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### Serving the Community in 2020 and 2021



Like you, I look forward to a day - hopefully very soon - with significantly fewer new COVID-19 cases, recovery of those who are ill, and a return to normal activities after the pandemic. Until that day, COVID-safe protocols including mask wearing and physical distancing remain very important, as we wait for wide-scale vaccination against the coronavirus.

So much that we cherish has been paused or curtailed during the past 10 months in order to minimize the spread of the disease. Yet the City's essential services have continued without interruption. Many services have been adjusted or enhanced to support the community through the pandemic and eventual recovery. A lot of work also is being done to improve inclusive and equitable outcomes in response to local and national concerns about disparities.

Every day, City services play an important role in protecting and preserving public health and safety. First responders in the Police and Fire departments respond to emergencies, including ones where life-saving medical assistance is required. Water System staff filter, treat and distribute enough water to approximately 300,000 customers to fill 60 Olympic-size swimming pools each day. The Water Resource Recovery Center processes roughly the same amount that flows "down the drain." Our employees maintain the City's 75 parks, 605 miles of streets, and other critical infrastructure. We issue permits and perform inspections to help ensure safe, well-functioning buildings. We also collect nearly 700 tons of refuse weekly and nearly 275 tons of recyclables every other week.

#### City staff provide these essential services for the community consistently and with a high level of quality even during a pandemic.

During the past year, the City has adapted to this challenging time. We expanded our digital service offerings. We supported residents by suspending water shut offs, providing bill payment options and assistance, helping with mortgage and rent payments, and funding eviction prevention services. For persons experiencing homelessness, we launched the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) in partnership with Network 180 and Community Rebuilders to connect these individuals with housing options and support services. To expand opportunities for future housing development, we acquired 60 parcels of land in partnership with the State Land Bank. To improve the existing housing stock, we secured a \$5 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for replacement of lead water service lines.

To support the business community, we established social zones to activate outdoor space for dining, are implementing a grant program to help small and micro-enterprises businesses, and are continuing our retail retention and attraction program in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. Grand Rapids' strong business climate continues to attract jobs and corporate headquarters to the city.

We have continued to emphasize excellent, responsive and innovative services during the pandemic. We renovated 15 parks, representing \$4.4 million of parks millage investment. We expanded the Office of Oversight and Public Accountability to improve confidence in our public safety services, and formalized the director of equity and engagement role. In response to the increase in violent crime, we initiated

Operation Safe Neighborhoods and gun buybacks.

This year, look for the scooter pilot to continue and free Wi-Fi to soon be available in select parks. We also will install a 4-acre solar installation at the Lake Michigan Filtration Plant that will save the City nearly \$50,000 and reduce our carbon footprint – a true win-win.

You will see continued progress on key initiatives; however, like most organizations, we will have financial sustainability challenges due to reduced revenues during the recession. There are more planned initiatives than can be listed here, but a few of note include re-launch of the Affordable Housing Fund, continuation and expansion of the GRow1000 youth employment initiative, start of biodigester and composting operations, implementation of evidence-based crime prevention strategies, shift to a neighborhood policing model, continuation of the river restoration project, progress on redevelopment of the 201 Market site, and increased financial transparency. The Master Plan process also will accelerate, as we re-envision and re-imagine the community together.

I appreciate the work of the many dedicated City employees, elected leaders and community partners in service to the people of Grand Rapids during this challenging time.

Mark D. Muling

Mark Washington, City Manager

### The Many Ways to Engage in the Budget Process

#### You can provide feedback sooner than you think

Each year, we create an annual fiscal plan that follows the mission laid out in our strategic plan – to elevate quality of life through excellent City services. The priorities of our strategic plan guide our annual goals, budget initiatives, resources, department operations, projects and investments. It helps shape our annual budget and guide our short-term and longterm goals in a transparent and trackable way.

It is our solemn responsibility to act with accountability when utilizing your tax dollars. We also strive to use resources wisely to ensure we maintain adequate funding for the services, public facilities and infrastructure necessary to our community's present and future needs.

To ensure that we are meeting your needs, we want to hear

from you. Throughout our budget process, there are several ways you can provide your feedback on budget proposals:

- 1. From December through April, join us at department and committee meetings that invite public engagement to share feedback, concerns and ideas.
- 2. In May, the City Commission will hold a public hearing during its meeting where you are invited to comment on the proposed budget.

You can find a list of boards, commissions, committees and authorities that offer the opportunity for public engagement in the budget process and the approximate meeting where budget discussions will take place on our website (grandrapidsmi.gov). Visit here for the meeting

schedule and times for each body.

- Below are the tentative upcoming dates for City Commission review of the fiscal year 2022 budget:
- Tuesday, April 27: Preliminary Fiscal Plan presentation to City Commission at Committee of the Whole (10 a.m.)
- Tuesday, May 4: Budget Review Workshop (9 a.m. to noon)
- Thursday, May 6: Budget Town Hall (TBD)
- Tuesday, May 11: Budget Review Workshop (1 to 4 p.m.) Tuesday, May 18: Committee of the Whole Discussion (10 a.m.)

#### Budget Process CONTINUED FROM B1

- Tuesday, May 18: Public Hearing at City Commission (7 p.m.)
- Thursday, May 20: Deliberation and City Commission Adoption (9 to 11 a.m.)

We encourage you to participate in the government budgeting process and express how you would like your tax

dollars spent. We ensure that all meeting agendas, backup materials and deliberations are as transparent as possible. All meetings agendas are posted on our website. You can follow our City Commission workshops, town halls and meetings virtually as we broadcast and stream them live on Comcast Channel 26, Facebook and YouTube.

# How We Formulate the Annual Budget

## **Departments and Committees**

From December through April, City departments, committees, commissions, boards and authorities meet to compile research, analyze data and discuss the budget priorities for their five-year budget plan.

The public is invited to provide feedback, concerns and ideas at scheduled meetings for the departments and committees

Departments, committees, etc. compile public feedback and their own research to prepare a five-year budget request.



Budget Office

The Budget Office reviews each department's budget requests for mathematical accuracy and compliance with policy.

# **City Manager**

The City Manager, Budget Office and Executive Review Team meet with each department to discuss and evaluate their proposed budget.

The Offices of Equity and Engagement and Performance Management review and analyze each department's budget submission.

The Budget Office staff then incorporates agreed-upon modifications based on direction from the City Manager and the Executive Review Team culminating in the City Manager's Preliminary Fiscal Plan.



# **City Commission**

The Preliminary Fiscal Plan is submitted for review to the City Commission. The City Commission holds discussions and gathers information regarding department requests.

The City Commission also holds a public hearing at which the public is invited to comment on the proposed budget

# New Year's Resolution Idea: #SupportOurGRBiz



While the new year brings new hope for our community, many local businesses are still recovering from the effects of the previous year. Now more than ever, local businesses need our support. The City of Grand Rapids and our partner organizations encourage our community to continue supporting local businesses as we recover from the pandemic.

#SupportOurGRBiz started as a holiday season challenge, but it has proven to be just as relevant in 2021. To participate in this campaign, you can record yourself safely shopping at local-owned businesses and call out three or more friends to do the same. You can also share one or more of the campaign's graphics, which are available in English and Spanish at grandrapidsmi.gov (search #SupportOurGRBiz).

While many of us may feel more comfortable sheltering in place as much as possible, there are still plenty of ways to support our favorite businesses from home. Here are a few ways you can support your favorite local businesses in 2021:

- Buy gift cards for later purchases
- Shop local online
- Wear a mask and wash your hands when visiting stores and restaurants
- If you're feeling sick, stay home
- Order takeout or delivery
- Refer local businesses to others
- Follow, like, comment and share posts from local businesses
- Be understanding when your favorite businesses need to make difficult decisions for their business.

"This has been a difficult year for all of us, including our local businesses," said Mayor Rosalynn Bliss. "They have always been here for us, and now we can step up to be there for them."

For more ways to support local businesses and to find new businesses to patronize, search #SupportOurGRBiz on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



**WEAREGR** January 2021

### Stay Healthy and Connected at GR Parks

As we welcome the new year, we also welcome new changes to our City parks that encourage health, wellness and community in our neighborhoods. We continue to make health, safety and accessibility top priorities in updating our parks so that you can stay active and explore.

With great support from our community, we are happy to announce that all Grand Rapids parks and playgrounds are smoking- and vaping-free zones as of January 1. In addition, thanks to support from Kent County, 10 parks across our city will soon get free public Wi-Fi hotspots as part of the county's Network in a Box program.

"Our City parks have always been important places for mental and physical well-being, but especially during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Parks and Recreation Director David Marquardt.

These are a few updates to our City's parks that you can look forward to this year:

#### Clean Air Ordinance brings smoke-free parks

All Grand Rapids parks and playgrounds are smokingand vaping-free zones as of January 1. In addition to banning tobacco and electronic smoking devices, the major changes to the ordinance include banning the disposal of tobaccorelated waste (e.g., cigarette butts) and prohibiting the use of marijuana products - which is already prohibited in public places by state law – in City parks and playgrounds. However, smoking tobacco products is still allowed at Indian Trails Golf Course because as a business, it runs under a different set of guidelines.

Our hope is that the Clean Air and Public Places Ordinance will promote greater health outcomes in our community. Smoke-free environments are a great model for healthy behavior for children as well as those who would like to quit smoking. Smoke-free areas also reduce



exposure to secondhand smoke and reduces litter in public spaces. By reducing smoking in our parks, we can ensure a fun environment focused on health and wellness for our community.

For more information on the changes to the Clean Air and Public Places Ordinance, visit grandrapidsmi.gov/cleanair.

#### Wi-Fi hotspots program brings GR parks into the digital age

Ten parks across our city are getting free public Wi-Fi hotspots in the new year as part of the county's Network in a Box program. This is a pilot program that has placed Wi-Fi hotspots in park locations near picnic shelters and pool houses for year-round use to accommodate the growing need for digital services in our community.

You may have already noticed Wi-Fi availability at your neighborhood park as we finished installing the first

10 hotspots in December. You can use the Wi-Fi within a radius of 900 feet from the network box, which has enough bandwidth to support 30-50 devices.

**City News** 

Our main goal with this program is to bridge the digital divide in our community that has widened during the pandemic. As our world has become more dependent on internet connection, providing a free connection to those who need it can ease stresses related to jobs, school and dayto-day tasks.

"This pilot program will now add a new element for parks to serve as places of online work, study and leisure for residents as we become a more digitally connected community," said David Marquardt, director of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation.

For more information and updates on the Wi-Fi hotspot pilot program, follow the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Facebook page.

# **PILOT PROGRAM** LOCATIONS Ah-Nab-Awen Park (220 Front Ave NW) Belknap Park (30 Coldbrook St NE) Briggs Park (350 Knapp St NE) Fish Ladder Park (606 Front Ave NW) Garfield Park

(2111 Madison Ave SE)

(2531 Kalamazoo Ave SE)

**Richmond Park** (1101 Richmond St NW)

Riverside Park (2001 Monroe Ave NE)

Roosevelt Park (739 Van Raalte Dr SW)



# Winter Preparedness: Snow Removal

As the worst of Michigan's winter weather approaches, we encourage everyone to brush up on your snow removal etiquette. Snow removal in our neighborhoods' roads and sidewalks is a necessary task for City crews and residents alike to ensure easier, safer travel.

Our primary goal is to clear all roads of snow within 24-36 hours of a weather event. Before reaching secondary and neighborhood streets, we prioritize snow removal and de-icing major high-traffic roads such as Burton, Division, Fulton, Leonard and Monroe. Then we clear secondary streets and alleys when there are more than 3 inches of snow, though we typically do not de-ice secondary streets. However, we may salt these streets if there are hills, severe curves or special circumstances in the city.

In order for our crews to clear your streets of snow and ice, it is important to follow odd-even and same-side parking restrictions. These seasonal parking restrictions are in place from November 1 through April 1 to allow snowplows access to snow removal on streets with on-street parking as well as prevent your car from being buried in snow. Seasonal parking restrictions are enforced whether or not there is snow, so avoid getting a \$20 parking ticket by parking in the proper areas each day.

An easier daily commute is just one of many benefits of proper snow removal on our roads and sidewalks. Clear roads also allow our crews to pick up your refuse and recycling bins more easily without leaving anything behind. When you clear sidewalks outside of your home – which is required for property owners within 24 hours of the end of snowfall – you allow for a safer commute for your neighbors, mail carriers and delivery workers and allow for easier access to fire hydrants in case of emergencies.

In addition to these benefits, smart snow removal can



also have major environmental benefits. Here are a few sustainability tips for snow removal:

- Shovel snow onto vegetated areas, where meltwater can soak into the ground. This reduces runoff that goes down storm drains and directly to rivers and streams.
- Keep your storm drains clear of snow and ice to prevent flooding by marking them prior to snow fall and clearing after each snow fall.
- Winterize vehicles to prevent leaks. Wash cars at a commercial car wash, where soapy water is reused or goes to the sanitary sewer.
- A little salt goes a long way. Apply sparingly and remove slush once the snow melts to prevent refreezing. Salt in our stormwater system can be harmful to aquatic life.
- Store salt and de-icers under a roof or cover to minimize polluted runoff.

For more information on snow removal and other wintertime tips, refer to this year's Winter Preparedness Guide available online at grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Programs-and-Initiatives/ Winter-Preparedness-Guide

### The City Encourages Community to Sign Up for Local Emergency Alerts

Want to stay up to date on emergency alerts in our city? Our Office of Emergency Management encourages you to sign up for the Nixle Emergency Alert System to receive urgent messages impacting our city. Alerts may include weather warnings, water boil notices, evacuation notices and other life safety messages.

Register your email address and cell phone to receive text messages here: grandrapidsmi.gov/Services/Grand-Rapids-Community-Alerts-Nixle.

