



WE ARE GR

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Thanks to the generosity of our advertisers, this newsletter was funded using minimal taxpayer dollars.

COVID-19 Continues to Impact All, Though Vaccine Rollout Offers Hope for a Brighter Tomorrow



Over the past year, COVID-19 has impacted all of us. We've lost loved ones to this disease. It has impacted our livelihoods. It has changed our way of life.

As the vaccine rollout eases our worries and offers hope for a brighter tomorrow, we look for ways to recover from this pandemic and slowly get back to normal.

I am very proud of our team of elected officials and employees here at the City of Grand Rapids who have worked tirelessly to meet this challenge during the past 14 months. We have proactively and creatively resolved many issues in order to continue and enhance our public service delivery. From suspending water shutoffs to creating social zones, we are assisting residents and business owners during the response and recovery phases of this pandemic. We also continue to provide high-quality essential services during the pandemic, including public safety services, water treatment and distribution, refuse and recycling collection, park maintenance that is responsive to increased utilization, and many others.

COVID-19 is having a major financial impact on the

City of Grand Rapids. For our current fiscal year 2021, we are experiencing an income tax shortfall of between \$12 and \$15 million due to the recession and also due to reduced payments from non-residents who worked from home over the past year during the pandemic lockdown and continue to do so today. As we forecast income tax into the future, we expect only slow steady growth which results in a \$60 million income tax shortfall in the city's budget over the next three years.

We also took a hit to our parking and special event funds as COVID negatively impacted those areas. Thankfully, funding in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) will help make up for the revenue shortfalls encountered over the course of the past year. It will enable us to fund operations at current levels for fiscal year 2022 which would be the same level of service that the public has come to expect and deserve.

As we craft our budget for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, we anticipate rolling out a "continuation budget" that maintains staffing and services and fully funds existing contractual obligations. We expect ARPA federal funding will enable us to maintain funding to our general, vital streets, sidewalk repair and capital reserve funds - all of which were impacted by the dramatic decline in income tax revenue - for the next two years.

The proposed budget will be presented to the City Commission during the morning Committee of the Whole meeting on April 27. Your thoughts on the proposed budget will be welcomed at a virtual town hall on May 6 and at a public hearing on May 18. The full City Commission review and budget adoption process is outlined on the right.

City Commission Review & Adoption Process

- Tuesday, April 27
FY2022 Preliminary Fiscal Plan Presentation
- Tuesday, May 4
City Commission Budget Review Workshop
- Thursday, May 6
Budget Town Hall
- Tuesday, May 11
Set Public Hearing for proposed FY2022 Millage and Budget
- Tuesday, May 11
City Commission Budget Review Workshop
- Tuesday, May 18
Hold Public Hearing for proposed FY2022 Millage/Budget
- Thursday, May 20
Resolution to Adopt FY2022 Millage/Budget
- Thursday, July 1
2022 Fiscal Year Begins

In partnership,

Mark Washington, City Manager

We've Extended the Deadline to File Your City Income Tax

Based on the federal income tax filing due date being extended to May 17, we have followed suit. This year, the City income tax due date also has been extended from April 30 to June 1.

All Grand Rapids taxpayers can defer income tax payments due on April 30 to June 1 without penalties and interest, regardless of the amount owed. This deferment applies to all taxpayers - including individuals, trusts and estates, corporations and other non-corporate tax filers as well as those who pay self-employment tax. This deferment does not apply to any withholding taxes.

If you need additional time to file beyond the new June 1 deadline, you can request a filing extension by completing and submitting the extension form available on the City's website at grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Income-Tax-Department/Forms.

If you have questions regarding this extension or your returns, you can email grincometax@grcity.us or call 616-456-3415 option 0.

If you need help preparing your City tax return, please bring the first page of your federal return and any 1099s or W-2s you have. Appointments can be made by calling 616-456-3415 option 0 or emailing grincometax@grcity.us.

The Income Tax Office is available for phone calls, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and Wednesdays until 7 p.m. Extended hours for filing in office are available Saturdays 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. - April 17 and 24 as well as May 15, 22 and 29. If you have finished your returns and are able, you may consider uploading it to the City's website for faster processing at grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Income-Tax-Department.

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US POSTAGE
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ECRWSS
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GRPS
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Grand Rapids Public Schools
1331 Franklin S.E., PO
Box 117
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0117

Rent-Subsidized Senior Apartments Available Now!

Enjoy comfortable apartment living in the neighborhood you call home and get your first month rent free!

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) makes it affordable for income-eligible seniors and people with disabilities to enjoy comfortable apartment living at senior communities located throughout the city. A rental subsidy is available to eligible tenants, which means rent is generally no more than 30 percent of monthly income.

All GRHC senior communities feature:

- Attractive one-bedroom units
- Park-like, professionally maintained grounds
- Affordable rent includes utilities
- Major appliances furnished
- Smoke-free environment
- Community room, social events
- Laundry facilities on site
- Food pantry on site
- On-site supportive services
- On-site housing and maintenance staff
- 24-hour emergency maintenance

Four GRHC senior communities currently have units available! And for a limited time, new tenants will get their first month free!

Apply online today to take advantage of the limited-time First Month Free offer! For more information and application form, visit grhousing.org.



Ransom Tower Apartments - 50 Ransom Avenue NE
(616) 235-2881
Serving seniors ages 62 and older
Maximum annual income, one person: \$44,950
Maximum annual income, two people: \$51,350



Mount Mercy Apartments - 1425 Bridge Street NW
(616) 235-2843
Serving seniors ages 55 and older; ages 55-61 must have a disability to receive a federal rental subsidy
Maximum annual income, one person: \$35,340
Maximum annual income, two people: \$40,380



Leonard Terrace Apartments - 1315 Leonard Street NE
(616) 235-2890
Serving seniors ages 55 and older; ages 55-61 must have a disability to receive a federal rental subsidy
Maximum annual income, one person: \$28,100
Maximum annual income, two people: \$32,100



Adams Park Apartments - 1440 Fuller Avenue SE
(616) 235-2865
Serving seniors ages 62 and older as well as adults with disabilities
Maximum annual income, one person: \$44,950
Maximum annual income, two people: \$51,350

GRow1000 Youth Employment Program Kicks Off 2nd Year

We are excited to begin the second year of our GRow1000 Youth Employment Program. This is a great opportunity for our local teens and young adults to learn valuable skills in the workplace while also lifting up our neighbors that were hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

The GRow1000 was launched the summer of 2020 in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing racial and economic disparities. City Manager Mark Washington called on business and community leaders to help mitigate these effects by employing 1,000 young people during the summer. Our community stepped up to the challenge! In just a few weeks, over 350 youth were employed in more than 60 unique job sites that spanned area businesses, nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions and government.

Our community has once again risen to the occasion to support GRow1000. This summer young people ages 15 to 24 will have the opportunity to explore a career and obtain valuable work experience while earning money. Program participants will be matched with employers for a 6-week, 120-hour, paid work experience from June 14 through July 23. Through this experience, area businesses and organizations will introduce youth to real-world work environments, provide mentorship and create pathways to future careers.

"We appreciate the community's support in making this program possible," said Mark Washington, city manager. "Providing meaningful work is important in helping our youth stay productive and build skills during the summer. There are more than 9,000 youth in Grand Rapids between



"At my job, I have been racking and staging parts to get plated. The experience has been fun and amazing. I have learned new things. The best part is that I'll be able to work there after the program is over."

Sammy L., 2020 GRow1000 Participant
Placement: Master Finish

"I am having so much fun at Steelcase! I am so sad that the program is ending soon! At my placement, we do a mix of things. On Mondays we go to WMCAT and participate in creative activities. On Tuesdays and Thursdays we explore possible career pathways at Steelcase. On Wednesdays, we go to Public Thread and we work on a product development project."

Yadira D-L., 2020 GRow1000 Participant
Placement: Steelcase & WMCAT

"I have been working in the different departments of Meijer. It is really nice because it can show me what department I might want to work in if I choose to stay at Meijer. My favorite department so far has been greeting."

Gretchen S., 2020 GRow1000 Participant
Placement: Meijer

the ages of 15 and 21. Nearly three quarters (73%) are under the age of 18 and are persons of color. Investing in GRow1000 means investing in our community's future!" added Washington.

For more information on GRow1000, visit grandrapidsmi.gov/GRow1000.

For additional questions, contact Our Community's Children at occyouth@grcity.us or call 616-456-3558.

Grand Rapids Fire Department Shares Spring-Summer Fire Safety Tips

With warmer weather brings new fire threats that can be prevented. Thousands of house fires and thermal burns occur each year due to unsafe yet avoidable practices.

Our Grand Rapids Fire Department shares its spring and summer tips for practicing fire safety while also making the most of seasonal fun.



Grilling Safety

With spring officially here, more of us will be firing up our grills and cooking outside. Ensure that you are grilling safely this summer with these tips:

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors and away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.
- Always make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it.
- If you use a starter fluid in a charcoal grill, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

It is also important to make sure your grilling tools are

functioning properly before you start grilling. For propane grills, check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. A propane leak will release bubbles when you apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. If your grill has a gas leak – by smell or the soapy bubble test – and there is no flame, turn off both the gas tank and the grill. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department. If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.

Smoking & Home Fire Safety

Smoking materials are the leading cause of fire deaths in the home, so it is important to protect yourself and those in your home from smoking-related fires. To practice fire safety while smoking:

- Only use fire-safe cigarettes.
- Smoke outside.
- Keep smoking materials such as cigarettes, lighters, matches, etc. out of reach of children.
- Use a deep, sturdy ashtray that is kept away from flammable objects.
- Do not discard cigarettes in vegetation or other things that could ignite easily.
- Be sure your cigarette butts and ashes are out before discarding them.
- Never smoke and never allow anyone to smoke where medical oxygen is used as it can easily ignite.

Storm & Extreme Weather Safety

While you may not be able to control storm-related emergencies, there are ways you can protect yourself and your loved ones from fire-related emergencies. In the case of storm and extreme weather incidents, there are ways to prevent fires related to lightning strikes, flooding and generator use.

While generators can be useful during winter storms, unsafe use can cause injuries and death. When using a portable generator, make sure you are operating it in a well-ventilated, dry area that is outdoors and away from all doors, windows and vents. Carbon monoxide can also be a threat associated with generators, so make sure your carbon monoxide detectors are working properly in your home. Lastly, do not fuel your generator when it is running, as spilling gas on a hot engine can cause a fire.

More fire safety tips for severe weather incidents include:

- Use flashlights, not candles, for emergency lighting and stock up on batteries. Household items can catch fire with candles, especially when unattended.
- Store backup batteries for you smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm.
- Use surge protectors.
- Consider unplugging appliances.
- In case of flooding, disconnect car and other motor vehicle batteries.

For more information and tips on fire prevention, visit [usfa.fema.gov/prevention/](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/).

Spring Tips to Protect the Grand River and Our Watersheds

Water is one of West Michigan's greatest natural assets, so it is important that we take care of it for everyone's enjoyment. One way we can protect our watersheds is by clearing and maintaining the catch basins in our neighborhood. By doing so, we can prevent flooding in our streets and harmful debris from entering our watersheds.

Here are a few tips to make sure the catch basins near your home are clear and well-maintained.

Practice proper disposal

Anything that goes down storm drains flows directly into our environment, so please dispose of all waste, including pet waste, in trash receptacles. Never sweep trash into the street or gutters where it will get caught in a storm drain and cause harm to the Grand River.

Clear a catch basin

Now that the snow has melted, catch basins or storm drains are becoming covered in leaves and debris. You can help us keep the Grand River clean by keeping them clear or calling 311 to report a clogged catch basin and we'll come take care of it right away.

Join the "Adopt a Drain" program

As they say - Everything has its place, and it's never in the drains! With over 17,000 storm drains in our city, we need your help to keep them clear of debris. If you're interested in adopting a drain in your neighborhood, visit adoptadrain-igrow.org to find an orphan drain in your neighborhood that you can name and care for as your very own.



How to Dispose of Your Yard Waste

Now that the snow has melted from our yards, it is time for some spring cleaning. Helping our City staff collect yard waste such as leaves, grass clippings and twigs separately from our normal trash and recycling collection prevents over-filling our landfills and contributes to a healthier planet.

Seasonal services like curbside yard waste collection and yard waste drop-off sites are now open through the second Saturday in December. To take advantage of these services, make sure you know where, when and how your yard waste is collected.

Yard Waste Curbside Collection

Our Public Works department will pick up curbside yard waste on the same day as your normal refuse collection. City yard waste tags are \$2.50 each, City yard waste-paper bags are \$12.50 for a package of five and yard waste cart tags are \$6 each. All yard waste needs to be placed at the refuse collection point by 7 a.m.

A few reminders about curbside yard waste preparation:

- Bulk yard waste materials need to be tagged and tied and weigh no more than 30 pounds.
- Bundled yard waste cannot exceed 4 feet in length and 6 inches in diameter.
- All yard waste other than bulk or bundled needs to be placed in a City yard cart or City yard waste-paper bag and be visible for collection.
- Raking or sweeping of leaves or any other material into the street or gutter is not permitted. Material swept into the street can clog catch basins and cause street flooding.



Yard Waste Drop-Off at 2001 Butterworth SW

You may also drop-off your yard waste at our composting site at 2001 Butterworth SW. This drop-off site is open to all Grand Rapids residents for residential yard waste only.

New this year, we are partnering with organics and composting vendor We Care Denali. The company will manage all on-site operations, working to turn yard waste into a high-quality compost that will be sold within the West Michigan area. Once finished compost is ready this summer, you will be able to pick up to one cubic yard of material once per year on a first come, first served basis. One cubic yard of

mulch will also be available to city residents.

Starting this season, new hours of operation are as follows:

April 5 through Memorial Day, Monday, May 31

Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday – 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (NEW HOURS)

June 1 through mid-December

Monday – Saturday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (NEW HOURS)

For more information, call the Public Works Department at 616.456.3000 or visit grandrapidsmi.gov/Services/Yard-Waste-Services.

GR 311 Can Help With That!



There are countless reasons to get in touch with a representative from the City of Grand Rapids, and our GR311 is the perfect point of contact for non-emergency information about our services and programs. From paying your parking ticket to questions about trash collection to reporting an issue like potholes in your area, our team at GR311 can help.

If you come across any of the following issues, you can report them to us online at grandrapidsmi.gov/report-it, on our grcity 311 mobile app or by calling our 311 Customer Service Center at 311 or 616.456.3000. You can contact GR311 on Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Potholes

Snow, salt, and temperature changes can wreak havoc on our roads. Now that the snow has melted, you may notice potholes in the road during your travels.

When reporting a pothole, please provide us with its specific location and site. This helps us find it and repair it as quickly as possible. If you don't have the address, an intersection works, too. Don't have the size of the pothole? Here are helpful questions:

- Is it the size of a basketball?

- Your car tire?
- Would it swallow your car whole?

Graffiti

Notice graffiti in your neighborhood or other parts of our city? Help us reduce graffiti in our community by reporting it.

