Congratulations to the Class of 2021

Special graduation edition: See inside for the names of graduates and selected student stories.

Loy Norrix Principal Chris Aguinaga presents a diploma to Annie Mansfield.

Jesus Alvarez-Gonzalez shows off his diploma at the Kalamazoo Central graduation.

Steven Anderson Jr. offers a thumbs up as Phoenix Principal Mark Hill gives him his diploma.

Rahnyi Kelley and August O’Neil share a hug at the Kalamazoo Central High School graduation.

Administrator for Online Learning Kimberly Kirshman awards a diploma to Justin Battle.

Lashley Pinto-Orozco welcomes guests to the 2021 Loy Norrix graduation.

Kalamazoo Public Schools Is Hiring
Find information at kpsjobs.com
Excellence in Education Honors 12 KPS Graduates

This year 12 Kalamazoo Public Schools seniors were selected for Excellence in Education, a program which recognizes the top-achieving high school seniors in Kalamazoo County high schools. This year, 43 seniors were selected for the honor, which comes with a $1,200 scholarship.

A collaborative effort among all Kalamazoo County public and non-public schools, local foundations, educational groups and the business community, Excellence in Education was designed in 1986 to focus community attention on the academic and professional excellence of graduating high school seniors and educators within Kalamazoo area schools.

Anna Buck
Loy Norrix/KAMSC
Parents: Rob and Jackie Buck
College: Undecided
Major: Mathematics and Biochemistry
Significant Educator: Modhi Alsherhi

Jane Heystek
Loy Norrix/KAMSC/Education for the Arts
Parents: Ryanne and Jason Heystek
College: Univ. of Michigan
Major: Biochemistry
Significant Educator: Mark Cardwell

Freya Kailing
Kalamazoo Central/KAMSC
Parents: Binney Girdler and Timothy Kailing
College: Undecided
Major: Undecided
Significant Educator: Rex Hafer

Kera Lonchate
Loy Norrix/KAMSC
Parents: Beau and Julie Lonchate
College: Kalamazoo College
Major: Anthropology and Biology
Significant Educator: Colleen Chapoton

Xavier Langsdale
Kalamazoo Central/KAMSC
Parents: Lisa Langsdale and Greg Langsdale
College: Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Major: Computer Science
Significant Educator: Modhi Alsherhi

Elijah Duguid
Kalamazoo Central
Parents: Jessica and Matthew Duguid
College: Undecided
Major: Political Econ/ Economic Development
Significant Educator: Eric Soulier

Keegan Hughes
Loy Norrix
Parents: Megan Reynolds and Sarah Hill
College: Kalamazoo College
Major: Pre-Med
Significant Educator: Brad Schmidt

Kearney Miller
Kalamazoo Central
Parents: Geanice and Jerald Miller
College: Albion College
Major: Integrated Marketing Communications
Significant Educator: Dylan Patterson

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Parents: Rob and Jackie Buck
College: Undecided
Major: Mathematics and Biochemistry
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The Excellence in Education program is supported by a permanent endowment established at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Funding for the endowment was raised through the leadership of the Monroe-Brown Foundation, with strong support from local foundations, businesses, organizations and individuals.

Explore, discover and engage ONLINE at KPL this summer!
For details, please visit: kpl.gov or call (269) 553-7800.
Tyrell Shaff: Insight Into Life Through the Lens of a Camera

For four years, Tyrell Shaff helped the Kalamazoo Central High School family see how he sees the world.

He was a fixture at sporting events, dances and concerts, spending hours taking pictures of the world around him.

“It lets me show the world what I see. I’m half blind. So, I capture things in my unique perspective,” Shaff said. “I use my right eye mostly to take photos. I love how that fascinates people.”

Shaff, 20, graduated from Kalamazoo Central in June. He is currently working on an internship at Bronson Methodist Hospital as part of a gap year, but he hopes to attend college next year.

He was born in Belize, where he suffered a detached left retina as an infant. He lived in Belize until being adopted at age 12 by Dana and James Shaff.

“It was a struggle when I was little and lived in Belize,” he said. “They had these big books with magnifiers. No one knew how to help me until I came here where we have all of these resources.”

He initially enrolled in Kalamazoo Public Schools before switching districts for middle school, and eventually returning to KPS. Early in his education, he was placed in special education before staff realized, “I am more capable than they realized — other than my visual impairment. They put me in harder classes and I excelled.”

Kalamazoo Central has become a second home, where he can always count on a hug from Principal Valerie Boggan and a handshake from Assistant Principal Ajamian Gardner. “The teachers cheer me on. This district is a family and they’re always there for you. We’re a forever family.”

And as with any family, there’s always that one family member who chronicles family life with their trusting camera. That has been Shaff for the past four years. His road to photography began with his uncle giving him his first camera and some photography books.

When he was a freshman, he lobbied Boggan to become the official student photographer for the school and she gave him her blessing. During busy sports seasons, he estimates he’d spend 20 hours a week shooting events at the school. On a football game day, for example, he might shoot the pep rally, then attend the game to take photos, and then spend several hours editing after he got home.

In addition to support from his uncle Kenn Livingston, a professional photographer in Kalamazoo, Shaff worked closely with KC photography teacher Matthew Douglas. Community photographer Herbert Scott also gave him good advice on the sidelines of games.

