any Title I, Part A funds is assigned to, or taught, for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified, the school must provide timely notice to the student’s parents. Any inquiries should be directed to:

Human Resources
1220 Howard Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0177

TITLE VI

Title VI protects people from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. Kalamazoo Public Schools operates in a non-discriminatory manner including, but not limited to, admissions, academic programs, student treatment and services, counseling and guidance, discipline, classroom assignment, grading, vocational education, recreation, physical education, and athletics. Any complaints or concerns regarding Title VI should be reported to:

Geoff Howe, Director of School Improvement, Title I
and Assessments
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0180

SECTION 504

Section 504 is a part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It applies to all persons with disabilities regardless of age. It is an anti-discrimination, civil rights statute that requires the needs of students with disabilities to be met as adequately as the needs of the non-disabled are met. Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights

of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. Students are not to be excluded solely by reason of their disability or be subject to discrimination. All students with an Individual Educational Plan are protected under Section 504. Section 504’s definition of disability is a broad definition that also protects students who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or has a record of such impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities include physical, mental, self-care, learning, reading, communicating, and thinking. Any complaints or concerns regarding Section 504 should be reported to:

Barry Smith, Coordinator of Student Services
SmithBJ@kalamazoopublicschools.net
Reuquiyah Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of
Student Services Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0161

TITLE II

Title II provides grants to school districts to increase student achievement through teacher and administrator training. Kalamazoo Public Schools provides high quality training to assist teachers and administrators in many different areas to improve achievement for all students. Any complaints or concerns regarding Title II should be reported to:

Geoff Howe, Director of School Improvement, Title I
and Assessments
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0180

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children’s education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are “eligible students.”

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student’s education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review

(continued on page 21)



SUMMER FUN STARTS HERE

**100+ Aircraft & Spacecraft
Indoor Amusement Rides
World-Renowned Restoration Center
Full-Motion Flight Simulators
Hands-On Exhibits**

6151 Portage Rd. | Open 7 days a week

AIR ZOO
Aerospace & Science Experience

Kalamazoo Public Schools Annual Notifications (continued from page 20)

the records. The school must honor your request to re-view your child’s education records within forty-five (45) days of receiving the request. Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The school official will arrange for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

• Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records that they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. They should write to the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record that they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise him or her of his or her right to a formal hearing regarding the request for amendment. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.

Parents of students currently in attendance, or eligible students currently in attendance, have the right to file a compliant with the United States Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the District to comply with

the requirements of FERPA.

• Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student to release any information from a student’s education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions:

- School officials with legitimate educational interest; contractors, consultants, or volunteers to whom the district has outsourced institutional services or functions. For example, the district shares data with educational institutions that have a vested interest in helping district students such as:
- Communities In Schools;
- The Kalamazoo Promise;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies;

- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific state law;
- Institutions of higher education; and
- Information the district has designated as “directory information.”

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires that the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS), with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child’s education records. However, KPS may disclose appropriate designated “directory information” without written consent, unless you have advised the district to the contrary in accordance with district procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow KPS to include this type of information from your child’s education records in certain school publications. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: a playbill, showing your student’s role in a drama production; the annual yearbook; honor roll or other recognition lists; graduation programs; or sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

Directory information, which includes student’s name, (continued on page 22)

“
**WHAT YOU
CAN’T SEE,
CAN HURT
THEM.**

FREE HOME LEAD PAINT HAZARD REMOVAL

If your home was built before 1978, toxic lead dust could be hiding in peeling paint, windows, floors, and soil around your home. You can’t see or smell it—but for young children, it can cause serious learning disabilities and lifelong health problems.

A SAFER HOME STARTS HERE

KNHS Home Ownership Services offers FREE Lead Paint Hazard Removal for eligible Kalamazoo residents — including inspection, repairs, deep cleaning and final safety testing.

You may be eligible if you:

- Live in the City of Kalamazoo
- Own or rent a home built before 1978
- Are pregnant, or have a child age 5 or under living in the home or visiting grandchildren, nieces or nephews (6+ hrs/week)
- Meet household income guidelines (≤ 80% AMI)

Funding for this FREE program ends December 1, 2026.

Learn More at **KNHS.org**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Kalamazoo Public Schools Annual Notifications (continued from page 21)

address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized school activities and sports, weight and height of athletic team members, dates of attendance and previous school(s) attended, is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to organizations without a parent’s prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. The district may disclose personally identifiable information from education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student to other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the district has determined to have legitimate educational interests, such as Communities In Schools and The Kalamazoo Promise. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the district has outsourced institutional services or functions. In addition, two federal laws require us to provide military recruiters, upon request, with three directory information categories — names, addresses and telephone listings — unless parents have advised KPS that they do not want their student’s information disclosed without their prior written consent.

If you do not want KPS to disclose information from your child’s education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the district by writing to:

Department of Information Technology
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

(269) 337-0146
or by faxing to (269) 337-0195 on or before Feb. 25.

NONDISCRIMINATION, TITLE IX

Kalamazoo Public Schools welcomes all students and staff of any religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, gender identification, height, weight, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability. The district will not tolerate or condone any act of bias or discrimination toward any person on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, gender identification, height, weight, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability in any of its activities, hiring practices, programs, or services. In addition, Kalamazoo Public Schools will not tolerate any retaliation against individuals who submit complaints and/or who participate in investigations relating to such complaints.