We can remove graffiti that faces the public right-of-way (between the street and sidewalk or within 5 feet of the street). We're not able to remove graffiti that doesn't face the public right-of-way. It's the responsibility of the property owner to take care of graffiti on private property.

Illegal Dumping

Did someone dump trash or old furniture in front of your home or in an alley behind it? If the items are in the public right-of-way or in the alleyway, please report it. We can send out a team to take care of it.

Items dumped on private property are the responsibility of the owner to remove. The issue can be reported to the Police Department by calling 616.456.3400.

Property complaints

Does your neighbor always have trash or other items in their yard? Do they let their grass become a small jungle? Is the trash and debris making it difficult to travel safely down the sidewalk?

These types of issues can be reported anonymously as code violations at grandrapidsmi.gov/Services/Report-a-Complaint-About-Tall-Grass-or-Trash-in-a-Yard.

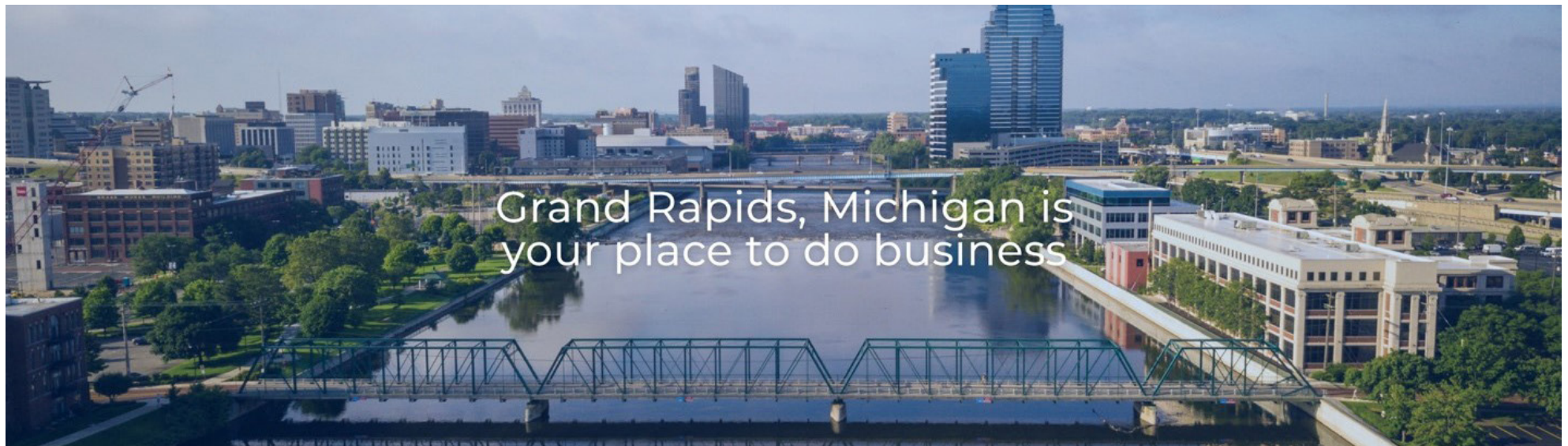
When reporting an issue, please give us the address of the property and your specific concern.

What Should I Do With a Wind-Damaged Tree?

Spring always brings thunderstorms, and thunderstorms bring wind, rain and lightning. These storms can do damage to trees and cause branches to come loose – or even whole trees to fall. Trees can also be infested with an exotic species of beetle known as the Emerald Ash Borer. These bugs can cause considerable damage to a tree and they can even kill it.

If you know of a tree on public property that needs to be trimmed or removed, report it to us at grandrapidsmi.gov, on our GRCity 311 mobile app or calling our 311 Customer Service Center at 311 or 616.456.3000. Any tree on private property is the property owner's responsibility.





City's Economic Driver Launches New Website, Releases Annual Report Video and Impact Report to the Community

Our Office of Economic Development (EDD) is responsible for all business retention, expansion and attraction projects for the City of Grand Rapids. The department serves as an economic driver and catalyst for our region. It plays an important role as an investment partner with tailored resources and programs that support business investment and job growth.

EDD's work is guided by the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan, which provides recommendations on policies, programs and investments. The purpose of the plan is threefold:

- Identify and rank public investment related to economic development and mobility
- Guide greater efforts in transparency, communications and investments

- Increase access to opportunity with an emphasis on Neighborhoods of Focus

The strategies in the Plan focus on outcomes and operations through 2025.

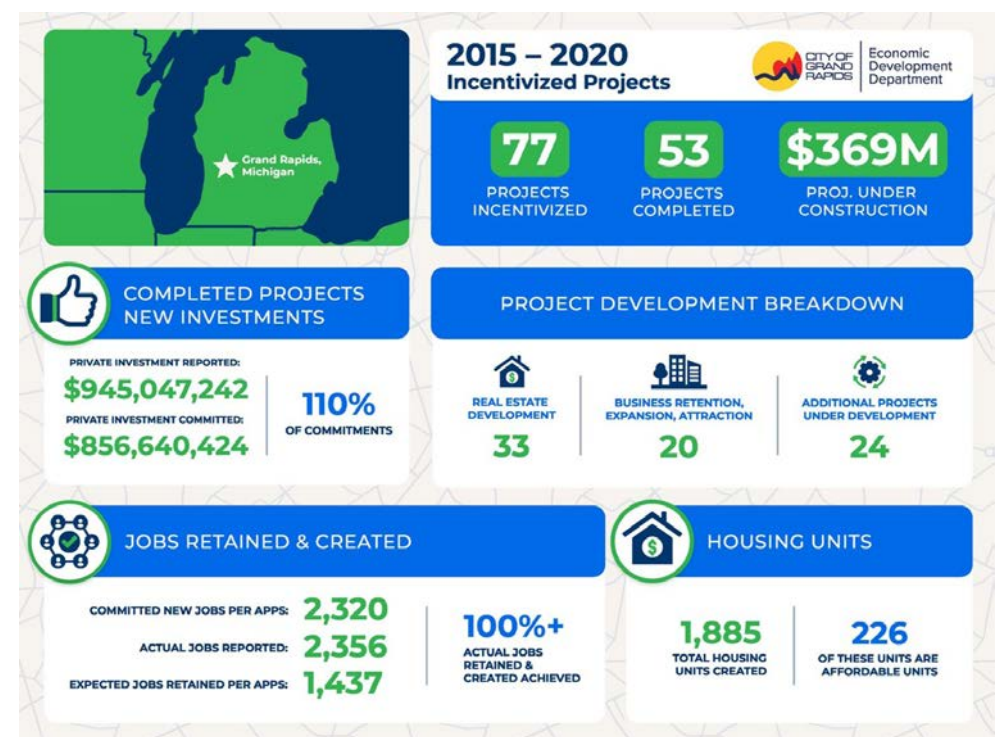
The EDD team presented its annual report video and Impact Report to the City Commission in March, while introducing a redesigned website making it easier for businesses to navigate available economic development resources.

The new website, GrowGR.org, outlines information on services, boards and authorities, available incentives, as well as an annual report video. The video highlights the focus of EDD's work in different neighborhoods in Grand Rapids and partnerships with community organizations, business and neighborhood associations, and other economic development organizations in the region.

Highlights of the Impact Report include \$180M in private investments, 887 jobs impacted (new and retained) and 259 new housing units in 2020 (see related image).. All of these were increases from 2019.

"Despite a very challenging year dealing with the pandemic, our 2020 Impact Report confirms that businesses continue to make commitments and investments in our community," said Jeremiah Gracia, economic development director. "They believe in Grand Rapids and the future economic impact to our community is clear."

Our EDD team serves as business advocates ensuring that businesses have access to every program and resource available to them as they prepare to commit to - and invest in - Grand Rapids. To see how they can assist you, please call 616-456-3431 or e-mail econdevshrd@grcity.us.



Joining Together to Green our Streets

Every Grand Rapids resident should have access to beautiful, well-maintained trees and parks.

Trees provide shade, clean the air, slow traffic, intercept stormwater, lower energy costs, and create beautiful streets. This has guided an effort to cover 40 percent of the city in healthy tree canopy, and bring the benefits of trees to all who live, work and play in Grand Rapids.

Six years ago, the City of Grand Rapids' Forestry Department joined with the Mayor's Office and local nonprofit organization Friends of Grand Rapids Parks to launch the Mayor's Greening Initiative in pursuit of this goal.

Typically, hundreds of community members volunteer together to plant between 300 and 500 trees in one weekend! Trees are placed in public right-of-way spaces (the area between the sidewalk and the street) of a different Grand Rapids neighborhood each year.

Communities which have traditionally had fewer healthy trees than others are prioritized for the event. In 2021, Burton Heights and the Plaster Creek Family Park are the areas of focus.

Key to the success of the initiative is collaboration with residents. Friends hosts numerous free events over the course of the year to get to know residents, and works closely with businesses and community centers to learn about the neighborhood's needs.

Trained arborists inspect possible planting sites to ensure that a new tree won't interfere with power lines, driveways or walkways. Then Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' team then



connects with residents to answer their questions and educate them about the life of the tree.

Not only does Friends offer the opportunity to plant these trees alongside its trained team, but the organization also guarantees watering. Friends' youth Green Team waters all Mayor's Greening Initiative trees every other week during the summer for two years.

The family-friendly volunteer event has been restructured

for 2021 to accommodate COVID-19 safety protocols and provide outdoor fun throughout the year. The key dates include:

- May 1, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Volunteers will plant 25 trees in Plaster Creek Family Park and 25 trees in surrounding streets in celebration of Arbor Day
- May 8: Tree Giveaway! Trees provided are for planting on the private property of Burton Heights area residents.
- Oct. 8-9: All Grand Rapids families are invited to volunteer for a two-hour shift and help add 250 new trees to the streets of Burton Heights!

Volunteers will be able to sign up for a two-hour shift, and will be assigned to a small group led by a trained Site Leader. Fully sanitized tools are provided, and as is a planting demonstration.

If your family is interested in volunteering, you may find more information or sign up on Friends' website: friendsofgrparks.org/mayors-greening-initiative

Residents can also enjoy free family-friendly outdoor activities such as Movies in the Park, hosted by the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department and Friends.

2021 Movies in the Park Schedule:

- June 18: Martin Luther King Park
- July 17: Sullivan Field
- July 31: Roosevelt Park
- Aug. 7: Plaster Creek Family Park
- Aug. 21: Highland Park

The Belonging Initiative



What is belonging?

Welcoming places are friendly and inviting, but not every guest who is invited to an event is later included as a full member in the core group, made to feel that they belong, and can make decisions with the group. The Belonging Initiative™ is working to cultivate concrete habits of inclusion in our civic practices, through the arts, meals together, relationship building, and disciplined measurement.

When you belong somewhere, you don't just feel as if you belong, you have some concrete evidence; you can say, "that's my chair." When you're beginning to belong, you hear more than just a friendly "hello." Someone remembers what is happening in your life. Someone asks how your mother's

operation went, or whether your roof is still leaking. At its best, belonging means you've got a key to the house, a regular order at the restaurant, a local band that knows your favorite song, a seat on the board. You have a network supporting you, sitting with your mother at the hospital, helping you find the right roofer. You have a network that trusts and recruits you, signing you up to volunteer at the hospital or to join the roof-repair crew.

Welcoming is good. It says, "come on in!" But it's a short-lived response to newcomers. Belonging is great, and it's a sustainable response to long-term neighbors.

Why does belonging matter?

Belonging matters because it reflects the health of a community. It speaks to the health of the local economy, the state of diversity and inclusion, and the overall level of social cohesion and social capital in a community. When people feel like they belong, they are more likely to stay in the community and invest time and money in it.

How do we measure belonging?

In 2019, Skot Welch, founder of the Grand Rapids-based diversity, equity, and inclusion firm Global Bridgebuilders, along with Derk Baartman of DB studios, Skot's long-time friend and collaborator, launched the Belonging Initiative™, an effort that provides services that enable communities and organizations to move from merely welcoming people to including people fully. To gauge community members' sense of belonging, the Belonging Initiative worked with the Calvin University Center for Social Research (CSR) to design the Belonging Index™, a survey that measures how much residents feel like they belong in the community as a whole

and in several types of groups, organizations, and entities. This spring, the Belonging Initiative will launch the Belonging Index in Grand Rapids. This survey is designed for community members living in the greater Grand Rapids area. Residents who are interested can complete the online survey using a computer or mobile device with internet access. Surveys are available in both English and Spanish.

To get started, please visit the links below:
English: calvin.edu/go/belonging-grandrapids-sm
En Español: calvin.edu/go/pertenecer-grandrapids-sm

Visit belonginginitiative.us and follow @BelongingWM for more information.

Visite www.belonginginitiative.us y siga a @BelongingWM en Facebook para obtener más información.



SCAN ME



Escanéeme



4 WAYS TO GET ACTIVE THIS SUMMER

Community fitness happening May through August

<p>1</p> <p>VIRTUAL FEE-BASED</p> <p>MONTHS May - Aug</p> <p>PRICING:* \$32 per 8-week class \$16 per 4-week class</p> <p>LOCATION(S): Wherever you are! Live on Zoom</p>	<p>2</p> <p>OUTDOOR FEE-BASED</p> <p>MONTHS May - August</p> <p>PRICING:* \$16 per 4-week class \$12 per 3-week class</p> <p>LOCATION(S): Parks and public spaces across Grand Rapids</p>	<p>3</p> <p>INDOOR FEE-BASED</p> <p>MONTHS June - August</p> <p>PRICING:* \$16 per 4-week class</p> <p>LOCATION(S): Parks and Rec Studio 201 Market Ave SW</p>	<p>4</p> <p>OUTDOOR FREE</p> <p>MONTHS June - August</p> <p>PRICING: Free, no registration. Just drop in!</p> <p>LOCATION(S): Parks and public spaces across Grand Rapids</p>
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*Add \$10 for nonresidents

Register online
grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr

Register by phone
616.456.3696, option #1

Register in person
201 Market Ave SW

VIRTUAL YOGA


Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASSES RUN FOR 8-WEEK SESSIONS, STARTING THE WEEK OF MAY 3

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
BASIC YOGA Discover your inner yogi in a class that builds strength and body awareness. Begin with gentle stretching and move to flowing through and holding poses. Class will come to a restful end.	MON	5:15 - 6:10 PM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
	WED	12:00 - 12:55 PM	VIRTUAL	KATIE V.
	WED	6:00 - 6:55 PM	VIRTUAL	SARA R.
	SAT	9:00 - 9:55 AM	VIRTUAL	SARA R.
GENTLE YOGA A balanced practice that will center you, leaving your body feeling open and relaxed. Basic poses and a slower flow unlock body tension, strengthen your core and help you tune into personal peace.	TUE	9:00 - 9:55 AM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
	THU	9:00 - 9:55 AM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
SLOW FLOW RESTORATIVE YOGA End your weekend and set the tone for the week ahead with this calming and gentle yoga class. Each class will begin and end with a variety of restorative postures, with a slow yoga flow in between. Find a cozy comfortable space, light a few candles, and grab as many blankets and pillows as you can!	SUN	7:00 - 7:55 PM	VIRTUAL	SARA R..
POWER YOGA This energetic class is designed to build strength, flexibility, and balance! Challenging peak poses, breath to movement flows, and mind body connections will encourage students to find their edge. Modifications are always offered and body awareness is always encouraged.	TUE	6:30 - 7:25 PM	VIRTUAL	SARA R.
VITAL MOVEMENT Strength, flexibility and balance are vital to our well-being. This class combines yoga stretches and poses (from the chair and standing only), along with light core work. No mat required. Perfect for anyone needing to stretch, improve their range of motion, or modify their practice as they recover from injuries. This class is great for any age, especially those 50+.	WED	9:00 - 9:55 AM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.

