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## Progress Flourished in a Year of Challenges; Opportunities



Happy New Year. We experienced many great things in 2022 along with many challenges. While 2023 will include its own challenges, I do believe we will continue to make our community better. Better together. With you and for you. As we begin 2023, we are navigating the after-effects of the pandemic and the realities we all face in

everyday Grand Rapids. We use our Strategic Plan as a roadmap to help us deliver important outcomes and sustain the high-quality public services you rely on. Within our priority areas of Economic Prosperity and Affordability, Governmental Excellence, Engaged and Connected Community, Health and Environment, Mobility, and Safe Community, we strive to enhance the quality of life for all Grand Rapidsians. I look forward to continuing to work with you in this New Year, building upon these highlights and achievements of the past year.

### Economic Prosperity and Affordability

We strive to be a community where all residents, employees, and businesses have pathways to financial growth and security. In 2022, we expanded those pathways in several ways.

- Amended the Zoning Ordinance to allow for administrative reductions of lot width and area to support development of single and two-family housing.
- Adopted a Planned Redevelopment Ordinance to allow for new 42-unit Community Land Trust development (670 Burton)
- The Office of Oversight and Public Accountability facilitated expungement clinics which helped nearly 1,000 community members clean their record, when appropriate, thereby improving their employment potential.
- Invested in partner programs for legal services, fair housing support, and home repairs to keep people in their homes to reduce displacement.
- Made strides in ensuring that rental properties in our community meet safety standards, with 95% of all occupied rental dwellings certified by the Code Compliance office.
- The Grand Rapids Housing Commission completed 50 new construction units at Antoine Court, including 18 permanent supportive housing units. They also awarded 100 Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers in support of local affordable housing development. And they partnered with local affordable housing providers to make 23 undeveloped parcels available for affordable housing.
- Through the City's investment in homelessness prevention and housing services, we helped 43 households obtain housing stability through tenant-based rental assistance,

159 households exit homelessness with rapid re-housing services, and 203 households avoid eviction. We also assisted 85 households with additional services that prevent homelessness.

- 84 housing units were repaired, with 50 units made lead safe, through City housing rehabilitation programs.
- City invested in 85 affordable rental units and 3 new affordable ownership units.
- Total of \$175,000 invested in partner programs for legal services, fair housing support and home repairs.

We recognize that there is still much work to be done to address the housing crisis in our community, and we remain committed to continuing our efforts to increase affordable and accessible housing options for all.

### Governmental Excellence

- We continue to be a fiscally resilient government powered by high performing and knowledgeable staff equipped with the appropriate tools and resources to offer excellent, equitable and innovative public service. We have taken several steps to modernize and improve the services we provide to our community through better use of technology.
- Our credit rating was maintained at stable Aa2 (Moody's) and AA (S&P) bond ratings.
- To invest in our workforce, we designed and launched a new learning management system for employee development and increased participation in the City's wellness program to 52% (up from 21% in 2019-20). A healthier and smarter workforce delivers better results for the community. We also partnered with our unions to remove legacy restrictions on mental health coverage for transgender employees and family.
- Finalized an equity tool to assess and track park capital improvements and hired a consultant to launch Grand River Voices to finalize an equity framework for river governance.
- With support from the Wege Foundation, added staff to support equity in our River For All work and climate-focused legislation.
- Hired a new Equity Analyst to coordinate our Equity Learning Community, co-create an equity evaluation tool for policy and initiatives, and support employee resource groups.

### Health and Environment

The City of Grand Rapids is continuously working to advocate for, protect, and enhance the health of all people and the environment. Our efforts have resulted in several significant achievements in 2022.

- In partnership with Consumers Energy, added a nearly 1-megawatt ground-mounted solar array at the Lake Michigan Water Filtration Plant which will save the Water Department a net \$1.6 million over 24 years.
- Received a \$1.441 million grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy Fuel Transformation Program to replace 12 heavy-duty vehicles with new diesel and Compressed Natural Gas options while also continuing to evaluate electric alternatives for operations and purchase where appropriate.
- Began operations of a biodigester, including renewable natural gas generation, and have been recognized at the Water Environment Federation's Technical Exhibition and Conference as a Utility of the Future.
- The Lead Service Lines Replacement program has replaced 2,300 private service lines since 2017. In 2021, 65% of all completed replacements were in Ward 3.
- As detailed in the 2021 Water Quality Report required under the Safe Drinking Water Act, the City of Grand Rapids meets or exceeds all water safety and quality standards. The full report is available at [grandrapidsmi.gov/WaterQuality](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/WaterQuality).
- Acquired 28.8 acres of park land, including 17 acres in the 3rd Ward, 4 acres in the 1st Ward, and 7 acres in the 2nd Ward.
- Hosted 4 free, ten-week Summer Camp programs for youth at Garfield, Joe Taylor, Roosevelt and Martin Luther King parks, with more than 400 participants.

We are committed to making our city a healthier and more sustainable place for all residents, and we will continue to work hard to make improvements in all areas. Thank you for your support and engagement in this process.

### Engaged and Connected Community

I am excited to share with you the progress we have made in ensuring that residents and stakeholders have awareness of and a voice in the decisions that affect them, and that they receive culturally responsive and proactive communication.

- Increased other-than-English content on our social posts by 50%
- Added the Public Safety Committee and Economic Development Planning Team to our video streaming offerings.
- The Neighborhood Summit had 354 people in attendance on May 21st and a Marketplace Park Party on July 16th with an estimated 450 attendees, with 97% of vendors being BIPOC-owned and 94% of vendors being Grand Rapids-based. For both events, summit expenses were

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- spent locally (96% of vendors were Grand Rapids-based) and with BIPOC-owned businesses (86%).
  - Awarded 30 contracts totaling \$135,540 to Grand Rapids residents through our Neighborhood Match Fund.
  - Continued work on Participatory Budgeting project, with more than 1,000 representative voices in the process, including a resident steering committee, community outreach partners, resident budget delegates, and community GOTV/voting partners. The projects have now been selected and departments are working on implementation.
  - Approved a new Community Manager position for the Office of Equity and Engagement and conducted Know Your Rights community-based trainings regarding traffic stops.
  - The Office of Oversight and Public Accountability hosted “Let’s Talk About It” sessions to provide opportunities to discuss and help increase understanding of public safety matters.
- We are committed to ensuring that all residents have an opportunity to be involved and have their voices heard in the decisions that affect them. We will continue to work hard to make improvements in all areas. Thank you for your support and engagement in this process.

### Mobility

- Progress has been made in developing innovative, efficient, low-carbon, and equitable mobility solutions that are safe, affordable, and convenient for our community.
- Completed the Division United Plan, a collaborative project with The Rapid and the Cities of Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and Wyoming to examine the past and future effectiveness of the Silver Line and how it can be improved.
  - Partnered with The Rapid on a bus stop improvement program, purchasing 43 shelters and installing 20 of them with additional installations planned for spring 2023.
  - Our shared mobility (scooter and bike-share) pilot has been completed and transitioned into a program with Lime being the only scooter and bike-share provider in our city. The transition to a single provider increases opportunity for micro-mobility options but without the clutter of unused scooters and e-bikes of multiple vendors.
  - Helped the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council secure

federal funding for a regional transportation demand management study.

- Deployed two additional speed trailers to collect traffic data and help with neighborhood speeding complaints.
- We are committed to providing our residents with safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation options. We will continue to work hard to make improvements in all areas and make sure that everyone in our community has access to them.

### Safe Community

Within our priority of Safe Community, we strive to be a city where all people feel safe and are safe at all times throughout our community. This vision of safety includes both physical safety, such as protection from crime and violence, as well as emotional safety, such as feeling free from discrimination or harassment. Progress toward this goal involves a number of different initiatives and efforts, including community policing, public education campaigns, and outreach programs to marginalized groups. It also involves working with community members, local organizations, and government officials to address any safety concerns and create a sense of collective responsibility for maintaining a safe community.

- Grand Rapids was ranked the safest city in Michigan and the 59th safest city in the U.S. by Wallethub.com. The full ranking is available at [wallethub.com/edu/safest-cities-in-america/41926](https://wallethub.com/edu/safest-cities-in-america/41926).
- Police launched an online crash reporting and lobby portal for online access to reports.
- The police continued a variety of engagement initiatives such as Clergy On Patrol / Pastors, Picnics & Police, House of Worship Safety Conference, Pop with a Cop, Skate with a Cop, On Base, and Drive for Success. They also launched the Data Informed Community Engagement (DICE) initiative which uses data to identify areas of high crime paired with higher levels of community engagement (including knocking door to door to discuss issues with residents) in those areas to make for better outcomes for the community.
- The Office of Oversight and Public Accountability led Citywide engagement with the Refugee and Immigrant Community regarding public safety after an officer involved shooting incident.

- Training of a diverse class of 15 Fire recruits began, and the Fire Department and Human Resources overhauled the hiring process. The Police Department hosted recruiting events in Neighborhoods of Focus and offered Citizens Police Academy, and they have received additional training on crisis intervention, fair and impartial policing and trauma.
- Dispatch progressed training for 8 new hires, and they facilitated emergency management exercises for water failure incidents and high-rise fires.
- The Office of Oversight and Public Accountability, and City leadership responded to and transparently communicated information about the death of Patrick Lyoya in an officer involved shooting and have cooperated in all investigations.
- Added a full-time Police officer to Mobile Crises Response, and continued the Homeless Outreach Team efforts (Fire, Police, Network180, Community Development) and launched a mobile app to track team activity.
- Formally launched Cure Violence Grand Rapids in partnership with the Urban League of West Michigan
- The Police Department has completed or was on track with 80% of FY22 actions steps from their Strategic Plan.

In 2023, we will sustain our momentum from 2022 and increase our progress in many areas of our Strategic Plan. Your City Commission has elevated these priorities for City staff in 2023: fiscal sustainability, talent attraction and retention, housing and homelessness, COVID relief and economic recovery, 201 Market development, the Community Master Plan, implementation of participatory budgeting projects, climate change, covid relief and economic recovery, parks and park amenities, public safety reform, crime prevention and violence reduction. We will continue to provide excellent municipal services and make significant progress on the Commission’s priorities in 2023 and 2024. We are committed to providing our residents with the best possible service in all areas.

In partnership,



Mark Washington, City Manager

## City Issues Annual Financial Report and Citizen’s Guide to the City’s Finances

Our latest Citizen’s Guide to the City’s Finances and Annual Comprehensive Financial Report are now available online. These reports summarize the City’s finances for the fiscal year 2022.

During a recent Committee of the Whole meeting, City Comptroller Max Frantz presented the Citizen’s Guide to the City’s Finances – an easy-to-read, summarized version of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). The guide includes:

- One page summary of the City’s finances
- Information on the City’s revenues, expenses and financial position
- Top vendors paid and tax abatement programs
- Debt summary
- Long-term obligation summary
- Graphics that illustrate the summary information
- Additional helpful resources and reports on the City government

The ACFR is a set of financial statements comprising the

financial report of a state, municipal or other governmental entity that complies with the accounting requirements of the U.S. Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

The ACFR includes an audit report, which shows that we achieved the best report possible for our financial statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2022. Independent auditor Plante & Moran PLLC issued the unmodified “clean” opinion on our financial statements. The ACFR also includes an introduction, financial section, combining statements & schedules, and statistical information.

Our Office of the City Comptroller published the Citizen’s Guide to the City’s Finances to help make information on City finances more accessible to you, the public. The Citizen’s Guide makes this information easier to understand and helps you gain insight into your City’s finances.

“The Citizen’s guide represents a continuation of our commitment toward governmental excellence and continuous improvement of our reporting to the public to help simplify

sometimes complex subject matters. The Citizen’s Guide aims to present a concise and straightforward overview of key financial topics for individuals to help those interested to learn more about their government’s finances,” said Frantz.

“Transparency is achieved through publishing financial statements however raising the number of those in the community who are engaged and finding meaningful information in these reports requires continuous improvement, efforts and innovation on our behalf. We hope that the public finds the Citizen’s Guide to be a useful and intuitive resource on the government’s financial activity in Fiscal Year 2022.”

A link to our comptroller’s presentation to the Committee of the Whole is available on the City’s YouTube channel: [grandrapidsmi.gov/cgcf-presentation](https://grandrapidsmi.gov/cgcf-presentation) You can also download a PDF of the Citizen’s Guide to the City’s Finances in English here: [grandrapidsmi.gov/cgcf](https://grandrapidsmi.gov/cgcf). A Spanish version is being prepared and will be posted online in the days ahead.

## Important Lead Line Information

The City of Grand Rapids Water System has a long history of protecting the public's health and delivering high-quality drinking water. Lake Michigan is a stable and dependable source of drinking water for the city. The Lake Michigan Filtration Plant, located in West Olive, MI, treats and pumps an average of 36 million gallons of water daily.

The treated drinking water from the filtration plant is lead-free when it leaves the plant and remains lead-free as it moves through the underground distribution system. When the drinking water reaches your home, lead particles can enter the drinking water from a lead water service line or the home's plumbing and water fixtures. Before 1950, it was common for water service lines to be made of lead.

Since 1994 the City has treated the water with an orthophosphate blend to limit pipe corrosion and reduce the potential for lead in your water. We also test the drinking water for lead at 50 homes throughout the city every year. The lead test results are reported on our website and have been below the allowable levels set by the State of Michigan and the federal government.

A mapping tool is available at [grcity.us/LSL](http://grcity.us/LSL), where you can search for your property address to find the material of your water service line. You can also visit our website for more information about the annual lead sampling program and steps you can take to minimize lead exposure.

### Lead Line Replacement Program

In 2017, the City began replacing lead service lines at no cost to homeowners and commercial properties during an emergency leak or a street construction project. Lead line replacements are scheduled with other city construction projects so that we can replace lead lines as efficiently as possible. The City budgets \$5 million in its capital program and \$1 million in the operations and maintenance budget for lead line replacements.