"Receiving emergency alerts is a critical piece to being prepared for any emergency or disaster," says Allison Farole, Emergency Management Administrator. In addition to signing up for the Nixle Emergency Alert System, our Office of Emergency Management recommends all households to have a battery powered radio and a list of all emergency contacts in an emergency kit. Visit ready.gov to learn more about building an emergency kit for your home, vehicle and workplace.

If you are unable to register for the Nixle Emergency Alert System online, call 311 or 456-3212 or email afarole@grcity.us.



WEAREGR January 2021

### **Residential Assessed Values for 2021**

In a year that brought constant change and disruption, one area that did not experience a negative impact is the residential housing market. In fact, the sale prices of residential property within the City of Grand Rapids continued to increase.

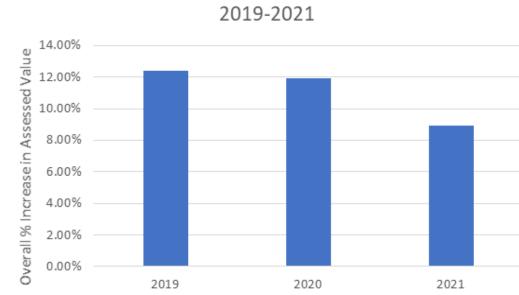
Sale studies of residential property in the City of Grand Rapids indicate that assessed values will increase an average of 8.9% for 2021. On January 19, the Assessor's Office will mail an Assessment Notice to all property owners reflecting the proposed assessed and taxable values for the 2021 tax year.

When you receive your Assessment Notice, you may notice that the assessed value did not increase by the exact 8.9%. That's because the 8.9% increase is the overall average increase of all properties classed as "Residential." State law requires our Assessing Office to assess all properties at 50% of true cash value.

The great variety of the types of neighborhoods and residential markets within our city cause this fluctuation based on separate annual neighborhood sales studies.

#### Assessed Value and Taxable Value

Although assessed values of homes and residential properties are increasing by an average of 8.9%, most taxpayers will not pay taxes on that full increase. There is a cap on the amount a property's Taxable Value may increase in one year. As long as there has not been a transfer of ownership in the previous year or physical changes to the property, the taxable value may only increase by the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less. This year, the inflation rate is 1.014, which means the taxable value can only be raised 1.4% – not 8.9%.



# Overall Increase in Residential Assessed Value 2019-2021

However, if your property was sold in 2020, the taxable value will become uncapped and will be set to the assessed value for 2021.

If you disagree with the assessed value of your home or property, you may appeal. The City of Grand Rapids charter requires an appeal to the Assessor's Review, which is held February 1 - 12. Instructions for the appeal process will be found on the 2021 Assessment Notice and on the City website.





### Learn About Our Emergency Operations Plan

In alignment with the City's Strategic Plan, the Office of Emergency Management is putting the final touches on the City's new Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Allison Farole, emergency management administrator, will host an engagement session in February to educate community members on the purpose of the EOP, the community's role in being prepared and discussing what makes Grand Rapids unique when it comes to being ready for the next disaster. The dates of these sessions were not scheduled at time of printing but will be promoted on the City's website and social media pages.

# **Grand Rapids Fire Department Encourages Businesses to Follow Safety Tips**

### **When Heating Temporary Structures**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, our team at the Grand Rapids Fire Department (GRFD) understands our local businesses are adapting to serve their customers throughout the winter. One challenge they are overcoming is creating temporary outdoors spaces that can accommodate service while still being warm and hospitable. In order to ensure these temporary structures are as safe as possible for guests and staff, we are asking every business to follow manufacturers' guidelines on all heating equipment and to pass an inspection with a GRFD fire inspector.

If you are a business operator who wants to add a canopy, tent or structure to its social zone, you should contact the Office of Special Events at specialevents@grcity.us for information about the permit process.

Our Fire Prevention Division offers the following information for businesses in need of sheltering their patrons during service activities:

- Electric heaters are acceptable in temporary structures but need to meet the required clearances to combustible material. Refer to manufacturers' guidelines on clearance requirements. Typically, three feet from the front of the heater to any combustible material is the norm. We recommend infrared-type heaters for use with the public.
- Gas-fired heaters that are ducted into temporary structures are recommended and will require permits from the Fire Prevention Division. You should contact a fire inspector for inspection requirements.
- Depending on the type of temporary gas-fueled heating appliances needed and fuel supply configuration, an inspection from the Grand Rapids Fire Prevention and Grand Rapids Building Department may be required. You should check with the Development Center at 616-

- 456-4100 for information about gas supply requirements. Portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances are
- prohibited in the following locations:Inside any occupancy where it is connected to a fuel gas container.
- Inside tents, canopies and membrane structures.
- Portable outdoor gas-fired heaters must also be located at least five feet from buildings. They shall not be located beneath or closer than five feet to combustible overhangs, awnings, sunshades or similar combustible attachments to buildings.
- Garden Igloo structures have become a popular

means to shelter patrons. Please provide the necessary documentation to the Fire Prevention Division proving the correct flame/smoke rating requirements before approval and use.

- Access to fire hydrants and fire department connections for sprinkler systems shall not be obstructed.
- All exits must have clear access to a public way and shall not be obstructed.

These are only some of the rules that our local businesses need to follow to ensure a safe environment. For more information and to schedule an inspection, contact your fire inspector fire inspector or call the GRFD at 616.456.3900.





Download our Citizen's Guide to the City's Finances today!





Dive into our City's 2020 revenues, expenses & more with an easy-to-read summary of our annual financial report.

The Citizen's Guide is now available for download in English & in Spanish at GrandRapidsMI.gov





### **Plaster Creek Family Park Wins mParks Design Award**

We are excited to announce that Plaster Creek Family Park has received a 2020 Park Design award from the Michigan Recreation & Park Association (mParks). The annual award is given to local park projects based on the criteria of project purpose, local significance, innovation, aesthetic quality and functionality.

We completed improvements on Plaster Creek Park, located at 2401 Buchanan Ave. SW, in August. The project is one of four planned partnerships between our City's Parks and Recreation Department and Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) to create green schoolyards in park-deficient areas. Other sites include Brookside Elementary, Buchanan Elementary and Sigsbee Park.

We applaud the help of the students and families at Burton Elementary/Middle School to create plans for the park's new nature and learning space. The Nest is an outdoor classroom overlooking the park near Burton School. The Meadows natural playscape features a stump forest, log jam and other play features made from local fallen trees harvested and stored by our Forestry Division. It also includes a rain garden, native meadow planting and community picnic area. Other features of the new park space include accessible pathways, athletic field improvements and green infrastructure improvements.

"We are honored that the important work we're doing in Grand Rapids is being recognized at a statewide level," said David Marquardt, our parks and recreation director, "The improvements at Plaster Creek Family Park will help students and the community create meaningful educational and recreational experiences."

The project directly supports our Strategic Plan goal of

creating a healthy environment through equitable access to and use of green spaces, increasing recreational activities and protecting and preserving water resources.

"The Plaster Creek Family Park and Burton Schoolyard project are truly the crown jewel of our joint Cities Connecting Children to Nature work," said Leadriane Roby, GRPS superintendent. "I want to extend our thanks and appreciation to the City's Parks and Recreation staff and architects who made this project an award-winning reality for our community's children."

In addition to GRPS, our project partners include Our Community's Children, the Wege Foundation, the our Environmental Services Department, the National League of Cities and the Children and Nature Network.

# Subscribe to Our newsletter, GR Connected!

With so much going on in our everyday lives and around the world, it can be difficult to stay connected with news that affects our community. That's why we are committed to providing you with the information you need to feel truly connected to your city. Our bimonthly e-newsletter, GR Connected, highlights the connections that make Grand Rapids special while also keeping you informed on the latest news and updates in the city.

GR Connected is your source of news and information from City Hall and departments across our organization. It also includes updates on important City news, community events and programs, helpful tips and much more.

Stay up-to-date on current and timely City news by subscribing to GR Connected today at grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Programs-and-Initiatives/ GR-Connected.





### **IN-PERSON FITNESS SESSIONS**

We're offering in-person classes while following public health guidelines at our Fitness Studio (201 Market Ave. SW). Note: Face coverings are required during in-person fitness sessions, when arriving, and leaving the area. Participants must maintain six feet of distance from others. If you are feeling ill, have any COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed, please stay home. For more information on COVID-19 symptoms, please visit michigan.gov/coronavirus.

**PRICING:** \$16/residents, \$26/nonresident per 4-week session

## **THREE WAYS TO REGISTER**

**Online** grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation



In Person 201 Market Ave SW

# CARDIO & STRENGTH

CLASSES RUN FOR 4 WEEKS STARTING THE WEEK OF FEB 1

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation 📡

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
CARDIO BARRE				
Take your barre class to a new level. Expect the strength and endurance building barre workout you know and love, combined with low impact cardio to bring up your heart rate, and bring on the sweat. 55 minutes of fast paced Cardio + Barre is exactly what you need to jump start your week. Sneakers or sticky socks required.	TUE	5:30 - 6:25 PM	201 MARKET AVE	CORI M.
PILATES Tone muscles, improve posture and learn flexibility and balance. Focus on moving as one unit with control and grace. Improve circulation, endurance and reduce stress.	WED	6:00 - 6:55 PM	201 MARKET AVE	ZIYAH D.

# CYCLING

CLASSES RUN FOR 4 WEEKS STARTING THE WEEK OF FEB 1

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation 🔀

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
CYCLING Reach your fitness goals while building leg and core strength. Powerful music and pace-setting instruction helps you climb steep hills, move across flat road and master intense intervals.	MON SAT	5:45 - 6:30 PM 8:00 - 8:45 AM	201 MARKET AVE 201 MARKET AVE	CAROL S. CAROL S.

# YOGA 🎯

CLASSES RUN FOR 4 WEEKS STARTING THE WEEK OF FEB 1

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation 🔀

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR	
BASIC YOGA Discover your inner yogi in a class that builds strength and body awareness. Begin with gentle stretching and move to flowing through and holding poses. Class will come to a restful end.	MON	12:00 - 12:55 PM	201 MARKET AVE	KAYE E.	



## VIRTUAL FITNESS SESSIONS

Join us online for the classes and instructors you know to stay fit and connect with fellow community members. All classes will be held on a secure Zoom video conference. Note: This is not a full listing of our spring classes, only classes planning to stay virtual in the spring. Watch for announcements with our full schedule, including some in-person classes, on our website and Facebook page in February.

PRICING: \$32 per 8-week session, unless otherwise noted.

# **THREE WAYS TO REGISTER**







# YOGA

### CLASSES RUN FOR 8 WEEKS STARTING THE WEEK OF MARCH 1

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation 📡

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

# **DANCE FITNESS**

CLASSES RUN FOR 8 WEEKS STARTING THE WEEK OF MARCH 1

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation 🔀

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
GROOVE Sweat away stress and dance some joy into your heart while following simple steps and easy toning moves. Groove is perfect for anyone who wants to add some fun into their current workout routine.	WED	5:15 - 6:10 PM	VIRTUAL	TERRI S.
ZUMBA A fusion of Latin and International music. This class combines high-energy and motivating music with unique moves and combinations.	THU	6:30 - 7:25 PM	VIRTUAL	AMY K. & BRI C.

# CARDIO & STRENGTH

CLASSES RUN FOR 8 WEEKS STARTING THE WEEK OF MARCH 1

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation 🔀

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
BARRE Barre is a low impact, high intensity total body workout that incorporates elements of Pilates, Ballet and Yoga. This workout is fast paced and set to fun upbeat music. During the workout you will use light hand weights, resistance bands, and your own body weight. Barre is a great workout for any fitness level as there are options to level up or down based on your own body.	WED	5:30 - 6:25 PM	VIRTUAL	CORI M.
CORE CAMP Incorporate weight training and cardio blast intervals to keep your muscles and heart pumping. Combined with today's hottest music, this class is as much fun as it is effective.	TUE	5:30 - 6:25 PM	VIRTUAL	KRISTIN P.
STRONG NATION Strong Nation is a HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) class that includes body weight strength exercises, fast cardio moves, plyometrics, and agility training. Music and moves sync together to help push you past your limits to reach your fitness goals.	WED	6:30 - 7:25 PM	VIRTUAL	AMY K.
POUND® Using Ripstix®, lightly weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND® transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Instead of listening to music, you become the music in this exhilarating full-body workout that combines cardio, conditioning and strength training with yoga and pilates- inspired movements. Designed for all fitness levels, POUND® provides the perfect atmosphere for letting loose, getting energized, toning up and rockin' out! The workout is easily modifiable, and the alternative vibe and welcoming philosophy appeals to men and women of all ages and abilities. POUND® approved sticks required for everyone. Ripstix® available at registration for \$20.	THU	5:30 - 6:15 PM	VIRTUAL	KRISTIN P.
<b>RESTORATIVE BARRE</b> Combining moves from pilates and yoga, and mixed with traditional strength work and elements from ballet, this is a class suitable for everyBODY. You can expect to start moving slow, building into a deep burn through your core and lower body, then peaking in standing postures that heat the body. Class ends with stillness and stretching. Move with intention, and peacefully reset your mind and body.	THU	8:00 - 8:45 PM	VIRTUAL	KELLY B.
STRONG30 STRONG30 packs a total body workout into 30 minutes. It combines HIIT (high intensity interval training), body weight exercises, and cardio moves. In every class, the music and moves sync together in a way to help push you past your limits and reach your fitness goals.	SAT	9:00 - 9:30 AM	VIRTUAL	AMY K.