Although he photographs everything from portraits to pep rallies to dance and choral concerts, his favorite subject is sports. He acknowledges that his passion for sports presents challenges with his impairment, but he’s trained himself through auditory cues and timing to capture the action on the field, the court, and the track.

“I can tell in my head when a person is going to take a step — and another step,” he said. “When they’re in motion I can estimate where they’re going and what they’re going to do next. Sometimes it can be a good estimate — sometimes it can be a bad estimate. I have to go over what I do in each game because it’s really time sensitive.

“Sports fascinate me, because you capture those moments that if you blink an eye — the person is already over there.”

Shaff said that he especially loves to capture the highlights of people’s days or their games — the happy moments.

One of his favorite photos shows his friend August O’Neill just after a baseball game.

“He was so happy after that win. He was like, ‘Hey, capture me!’” Shaff said. “He actually likes that one. He comments on my photos every single time. It motivates me to be more successful in what I do.”

Photography also gave Shaff a way to become a part of the school community.

“If you have a camera and go out and shoot, everybody knows you. You capture that memory they won’t forget about.”

He is also capturing memories that he’ll never forget — even after the day comes that he won’t be able to look at his old photos.

“The doctor says that one day I will probably lose my sight. I felt sad when I heard that. I don’t know when that day will be, but I hope that I live life to the fullest until then.

“You read stories about people with no legs at all who become swimmers. Those kinds of stories fascinate me. I think you want to live the best life possible. When I do go completely blind or whatever, I want to say I enjoyed my life while it lasted.”

“KPS will always be in my heart. It’s where my career started and my memories were made.”

Tyrell Shaff used photography to become an integral part of Kalamazoo Central.
Jacob Bowser: Ready to Take Off on a New Path

Jacob Bowser says it sounds a little cliche but it’s true: When you’re flying and you look down on Earth, it makes your problems seem small.

“I like the clarity it provides, just being high up and being able to think about everything.”

Bowser, 18, is well prepared to take to the skies and launch his aviation studies at Western Michigan University in the fall. For the past two years he’s been studying aviation technology through Kalamazoo RESA’s Education for Employment.

Bowser learned about EFE, which is now called Career & Technical Education, through a high school counselor at the end of his freshman year. Aviation technology wasn’t open to sophomores, so he enrolled in robotics and electronics, which was housed at Kalamazoo Central.

“I remember going in feeling like I had to have some background knowledge to prepare for aviation,” he said. “They taught me everything and really helped me along the process. We did all sorts of things in that class. We built submarines and simple circuits. At one point, we built remote control cars. It’s a pretty fun class and as far as classes go it was free-ranging. The instructor I had let you think for yourself.”

By his sophomore year, he was ready to make the jump to the aviation program.

“There are all different aspects of aviation that you can study from repairing them to managing them to flying them, but for a long time I knew I wanted to fly airplanes,” Bowser said.

The aviation technology class is housed at the Air Zoo in a classroom that overlooks the museum’s restoration area and its background noise of rivet guns and sanders. Students study subjects such as weather patterns, physics, aircraft, charting courses, setting weight limits, and runway markings. There were hands-on lessons as well, such as rivet projects and making tool boxes.

“I’ve already completed ground school for my private pilot’s license,” Bowser said. “That course really, really helped me. I wouldn’t have been able to do it without it.”

Bowser, the son of Julie and William Bowser, graduated from Loy Norrix High School in June. While at Norrix, he threw shot put and discus for the track team for four years. He played football for three years, before giving it up in his senior year to take flight lessons.

When he begins his studies at WMU, he will already have four credit hours based on online classes and classes he took through Kellogg Community College. Those classes and the KRESA instruction that helped him complete ground school have been invaluable.

“I think EFE is right for all manner of people – not just those into STEM,” he said. “The teachers are there to help you, actually help you. They’re not going to throw you in the water and expect you to know how to swim. They’ll actually teach you.”

“Mrs. Anne Lewis is my aunt but she’s also a great English teacher. She taught me some valuable writing skills. And, I want to thank all of the EFE instructors, especially aviation instructor Al Holloway. I remember everything he taught me.”
Kashyah Nabors positions with her motivating forces: daughter Ka’lani and son Malik.

Kashyah Nabors: Juggling School Work and Motherhood at Phoenix

Kashyah Nabors could have given up on getting her high school diploma but she didn’t for two very good reasons: her son, Malik, 3, and daughter, Ka’lani, 1.

Nabors, 20, was pregnant with Malik when she enrolled in Phoenix High School. She’d dropped out of school to work but wanted to go back. She’d heard that Phoenix staff was good at supporting students.

That became especially important after she became pregnant with her daughter and considered dropping out permanently.

“ ‘I was working and I didn’t have time for anything else,’ she said. “It’s hard being a student and a mom. I was trying to do my work while both of them were up. I had to wait for them to go to sleep before I could do my homework.”

Nabors, who is the daughter of Kawanna Nabors, attended Edison Environmental Science Academy, Washington Writers’ Academy, Milwood Magnet School, and Loy Norrix before enrolling in Phoenix.

“It was important to me to stay in school because I want to go into medicine, and I can’t do that without a high school diploma,” Nabors said.

Phoenix staff could be counted on to make sure she understood the work, and they rallied around her when she was struggling, especially science teacher Ann Huntington, who would let students come in and work during the lunch hour; Spanish teacher Scott Hun-
For 14 years, Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo has hosted the annual Champs Celebration to recognize those who have gone above and beyond for kids. Congratulations to this year’s recipients!