VIRTUAL DANCE FITNESS


CLASSES RUN FOR 8-WEEK SESSIONS, STARTING THE WEEK OF MAY 3

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr 
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
GROOVE Sweat away stress and dance some joy into your heart while following simple steps and easy toning moves. Groove is perfect for anyone who wants to add some fun into their current workout routine.	WED	5:15 - 6:10 PM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
WERQ WERQ is a nonstop cardio dance class with fun and unique routines set to the hottest pop and hip hop music. Participants will get a high calorie burn, and a non stop workout, combining repetitive athletic moves with fresh dance steps. Anyone can WERQ it!	MON	6:00 - 6:55 PM	VIRTUAL	JEANNIE W.
ZUMBA Zumba is a high energy, dance fitness class that incorporates Latin and international music. All fitness levels are welcome.	THU	6:30 - 7:25 PM	VIRTUAL	AMY K. & BRI C.

VIRTUAL CARDIO & STRENGTH


CLASSES RUN FOR 8-WEEK SESSIONS, STARTING THE WEEK OF MAY 3, UNLESS NOTED

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr 
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
ACTIVE ADULTS This class is designed for adults ages 50+ but is open to all. Includes warm-up, standing cardio, balance work, strength training (preferably with weights), and cool-down.	TUE THU	11:05 - NOON 11:05 - NOON	VIRTUAL VIRTUAL	DARCY D. DARCY D.
BARRE Barre is a low impact, high intensity total body workout that incorporates elements of Pilates, Ballet and Yoga. This workout is fast paced and set to fun upbeat music. During the workout you will use light hand weights, resistance bands, and your own body weight. You will complete small range movements at high repetitions meant to fatigue your muscles to build strength and endurance, and then stretch everything out to increase your flexibility. Barre is a great workout for any fitness level as there are options to level up or down based on your own body. Barre is for EVERYBODY.	MON	6:30 - 7:25 PM	VIRTUAL	CORI M.
CORE CAMP Incorporate weight training and cardio blast intervals to keep your muscles and heart pumping. Combined with today's hottest music, this class is as much fun as it is effective.	THU	5:30 - 6:25 PM	VIRTUAL	KRISTIN P.
KICKBOXING Mix up your routine with balance, coordination and strength-building moves. Strengthen your legs, upper body, abs and burn calories. 4-week session, May only.	TUE	6:00 - 6:55 PM	VIRTUAL	VALARIE J.
POUND® Using Ripstix®, lightly weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND® transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Instead of listening to music, you become the music in this exhilarating full-body workout that combines cardio, conditioning and strength training with yoga and pilates-inspired movements. Designed for all fitness levels, POUND® provides the perfect atmosphere for letting loose, getting energized, toning up and rockin' out! The workout is easily modifiable, and the alternative vibe and welcoming philosophy appeals to men and women of all ages and abilities. POUND® approved sticks required for everyone. Punch card holders must have their own Ripstix®. Ripstix® available at registration for \$20. 4-week session, May only.	TUE	5:30 - 6:15 PM	VIRTUAL	KRISTIN P.
STRONG30 STRONG30 packs a total body workout into 30 minutes. It combines HIIT (high intensity interval training), body weight exercises, and cardio moves. In every class, the music and moves sync together in a way to help push you past your limits and reach your fitness goals.	SAT	9:00 - 9:30 AM	VIRTUAL	AMY K.

OUTDOOR FEE-BASED CLASSES


CLASSES RUN FOR 4-WEEK SESSIONS UNLESS NOTED

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr 
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	MONTHS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
CYCLING Reach your fitness goals while building leg and core strength! Powerful music and pace-setting instruction helps you climb steep hills, move across flat road and master intense intervals.	MAY - AUG MAY - AUG MAY - AUG	MON THU SAT	5:30 - 6:15 PM 6:00 - 6:45 PM 8:00 - 8:45 AM	COLDBROOK AT RIVER'S EDGE	CAROL S. JULIE S. CAROL S.
GROOVE Sweat away stress and dance some joy into your heart while following simple steps and easy toning moves. Groove is perfect for anyone who wants to add some fun into their current workout routine.	MAY	THU	6:00 - 6:55 PM	THE BLUE BRIDGE	HEATHER W.
FOREST YOGA Join Certified Forest Therapy Guide and yoga instructor Katie (from In Your Element) for a four-week class in Ken-O-Sha Park. Step away from the hustle of the city for a short walk into the forest and a yoga class among the trees during these 1.25-hr wellness classes, where you'll enjoy mindful time in nature, release stress and anxiety, and learn a little about the forest environment and the health benefits we receive when we spend time there. Yoga class is for all levels, please bring your own mat and water. Participants will be guided along forest trails for the walk to our location, some of which are unpaved. \$40/residents, \$50/nonresidents	JUN	THU	6:00 - 7:15 PM	KEN-O-SHA PARK	KATIE V.
NEW! PADDLEBOARD BASICS In this one time introductory class, get familiar with a paddle board and learn some of the basic tips and tricks that will help your navigation and stability. With a little practice, and a lot of fun, you will become aware of all the muscles used and benefits received, when you take your work out to the water. One-time class, \$10/residents, \$20/nonresidents.	JUN 10, 17, OR 24	THU	7:30 - 8:25 PM	RICHMOND POOL	HEATHER W.
NEW! PADDLEBOARD FITNESS FUSION Let's make a SPLASH this summer trying something new! Paddleboard Fitness Fusion is a combination of balance training, strength training, pilates and yoga to fully benefit your body in the most unique way. No experience is necessary, we will provide options for all levels of fitness. Come for the challenge, and come for the FUN. 3-week session, \$35/residents, \$45/nonresidents.	JUL - AUG	THU	7:30 - 8:25 PM	RICHMOND POOL	HEATHER W.
STRONG NATION Strong Nation is a HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) class that includes body weight strength exercises, fast cardio moves, plyometrics, and agility training. Music and moves sync together to help push you past your limits to reach your fitness goals.	MAY - AUG	WED	6:30 - 7:25 PM	COLDBROOK AT RIVER'S EDGE	AMY K.
TAI CHI EASY™ Practice gentle movement and simple, modified tai chi to bring vitality to your mind and body. Combining breathwork and gentle mindful movement, this class will help soothe and rebalance you. Class will be held outside and taught standing and walking, but is easily adapted for a seated practice. For seated practice, please bring your own chair or stool; armless is ideal.	JUN & AUG	WED.	10:00 - 10:55 AM	GARFIELD PARK	ALESHEIA H.
WATER AEROBICS Build core strength, conditioning, endurance and all-over toning. Class features deep and shallow water exercises. A great low/non-impact workout. Float belts are available.	JUN - AUG	TUE THU SAT	TBD TBD TBD	TBD TBD TBD	KATHLEEN H.

INDOOR YOGA


CLASSES RUN FOR 4-WEEK SESSIONS UNLESS NOTED

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr 
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	MONTHS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
NEW! PRENATAL YOGA This series is designed to connect and support expecting mamas. Build strength and flexibility in your body to help you carry your growing belly more efficiently, preventing low back pain, hip pain, round ligament pain and other common pregnancy aches and issues. We will target the muscles you will use in labor and birth to help you build stamina and strength where you'll need it most. Whether you have a vaginal or cesarean birth, practicing yoga while pregnant will significantly aid in your postpartum recovery. Prenatal yoga gives expecting moms the opportunity to relax, breathe, and connect with their body and their baby. Please bring your own water bottle, towel & mat, bolsters and blocks are available in the studio.	JUN & AUG	SUN	11:00 - 11:55 AM	201 MARKET AVE	HEIDI M.

INDOOR DANCE FITNESS


CLASSES RUN FOR 4-WEEK SESSIONS UNLESS NOTED

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr 
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	MONTHS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
BALLROOM DANCING: THE NEXT STEPS A follow-up to Ballroom Dancing. Continue practicing basic dances and learn new moves to add flair.	JUN - AUG	FRI	4:30 - 5:25 PM	201 MARKET AVE	JULIE G.
GROOVE Sweat away stress and dance some joy into your heart while following simple steps and easy toning moves. Groove is perfect for anyone who wants to add some fun into their current workout routine.	JUN - JUL	SAT	9:00 - 9:55 AM	201 MARKET AVE	ANNA W.

INDOOR CARDIO & STRENGTH

CLASSES RUN FOR 4-WEEK SESSIONS UNLESS NOTED

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr 
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	MONTHS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
BARRE Barre is a low impact, high intensity total body workout that incorporates elements of Pilates, Ballet and Yoga. This workout is fast paced and set to fun upbeat music. During the workout you will use light hand weights, resistance bands, and your own body weight. You will complete small range movements at high repetitions meant to fatigue your muscles to build strength and endurance, and then stretch everything out to increase your flexibility. Barre is a great workout for any fitness level as there are options to level up or down based on your own body. Barre is for EVERYBODY.	JUN - AUG	TUE	6:00 - 6:55 PM	201 MARKET AVE	KELLY B.
PILATES Tone muscles, improve posture and learn flexibility and balance. Focus on moving as one unit with control and grace. Improve circulation, endurance and reduce stress.	JUN - AUG	WED	6:00 - 6:55 PM	201 MARKET AVE	ZIYAH D.
RESTORATIVE BARRE Combining moves from pilates and yoga, and mixed with traditional strength work and elements from ballet, this is a class suitable for everyBODY. You can expect to start moving slow, building into a deep burn through your core and lower body, then peaking in standing postures that heat the body. Class ends with stillness and stretching. Move with intention, and peacefully reset your mind and body. Participants will need a yoga mat or soft surface.	JUN - AUG	THU	6:00 - 6:45 PM	201 MARKET AVE	KELLY B.
NEW! STRENGTH + POWER This laser-focused strength class will work all your muscle groups with a variety of exercises to elevate your current routine. It will combine compound exercises to engage as many muscles as possible in a single move, as well as incorporate isolation moves. Modifications and challenges will be offered to make the class appropriate for all levels. Bring your own water bottle, towel & mat.	JUN - AUG	MON	5:45 - 6:40 PM	201 MARKET AVE	AMANDA B.

FREE OUTDOOR CLASSES

CLASSES RUN FOR 12 WEEKS, JUNE THROUGH AUGUST. **DROP-IN, NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED!**

CLASS	MONTHS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
BARRE Barre is a low impact, high intensity total body workout that incorporates elements of Pilates, Ballet and Yoga. See full description above in previous section.	JUN - AUG	WED	6:00 - 6:45	THE BLUE BRIDGE	CORI M.
BASIC YOGA Discover your inner yogi in a class that builds strength and body awareness. Begin with gentle stretching and move to flowing through and holding poses. Class will come to a restful end.	JUN - AUG	MON THU	6:00 - 6:45 PM 7:15 - 8:00 PM	MULICK PARK MLK PARK	JUDITH V MELISSA T.
GROOVE Sweat away stress and dance some joy into your heart while following simple steps and easy toning moves. See full description above in previous section.	JUN - AUG	THU	6:00 - 6:45 PM	THE BLUE BRIDGE	HEATHER W.

FREE OUTDOOR CLASSES (continued)

CLASSES RUN FOR 12 WEEKS, JUNE THROUGH AUGUST. **DROP-IN, NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED!**

All outdoor classes are weather dependent. Follow us on Facebook @GRParksandRec or call our cancellation hotline at 616.456.3699 for up-to-date cancellation information.

CLASS	MONTHS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
NEW! HIGH FITNESS HIGH Fitness is an energetic, fun, fitness class that incorporates interval training with pop music, and easy-to-follow fitness choreography. This dance based class produces a high caloric burn and full-body toning through its carefully formulated choreography, alternating between intense cardio peaks and toning tracks. No equipment necessary, and options will be given for all fitness levels.	JUN - AUG	TUE	6:00 - 6:45 PM	555 MONROE	AMANDA B.
KICKBOXING Mix up your routine with balance, coordination and strength-building moves. Strengthen your legs, upper body, abs and burn calories	JUN - AUG	WED	6:15 - 7:00 PM	555 MONROE	VALARIE J.
POUND® Using Ripstix®, lightly weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND® transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Full description on page 8.	JUN - AUG	TUE	5:30 - 6:15 PM	THE BLUE BRIDGE	KRISTIN P.
SOULFUL MOTION SoulfulMotion is an exciting class of fitness and inspiration. This is a high intensity interval training (HIIT) class set to Christian and inspirational music. Designed for anyone regardless of age or fitness level.	JUN - AUG	MON	6:30 - 7:15 PM	GARFIELD PARK	TBD
SUNRISE YOGA Add some relaxation to your day. Begin with gentle stretching and move to flowing through and holding poses. Class will come to a restful end.	JUN - AUG	WED	6:30 - 7:15 AM	INDIAN TRAILS GOLF COURSE	JUDITH V.
SUNSET YOGA Add some relaxation to your day. Begin with gentle stretching and move to flowing through and holding poses. Class will come to a restful end.	JUN - AUG	TUE	7:00 - 7:45 PM	LOOKOUT PARK	AMY K.
TAI CHI EASY™ Practice gentle movement and simple, modified tai chi to bring vitality to your mind and body. Full description on page 9.	JUN - AUG	THU.	7:15 - 8:00 PM	BRIGGS PARK	ALESHEIA H.
WERQ WERQ is a nonstop cardio dance class with fun and unique routines set to the hottest pop and hip hop music. Full description on page 8.	JUN - AUG	WED	7:15 - 8:00 PM	RICHMOND PARK POOL DECK	JEANNIE W.
ZUMBA Zumba is a high energy, dance fitness class that incorporates Latin and international music. All fitness levels are welcome.	JUN - AUG	MON FRI	6:30 - 7:15 PM 5:00 - 5:45 PM	ROSA PARKS CIRCLE ROOSEVELT PARK	AMY K. & BRI C. YELI R.
NEW! 30-MINUTE HIIT 30 minutes is all you need to get a full workout in! This class uses high intensity interval training (HIIT) to increase your heart rate, strengthen your muscles, and boost your metabolism. Participants will be given 30 seconds to do as many reps of a single body weight exercise as possible. Then rinse, repeat, with a new move! Exercises will have modified options as well as progressions, allowing each person to decide their own intensity. All fitness levels welcome!	JUN - AUG	TUE	6:15 - 6:45 PM	LOOKOUT PARK	AMY K.