# YOUTH PROGRAMS

Register online: grandrapidsmi.gov/recreation 🔀

CLASS	DAY(S)	TIME(S)	LOCATION(S)	INSTRUCTOR
YOUTH HIP HOP (AGES 5-11) Learn the fundamentals of hip hop movement and develop body control in an upbeat and high-energy environment. <b>\$16.</b>	FEB 2, 9, 16, 23	6:00 - 6:45 PM	VIRTUAL	GABRIELLE S.
YOUTH BALLET (AGES 7-11) This class will develop coordination, balance and rhythm through basic ballet/tap moves and creative movement. Participants should wear ballet shoes. <b>\$16.</b>	FEB 3, 10, 17, 24	6:00 - 6:45 PM	VIRTUAL	GABRIELLE S.
FAIRYTALE BALLET/CREATIVE MOVEMENT (AGES 3-6) Children will gain confidence moving their bodies to music while practicing simple steps, repetitive sequences and balance. Stretching, silly songs and props will make the experience fun. <b>\$16.</b>	FEB 6, 13, 20, 27	10:00 - 10:45 AM	VIRTUAL	GABRIELLE S.
SAFE SITTER ESSENTIALS (GRADES 6-8) Two-session class with each session designed to prepare students in grades 6-8 to be safe when they're home alone, watching younger siblings, or babysitting. The Instructor-led class is filled with fun games and role-playing exercises. Handbook Included. <b>\$49</b> .	FEB 16 & 18	5:00 - 5:45 PM	VIRTUAL	STEPHANIE B.
SAFE AT HOME (GRADES 4-6) Two 45 minute classes designed for students in grades 4-6. Participants will learn how to stay safe and learn safe habits when they are at home alone for a short period of time. Handbook included. <b>\$39.</b>	FEB 23 & 25	5:00 - 6:15 PM	VIRTUAL	STEPHANIE B.

### An Update on Current and Upcoming Park Improvement Projects

On Dec. 1, the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department provided an annual update to City Commission on 37 recently completed, current and upcoming park improvement projects. The projects mark the final phase of the seven-year parks millage passed by Grand Rapids voters in 2013.

The park system's second nature-based playscape and first gender-neutral restroom – which will serve as the standard for future park restroom projects – were among the highlights of the past year's improvements.

David Marquardt, parks and recreation director, told the City Commission that this year's \$4.4 million millage investment was supplemented by nearly \$3 million of leveraged funding from external organizations and grants.

"Guided by the investment policies initiated by the City Commission and the Parks Advisory Committee, we continue to be good stewards of the millage dollars approved by our residents," Marquardt said. "The extra funding that we have secured from our federal, state and local partners have really stretched our residents' tax dollars and allowed us to improve our parks much more than we could have without that support."

#### **Completed Projects**

- **Belknap Park** (30 Coldbrook St. NE) Improvements included new electrical service for the park as well as electrical upgrades to the sports courts and fields.
- **Foster Park** (350 State St. SE) Improvements include new ornamental fencing, new bench and picnic seating, new chess table and improved landscaping.
- Lexington Park (48 Gold Ave. NW) Improvements include a new picnic shelter, seating, swing, hammock grove and tree plantings.
- Mackay-Jaycees Park (2531 Kalamazoo Ave. SE) Improvements include playground updates, new outdoor exercise equipment, new beach volleyball courts and upgrades to the athletic fields and concession/restroom building.
- **555 Monroe** (555 Monroe Ave. NW) Improvements include a new skate/bike/scoot facility completed in partnership with Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.
- **Plaster Creek Family Park** (2401 Buchanan Ave. SW) Improvements include a new nature playscape, outdoor classroom, accessible walkways and green infrastructure completed in partnership with The Wege Foundation, the City's Environmental Services Department and Grand Rapids Public Schools.

#### **Current and Upcoming Construction**

- Aman Park (O-1859 Lake Michigan Dr. NW) Currently under construction. Improvements will include improved erosion control, new pedestrian bridge, entrance drive improvements and signage upgrades.
- **Bike Park Phase II** (580 Kirtland St. SW) Improvements will include a new picnic shelter and building removal.
- **Burton Woods** (2259 Everest Ave. SE) Construction is expected to begin Spring 2021. Improvements will include improved entryways, new benches and litter receptacles, fence removal along the north and northeast portion of the property and a small natural play area.
- Camelot Park (2230 Rowland Ave. SE) Improvements
  Continued on B12



Improvements at Lexington Park (48 Gold Ave. NW) include a new picnic shelter, seating, swing, hammock grove and tree plantings.



Improvements at MacKay-Jaycees Park (2531 Kalamazoo Ave. SE) include playground updates, new outdoor exercise equipment, new beach volleyball courts and upgrades to the athletic fields and concession/restroom building.



Improvements at 555 Monroe include a new skate/bike/scoot facility completed in partnership with Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.

will include a new splash pad partially funded by a \$150,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

- **Caulfield Park** (1119 Caulfield Ave. SW) Currently under construction. Improvements will include new lighting, drinking fountain, swing set and a custom bench designed by students at Cook Arts Center.
- Roberto Clemente Park (546 Rumsey St. SW) Currently under construction. Improvements will include a new gender-neutral restroom building, new picnic shelter, outdoor discovery play area, pathways with pedestrian lighting and green infrastructure improvements. Improvements are partially funded by a \$242,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund and \$300,000 from the City's Environmental Services Department.
- **Covell Dog Park** (526 Covell Ave. NW) Construction is expected to begin Spring 2021. Improvements will include separate areas for small and large dogs, a new shade structure, new drinking fountain and new play components.
- **Eastern Park** (820 Eastern Ave. NE) Currently under construction. Improvements will include new pathways, new swing set, new basketball court, new benches and a new grill.
- **Ken-O-Sha Park** (1353 Van Auken St. SE) Currently under construction. Improvements will include a new nature-based playscape, new outdoor classroom and green infrastructure, pathway and trailhead upgrades. Improvements are partially funded by a \$150,000 Great Urban Parks Campaign grant by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).
- Kensington Park (902 Curve St. SW) Currently under construction. Improvements will include an upgraded picnic area with tables and grills, improved athletic field drainage, improved playground and a new entrance pathway.
- Pleasant Park (400 Pleasant St. SE) Currently under construction. Improvements will include a new swing set and shade sails for the playground, new water spigot, entryway improvements and rain garden renovations.
- Rosa Parks Circle (135 Monroe Center St. NW) Construction is expected start in Spring 2021. Improvements will include upgraded and new seating, steps, granite, lighting, stage space, restrooms and landscaping. Fundraising to support these improvements is currently under way with support from the Ecliptic at Rosa Parks Circle Conservancy.
- **Richmond Park** (1101 Richmond St. NW) Nearly complete. Improvements include a new accessible path around the pond, stairs for the sledding hill, new trailhead signage (coming Spring 2021) and pool house entrance upgrades. Fundraising for future playground improvements is under way with support from the Mitten Foundation.
- **Riverside Park** (2001 Monroe Ave. NE) Construction expected to start Summer 2021. Improvements will include a new picnic shelter and restroom, new accessible kayak launch, upgrades to tables, grills and benches throughout the park and native plantings at the lagoon edge. Funding for the kayak launch is supported by a \$150,000 Michigan Department of Natural Resources recreation passport grant.



A conceptual rendering of the new gender-neutral restroom building and picnic shelter coming to Roberto Clemente Park.



A concept plan for improvements coming to Ken-O-Sha Park.

• **Sigsbee Park** (431 Benjamin Ave. SE) – Construction is expected to start Spring 2021. Improvements—in coordination with Grand Rapids Public Schools—will include a new nature-based play structure, new landscape beds with trees and bikeable landscape, and repainted plaza embankment.

#### Slated for Community Input and Design

- **Canal Park** (941 Monroe Ave. NW)
- Fish Ladder Park (560 Front Ave. NW)
- Fourth Street Woods (1341 4th St. NW)
- **Garfield Park** splash pad project (2111 Madison Ave. SE)
- Heartside Park (301 Ionia Ave. SW)
- Heritage Hill Park (501 Paris Ave. SE)
- Hillcrest Dog Park (1415 Lyon St. NE)
- Midtown Green (747 Fountain St. NE)
- Martin Luther King Park lodge improvements (900 Fuller Ave. SE)
- Nagold Park (945 Nagold St. NW)
- Paris Park (942 N Ottillia St. SE)

- **Pekich Park** (9 Cherry St. SW)
- Seymour Park (942 Ottillia St. SE)
- Sixth Street Park (647 Monroe Ave. NW)
- Sweet Street Park (475 Sweet St. NE)
- Veterans Memorial Park building improvements (101 Fulton St. E)

Remaining park projects to be funded from the 2013 parks millage include **Ah-Nab-Awen Park** (220 Front Ave. NW), which is pending amid Grand River restoration projects, and **Sullivan Field** (650 Valley Ave. NW), which will continue community design input in 2021.

Upon completion of these projects, the 2013 parks millage will have funded a total of 83 park improvement projects across Grand Rapids, with each of the City's 75 parks receiving upgrades. The total millage investment since 2014 is \$22,810,522 with \$17,048,605 additional leveraged funding.

Additional information on past, current and upcoming parks millage projects can be found online at grandrapidsmi.gov/parks.

# **WEAREGR**

### January 2021

# Library News

### BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

Rachel S. Anderson

Deborah Bose

Kelly Boston

James Botts

Sophia Ward Brewer

Kathryn Dilley

### **LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

John J. McNaughton



616.988.5400 - WWW.GRPL.ORG

# Free Printing, Copying, Faxing, and Scanning Services Now Available



The Grand Rapids Public Library is now offering contactless printing, copying, faxing, and scanning of documents through its GRPL To Go curbside service. Patrons can have up to 50 pages per week copied, printed, scanned or faxed at no cost.

"As more people work and learn from home, access to business machines like printers, scanners, and copiers are not available or affordable," remarked GRPL Director John McNaughton. "But the need is still there. Offering these services is another example of how GRPL can bridge the technology gap many are facing."

To use these services, patrons can submit a request on the library's website grpl.org, or bring their documents to any GRPL location. Staff will assist them at the GRPL To Go walk up window or by phone or text curbside. When complete, staff will return the original documents and any copies/printouts in a safe and contactless manner.



GRPL To Go is a curbside service that allows patrons to pick up holds and receive account assistance. It also offers limited material retrieval, book bundles, and storytime kits for families to use at home.

To get started, browse the online library catalog and place holds on the items that interest you. You can have up to 25 holds at one time.

When the items you placed on hold are available and ready for pick up, the library will notify you by text, email, or phone. You have up to 14 days to pick up your items after you are notified that they are in. Drive to the GRPL location you selected to pick up your holds. Park your vehicle in a GRPL To Go spot and call or text the number on the sign. Please give your full name and a description of your vehicle. We may also ask for your date of birth or library card number. A staff member will bring out your library material to you.

Our staff are using Personal Protection Equipment like face masks and are practicing social distancing to ensure that GRPL To Go is safe for both patrons and staff.

When you are done with your items, please return them to any outside GRPL book drop. All returned material will be heat treated and quarantined for five days. GRPL has eliminated late fees on overdue material, so don't worry if you need an extra day or two to finish your book.

GRPL To Go is offered at all eight of our locations. To learn more about GRPL To Go, visit www.grpl.org/togo.

# **Collecting Your Grand Rapids Public Library Stories**



Public libraries have a special place in people's hearts. From childhood memories to transformational experiences, each story is unique. In celebration of the Grand Rapids Public Library's 150th anniversary, we want to hear your GRPL story! Please share a memory or experience with us. Fill out the form (www.grpl.org/150) and include any photos or videos that help tell your story. This could include a picture of you at one of our libraries; audio or video of you sharing your story; a photo or scan of a handwritten story, or even a drawing.

If you would like to share a physical copy of your story, drawing or photo, please drop it off at any GRPL location or mail it to us at: My GRPL Story 111 Library St NE Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

We'll share a selection of story submissions on our social media platforms and website throughout the year. All of the submissions will be kept in our archives.

Questions? Email stories@grpl.org or call us at 616-988-5497.

Las bibliotecas públicas ocupan un lugar especial en el corazón de las personas. Desde los recuerdos de la infancia hasta las experiencias transformadoras, cada historia es única. ¡Para celebrar el aniversario 150 de la Biblioteca Pública de Grand Rapids, queremos escuchar su historia GRPL!

Favor de compartir un recuerdo o experiencia con nosotros. Complete el formulario (www.grpl.org/150) e incluya cualquier foto o vídeo que ayude a contar su historia. Esto podría incluir una foto suya en una de nuestras bibliotecas; un audio o vídeo de usted compartiendo su historia; una foto o un escaneo de una historia escrita a mano, o incluso un dibujo. Si desea compartir una copia física de su historia, dibujo o foto, déjela en cualquier ubicación de GRPL o envíenosla por correo a: My GRPL Story 111 Library St NE Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

Compartiremos una selección de envíos de historias en nuestras plataformas de redes sociales y sitio web durante todo el año. Todos los envíos se guardarán en nuestros archivos.

¿Preguntas? Envíe correo electrónico a stories@grpl.org o llámenos al 616-988-5497.

### WEAREGR January 2021

# The One Book, One City for Kids 2021 Selection



#### About the program

One Book, One City for Kids is an annual reading program that encourages upper elementary 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 Front Desk

Mia Tang has a lot of secrets:

Number 1: She lives in a motel, not a big house. Every day, while her immigrant parents clean the rooms, ten-year-old Mia manages the front desk of the Calivista Motel and tends to its guests.

Number 2: Her parents hide immigrants. And if the mean motel owner, Mr. Yao, finds out they've been letting them stay in the empty rooms for free, the Tangs will be doomed.

Number 3: She wants to be a writer. But how can she when her mom thinks she should stick to math because English is not her first language?

It will take all of Mia's courage, kindness, and hard work to get through this year. Will she be able to hold on to her job, help the immigrants and guests, escape Mr. Yao, and go for her dreams?