Kathy Hogg
KPS Information & Technology team
School Food Services team
Dr. Qiji (Jim) Zhu
Pam Dalitz
the late Dorothy P. Young

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Morasha Wiggins: From Kalamazoo Central Giant to North Carolina Tar Heel

Maybe it’s just the difference between great athletes and the rest of us, but Morasha Wiggins says that she finds big basketball games help her relieve stress.

That’s right. Haying to make that free throw, shooting when the timer is running out, fending off other players — not a problem.

“Playing basketball is just a good way for me to get away from the world for a little bit,” said Wiggins, 18.

It’s not that she’s not thinking about her game or that she is not playing it well. She’s playing it exceedingly well. So well, that she was recruited by basketball powerhouse University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where she hopes to study architecture or sports medicine. So well, that she was a finalist for Miss Basketball this spring. So well that she was the Division 1 Co-Player of The Year and made the All State Basketball First Team this spring.

Wiggins, who is the daughter of Roshonda and Harold Wiggins Sr., moved to Kalamazoo in the seventh grade, when her mother took a job as a counselor at Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts.

She can’t remember when she started playing, but with older brothers it seems like basketball has always been a part of her life and she grew up loving the sport. It helped her transition into KPS as a middle schooler.

“The people here were really generous, plus I played basketball and I ended up fitting in really well,” she said. “I remember my first middle school game. There was a little crowd and there was a crazy energy in the building. I went to Lakeshore before, which was a really small school. We didn’t see much of that in middle school.”

After Maple, she moved on to Kalamazoo Central where she also played volleyball, was on the Link Crew service team, served on the Student Advisory Council, and was a member of the National Honor Society. She also played travel basketball with Michigan Crossover.

“The best part of high school was meeting new people, just that whole high school experience,” Wiggins said. “The worst part was the COVID year and not being able to experience my senior year.”

Her teachers and coaches were key to making high school a positive experience. Kalamazoo Central has some “amazing teachers,” and among her favorites were: Shannon Wintz, honors English; Dr. Chartanay Bonner, honors chemistry; Samir Sandu, world history; Josh Gottlieb, physics; and Julie Marcikic, biology.

Her high school coaches included Jason Plunkett, Nelly Smith, Aaron Sauter and one particularly special coach — her brother Harold Wiggins Jr.

“My brother really pushed me to be a better player. I’m so grateful that he came,” she said. “His expectations for me were a lot higher than for anyone else. Even when I was doing good, he wanted me to do better.”

She thanked her teammates and her parents for being at every game and seeing her through a torn ACL during her junior year.

“They’ve been supportive all four years. They’ve been a blessing.”

Wiggins said she “plays a little bit of everything”: point guard, shooting guard, forward. She anticipates UNC using her as a shooting guard or wing. But, she doesn’t think it’s necessarily that versatility that makes her a good basketball player.

“I’d probably say my work ethic. I work really, really hard to get where I am. It makes me a good basketball player overall. I would also say my mindset sets me apart. I’m really, really calm when I’m playing basketball. I have a really level head, which separates me from a lot of players.”

Morasha Wiggins will play basketball for University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in the fall.

“I’m sad to see high school end especially because we didn’t get a normal year, but I’m excited for a new chapter. Playing at UNC is anybody’s dream.”

“Strap on your wings, and get ready for a mystical adventure into the world of mythical creatures! Explore through stories, songs, and art! Many of these legends have their roots in Michigan folklore, some have traveled from around the world, and others through time. All have been inspired by this summer’s traveling exhibit Giants, Dragons & Unicorns, The World of Mythic Creatures. Below are just some of the things to discover:

DRAGONS
Dragons big and small, those that fly and those that swim, fire breathing, flower smelling, dragons from around the world, Medieval and pet dragons have always captured our imaginations!

MERMAIDS
To swim in the ocean or the Great Lakes, mermaids are the object of dreams for people of all ages.

UNICORNS
The elusive unicorn conjures up visions of rainbows, magic, and lots of sprinkles and glitter!

GIANTS OF ALL SIZES
Stories of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox are considered classic Michigan Folklore. But what about Native legends of the little people, the bones and fossils of creatures often mistaken for dinosaurs or monsters, and manmade mermaids that are found in museum collections including our own? Some of these not so large creatures have some pretty BIG stories!

FISH TALES
Michigan, surrounded by the five Great Lakes, is bound to have giant creature sized fish stories! Discover oddities of the Lakes from prehistoric sturgeon to our own version of the Loch Ness Monster.

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and is governed by its Board of Trustees.