Further, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), students, employees, and candidates for admission to any educational program and/or employment and all other persons are protected against all forms of sex discrimination and sexual harassment, including based on gender identity or stereotypical notions of gender identity.

The following person is designated as the Title IX coordinator with respect to any Title IX complaint of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation involving staff members or third parties:

Steve Leland
Director of Human Resources

lelandsp@kalamazoopublicschools.net
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo MI 49008
(269) 337-0177

The following person is designated as the Title IX coordinator with respect to any complaint from students regarding discrimination, harassment, retaliation and/or bullying from another student(s):

Reuquiyah Saunders, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0161

In addition, building-level administrators are responsible for monitoring adherence to the district’s nondiscrimination policy and for incorporating the district’s policy statement in all printed promotional materials and newsletters. Students should report concerns or complaints about discrimination, harassment, bullying, or cyberbullying by another student or students first to a teacher, and then if not satisfied, to the principal or assistant principal. Any concerns or complaints of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or cyberbullying not satisfied at the building level may be reported to an administrator in the Student Services Department. Concerns and/or complaints should be in writing, with the date, details of the concerns, and signature of the person making the complaint.

Any complaints and concerns of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or cyberbullying that involve adults and/or staff members should be reported to the building principal. If the inquiry is not satisfied at this level, or if the building principal is the subject of the complaint, then the concern may be directed to the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. All concerns should be in writing, with the date, details of the concern, and signature of the person making the complaint.

Complaints of any violation of the district’s nondiscrimination policy will be promptly investigated and appropriate actions taken based on the results of the investigation. Individuals who report violations of the district’s nondiscrimination policy will be granted confidentiality to the extent reasonably practicable. Any questions or assistance required regarding the district’s nondiscrimination policy, bullying policy, or Title IX protections should be addressed to the office of Student Services (269) 337-0161 for students and Human Resources (269) 337-0182 for staff.

The district guidelines and procedures for complaints filed under Title IX, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in any district educational program, service, or activity, can be found on the district website.



“Sometimes, the hardest part of care *is getting to the appointment.*”

Since 1991, the Shepherd’s Center has provided personalized, door-to-door transportation for adults 60+ to health-related appointments.

We’re not just a ride service — we’re a community. Our volunteer drivers offer compassion, conversation, and peace of mind along the way.

SERVING ALL OF KALAMAZOO COUNTY
Now Expanding Service to Include Wheelchair- Accessible Transportation — through a partnership with Kalamazoo Metro!

Visit ShepherdsCenterKalamazoo.org | (269) 383-1122



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community college

Time to Grow with Kalamazoo County Pre-K!

- ✕ Plant the seeds of success with high-quality prekindergarten.
- ✕ The 2026-27 application is open! Programs may be free for your family.

Visit dreambigstartsmall.org or call 269-250-9333.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE



EXHIBIT NOW - SEPT. 6 | FREE

LAST CHANCE! DINOSAUR EXPLORER

Journey through the wildest, wackiest and most wondrous dinosaurs to examine how the human body works through the lens of these creatures. NOTE: Free timed entry tickets are required for Dinosaur Explorer. Details and tickets are available at kalamazoomuseum.org/exhibits/dinosaur-explorer.



This exhibition is created and produced by Imagine Exhibitions Inc.

EVENT WEDNESDAYS & SATURDAYS | 10:30 A.M. & 1:30 P.M.

LAST CHANCE! RAIN GARDEN TOURS | FREE



Enjoy interactive tours of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum's Rain Garden through **Aug. 29**. Tours are 20 minutes long and are open to all ages.

For tickets and to learn more, visit kalamazoomuseum.org.

EVENT SATURDAY, AUG. 22 | FREE

STEAM AHEAD INTO THE SCHOOL YEAR

Join the museum at the Children's Nature Playscape across from Bronson Park for activities to get young kids excited about the new school year!

For times and to learn more, visit kalamazoomuseum.org.

EVENT SATURDAY, AUG. 8 | 1 & 2 P.M. | FREE

SPECIAL FREE PLANETARIUM SHOW! ELEMENTS IN ORBIT

Celebrate 150 years of the American Chemical Society with local history and exciting science experiences. Discover the unseen chemistry in space in this seasonal planetarium show, traveling from the solar system to the distant wonders of the universe. Journey from the basic building blocks of matter to stars, planets, moons and nebulae. Learn how scientists study the composition of distant worlds and uncover secrets revealed by evolving space technology.

Seating is limited. Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis.



PLANETARIUM EXPERIENCE | AUGUST SHOWS | \$3 PER PERSON

Visit kalamazoomuseum.org/planetarium for details.

ONE WORLD, ONE SKY | 10:30 A.M. TUES. - FRI. | 30 MIN. | PRE-K - GRADE 1

EXPEDITION SOLAR SYSTEM | 12:30 P.M. SAT. | 35 MIN. | ALL AGES

THE SKY ABOVE US | 1:30 P.M. TUES. - SAT. | 2:30 P.M. SUN. | 35 MIN. | GRADES 4 & UP

BIG ASTRONOMY: PEOPLE, PLACES & DISCOVERIES | 1:30 P.M. SUN. | 30 MIN. | GRADES 3 & UP

PINK FLOYD — DARK SIDE OF THE MOON | 2:30 P.M. SAT. | 45 MIN. | GRADES 5 & UP



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

FREE GENERAL ADMISSION

SPECIAL NOTICE: The museum will open at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 2.

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