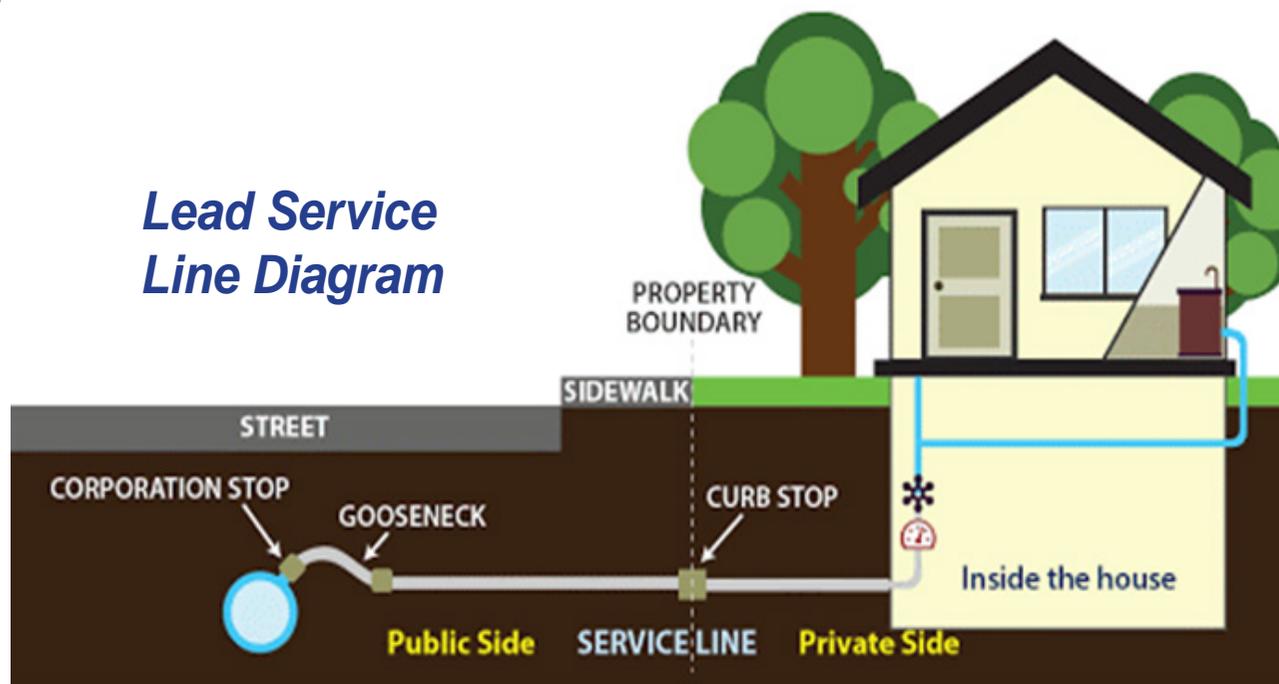
In 2020, the City was awarded a \$5.1 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help replace approximately 1,600 private lead service lines in the Neighborhoods of Focus. In 2021, the City received an additional \$10 million from the State of Michigan to replace 1,448 lead lines in 2023 and 2024.

3,100 lead service lines have been replaced since 2017, and 23,000 lead lines remain citywide. The state requires all cities to replace their lead lines by 2040.

### 2023 Replacement Schedule

In 2023, the City plans to replace approximately 2,037 lead lines, the most it has ever planned to replace in a single year. The replacements are scheduled for the following streets:

Streets	Boundaries
9th St NW	Fremont to Alpine
Alto Ave SE	Worden to Franklin
Ballard St SE	Kalamazoo to Giddings
Benjamin Ave SE	Hope to Fulton
Beulah St SE	Lafayette to Madison
Cesar E Chavez Ave SW	Beacon to MLK
Coit Ave NE	Bradford to Matilda
Courtney St NW	Valley to Garfield
Courtney St NW	Garfield to Tamarack
Crescent St NE	Grand to Fuller
Dean St NE	Monroe to Oakwood



Streets	Boundaries
Deloney Ave NW	W Fulton to Veto
Dickinson St SE	Kalamazoo to Giddings
Emerald Ave NE	Leonard to Sweet
Fremont Ave NW	Myrtle to Webster
Fremont Ave NW	7th to 9th
Garfield Ave NW	Walker to 12th
Giddings Ave SE	Burton to Boston
Graceland St NE	Monroe to Diamond
Grand Ave NE	Flat to Lydia
Grand Ave NE	Frontage Road to Flat
Grand Ave NE	Hawthorne to Parkwood
Griggs St SE	Kalamazoo to Giddings
Gunnison Ave SW	Butterworth to Park
Harlan Ave NE	Frontage Road to Flat
Jackson St NW	Valley to Garfield; Lane to Jackson Pl
Kenwood St NE	Oakwood to Plainfield
Lafayette Ave NE	Dean to Burr Oak
Linden Ave SE	Griggs to Dickinson
Milton St SE	Carlton to Norwood
Neland Ave SE	Bates to Thomas
Norwich Ave SW	Curve to Hayden
Orville St SE	Kalamazoo to Giddings
Page, Carrier, Lister St NE	Plainfield to Lafayette (approx.)
Park St SW	John Ball Park to Richards
Patton Ave NW	Bristol to Walker
Pine Ave NW	Walker to 10th
Plainfield Ave NE	Marywood to Ellsmere
State St SE	Lafayette to Madison
Travis St NE	Coit to Lafayette
Turner Ave NW	7th to 8th & Webster to Richmond
Union Ave NE	Lyon to Crescent
Wilbert Ave NE	Ann to Dean

Tenants and property owners will receive a letter, door hanger, or call informing them of their upcoming lead line replacement and the steps to begin the process. If you receive this letter, it is extremely important that you contact us as soon as possible so we can obtain your permission to replace the lead service line on your property.

To find out if your home is scheduled for a lead line replacement within the next 24 months, email us at [leadfreewater@grcity.us](mailto:leadfreewater@grcity.us).

### Minimizing Lead Exposure

Prevention is the best way to protect yourself and your family. Below are steps you can take to help minimize lead exposure from drinking water:

1. Only use cold water for drinking, cooking, making ice, beverages, and infant formula. Note: Boiling water does not remove lead from water.
2. If you have a lead service line or if there is a pregnant woman or children aged six and under in your home, consider buying a filter that meets NSF standard 53. When using a filter, follow the manufacturer's recommendation for maintenance and replacement.
3. If water has not been used for a few hours, run the kitchen or bathroom faucet for at least 5 minutes. You can also run the dishwasher, shower, or use a washing machine.
4. Remove your faucet aerators at least once every six months and clean them out. Small particles may accumulate on the screens.
5. A licensed plumber can help you identify the materials in your home plumbing system and inform you about alternate lead-free approved materials for your household plumbing.

Visit [epa.gov/water](http://epa.gov/water) for more information about lead-free plumbing products.

In some homes, lead in water is not the only potential source of exposure for young children. Lead-based paint, lead in soil, and lead dust are significant risk factors for children living in pre-1978 housing. Learn more about all potential sources of lead exposure at [dontplayaround.org](http://dontplayaround.org).

The City remains committed to public health, delivering high-quality drinking water, and eliminating all lead service lines for the health and safety of you and your loved ones.

## City Outlines Systematic Approach to Improve Health and Safety Downtown and in Neighborhoods

City administrators recently outlined how they are investing in facilities and services to address housing instability. They also explained its approach of enforcing existing ordinances that address recent comments about health and safety in downtown Grand Rapids and its neighborhoods. In its report, staff committed to monitoring the focused approach on these initiatives as well as to future engagements with the Commission and Public Safety Committee around what additional investments and actions may be needed to accomplish lasting change.

The measures outlined by Deputy City Manager Kate Berens, Police Chief Eric Winstrom and Fire Chief John Lehman use city personnel, the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), mental health providers and many provisions of the current City Code to address recent concerns. The policy uses a systematic approach to improve the health of the unhoused, especially this winter, by encouraging entrance into temporary shelter, permanent stable housing and access to supportive services.

The City's "Safe Community" strategic priority is to make sure all people feel safe and are safe at all times throughout our community. That strategy continues being implemented across the community and includes:

- Continued funding for homeless service and shelter providers.
- Allocating funding and support for the Affordable Housing Fund.
- Participation in the Continuum of Care, Essential Needs Task Force, Housing Kent and the Housing Stability Alliance and collective community-wide coordination and commitment for ending homelessness.
- Partnership with Network180 and other social service providers to ensure we address mental and behavioral health issues for the unhoused community.
- Continuation of the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), first created in 2020.
- Partnership with Network180 for dedicated Mobile Crisis Response (co-response team) services to support the Police Department in responding to mental health calls.
- Enhanced focus on downtown public health issues, with the City's Public Works Department and Homeless Outreach Team partnering to improve responsiveness to sanitation issues.
- Partnership with Mel Trotter Ministries to operate a storage program to reduce the accumulation of personal belongings outdoors.
- Partnership with Downtown Grand Rapids Incorporated (DGRI) and others to make environmental design changes in public spaces to increase lighting, visibility and feeling of safety.
- Partnership with DGRI and independent City efforts to increase private security in and around Monroe Center and downtown parks during key events and times of the year.
- Partnership with DGRI led to the installation of a stand-alone, 24/7, year-round public restroom at Division and Weston.
- Improvements in Heartside Park that will include year-round public restroom facilities and recently approved upgrades to Veteran's Park historic building that will include public restrooms.



- Funding for, and deployment of, public safety camera trailers at key times, locations and events.

In recent months, reports of problematic situations and behaviors downtown have continued with calls for additional City response. In addition, general concerns on behalf of unhoused persons have included exposure to cold weather and other hazards, as well as unmet mental and behavioral health needs. Specific behavioral concerns related to downtown safety that have been expressed to the City Commission include various health and sanitation issues, aggressive threatening behavior, sleeping in public and private places, public intoxication, assault, trespassing and littering.

After hearing directly from the public, City Commission indicated an overwhelming desire to utilize existing codes and ordinances to address recent concerns instead of creating new ordinance provisions to prohibit panhandling and sitting and lying in public spaces. Following up, City Manager Mark Washington directed City staff to use existing ordinances and resources, consistent with applicable state and federal statutes and case law, to respond, monitor, de-escalate, and – where necessary – take other enforcement actions against violations that threaten public health and safety.

"During the pandemic, the City deprioritized non-violent misdemeanor offenses to reduce COVID exposures which coincided with a higher demand for critical resources that delayed response to some of the issues being identified," Washington said. "We are still deprioritizing non-violent offenses but have resumed more normal operations and have redeployed our resources to address the more violent and criminal acts in key locations throughout the city. But let me be clear, we will not arrest our way out of homelessness and need more holistic approaches."

Washington said more permanent supportive affordable housing supply is the key to resolving this issue.

"We have many emergency overnight shelters with approximately 1,000 beds but during the day many of those in shelters have limited places to go," he said. "We need to rethink approaches and how we shelter individuals especially in cold weather months while seeking low barrier solutions.

Washington expressed that, while there are a number of initiatives working in the community around these issues, "It is time to assess the progress made and identify ways to increase collaboration and effectiveness. As a first step towards this, I plan to have City staff return to the City Commission and the Public Safety Committee in the coming months with an overview of current communitywide initiatives intended to improve outcomes for people that are unhoused, including plans for public engagement to address many of these housing, health and safety issues. I am also encouraged by the Affordable Housing Fund Board's recent decision to launch a request for proposal process in the first quarter of 2023 that will award up to \$6 million to support various affordable housing projects."

To access a list of current ordinances, policies and provisions that are available to City staff to address health and safety concerns, please visit: [bit.ly/3vSbZ88](https://bit.ly/3vSbZ88).



### Text 911 Now Available If you can't call, text

Text 911 is now available. If you cannot make a phone call, you can now text 911 to get emergency help. Begin your message with location information. Please do not text pictures or videos, as those will not go through.

Call when you can, text when you can't.

## Participatory Budgeting Grand Rapids Projects Preparing to Move Forward

City administrators are reviewing the dozen winning Participatory Budget Grand Rapids (PBGR) projects and developing requests for proposals (RFPs) to conduct the work. The projects were selected by a public vote last fall in the PBGR process. Requests for proposals will be released over the next 90 days in groups of three-to-four each month.

To ensure as many local organizations and businesses as possible are prepared to bid on projects, the City has partnered with the Urban Core Coalition to host RFP education/training workshops as each group of RFPs is released. Once proposals are submitted and reviewed, it hopes to execute agreements with selected partners by June to make these community ideas a reality.

The PBGR projects, which span across the City's three wards, are funded by \$2 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The graduated ward distribution of funds includes: First Ward - \$600,000, Second Ward - \$400,000, and Third Ward - \$1 million.

The public vote for projects recommended by the public and finalized by the PBGR Steering Committee Votes by ward took place online during Vote Week – September 30 to October 5, 2022 at PGRG.org, in-person at all Grand Rapids Public Library sites and at a series of neighborhood events. Residents, 13 years of age and older, were eligible to vote.

## More than \$10 Million Invested in City Parks

The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department has been hard at work enhancing 43 parks in our beautiful park system. In 2022, the City made a \$3.5 million millage investment in our parks which was supplemented by \$6.7 million of leveraged funding from external organizations and grants.

“The improvements made to our incredible park system, recommended by community input and the investment policies initiated by the City Commission and the Parks Advisory Committee, have created meaningful and inspirational experiences for our residents,” Mayor Rosalynn Bliss said. “As responsible stewards of our public spaces, the City is committed to continuing this work on transforming and developing quality parks throughout our community.” In 2022, the City completed construction in the following parks:

- **Belknap Park** (30 Coldbrook St. NE) – Improvements include six new pickleball courts, an expanded spectator area and professional stadium lighting in partnership with the Grand Rapids Pickleball Club.
- **Briggs Park** (350 Knapp St. NE) – Improvements include a new butterfly garden with native plantings and a hammock grove/public art installation in partnership with Lions and Rabbits and Creston Neighborhood Association.
- **Ecliptic at Rosa Parks Circle** (135 Monroe Center St. NW) – Improvements, made possible in partnership with the Ecliptic at Rosa Parks Circle Conservancy, include upgrades to the existing stage, replacement of the concrete rings with granite, replacement of the lighting and waste receptacles, renovations to the restroom building, new granite and wood benches, interpretive signage, upgraded trail surfacing, additional shade trees and a three-dimensional bronze plaque and sitemap.
- **Fourth Street Woods** (651 Valley Ave. NW) –

Based on the voting results and project rankings using ranked-choice voting methodology, the PBGR Steering Committee formally adopted the following projects (with estimated costs) to advance in the community:

### In Ward 1 - \$600,000 Total Investment

1. Affordable Childcare for 2nd and 3rd Shift Workers (\$150,000)
2. Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking (\$100,000)
3. Youth Affordable Housing Support (\$145,000)
4. Cleaning Up Grand Rapids (\$75,000)
5. Community Reading Initiative for Violence Reduction (\$50,000)
6. Citizen Advocacy Skills Academy (\$80,000) Partially funded (from a requested \$100,000) due to reaching total investment limit

### In Ward 2 - \$400,000 Total Investment

1. Mental Health Community First Responders (\$350,000)
2. CURE Violence – 2nd Ward (\$50,000 PB + additional possible investment) Partially funded (from a requested \$250,000) due to reaching total investment limit

### In Ward 3 - \$1 million Total Investment

1. Lead Water Line Replacement (\$500,000)
2. Affordable Childcare for 2nd and 3rd Shift Workers (\$150,000)
3. Youth Affordable Housing Support (\$145,000)
4. Community-Based Violence Reduction Initiative (\$205,000) Fully funded and \$5,000 added to program (from a requested \$200,000) due to excess funds in total investment limit

For a list of these projects with descriptions of each, please visit [PBGR.org](http://PBGR.org).

The PBGR Steering Committee includes: (First Ward) Mallory Patterson, Michael Scholten; (Second Ward) Doug Booth, Lisa Knight, Cailin Kelly; (Third Ward) Kristian Grant, LaKiya Thompson-Jenkins and Pastor Kenneth Hoskins.