kalamazoomuseum.org/education
Loy Norrix High School 2021 Graduates

Abbott, Dejuan Alexander
Abbott, Virginia Louann
Adams, Eliana Marie
Al Harir, Wedad
Mohammed Khir
Al Jaouni, Salsabeel
Ahmad
Alhasan, Hasan Emad
Allen, Treteny Michae!
Alonzo, Isabel
Amy, Gabriel Lucas
Anderson, Shatonia
La’quise
Andrews, Lydia Grace
Anglin, Ava Elaine
Apolo, Ava Rose
Armendariz Gallardo, Jessica
Arnold, Keyasia Lashon
Augustine, Abigail Marie
Ballesteros, Jaylene
Bangura, Josratu Jusuf
Augustine, Abigail Marie
Armendariz Gallardo, Apolo, Ava Rose
Buckley, Adrienne
Elizabeth
Bynum, Joseph Patrick
Bizi, Taha
Cameron, Keegon Scott
Campbell, Gavin Xavier
Cannon, Joshua Edwin
Carriker, Eric Cornell
Claveria, Zuriel Jovany
Cole, Jaquay Lee
Cole, Joseph Aaron
Cook, Taylor Anne
Cosgrove, Michael
Bradley
Crawford, Maya Reed
Davis, Erik Dennis Patrick
Davis, Sidney Lee
Decker, Sophie Paulette
Demello, Daniel Michael
Dilley, Khyra Layne
Dubois, Jalyn Rachelle
Dunham, Matthew Ryan
Dunigan, Devante’ Scott
Edleson, Owen Josiah
Fergusson, Jack Robert
Bruce
Fierke, Nathaniel James
Figueroa, Lucas Hardy
Flanagan, Sean Michael
Flores, Annika Noelle
Flyn, Zoe Brenna
Ford, Isabella Louise
Freud, Jaden Cristofer
Fries, Nicholas Alexander
Garcia, Abril
Garcia, Angelique Jocelyn
Garcia, Ashley Marcela
Gayney, Samuel Patrick
Gbogi, Gideon Tolulope
Glendening, Liam Patrick
Gomez, Marcos Manuel
Gonzalez, Matthew
Gonzalez, Shakiya Mae
Grayson, Brian Lamont
Gross, Elaina Leigh
Gruber, Jonathan Henry
Gruber, Sarah Lillian
Haase, Ellie Adel
Hagan, Danyelle Natasha
Hendley, Brady Joshua
Hannfland, Mackenzie Elaine
Hart, Joy Journey
Hartwell, Christian
Armon
He, Hannah Li
Henderson, Ontanisha
Mekia
Henktkowski, Hannah Marie
Herbert, Tala
Provvidenza
Hernandez-Martinez, Venacio Levi
Heystek, Jane Christine
Hitchcock, Earl Austin
Hohn, Gerrick Joseph
Holley, Jordan Russell
Holt, Harmony Kalen
Hooper-Edward’s, Shani Tamrya
Houslander, Layla Jean
Hughes, Keegan Andrew
Hughes, Nolan Conway
Hutton, Sofia Marie
Hybels, Megan Grace
Hyer, Colton David
Isacksen, Daniel Louis
Ivy, Kody Ishiah
Jackson, Amari Wesley
Jordan, Jackson, Ja’Mari Drakkar
Johnson, Damarion
Javon
Johnson, Janeca
Pearlene
Johnson, Jeremiah
Richard
Jones, Lennetta Lynn
Kabombo, Elie Badiayi
Kelsch, Ashley Marie
Ketchum, Sydney Nicole
Kimbrough, Kamryn
Klemchuk, Kody Matthew
Konjoh, Abraham
Fohnkwewo
Konjoh, Bartina
Mangweshere
Konjoh, Lucyma
Ngwepekelmpemzune
Koss, Dylan Randall
Kutzko, Katherine Helen
Lago, Jordyn Kathryn
Lankerd, Haley Ann
Lee, Michael Krieg
Leonard, Elijah
Lepley, Ellie Ann
Ligman, Claudia Athene
Loc, Ava Nhi
Lonchate, Ava Rose
Lopez Chavez, Mayte
Geraldine
Lucking, Joseph Shively
Macias, Jaime David
MacNiss, Lillian Marie
Mahoney, Hannah Marie
Mansfield, Annemarie Arlene
Marcinkowski, Ivy Ann
Marcinkowski, Mark Alan
Martin, Brian Keith
Martin, Jaden Saramarie
Martinez, Brian Aurelio
Mason, Sean Michael
Mboup, Princess-J’maria Jean-Monique
McCoy, Dajianah
Monique
McMahon, Shadiah
La’Relle Ahliose
McNair, Madison LeeAnn
McPherson, Dajanique
Yeneisha-An
Meja Hernandez, Elder
Amilcar
Mendoza, Brandon Isaac
Mendoza Landaverde, Javier
Mielke, Maya Suzanne
Miller, Aidan Rylee
Miller, Grant William
Mills, Caleb Aaron
Miller, Arie
Mills, Davreon Lamont
Mireles Caballero, Luis
Mitchell, Karah Olivia
Moore, Janiayah Sherrel
Moore, Maya Yasmeen
Morabito, Danni Christine
Morales, Kevin
Morales-Amatres, Carlos Jesus
Morales-Serna, Oscar
Morgan, Amber Rose
Morris, Anna Christine
Mosher, Abigail Rose
Mosher, Caitlyn Ann
Mosqueda Montoya, Yasmin
Moubay, Amaya
Alexandra
Nachtigal, Addison Josiah
Naylor, Zoe An
Nelson, Rain Rose
Neve-Jones, Kai
Newman, Spencer James
Northmore, Malin Yishan
Nishimiyama, Faustin
Nuyen, Kyle Christopher
Olinger, Natalie Isis
Ortiz, Adan
Ott, Connor Eric
Ott, McKenzie Amber
Ott, Tegan Riley
Padilla, Ivan Alexander
Parsons, Seth Gabriel
Patterson, Makya Arrel
Pawloski, Joseph John
Perry, Quincy Marcel
Pinto-Orozco, Lashley
Paola
Pittman, Gavin Lennox
Pixler, Tobias Cole
Poindexter, Jade Cerell
Pollack, Che Alexander
Polllens-Voigt, Evan Daniel
Poole, Isabela Eileen
Posthumus, Krista Leigh
Preston, Melissa Diane
Price, Keyara Marie
Price, Michael LaRoyce
Primer, Daniel Leon
Pueblo, Vanessa Caprice
Quinn-Cabrera, Yancy Patrick
Rafferty, Tieren Joseph
Randazzo, Sarah Jeanne
Remelius, Parker John
Reyes, Erik David
Ricardo Ramirez, Uriel
Richards, Breyon Simone
Richardson, Shelby Nikole Selene
Ringost, Navea Jaina-Anneece
Roberts, Jada Monique
Rodriguez, Heriberto
Rostick, D’Angelo
Russel, Sharynn Erlich
Rubin, Eliana Sadye
Russell, Amarianna
Tajane’ Marie
Sackett, Makenzie Ann
Salamun, Greta Rose
Sandover, Giesselle
Sankey, Anna Lina
Santos, Daisa Esmeralda
Santos, Sofia Alena
Santos-Pye, Lucas
Schaefer, Joshua Walter
Scheel, Carter Allen
Selvidge, Thomas
Caswell-Phoenix
Shaffer, Samantha
Kathryn
Sheehan, Madelyn Nichole
Sierra-Torres, Benjamin
Sierra-Torres, Rebeca
Esperanza
Sims, Tayanay Jaaquarilea
Skjold, Kinsey Rey
Smith, Andrew James
Smith, Ayden Paul
Smith, Darius Dewayne
Smith, Eric Matthew
Snell, Trenton Michael
Solito, Adrien Ellery
Somerville, Clarissa Jane
Stephenson, Jerome DeVonte’
Stenberg, Isaac Matthew
Stickley, Lily Teresa
Stone, Alexandria Allena
Strand, Avery Jacqueline
Stratton, Lee Anna Denise
Strickland, Johnathan Arnell
Tanner, Gage Eli
Thompson, Elijah River
Thrash, Solomon Tyrell
Tipton, Logan Farrell
Towsell, Derrick Jamar
Turner, Janice Nevaeh
Tyler, Eve Elizabeth
Valdez-Martinez, Rodrigo
VanderPlo, Samantha Rose
Vasquez, Ximena
Vazquez, Yahir
Wallace, Chloe Lin
Wallis, Lucinda Eleanor
Waltemeyer, Matthew Richard
Ward, Christina Mary
Ward, Sierra Michelle
Warren, Silas Paul
Watkins, Rubion James
Wayman, Jakub Kenneth
Wesselhoff, Emerson Grace
Westcott, Peyton
McKayla
White, Ciera Elaine
White, Jaylin Isaiah
White, Jonathan Isaiah
White, Mikayla Michele Shante
White, Nathaniel Aaron
White-Anderson, Kaylon
Ivy
Wilkerson, Jerrila
Joyceann
Williams, Carson Ann
Williams, Travior Antonio
Wilson, David James
Wireman, Kaitlyn Irene
Wohllaib, Kara Marie
Wolfe, Laurel Elizabeth
Wood, Daniel John
Wooden, Nicholas Robert
Helmut
Xayphannh, Jozelynn Elaine
Yarber, Cassidy Jean
Yuill, David Asher Samuel
Zajac, Alexandra Marie
Kalamazoo Central High School 2021 Graduates