OUTDOOR CLASS LOCATIONS

555 Monroe - 555 Monroe Ave NW
The Blue Bridge - Between Front Ave and Campau Ave
Briggs Park - 350 Knapp St NE
Coldbrook at River's Edge - 1101 Monroe Ave NW
Garfield Park - 2111 Madison Ave SE
Indian Trails Golf Course - 2776 Kalamazoo Ave SE
Lookout Park - 801 Fairview Ave NE

MLK Park - 900 Fuller Ave SE
Mulick Park - 1632 Sylvan Ave SE
Richmond Park Pool - 1101 Richmond St NW
Roosevelt Park - 739 Van Raalte Dr SW
Rosa Parks Circle - 135 Monroe Center St NW

FREE CLASSES MADE POSSIBLE BY



PriorityHealth



YOUTH DANCE

CLASSES RUN FOR 4-WEEK SESSIONS. \$16/RESIDENTS, \$26 NONRESIDENTS

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	MONTHS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
BALLET/TAP (AGES 3-5) This class will develop coordination, balance and rhythm through basic ballet/tap moves and creative movement. Participants should wear ballet shoes. The end of the session recital will be a tap dance performance	JUN - AUG	MON	3:30 - 4:15 PM	201 MARKET AVE	GABRIELLE S.
BALLET/TAP (AGES 6-9) See description above.	JUN - AUG	MON	4:30 - 5:15 PM	201 MARKET AVE	GABRIELLE S.
FAIRYTALE BALLET (AGES 3-5) Children will gain confidence moving their bodies to music while practicing simple steps, repetitive sequences and balance. Stretching, silly songs and props will make the experience fun.	JUN - AUG	FRI SAT	10:30 - 11:15 AM 10:15 - 11:00 AM	201 MARKET AVE 201 MARKET AVE	GABRIELLE S. GABRIELLE S.
JAZZ (AGES 6-9) Gets kids up and moving! An upbeat class that explores jazz technique while adding in some funky hip-hop moves.	JUN - AUG	SAT	11:15 - 12:00 PM	201 MARKET AVE	GABRIELLE S.
MOMMY & ME BALLET (AGE 2) Mommy & Me is an introductory to dance class for tots! Your child will sing, learn simple movements, and have fun with props! This class will develop motor skills, improve coordination and help children follow directions!	JUN - AUG	FRI	9:30 - 10:15 AM	201 MARKET AVE	GABRIELLE S.

YOUTH VOLLEYBALL

CLASSES RUN FOR 6-CLASS SESSIONS. \$45/RESIDENTS, \$55 NONRESIDENTS

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	DATES	TIME(S)	LOCATION	INSTRUCTOR
YOUTH VOLLEYBALL CONDITIONING (AGES 8-10) Pass. Set. Hit! Participants will learn the fundamentals of volleyball while developing strength, endurance, and skill in a team atmosphere.	JUN 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23 JUL 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, 29 AUG 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19	1:00 - 2:15 PM 1:00 - 2:15 PM 1:00 - 2:15 PM	GARFIELD PARK COMMUNITY GYM	JAYDA P.
YOUTH VOLLEYBALL CONDITIONING (AGES 11-13) Pass. Set. Hit! Participants in this age group will learn to strengthen their volleyball skills. This clinic will focus on individual skill development as well as team development. Experience is recommended, but not required.	JUN 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23 JUL 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, 29 AUG 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19	2:30 - 3:45 PM 2:30 - 3:45 PM 2:30 - 3:45 PM	GARFIELD PARK COMMUNITY GYM	JAYDA P.

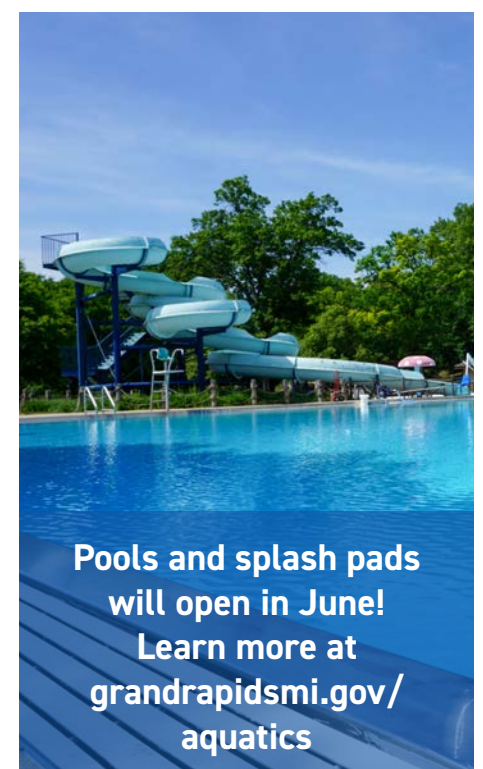
YOUTH ART

3-CLASS JUNE SESSIONS \$40/RESIDENTS, \$50 NONRESIDENTS
4-CLASS JUL & AUG SESSIONS \$45/RESIDENTS, \$55 NONRESIDENTS

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr
Registration for Jul/Aug opens May 15.

CLASS	DATES	TIME(S)	LOCATION	INSTRUCTOR
YOUTH ART(AGES 6-8) This class will focus on fostering their already creative nature while creating art using a variety of media: an array of paints, chalks, crayons, paper, canvas, etc. This class will also include learning basic crafting and fine motor skills and occasional instructor book reading; crafts that foster S.T.E.A.M. learning while having fun creating.	JUN 15, 17, 22 JUL 20, 22, 27, 29 AUG 10, 12, 17, 19	10:00 - 11:30 AM 10:00 - 11:30 AM 10:00 - 11:30 AM	RICHMOND PARK OR WILCOX PARK*	SHAWNA S.
YOUTH ART (AGES 9-12) With an in-depth advanced learning and abstract thinking, this class will create art using a variety of media and techniques: Stitching, String Art, Op Art, 3D modeling. Crafts will foster advanced creativity and S.T.E.A.M learning while having fun. Learning while creating. Includes: Manipulating tools and age-appropriate materials to create a work of art.	JUN 15, 17, 22 JUL 20, 22, 27, 29 AUG 10, 12, 17, 19	12:00 - 2:00 PM 12:00 - 2:00 PM 12:00 - 2:00 PM	RICHMOND PARK OR WILCOX PARK*	SHAWNA S.

*Exact location will be announced closer to the start date.



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616.988.5400 • WWW.GRPL.ORG

Grand Rapids Public Library Offers New Ways to Get Library Material



The Grand Rapids Public Library is now offering two new ways to get library materials. GRPL Delivered is a home delivery service and GRPL Hold Lockers provide 24/7 access to picking up library holds. Both new services are available to all GRPL card holders and are funded by the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation.

For patrons who have trouble getting to the library, GRPL Delivered service brings the library to them. GRPL staff selects an assortment of books or movies based on the patron's interests and mails 3-5 items to their home. When a patron is done with them, they can return the items to any GRPL location or by USPS. Return postage is the patron's responsibility. Items checked out through GRPL Delivered circulate for

5 weeks and can be renewed. To get started, patrons fill out a Book Bundle Form on the library's website and select GRPL Delivered as their pick up location.

GRPL installed Hold Lockers at the Ottawa Hills Branch. Hold Lockers are a self-service locker system that allows patrons to check out items they have placed on hold in a convenient, contact free method. Patrons can select 'Ottawa Hold Locker' when then place their holds. To pick them up, they simply scan their library card and a locker opens with their material in it. Lockers are outside the library and accessible anytime. Hold Lockers are a part of the GRPL To Go service which includes curbside pick up, contactless printing, faxing, scanning and copying, and other contactless services.

To learn more about these services, visit www.grpl.org or call 616-988-5400.



Calling all Poets! Enter the Annual Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition

The Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition was started in 1968 by poet James Allen at the urging of John Hunting, the founder of the Dyer-Ives Foundation, to encourage excellence in writing and to provide recognition for local work of high quality.

The Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition is open to poets ages 5 through adult who live in Kent County. Submissions are accepted in April and winners are notified in the summer. Winners have their poems published in *Voices*, receive a cash award, and take part in a poetry reading.

About the Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition

- Free to enter
- Cash prizes

- Publication in the annual literary journal, *Voices*
- Winners read poems at the awards ceremony
- Open to Kent County, Michigan residents of all ages and students attending classes within Kent County including GVSU
- National Judge Safia Elhillo

How to Enter

- Submissions are accepted April 1–30.
- Winners will be announced in June.
- One poem per person. The poem must be original and unpublished.

Visit www.grpl.org/dyer-ives for submission guidelines.

Divisions and Awards

Elementary School

- 1st & 2nd Grade
 - 1st Place: \$25 & Publication
 - 2nd Place: Publication
- 3rd & 4th Grade
 - 1st Place: \$25 & Publication
 - 2nd Place: Publication

Middle School

- 5th & 6th Grade
 - 1st Place: \$50 & Publication
 - 2nd Place: Publication
- 7th & 8th Grade
 - 1st Place: \$75 & Publication
 - 2nd Place: Publication

High School

- 9th & 10th Grade
 - 1st Place: \$75 & Publication
 - 2nd Place: Publication
- 11th & 12th Grade
 - 1st Place: \$75 & Publication
 - 2nd Place: Publication

Undergraduate

- 1st Place: \$100 & Publication
- 2nd Place: \$75 & Publication

Adult

- 1st Place: \$150 & Publication
- 2nd Place: \$125 & Publication
- 3rd Place: \$100 & Publication

Funded by:


Dyer-Ives Foundation Poetry Fund

Free Spring Programs

For Adults

Book Club on the Lawn

Calling all readers! Join us for a new outdoor book club that focuses on nonfiction titles. Each month we will meet on the lawn at select library locations to discuss celebrated titles. Seating will be available but guests are welcome to bring their own seating or blankets. Space is limited. Sign up at grpl.org/register. Join us for a lively book discussion led by librarian Steve Assarian. This event is weather permitting.

May's title: *Sigh, Gone: A Misfit's Memoir of Great Books, Punk Rock, and the Fight to Fit In* by Phuc Tran

Saturday, May 8, 2021, 12:00–1:30 pm,
Main Library | 111 Library St NE

June's title: *Sorry I'm Late, I Didn't Want to Come: One Introvert's Year of Saying Yes* by Jessica Pan

Saturday, June 5, 2021, 12:00–1:30 pm
Seymour Branch | 2350 Eastern Ave SE



Crafting Learning Spaces for Work and School with Dr. Irving E. Vega

English program – Saturday, May 8, 2021,
3:00–3:30 pm

Spanish program – Saturday, May 8, 2021,
4:00–4:30 pm

Virtual Event | Zoom | *Registration required*

In the age of COVID-19, parents everywhere became experts in online learning. But online learning is more than setting up a laptop; it's also creating a space for kids to learn. But how do we do this? How do we set up a space at home that promotes concentration and entice creativity? Come join Dr. Irving Vega of the Michigan State University's Department of Translational Neuroscience to learn how to set up the home classroom—and home office—in ways that enhance success.



Job Seeking Series: Beginning the Job Search

Wednesday, May 12, 2021, 6:00–7:00 pm

Virtual Event | Zoom

In this series, presented by GRPL's Business and Career Librarian, learn tips and tricks to help you navigate your job search. Discover how to approach finding a job as a process and how preparation can help in the search for a new career. By the end of this class, you'll learn how to define your career interests and set boundaries.

Building A Fit Brain with Dr. Irving E. Vega

English program – Saturday, May 15, 2021,
3:00–3:30 pm

Spanish program – Saturday, May 15, 2021,
4:00–4:30 pm

Virtual Event | Zoom | *Registration required*

Our brains become a worry as we get older. We worry that we're not as quick on the draw, that our memories aren't as sharp. But what will help are good habits: the actions we take in midlife that build our brains for our golden years. Join Dr. Irving Vega of the Michigan State University's Department of Translational Neuroscience to learn the ways you can establish the foundation of a fit brain before memory becomes a worry.

Job Seeking Series: Resume Writing 101

Wednesday, May 19, 2021, 6:00–7:00 pm

Virtual Event | Zoom

In this series presented by GRPL's Business and Career Librarian, learn tips and tricks to help you navigate your job search. Discover what employers are looking for on a resume and how to write and adapt your resume for the job you want. Find out how to stand out with a resume that highlights your unique skills.

Healthy Brain in the Golden Years: Understanding Alzheimer's with Dr. Irving E. Vega

English program – Saturday, May 22, 2021,
3:00–3:30 pm

Spanish program – Saturday, May 22, 2021,
4:00–4:30 pm

Virtual Event | Zoom | *Registration required*

In 2020, 5.8 million Americans were living with Alzheimer's Disease according to the Alzheimer's Association, a number that will only grow in the coming years. Even though Alzheimer's is scary, it's only by understanding disease risk factors and symptoms that we can plan for and treat it during our golden years. Join Dr. Irving Vega of the Michigan State University Department of Translational Neuroscience to learn about risk factors, symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, cut through bad information, and gain a better understanding to reduce your risk of developing this terrible disease.

Job Seeking Series: Creating a Cover Letter

Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 6:00–7:00 pm

Virtual Event | Zoom

In this series presented by GRPL's Business and Career Librarian, learn tips and tricks to help you navigate your job search. In this session, discover the best way to introduce yourself to a potential employer—by writing a clear and effective cover letter that reflects you. This in-depth session will break down cover letter writing and tactics to help you stand out.

For Families

Outdoor Storytimes for Families

We're bringing our storytimes outdoors for the summer! Parents and caregivers are invited to bring their children 18 months to 5 years old to this weekly event featuring literacy rich activities such as stories, songs, and fingerplays. Bring your own blanket and join us for this special outdoor series.

Outdoor Storytimes for Families are weather permitting and will be held on the lawn at select library locations.

West Leonard Branch | 1017 Leonard NW
Mondays, May 3–June 28, July 12–26,
6:00 pm (*Presented in English and Spanish*)

Main Library | 111 Library Street NE
Tuesdays, May 4–June 29, July 13–27,
6:00 pm

Yankee Clipper Branch | 2025 Leonard NE
Wednesdays, May 5–June 30, July 14–28,
10:30 am

Seymour Branch | 2350 Eastern SE
Wednesdays, May 5–June 30, July 14–28,
10:30 am

West Side Branch | 713 Bridge NW
Wednesdays, May 5–June 30, July 14–28,
10:30 am



Outdoor Storytimes with GRPL

Join the Grand Rapids Public Library for this fun and socially distanced outside storytime! Enjoy stories, sing-along-songs, and rhymes with a take-home kit activity for every child. Sing, dance, and read with a GRPL librarian. Each child attending this outdoor experience will receive a book to read along with during the storytime and to take home. Space is limited to 100 people in order to safely social distance. Masks are encouraged.