The City of Grand Rapids' participatory budgeting initiative is a democratic process that allows residents the opportunity to help determine how public funds are spent. To learn more about the project, the steering committee, or sign up for the newsletter, please visit [PBGR.org](http://PBGR.org), or follow @PBGrandRapids on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



Playground features at Sweet Street Park

Improvements include nature-based play features using recycled fallen trees, a new swing set, fencing and landscaping improvements, picnic areas, bike loops, and accessible entryways.

- **Garfield Park** (250 Burton St. SE) – Improvements include gym restroom renovations and a universally accessible splash pad with multiple spray features, shade sails, and a custom entryway that doubles as public art and picnic areas. The project is near completion, with finishing touches in spring 2023. Project partners include the Garfield Park Neighborhood Association, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Friends of



Kayak Launch at Riverside Park



Fitness Court at Ottawa Hills Park

Grand Rapids Parks and Meijer.

- **Heartside Park** (301 Ionia Ave. SW) – Improvements include a resurfaced basketball court with mural, all-season restroom facility (open spring 2023), new drinking fountain, sidewalk improvements and power pedestal for community events.
- **Highland Park** (700 College Ave. NE) – Improvements include a new temporary outdoor boulder wall created in partnership with Grand Rapids Boulder Project.
- **Hillcrest Park** (1309 Lyon St. NE) – Improvements include an expanded dog entryway and fenced off-leash

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area, wooded nature path, nature play for humans and dogs, bench seating, drinking fountain with dog bowl, accessible pathways, rain garden bike loops, and a new sign (installation spring 2023).

- **Mulick Park** (1632 Sylvan Ave. SE) – Improvements include a community-built playground expansion in partnership with the Junior League of Grand Rapids, GameTime, and Sinclair Recreation.
- **Nagold Park** (1001 Fourth St. NW) – Improvements include an accessible pathway connecting Fourth Street to Nagold Street, new benches, picnic tables, replaced fencing, a pollinator garden, and a new park entry sign (installation spring 2023).
- **Ottawa Hills Park** (2060 Oakfield Ave. SE) – Improvements include an outdoor Fitness Court with seven different workout stations for multiple exercise combinations. The project was supported with funding by Priority Health, the National Fitness Campaign, and Meijer.
- **Paris Park** (942 S Othillia St. SE) – Improvements include bench seating, accessible pathways, ornamental trees, and a park sign/landscape bed (installation spring 2023).
- **Plaster Creek Trail** (Kroc Center path) – Improvements include new trail connections to the larger network in partnership with the City of Wyoming and the Michigan Department of Transportation.
- **Pekich Park** (2 Cherry St. SW) – Improvements include new seating, shade trees, drinking fountain with bottle filler, and power pedestal for community events.
- **Riverside Park** (2001 Monroe Ave. NW) – Improvements include a new accessible kayak launch in the lagoon, new solar powered picnic shelter and refurbished restrooms, bike loops, and a drinking fountain with dog bowl in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
- **Seymour Park** (943 N Othillia St. SE) – Improvements include a native plant bed, public art piece (future installation), and a park sign/landscape bed (installation spring 2023).
- **Sweet Street Park** (459 Sweet St. NW) – Improvements include a bench for sunset viewing, a new swing set, new and reconfigured playground areas, picnic tables, accessible pathways, landscaping improvements, bike loops, and a new waste receptacle. The tennis and basketball courts were also improved in partnership with

Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Construction will begin for the following parks in 2023:

- **Ah-Nab-Awen Park** (220 Front Ave. NW) – Improvements will include restored Indian mounds in partnership with the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians and the Downtown Development Authority, as well as new restroom facilities.
- **Ball Perkins Park** (1675 Perkins Ave. NE) – Improvements will include bike and pedestrian trail improvements and a new south parking lot off Plymouth Ave. NE. Bike trail improvements in partnership with the West Michigan Mountain Bike Alliance.
- **Camelot Park** (2230 Rowland Ave. SE) – Improvements will include a new splash pad, restroom building, picnic shelter, drinking fountain, park sign, and accessible pathways in partnership with the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program.
- **Canal Park** (941 Monroe Ave. NW) – Improvements will include playground renovations, trail improvements, new seating and additional site amenities.
- **Grand River Edges Trail** (Leonard St. to Ann St.) – Improvements will include a new multi-use trail along the east side of the river, connecting Leonard St. and Canal Park to Ann St. and Riverside Park. Project partnership include the State of Michigan, West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition, Downtown Development Authority and other private partners.
- **Highland Park** (700 College Ave. NE) – Improvements will include renovations to the parking lot and new multi-sport court facility.
- **Lyon Square** (296 Lyon St. NW) – Proposed improvements include flexible community gathering and event spaces, an improved river overlook, improved lighting and accessibility, and additional landscaping/garden space in partnership with the Downtown Development Authority and other private funders.
- **Midtown Green** (747 Fountain St. NE) – Improvements will include a new plaza space, drinking fountain, nature play and landscaping.
- **Martin Luther King Park Lodge** (1200 Martin Luther King Jr. St. SE) – Improvements will include a new lodge and pool locker rooms, updated parking lot, playground and fitness loop.
- **Ottawa Hills Park** (2060 Oakfield Ave. SE) – Improvements will include a new restroom building and resurfaced parking lot in partnership with the Michigan

Department of Natural Resources.

- **Plaster Creek Trail** – Trail improvements and additional seating along the trail.
- **Plaza Roosevelt** (650 Cesar E Chavez Ave. SW) – New park space in the Roosevelt Park neighborhood near Southwest Middle High in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
- **Riverwalk** (Blue Bridge to JW Marriott) – Proposed improvements include a new river trail and water access in partnership with the Downtown Development Authority.
- **Sullivan Field** (650 Valley Ave. NW) – Improvements will include upgrades to the baseball field, grandstands, and supporting amenities in partnership with Fans of Valley Field.
- **Veterans Park Building** (22 Sheldon Ave. NE) – Restoration of the historic building to be used for the [HAS HEART] Coffee Shop, which will provide a space for veterans to have therapeutic, creative outlets by working with local artists. Work will be in partnership with [HAS HEART], the Downtown Development Authority and other private funders.

Upon completion of these projects, the parks millage will have funded a total of 116 park improvement projects across Grand Rapids. The total millage investment since 2014 is \$42,558,754 with \$30,651,055 additional leveraged funding.

Future park improvements will be in coordination with the Parks and Recreation Department's five-year Strategic Master Plan and strategic priorities. Additional information on past, current and upcoming parks millage projects can be found at [grandrapidsmi.gov/parkprojects](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/parkprojects)



*Playground at Mulick Park*



*Boulder Wall at Highland Park*

**Está invitado a asistir**  
**Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit**  
**sábado, 20 de mayo de 2023**

  Marque su calendario  
 Síguenos en Facebook  
 @GRNeighborhoodSummit

**YOUR CITY.  
YOUR VOICE.**

Más información en [www.grandrapidsmi.gov/summit](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/summit)

**You're invited to attend**  
**Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit**  
**Saturday, May 20, 2023**

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 Follow us on Facebook  
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**YOUR CITY.  
YOUR VOICE.**

More information at [www.grandrapidsmi.gov/summit](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/summit)

# BRING YOUR BIG IDEAS!

Share your hopes and dreams for the future of Grand Rapids!  
Attend a Launch Party for the Grand Rapids  
Community Master Plan.

**TUE, FEB. 21**

5-7 p.m.

GRPS University  
1400 Fuller Ave NE

**WED, FEB. 22**

5-7 p.m.

Union High School  
1800 Tremont Blvd NW

**THU, FEB. 23**

5-7 p.m.

Alger Middle School  
921 Alger Street SE

**All events will follow the same format, so attend the Launch Party that is most convenient for you.**

We're creating a new Community Master Plan (CMP) that will define the vision of how our city will grow and develop over the next 20 years. A CMP can address topical concepts related to land use such as equity, housing, environmental justice, and economic development. The last plan is from 2002 and it's time for a new one. We need your help! Our goal is to gather perspectives and input from residents to help create a vision for the future. These family friendly events will provide dinner along with entertainment and interactive activities.

For planning purposes, please RSVP using the QR code below.

**Sign up today!**



**BRIDGE TO  
OUR FUTURE**

GRAND RAPIDS  
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

Learn more and  
get involved at  
[BridgeToOurFuture.com](https://BridgeToOurFuture.com)



CITY OF  
GRAND  
RAPIDS



# COMMUNITY RECREATION

## REGISTRATION OPENS

February 1

## CLASS DATES

March 6 - April 30 (No class the week of April 3)

## ADULT PROGRAM PRICING:

\$42 per 7-week class, \$52/nonresidents

## YOUTH PROGRAM PRICING:

\$45 per session, \$55/nonresidents unless noted



**Register online**  
grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr



**Register by phone**  
616.456.3696, option #1



**Register in person**  
201 Market Ave SW

## YOGA

CLASSES RUN FOR 7 WEEKS STARTING WEEK OF MARCH 6

No class the week of April 3

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)  
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
<b>BASIC YOGA</b> 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	5:30 - 6:25 PM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
	MON	5:30 - 6:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	SARA R.
	MON	6:00 - 6:55 PM	GARFIELD GYM	DARCEL S.
	TUE	6:30 - 7:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	AMY K.
	WED	6:00 - 6:55 PM	VIRTUAL	SARA R.
	THU	12:00 - 12:55 PM	201 MARKET SW	MELISSA T.
	SAT	9:00 - 9:55 AM	VIRTUAL	SARA R.
<b>GENTLE YOGA</b> 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	9:15 - 10:10 AM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
	THU	9:15 - 10:10 AM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
<b>SLOW FLOW YOGA</b> 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.
<b>POWER YOGA</b> 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.
	THU	5:30 - 6:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	AMY K.
<b>VITAL MOVEMENT</b> 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	9:15 - 10:10 AM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.

# CARDIO & STRENGTH

CLASSES RUN FOR 7 WEEKS STARTING WEEK OF MARCH 6

No class the week of April 3

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)   
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
<p><b>BARRE</b></p> <p>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.</p>	WED	5:30 - 6:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	KELLY B.
<p><b>HIGH FITNESS</b></p> <p>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.</p>	TUE	5:30 - 6:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	AHNA S.
<p><b>HIIT EXPRESS</b></p> <p>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! Class will end with mat routines that includes core and upper body strength exercises. All movements will have modified options as well as progressions, allowing each person to decide their own intensity level. All fitness levels welcome!</p>	WED	6:30 - 7:15 PM	201 MARKET SW	AMY K.
<p><b>KETTLEBELL AMPD</b></p> <p>Kettlebell AMPD is a group fitness format that takes heart-pumping music and kettlebell moves and combines them into a calorie torching fun workout! The program uses lightweight kettlebells, in both traditional and non-traditional ways, to create a fun, effective, full body workout. Combining the benefits of strength training, functional movements and cardiovascular exercise, this program is a safe and effective workout for all ages and fitness levels. No experience necessary!</p>	THU	4:30 - 5:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	MONICA S.
<p><b>KICKBOXING*</b></p> <p>Mix up your routine with balance, coordination and strength-building moves. Strengthen your legs, upper body, abs and burn calories. *Class runs March 16 - May 4.</p>	WED	6:30 - 7:25 AM	201 MARKET SW	MARIE R.
<p><b>PILATES</b></p> <p>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.</p>	WED	5:30 - 6:25 PM	GARFIELD PARK COMMUNITY GYM	ZIYAH D.
<p><b>POUND</b></p> <p>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.</p>	THU	5:30 - 6:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	JANNA S.
<p><b>STRENGTH &amp; CARDIO</b></p> <p>It's the best of both worlds: strengthen your muscles using a variety of equipment (dumbbells, resistance bands, stability balls, etc) and burn calories with cardio intervals in the same class! You will learn safe and effective movements adaptable for all fitness levels, experience improvements in your fitness from week to week, all while having fun!</p>	MON	5:30 - 6:25 PM	201 MARKET SW	MICHELLE D.
<p><b>STRENGTH &amp; ROW CIRCUIT</b></p> <p>This high intensity class will improve your endurance and strength to row faster and for longer. Each class will include a rowing and strength training circuit to maximize calorie burn! <b>STRENGTH &amp; ROW CIRCUIT</b></p> <p>This high intensity class will improve your endurance and strength to row faster and for longer. Each class will include a rowing and strength training circuit to maximize calorie burn!</p>	THU	5:30 - 6:25 PM	COLDBROOK (1101 MONROE NW)	SARA A.
<p><b>WATER AEROBICS</b></p> <p>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.</p>	MON WED SAT	6:30 - 7:25 PM 6:30 - 7:25 PM 10:15 - 11:10 AM	UNION HIGH SCHOOL POOL	KATHLEEN H.

## CYCLING

CLASSES RUN FOR 7 WEEKS STARTING WEEK OF MARCH 6

No class the week of April 3

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](https://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)   
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
<b>CYCLING</b> 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.	MON	5:30 - 6:15 PM	COLDBROOK (1101 MONROE NW)	CAROL S.
	TUE	5:45 - 6:30 PM		MICHELLE D.
	WED	5:30 - 6:15 PM		CAROL S. & PATRICK F
<b>CYCLE &amp; ROW COMBO</b> Find strength through the power of cycling with fast flats, hill climbs and intervals set to fun music, and then hop off the bike and continue your cardio burn by igniting your upper body with our low impact rowers where you will complete power and intervals.	MON WED	6:30 - 7:30 PM 6:30 - 7:30 PM	COLDBROOK (1101 MONROE NW)	CAROL S. SARA A.
<b>CYCLE &amp; TONE</b> A combination of high-intensity cycling intervals followed by strength exercises that target the arms, abs and lower back.	SAT	8:15 - 9:00 AM	COLDBROOK (1101 MONROE NW)	CAROL S. & MICHELLE D.