Acosta–Maxson, Isaac Mark
Adams, Aliyah Hana
Adams, Mackenzie Lee
Alfaraj, Mohammed
Allen, Alixandrea Dana
Allen, Claire Elizabeth
Alphonse, Jeanine
Ahimbazwe
Alvarez, Jimena Renee
Alvarez Gonzalez, Jesus
Esteban
Andrews, Jonathan
Charles
Annis, Ryan Christopher
Argobast, Zachary William
Austin, Davion Samejay
Bade, August Wingate
Baker, Abigail Violet
Baker, Delaunna Anne
Baker, Jaylen Benjamin
Marquise
Banks, Anique Briel
Barnes, Kalea Serii
Barron-Murillo, Eddson Francisco
Bates, John Paul
Beamom, Marcus Jay
Bean, Jaylen Montrell
Beebe, Jonah Edward
Bell, Jacquelle Diane
Benamou, Michaela Shavon
Berkley, Micaela Ann
Berlin, Riley Nicole
Berry, Latrell Deontae
William
Berry, Ny'Asia Joyce Ann
Bibs, Chynna Marie
Bishop, Maicey Rayne
Blackwell, Azariah
Chanta–Faith
Blanchard, Jaden Ramail
Blank, Parker Mackade
Blue, Teila Chante'
Bodian, Khadija Amari
Boehm, Amaya Corina–Lee
Booth, De'Karieon Jailee
Brashers, Qwadi Maliq
Breed, Jenna Marie
Brill, Breven Thomas
Brooks, Alexandra Rylee
Brooks, Moshe' Renard
Broomfield, T–Shombe
Cordell
Brown, Aerimya Yvette
Brown, Janessa Rose
Brown, Mercy Gabrielle
Brown, Morgan Alysé Louise
Brown, Shamara Rae
Bull, Amya Dana
Burden, Ja‘Bryia Kadayjia
Maria
Burnham, Maxwell Lincoln
Butler Ritchie, Lillie May
Cajero, Anthony
Carle, Turner Malik
Carruthers, Krysta Marie
Cegers, Juanaya Star
Cichy, Mitchell Thomas
Clark, Maceo Ezra
Coats, Steven Michael
Coleman, Ferris Darnell
Collins, Sarah Gabrielle
Comer, Chriselle
Magaly–Adoree
Conner, Keylin
Cook, William Michael
Cooper, Kaywye Keenah
Coria, Immanuel
Solomon
Couvillion, Kavia Layosha
Crawford, Gerald Jerome
Crocker, Josephine Erin
Crosby, Ashanti Shanika
Yvette
Curtis, KImion Corey Lynn
Danzy, Makaiyah Janise
Darden, Deshaun Lamar
DeBat, Lauren Elizabeth
DeBat, Rachel Nichole
Degrote, Korinne Genevieve
Dickens, Collin Neil
Dorantes, Hector Junior
Dugger, Donald Greg
Duguid, Eliah Gabriel
Echols, Staacy Eugenie
Eddington, Delaney
Chase
Eisner, Aaliyah Jolie Paige
Etridge, Imani
Evans, McKayla Idella
Felmeden, Kaitlynn
Elisabeth
Fernandez, Vanessa
Jacqueline
Ferrell, Alexis Caitlyn
Finjas, Samantha
Chuantu
Flores, Haley Ann
Ford, Will Marshawn
Fosness–Bartee, Kamell
Michelle
Foster, Armoni Kaley
Frazier, George Haywood
Freeland, Gabriel Robert
Fulkerson, Evan Jacob
Gaines, A–Laeyah
Tabetha
Gakodi, Liam Hewitt
Galasso, Leonardo
Sebastian
Garrett, Sania Rashanti
Lynn
Geer, Eliza Kathryn
Gill, Samaria Shonta
Nico
gillelyen, Lanasia Ann
Gillish, Deric Scott
Glover, Honesty Eshia
Bean
Goerge, Iden Frances
Gonzalez Hernandez, Victor
Griffith, Rider Leslie
Samuel
Grooten, Elizabeth Daryl
Guzman, Samantha
Monsserrat Montes
Haddad, Owen Nicholas
Hall, Camren Jhoventhus–Rudolph
Hall, Devantay Lamont
Halloran, Colin Michael
Hamilton, Dareus
Harri, La’Cress Benard
Harris, Xzavier Daewone
Harrison, Brianna Nicole
Haus, Nava Aliza
Hemingway, Cole Egan
Henley, Evelyn Claire
Horn, Jaelyn Noelle
Horne Al–Gharib, Asma
Amatulah
Hughes, Carla Jean
Hussien, Maua
Jackson, Kaniya Caniece
Jackson, Olivia nettie–Grace
Jacobs, Jasmine Kay
James, Tanel Denise
Jennings, Ashlin Elizabeth
Johnson, Jaleen Jaime
Johnson, Kameriah
Rashay
Johnson, Tamera
Sheriece
Johnson–Streeter, Daylen D’mani
Kading, Freya Jane