Martin Luther King Jr. Park
900 Fuller Ave SE
Monday, May 10, 2021, 11:00–11:30 am

Lincoln Park | 1120 Bridge St NW
Mondays, May 17 | 11:00–11:30 am

Martin Luther King Jr. Park
900 Fuller Ave SE
Monday, June 14, 2021, 11:00–11:30 am

Lincoln Park | 1120 Bridge St NW
Monday, June 21, 2021, 11:00–11:30 am



Grand Rapids
PUBLIC LIBRARY

OPEN HOURS

MAIN LIBRARY

111 Library St NE | 616.988.5400

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Friday | 10 am – 4 pm
Saturday | 10 am – 4 pm

MADISON SQUARE BRANCH

1201 Madison SE | 616.988.5411

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Friday | 10 am – 4 pm

OTTAWA HILLS BRANCH

1150 Giddings SE | 616.988.5412

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Friday | 10 am – 4 pm

SEYMOUR BRANCH

2350 Eastern SE | 616.988.5413

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Saturday | 10 am – 4 pm

VAN BELKUM BRANCH

1563 Plainfield NE | 616.988.5410

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Friday | 10 am – 4 pm

WEST LEONARD BRANCH

1017 Leonard NW | 616.988.5416

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Saturday | 10 am – 4 pm

WEST SIDE BRANCH

713 Bridge NW | 616.988.5414

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Friday | 10 am – 4 pm

YANKEE CLIPPER BRANCH

2025 Leonard NE | 616.988.5415

Monday | 1 – 7 pm
Tuesday | 1 – 7 pm
Wednesday | 10 am – 4 pm
Saturday | 10 am – 4 pm

WWW.GRPL.ORG/REOPEN

The Super Secret Summer Reading Challenge Motivates Kids to Learn All Summer Long

The Grand Rapids Public Library is searching for kids and teens to take part in a mysterious summer adventure.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to create your own summer reading adventure with the Grand Rapids Public Library! Do you like to move? Do you like puzzles? Are you an artist? Pick your favorite activities to discover your mystery team. GRPL invites kids under the age of 18 to take part in exciting online events featuring local community partners, reading challenges, and select in-person programming throughout the city of Grand Rapids to inspire and entertain you all summer long.

Super Secret Summer Activities include:

- Neighborhood Scavenger Hunt
- Mystery Science STEAM Kits
- Mysteries at the Park
- Spy-themed Adventures
- Comic Geek Out
- Youth GR Crime Tours
- D&D Mystery Game
- Much, much more

To sign up and get your classified information, visit www.grpl.org/summerreading or visit any GRPL location.

Funded by:



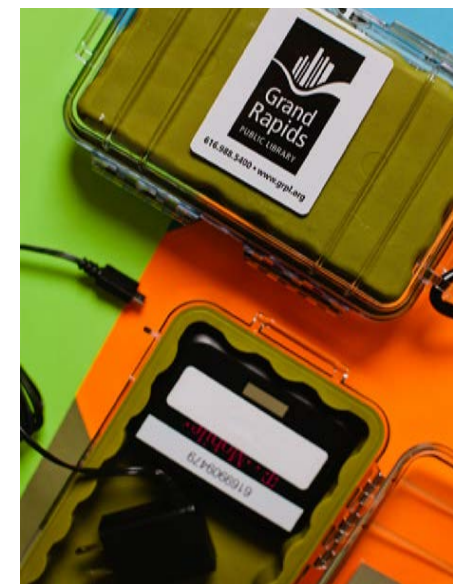
New Program Lets Users 'Borrow the Internet'

The Grand Rapids Public Library now offers a Hotspot Lending Program. Library patrons can check out a mobile hotspot using their library card. The hotspot provides free, unlimited internet access to easily get online using a Wi-Fi-enabled device such as a phone, tablet or laptop. The hotspot allows up to 15 devices to be connected to it at the same time.

“As more people work and learn from home, access to reliable internet service is a necessity,” remarked GRPL Director John McNaughton. “Our goal with this program is to bridge the growing technology gap.

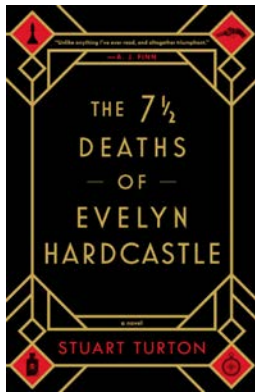
Hotspots are available at all GRPL locations and check out for 21 days. Patrons can place holds on hotspots and can renew the check out if there are not any holds on it. When picking up a hotspot, patrons must be 18 or older, have a valid GRPL library card, and show a current photo ID with proof of address.

The Hotspot Lending Program is funded by a grant from the Wege Foundation. To learn more, visit www.grpl.org/hotspot or call 616.988.5400.



GR Reads Kicks off June 1

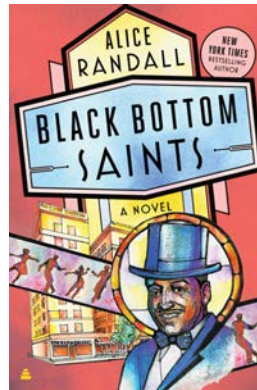
The Grand Rapids Public Library has partnered with area organizations to present GR Reads, a summer reading program for adults. Our expert staff have selected six engaging titles that can be downloaded directly to your digital device or checked out from any GRPL location. Read or listen to the books that interest you, and then enjoy a series of fun and interesting events related to the books. For a full schedule, visit www.grpl.org/grreads.



***The 7 ½ Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle* by Stuart Turton**

Stuart Turton's debut novel is a Groundhog Day story, with a macabre and mysterious twist. Every day, Evelyn Hardcastle will die at 11:00 pm unless the cycle can end. Every day, amnesiac Aiden Bishop will wake up as a different party guest at Blackheath House. The loops always play out the same, and jumping among the guests gives him new perspectives on the murder. To save Evelyn, Aiden will have to uncover the guests' secrets as he finds out not everyone is who they seem. Will he solve the mystery? Or will every day end with a ringing gunshot?

Winner of the Best Debut Novel at the 2019 British Book Awards, *The 7 ½ Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle* reads like an Agatha Christie novel. A modern take on the classic whodunit, the everlasting twists, turns, and murders make this a white-knuckle read through the stunning conclusion.



***Black Bottom Saints* by Alice Randall**

Black Bottom Saints is a lively tour through Black Detroit's history, filled with struggle and perseverance, and guided by a master emcee. Inspired by the Catholic Saints Day Books, it honors 52 weekly "Saints" of Black Bottom. Ziggy celebrates each Saint with their story and a custom cocktail recipe. You already know names like Joe Louis, Della Reese, and Nat King Cole. Others are recognized for the first time, and their stories are just as compelling.



***The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune**

When Extremely Upper Management summons Linus Baker, a case worker at the Department in Charge of Magical Youth, a wrench is thrown in his plans of skating under the radar and coasting through life. Linus must travel to Marsyas Island Orphanage on a strange and classified assignment to evaluate how caretaker Arthur Parnassus is controlling the children. There, Linus meets his match in the orphanage's magical children, including Talia, a garden gnome; Chauncey, a mysterious blob; and Lucy, the literal antichrist. Can he stick to the plan and his cold and calculated approach to his job when he gets to know this lovable cast of kids? And can he stop himself from falling for the wacky yet alluring Arthur?



***The Library Book* by Susan Orlean**

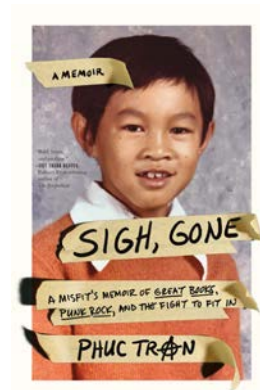
In *The Library Book*, Susan Orlean revisits the largest and most disastrous library fire in the United States' history. On April 29, 1986 the Los Angeles Public Library went up in flames for more than seven hours. The fire destroyed four hundred thousand books and damaged seven hundred thousand more. The library was forced to shut down for years in the aftermath. Orlean employs her research skills to investigate the mystery surrounding the infamous fire.



***A Mind Spread Out on the Ground* by Alicia Elliott**

Named for the Mohawk phrase for depression, *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground* is a light shined on darkness.

Haudenosaunee author Alicia Elliott takes a hard look at many serious subjects in this essay collection. She has lived with depression from a very early age. She grew up poor in a family that struggled with both alcohol and mental illness. As the daughter of a white mother and Haudenosaunee father, she knows the tension of race and existing between two worlds. Learning she was pregnant in high school shook her dreams of becoming a writer.



***Sigh, Gone: A Misfit's Memoir of Great Books, Punk Rock, and the Fight to Fit In* by Phuc Tran**

Powerful, moving, and deeply, painfully funny, Phuc's personal journey from Vietnam to Pennsylvania cuts through time and culture like a modern Odysseus.

Caught between his status as an outsider and his family's strict expectations, Phuc struggles to adjust to his new country. Filled with a will to live life on his own terms, he cuts out a path to identity and belonging through a thicket of poverty, racism, and abuse.

A truly captivating memoir that touches every aspect of the human experience in our search to find our place in the world.

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All Student Groups Continue Steady Climb in Graduation Rates

By Phil de Haan, Courtesy of School News Network

Grand Rapids Public Schools got good news in March 2021 when the Michigan Department of Education released the 2019-2020 graduation rates.

The district saw its rates rise for the ninth straight year. It also saw a nice jump from 76.2 percent in 2018-2019 to 80.92 percent last year.

In 2012, GRPS was graduating just 44.56 percent of its high school students.

Since then, the improvements from year-to-year have been steady – 3 to 5 percent most years, though 2015 to 2016 saw a dramatic jump from 56.2 percent to 65.54 percent. But over time, those incremental increases have led to a 36.36 percentage point increase in graduation rates in less than a decade.

“The significant increase in our graduation rates is symbolic of the overall transformation success story that is gaining GRPS state and national attention” Superintendent Leadriane Roby said.

That success story, said district spokesperson John Helmholdt, has its roots in the GRPS Transformation Plan

Version 3.0, approved unanimously by the Grand Rapids Board of Education in December 2012 with implementation beginning the following school year.

That plan had a number of goals, including strengthening and improving academic achievement. Indeed, the first two points under that goal were “increasing the district graduation rate” and “reducing the district drop-out rate.” GRPS’ drop-out rate last year was 7.56 percent, below the state average of 7.77 percent.

In addition to the guiding framework of the plan, Helmholdt told SNN, “Strong leadership at the board, district, and high school level coupled with rockstar teachers and support staff played a huge role in supporting the success of our high school students.”

Though all groups have seen steady increases since 2012, the biggest gainers in that time have been the district’s Asian students who were graduating at just a 37.5 percent clip in 2012 and now are above 95 percent. But all racial and ethnic subgroups saw substantial gains over that time, as well as economically disadvantaged students and English-language learners.



At an 80.92 percent overall graduation rate, GRPS is right around the state average of 82.07 percent and has Kent ISD’s overall 86.08 percent rate in its sights.

Helmholdt noted that City High Middle School, C.A. Frost Environmental Science Middle High School and Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy all had 100% graduation rates.

GRPS Grad Rates Breakdown Chart

Year	Overall	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian	White	Economically disadvantaged	English Language Learners	Students with Disabilities	Native American (small cohort <10)
2012	44.56%	40.59%	42.62%	37.5%	53.36%	40.07%	32.61%	15.74%	62.50%
2013	47.31%	48.30%	41.07%	52.94%	52.86%	44.49%	29.44%	19.59%	66.67%
2014	49.56%	48.96%	50.58%	47.15%	52.31%	47.29%	37.13%	18.18%	14.29%
2015	56.20%	61.46%	56.27%	68.42%	46.63%	55.10%	54.48%	21.31%	40.00%
2016	65.54%	66.33%	70.46%	71.43%	56.36%	62.64%	60.68%	22.76%	50.00%
2017	66.58%	65.41%	74.15%	81.82%	56.08%	64.59%	70.67%	28.57%	< 5.00%
2018	71.25%	71.04%	75.19%	78.95%	62.86%	71.64%	63.80%	28.81%	75.00%
2019	76.20%	69.26%	81.56%	85.71%	77.33%	72.80%	75.12%	33.33%	50.00 %
2020	80.92%	72.26%	84.64%	>95.00%	86.58%	78.83%	79.07%	43.96%	80.00%



Theresa Dudley is proud that Ruth Jones-Hairston was included in a Paul Collins painting depicting important people in history; she is just to Dudley's left (photo by Dianne Carroll Burdick).

School Library Renamed in Honor of 'A True Educator' Ottawa, Union upgrades part of \$175 million bond in 2015

By Charles Honey, Courtesy of School News Network

It was coming up on Christmas vacation, a time when school children should be excited. But the brother and sister in front of Ruth Jones-Hairston were crying.

When she asked them why, the boy said, "Because we don't eat."

That's when she felt God tap her on the shoulder and say, "Fix that."

Skot Welch tells this story about his late mother, who did indeed fix those children's fear that their family would run out of food before the two-week break was over. With help from a community partner, she arranged to provide food and gifts for families over that holiday and those thereafter.

In her 12 years as principal of the former Henry Paideia Academy, Jones-Hairston fixed many problems – both academic and material – for her largely impoverished students. Now Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy, the school bears the imprint of how she turned a failing school into a model of inner-city success and mustered community support for a new, state-of-the-art facility, her admirers say.

Grand Rapids Public Schools is formally recognizing Jones-Hairston's legacy by renaming MLK's library the Ruth Jones Media Center. A simple ceremony is planned Tuesday in honor of a woman who garnered widespread respect in her 30 years as a GRPS teacher and principal.

For her it was less a job than a faith-fueled mission, her son and others say.



Theresa Dudley shows off the Ruth Jones Media Center sign at Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy (photo by Dianne Carroll Burdick).

"Mom would always say, 'What we're doing with our kids you cannot find in a Houghton-Mifflin curriculum,'" said Welch, founder of The Mosaic Film Experience. "This is about love."

■ CONTINUES ON B3

Grand Rapids Public Schools

WE ARE GR

April 2021

Grand Rapids

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Title IX Annual Athletics Compliance Report: Grand Rapids Public Schools is committed to securing athletic equity and provides annual Title IX reporting to the athletes and parents in an effort to bring increased attention and resources towards ensuring that gender equity as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments for 1972, Grand Rapids Public Schools annual report is available at www.grps.org.

To comply with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), parents may request information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers.

Please contact Micky Savage, Director of Human Resources, in Human Resources via email savagem@grps.org or at (616) 819-2028.

WE ARE GR

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A Calling, Not a Job

Jones-Hairston, who died in 2019 at age 71, showed her love for children by inspiring excellence, first as a teacher at Southeast Academic Center, then as principal at Henry Paideia. The former Henry Park Elementary was a failing school when she was hired in 1993, plagued by low achievement, high mobility and poor graduation rates from its former students.

But the school turned around after she was recruited to lead it, supported by a three-year, \$1.2 million investment from GRPS as part of a bold partnership with Thornapple Elementary School in Forest Hills. The objective was to see if student performance could markedly improve with the same resources an affluent suburban school received.

In a process that then-Superintendent Jeffery Grotzky likened to opening a new school, Henry was transformed into an academy based on the Paideia model of whole-child education. New jobs were posted and more teachers hired, along with Jones-Hairston as new principal.

As someone who loved teaching, it was a job she did not aspire to but felt God calling her to take, she recalled in an unpublished memoir.