#### Meet the Author Kelly Yang

Ever since she was a little girl, Kelly Yang has LOVED telling stories. She tells all kinds of stories—stories about gutsy girls and bold boys, about motels, loan sharks, immigration, poverty, and race. The thing all her stories have in common is they are important, accessible, and filled with diverse characters.



Kelly Yang is the *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Front Desk*, *Parachutes*, and *Three Keys. Front Desk* was awarded the 2019 Asian Pacific American Award for Literature, the Parents' Choice Gold Medal, the 2019 Global Read Aloud, and has earned numerous other honors.

Kelly immigrated to America when she was 6 years old and grew up in Southern California, where she and her parents worked in three different motels. She eventually left the motels and went to college at the age of 13 and law school at the age of 17. She is a graduate of University of California Berkeley, where she majored in Political Science, and Harvard Law School. After law school, she gave up law to pursue her passion of writing and teaching children writing. She is the founder of The Kelly Yang Project (kellyyang.edu.hk), a leading writing and debating program for kids in Asia. As a writing teacher for 13 years, Kelly helped thousands of children find their voice and become better writers and more powerful speakers.

Before turning to fiction, she was also a columnist for the South China Morning Post for many years. Her writing has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Atlantic*. She has three children and splits her time between Hong Kong and San Francisco, California.

Funded by:



Community Partner:



# Ericka "Kyd Kane" Thompson Appointed Poet Laureate of Grand Rapids



Ericka "Kyd Kane" Thompson has been named the Poet Laureate of the greater Grand Rapids area for a three-year term starting in January 2021. She will take over the

position currently held by Marcel "Fable the Poet" Price, who has been Poet Laureate since 2017.

The Poet Laureate is an ambassador for poetry, creating programs and projects to foster the writing and reading of poetry by the public. Selected by the Grand Rapids Poet Laureate Selection Committee, past Poet Laureates include L.S. Klatt, Linda Nemec Foster, Patricia Clark, Rodney Torreson, and David Cope.

Kyd Kane is a self-taught, multi-disciplinary poet and visual artist who grew up on the Southeast side of Grand Rapids. She uses self expression to generate social dialogue about the human experience. Her work explores themes such as poverty, privilege, gentrification, resilience, and identity through community conversation, poetry, installation pieces, video, and photography.

Her work has taken her to numerous performance venues including the Detroit Masonic Temple, the Michigan State Capitol building, Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Unity Center of Peace in Chapel Hill, NC, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts and SiTE:LAB, among others. Her voice has been featured on NPR, WYCE Electric Poetry, TEDx, and on the intros, interludes, and outros of various musical artists from all over the country.

She serves as the co-host of Creston Vibes, a themed open mic series, is active with the "Challenge Privilege" movement, and is a teaching artist with an arts and culture nonprofit organization, The Diatribe, Inc.

Kyd reflected, "Years ago, when I first learned that this city appointed a Poet Laureate every three years, I couldn't have imagined that one day, it would be me. Growing up on the Southeast side of GR, arts and culture wasn't something I got to experience much and when I did, I never saw many people that were a reflection of me or my experiences. When there's a lack of representation, it tends to cloud the vision of what we view as possible or attainable. I am the first Black Woman and also the first openly queer person to hold this position. I set the intention for my role as laureate to open up new windows of possibility and allow people to imagine themselves in positions that they may have never seen themselves in historically. I'm excited for all the ways I'll use the art of poetry to build community, and I look forward to changing the way poetry is experienced in our city for years to come."

The Grand Rapids Poet Laureate is a program of the Grand Rapids Public Library and is funded through a grant from the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation, Dyer-Ives Foundation Poetry Fund.

### **Library News**

### **WEAREGR**



# GRPL To Go Hours

MAIN LIBRARY 111 Library St NE | 616.988.5400

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

#### **MADISON SQUARE BRANCH**

1201 Madison SE | 616.988.5411

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

#### OTTAWA HILLS BRANCH 1150 Giddings SE | 616.988.5412

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

#### SEYMOUR BRANCH

2350 Eastern SE | 616.988.5413

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

#### VAN BELKUM BRANCH

1563 Plainfield NE | 616.988.5410

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

#### WEST LEONARD BRANCH 1017 Leonard NW | 616.988.5416

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

WEST SIDE BRANCH 713 Bridge NW | 616.988.5414

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

Friday | 10 am – 4 pm **YANKEE CLIPPER BRANCH** 2025 Leonard NE | 616.988.5415

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

WWW.GRPL.ORG/TOGO

# **Grand Rapids Public Library Celebrates 150 Years of Service in 2021**

The Grand Rapids Public Library is celebrating 150 years of serving the City of Grand Rapids. We are planning community events, exhibits, and some fun surprises throughout the year, sponsored by the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation. Visit grpl.org/150 for updates.



#### A Brief History of GRPL

The Grand Rapids Public Library was founded in 1871 when members of the Grand Rapids Board of Education agreed to combine their book holdings with those of two other organizations – the Ladies Literary Association and the YMCA. A library committee hired the first librarian, Miss Frances Holcomb, at an annual salary of \$500.

In its early years, the Grand Rapids Public Library called several downtown spaces home, including a room above a dry goods store, space in the Ledyard Building, and several rooms of Grand Rapids' City Hall.

By 1900, the desire for a permanent home began to grow. Attorney John Patton fueled the effort by contacting Andrew Carnegie, one of the wealthiest men in the country, to seek funding; Carnegie promised \$150,000 in support. Around the same time, Martin Antoine Ryerson, a native of Grand Rapids and prominent Chicago citizen, expressed interest in funding

a home for the library. Ultimately, Grand Rapids has Martin A. Ryerson, arts and education benefactor, to thank for the gift of the Ryerson Building, now known as the

Main Library.

Martin A. Ryerson



Ryerson Building

The cornerstone of the Ryerson Building was laid on July 4, 1902, and the building was completed and open to the public two years later. Many features make the Ryerson Building remarkable and beautiful. Its exterior is made of milled Bedford Limestone from Indiana. Carrara marble from Italy was used for the steps, and the marble wainscoting inside also hails from Italy.



Ottawa Hills Branch

Over the decades, the library expanded into city neighborhoods to better serve patrons living in different areas of the city. The first branch was the West Side Branch, which was originally housed in an old Michigan Bell Telephone Company building; it opened in 1908. Current branches include Ottawa Hills, Madison Square, Yankee Clipper, Van Belkum, West Leonard, and Seymour.



Ryerson Building under construction

The Ryerson Building saw a great deal of change in the second half of the 20th century. Overcrowding had gradually become problematic, and by 1962, plans were made to spend \$2.8 million on an addition to the north side of the Ryerson Building. The updated building with its large addition was dedicated in May of 1969.



Keeler wing under construction

Then, another huge transition occurred around the turn of the 21st century. Architects designed a plan to better marry the original 1904 structure with its 1960s addition. As a result, the Ryerson Building was open to the public again for the first time since 1967. Additionally, the original atrium and skylight of the Ryerson Building were restored, and a large atrium was built to join the original Ryerson Building with the 1960s addition. Pairing the original building with the newly named Keeler wing - named in honor of Mike and Mary Ann Keeler, who made a gift of \$1.2 million from the Keeler Foundation – proved to be quite a challenge, as the original building and its addition were made of different materials and in different styles. In 2003, a grand opening was held to dedicate the new Main Branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library.



Throughout its first 150 years, the library has experienced numerous evolutions-everything from introducing the Dewey Decimal System to eschewing traditional card catalogs for online catalogs to streaming audiobooks directly to patrons' devices. In good times and in bad, the library has served as a refuge and a resource determined to provide outstanding customer service. The library is grateful to its staff and its leadership, including its devoted library commissioners, as well as to its endlessly generous patrons and supportive community members.

# **Black History Month 2021**

# February 1–28, 2021 | Celebrate Black History and Culture

Celebrate Black History Month with the Grand Rapids Public Library! Join us online February 1–28, 2021 for programs for both kids and adults that highlight and celebrate our Black community.



# **Virtual Events**

#### African American Architects with Isaac V. Norris, AIA, NOMA, LEED-AP

Part 1 – Tuesday, February 2, 12:00 pm Part 2 – Tuesday, February 8, 12:00 pm



**Community Spotlight: Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses (GRABB)** Wednesday, February 3, 12:00 pm Music (NOT) in the Stacks: Edye Evans Hyde

Thursday, February 4, 7:00 pm

**Black History Month Storytimes** Saturdays, February 6, 13, 20, 27, 2021, 10:00 am

**Community Spotlight: A City Within A City Film with Victor Williams** Wednesday, February 10, 12:00 pm



Music (NOT) in the Stacks: Tom Cutts Thursday, February 11, 7:00 pm

**Ebony Road Players Present 'Anne and Emmett'** Tuesday, February 16, 6:00 pm



**Community Spotlight: We Are Lit GR with Kendra McNeil** Wednesday, February 17, 12:00 pm

Music (NOT) in the Stacks: Karisa Wilson Thursday, February 18, 7:00 pm

#### Taste of Soul Sunday

Sunday, February 21, 1:00 – 2:30 pm A Moment with Shannon Cohen

1:00 pm

Serita's Black Rose 1:30 pm

.....

**Community Spotlight: Luxe Artisan Preserves with Kimberly Marie** Wednesday, February 24, 7:00 pm



Music (NOT) in the Stacks: Jordan Hamilton Thursday, February 25, 7:00 pm

## Create

#### **Black History Month Craft Kit**

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

Craft kits can be picked up using GRPL To Go, our curbside holds pickup service, or can be picked up at any GRPL location. Available while supplies last.

### Eat

#### Taste of Soul Showcase

February 21 – 28, 2021

Show your GRPL library card at participating restaurants between February 21–28, 2021 to receive \$5 off.

*40 Acres Soul Kitchen* 1059 Wealthy St SE 616-723-9770

Boston Soul Cafe 1553 Kalamazoo Ave SE 616-214-706

*Daddy Pete's BBQ* 2921 Eastern Ave SE 616-426-8439

*Taste of Africa* 1553 Kalamazoo Ave SE Suite A 616-617-6678

\*One discount per restaurant per household.

\*Each restaurant is limited to offering the discount to the first 160 households. \*Please let the restaurant know that you will be using your library card for a \$5 discount when you place your order. \*While supplies last.

Please practice safety by following the CDC's recommended health guidelines. Wearing a mask and adhering to individual restaurant guidelines is required to be serviced from participating restaurants.



# The Grand Rapids Public Library Offers Remote Resume Help to Job Seeker

GRPL has a new service to help job seekers be successful in their employment search. Library patrons and Kent County residents can now upload their resume using the library's online form and receive feedback from trained library staff.

"Job-seeking is difficult when there's not a worldwide pandemic," said Steven Assarian, GRPL's Business and Career Librarian. "It makes us vulnerable, and it's a process that's difficult to navigate well. That's why we created our Remote Resume Review service. We want to ensure our patrons get the help they need, especially those who've been impacted by COVID-19. With this service, we can help our patrons put their best foot forward and be primed for success while staying safe and healthy."

GRPL's remote resume service offers timely support from trained professionals that are tailored to each patron's needs. Resume evaluation includes feedback on format, design, recommendations on what to include, copy-editing, and more.

In addition to GRPL's Remote Resume service, the library's Small Business

Resource Center offers 1:1 career consultations with staff. Patrons and Kent County residents can schedule an appointment with the library's Business and Career Librarian to fine-tune their job seeking process, prepare for future interviews, identify strengths, or work on effective business plans.

Assarian continued, "Now more than ever, we need to help each other. The Small Business Resource Center is just one way your library helps entrepreneurs, nonprofits, and jobseekers get the information they need to be successful. Through our



suite of SBRC services and resources, the Grand Rapids Public Library continues to be in your corner, helping you ask the important questions to assist you through your journey, wherever it may lead."



### In This Issue:

Grand Rapids Public Schools News - Section A City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Public Library News - Section B Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Programs - Section B

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

# THEME APPLICATION WINDOW OPEN

ACT NOW, APPLY TODAY AT APPLY.GRPS.ORG

# MORE INFORMATION INSIDE!



ECRWSS Postal Customer



Leadriane Roby having fun on her first day as the new GRPS superintendent (all photos courtesy of GRPS)

# **Dedicated Educator Overcame 'Life's Circumstances' to Lead GRPS**

#### New superintendent tackles twin challenges of district, pandemic

#### By Phil DeHaan, Courtesy of School News Network

For more than a quarter of a century, going back to her first teaching job in 1993, Leadriane Roby, the first-year superintendent of Grand Rapids Public Schools, has had a guiding principle for her work in education.

"Life's circumstances happen," she says. "How do we prepare our young people for life's circumstances?"

It has informed her work in the classroom, her work as an assistant principal and principal, her work as an assistant superintendent and now her work at the helm of GRPS, Michigan's eighth-largest public school district with just under 15,000 students and almost 1,100 teachers.

But it has also informed the life Roby has lived — a life filled with personal challenge, strong women role models and accomplished educators. Those influences helped prepare her to head a changing and demanding urban school district, which she was hired to lead in February.

As a young girl she moved from Missouri to Minnesota with

her mother after her parents divorced. The Minneapolis area was where there was extended family, and her mom knew that support system would be needed.

**College Prep** 

Financial Aid - A6

Michigan College and

University Directory - A7

Choosing a College - A7

Young Leadriane — it's pronounced LEE-dree-in — adjusted to life's circumstances, she says, thanks in large part to that support system. She loved school, and especially loved conversation-based classes as opposed to lecture-based ones.

She still remembers a math class at Central High School in St. Paul where, if the students were participating well during the week, the last 15 minutes of class on Fridays would be a time where the teacher and the students would tell jokes.

"It was kind of corny," she says, "but he knew how to hook us. The students would hold each other accountable. During the week it would be 'turn in your work, so we can have Joke Friday."