Kassas, Mustafa Jamal
Kelley, Rahnyi Kimora
Kernell, Michael Charles
King, Jenna Elisabeth
Kirk, Jennifer Olivia
Klein, William Walker
Kozlowski, Aaron James
Kuepfer, Luke Andrew
Kupier, Annalise Noelle
Lake, Alexis Lynn
Lampros, Emily Megan
Lawson, Zania Taryn
Latshaw, David Dennis
Lawyer, Shemaijah Renee
Ledesma, Olivia Tyla
Lee, Velma
Lekan, Margaret Grace
Lekan, Miles Joseph
Lewis, Javier Jackson
Lewis, Shawntay Louise
Lincoln
Little, Lauren Daeon
Lloyd, Zackary David
Loveydel, Theodore
Jamaal
Macharia, David Jonathan
March, Natasha Jolea
Mares Castro, Lesly
Guadalupe
Martini–Zeller, Gracen
Taylor
Matthews, Quinniah Renee
McCants, Courtney Kiara
McCollum, Alexis Paige
McCouch, Kathleen
Elizabeth
McFerrin, Danyaille
Lushay
McKissack, Elijah Atiba–Khari
McNair, Shantassia Ann
McNeer, Parker Seth
McRae, Marlon Shareef
Melchor, Daniela
Messegner, Cecilia Renee
Metcalfe, Jayla Samone
Meyer, Benjamin Vincent
Mileski, Samuel Mona
Minter, Kearney Shea
Wegienka
Morales, Jacqueline
Selena
Murray, Sidney Ryan
Nichols, Konye A mari
Nichols, Marquayvon
Anteirion
Nizzardini, Stefanie Ann
Nyirambyeyi, Jeannette
Nyiramutuzo,
Nyiramugishina
O’Neil, August Marlen
Olmstead, Andrew
Owings, Felix Joey
Omondi
Paiwaninta, Anthony
Gilbert
Palmore, Kennadie Ann
Pardee, Ian Alexander
Parker–Murray, Brianna
Parnell, Jeremiah Lee
Patterson, Aaron Lee
Pesta, Jack Gabriel
Pineda, Lucas
Christopher
Plunkett, Zaria Inez Lillian
Pollard, Elaine Elizabeth
Post, Makayla Ann
Powell, Dwayne Marquise
Pratt, Sebastian Mekhi
Price, Jaiaroh Zoriah
Pryor, Adrienne Celeste
Rahnavardan, Omeed
John
Ramber–Jach, Jordan
Shea
Randolph, Tianna Lynae
Reidy, Madeline Patrice
Richardson, Brooklyn
Nico
Richman, Rachel Rose
Ring, Austin James
Deanda
Robinson, Jamerica
Devonjeha
Robinson, Tristan Kent
Rolland, A’Jon’Te
Rothwell, Dustin
Russell, Jaslyn D’nea
Salinas, Matthew Patrick
Salvaggio, Nicholas
Anthony
Sanusi, Riannat
Olawummi
Scholten, Andrew Bergen
Schuetteboer, Izik Lee
Schwachtner, Simon
Lawrence
Scott, Amira Brion
Shaff, Tyrell Carr
Sigsbee, Tristan Liegh–Ann
Silva, Angelo
Skinner, Christopher
Michael
Smith, Abigail Louise
Smith, Arieonna LaQuiesha
Smith, Jalen Lamont
Smith, Niegel Malek
Smith, Phillip Ny’acies
Aijah
Snell, Amaya Allean
Snyder, Savannah
Kathleen
Soens, Blake Joshua
Sohi, Harsimaran Kaur
Solis, Morton Daniel
Soule, Jacob Frederick
Stephens, Dequoraya Amerie
Stovall–Nowling, Jayson
Duane
Straton, Heavens Nicole
Street, Emoni La’Nee
Streeter, Ja’nya Renea
Stroud, Isabell Margaret
Swann, Jayda Symone
Takai, Tiobea Afua
Thomas, Aleigha Mo’ray
Thomas, Traysjhawna
Antonette
Thompson, Elena Simone
Thompson, La Tayjah
Geneva
Thurman, Arionna Chaslin
Thurman, Kaylah Shania
Tidd, Weston Joseph
Tillman, Aidan Arthur
Toutant, Garrett Henry
Unger–Branson, Gabrielle
Teresa
Vallier, Nicklas Mathew
Vanravenswaay, Michael
Daniel
Vasquez, Sean Casey
Venus, Benjamin Michael
Vincent, Laila Kelis
Walker, Joshua Anthony
Walker, Savannah
Danielle
Weller, Julia Elise
Winston, Lacey Renee
Wiggins, Morasha Kamea
Williams, Richard Bryson
Landon
Williams, Trahe Damar
Williams, Trent Gregory
Willson, Calvin John
Yuag, Yumi Pocopio
Yang, Tim
Zaczek, Mitchell Rheese
Tyler
Zamora, Humberto
Antonio
Zarate, Marisol Eriann