“I asked, ‘How could it be, Lord that you are sending me? I don’t know what to do, and I don’t feel qualified to do this work,’” she wrote. “Then He said to me, ‘Just go, I will send the people who will help you.’”

She found those people in community allies such as First United Methodist Church, which has for decades provided tutors and other supports; John Wheeler, cofounder of Rockford Construction, which organized the holiday food drive and helped families pay bills; and Peter and Joan Secchia, who helped start the library now being renamed for Jones.

Crucially, she engaged parents to become more active in the school, eventually gaining 100% attendance at parent-teacher conferences, said Theresa Dudley, the school’s secretary since 2000. Parents and students alike were held to high expectations, which Jones-Hairston helped them meet with supports like installing a washer and dryer for students’ uniforms, Dudley said.

“She just had a way with people. People believed in her, they trusted her,” Dudley said. “Even when she was firm she would say, ‘But you know I love you.’”

National Recognition and a New School

Student performance improved, suspensions dropped and educators took notice and tours of the school. Presidents noticed, too; Bill Clinton once called to congratulate her, Welch said, and George



Ruth Jones-Hairston cozies up fireside with her daughter, Zsanara Hoskins (far right) and grandchildren (from left) Zsana, Kaiden and Dilan (courtesy).

W. Bush visited the school in 1999 when he was Texas governor and a presidential candidate.

Jones-Hairston retired in 2005, but not before breaking ground for Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy, which opened a year later. Jones-Hairston was the prime force behind getting the new school built, campaigning for support and showing community members the sad state of the old Henry School before it was torn down, said her daughter, Zsanara Hoskins.

“Whoever she could get to listen: ‘Look at the leaks. This would not happen in Forest Hills. This would not happen in East Grand Rapids,’” said Hoskins, dean of elementary students for Kentwood Public Schools. “She was determined, like, this cannot be.”

“She wanted the same things for her kids in the inner city that they had for kids in the suburbs,” Dudley said.

Now the library in that building bears the name of a woman who led the way for a new school and new opportunities for its students. Her name will teach today’s students and future generations what Jones-Hairston did for students like them, said her son.

“It’s the story of a true educator,” Welch said. “It’s important for people to know her story, what she did and how she did it.”



Librarian Cherie Knooihuisen looks on as, from left, second-graders Angelo McKinney and Daniel Miranda work in the Ruth Jones Media Center (photo by Dianne Carroll Burdick).

Asbestos Notice

Asbestos is a general name for a group of naturally occurring minerals composed of small fibers. These fibers are very strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. The mere presence of asbestos in a building does not mean that the health of the building occupants is endangered. When left intact and undisturbed, asbestos-containing materials do not pose a health risk to building occupants. There is, however, the potential for exposure when the material becomes damaged or disturbed. Because of these problems associated with asbestos exposure, the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act, or AHERA emphasizes that asbestos in school buildings must appropriately be managed.

The Grand Rapids Public Schools has an asbestos management plan that addresses contact persons, training, inspections, response actions, operation and maintenance

activities, periodic surveillance, cleaning, disclosure efforts, and school building areas containing asbestos. Any person may review the management plan at the Grand Rapids Public School’s Facilities Management Department, 900 Union, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, during regular business hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm). Plans may also be found on the district’s website at grps.org/facilities-asbestos-info. Alternatively, any person may request a copy of the plan by writing the Grand Rapids Public Schools Facilities Management Department, 900 Union, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503. There is a cost involved in reproducing the document of approximately 10 cents per page. The Grand Rapids Public Schools will send a copy out of the management plan within 5 business days of receiving the request.



District's Newest School is a Winner in Green Design

Dual-immersion bilingual school gets LEED certification

By Phil de Haan, Courtesy of School News Network

The newest building in Grand Rapids Public Schools has received national recognition for its energy-efficient, sustainable and cost-saving design.

Southwest Middle High School – Academia Bilingüe qualified for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Schools Silver certification based on the building's sustainable and efficient "exterior envelope" (roof, walls, doors, windows and insulation), its urban location and proximity to public transportation, its stormwater quality control, provisions for bike parking and more.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a program of the U.S. Green Building Council, which says the certification "provides a framework for healthy, highly efficient, and cost-saving green buildings. LEED certification is a globally recognized symbol of sustainability achievement and leadership."

For Southwest Middle High Principal Carlos de la Barrera, the LEED certification is a great thing but what matters most is what the new building means for his students and teachers.

"It is a state-of-the-art facility," he said simply, "a welcoming space designed to serve our students, staff and community."

One of the first things people notice in the new building is the abundance of natural light, he added: "For a city with scarce sunny days during the school year, the sheer number of windows and the east/west orientation of the classrooms makes us all happier and more ready to learn every day."

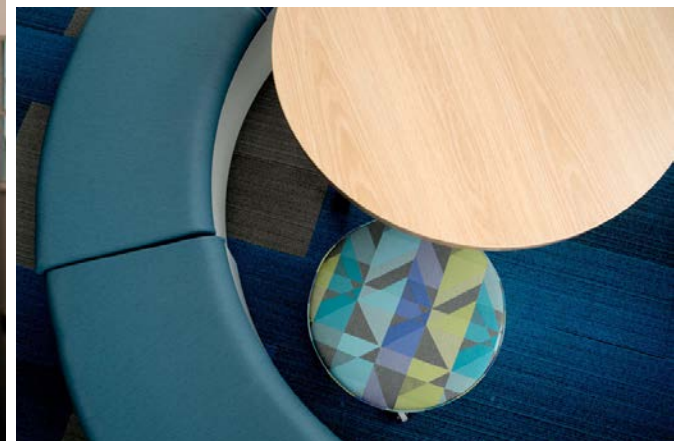
In fact, though the building was ready in August for the start of the 2020-21 school year, it didn't get used by students right away as GRPS did not open for in-person instruction until January.



The east lobby is filled with natural light and an eye-catching design.



Exquisite design, color and texture are revealed in the Knowledge Center.



The Knowledge Center is designed with color and shape to provide a comfortable learning place.

■ CONTINUES ON B5

'Their Brand-New, Second Home'

But that didn't stop de la Barrera and a number of teachers from using the new space when the district's first dual-immersion Spanish-English secondary school opened last fall.

"I had access to work from my new office since August, which gave me the opportunity to enjoy the new facility and also the time to better prepare the building for the arrival of the in-person students," he noted. "And teachers were also given access to the building and the option to teach synchronously from their new classrooms prior to January. Even though they had the option of teaching from home, most chose to drive to the building every day."

And when students finally did arrive, de la Barrera said the reactions were priceless.

"They were very excited to see the new building turned into a reality after years of hearing about the project and looking at colorful renderings," he said. "As they were entering the building for the first time, I could see in their faces that they were coming to the realization that from that moment on, this school was their brand-new, second home."

Long Nguyen, director of design, construction and renovation for GRPS, said the district has made environmental stewardship an important part of its culture for many years now with the 2007 renovation of Harrison Park Elementary and Middle school earning the district's first silver certification.

Since then, Cesar E. Chavez Elementary School, Burton Elementary, Sibley Elementary and Gerald R. Ford Middle School have been certified, and Museum High School, Ottawa Hills High School and Buchanan Elementary School are in the process.

53 LEED Credits Get Project to Silver

Nguyen noted that GRPS initiated the LEED-certification process early in the Southwest Middle High project and then identified LEED goals that guided the design going forward. In the end, Southwest earned 53 LEED credits, well past the 40 needed for certification at any level and also topping the 50 credits needed for Silver.

The \$20 million project was headed up by Rockford Construction. Architects were c2ae and TMP Architecture.

The 75,000-square-foot facility is built into the side of a hill sloping towards the freeway east of Grandville Avenue SW, between Graham and Rumsey streets. Funded by the \$175 million bond approved by voters in 2015, the school anchors the 5.5-acre Roosevelt Plaza, a multi-use development that includes affordable housing, health-care services, after-school and community activities and college-level programs.

The school houses two dozen classrooms on the third and fourth floors; art, music and science rooms and administrative offices on the second; and a gym and locker rooms, dining area and kitchen on the first floor. The gym and kitchen will be available for community use.



Art Teacher Matt LaFleur teaches online from the art room.

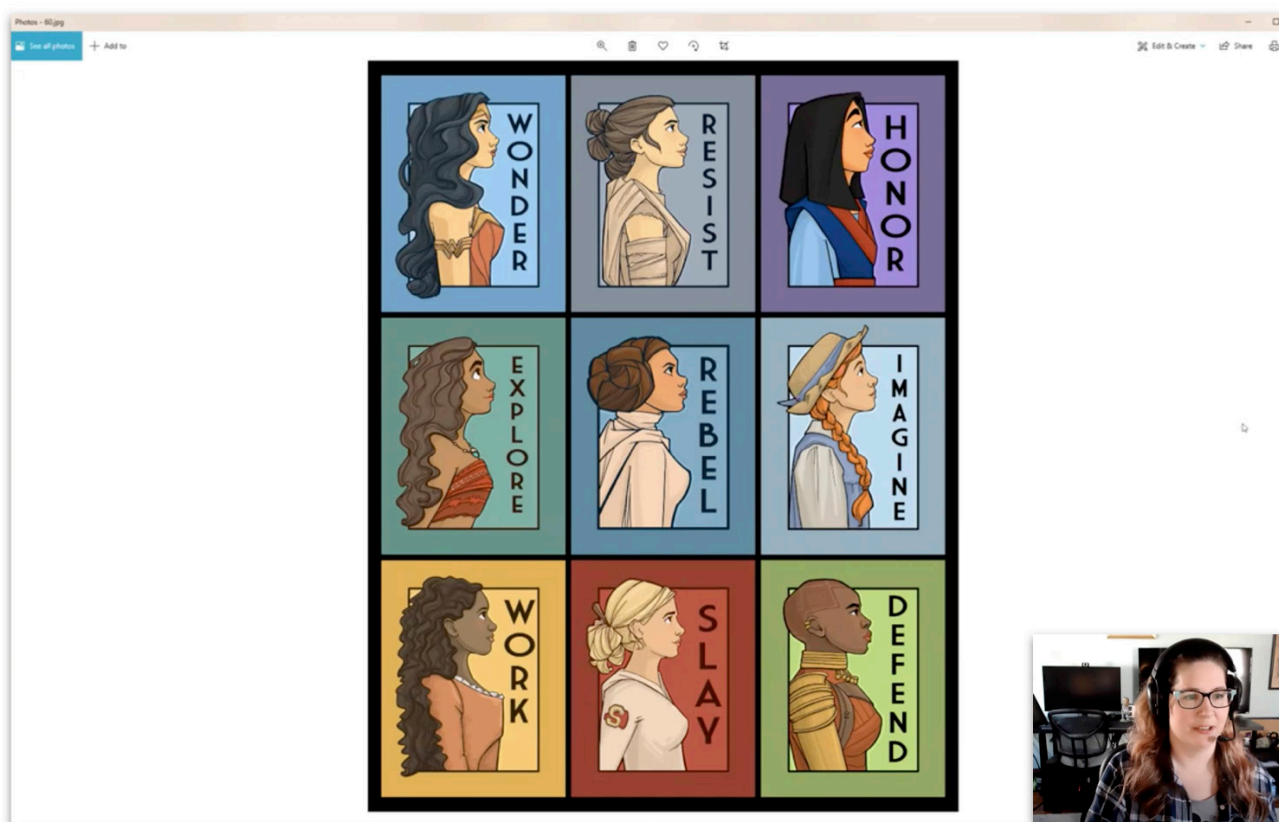


Mrs. Emily DeWitte teaches science to eighth-graders.

GRPS Virtual Choir

The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for GRPS students and staff. Not only did education completely change, but teaching Choir virtually presented many new challenges. Despite these drastic changes to the choral classroom, GRPS students and the Fine Arts staff still found a way to make music together. Learning new skills and technologies, we created the District Wide Virtual Choir. Over a 13-week span, students were taught the music and spent time practicing with practice tracks in order to learn their part. During this time, students learned about proper video recording techniques and what specifics needed to happen in order to lace their video with others. Once students submitted their videos, the Vocal Department researched and learned to use both audio and video programs in order to assemble the performance.

Erik Love, Choir Teacher at Ottawa Hills High School, took charge of audio and learned how to use Audacity to import files and edit them. As Erik worked on audio, Kara Degenhardt, Choir Teacher at City High Middle School and GRUPA, tackled video editing through both Shotcut and iMovie. After many hours of editing audio and video, the final product finally came together. Everyone's hard work paid off and the Fine Arts staff was beyond proud of the work their students had put forth. The songs picked for this performance not only challenged students, but also share messages of hope in finding a brighter future. This performance showcases the talent and passion that our students possess, and despite the obstacles, it shows that nothing can stop them from making music together. After the success of the first virtual choir, GRPS choir teachers are hard at work compiling and editing our next performance. Stay tuned!



Our She Series

Art students at the new Southwest Academia Bilingue Middle High School studied the work of illustrator and freelance artist Karen Hallion. Hallion has lent her talents to many different studios including Marvel, Lucas Films, and Disney. A self-described “nerd”, Hallion depicts many different characters from pop culture including many Star Wars films and Disney movies. However the artists at SWMH focused on her She Series, a collection of portraits of women throughout history, pop culture, as well as fictional characters from books, comics, and movies.

Students were tasked with choosing a woman they find inspirational either from their personal lives (mothers, sisters, etc.), celebrities, or popular characters. They then learned how to draw these women in profile just like Hallion does in her series. Students drew on paper and then colored the images using traditional media as well as digital software. Each portrait was then paired with a verb that describes each predominant female, adding context and inspiration to each portrait.

Their teacher, Mr. Matt LaFleur, reached out to Karen Hallion through her website, who agreed to meet with the students of SWMH over Zoom. On Tuesday, March 9th, Hallion joined a video call from her studio in Connecticut to discuss her work and career. The hour-long conversation gave student an opportunity to see the life of a freelance artist, as well as a sneak peek into Hallion's creative thinking, project timelines, and her actual artistic process. Hallion answered questions from students and also critiqued their own artwork, made in her style. It truly was an amazing experience!



Students troop into Grand Rapids' Union High School for classes beginning at 7:40 a.m., a welcome change for many who learned virtually in the fall.

How One School Reached Out to Missing Students

By Charles Honey, Courtesy of School News Network

After a semester of learning online – though not much — Maddie Cummings is glad to be back in school.

“I’m a very hands-on person, especially during school. I just learn quicker,” said the senior, taking a break from chatting with friends before school. “It was very odd learning virtual. I wasn’t getting the best grades that I used to get. When I got back in school, it was just a lot better.” Plus, she added, “I get to see faces that I haven’t seen in almost a year.”

Maddie was not one of the 80 or so students that did not return to Union in the fall as expected, part of a major enrollment shortfall for Grand Rapids Public Schools. But Union and GRPS officials hope that the better experience of students like her, now that learning has shifted from all-virtual to hybrid in-person, will prompt some of those missing students to return.

In fact, Principal Aaron Roussey knows of at least one who did. An 18-year-old senior told him he hadn’t been in school for four months. “He said flat-out, ‘I’m not coming back till you’re in person,’” Roussey said.