#### Dealing with Life's Circumstances as a College Sophomore

After graduating from Central as a strong student at a very

#### Dedicated Educator CONTINUED FROM A1

rigorous school, she headed off to Hampton University in Virginia, but returned to the Twin Cities because she was so homesick. She then transferred to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities but dropped out her sophomore year when she became pregnant.

It was a path she hadn't planned on taking, but, she says, she had some critical capital in her corner as she again dealt with life's circumstances.

"It may not have been easy," she recalls, "but I've always had support. And I learned that you don't do anything by yourself."

Still, there were some hard lessons for Roby and her husband, Steven, along the way.

"I tried to work for a year-and-a-half," she says. "My mother and mother-in-law were extremely supportive of Steven and me. They supported us but not too much. So, I was working three jobs: as a telemarketer, in the Kmart ladies' department, and I sold Avon.

"And I remember I paid the babysitter and had \$12 left to last two weeks. And I said, 'okay you have to get yourself back in school.' I understood that having \$12 to my name to last two weeks was not a good spot to be in."

She found out that as a high-achieving high school student and a young mom, there were scholarships available to her that could make going back to college a reality.

#### Helped by a Purple People Eater

One was a Page Education Foundation scholarship, courtesy of a nonprofit founded in 1988 by former Minnesota Viking Alan Page — one of the Purple People Eaters, the team's four defensive linemen



Roby and her husband and high school and college sweetheart, Steven, ran a virtual 5K Turkey Trot to support GRPS studentathletes in the 1960s and 1970s who wreaked havoc on the NFL and whose motto was "Meet at the quarterback." In addition to his on-the-field exploits, Page had earned a J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School while still playing in the NFL and went on to serve on the Minnesota Supreme Court.

And he and Roby share an important connection. When he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, his presenter was Dr. Willarene Beasley, who had come to know Page when she served as principal of North Community High School where, she said, he had been a role model to her students during and after his time as a Viking.

Beasley is the older sister of Dr. Jacquelyn Sowell-Davis, the mother of Dr. Leadriane Roby.

"Both my mom and aunt have had a huge influence on who I am personally and professionally," Roby says. "As a little girl, I was always with them, listening and watching how they navigated the professional world. They are my first mentors. I have mad respect for both these ladies."

Roby's mother began her career as a registered nurse in St. Louis, and transitioned to teaching and administration in a nursing program while earning a master's and doctorate degree. She eventually moved into public school administration in Minneapolis Public Schools and retired as a principal.

#### 'I'm An Educator'

Both she and Roby's aunt are still heavily involved in the Minneapolis/St. Paul community, volunteering at schools and church, and it is because of them, she says, that she went into education. Indeed, though it's been a while since she was in the classroom, Roby still considers herself a teacher at heart.

Her career began in Minneapolis Public Schools in 1993 as an elementary school teacher. She then moved into a role there that included providing professional development and training for teachers and support staff before she transitioned to an assistant principal's role in Minneapolis. That was followed by nine years as a principal in Covert Public Schools in Southwest Michigan.

From there it was back to a principal's post in Minneapolis

#### Leadriane Roby and Family

Dr. Leadriane Roby and her husband, Steven, were high school and college sweethearts. They have been married for 33 years.

Their oldest child is daughter Tayler, who is 33, lives in Atlanta with her husband Eric and has a 3-year-old daughter Reese who, Roby says, is "the cutest and yep, that is my biased opinion!"

Their older son Julian is 26 and lives in St. Paul, Minn., where he is coordinator for the Oversight Board for the City of St. Paul Human Rights Department.

Younger son Cedric is 23, and recently moved to Detroit where he is a first-year teacher in the Detroit Public Schools Community District.

CONTINUES ON A3

### Grand Rapids Public Schools

# WE ARE GR

January 2021 Grand Rapids Board of Education

Jen Schottke, *President* Kimberley Williams, *Vice President* Katherine Downes Lewis, *Secretary* Rev. John Matias, *Treasurer* Tony Baker, Ph.D. Kymberlie Davis Jose A. Flores, Ed.D. Kristian Grant Raynard Ross

> Leadriane Roby, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools

Equal Opportunity Institution: Grand Rapids Public Schools, as an Equal Opportunity Institution, complies with federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment, including Title IV and Title VII (with amendments) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Veterans Readjustment Act of 1974 as amended 38 USC 20-12 and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. The District will not discriminate against any person based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, height, weight, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, disability or veteran status. The District's Civil Rights Compliance Officer is Sharron Pitts. Ms. Pitts may be contacted at 1331 Franklin SE, P.O. Box 117, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0117, (616) 819-2030 or (616) 819-2028. The District's Title IX Coordinator is Kurt Johnson. Mr. Kurt Johnson may be contacted at 1331 Franklin SE, P.O. Box 117, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0117 or (616) 819-6339 or titleix@grps.org.

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

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

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

#### WE ARE GR

is published four times per year by GRPS Communications Office Grand Rapids Public Schools 1331 Franklin St. SE, P.O. Box 117 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501-0117 Phone: (616) 819-2149 Fax: (616) 819-2149 Fax: (616) 819-3480 www.grps.org www.WeAreGR.com John Helmholdt, *Executive Director of Communications & External Affairs* Kyle Pray, *Director of Communications* & Enrollment Javier Cervantes, *Communications Coordinator* 

#### CONTINUED FROM A2

Public Schools and then a dual role as both a building principal and assistant associate superintendent. Finally, she served six years as assistant superintendent of Richfield Public Schools in suburban Minneapolis before taking her new post in Grand Rapids.

"I'm an educator," she says. "Sometimes my husband will say 'Leadriane, I'm not in your classroom!' I want people to get things. If we're all on the same page, we can be learning."

That's why, she says, a comment last February by Mary Bouwense, president of the Grand Rapids Education Association, meant so much to her.

After the Grand Rapids Board of Education chose Roby, Bouwense told local media that she saw Roby as an educator, someone who understands the job of being a teacher.

"It meant a lot," Roby says.

And in the midst of COVID-19, Roby's understanding of and empathy for the teaching profession has grown even stronger.

"Teachers right now," she says, "I give them all sorts of props. The creativity and innovation they have shown this year. Making connections with kids they have not even physically met. It's been amazing."

Roby has tried to model the same creativity and innovation as superintendent.

"I've tried to challenge myself to grow," she says. "If I'm not pushing myself, I'm not doing my job."

#### Plenty of Challenges Ahead

That includes what is next for GRPS, as the district contends with financial, enrollment and achievement challenges in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic. "We're doing lots of things well and have done them well," she says. "Our achievement levels have increased, graduation rates have increased. The next level is what's underneath that. As we peel the onion, where are we with subgroups? Where are we with Latino students, with special ed students? How are we making sure all students have a post-secondary plan? College might not be for everyone but having a plan should be."

Her to-do list includes facilities and technology to optimize student learning.

"How are we connecting our students to the resources they need? How are we setting up our buildings and facilities so they are physically appealing, clean, up-to-date with state-of-the-art equipment?"

Roby also is casting an eye to how the district supports its teachers.

Her doctorate from Western Michigan University is in Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology, and her research focused on the teacher mentoring experience. Teacher preparation and support, she says, in turn shapes the academic experiences of students.

"Mentoring is something I strongly believe in," she says. "I have had wise and sage teacher-leaders who took me by the elbow and helped me with the softer skills: how to engage with families, working in a team. I am thankful that I had really strong mentors and thankful for people who demonstrated what it means to have a coachable spirit."

#### Zooming with the Unicorns

She is also thankful for a group of black, female Ph.D. holders in the Minneapolis area who head up educational institutions. She still



Out supporting the Union High School football team, one of a number of appearances at district events Roby made this fall



Roby and Gov. Whitmer with a socially distanced greeting at an August 2020 press conference on funding for schools hit hard by COVID-19

stays in touch with them via a monthly Zoom. They call themselves "the unicorns" because of their perceived rarity, and Roby's face lights up and her voice grows animated when she talks about this group.

"We could let our hair down and be ourselves," she recalls. "We could talk about aggressions we experienced, and it was a safe space to have that dialogue. Society is not always willing to accept women in leadership and especially black women in leadership. Being in leadership can be isolating at times. When you are the person making decisions, or the face of a decision, the attacks may come."

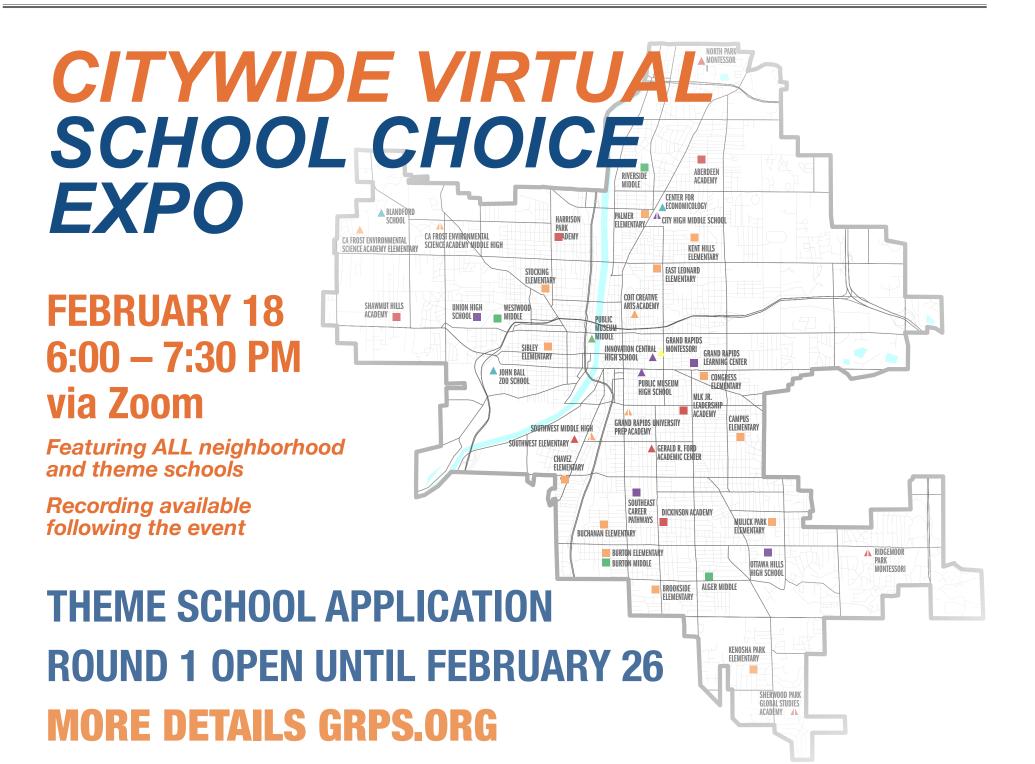
Roby says she turns to her faith in times of trouble, and the story behind her colorful first name, given to her by her paternal grandmother, is that it has biblical origins — though she has not been able to verify that and has never met another Leadriane.

"If I ever do," she says, "I would be so excited to learn if the name really is biblical or to have them shed light on the name's origin."

In the meantime, she has work to do in a district that will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2021. She heads into the new year having been rated "highly effective" by the board in early December in their first formal evaluation of her.

"As a board, we are happy to have Dr. Roby on our team," board President Kristian Grant told SNN. "She has consistently shown up for her students and staff in one of the hardest years we have seen. Although there are still some tough decisions to be made for the district, I am confident that we have chosen the right leader to guide the process."

Roby is confident too, and she heads into 2021 knowing that life's circumstances will happen — and that she's prepared to handle them.



### **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, 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 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 house (8:00 am to 4:00 pm). Plans may also be found on the district' website at www.grps.org/facilities-asbestos-info. Alternatively, any person may request a copy of the plan by writing the Grand Rapids Public Schools Facilities Management Department, 900 Union, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503. There is a cost involved in reproducing the document of approximately 10 cents per page. The Grand Rapids Public Schools will send a copy out of the management plan within 5 business days of receiving the request.