## DANCE FITNESS

CLASSES RUN FOR 7 WEEKS STARTING WEEK OF MARCH 6

No class the week of April 3

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](https://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)   
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
<b>BALLROOM DANCE</b> A beginner class targeted toward couples wanting to learn ballroom dancing. Learn the Salsa, Waltz, Foxtrot, East Coast Swing, Cha Cha, Rumba and Tango.	TUE	8:00 - 9:00 PM	201 MARKET SW	BYRON D.
<b>BALLROOM DANCE: THE NEXT STEPS</b> A follow-up to Ballroom Dancing. Continue practicing basic dances and learn new moves to add flair.	WED	8:00 - 9:00 PM	201 MARKET SW	SHANNON B.
<b>GENTLE MUSICAL MOVEMENT</b> This 45 minute class encourages freedom for body, mind, + spirit while working range of motion, strength, flexibility and balance. Class is created around music and combines simple dance and stretch moves for all body parts. Move your body in ways outside of your daily routine, inviting in both fun and freedom of personal expression. Perfect for all ages, especially those 50+. This class can also be adapted to the chair.	MON	9:15 - 10:00 AM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
<b>MINDFUL MUSICAL MOVEMENT - FORMERLY GROOVE</b> Move in new ways, get your heart pumping, and infuse your whole body with joy in this not-so-typical dance class set to a variety of great music. Simple steps designed to work your whole body are provided and you are encouraged to supply the intensity level and flair. Perfect for all levels, all you need is space to move freely.	WED	5:30 - 6:25 PM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
<b>SWING DANCING</b> This couples class will focus on East Coast Swing, a fun, upbeat rhythm dance. In each lesson we will cover basic steps for both lead and follow and one or two new steps each week. No dance experience necessary. Class is for couples. Each person required to register.	THU	8:00 - 9:00 PM	201 MARKET SW	SHANNON B.
<b>WERQ</b> 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! Bring your own water bottle and towel.	WED	6:30 - 7:25	201 MARKET SW	JEANNIE W.
<b>ZUMBA</b> Zumba is a high energy, dance fitness class that incorporates Latin and international music. All fitness levels are welcome.	MON THU SAT	6:30 - 7:25 PM 6:30 - 7:25 PM 9:00 - 9:55 AM	201 MARKET SW	AMY K. & BRI C.

## TAE KWON DO

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)  
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
<b>TAE KWON DO (AGES 7+)</b> Learn the basics of the Korean martial art form of Tae Kwon Do. Participants will develop confidence, increase flexibility, concentration, balance, and learn how to defend themselves. <b>\$40 residents/\$50 nonresidents.</b>	TUE MAR 7 - APR 25	6:00 - 7:30 PM <i>*High level belts will meet until 8:00</i>	GARFIELD PARK COMMUNITY GYM	MASTER BEAN

## YOUTH DANCE & GYMNASTICS

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

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)  
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DATES	TIME(S)	LOCATION
<b>YOUTH MOVEMENT (AGES 4-8)</b> This class combines creative movement and basic dance skills. The class focuses on coordination, motor skills, musicality, and overall to get the wiggles out and heart rate up! This non-stop action packed class will include foundations in mostly hip hop and jazz dance, so please wear a pair of clean sneakers or ballet slippers.	TUESDAYS MAR 14 - APR 25	4:30 - 5:15 PM	201 MARKET SW
<b>PARENT &amp; ME TUMBLE &amp; PLAY (AGES 2-3)</b> For the younger gymnast to encourage success and fun in the gym. Kids learn tumbling and balancing basics with emphasis on strength and flexibility. <b>Required Clothing:</b> leotards, athletic clothing with shirts that can be tucked in, comfortable with stretch.	SATURDAYS MAR 18 - APR 29	10:00 - 10:45 AM	MLK PARK LODGE
<b>GYMNASTICS 1 (AGES 4-6)</b> For the younger gymnast to encourage success and fun in the gym. Kids learn tumbling and balancing basics with emphasis on strength and flexibility. <b>Required Clothing:</b> leotards, athletic clothing with shirts that can be tucked in, comfortable with stretch.	MONDAYS MAR 13 - APR 24 MONDAYS MAR 13 - APR 24 SATURDAYS MAR 18 - APR 29	5:00 - 5:45 PM 6:00 - 6:45 PM 11:00 - 11:45 AM	MLK PARK LODGE
<b>GYMNASTICS 2 (AGES 7-10)</b> A follow-up to Gymnastics 1. Activities increase strength, movement, coordination, agility and flexibility. <b>Required Clothing:</b> leotards, athletic clothing with shirts that can be tucked in, comfortable with stretch.	MONDAYS MAR 13 - APR 24 SATURDAYS MAR 18 - APR 29	7:00 - 7:45 PM 12:00 - 12:45 PM	MLK PARK LODGE

## BRICKS 4 KIDZ

3-CLASS SESSIONS. \$45/RESIDENTS, \$55/NONRESIDENTS

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)  
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DATES	TIME(S)	LOCATION
<b>POCKET BRICK MONSTERS WORLD OF SCIENCE! (AGES 5-11)</b> Calling all future scientists and Pokemon™ lovers! Come learn, build and experiment with us! Budding astronomers, meteorologists, zoologists, and inventors will learn about space, weather, animals, and more! We'll also build some of your favorite pocket brick monsters such as Peeky, Fungy, Pocket Ball and more. Bring your trading cards if you wish to trade at the end of class! Class members will receive a LEGO mini-set of Pikachu™ to keep!  Each class is a fun and educational LEGO-building adventure with Bricks 4 Kidz. We use age-appropriate models for different levels of building skill. This hands-on class explores STEAM concepts (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) primarily using LEGO Bricks, in which children will develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills in a fun and engaging way. Even our youngest and newest students will learn how to make mechanical LEGO models that move and groove. As they advance in building skill, they'll also motorize their weekly model for even more learning fun!	MAR 14, 21, 28	4:30 - 5:45 PM	201 MARKET SW

## YOUTH ENRICHMENT

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

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)  
Registration opens Feb 1.

CLASS	DATES	TIME(S)	LOCATION
<b>CHILDREN'S YOGA (AGES 3-6)</b> Children can enjoy and benefit from yoga and mindfulness from toddlerhood through middle school and beyond. Classes are available for three age groups, and activities vary to meet the developmental needs of each group. Classes consist of movement, music, yoga, games, mindfulness practice, and breathwork. They are designed to be playful while challenging children to develop their focus, awareness, and movement in new ways. Children will build regulation skills, healthy social skills, and positive self-esteem. If you'd like to add more to your class, talk to me about adding a related craft for even more fun!	TUESDAYS MAR 14 - APR 25	4:15 - 5:00 PM	201 MARKET AVE SW

## ADULT SWIM LESSONS

All lessons held at Union High School. Dates and times TBD.

Visit [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr) for more information and to register online.

### SWIMMING ESSENTIALS (AGES 16+)

Swimming Essentials is designed for anyone 16 years of age and older. This class will develop fundamental swim skills including floating, water safety, breathing techniques, and foundational swim strokes while allowing participants to gain confidence in a safe, controlled setting. This class is great for individuals who are brand new to swimming or have an existing fear of the water. After successfully completing Swimming Essentials, swimmers will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to safely navigate aquatic environments.

### STROKE DEVELOPMENT (AGES 16+)

Stroke Development is designed for anyone 16 years of age and older. This class will build on fundamental swimming skills by introducing different swimming strokes. This class is great for individuals who are comfortable in the water and looking to expand on their skills and learn different ways to swim. After successfully completing Adult Stroke Development, swimmers will be able to swim using a variety of strokes.

## YOUTH SWIM LESSONS

### SWIM LESSON LEVELS

#### PARENT CHILD (AGES 6M-3Y)

Introduce water safety and basic swim skills to parents and children. Parents will learn skills to safely work with their child in the water, including how to correctly support/hold them in the water and how to encourage them. Children will gain confidence in the water through games and songs and receive an introduction to swim foundations, like submerging and kicking.

#### PRESCHOOL LEVEL 1 (AGES 3-5)

Introduces water safety and basic swim skills. Children will work with instructors to gain confidence, develop positive attitudes around the water, and receive an introduction to swim foundations like submerging, floating, and the movements of front and back crawl.

#### PRESCHOOL LEVEL 2 (AGES 3-5)

Builds on the skills introduced in Preschool Level 1. Children will continue to develop a positive relationship with the water while mastering swim foundations like floating, submerging, and the basics of front and back crawl.

#### YOUTH LEVEL 1 (AGES 6+)

Youth Level 1 aims to develop positive relationships with the water while mastering swim foundations – like floating, submerging, and the basics of front and back crawl. At the end, participants will be able to perform swim foundations independently or with minimal assistance.

All lessons held at Union High School. Dates and times TBD.

Visit [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr) for more information and to register online.

### SWIM LESSON LEVELS

#### YOUTH LEVEL 2 (AGES 6+)

Builds on the foundations in Level 1 to support the correct execution of foundational swim skills. Focuses on proper technique of foundational skills to ensure participants are strong and capable in the water independently. Repetition is used to build endurance and muscle memory. Participants will learn how to float, glide and move forward in the water with no support and will continue to develop the foundations for future swim strokes.

#### YOUTH LEVEL 3 (AGES 6+)

Aims to increase proficiency of previously learned skills by providing additional practice with an emphasis on technique. Participants will learn and practice survival floating and improve their front crawl, back crawl, breaststroke, and elementary backstroke technique while swimming longer distances. Participants will also learn safe headfirst entries and begin learning the foundations of butterfly. After successfully completing Level 3, participants will have achieved basic, independent water competency in a pool environment.

#### YOUTH LEVEL 4 (AGES 6+)

Participants will improve their technique and increase endurance in previously learned strokes. Swimmers will gain better control over front crawl, back crawl, and breaststroke and will continue to learn butterfly foundations. Emphasis will be placed on headfirst entries and swimming underwater to provide the basic skillset for competitive swimming. After successfully completing Level 4, swimmers will be well equipped with the skills needed to transition to a swim team setting.

## YOUTH SPRING SOCCER

Register online: [grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr](http://grandrapidsmi.gov/recgr)

AGE GROUP	DATES	LOCATIONS
<b>AGES 4-5</b> Meet only on Saturdays. 25 minutes of instruction, 24 minutes of game play. <i>\$38/residents, \$48/nonresidents.</i>	SATURDAYS, APRIL 22 - JUNE 3	ABERDEEN <b>OR</b> MACKAY-JAYCEES PARK
<b>AGES 6-7</b> Practice one evening a week with games on Saturdays. <i>\$48/residents, \$58/nonresidents.</i>	TUESDAYS APRIL 11 - MAY 30 THURSDAYS APRIL 13 - JUNE 1	LINCOLN <b>OR</b> MLK PARK ABERDEEN <b>OR</b> MACKAY-JAYCEES PARK
<b>AGES 8-9</b> Practice one evening a week with games on Saturdays. <i>\$48/residents, \$58/nonresidents.</i>	TUESDAYS APRIL 11 - MAY 30 THURSDAYS APRIL 13 - JUNE 1	LINCOLN <b>OR</b> MLK PARK ABERDEEN <b>OR</b> MACKAY-JAYCEES PARK
<b>AGES 10-12</b> Practice one evening a week with games on Saturdays. *Optional Tuesday evening clinic. <i>\$48/residents, \$58/nonresidents.</i>	TUESDAYS APRIL 11 - MAY 30* THURSDAYS APRIL 13 - JUNE 1	MACKAY-JAYCEES PARK
<b>AGES 13-16</b> Meet only on Saturdays for games. <i>\$38/residents, \$48/nonresidents.</i>	SATURDAYS, APRIL 22 - JUNE 3	MACKAY-JAYCEES PARK

#### Registration and Season Information:

- Registration opens Jan 30
- Registration deadline is March 20
- Season begins the week of April 11
- Season ends on June 3
- No games on Memorial Day weekend
- Registrations received before deadline are prioritized

## Visit any of the Grand Rapids Public Library's 8 locations

### Main Library

111 Library Street NE ■ 49503  
616.988.5400

### Madison Square Branch

1201 Madison SE ■ 49507  
616.988.5411

### Ottawa Hills Branch

1150 Giddings SE ■ 49506  
616.988.5412

### Seymour Branch

2350 Eastern SE ■ 49507  
616.988.5413

### Van Belkum Branch

1563 Plainfield NE ■ 49505  
616.988.5410

### West Leonard Branch

1017 Leonard NW ■ 49504  
616.988.5416

### West Side Branch

713 Bridge NW ■ 49504  
616.988.5414

### Yankee Clipper Branch

2025 Leonard NE ■ 49505  
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For more information and hours,  
visit [www.grpl.org](http://www.grpl.org).



616.988.5400 ■ [www.grpl.org](http://www.grpl.org)

## Join a GRPL Book Club

### Popular Pages Book Club

Enjoy popular fiction and nonfiction titles selected by GRPL librarians and participate in a discussion about each reading with members of the community and library staff. Book clubs are designed for adults and are a great way to meet new friends, explore real and imagined worlds, and discover new perspectives.

Saturdays, February 11, March 11, April 8,  
May 6, June 3 | 12:00 – 1:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

February: *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon  
March: *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke  
April: *How to do Nothing* by Jenny Odell  
May: *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*  
by Cho Nam-Joo  
June: *When We Rise* by Cleve Jones

Thursdays, February 16, March 16, April 20  
6:00 – 7:00 pm  
West Side Branch – 713 Bridge St NW

February: *The Fire Next Time*  
by James Baldwin  
March: *The Leavers* by Lisa Ko  
April: *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*  
by Michelle McNamara



### Healthy Habits Book Club

Wednesdays, February 8, March 8, April 5  
5:30 – 6:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Katie Hague, a Health Coach from Catherine's Health Center, will lead this monthly book discussion and provide additional strategies for making healthy choices. Participants will leave with more information about how to create new habits for a healthy lifestyle!

February 8: *Fast Food Nation*  
by Eric Schlosser  
March 8: *Run For Your Life*  
by Mark Cucuzzella  
April 5: *Do Hard Things* by Steve Magness

### Social Equity Book Club

Tuesdays, February 21, March 21, April 18  
6:00 – 7:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

The Social Equity Book Club is a great way to engage in thoughtful conversation about social justice with neighbors and friends. Led by library staff, this book club is designed for adults and covers a different topic each month.

February 21: *Hood Feminism*  
by Nikki Kendall  
March 21: *No One Cares About Crazy People*  
by Ron Powers  
April 18: *Minor Feelings* by Cathy Park Hong

## Enter the Annual Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition



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

### About the Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition

- FREE to enter
- CASH prizes
- PUBLICATION in the annual literary journal, *Voices*
- WINNERS read poems at the Awards Reading held during Grand Rapids' Festival of the Arts in June
- OPEN to Kent County, Michigan residents of all ages and students attending classes within Kent County, including GVSU

### How to Enter

- Submissions will be accepted February 1 – 28, 2023.
- Visit [www.grpl.org/dyer-ives](http://www.grpl.org/dyer-ives) for submission guidelines.



### 2023 National Judge

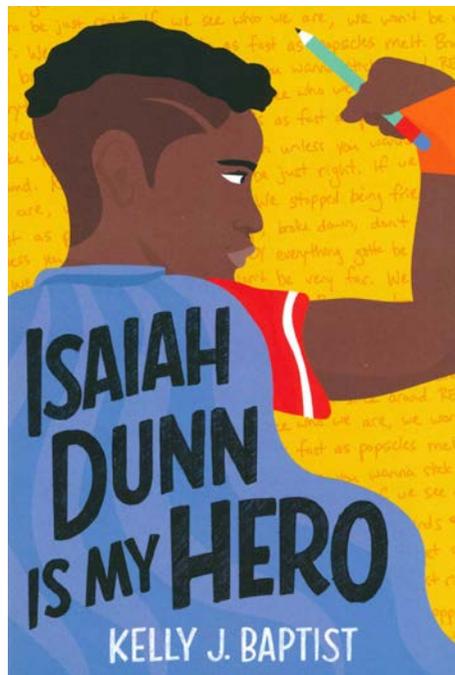
Kelly Grace Thomas is a poet, editor, educator, and an ocean-obsessed Aries from Jersey. Her first full-length collection, *Boat Burned*, was released with YesYes Books in January 2020.