Kalamazoo Central Principal Valerie Bogdan listens to Dwayne Powell's commencement speech.
Phoenix High School
2021 Graduates

Anderson, Emmanuel
David
Anderson, Steven Lavel
Antkowiak, Ethan Daniel
Atchison, Brooklynn Marie
Beville, Marvin Jermaine
Blake, Amrarrae Jabre
Burnett, Jaquesha Erica
Casey, Devin Thomas
Clark, Ty’an L
Dawati, Eric Daniel
Diallo, Faiza Hando
Dunlap, Shavnique Deontae
Edward, Jaelin Marie
Espinoza, Destiny Marisela
Ezell, Tayshon Christopher
Flores, Christian Michael
Gerard, Raeann Lyn Marie
Gillam, Troy Deniro
Gunter, Nathan William
Hasler, Jaydon
Haywood, Tyshawn Christian
Hernandez, Israel
Hovey, Makenna Ann
Hovey, Regan Margaret
Johnson, Alexia Monique
Johnson, Tajanay Lorraine
Jones, Megan Marie
Lee, Rayonna Michelle
Lee–Yeargin, Zaria Naomi
Luckett, Sierra Marrissa
Mabon, Martavion Amier
Martin, Rylan Glenn
Mathews, Jada Rajine
May, Christopher Michael
McClenton–Russell, Jada
Chishalla
McDonald, Jazmine
Anyanna Marie
McGrew, Sky Justice
Moon, Adajah Shavyonne
Myles, De’quavion Anthony
Nabors, Kashyah
O’Day, Kelley Nicole
O’Day, Kellis Marie
Panos, George
Plair, Orlando
Pritchett, Keyniyah Monet
Prude, Karreon Ja’mal
Rodgers, Ciara Bri–Anna
Ruffin, Derek Lamar
Salazar, Melanie
Schifino, Tamia Javon
Smith, Davyon Javaughn
Spencer, Dushawn Omar
Stevenson, Dominick Owen
Stevenson, Gabrielle Joyce
Steward, Jamiay Tramier
Sulaiman, Abdulsamad Olajide K
Swans, N’ykole Marie
Thomas, Kaylah Latice
Ubi, Adyson Mae
Walker, Aaliyah Lee
Walker, Imari Chantel
Warden, Rae’Sean Devlon
Welbaum, Dominic Aaron
White, Reign Nevaeh
Whitfield, Keyth Lamont
Willard, Nia Christine
Willhite, Seantiana Rose
Irene
Williams, Trey Gavin
Williams – Evans, Garian
Dyshaun
WITHERSPoon, Jeremiah
Darvey
Woodard, Christian
Shaniece
Woodruff, Oriana Aallyah–Shayntae’

Breven Brill: The Reluctant New Kid
Who Went on to Earn 15 Varsity Letters

Breven Brill started his life at Kalamazoo Central High School as a reluctant transfer student.
He ended his KC career as an elite athlete — with a school record of 15 varsity letters.
It was a change inspired by friends and teachers.
Brill, 18, grew up in a military family who moved from California to Oregon to Virginia to Japan to North Carolina. When his parents divorced, his mother Michelle Brill’s family urged her to return to Michigan to take advantage of The Kalamazoo Promise. She moved with Breven and his younger siblings Kiana and Bode to Kalamazoo.