Come mid-January, when GRPS school doors opened, that student was indeed back at Union.

All Hands on Deck

Roussey and his staff have been trying to contact missing students since September, when the projected enrollment of 1,080 was barely above 1,000. Working from phone numbers, emails and last known addresses, staffers found many had left because they wanted in-person learning or had moved out of the district. A number of older students



Senior Maddie Cummings makes the ‘U’ sign for Union High School, where she’s glad to be back in person.

had gotten jobs to help their families through the financial crisis.

The biggest chunk came from the school’s Newcomers program for refugees and new immigrants, many of whose families couldn’t get into the U.S. because of border shutdowns, Roussey said.

The good news: Since school doors opened in January about 40 students have enrolled at Union, a “good number” of them students who had left, Roussey said. Those include the 18-year-old who had legally dropped out, and who returned thanks to his personal connections with staff members, Roussey said.

“It’s great to have him back,” Roussey added. “Now we’ve got work to do. He’s got work to do.”



Principal Aaron Roussey said many of his students craved the personal connections of in-person learning.



Food Service Manager Honored for Work in Pandemic Year

By Phil de Haan, Courtesy of School News Network

Her title at Grand Rapids Public Schools is commissary program manager.

For today's students, the definition of commissary as a "store for provisions" might be a mystery.

But what they do know, and what her supervisors know too, is that Renee Crampton, owner of that aforementioned title, is one of the district's unsung heroes, even more so in a time of COVID.

Her work was acknowledged recently by the School Nutrition Association of Michigan, which named her Manager of the Year.

Phillip Greene, the district's director of food and nutrition services, said the honor is well earned.

"She encourages input and makes everyone feel that they are a part of the team," he noted, "and that their suggestions are important. Her passion is feeding students, and she coaches team members to work towards continuous improvement to meet the changing needs of the students."

Crampton, who celebrated 10 years with GRPS last November, was stunned when she heard about the award and is quick to credit her staff for the recognition.

"I work with some of the hardest-working people," she said. "They really are the ones who deserve this award. I guess I don't think of myself as a manager, but just part of the team. None of us could do this if we were not all doing our jobs. But of course, I was surprised and happy because I do try to do my best."

'Fueled Up for Learning'

Crampton, a Michigan State graduate who has a degree in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management, added that she and her team see themselves as an important part of the educational journey for students.

"We are always trying to improve what we are offering the kids," she said. "There are a lot of nutrition guidelines and restrictions that have to be met, but we still want them to enjoy the meals, and we want to get them fueled up for learning."

Greene added that in her work, Crampton often must make daily menu adjustments based on product availability, but always is able to roll with the punches.

"She has a positive attitude," he said simply. "She doesn't spend unnecessary time worrying about the issue but focuses on solutions. She has a great attitude, work ethic and dedication to serving GRPS students."

Serving students is what motivates Crampton and her team. She pointed to their work in the spring of 2020, when COVID hit and she and her staff had to rethink essentially everything they were doing, as an example of their resolve.

"This kitchen did not shut down," she said, "because a dedicated group of GRPS nutrition staff and volunteers consistently showed up to make lunches. I think that is probably also why I got this award. I get the credit because I organized people, but they showed up and did the work."

"We enjoy working together," she added, "and we take pride in what we produce here."

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Happy 150th Anniversary Grand Rapids Public Schools!

On April 11, the school district recognized its 150th anniversary! To celebrate we have announced the launch of our GRPS alumni website and will be doing a series of fun events, social media posts and more culminating in our annual Crosstown Throwdown football game on Friday, August 27. We want this to be the district's largest homecoming event and are encouraging alumni, friends, and supporters to be there. Stay tuned for more details!

As we continue to celebrate GRPS 150th year, the Foundation is increasing its focus on engaging alumni and friends, launching a new digital community that will help it do just that.

Through GRPS Alumni Nation, the alumni community has access to regular updates, special events, volunteer opportunities and an alumni directory. The foundation will also offer news and updates on a variety of subjects of interest to alumni through its social media and monthly email updates.

As it begins this process, GRPSF is releasing a community interest survey asking alumni and community members to share their thoughts on what information and services they want from the digital community platform.

To explore Grand Rapids Public Schools Alumni Nation and learn more about how you can get more involved in the school community as an alumnus, visit grpsalumni.org

JOIN NOW! GRPS ALUMNI NATION

Join to receive information on upcoming events, district news, connect with classmates and more!



Visit www.grpsalumni.org to become a member today



**BUILDING A VIBRANT
GRPS ALUMNI NATION**



The GRPS Family and Community Engagement department continues to thrive.

Please explore the updated Parent University website at parents.grps.org. Check out the Digital Literacy and the Trending News blocks on the HOME page.

Do you know what your child is learning in school? Explore K-12 Milestone videos to discover what grade level success looks like in reading, writing and math.

Delve into April's online Power Parent Magazine. This publication focuses on Academic Transitions and it contains timely articles, videos, and links to support students and families through grade level changes.

Register for Parent University and receive access to free courses and weekly emails that support caregivers in becoming stronger educational partners.

If you have an idea for a class or you would like to create a course, please email the Family and Community Engagement Office at parentengagement@grps.org. You may also call the office at 616.819.1977.



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- Best City to Start a Career (WalletHub 2018)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call the GRPS Talent Hotline at [616-819-5720](tel:616-819-5720)
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Great Start Readiness Pre-K Program

Will your child be 4 years old by December 1, 2021? The enrollment process is now underway for the Great Start Readiness PreK Program for the 2021-2022 school year! Apply today at preschool.kentisd.org or by calling the Grand Rapids Public Schools' Early Childhood office at (616) 819-2111.

Grand Rapids Public Schools provides FREE world-class PreK learning opportunities to qualifying preschoolers in ALL of our district's elementary schools throughout the city.

GRPS' World-Class PreK programs provide young children with the foundation for both academic and social-emotional success! Within our World-Class PreK classrooms, children will have the opportunity to learn social-emotional, academic, motor, and cognitive skills in a developmentally appropriate play-based environment through engaging, fun, hands-on activities! Whether children are busy exploring with magnifying glasses in the classroom's exploration station, building intricate creations in the construction zone, letting their imaginations run wild in dramatic play environments, or making masterpieces in the art center, children in GRPS preschools are building skills and developing the attitudes of life-long learners!

Full day PreK, Monday through Thursday, is offered at the following schools.

- Aberdeen School
- Brookside Elementary
- Buchanan Elementary

- Burton Elementary
- CA Frost Environmental Science Academy
- Campus Elementary
- Cesar E. Chavez Elementary
- Coit Creative Arts Academy
- Congress Elementary
- Dickinson Academy
- East Leonard Elementary
- Gerald R. Ford Academic Center
- Harrison Park
- Ken-O-Sha Elementary
- Kent Hills Elementary
- Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy
- Mulick Park Elementary
- Palmer Elementary
- Shawmut Hills
- Sherwood Park Global Studies Academy
- Sibley Elementary
- Southwest Community Campus

Stocking Elementary

Half day PreK, Monday through Thursday, is offered at the following schools.

- Grand Rapids Montessori
- Ridgemoor Park Montessori
- North Park Montessori at Wellerwood Early Childhood Center

Please note that all Children's House programs are tuition-based programs for PreK3 and PreK4 students. Reduction or elimination of tuition may be possible based on eligibility factors. Placements for 3 and 4 year old PreK at Grand Rapids Montessori, Ridgemoor Park Montessori, or North Park Montessori at Wellerwood are conducted through the theme school selection process.

For those students who will be 4 years of age by December 1, 2021, apply online today for this great program at preschool.kentisd.org. Contact the Grand Rapids Public Schools' Early Childhood office today at (616) 819-2111 to learn more about PreK options for your child!



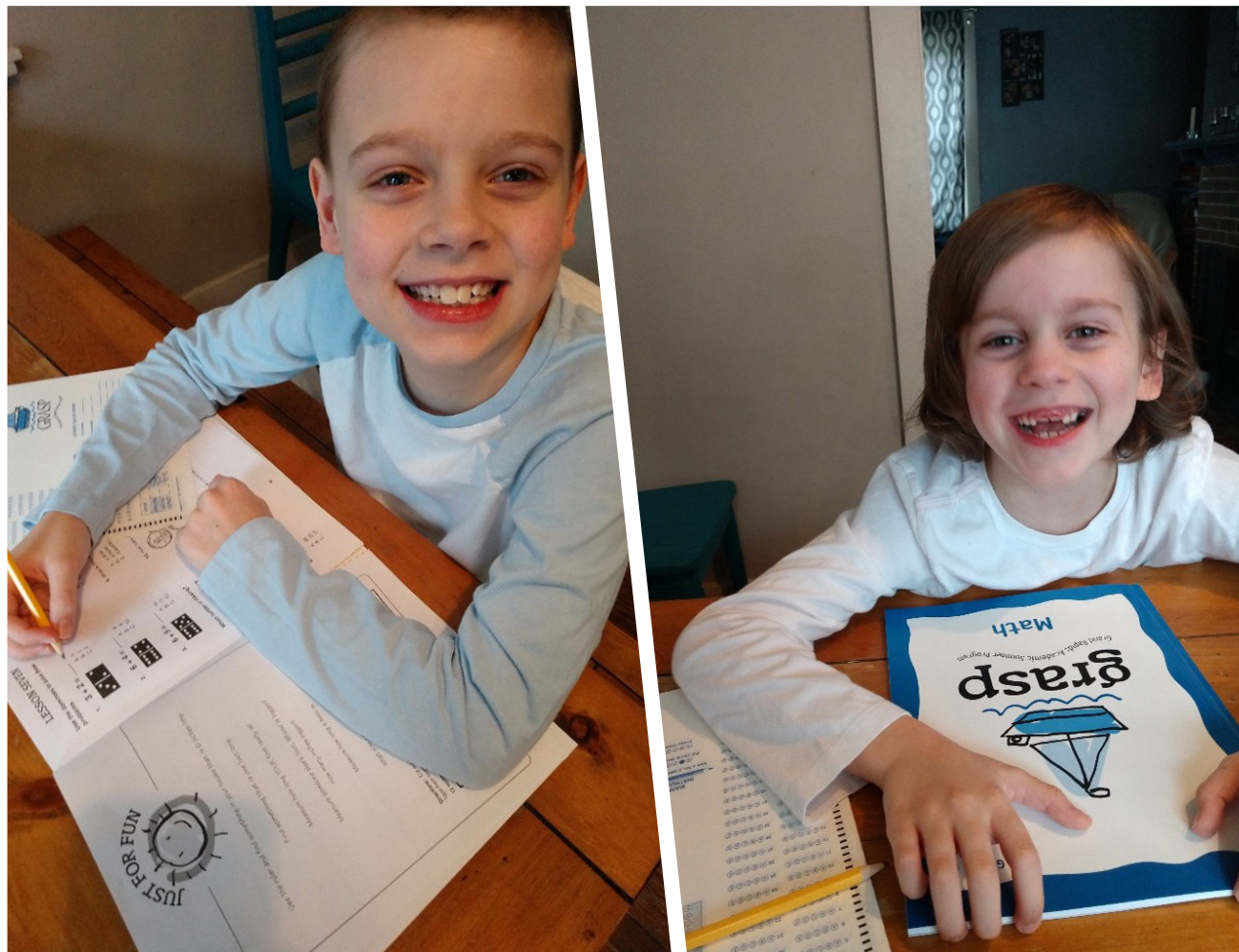
grasp

Grand Rapids Academic Summer Programs



GRASP is an at-home program created by GRPS and used by students throughout the U.S. to assist them in maintaining reading and mathematics skills that were learned during the previous school year. There are nine units each for Reading and Math for grades Kindergarten to 8th. Lessons are to be completed each week during the summer. Students receive a packet with the book, instruction sheet/schedule, answer sheets, and pre-addressed mailing envelopes. Students in grades 4 through 8 can choose to use the online GRASP program instead of the mail-in option.

GRPS students will receive enrollment forms from their schools soon. Students from other schools should first check with your child's school to see if they participate as they may get a discounted rate. If the school does not participate, go to grps.org/grasp for more information and click Enrollment Form. Print and mail or fax the form or use the link to enroll online. You may also call (616) 819-2548 to enroll over the phone.



Union High School



Union High School Athletic Office
Phone: 616.819.3168
Website: unionredhawks.com

Vision Statement

The Union Athletics Department will strive to develop champions excelling in both classroom and in competition.

Participation Requirements

- Pass 66% of classes
- Maintain a 2.0 GPA
- Have good attendance
- Pay \$10 insurance fee
- Have an up to date sports physical on file in the athletic office prior to any form of participation

You may receive a physical from your own doctor/physician or you can set an appointment with Cherry Health at Union HS. Cherry Health: 616.791.6593

If you have any questions or concerns about the requirements to participate, please the Athletic Department at 616.819.3168.



Contact Coaches to Sign Up for Spring Sports

Baseball Coach, Eric Zudweg
Phone: 616.337.4128
Email: ezudweg@gmail.com

Boys Golf Coach, Jason Stachura
Phone: 269.830.3530
Email: stachuraj@grps.org

Girls Tennis Coach, Bill Schaefer
Phone: 616.214.1476

Girls Soccer Coach, Juan Zavala
Phone: 616.485.7955
Email: jmzavala@gmail.com

Softball Coach, Sam Meert
Phone: 616.308.0526

Track & Field Coach, Dan Droski
Phone: 616.260.2669
Email: droskid@grps.org

Ottawa Hills High School



Ottawa Hills High School Athletic Office
Phone: 616.819.2879
Website: ottawahillsbengals.com

Mission Statement

The OHHS Athletic Department will maintain a high quality athletic program with excellence in the classroom and in athletic competition.

Contact Coaches to Sign Up for Spring Sports

Baseball Coach, Jon Duncan
Phone: 616.502.8369
Email: duncanJ@grps.org

Boys Golf Coach, Craig Kooienga
Phone: 616.635.0995
Email: cmkooienga@gmail.com

Girls Soccer Coach, Edward Hilton
Phone: 616.558.0080
Email: coach.ed.hilton@gmail.com

Softball Coach, Mary Dekker
Phone: 616.284.0786
Email: mjd62@calvin.edu

Girls Tennis Coach, Andre Posey
Phone: 616.821.2393
Email: dreposey@sbcglobal.net

Track & Field Coach, Tony Shellman
Phone: 517.414.6228
Email: tonecapone3000@yahoo.com

Track & Field Coach, Dan Ebright
Phone: 616.608.2209
Email: dan.s.ebright@usdoj.gov

Participation Requirements

- Pass 66% of classes
- Maintain a 2.0 GPA
- Pay \$10 insurance fee
- Have an up to date sports physical on file in the athletic office prior to any form of participation



For This Longtime Family, GRPS is Part of Their 'Family Forever'

District marks 150th anniversary, plans celebrations this summer

By Charles Honey, Courtesy of School News Network

Grand Rapids — Mel Atkins II has great memories of his years at Ottawa Hills High School back in the day. It's like his own personal highlight reel of Grand Rapids Public Schools, which marks its 150th anniversary this week.