Sponsor:



Dyer-Ives Foundation Poetry Fund

## The One Book, One City for Kids 2023 Selection



### About the program

One Book, One City for Kids is an annual reading program that encourages 5th grade students to read and discuss the same book. The program also helps to develop a lifelong love of reading among school-age readers, to inspire readers to bring story ideas and themes to life through discussion and creative reactions, and to build collaborative ties between public libraries, school libraries and area schools.

### About the book *Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero*

Isaiah is now the big man of the house. But it's a lot harder than his dad made it look. His little sister, Charlie, asks too many questions, and Mama's gone totally silent.

Good thing Isaiah can count on his best friend, Sneaky, who always has a scheme for getting around the rules. Plus, his classmate Angel has a few good ideas of her own—once she stops hassling Isaiah.

And when things get really tough, there's Daddy's journal, filled with stories about the amazing Isaiah Dunn, a superhero who gets his powers from beans and rice. Isaiah wishes his dad's tales were real. He could use those powers right about now!



### Meet the Author Kelly J. Baptist

Kelly J. Baptist was born and raised in the great state of Michigan, and although she has lived in Alabama, Florida, and Minnesota, she found her way right back home. She's been writing since...well, since she learned how to write!

She won the 2015 We Need Diverse Books short story contest with "The Beans and Rice Chronicles of Isaiah Dunn," which is included in the middle grade anthology *Flying Lessons and Other Stories*. As a result of her work in an urban school district, Kelly felt compelled to continue Isaiah's story with *Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero* and *Isaiah Dunn Saves The Day*.

Kelly has also written a picture book, *The Electric Slide and Kai*, and a middle grade novel, *The Swag Is In The Socks*. When she's not actually writing, Kelly is usually thinking about new story ideas...and dreaming of palm trees. She keeps beyond busy with her five children, who always give her plenty of story ideas and background noise to write to.

### Author Talk with Kelly J. Baptist

Friday, March 16, 2023, 1:00 – 2:00 pm  
Main Library | 111 Library St NE

Kelly J. Baptist will discuss her book, writing it, and will answer questions from the audience during this kid-friendly event. Educators are encouraged to bring their class to this one-of-a-kind experience.

Sponsors:



## Winter & Spring Storytimes

### Family Time

Parents and caregivers are invited to bring their children ages 0–5 years to this storytime featuring great books, songs, fingerplays, and hands-on fun. Classes end with an art activity and playtime designed to help your child's brain grow.

Mondays, January 16 – April 3 | 10:30 am  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Wednesdays, January 18 – April 5 | 10:30 am  
Seymour Branch – 2350 Eastern SE

Wednesdays, January 18 – April 5 | 10:30 am  
Van Belkum Branch – 1563 Plainfield NE

Fridays, January 20 – April 7 | 10:30 am  
Ottawa Hills Branch – 1150 Giddings SE

### Pajama Time

Get cozy in your pajamas, grab your favorite stuffed animals or blanket, and come to the library for a special bedtime event! Listen to stories, sing songs, and get those wiggles out before bed. Great for working parents of children age 5 and under.

Mondays, January 16 – April 3 | 6:30 pm  
West Leonard Branch – 1017 Leonard NW

### Toddler Time

Bring your toddlers, ages 18 months – 3 years, to share fun stories, songs, and rhymes and learn together! Toddler Time is a 25-minute long storytime followed by a hands-on activity and playtime designed to help your child's brain grow.

Tuesdays, January 17 – April 4 | 10:30 am  
West Side Branch – 713 Bridge St NW

Thursdays, January 19 – April 6 | 10:30 am  
Yankee Clipper Branch – 2025 Leonard NE

### Baby & Me

Bring your babies and bounce along to fun stories, songs, and rhymes. Baby & Me is a 15-minute long storytime, followed by a relaxed playtime where baby and you can meet new friends.

Tuesdays, January 17 – April 4 | 2:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Thursdays, January 19 – April 6 | 10:30 am  
Seymour Branch – 2350 Eastern SE

### Bilingual Family Time

Join us for an evening bilingual storytime filled with fun stories, movement, and music activities. This 30-minute English and Spanish storytime is followed by a hands-on activity and playtime. Wear your pajamas and get those wiggles out before bed! For families with children ages 0–5.

Thursdays, January 19 – April 6 | 6:30 pm  
Madison Square Branch – 1201 Madison SE

### Bilingual Family Time [Hora Familiar Bilingüe]

Únanse a nosotros para una velada de hora de cuentos bilingüe llena de historias divertidas, movimiento, y actividades musicales. Esta hora de cuentos de 30 minutos en inglés y español es seguida por una actividad práctica y tiempo de juego. ¡Ponte tu pijama y elimina esos meneos antes de acostarte! Para familias con niños de 0 – 5 años de edad.

Los jueves, 19 de enero – 6 de abril | 6:30 pm  
Sucursal Madison Square – 1201 Madison SE

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## Free Computer Classes

### Open Tech Lab

Tuesdays, January 10 – April 30  
1:00 – 3:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Need help with your computer, tablet, or smartphone? We're here to help. Stop by during our drop-in tech support sessions.

### Internet Privacy: Protecting Yourself in the Digital Age

Thursday, February 2 | 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm  
Wednesday, April 5 | 11:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Learn how to secure information and manage your digital footprint. Topics include securing your Internet connection and browser, creating and managing effective passwords, and using email aliases to keep your information more secure.

### Backup Basics: How to Secure your Data

Thursday, February 9 | 1:00 – 2:30 pm  
Wednesday, April 12 | 11:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Whether it's your family photos, business documents, or digital media collection, your digital data is valuable. In this class, we discuss how to ensure your digital data is kept safe and secure. From thumb drives and hard drives to cloud storage, find multiple ways to backup your data.

### Google Drive Basics

Thursday, February 16 | 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm  
Wednesday, April 19 | 11:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Cloud storage services like Google Drive allow you to store and edit documents online. These documents can be accessed or edited on any device with an Internet connection. In addition, we will discuss how to share and back up media and photos in the cloud.

### Learning Online: Free Tools and Classes

Thursday, February 23 | 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm  
Wednesday, April 26 | 11:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

In this class, we will explore free tools and sources for online education, including LinkedIn Learning, MOOCs, and much more. Whether you are a beginner to online education or a graduate, you'll find plenty of tools in this class to keep learning for a lifetime.

### Building Basic Computer Skills

Monday, March 6 | 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Are you often confused by computer terms and lingo? By learning the key concepts and basic terminology used in technology, you can build a foundation for digital literacy that will last a lifetime.

### Discovering the Internet

Monday, March 13 | 11:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Learn how the Internet works and basic definitions for the most common Internet terms. Discover tips and tricks on how to protect your information and identity while searching, shopping, and surfing the web.

### Exploring Email

Monday, March 20 | 1:00 – 2:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Explore how to secure your email account and ensure you can always regain access should you forget your password. In addition, we will discover how to use two-factor authentication to protect our accounts.

### Managing Your Digital Footprint

Monday, March 27 | 1:00 – 2:30 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Have you ever forgotten a password? Do you wish you had a plan to manage your online information and protect your privacy? Managing your digital footprint may seem intimidating, but with a plan and the right tools, you can stay safe and get the most out of your experience online. This class offers methods and tools you can use right away to begin managing your online profiles, passwords, and information.

## Free Events at Grand Rapids Public Library

### Teen Anime Club

Tuesdays, February 14, March 14, April 11  
4:00 – 5:30 pm

Madison Square Branch – 1201 Madison SE  
Registration Required – [www.grpl.org/register](http://www.grpl.org/register)

Join Teen Anime Club to talk with other enthusiasts about your favorite anime and manga fandom. Chat about what you're currently reading and watch movies and TV episodes together! Snacks are provided and attendees can enter a raffle to win a prize. This program is designed for kids and teens ages 13 – 19.

### Meet Me at the Library!

It's a play date at the library! Drop in for family-friendly fun and refreshments. Bring your friends or make some new ones at these weekly neighborhood parties featuring toys, games, and music.

Saturdays, January 28 – April 8  
10:30 am – 1:00 pm  
Yankee Clipper Branch – 2025 Leonard NE

Saturdays, January 28 – April 8  
10:30 am – 1:00 pm  
West Side Branch – 713 Bridge St NW



### Music in the Stacks: Avocadsquad

Thursday, March 9 | 7:00 – 8:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Avocadsquad is a genre-bending music collective based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The new album "Kickball Forever" showcases an alternative funk trio featuring squadmates Mitch Goetz, Phil Hartley, and Devin Anderson. The group also dabbles in Bach and hip-hop.



### Music in the Stacks: hi-ker

Thursday, April 20 | 7:00 – 8:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

hi-ker is an experimental indie synth pop project based in Grand Rapids. Incorporating elements from influences such as Talking Heads to modern hip-hop and hyper pop, hi-ker will take you on a sonic journey.

# Black History Month 2023

February 1–28, 2023 | Celebrate Black History and Culture

Celebrate Black History Month with Grand Rapids Public Library! Join us for programs for both kids and adults that highlight and celebrate our Black community.



## Events

### Black History Month Storytimes

Join us for a series of storytimes during Black History Month. Storytimes will highlight Black stories and include songs, fingerplays, and hands-on fun. Classes end with a special art activity and playtime.

Monday, February 6 | 10:30 am  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Monday, February 6 | 6:30 pm  
West Leonard Branch – 1017 Leonard NW

Tuesday, February 7 | 10:30 am  
West Side Branch – 713 Bridge St NW

Wednesday, February 8 | 10:30 am  
Seymour Branch – 2350 Eastern SE

Wednesday, February 8 | 10:30 am  
Van Belkum Branch – 1563 Plainfield NE

Thursday, February 9 | 10:30 am  
Yankee Clipper Branch – 2025 Leonard NE

Thursday, February 9 | 6:30 pm  
Madison Square Branch – 1201 Madison SE

Friday, February 10 | 10:30 am  
Ottawa Hills Branch – 1150 Giddings SE



### Black History 101 Exhibits with Dr. el-Hakim

Thursday, February 2 | 1:00 – 7:00 pm  
Friday, February 3 | 10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Experience the nation's premiere Black History traveling exhibit, the Black History 101 Mobile Museum. Explore Dr. el-Hakim's collection of over 7,000 original artifacts of Black memorabilia dating from the trans-Atlantic slave trade era to hip-hop culture.



### Cultural Connections Cooking Class

Tuesday, February 14 | 6:00 – 7:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE  
Registration required: [www.grpl.org/register](http://www.grpl.org/register)

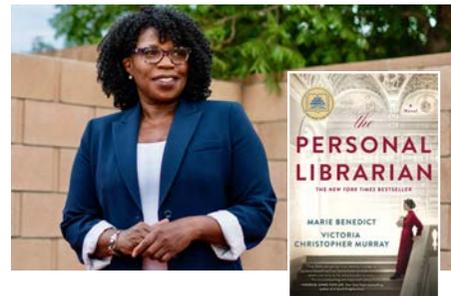
Learn about Africa's diversity and culture as you enjoy a seminar-style cooking demonstration with Motherland Cooking Xperience. Learn how to make a traditional African appetizer and enjoy live music and dancing.



### Music in the Stacks: Yolonda Lavender

Thursday, February 16 | 7:00 – 8:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE

Yolonda Lavender is an international recording artist with the independent label Truth Tone Records. She is a singer/songwriter, curator, composer, arranger, and performing artist from Kalamazoo, Michigan whose sound is soul-based with gospel, R&B, hip-hop, blues and jazz influences.



### Author Talk with Victoria Christopher Murray

Thursday, February 23 | 7:00 – 9:00 pm  
Main Library – 111 Library St NE  
Registration required: [www.grpl.org/register](http://www.grpl.org/register)

Join Grand Rapids Public Library for a lively conversation with award-winning author Victoria Christopher Murray. Learn more about her celebrated book, *The Personal Librarian*, and participate in a Q&A. The event will be followed by a book signing.



## Craft Kits

### Black History Month Craft Kits

These free take-home kits include age-appropriate crafts for toddlers and kids, and include information to help parents explain great moments in Black History in the United States. Request a kit by calling any GRPL location.

Sponsor:



## Service Spotlight



### Phone-A-Story

Call the library's Phone-A-Story line each week to hear a new story read aloud by a GRPL Youth Librarian. Listen to pre-recorded stories, songs, and rhymes in English or Spanish. This service is accessible 24/7. Dial 616.988.5494 and follow the directions when prompted.



### Hold Lockers

Service update! In addition to our Ottawa Hills Branch hold locker, patrons can now find lockers at our West Side and Seymour branch locations.

Place your library materials on hold through our online catalog and select the Ottawa Hills, Seymour, or West Side Branch hold locker as your pickup location. You'll be notified when your items are ready for pickup.



# WE ARE GR

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Jan 2023 | Vol. 21 | Issue 3 | Section A

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

## 18th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Social Justice Legacy Contest Winners Announced

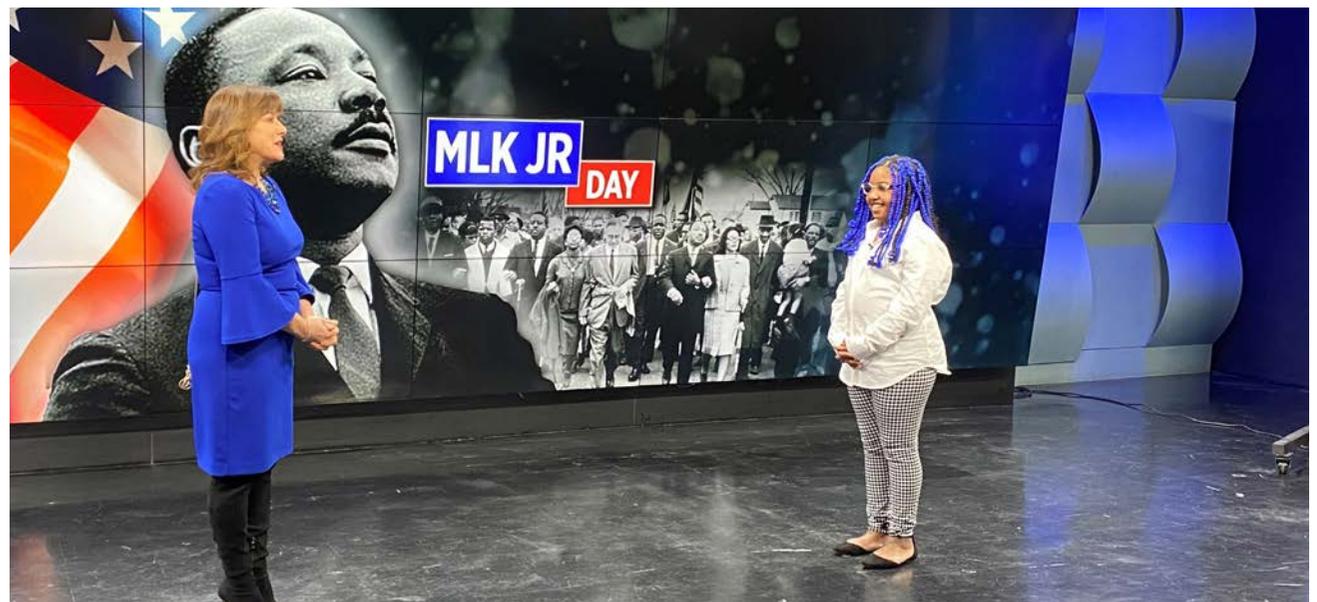
By Maleika Brown, Director of Equity and Inclusion

The Grand Rapids Public Schools has placed an intentional focus on uplifting student voice. It is an integral part of the GRPS Strategic Plan 2022 to 2025. Scholars have much to say about the world around them. Such is the case with social justice issues.