WEAREGR January 2021

# 2021-2022 SCHOOL CHOICES

ABERDEEN (PK-8) Neighborhood School 928 Aberdeen St NE 616-819-2868

ALGER MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8) Neighborhood School 921 Alger St SE 616-819-6200

BLANDFORD SCHOOL (6) Theme School 3143 Milo St NW 616-819-2555

BROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 2505 Madison Ave SE 616-819-2242

BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 1775 Buchanan Ave SW 616-819-2252

BURTON ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 2133 Buchanan Ave SW 616-819-2262

BURTON MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8) Neighborhood School 2133 Buchanan Ave SW 616-819-2269

#### CA FROST ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE ACADEMY ELEMENTARY (PK-5)

Theme School 1460 Laughlin Dr NW 616-819-2550

CA FROST ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE ACADEMY MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL (6-12)

Theme School 1417 Covell Ave NW 616-819-5900

CAMPUS ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 710 Benjamin Ave SE 616-819-3525

CENTER FOR ECONOMICOLOGY (6) Theme School 1720 Plainfield Ave NE 616-819-2380

> **CESAR E CHAVEZ ELEMENTARY (PK-5)**

Neighborhood School 1205 Grandville Ave SW 616-819-2560 CITY HIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL (7-12) Theme School 1720 Plainfield Ave NE 616-819-2380

> COIT CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY (PK-5) Theme School 617 Coit Ave NE 616-819-2390

CONGRESS ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 940 Baldwin St SE 616-819-2201

DICKINSON ACADEMY (PK-8) Neighborhood School 448 Dickinson St SE 616-819-2505

EAST LEONARD ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 410 Barnett St NE 616-819-2525

> GERALD R. FORD ACADEMIC CENTER (PK-8) Theme School 851 Madison Ave SE 616-819-2640

GRAND RAPIDS LEARNING CENTER (10-12) Success Center 415 Fulton St E 616-819-1045

GRAND RAPIDS MONTESSORI ACADEMY (PK-6) Theme School 159 College Ave NE 616-819-2405

GRAND RAPIDS MONTESSORI HIGH SCHOOL (7-12) Theme School 421 Fountain St NE 616-819-2405

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM HIGH SCHOOL (9-12) Theme School

54 Jefferson Ave SE 616-819-6450

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8) Theme School 272 Pearl St NW 616-819-3600

GRAND RAPIDS UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY ACADEMY (6-12)

Theme School 512 Division Ave S 616-819-1010 HARRISON PARK ACADEMY (PK-8)

Neighborhood School 1440 Davis Ave NW 616-819-2565

### **INNOVATION CENTRAL**

HIGH SCHOOL (9-12) Theme School Academy of Health Sciences & Technology Academy of Business, Leadership & Entrepreneurship Academy of Science, Technology, Engineering & Math Academy of Design & Construction Academy of Teaching & Learning 421 Fountain St NE 616-819-2310

KEN 0 SHA PARK ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 1353 Van Auken St SE 616-819-2696

KENT HILLS ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 1445 Emerald Ave NE 616-819-2727

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (PK-8) Neighborhood School 645 Logan St SE 616-819-2600

MULICK PARK ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 1761 Rosewood Ave SE 616-819-2810

NORTH PARK EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER @ WELLERWOOD (PK-K) Theme School 800 Wellerwood NE 616-819-3683

NORTH PARK MONTESSORI (1-8) Theme School 3375 Cheney Ave NE 616-819-2848

#### OTTAWA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)

Neighborhood School Early Middle College Academy of Hospitality & Tourism Academy of Media Production Academy of Public Safety Services 2055 Rosewood Ave SE 616-819-2900

PALMER ELEMENTARY (PK-5)

Neighborhood School 309 Palmer St NE 616-819-2929 RIDGEMOOR PARK MONTESSORI (PK-6) Theme School

2555 Inverness Rd SE 616-819-2950

RIVERSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8) Neighborhood School 265 Eleanor St NE 616-819-2969

**SHAWMUT HILLS (PK-8)** 

Neighborhood School 2550 Burritt St NW 616-819-3055

SHERWOOD PARK GLOBAL STUDIES ACADEMY (PK-6)

Theme School 3859 Chamberlain Ave SE 616-819-3095

SIBLEY ELEMENTARY (PK-5) Neighborhood School 943 Sibley St NW 616-819-3100

> SOUTHEAST CAREER PATHWAYS (9-12)

1356 Jefferson Ave SE 616-819-2666

SOUTHWEST ELEMENTARY (PK-6) ACADEMIA BILINGUE

> Theme School 801 Oakland Ave SW 616-819-2947

SOUTHWEST MIDDLE HIGH (7-10) ACADEMIA BILINGUE

> Theme School 327 Rumsey Ave SW 616-819-3220

**STOCKING ELEMENTARY (PK-5)** 

Neighborhood School 863 7th St NW 616-819-3130

UNION HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)

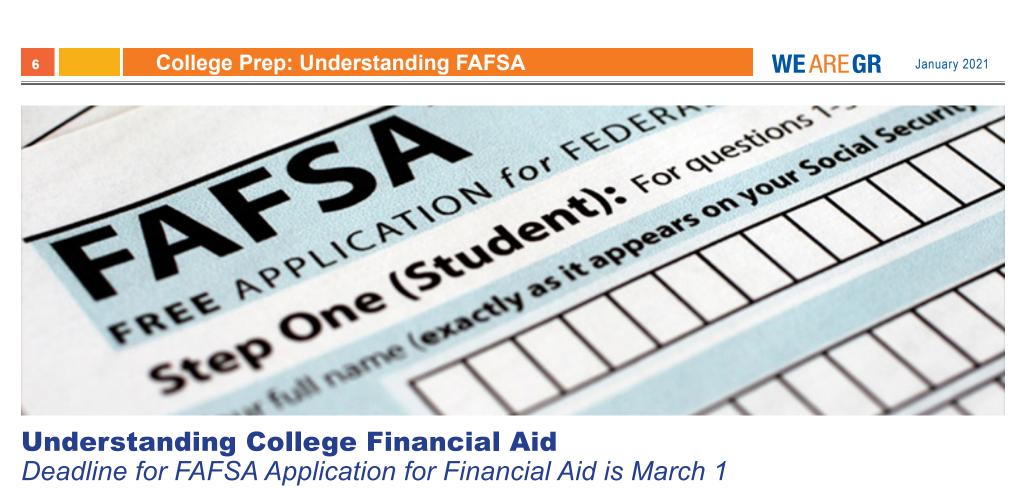
Neighborhood School 1800 Tremont Blvd NW 616-819-3160

WESTWOOD

MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8) Neighborhood School 1525 Mount Mercy Dr NW 616-819-3322

> **Z00 SCHOOL (6)** Theme School 1300 W Fulton St 616-819-3344

### January 2021



# **Understanding College Financial Aid** Deadline for FAFSA Application for Financial Aid is March 1

Did you know that more than \$185 billion in financial aid is available to students attending college? Many people think they won't qualify for financial aid, but about 2/3 of full-time undergraduate students receive some sort of aid, according to The College Board.

#### What is financial aid?

Financial aid refers to the combination of loans, grants, and scholarships that help pay for college. Most students will receive some form of financial aid. Some of the most common types of financial aid are:

#### Federal loans

- There are two types of federal loans: subsidized and unsubsidized. Both types of loans must be repaid with interest. With a subsidized loan, the government pays the interest while your child is in school. With an unsubsidized loan, the interest is being added to the loan balance while your child is in school.
- Some federal loans do not require a credit check or cosigner.

#### **Private loans**

· Private loans are usually offered by banks and other financial institutions. Private loans usually have a higher interest rate than federal loans, but not always, so it is important to research any loans you are offered and compare the terms.

#### Grants

• Grants may come from the government, a college/ university, or private organizations. Grants are a gift and do not need to be paid back. Students usually receive grants based on their financial need.

#### **Scholarships**

• Scholarships may also come from the government, a

college/university, or private organizations. Scholarships, like grants, do not require repayment. Scholarships are different from grants because they usually are awarded based on a characteristic of the student. Examples include academics, athletics, an association you belong to, religious affiliation, or the degree you will pursue in college. Scholarships often have rules that recipients need to follow, such as a GPA requirement.

#### Work study

· Some students are offered an opportunity to work parttime on campus to help pay for their schooling.

#### How do I sign up to receive financial aid?

Applying for financial aid can seem like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, better known as the FAFSA, uses much of the same information you provide on your income tax return. Before beginning the FAFSA, you will need to register for a PIN number at pin.ed.gov.

You will also need to collect the following documents, if applicable: social security number; alien registration number; most recent federal income tax return, W-2s, and any other income records; bank statements and investment records; and any records of untaxed income. Depending on your situation, you may not have all of these, just collect as many as you can. The FAFSA is available online at fafsa.ed.gov.

If you need help filling out the FAFSA, you can access a step by step guide at studentaid.gov/fafsa or connect with a customer service representative at fafsa.gov.

#### How often do I need to apply?

You must complete the FAFSA each year. The FAFSA is always due March 1 for Michigan schools and determines financial aid for the following school year.

#### What do I do after the FAFSA is completed?

On the FAFSA, you will indicate which colleges you want your FAFSA information sent to. The college will send you an award letter, which outlines what type of financial aid you are eligible to receive. The letter will have a deadline to reply, and it is very important to respond before the deadline. The college/university's financial aid office can answer any questions you have about the award letter. You may choose to accept some, all, or none of the financial aid offered to you.

You should also apply for scholarships. Search the web for legitimate scholarship research sites such as michigan.gov/ mistudentaid and fastweb.com. Research scholarships available through you or your parents' employer, school networks, community organizations, and religious organizations. Locally, the GRCC Foundation (most applications due March 15) and the Grand Rapids Community Foundation (due March 1) are great places to apply for scholarships.

#### Helpful Websites

#### **Federal Information**

- US Department of Education studentaid.ed.gov
- FAFSA fafsa.gov
- IRS (Tax Forms) irs.gov
- Selective Service sss.gov

#### **State Information**

michigan.gov/mistudentaid

#### **Loan Information**

studentaid.ed.gov/sa

#### **Scholarship Information**

- The GRCC Foundation grcc.edu/money
- Other Scholarships fastweb.com

# **Choosing a College**

Choosing a college can feel like a daunting task. Choosing the right college can seem even harder. Before you begin your search, it helps to understand some of the terms associated with higher education.

- Public, Private, and For-Profit: Public colleges receive funding from local and state governments. They typically offer lower tuition rates, especially to in-state residents. Private colleges are funded through tuition, fees, and donations. Some private schools offer competitive scholarships to make them more affordable. For-profit schools are businesses that offer degree programs. They typically offer degrees for specific careers. Students may graduate with higher debts than from other types of schools, and credits don't always transfer.
- Four-Year vs Two-Year: Four-year schools offer programs that lead to bachelor's degrees. Two-year programs lead to a certificate or associate degree.
- Liberal Arts: Liberal arts schools offer a variety of courses in liberal arts, which includes literature, history, languages, mathematics, and life sciences. Most liberal arts schools are also four-year programs.
- University: A university is often larger than a college and typically offers more choices for majors and degrees. Most are made up of smaller colleges, such as engineering, health sciences, education, or liberal arts.
- Community College: Community colleges are twoyear programs that can provide a certificate or associate degree. They also prepare students to transfer to a fouryear school to finish their bachelor's degree, if they wish. Their credits typically transfer to four-year schools and they are known for their affordability.
- Vocational or Technical: Vocational and technical programs offer training in a specific industry or career, like medical records, dental hygiene, mechanics, or culinary arts. They typically offer certificates or associate

#### degrees.

Once you know the types of schools and programs available to you, you need to determine what will be the best fit. Ask yourself these questions to help you narrow your search:

- Am I more interested in a two-year or four-year program?
- How close to home do I want to be?
- Would I be happier at a campus with a lot of students or in a smaller setting?
- Do I want to be around people like me or with a more diverse group?
- How important is cost?
- Do I know what major I want to pursue? If not, what types of classes do I want to take?
- What type of learning environment do I want?

After you have considered these questions, make a list of the qualities you are looking for. As you search for colleges and review materials, like their brochures and websites, keep the list you made in mind. The College Board website has a great search tool called "College Search Step-by-Step" (https:// bigfuture.collegeboard. org/find-colleges) that allows you to enter your criteria and find those schools that fit your list.

After you have narrowed down your choices to the ones that most interest you, schedule a college visit to learn more and see the campus. The checklist below can help you get the most out of your visit.

Picking a college or university takes time and planning, but it is an important step for your future. Be sure to begin your search early, so you have enough time to explore your options and make the best decision for you. Don't be afraid to ask a lot of questions and to turn to those you trust, like your parents, school counselor, and others for advice.

Information adapted from the College Board

# Choosing a College Checklist:

$\mathbf{\nabla}$	Arrange for a tour of the campus.
Ø	Sit down with an admissions officer to learn about application requirements.
$\mathbf{\nabla}$	Pick up financial aid forms.
Ø	Sit in on a class that you find interesting. If it isn't available or classes aren't in session, see what the classrooms look like.
	Be sure to get business cards for people you meet, in case you have follow up questions.
Ø	Talk to a current student to find out what they like and don't like about the school.
$\mathbf{\nabla}$	Visit the dorms and learn about housing choices.
$\mathbf{\nabla}$	Check out the fitness center, library, bookstore, and common areas.
Ø	If you want to play a sport, meet with the coach or athletic staff.
$\mathbf{\nabla}$	Explore the community around the campus.
$\overline{\mathbf{v}}$	Find out what clubs and activities are available.
Ø	Read student newspapers and other publications to learn more about the school's culture.

# **Michigan Colleges & Universities**

### Public Four- Year Colleges and Universities

Central Michigan University	989-774-4000	cmich.edu
Eastern Michigan University	734-487-1849	emich.edu
Ferris State University	231-591-2000	ferris.edu
Grand Valley State University	616-331-5000	gvsu.edu
Kendall College of Art & Design/Ferris	800-676-2787	kcad.edu
Lake Superior State University	906-632-6841	lssu.edu
Michigan State University	517-355-1855	msu.edu
Michigan Tech University	906-487-1885	mtu.edu
Northern Michigan University	906-227-1000	nmu.edu
Oakland University	248-370-2100	oakland.edu
Saginaw Valley State University	989-964-4000	svsu.edu
University of Michigan- Ann Arbor	734-764-1817	umich.edu
University of Michigan- Dearborn	313-593-5000	umdearborn.edu

University of Michigan- Flint	810-762-3300	umflint.edu	
Wayne State University	313-577-2424	wayne.edu	
Western Michigan University	269-387-1000	wmich.edu	

### Public Community Colleges

89-356-9021	discover.alpenacc.edu
00-221-2001	baycollege.edu
10-762-0200	mcc.edu
89-686-9000	delta.edu
69-467-9945	glenoaks.edu
06-932-4231	gogebic.edu
16-234-4000	grcc.edu
6	10-762-0200 39-686-9000 69-467-9945 06-932-4231

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### WEAREGR Ja

January 2021

#### Michigan Colleges and Universities CONTINUED FROM A7

5 5		
Great Lakes Maritime Academy	231-995-1200	nmc.edu/maritime
Henry Ford Community College	313-845-9600	hfcc.edu
Jackson College	517-787-0800	jccmi.edu
Kalamazoo Valley Community College	269-488-4400	kvcc.edu
Kellogg Community College	269-965-3931	kellogg.edu
Kirtland Community College	989-275-6767	kirtland.edu
Lake Michigan College	269-927-1000	lakemichigancollge.edu
Lansing Community College	800-644-4522	lcc.edu
Macomb Community College	586-445-7999	macomb.edu
Mid-Michigan Community College	989-386-6622	midmich.edu
Monroe County Community College	734-242-7300	monroeccc.edu
Montcalm Community College	989-328-2111	montcalm.edu
Muskegon Community College	231-773-9131	muskegoncc.edu
North Central Michigan College	888-298-6605	ncmich.edu
Northwestern Michigan College	231-995-1000	nmc.edu
Oakland Community College	248-341-2000	oaklandcc.edu
St. Clair Community College	810-984-3881	sc4.edu
Schoolcraft College	734-462-4400	schoolcraft.edu
Southwestern Michigan College	800-456-8675	swmich.edu
Washtenaw Community College	734-973-3300	wccnet.edu
Wayne County Community College	313-496-2600	wcccd.edu