Atkins formed lifelong friendships at Ottawa, enjoyed his honors studies and played first base on the baseball team, which in 1994 was ranked No. 1 in the state and, at one point, No. 21 in the nation by USA Today.

His experience at Ottawa and other city schools laid the foundation for his 21-year career at GRPS, where he is executive director of community and student affairs. In that career path he followed the example of his father, Mel senior, who served GRPS for 39 years, 25 of them as athletic director, and his mother, Peggy, a GRPS teacher and administrator for 40 years. Peggy also was an Ottawa graduate, and Mel was in the last graduating class of the old South High School, in 1968.

The lineage continues today. Mel III, age 6, goes to Gerald R. Ford Academic Center, where his mother, Anna, teaches. Daniela, 12, attends Zoo School. And Reina, 15, went to Museum School before the family moved to the Grandville area, where she now attends high school.

Family, friends, life-shaping experiences: That's what Grand Rapids Public Schools means to Mel Atkins II, and what he wants for his kids. "There's been an Atkins in the GRPS family for almost 70 years now," he said. "We're celebrating 150 years of GRPS. We're very proud to say we're connected to almost half of it."

A Quiet Milestone

The school district's sesquicentennial has crept up quietly due to the pandemic, with none of the fanfare that could be expected for such a milestone. But the Grand Rapids Public Schools Foundation is planning a week of celebrations for late August, when it's hoped conditions will allow for larger gatherings.

Also, a new alumni website has been launched, providing a way for alums to get connected, tell their stories and volunteer.

"I would love to have more alumni volunteers to help us with the celebration," said foundation Executive Director Sally Andreatta. "We would also like to identify 'Decade Captains' for all of the high schools so that we can get the word out to everyone near and far."

In the meantime, the foundation has been gathering names of GRPS grads to include in a historic alumni directory planned to be published in August. The foundation is still seeking alumni and volunteers to help locate them.

The district was officially founded on

April 11, 1871, consolidating three districts under a single board of education, according to Albert Baxter's 1891 history of Grand Rapids. Starting with 53 teachers and 3,805 students, today GRPS employs 936 teachers and serves more than 14,000 students from widely diverse backgrounds.

What's stayed consistent over the decades for the Atkins family is a strong sense of identity, pride, excellence and modeling for the next generation.

"What makes GRPS is the people you come in contact with," said Mel Atkins II. "You're not just a student or a number. People over the years have taken time to get to know you and your family."

A Family within a Family

Strong family connections have made GRPS an intimate part of the Atkins clan, going back to Mel's parents, Matthew II and Georgia. They made sure he and his four siblings got a good education during the turbulent Sixties.

The turbulence came to Mel at South High, the majority-Black school where he was part of a walk-out by some 400 Black students in 1966 after the principal forbade students from wearing mustaches. He was one of half a dozen players kicked off the football team for refusing to shave, he said. After he graduated in 1968, South closed and its students were bused to other city high schools, igniting ugly student conflicts and parental protests.

Though the closure was "devastating," Mel said, he still has warm memories of his time there. Indeed, after attending Western Michigan University, his first teaching job was at South Middle School in the same building.

He and Peggy wanted Mel II and their daughter, Melinda, to follow them into GRPS, Atkins said.

"It was very important that my wife and I set the example. We told them we were going to set the bar really high. We want them to do better than we have done. And they have. We're really proud of both of them."

Giving Back and Going Forward

His son is grateful for their pushing that bar, and the staff who did that too. At Ottawa those included dean James Burruss, teacher Dorothy Jo Butler, Principal Sydney Bailey and baseball coach Rick Arpin. Mel II went on to major in child development at Michigan State University, while Melinda attended the University of Michigan.

The seeds planted by his parents and teachers bore fruit with his career at GRPS as teacher, principal and administrator. For his



Three generations of GRPS: from left, Mel Atkins Sr. and his wife, Peggy, both retired from GRPS; their grandson Mel III and granddaughter Daniela, both GRPS students; their daughter-in-law Anna, a ¾ split teacher at Gerald R. Ford Leadership Academy; and their son Mel II, executive director of community and student affairs (photo by Dianne Carroll Burdick)

three children, he added, "I want them to have the same experiences that my parents had and I had."

Daniela seems happy with her experience at Zoo School. "It's really fun," the sixth-grader said. "I like learning about the animals."

And so the family tradition continues, one of many GRPS has nurtured over 150 years. Mel Atkins II is happy to be part of it.

"That's what keeps a lot of us coming back and giving back to GRPS; someone did it for you," he said. "Once you're a part of GRPS you're family forever."

"As we celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Grand Rapids Public Schools, I want to recognize the growth, transformation, and impact that has been a part of our history within our school district and the Grand Rapids community," said Leadriane Roby, Superintendent of Schools. "For 150 years, our talented teachers, school leaders, and support staff have dedicated themselves to educating and support the students and families we are so fortunate to serve."

Celebrations Planned, with Fingers Crossed

The Grand Rapids Public Schools Foundation has tentatively planned a week of 150th anniversary celebrations in late August, since pandemic conditions didn't allow for large in-person gatherings around the April 11 founding date. Conditions permitting, plans include:

Aug. 23 — The Grand Rapids Sports Hall of Fame Golf Tournament, with proceeds going to the GRPSF Great Sports, Great Kids fund supporting GRPS elementary and middle school sports

Aug. 27 — Annual Cross-Town Throw-Down football game between Union and Ottawa Hills high schools, kicking off Homecoming weekend

Aug. 28 — 150th class reunion at Houseman Field, celebrating all classes and all current and former high schools with an evening of food, music and memories; an anniversary alumni directory will be available

Aug. 29 — After-party brunch, with details to be announced

Longtime Volunteer Does Whatever's Needed for School: 'I Love Being Here'

Parent Action Leader keeps parents connected, students learning and garden growing

By Charles Honey, Courtesy of School News Network

Some mornings when Belinda Henderson greets a student with a smile at Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy, she'll get a frown in return. That's when her inner grandma goes into action.

Henderson: "I'll say 'Excuse me? Did I do something wrong?'" Child: "No." Henderson: "Are you OK?" Child: "Well, I didn't get breakfast." Henderson: "OK, let's figure this out now."

Then she'll take that student down to the lunch room and find him a snack, or, as she puts it, "something to send that child in that classroom so he wouldn't have, as we say, your stomach touching your backbone."

Whether it's keeping kids' stomachs off their backbones, driving them to school or supporting bereaved parents, Henderson tends to her MLK school families' needs — either at home during these past several months of virtual schooling, or back in classrooms where students returned last week. It's her duty and her joy as a Parent Action Leader.

PALs, as they're known, serve as liaisons between families, their school buildings and the school district. They work to get parents involved in their children's education, relay their concerns to teachers and administrators, help plan school events and, in Henderson's case, put out coffee in the morning for teachers and parents when they arrive.

She'll not be able to resume the coffee for a while yet, but she was good and ready for the day when classes reopened last Tuesday, Jan. 19. Still, she needed to wait for a negative COVID-19 test before being allowed back into the school, which she hopes will be this week.

"I can't wait to see them," she said of the students. "This is going to be so exciting."

A Volunteer Veteran

Henderson could more precisely be called a GPAL — Grandparent Action Leader. She's been volunteering for 24 years at MLK Academy, where her four daughters and five grandchildren all attended. Though she now lives in Wyoming with her kids grown, she still faithfully serves the school at 645 Logan St. SE.

"The one thing I tell my students, I don't get paid to be here," she said. "I love being here."

MLK's staff loves having her there, too. Principal Harvey Crawley calls Henderson a key go-to person "with everything from academics to housing, clothing, you name it. Any way that she feels she can contribute, she's more than willing to jump in and help."

Especially for students learning remotely and their parents, he added, Henderson is one of MLK's "lifelines" to the school community. "Be it a phone call or 'I'm just dropping something off' ... little things like that during these times go a long way."

Henderson is one of the longest-serving PALs for GRPS, which strives to have at least one for every K-12 building, said Jamie Masco, Family and Community Engagement supervisor, adding, "She's truly an amazing woman."

Adapting to the Pandemic

Henderson is a custodian at First United Methodist Church,



Belinda Henderson with the community garden she helps cultivate at Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy.

which has long had a tutoring program at MLK Academy. She is among the First UMC tutors, and worked with the church to establish a school garden. In cooperation with Our Kitchen Table, a nonprofit focused on healthy eating and justice, she is a coach for a program educating parents on nutrition and growing greens, peppers and other produce at their homes.

Henderson became active at the school after enrolling her kids in what was then Henry School. She was inspired to do so by its principal, the late Ruth Jones-Hairston.

"I just fell in love with the principal and the love she had for the school and for the parents," Henderson said. "I just picked up on that love."

But after decades of faithfully volunteering, Henderson last year found herself unable to put her love to work inside the school due to the pandemic. So she adapted, organizing remote games of bingo and virtual scavenger hunts with parents and

"I tell my parents that I go to the White House to speak for them. I am your voice."

*— Belinda Henderson,
parent volunteer leader*

kids.

“You’d be amazed how many people can find Christmas paper in July,” she said with a chuckle.

As always, she relays parent concerns to teachers and helps arrange meetings to address them. She also meets online regularly with other PALs and GRPS administrators to discuss issues on parents’ minds and be their advocate.

“I tell my parents that I go to the White House to speak for them. I am your voice,” she said.

Comforting the Bereaved

A big issue last fall was the district’s decision for all-virtual learning, which is now a choice along with in-person classes. Many parents complained of problems connecting their students online, and were divided about 50-50 on wanting to keep their kids home or go back to school, Henderson said. “But then you take 25 percent of both of them, and they’re just like, uhhh!” – fed up with it all.

But she pitched in to the annual Christmas gift campaign with First UMC and donors, providing \$25,000 worth of food gift cards and board games to families. And she and church members organized a post-funeral gathering for the family of a third-grade girl who died on Christmas Day.

“It was a hard one,” she said of the tragedy, “but we got through it as a team.”



Principal Harvey Crawley, right, says Belinda Henderson is ‘more than willing to jump in and help’.

A Shirt With a Message: Black History Month is Happening ‘Right Now’

Student teams with local artist to design T-shirt for 220 Meijer stores

By Phil de Haan, Courtesy of School News Network

When Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy junior Elijah Brown agreed to be part of a Black History Month T-shirt project between Meijer and the West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology (WMCAT), he thought it was just a little thing.

In his words: “I thought it was for one local Meijer in Grand Rapids. I didn’t know it was going to do all this.”

“All this” is the shirt that Brown designed with Grand Rapids artist Jasmine Bruce now available at 220 Meijer stores in six states as part of its Black History Month collection.

“All this” is a raft of media interviews. “I’ve been doing media for weeks and weeks,” Brown said with a laugh.

And “all this” includes the surreal experience of seeing his shirt at the Bridge Street Market in Grand Rapids, his extended family telling him how great the shirt is and his mom in tears with pride.

The shirt that Brown and Bruce came up with is a different approach to Black History Month, they say.

“When Jasmine and I first met online, we basically came to an agreement,” Brown recalled. “Not traditional. I didn’t want to keep talking about the history of our influencers, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks. In the next 20-30 years what’s going on now is what’s going to be history.”

Brown, who is hoping to major in psychology or finance in college and become an entrepreneur after graduation, adds that the events of last summer, especially the police brutality that he witnessed in the media and on social media, were at the heart of his design.



Elijah Brown, a junior at Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy, designed a shirt for Black History Month that is in 220 Meijer stores in six states.

Continued from B15

'Our History is Right Now'

"It influenced the whole shirt, my whole design," he said without hesitation. "That shirt is a message. We're coming together, starting movements, Black Lives Matter. That's our Black history. Our history is right now."

As a result, the shirt features an original quote from Brown and a design brought to life by Bruce.

The words are direct – "This isn't just a month, it's every day for us. #blackhistory" – and they're boxed up. Above the box is a bird released from a cage. Below it, the empty cage.

For Brown, a self-described "math head" who also loves to write, the intent of the message is pretty simple. "We should recognize Black history every month," he said. "Not just in February."

He credits UPrep and his participation in WMCAT's nationally-recognized Teen Arts + Tech Program for the opportunities he has been given these past few years, including being asked to be part of the T-shirt project.

There are 4,000 of the shirts in Meijer stores in six states, all of them produced by Ambrose, the WMCAT screen-printing business.

Trudy Ngo-Brown, the director of Arts + Tech at WMCAT, noted that Meijer has been working to include more local suppliers and products in their stores and had reached out to Ambrose for the order. The Ambrose team then reached out to the Teen Arts + Tech Program to get students involved, and Brown was invited to participate based on another client shirt-design project he had been part of last summer.

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'Our History is Right Now'

"It influenced the whole shirt, my whole design," he said



Local artist Jasmine Bruce said it was a pleasure to work with Elijah Brown on a project that aligned with her focus to transform and heal through her art.

without hesitation. "That shirt is a message. We're coming together, starting movements, Black Lives Matter. That's our Black history. Our history is right now."

As a result, the shirt features an original quote from Brown and a design brought to life by Bruce.

The words are direct – "This isn't just a month, it's every day for us. #blackhistory" – and they're boxed up. Above the box is a bird released from a cage. Below it, the empty cage.

For Brown, a self-described "math head" who also loves to write, the intent of the message is pretty simple. "We should recognize Black history every month," he said. "Not just in February."

He credits UPrep and his participation in WMCAT's nationally-recognized Teen Arts + Tech Program for the opportunities he has been given these past few years, including being asked to be part of the T-shirt project.

There are 4,000 of the shirts in Meijer stores in six states, all of them produced by Ambrose, the WMCAT screen-printing business.

Trudy Ngo-Brown, the director of Arts + Tech at WMCAT, noted that Meijer has been working to include more local suppliers and products in their stores and had reached out to Ambrose for the order. The Ambrose team then reached out to the Teen Arts + Tech Program to get students involved, and Brown was invited to participate based on another client shirt-design project he had been part of last summer.

Reflecting the Voices of Black Artists

Bruce, meanwhile, has done some teaching at WMCAT and, noted Ngo-Brown, has been an active artist in Grand Rapids.

"I thought she'd be a great mentor for Elijah in this project given her experiences," Ngo-Brown added. "I also thought it was important for this design to reflect the voices of Black artists."

Bruce, a Northview High School and Grand Valley State University graduate, said it was a pleasure to work with Brown on a project that aligned with her focus to transform and heal through her art. She said that she and Brown both were drawn to Maya Angelou's poem "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" and agreed that the shirt needed to convey both themes of captivity and freedom.

"It's not just a month for us," she added. "For Black people it's all year. And working on this shirt was the same. It went a lot deeper for us as people of color."

Like Brown she said that seeing the shirt in a Meijer store is pretty amazing.

"As Midwesterners we're always going to Meijer," she said. "So, going to a Meijer and seeing it there. Yeah, I thought that was pretty cool."



Newly hand-printed shirts drying on a conveyor belt at WMCAT prior to distribution to 220 Meijer stores in six states.