For 18 years, the Grand Rapids Public Schools has had the awesome opportunity to partner with the law firm of Warner Norcross + Judd LLP to offer our young scholars the opportunity to join the conversation about social justice issues, do so on their own terms, and be recognized for their contributions.

In connection with the celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sixth grade scholars from the Grand Rapids Public Schools were given the opportunity to think about how Dr. King's legacy of justice and peace applies to the world in which they live and to identify and react to a racial social justice issue that is meaningful to them. Warner Norcross + Judd maintains its commitment to honor scholar voices through its sponsorship of the Warner Norcross + Judd Social Justice Legacy Contest.

This year, GRPS sixth graders, with the guidance of their awesome teachers, submitted 203 entries from 13 different schools and we are celebrating each of them for making us pause,



think, and reconsider how Dr. King's dream unrealized impacts the lives of our youngest thought partners and future leaders.

Sixty firm members were involved in judging scholar entries. As in previous years, judges shared that they were inspired by the students' entries and appreciated the variety and creativity of the submissions. Bill K. A. Warners, Warner Attorney and member of the final judging committee stated. "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had one of the most famous dreams in our nation's history. Having students engage critically and intentionally with that dream in all variety of ways is why this contest is important and why we keep doing it every year."

The following 28 GRPS scholars were honored this year at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration and will also be celebrated at the February 6th GRPD Board of Education meeting. However, all 203 entries are noteworthy.

**First Place Honors:** Ca'Niyah Sutton, Westwood Middle School – "Do What's Right," a painting inspired by Rosa Parks and Dr. King, urging everyone to do the right thing, no matter the circumstances. **Second Place Honors:** Remington Davis, Center for Economicology– "The Injustices," an essay describing how injustice against people of color impacts their experiences. **Third Place Honors:** Jeckia Brooks, Riverside Middle School– "My Reason Why," an essay about her experiences with racism and bullying and how she drew inspiration from Dr. King. **Honorable Mentions:** Bridget Anderson, Center for Economicology; Dae Anderson, GR Montessori; Autumn Callaway, Center for Economicology; Oralia Castaneda, Center for Economicology; Journey Churchwell, Westwood; Andreas

Cimpan, Center for Economicology; Mason Davis, Center for Economicology; Amelia Iuga, Center for Economicology; Alexander Jimenez, Harrison Park Academy; Dmeera Jones, Gerald R Ford; Kaden Jurewicz, Center for Economicology; Sophia McClain, GR Montessori; Campbell McKinnon, Center for Economicology; Mynor Monterroso Rivera, Dickinson; Jakiyah Murphy, Martin Luther King Leadership Academy; Oscar Neal, Center for Economicology; Arlo Novosad, GR Montessori; Stephanie Perez, Center for Economicology; Cora Retsema, Center for Economicology; Arielly Sanchez, Burton; Dax Sievers, Center for Economicology; Ishaan Vulta, Blandford; Zachary Walker, Aberdeen; Addison Williams, Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy; Jeremiah Williams, Alger.

We are excited that our scholars are learning that their voices hold power. Through Warner's efforts, the top three honorees had the opportunity to address community celebration patrons via video, be acknowledged for their efforts on the evening news and in the case of one scholar, have the experience of being interviewed by Susan Shaw of Wood TV 8.

When we as educators and community make space for our scholars to show that they are indeed thinking about the world around them, even at the tender ages of 10 and 11, we step closer and closer to what Dr. King considered the true function and of education: To teach our scholars to think intensively and critically, thereby developing intelligence as well as character. All 203 scholars will receive a certificate of recognition and the top 28 honorees received prizes including an Apple Ipad, Kindle Fire, and gift cards to We are Lit Multicultural Bookshop.

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## New GRPS Program Opens Doors for Sibley Parents

*Abriendo Puertas was developed by and for Latino parents and has been adopted by diverse communities across the country, including Grand Rapids.*

The day before the first snow day of the year for GRPS, as the winter weather already was beginning to make its presence known with falling temperatures and snow, the atmosphere in a classroom on the third floor of Sibley Elementary was warm and inviting.

There Sibley parents were gathered with Karrie Roy, the district's EL/Refugee Parent Community Liaison, for their weekly workshop, part of a 10-week series called *Abriendo Puertas* or Opening Doors.

The program was developed by and for Latino parents with children up to the age of five and has been adopted by diverse communities across the country, including now Grand Rapids after Roy, who is fluent in Spanish, brought it to the district after working for two decades in K-12 education in Los Angeles.

"The workshop is conducted in Spanish primarily for our Latino parents, though all are welcome," Roy said. "The goal is to empower parents to be their child's first teacher, drawing on the strength and resilience that they already have inside of them."

As the parents settled in for the workshop, some of them shooing their children away to the daycare in the room and others finishing up the last bites of the provided breakfast, Roy introduced the day's *dicho* (Spanish for saying).

"In English," she said, "it's this: 'The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.' Who would like to translate that into Spanish?"

The women smiled and one replied: "El futuro pertenece a aquellos que se preparan para él hoy."

The others nodded and continued to smile, and with that they were off to the lessons for the day.

On this day the topic was "My Child: The Media and Technology," a session designed to inform and encourage parents to embrace media and technology to prepare their children to succeed in the digital age.

"Beyond that," Roy said, "parents learned how to identify quality media choices, serve as good role models and use developmentally appropriate media and technology."

As the women discussed a variety of topics and even did



*Karrie Roy (far right) with special guests, including (from left) Vanessa Cervantes of Buchanan School (which will host the next *Abriendo Puertas* sessions), Javier Cervantes, GRPS communications coordinator, and Lea Tobar, a longtime GRPS employee and now an EL Parent Community liaison.*

some role-playing, the room was filled with laughter and obvious love for each other, something Roy said had been characteristic of the sessions since the start.

"These women are amazing," she said. "Some of them have endured a lot. And when they come together here, there is a strong sense of solidarity."

About five years ago, Roy ran the same *Abriendo Puertas* workshop series while working for Los Angeles Unified School District.

She said that when she started at GRPS, she knew she wanted to bring it to the district, and she was ecstatic when her supervisor, Dr. Mayda Bahamonde Gunnell, approved her to get re-certified to offer it for the first time in Grand Rapids.

"Launching it at Sibley has been great because they already have such a tight-knit parent group that attends weekly English classes onsite," she said. "It's been an instant success because of

## Grand Rapids Public Schools

### WE ARE GR

January 2023

Grand Rapids

Board of Education

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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](http://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](mailto:savagem@grps.org) or at (616) 819-2028.

### WE ARE GR

is published four times per year by  
GRPS Communications Office  
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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501-0117  
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*Continued on next page*

*Continued from previous page*

these parents' willingness to share their stories, their parenting challenges and successes. This isn't a workshop where I impart knowledge they don't have. It's a workshop that celebrates the strength of their own parent leadership."

A West Michigan native who went to Grandville High School and graduated from Indiana University with a double major in Spanish and Political Science, Roy plans to offer the workshop in 2023 at Buchanan Elementary on 10 Wednesdays beginning January 25 from 8:45-10:45 am, including free childcare and breakfast next on the docket.

Participants in the Sibley pilot agree that an expansion would be awesome.

Lesvia Marroquin is a Parent Action Leader for Sibley and attended many of the recent sessions.

She said seeing the results of the program was amazing.



*Karrie Roy, the district's EL/Refugee Parent Community Liaison, brought Abriendo Puertas to Grand Rapids after working for two decades in K-12 education in Los Angeles.*

"It made everyone confident," she said. "It made them happy, like a family. And now everyone is sad to see it's done. But they did so great."

One of those sad to see it done but also feeling empowered by what she had learned over the course of the program was Sibley parent Ruby Garcia.

At the recent graduation celebration for program participants, she spoke to a visitor about what Abriendo Puertas had meant to her.

Though she struggled a bit to put her emotions into English, the smile on her face and the tears in her eyes spoke volumes.

"It's so important," she said. "This group, very supportive. I love the program, yes. I love it."

## Star Ottawa Hills High School Football Player and Scholar Recognized for Academic Awards

*A GRPS senior led the way this year on the playing field and in the classroom and was recognized at the state level for his achievements.*

Ottawa Hills High School senior Aashray (Ash) Chhabra started out as a talented soccer player with a powerful leg. His strong kicks soon caught the eye of Ottawa Hills head football coach Christian Verley who suggested that Chhabra try out as a kicker for the football team.

Chhabra is now a dual-sport athlete and a three-year varsity letterman. This season, he also was recognized as a member of the Division 2 Academic All-State Football Team and the Academic All-State Dream Team.

The Academic All-State Football Team nominates any senior who has achieved a 3.5 GPA or higher and the Academic All-State Dream Team selects two students per division from the Academic All-State Football Team to be recognized as a "Scholar Athlete."

As a scholar who had a GPA in the top ten out of the entire Academic All-State Football Team and a history of athletic success and volunteer experience, Chhabra was proud to be chosen as part of the Academic All-State Dream Team.

His academic awards follow a season in which he was a consistent kicker for the Bengals going 13-17 on PATs and 2-3 on field goals.

Outside of sports, he also participates in club skiing and snowboarding where he medaled last year.

Chhabra not only dedicates most of his time to academics and sports, but he gives back to the community as well. He volunteers for food drives and participates in water bottle drives led by the Ottawa Hills football team.

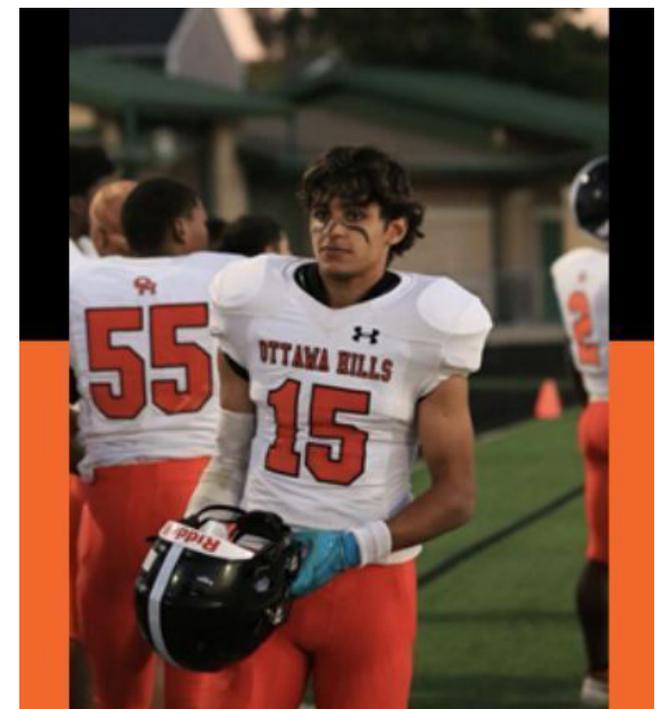
He has also worked with one of the school district's community partners, Vibrant Futures, to provide assistance during their youth summer football programs.

"Anything he is available to do as far as giving back to the community or football team, he will do," Verley said. "He takes advantage of his downtime and makes it happen."

Chhabra was not the only scholar-athlete leading the team to success this football season. Ottawa's football team had a lot of talented younger scholar-athletes who are returning next season with a year of playing and practice under their belt.

The team has started a youth program for middle school students to get involved in football practices prior to entering the GRPS program, as well as a partnership with the Grand Rapids United Football League.

Verley was proud to see his scholar-athletes grow their football skills throughout this past season and is eager to see what the future holds for them next year.



## 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). 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.

## Supporting GRPS at a Grassroot Level

*Local organizer recruits friends, family and many others to support donation drives for GRPS schools.*

In the last year, Sherri Lynn Noe and a group of her friends have organized donations to GRPS schools that total almost \$70,000. Over the last decade, the total is probably \$150,000 or more.

The list of items she has helped secure for a variety of district schools is impressive.

For a recent drive for Dickinson Academy there were 90 new winter coats, 30 pairs of winter boots, 49 pairs of snow pants, 57 pairs of gloves and mittens, plus socks, shoes, school supplies and more.

For a district program for scholars experiencing homelessness, Noe and her squad have rounded up toothpaste, toothbrushes, hair accessories, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, floss, chapsticks, combs, shoes, clothing, backpacks and more, items totaling almost \$5,000 in value.

And at the start of 2022, Cesar E. Chavez Elementary and Buchanan Elementary welcomed almost 200 brand-new winter coats, plus boots, hats, gloves, mittens, hoodies, shirts, socks and more.

All told there have been eight donations to GRPS schools in the last 12 months.

And Noe has no plans of slowing down anytime soon.

She recalls the response this past summer when she found out that there were 300 GRPS scholars experiencing homelessness.

“We decided to do a fund drive to supply them with items that were most needed,” she said. “That could be everything from toiletries to shoes to school supplies. I put the word out on social media, and there were so many Amazon packages arriving daily, it was amazing.”

A Grand Rapids native, Noe attended North Park Elementary until fourth grade and graduated from Forest Hills Central. Her heart for young people was deepened, she said, during a 15-year stint in youth ministry at Mayflower Congregational and Ada Congregational churches.

She got re-connected to GRPS through MaryAnn Prisichenko, who was the principal at Sibley Elementary at the time. There she helped organize a school garage sale. Later she volunteered at Feeding America at Caesar Chavez Elementary School, and there her eyes were opened to the need for warm winter clothing.

“The winter apparel started out small,” she said with a smile. “But it has just grown and grown.”

Noe is quick to note that everything she organizes is a collaboration.

“Oh, yes,” she said. “I really want to stress this is not a Sherri thing. Friends, family, the community. Such an incredible group of people and businesses that have come on board to really raise awareness about these needs and to help support my passion and efforts with these projects.”

For example, she said, she has more than 100 people from the community who regularly drop off returnable cans and bottles with the money raised by such returnables getting used for all of her donation drives.

“Last year I collected almost \$4,000,” she said. “This year will be close to that. That’s a lot of cans.”