### Non-Public Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Adrian College	800-877-2246	adrian.edu	
Aunan College	000-077-2240	aunan.euu	
Albion College	517-629-1000	albion.edu	
Alma College	989-463-7111	alma.edu	
Andrews University	269-471-7771	andrews.edu	

Aquinas College	616-632-8900	aquinas.edu
Ave Maria College	239-280-2500	avemaria.edu
Baker College (multiple locations)	800-964-4299	baker.edu
Calvin College	616-526-6000	calvin.edu
Cleary University	800-686-1883	cleary.edu
College for Creative Studies	313-664-7400	collegeforcreativestudies.edu
Concordia University	734-995-7300	cuaa.edu
Cornerstone University	616-949-5300	cornerstone.edu
Davenport University (multiple locations)	800-686-1600	davenport.edu
Finlandia University	906-482-5300	finlandia.edu
Grace Bible College	616-538-2330	gracechristian.edu
Great Lakes Christian College	517-321-0242 x230	glcc.edu
Hillsdale College	517-437-7341	hillsdale.edu
Hope College	616-395-7000	hope.edu
Kalamazoo College	800-253-3602	kzoo.edu
Kettering University	810-762-9500	kettering.edu
Kuyper College	616-222-3000	kuyper.edu
Lawrence Technological University	800-225-5588	ltu.edu
Madonna University	734-432-5300	madonna.edu
Northwood University	800-622-9000	northwood.edu
Olivet College	800-456-7189	olivetcollege.edu
Rochester College	248-218-2000	rc.edu
Sacred Heart Major Seminary	313-883-8500	shms.edu
Siena Heights University	800-521-0009	sienaheights.edu
Spring Arbor University	800-968-0011	arbor.edu
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# For IT Team, COVID Meant Turning on a Dime to Online

By Phil DeHaan, Courtesy of School News Network

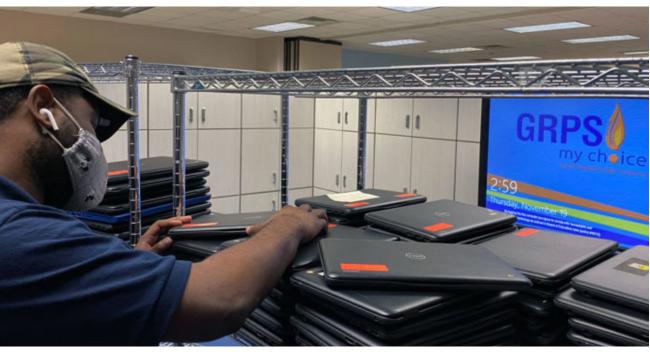
Craig Ghareeb has been with the Grand Rapids Public Schools since 1984, when he was working part-time for the district already as an Ottawa Hills High School student.

He's now the district's coordinator of management information systems, a job he said is always evolving and never boring — although he admitted that in an industry that "doesn't always turn on a dime," bringing new technologies to K-12 education can be a slow-go.

There is thus an irony in what COVID-19 has meant for him and his team of IT specialists, who had to suddenly change most of their normal ways of doing things when the state ordered schools closed last spring and sent GRPS into online-only learning that continued into fall 2020.

"We've now had to turn on a dime and still do our work well," he said. "I guess that's 'be careful what you wish for.""

Some of their work has been in helping GRPS students and parents, but the bulk of it has been in assisting district teachers in the sudden transition from face-to-face learning to online instruction. ■ CONTINUES ON A9



Allante Johnson packs Chromebooks in boxes for distribution to GRPS families who need technology at home for online learning

8

#### Former Teacher Trains Others

For Ghareeb, the son of two longtime educators in Wyoming schools, seeing things from a teacher's perspective comes pretty naturally, and he said he and his team were grateful to be able to assist GRPS teachers.

A 1988 graduate of Ottawa Hills, Ghareeb went on to attend Grand Rapids Junior College and then Grand Valley State University, where he was a computer programming major with a minor in technical theater (more on that later).

In a normal school year, he said, he and his colleagues across Kent County would have their arms around a wide variety of areas, including student devices; classroom technologies such as projectors and interactive whiteboards; phone and communication systems; HVAC and lighting systems; and much more.

But in the wake of COVID, district IT folks have seen their normal cycles of planning time, pilot time, reflection time and implementation time be significantly compressed as initiatives move from planning to implementation in quick order.

"It really does feel like rebuilding the plane while it's in the air," he said.

#### Difficult Not Seeing People Every Day

Instructional technology specialist Erin Gotra chuckled when she heard Ghareeb's airplane metaphor.

She has been with the district for nine years, including seven years teaching at Stocking Elementary before moving into her current post.

She said COVID has been tough because in the past she loved being able to work within classrooms so that she could interact with the students and build relationships with them and the staff. Now, working from home, she still works directly with teachers but via video calls and messaging.

"It's been difficult not seeing people in person every day," she said. "During this pandemic, it can get a little lonely."

But she agreed that the pandemic also has brought opportunity.

"Staff were forced into viewing and delivering content digitally and couldn't rely on how they've always taught," she said. "And just like students need differentiated instruction, our staff does too. We have a wide range of knowledge levels among staff when it comes to technology integration in the classroom, and that's okay. It's okay to be a learner right now."

On the student side of things, Gotra said the tricky part from her perspective is that it's really hard to meet the needs of all students in a face-to-face classroom, let alone in a virtual one.

"We still have a long way to go to learn best practices for teaching and learning in a virtual environment," she said.

#### Asking 'How Can I Do This?'

Gotra's fellow instructional technology specialist Mike Hastings echoed her comments.

He stepped into his role just last fall after previously serving as a science teacher at Westwood Middle.

Work that was being done in the background before COVID suddenly became front-and-center in March of 2020, he said,



Craig Ghareeb has been with GRPS since 1984, when he worked part-time for the district as an Ottawa Hills High School student, and now coordinator of management information systems



Instructional technology specialist Erin Gotra has been with GRPS for nine years, including seven years teaching at Stocking Elementary



Mike Hastings became a district instructional technology specialist just last fall after previously serving as a science teacher at Westwood Middle

with initiatives such as a formal learning management system for the district and 24/7 access to content and materials for students, suddenly became instant priorities.

It was tough, he said, because some staff did not have the preparation and training needed to "swim with tech in the deep end." But, he added, the positive was 2,000 administrators, teachers and support staff were moved into a new technology reality, and now they are making amazing strides.

"They are modeling the growth mindset for their students," he said. "They are asking 'How can I do this?' and thinking creatively, coming up with new and wonderful ideas and techniques for the distance learning world. They also are doing a majority of the frontline support for students using info and knowledge we share with them."

And while students are "a generation born into technology," Hastings said, that doesn't necessarily mean they are as comfortable with it as one might assume, nor are parents.

"There is a high percentage of parents and students who don't have a clear understanding of how their phone or device does what it does for them, and very little understanding of the concept of cloudbased data and accounts."

#### A Deserved Curtain Call

Ghareeb said that the work of Gotra and Hastings has been impressive.

"We have two rockstar-teachers-turned-instructionaltechnology-specialists who stepped up," he said. "They helped develop online course materials and rallied willing-and-able teachers to speed ahead and act as real-time support mechanisms for their peers, who felt like they were in the deep end as we raced to get back to student instruction."

He is also proud of his entire staff which he said has worked harder than ever and showed how productive it could be working from home. His team includes six network and systems technicians; five end-user system technicians; three Helpdesk technicians; the two instructional technology specialists; one financial system analyst; and one administrative assistant/systems operator.

And he has been impressed by the ways in which GRPS teachers have adopted new technologies and adapted to the instructional challenges they have faced this semester.

"The use of technology tools in instruction is not always easy for all staff," he said. "Sure, we had been using a lot of technologybased solutions for instruction in classrooms for years, but – like so many districts – we were never in a situation where everything had to be able to be performed remotely. Everything."

His minor in technical theater was no small thing, said Ghareeb, when it came to dealing with COVID.

"I ran a 1,000-seat community theater for almost 10 years," he said, "and always told my technicians that if the audience didn't know we existed, we were doing our job right. Our job at GRPS is not so different.

"Our staff doesn't mind being 'backstage' because that means their systems are running smoothly," he added. "But this is a moment in time where I'm glad they can take a small curtain call, because they deserve it."

# **Early Childhood Information**

Will your child be 4 years old by December 1, 2021? Begining March 1, The Great Start Readiness Program will start the enrollment process for PreK students for the 2021-2022 school year!

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

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

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

- Aberdeen School
- Brookside Elementary
- Buchanan Elementary

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

- Southwest Community Campus
- Stocking Elementary

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

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

Placements for 3 and 4 year old PreK at Grand Rapids Montessori, Ridgemoor Park Montessori, or North Park Montessori at Wellerwood are conducted through the theme school selection process. To apply for these Montessori Children's House PreK placements, apply today at grps.org/ apply-to-a-school. Round 1 of the 2021-2022 theme school applications closes on February 12, 2021. Please note that all Children's House programs are tuition-based programs for PreK 3 and PreK 4 students.

For those students who will be 4 years of age by December 1, 2021, on March 1 we will begin accepting PreK applications for the 2021-2021 school year for our full day PreK sites. Apply online today for this great program at preschool.kentisd.org/ apply. Contact the Early Childhood office of Grand Rapids Public Schools today at (616) 819-2111 to learn more about PreK options for your child!

# Kent County Preschool Intake Steps

# Complete online application at <u>preschool.kentisd.org</u>.

Children must be 4 on or before September 1; there is possibly an age waiver for students who are 4 between September 2 and December 1.





### Turn in all required documentation

- Proof of birth copy of legal birth certificate, passport, hospital record, baptismal record or other government form
- Proof of income (for everyone who contributes to the household) income tax form, W-2, pay stub, unemployment, written statement from employer, foster care reimbursement, SSI documentation, child support, alimony, or pensions
- Proof of residency driver's license with current address, current utility bill, rent receipt, tax bill or land contract
- Most recent Physical or Well child Checkup or Health Appraisal form
- Immunization Record
- If your child has an IEP we will need a copy

### Documents can be emailed to earlychildhood@grps.org or mailed to: Early Childhood, 1331 Franklin St SE, Grand Rapids MI 49506. The Early Childhood office can also be reached by phone at 616-819-2111.



**Placement** You will be contacted by email as soon as placement is made for your child. Placements will start Mid-July and will continue until all spots are filled. Placements are made based on need using the State of Michigan required placement process.

# **Family and Community Engagement**



Amazing things are happening in the GRPS Family and Community Engagement Office. If you haven't already, please check out the updated **Parent University** website at **parents.grps.org.** Explore Distance Learning, Trending News, and the K-12 Literacy Milestones.

Check out January's online **Power Parent Magazine.** This publication focuses on Literacy and it contains timely articles, videos, and supportive links for students and caregivers.

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

#### NEW Parent University Courses:

**LGBTQ+ and Safe Schools:** This two-hour course is designed to provide families and community information about the critical roles that a student's village plays in reducing risk and promoting all students' well-being. This session includes exploring terms, facts, and the implication of legal and policy issues related to LGBTQ students and a safe school environment.

- January 25, 2021 from 5:00-7:00 p.m.
- February 18, 2021 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

**Parent University Website Tour:** This 45-minute course will take you on a virtual tour of Parent University. You will learn how to register for courses, navigate the Power Parent magazine, and more. This course will be offered on the second Wednesday of every month.

- February 10, 2021 from 5:30-6:15 p.m.
- March 10, 2021 from 5:30-6:15 p.m.
- April 14, 2021 from 5:30-6:15 p.m.
- May 12, 2021 from 5:30-6:15 p.m.

**Navigating SPACE & Healing:** Create SPACE = Safety, Power, and Control, Empathy. You are stronger than you think, and you are stronger than you know. You have the ability to move toward safety, healing, and empowerment for you and your children. This 90-minute course will share resources and information from Suzanne Katerberg - West Central Michigan YWCA.

- February 11, 2021 from 5:30-7:00 p.m.
- February 16, 2021 from 12:30-2:00 p.m.

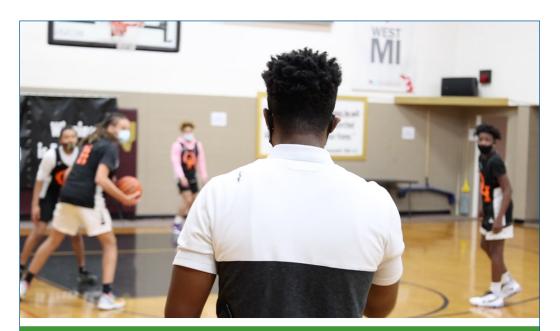
Know Your Rental Rights: Renters have rights! This course will examine tenant rights and help you understand specific laws that provide protection. It is important to be informed, to know your rights, and to stand up for yourself

when necessary.

- February 23, 2021 from 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- February 25, 2021 from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

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

BICGR.com

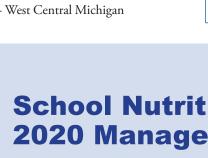


Be a Team Player - Mask Up



DEPARTMENT

Caring today for a healthy tomorron



# School Nutrition Association of Michigan 2020 Manager of the Year

Nutrition Service's Commissary Program Manager Renee Crampton was recognized as the 2020 Manager of the Year by the School Nutrition Association of Michigan. She was recognized via a Zoom call December 4th. Renee manages our Central Kitchen at the Nutrition Center.