And although hundreds and hundreds of GRPS scholars have benefited from what Sherri and Friends get accomplished,

there are many days, Sherri said, where she feels like she gets as much as she gives.

“It’s incredibly rewarding knowing we are helping literally hundreds, if not thousands, of children and teens every year,” she said. “I always say that I don’t have the financial ability to give a lot, but I can give of my time.”

Mary Spalding, GRPS Purchasing Coordinator, said what Sherri and her team do for the district is inspiring.

“I am grateful for the positive impact they are making,” she said. “This group of donor-givers are champions. They inspire us with their kindness and generosity, and their care and kindness create excitement and encouragement for our scholars and their families. Many times, the scholars will burst into cheers as the donations are delivered to the schools.”

The 2022 Winter Apparel Drive is going on through December, and in January and February 2023, Sherri and Friends will kick off a drive to gather shoes, belts and toiletries for scholars who are experiencing homelessness. Anyone who’d like to support either of these drives can contact Sherri Lynn Noe on Venmo at SherriLynn-Noe or on PayPal at sherbear318@yahoo.com.



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[apply.grps.org](http://apply.grps.org)



## Holiday party brings young GRPS students to Union High School

*Students of all ages celebrate the holidays and school pride at this annual event.*

The sixth annual holiday celebration at Union High School saw 205 first-grade students from Burton Elementary, Harrison Park Academy, Sibley Elementary, and Stocking Elementary come to what might be their future school for a morning of crafts, treats, gifts (including a future Union Redhawk T-shirt!) and holiday songs.

For Union principal Aaron Roussey, the yearly event is “a ton of work and a ton of fun.”

“Every year we kind of wonder if it’s worth it,” he said with a chuckle. “And then when it’s done, and we’ve had all those first-graders over here, we say ‘yeah, it was definitely worth it.’”

Roussey credits Dana Bachelder, Tracy Benjamin and Jessica Maat from the Union staff for doing most of the heavy lifting on organizing the event with a healthy dose of help from the Union student body.

He noted that the logistics are complex as each first-grade student gets accompanied along the way for the day by a Union student, dubbed their elf or Santa’s helper. Most of the helpers are ninth-grade students at Union with a smattering of other students from each grade’s standing leadership team and from Union’s award-winning JROTC chapter.

The young students and their helpers moved from station to station, and then the whole group finished in the gym where Union’s choir, orchestra and band led everyone in such holiday standards as Jingle Bells.

“I had a smile on my face the whole day,” Roussey said. “The goal on our end is to introduce these young students to Union and get them thinking ‘hey, I want to go to school here someday.’ And for our current students, the goal is to put them in a position of leadership. Our students helped organize and run the whole thing.”

Roussey also gave a shout-out to GRPS Superintendent Leadriane Roby who was among several special guests at the event.

“Having her come is always huge for our scholars and our staff,” he said.

And he thanked Walter Durkee American Legion Post 311 which donated \$2,000 for gifts for the children and other expenses.

“This was the first year we partnered with them,” he said. “It was great to have them involved. We’re very thankful.”



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## Union JROTC Squad is Second in State

*A weekend trip to the Michigan Regulation Drill Team Championships proved lucrative for Union High School as it came home with four trophies and a state runner-up finish*

A trip to the Michigan Regulation Drill Team Championships saw the JROTC team from Union High School return to Grand Rapids with a little heavier load.

A trunk full of trophies will do that!

All told the Union Junior Officers' Training Corps squad took two firsts and two seconds in four events and finished second overall in the state out of a total of 20 teams. The firsts were in Color Guard and Armed Platoon and the seconds were in Platoon Inspection and First-Year Marching Squad.

For Union's Ron Voisinet, a JROTC instructor and First Sergeant, it was a dream come true.

"This is just a special, special group of scholars that works hard and does everything asked of them without complaint," he said. "They practice every day, study as a group, and do things on weekends. To see them succeed in this way this weekend was pretty amazing."

Voisinet noted that Union was competing with some of the nation's best teams at the event, held at Cass Technical High School.

"It was all Michigan high schools," he said. "Schools from all over the state who are known to be among the best in the country and who regularly compete successfully at Nationals. But we held our own. More than held our own."

The 23 Union Cadets who attended the Michigan Regulation Drill Team Championships included 15 girls and eight boys, something Voisinet said was unusual at the recent event.

Among the 15 girls was junior Sarely Rodriguez, one of four girls on a Union Color Guard Squad that took first place.

She joined the JROTC program last year and wasn't all in at the

time she admitted.

But now?

"I cannot imagine life without JROTC and especially the Color Guard," she said with a laugh. "The girls in the Color Guard have gotten really close."

As Color Guard commander and a Major in the Union JROTC, Rodriguez said she was a little nervous when she and her teammates took the floor to be evaluated.

"When we were done, I was shaking and out of breath," she said. "But I'm so proud of us. We've really grown as a team."

Rosalinda Rios, junior, the Drill team commander and a Sergeant Major said the same.

"Oh, at first Cass was overwhelming," she said. "And the wins were unexpected. But it was so good to go down there and compete against some of the best and do so well. JROTC is more than I thought it would be. I'm so glad I joined."

Neither Rodriguez nor Rios said they have any firm plans to join the military after graduation, and Voisinet said that's fine by him as the biggest focus right now in JROTC is academics.

Indeed, the mission of JROTC at all three high schools is to motivate young people to be better citizens with education seen as critical to that goal.

As for the recent accolades for his squad, he beamed like a proud parent as he described their performances.

"Even my experienced Cadets were a little wide-eyed when we walked in (to Cass)," he said. "But after winning state runner-up, they're not wide-eyed anymore. They're Midwest known now, that's

for sure."

Voisinet also gave a special shoutout to Walter Durkee American Legion Post 311 which he said has adopted Union's JROTC team, including paying for some of the team's hotel stay and even a supper trip to Golden Corral!

Union's JROTC program is one of just three west of Lansing, and all three of them are at Grand Rapids Public Schools: Innovation Central, Ottawa Hills and Union high schools.

Major Robert Ware heads things up at Union.

A 1979 Union graduate, Ware did four years of JROTC as a high school student and considers it a life-changing experience. He returned to Union in 2006 as an instructor and continues to be gratified by the many ways in which JROTC changes lives in all three GRPS high schools.

"One of our strong points," he said, "is that we are a mentorship program. We will mentor the kids, especially if they stay with us for all four years but even if they don't. It's a thrill to watch an unsure 14-year-old come in and see a confident young man or woman leave when they graduate. To watch a student grow over their high school career and to think, well you know I had a little hand in that, it's powerful."

ROTC was established nationwide in 1916 to bring military skills to high school students. And GRPS records show that Central High School's program goes all the way back to 1916 with Union close behind with a program starting in 1921.

JROTC in Grand Rapids stayed about basic military skills all the way up to about the 1980s and then began to change its focus as students, parents and the military realized that some tweaks were

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needed.

The curriculum nationwide, and in Grand Rapids, is intended to teach critical thinking skills, build a capacity for lifelong learning, help students become better communicators, take responsibility for their actions, and more.

In short, Voisinet said, it reinforces and repeats the same qualities and characteristics GRPS builds its K-12 foundation upon.

Union High School principal Aaron Roussey sees the ways in which JROTC benefits his building.

“As a teacher here (at Union),” he said, “I was aware of JROTC, had students in the program, but I don’t think I realized the direct impact it has on the climate and the culture of our schools. It’s been a real positive for Union High School.”

Each GRPS school that offers JROTC has two instructors and follows a standardized curriculum which includes coursework in leadership, civics, geography and global awareness, health and wellness, language arts, life skills and U.S. history.

All three JROTC programs also get out and about in the community, doing a variety of volunteer projects. In addition to volunteer opportunities in the community, all three JROTC programs also connect with organizations like the Grand Rapids Police Department and the Grand Rapids Fire Department, learning about the work done by such organizations and even considering public service as a possible career path.



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## Museum High Junior wins District 19 Sportsmanship Award for 2022 Michigan Interscholastic Horsemanship Association

*Naomi Jacobsen started an equestrian team last year as a sophomore at Museum High School.*

Naomi Jacobsen, a junior at Museum High School, has been around horses for as long as she can remember.

“I was maybe four years old,” she said. “I can’t exactly remember but from a young age I was at my aunt and uncle’s, helping out with the horses and doing what needed to be done.”

A little more than a decade later, Naomi’s can-do attitude saw her first start an equestrian team of one at Museum High as a sophomore, and then this year, as a junior, won the 2022 Michigan Interscholastic Horsemanship Association Sportsmanship (MIHA) Award for District 19.

MIHA governs and runs junior high and high school equestrian team events in Michigan and was established in 1976. Although Naomi trained this season with Caledonia’s renowned equestrian team, at MIHA events she represented Museum High, and she did it well.

In honoring her and Museum High with the Sportsmanship Award, MIHA District 19 coordinator Kate Higley noted her willingness to go above and beyond in helping others, in cleaning up at meets, encouraging her fellow competitors and generally in doing whatever needed to be done.

Naomi’s coach and father Jeff Jacobsen helped his daughter start the equestrian program at Museum High, and he noted that Naomi’s positive attitude and work ethic came despite most meets for her encompassing a 10-12 hour day.

MIHA meets generally would include numerous different events that would score points for teams in the meet – everything from Western pleasure to equitation over fences to flag race.

As a team of one, Naomi often entered as many as 10 events, meaning she’d generally arrive at most meets around 7 am and not leave until 5 or 6 pm.

And she did it all this year despite a hip injury serious enough to warrant surgery in November 2022, after the season was done.

“I was really proud of her all season long,” Jeff Jacobsen said. “And the Sportsmanship Award was a great way to end the season.”

Naomi agreed.



Museum High junior Naomi Jacobsen and Grimmy



Museum High junior Naomi Jacobsen in action during a 2022 Michigan Interscholastic Horsemanship Association

“When they were reading off what they used to judge the Sportsmanship award, I didn’t recognize myself,” she said. “But then I started to realize, ‘Hey, they’re talking about me.’ It was a surprise but definitely a nice surprise.”

Both Jeff and Naomi said the high school equestrian world in Michigan made it easy to want to give back.

“I think one thing that we thought was really interesting is that it is a very close, tight-knit community, but it works so well together,” said Jeff Jacobsen. “The community itself, they want to see the kids succeed. If we forgot something for a meet, we’d have parents from other schools, and they’d come back from their trailer, walk down to meet you and have what you need.”

Both Jacobsens also paid tribute to Higley who they said was

instrumental in helping them start a team, filling out the right paperwork, getting them connected to others in the district and staying at their side as they navigated the world of an equestrian team.

And now, Naomi’s love for all things equestrian not only got her high school team started and netted her the 2022 Sportsmanship Award, but it also is influencing her future career path.

She is dually enrolled at Ferris State as part of the Kent Career Tech Center criminal justice program and already is planning to merge her academic and athletic pursuits with a career in the mounted police.

“It’s the best of both worlds,” she said with a smile.



Museum High junior Naomi Jacobsen, second from left, with her father and coach Jeff Jacobsen, Adalynn Masselink of Caledonia and sister Layla Jacobsen, a sixth grader at Public Museum Middle.



Museum High junior Naomi Jacobsen and Grimmy

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## Cultivating Future Scientists, Techies, Mathematicians & Engineers

### Organization brings after-school STEM to students of color

By Erin Albanese, Courtesy of School News Network

The challenge at hand was to design a catapult with the ability to fling a marshmallow far and with precision. A team member adept at catching marshmallows in a bucket would also prove helpful.

“Every winner I’ve had has had a different way of doing it,” said Jahleel Levi-Alford, director of STEM Scholars, a middle-school program offered by STEM Greenhouse, as he invited students to grab boxes, tape, spoons and toilet paper, and begin crafting.

“Don’t make it too stable or you won’t be able to move the spoon,” said Dontell Droughn, as he, Shakuru Abasi and Esmeralda Perez assembled their catapult during the design process. They taped their spoon to a toilet paper roll and affixed it to a solid base made from an empty cracker box.

Giancarlo Salgado’s design was smaller than his peers — “easy-grab,” he explained. He hoped it would make for straightforward flinging.

The sixth- through eighth-grade Dickinson Elementary students worked together during the after-school session, readying their contraptions for play. Then, in a mini bracket tournament, teams vied to see who could land the most marshmallows into a bucket, minute-to-win-it style.

The competition was the culminating activity of STEM Scholars’ fall semester, during which students participated in hands-on science, engineering, technology and math projects.

STEM Greenhouse, a Grand Rapids-based non-profit organization, also offers a middle-school program on applied agricultural science; a summer program for high-school students at a local university; and Kids Count, a math focused program for third-through-fifth graders. STEM Scholars is also offered at Martin Luther King, Jr. Academy, Alger Middle and Southwest Community Campus.

#### STEM Careers Within Their Reach

Founded in 2014 by Keli Christopher, a 1994 Ottawa Hills High School graduate who attended Dickinson Elementary as a child, STEM Greenhouse aims to expose students to STEM and related careers and boost their proficiency in science and math.

“The students we are working with come from a variety of circumstances and situations. If you are in an environment where you don’t see people who look like you doing math and science, it is very easy to believe that it’s not for you,” she said.

“We want to make sure that they are not only learning math and science, but they believe a math, science or STEM career is within their reach.”

Christopher is the first Black person to earn a doctorate in agricultural engineering from the University of Illinois and the third Black person in the world to get a doctorate in agricultural engineering. She has also worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, and as an engineer for the Kent County Conservation District.

As a young Black woman in engineering, she realized the need early on to increase representation of women and people of color in STEM. She knew students of color were not seeing themselves in



From left, seventh-graders Shakuru Abasi and Esmeralda Perez say they’ve gotten better in math and science

those careers.

“I saw a lot of STEM programming happening, but I didn’t feel much of it was going to help students because we are battling a problem with proficiency in math and science,” Christopher said. “If you aren’t proficient in math or science, there’s really no point in pushing a STEM career. We have to make sure students have a math and science foundation first, before we try to get them into engineering.”

She and her staff focus on reaching students with accessible programs. “(Our mission) is to prepare children of color for careers in STEM. We need to be at the schools that have the highest proportion of students of color and often those schools are struggling with science and math proficiency,” she said.

Research from the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy showed Dickinson students in STEM Scholars in the 2017-18 school year (most recent data available) achieved more growth than expected on Michigan’s Math MAP Test, and 91% more growth than the non-STEM Scholars in the study. See research here. STEM Greenhouse is also one of 10 nationwide winners to receive Sony Electronics’ 2022 Create Action grant.

Research also showed students increased their interest in math



Sixth-grader Dontrell Droughn tests the spoon on his group’s design

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and science careers and in taking higher level math and science classes in high school.

Christopher includes a focus on growth mindset (instilling the belief that talents can be developed) and socio-emotional learning in her programming. Students also learn about Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The STEM Scholars team Cheese-its — self-named by students — landed the most marshmallows in the bucket, winning the team large candy bars and family-size bags of chips.

It's games like these that have captured their attention this semester, and things like creating elephant toothpaste that got them thinking and enjoying STEM, students said.

“I’ve gotten better in math and science and I’ve grown to love science,” said seventh-grader Shakuru, who wants to be an engineer. “I love making things and building things.”

Sixth-grader Kyler Jackson agreed that STEM Scholars has been good for him.

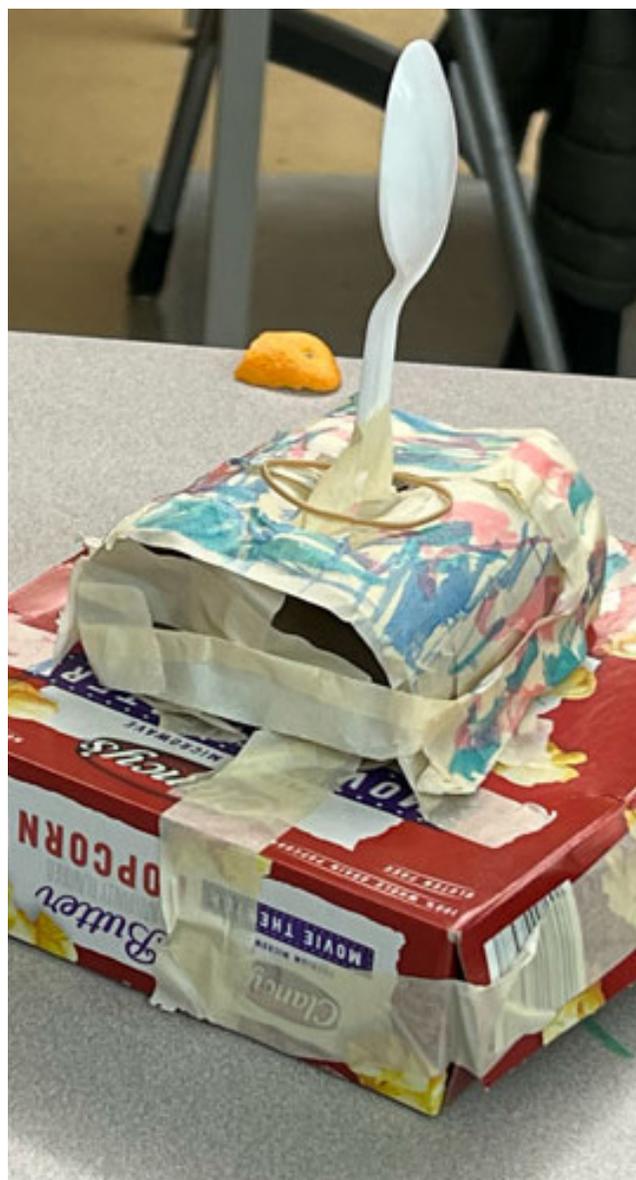
“It’s helping me very much; I’m getting better at math even though I’m already great.”



*Sixth-grader Dontrell Droughn gets ready to launch marshmallows as teacher’s assistant Victor Chemjor works the timer*



*From left, sixth-graders Kyler Jackson and Isabella Rodriguez build their catapult*



*Students fashioned their catapults from boxes, tape and spoons*

# FACILITIES MASTER PLAN FRAMEWORK

Visit [GRPS.ORG/FMP](https://grps.org/fmp) for all the latest updates on the Facilities Master Plan.

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**QUESTIONS?** 📞 616-819-2149 ✉ [Communications@grps.org](mailto:Communications@grps.org)

# GRPS



## FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Parent University

If you haven't already, explore the Parent University website at [parents.grps.org](https://parents.grps.org). This newly designed website contains academic and community resources, trending news, a monthly online magazine, and so much more.



In January's edition of Power Parent Magazine, you'll find these great resources:

- The newest Power Parent magazine components include:
  - Discover some fabulous Early Childhood Apps in **GOOD TO KNOW: Resources for Early Literacy**.
  - Did you know that more than 32% of our world's countries and more than 51 languages are represented within GRPS? Check out **SETTING GOALS: English Language Learners (ELL)**.
  - Within **CHECK IT OUT: Resources for Elementary Literacy**, you'll encounter recommendations on how to fine-tune your scholar's reading and writing skills.
  - "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose." Dr. Seuss. Uncover a complete list of 2022's best children's books in **NETWORK FOR SUCCESS: Top Books of 2022**.
  - In **NAVIGATING ACHIEVEMENT: Resources for**

Middle & High School, you'll learn creative ways to motivate your middle school readers.

- Skim through a list of literacy resources, compiled by our district's very own curriculum team, in **FAMILY CONVERSATIONS: GRPS Curriculum Resources**.

### Parent University Calendar - February 2023

Visit [parents.grps.org/events](https://parents.grps.org/events) to learn additional information about these courses.

### Attendance Matters

Join us for an online Professional Development series presented in partnership with Attendance Works to learn proven, evidence-based, tiered strategies to promote attendance and engagement using a team approach. Take advantage of this opportunity to hear what works and to exchange ideas with your peers.

Attendance is a leading on-track indicator for scholar success. Beginning in preschool, chronic absence can predict lower 3rd grade reading scores. By middle and high school, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign of high school dropout for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

- February 7 from 4:30 - 5:30 pm, online event. Email Sarah Ramirez at [ramirez@grps.org](mailto:ramirez@grps.org) to register.

### Play and Learn

This 90-minute opportunity is for caregivers and young children, ages 0-5 years old, to learn, socialize and interact with each other. Participants receive a complimentary children's book, and learn about child development, early reading strategies, and positive discipline. Play and Learn GRCC activities are made possible because of the generosity of Kent County taxpayers and the voter-approved Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage.

- Every 2nd Wednesday of the month, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. at



GRPS University (1400 Fuller St. NE.)

### Creating and Maintaining a Safe School

Attend this GRPS security training and learn about district-wide safety systems.

- November 8 from 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm at Grand Rapids Public School University located on 1400 Fuller Rd. NE.

### Elephant and Piggy "We Are in a Play" Performance

Register at [parents.grps.org/events](https://parents.grps.org/events) to attend the hilarious live performance of Elephant and Piggie, in *We are in a Play*, written by Mo Willems, at the Grand Rapids Civic Theater.

- February 4, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. at the Grand Rapids Civic Theater (30 Division Ave. N.)

### Mental Health and Human Trafficking

Understand and explore how students with mental health concerns or substance use are at increased risk for experiencing human trafficking. The four-part Human Trafficking PLC will be led by Kent ISD HTYPE team and local community partners to engage educators and school staff. Register at [parents.grps.org/events](https://parents.grps.org/events) to attend.

- February 14, 3:00 - 4:00 pm – Virtual

### Creating and Maintaining a Safe School

Attend this security training and learn about GRPS school safety systems.

- February 14, 6:00 - 7:00 pm at the Grand Rapids Public School University (1400 Fuller Rd. NE.)

### GRPS K-8 Game Night

Registered families will participate in different academic stations that will reinforce everyday academics. Every registered

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family will receive dinner and a free board game. Register at parents.grps.org/ to attend.

- March 2, 5:00 - 7:30 pm at the Grand Rapids Public School University (1400 Fuller Rd. NE.)

F.A.C.E. in the Community

FACE, along with the GRPS Early Childhood Department, has proudly partnered with Ms. Janaya Jones and Chris Dudley Art to offer all Great Start Readiness Preschool (GSRP) families with an opportunity to hear local author, Janaya Jones, read from and demonstrate how to use her book, ABC Affirmations. Ms. Jones has dedicated her career to helping every child realize their personal value.

Chris Dudley, the illustrator of ABC AFFIRMATIONS and a proud GRPS alumni, is an Award-Winning Artist. He began drawing before entering preschool and has never stopped. Dudley dabbles in all things art! He's had the privilege to draw many commissioned portraits over the past 25+ years, in addition to receiving acceptance into many juried exhibitions. While he stays busy with commission work, he also spends much of his time illustrating children's books

and teaching art. Mr. Dudley's most recent work can be found at the "World of Winter Festival" children's display, located on 303 Monroe Avenue NW, from January 6, 2023 – March 5, 2023.

GSRP FAMILIES: Throughout the entire month of January, Ms. Jones, will visit every classroom to share her book ABC AFFIRMATIONS. All GSRP families will even receive their own copy of the book!

Taste Buddies

Our next TASTE BUDDIES experience will be held on Thursday, February 16, 2023 from 5:30-7:00 p.m. Join us for some "Flavorable Family Fun"!



## Celebrate National School Breakfast Week! March 6-10, 2023

**PARENTS:**  
Did you know? Your child can **DIG IN** to healthy breakfast options at school!

# DIG IN TO SCHOOL BREAKFAST

**Be a School Breakfast Builder!**

WAFFLE CROSSING

CRUCE DE WAFFLE

**Studies show that students who eat school breakfast are more likely to:**

- Reach higher levels of achievement in reading and math
- Score higher on standardized tests
- Have better concentration and memory
- Be more alert
- Maintain a healthy weight

STOP  
EAT SCHOOL BREAKFAST

BREAKFAST FUEL STATION

BREAKFAST ZONE

NSBW resources are made possible by:

facebook.com/TrayTalk
 @Schoolnutritionassoc
 @SchoolLunch

## ¡Celebra la Semana Nacional del Desayuno Escolar! Del 6-10 de Marzo del 2023

**PADRES:**  
¿Sabías que? ¡Su hijo puede DISFRUTAR de las opciones saludables de desayuno en la escuela!

# ESCABA EN EL DESAYUNO ESCOLAR

**¡Conviértase en un constructor de desayunos escolares!**

CRUCE DE WAFFLE

**Los estudios demuestran que los estudiantes que desayunan en la escuela tienen más probabilidades de:**

- Alcanzar mejor rendimiento escolar en lectura y matemáticas.
- Obtener puntajes más altos en las pruebas o exámenes estandarizados
- Tener mejor concentración y memoria
- Estar más atentos
- Mantener un peso saludable

14 MILLONES ESTUDIANTES Atendidos Diariamente

DESAYUNO ESTACIÓN DE COMBUSTIBLE

¡Siganos en SNA y #NSBW22 en las redes sociales para aprender más sobre el desayuno escolar

Los recursos de NSBW son posibles gracias a

facebook.com/TrayTalk
 @Schoolnutritionassoc
 @SchoolLunch



# WORLD-CLASS PRESCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILD

**Get ready for the 2023-2024 school year at GRPS!**

Learning in a Grand Rapids Public Schools world-class preschool classroom prepares children to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. Experts agree that children who have quality early learning experiences are better prepared to be successful in school and throughout life. Preschool is the essential first step in your child's lifelong education.

Application for the next school year will be available March 1.  
**APPLY AT [PRESCHOOL.KENTISD.ORG!](https://www.kentisd.org/preschool)**

- Tuition-free for families meeting income and eligibility criteria
- Research based curriculum
- Culturally diverse staff
- Individualized learning goals
- Full day program
- 24 convenient locations
- Hands-on activities
- Purposeful learning through play
- Outdoor and community learning opportunities

We are always happy to answer your questions. Please contact us today!

☎ (616) 819-2111    ✉ [earlychildhood@grps.org](mailto:earlychildhood@grps.org)

Grand Rapids Public Schools | 1331 Martin Luther King Jr St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

**GRPS**  
my choice®  
Grand Rapids Public Schools

## Senior Summit for Class of 2023 Gives Scholars All They Need to Plan for the Future

*Most of the district's expected 2023 graduates were at GRPS University to gather advice and information for what's next after high school.*

It was a day off from school.

But not from instruction.

In fact, the Class of 2023 Senior Summit was filled with information and advice from beginning to end.

An annual event since 2010, this year's summit at GRPS University saw the majority of the district's 740 expected 2023 graduates in attendance.

Things kicked off with GRPS Counselor Coordinator Emmanuel Armstrong welcoming seniors and getting them hyped up, calling out each GRPS high school and urging the seniors from those schools to "make some noise."

After some words about logistics and how the day would go, Armstrong then turned the microphone over first to Dr. Brandy Lovelady Mitchell, the new Deputy Superintendent of PreK-12 Academics and Leadership, and then to Dr. Leadriane Roby, GRPS Superintendent.

Lovelady Mitchell talked to the assembled students about her own high school journey, including her 1991 graduation from Ottawa Hills High School and then her anxiousness about what would come after high school.

"I knew I wanted it (to go to college)," she said. "But I didn't know how to get there."

She encouraged the students to use the people around them such as family, staff and educators to guide them toward what's next.

And she encouraged them to remember that "the sky is the limit for the great human you will be."

Roby was equally encouraging, sharing with the Class of 2023 a piece she'd read that advised the best ways to plant a daily living garden.

Such a garden, she said as students smiled, would include things like peas (peace of mind, heart and soul) and squash (squash gossip, indifference, grumbling and selfishness) and lettuce (lettuce be faithful to our beliefs and values) and most importantly turnips (turn up for school, for service and to help others).



*Emmanuel Armstrong, Leadriane Roby and Brandy Lovelady Mitchell (from left to right) appreciate district seniors "making some noise" as their high school is called at the Senior Summit*



*GRPS seniors in their regalia after a mini, mock graduation ceremony*

Students then watched some of their classmates do a mini, mock graduation ceremony, complete with gowns, announcements and applause before heading out to 22 breakout sessions on such topics as:

- 3 Cs: Cost, College and Campus
- Athletics After High School
- Careers in STEM
- First Generation College Students
- HBCUs and You
- Keep It 100
- Life at a Community College
- Sorority Life: In and Out of College
- Your College Success Squad

Armstrong noted that the opening sessions and all of the breakouts were carefully planned to help GRPS senior scholars become more aware and more informed about the many post-secondary options that are available to them.

"This is an important event for the entire GRPS school community," he said. "We partner with local businesses, employment agencies and local colleges to deliver content that is beneficial for graduating scholars."

A graduate of Detroit Public Schools, Armstrong has been with GRPS for two decades and said he loves helping district scholars realize their full potential. The Senior Summit is for him one of the year's regular highlights.

"I am so proud when I see our scholars interact with professionals from higher education, the National Guard and with their peers from other schools within the district," he said with a big smile.



*Panelists for a session on sorority life in and out of college, including GRPS Superintendent Leadriane Roby*



*The 22 breakout sessions at the Senior Summit included topics of interest to numerous senior scholars*



GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
**2023 GRADUATION SCHEDULE**  
 HOSTED AT HOUSEMAN FIELD

SCHOOL/PROGRAM	CEREMONY
<b>Monday, May 22, 2023</b>	
City High Middle School	5:00 PM – 6:00 PM
<b>Tuesday, May 23, 2023</b>	
CA Frost Middle High School	5:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Innovation Central High School & Grand Rapids Montessori	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
<b>Wednesday, May 24, 2023</b>	
Ottawa Hills High School	5:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Grand Rapids Public Museum High School	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
<b>Thursday, May 25, 2023</b>	
Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy	5:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Union High School	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Questions? Email [RitsemaL@grps.org](mailto:RitsemaL@grps.org).