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# More Than \$1 Million in Scholarships Available Through Grand Rapids Community Foundation

To give students a boost on their path to higher education, Grand Rapids Community Foundation awards more than \$1 million every year to hundreds of students pursuing higher education. The Community Foundation is accepting applications until March 1, 2021.

By completing one application, students will be considered for scholarship opportunities from more than 80 scholarship funds. Last year, the Community Foundation awarded \$1.16 million in scholarships to 449 students.

Scholarships are available for students with a wide variety of backgrounds, GPAs and levels of education from public and private institutions in Kent County. Students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees or technical training certificates are eligible to apply. The Community Foundation is committed to providing opportunities for first generation students and those with financial need.

For many decades, education has been a key focus of the Community Foundation's work in Kent County. Generous contributions from community members make scholarship funds available to students. Award decisions are made by more than 100 community members, who volunteer their time and serve on scholarship advisory committees.

Challenge Scholars is an initiative of the Community Foundation in partnership with Grand Rapids Public Schools that is increasing educational opportunities for students on the West Side. Challenge Scholars students graduating from Union High School will need to activate their scholarship by completing the Community Foundation's general scholarship application.

The general scholarship application for the 2021-2022 academic year is open until March 1. Students can find more information and apply at grfoundation.org/scholarships.

### 4 Tips for a Great Scholarship Essay

- Many scholarships, including those available through Grand Rapids Community Foundation, require the submission of a personal essay. Here are some tips to help your essay stand out:
- Brainstorm first. Generating multiple ideas and creating an outline can help you write smoothly.
- Be creative in your answers. Use examples and stories to demonstrate the point you want to make and individualize your essay.
- Proofread. Be sure to check grammar by sharing your essay with your friends, parents or teachers. Reviewers can help identify errors you may have been missed.
- Be you! With this essay, your intention should be to create a vivid depiction of the person behind the grades, activities and awards. If the reader feels they know you after reading the essay, you have done your job. An emotional connection elevates your application and makes you stand out from others.



More than 500 scholarships for college or trade school are waiting for you!

This year we'll award more than \$1 million in needbased scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students like Edgar, a West Michigan student pursuing his dreams at New York University.

Apply at grfoundation.org/scholarships.

RAND RAPIDS

community



### Other Helpful Resources

- **Bestcolleges.com** streamlines the process of gaining financial aid for college with a comprehensive scholarship database, and step-by-step guide to the FAFSA.
- College Navigator provides an easy resource for you to compare all colleges and their costs in a uniform format.
- FastWeb matches students to scholarships, a source of local, national, and college-specific scholarships.
- KnowHow2Go helps you understand the steps you need to take to make your college dreams a reality.
- MIStudentAid provides information and related links about financial aid specifically for Michigan students.
- **Scholarships.com** is a popular, free college scholarship search and financial aid information. When you create a personal profile, they will present you with complete and accurate info on the most relevant, attainable college scholarship awards.

# **GRPS** Calendar

# 2020-2021 GRPS External Calendar

Revised 1/14/2021

<b>FEBRUARY - 2021</b>	
February 10	COUNT DAY
February 12	Half Day for Students (am); NO SCHOOL - Mid Winter Break (pm)
February 15	NO SCHOOL - Mid Winter Break; No LOOP Programming
February 18	Virtual School Choice Expo (6:00-7:30 pm)
February 26	21-22 Theme School Application Period Closes - Round 1
MARCH - 2021	
March 12	End of 3rd Marking Period
March 15	NO SCHOOL - Records Flex Day; No LOOP Programming
March 16	Start of 4th Marking Period
March 19	21-22 Theme School Application Period Opens - Round 2
APRIL - 2021	
April 1-8	No LOOP Programming
April 2-9	NO SCHOOL, Spring Break
April 30	21-22 Theme School Applicatin Period Closes - Round 2
MAY - 2021	
May 7	Preschool, Here I Come
May 11	Last day of Great Start Readiness PreK Program
May 27	Last Day of LOOP Programming
May 28	Half Day for Students (am); NO SCHOOL (pm)
May 31	NO SCHOOL - Memorial Day
WINE 2024	
JUNE - 2021	Helf Dev fer Studente, Geogradery Evenes (em), NO SCHOOL - Deserve (em)
June 7	Half Day for Students; Secondary Exams (am); NO SCHOOL - Records Flex (pm)
June 8	Half Day for Students, Secondary Exams (am); NO SCHOOL - Records Flex (pm)
June 9	Half Day for Students, Secondary Exams (am); NO SCHOOL - Records Flex (pm); End of 4th Marking Pariod
June 9	4th Marking Period LAST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
June J	

# **Through Screens and Technical Glitches, Learning Goes On**

How one tech-savvy teacher handles virtual learning By Charles Honey, Courtesy of School News Network

Ja'Niya Cummings sees three gingerbread men on her computer screen, each wearing a letter: n, a, v. "First sound," says her teacher, Heather Gauck.

"V," says the second-grader, drawing out the vvvv sound, and Gauck drags the gingerbread letter into a picture frame. "Eh-eh-a, the gingerbread," Ja'Niya says, then "n," as Gauck also drags those letters into the frame to spell "van."

"I love it, Ja'Niya," Gauck says. "You are getting so good at this. And I also like how you used some of your visual phonics for that."

Then it's on to spelling "bag" in this one-on-one learning session for the Harrison Park School pupil. It was a lesson on consonant-vowel-consonant words, part of Ja'Niya's Individual Education Plan (IEP) as a special-education student. But instead of working with Ja'Niya in a classroom, Gauck was teaching on Zoom, both from their homes.

It's a teaching modality Gauck and hundreds of other GRPS teachers used in the district's all-virtual format during the first semester. And it's a method Gauck will continue to use even as other teachers switch to a hybrid plan of in-person and virtual instruction beginning Jan. 19.

For Gauck, who has extensive background in online teaching tools, the forced conversion to all-virtual teaching this fall was easier than for less digitally dexterous teachers. But even for her this year of teaching remotely has been a big challenge, compounded by working with students with special needs.

"I feel a lot of sympathy for all these teachers who did not use technology," said Gauck, a resource teacher for students with impairments and learning disabilities.

And yet it's been rewarding to see how teachers and families have come together to make virtual learning work the best it can, she said.

"I can't say how many phone calls, how many teachers are in tears because it's almost 24/7. But we're all doing it. We're finding a way to do it and just relying on each other."

#### A Heavy Learning Lift

Learning the ropes of online learning has been a heavy lift for teachers, students and parents in all districts in a year of COVID-19 outbreaks and state-ordered restrictions. Especially so in GRPS, which has taught 100% virtual since school opened but is giving students the option of hybrid or virtual learning for second semester.

At last count, 9,253 students had chosen hybrid and 5,394 virtual, with pools of teachers designated to teach in classrooms, virtually or both, said spokesman John Helmholdt. Thousands of devices have been distributed to students along with hotspots for those lacking Wi-Fi access.

Gauck has plenty of experience in both methods and has helped train other teachers in online instruction. In her 27th year at GRPS, she has been on the forefront of educational technology including as organizer of a statewide cadre of teachers called



Heather Gauck, in her 27th year of teaching for GRPS, has expertise in using educational technology (courtesy photo)

Innovation Classroom. A National Board-certified teacher, she will teach a special-education master's degree class in instructional technology at Grand Valley State University this spring.

At Harrison Park, she works with several grades of specialeducation students in their gen-ed classrooms and pulls them out for more intensive work. This year she's had to do that online, which for all its logistical hurdles has been advantageous in some ways, she said.

"It is a lot to keep track of, but in a way it has helped me know what each teacher is teaching, unlike when I was in the physical classroom," she said. "With everything online, it has made things available whenever I have the time to look at it."

That's helped her make sure she's tying in each student's learning-plan goals with what they're learning in class, she said. By recording Zoom sessions she can go back and analyze where they need help on math or reading skills and tailor activities accordingly.

It all requires constant creativity, she said, but added, "One thing that has been confirmed during this pandemic is that if educators are given a challenge, we find a way to solve it for the success of our students."

#### Connecting Emotionally Through Screens

Still, she concedes it's hard to measure progress with traditional tests online, not knowing whether the student may be receiving help at home. Most challenging is keeping students engaged and working through the glitches of weak internet connections, she said.

"The biggest challenge is the technology not working," as when the sound cuts out, Gauck said. "You can have a wonderful © CONTINUES ON A15



Ja'Niya Cummings holds a prize donated by StoreHouse of Community Resources. Gauck's students can earn prizes for good attendance or successfully completing activities (courtesy photo)



Third-grader Josiah Strickland, Ja'Niya's brother, also receives help from Gauck in pull-out sessions from his main classroom (courtesy photo)

# WEAREGR January 2021

lesson and then the technical glitches make it go out the window."

Distractions like background noise and younger siblings running around is another issue, she said. "We try to say, 'It is school time, try to find a spot where it's quiet and you can really concentrate, and you have your paper and your pencil.""

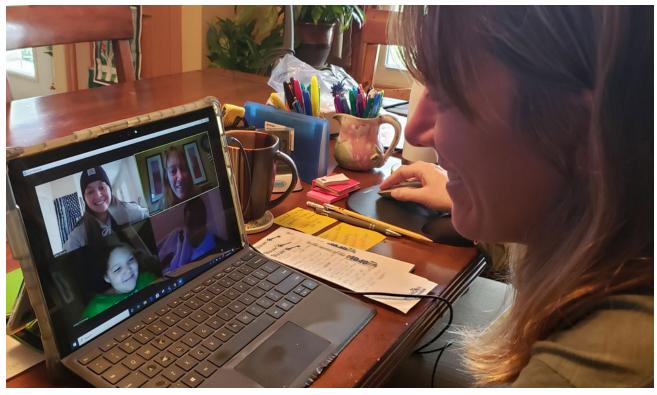
Focusing their attention is key for students like Ja'Niya, whom Gauck worked with individually in the fall along with her brother, Josiah. In a 20-minute Zoom session one December afternoon, despite spotty audio and occasional screen freezes, Ja'Niya worked through a series of vowel-and-consonant combinations, sounding them out and forming words.

"Teacher, I know how to spell hat," she said, then proceeded to do so while sounding out each letter.

There was also chit-chat. Ja'Niya: "Guess what tomorrow is?" Gauck, playfully: "Is it your birth-day?" "Yes," Ja'Niya said proudly, and Gauck laughed.

Afterward, Gauck was very happy with the progress Ja'Niya had shown academically. But it's things like the birthday chatter that she finds most rewarding.

"It's those more human type exchanges that I have with my students that make it all worthwhile. I am so glad I am still able to connect with my students. That's what's most important right now — to know that they're OK, and they're still wanting to learn."



Special-education teacher Heather Gauck works from home with students Ja'Niya Cummings, lower left on screen, and her brother Josiah Strickland, lower right. Student teacher Taylor Lincoln is upper left (courtesy photo)

# **GRPS** Athletics Update

We want to provide a quality athletic experience for all students under the current circumstances.

GRPS Athletics is following all information, requirements and/or restrictions that may come from the Governor's office, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Kent County Health Department and the MHSAA. We will continue to share information as we receive it.

Coaches will be in contact with you regarding practice and conditioning times, along with any other winter season requirements and expectations. Students must continue to meet the sports physicals, insurance fee and eligibility requirements. Please contact your coach or athletic office for more specific information or visit the websites below.

- Ottawahillsbengals.com
- Unionredhawks.com
- @grpsmsathletics on Facebook

Kurt D. Johnson, Executive Director (616) 819-2010 johnsonk@grps.org

Brodie Larson, District Middle School Athletics (616) 819-3243 larsonb@grps.org

Marcus Harris, Ottawa Hills Athletics (616) 819-2879 harrismar@grps.org

Justin Walker, Union HS Athletics (616) 819-7688 walkerju@grps.org



# Grand Rapids Promise Zone

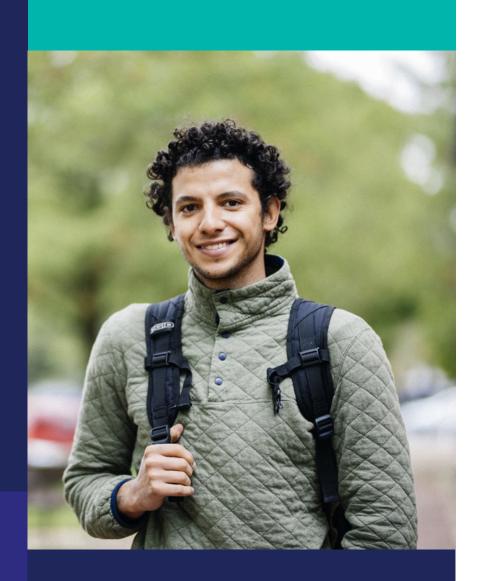
# IMAGINE YOUR FUTURE. NOW, GIVE IT WINGS.

Do you live in the City of Grand Rapids?

Do you attend a high school in the City of Grand Rapids?

Did you graduate in 2020, or will you graduate in 2021?

If you answered yes to these questions, you're a Promise Zone student. Your scholarship covers the cost of GRCC tuition, fees and textbooks. Whether you plan to transfer to a four-year university or join the workforce, GRCC's degree and job training certificate programs offer something for every student, every interest, every future.



# **Enrolling is easy:**

- 1. Apply to GRCC (grcc.edu/apply)
- 2. Fill out the FAFSA (fafsa.gov)

### **Questions?**

Our whole job is to help you navigate this process. Please visit **grpromisezone.com** or call or text **616.288.2635** today.

# GRCC

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