It was not an easy move for Breven Brill.

“We lived in North Carolina prior to coming to Kalamazoo. That was for five years. That was the longest I’d ever lived in one spot,” he said. “I felt like I had created a community and I felt like I was going to settle into.”

He was determined to go back to North Carolina.

“I would only talk about home — North Carolina — with people I was meeting. I only played soccer that year. I didn’t reach out to anyone.”

But at the end of the year soccer teammate Ryan Halloran pulled him aside.

“He said he thought I was wasting my potential,” Brill said. “He wasn’t trying to be a jerk, he just saw a lot more in me than what I was putting out.”

The next school year — Brill played five sports to make up for lost time. In addition to being a soccer forward, he became a kicker for football. He joined the swim team competing in the butterfly — and was voted captain for the following year. In the spring, he picked up lacrosse and golf, both of which he had never played before. By the end of the year, he’d been voted captain of the lacrosse team.

“Sports is kind of a release for me. I feel it’s a rewarding thing,” he said. “I’ve always believed in training to the fullest. I feel like that applies to anything. When I get to the games, I don’t really think. I feel like I’m going on autopilot and I let all of that work take over, which is a lot of fun.”

“Also, everything I’ve learned from sports has transferred really well to real world team building and leadership skills.”

Brill was also a member of the National Honor Society and worked at the Kalamazoo Country Club. In the fall, Brill will be attending Kalamazoo College, where he has committed to playing soccer.

The irony of his disliking Kalamazoo when he moved here — and now committing to another four years in the city — is not lost on him.

“Really, I was rejecting this place at first, but now I love it. I feel like on K’s campus I’ll be thrown into the atmosphere and really get to see that thriving Kalamazoo culture. I’m so grateful for all of the opportunities that I got. Everything that my teachers and friends pushed me to do that I didn’t think I was going to be doing. It felt like I made this place a home for myself. I couldn’t be happier with that.”

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KPS 2021 KAMSC Graduates

Congratulations to these Kalamazoo Public Schools students on their graduation from the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center:

Kalamazoo Central High School
Ellie Grooten, Kalamazoo College
Owen Haddad, Bates College
Freya Kailing, Oberlin College
Xavier Langsdale, University of Michigan
Lesly Mares Castro, Kalamazoo College

Loy Norrix High School
Ava Avolto, Kalamazoo College
Kohler Briggs, University of Michigan
Anna Buck, Kalamazoo College
Jane Heystek, University of Michigan
Daniel Isacksen, Kalamazoo College

Stefanie Nizzardini, Kalamazoo College
Felix Ovinga, Michigan State Univ.
Matthew Salinas, University of Michigan
Simon Schwachter, University of Michigan
Ashley Keltsc, Hope College
Ava Lorcharte, Kalamazoo College
Princess-’J’Maria Mbo, University of Michigan
Addison Nachtigal, Western Michigan University
Raili Nelson, University of Michigan
Malin Nordnmo, Kalamazoo College
Evan Pollens-Voigt, Kalamazoo College
Madelyn Sheehan, Michigan State University
Emerson Wesselhoff, Kalamazoo College

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SPEND THE AFTERNOON
SWIMMING • PICNICKING • PLAYING AT MAPLE ISLAND
PADDLING • BOATING • FISHING FROM SUNSET PARK
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DINING • SNACKING • SIPPING
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MAPLE LAKE FREE SUMMER CONCERT SERIES LIVE
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Paw Paw’s series of free summer concerts offer great entertainment and Sunday sunsets on the south shore of Maple Lake. There’s not a bad seat in the house on our tiered hillside, or bring a lawn chair or blanket - relax and enjoy a varied lineup of local and regional artists.

Aug. 1  -  BRONK BROS. • “A Rockin’ Hillbilly Extravaganza”
Aug. 8  -  TYPO • Rock • Country • Pop • Urban cover favorites
Aug. 15  -  KARI LYNCH • Country • Americana • Pop • Rock
Aug. 22  -  ZION LION • Reggae
Aug. 29  -  THE UNKNOWNS • Classic Rock cover music

In case of questionable weather, a decision will be posted on Facebook by 4 p.m. Sunday.

Students mingle during the 2021 KAMSC senior lunch; Raili Nelson, center. (Photo courtesy of Mark Bugnaski)
Kalamazoo RESA Programs Name 14 Students Outstanding Seniors

The Kalamazoo RESA Outstanding Senior Awards honor outstanding students in Career & Technical Education, Education For the Arts, and Early/Middle College in Kalamazoo County.

Career & Technical Education, formerly known as Education for Employment (EFE), equips students with the academic and technical skills, knowledge and training necessary to succeed in well-paying, high-demand careers. Education for the Arts strives to enhance arts education for all students in Kalamazoo County, making dance, music, theater, literary, media and visual arts an essential part of a comprehensive education. Early/Middle College is an innovative program which gives students the opportunity to earn an associate degree or certificate with an additional year of high school.

Instructors nominate students for the honor and a scholarship committee selects the scholarship winners based on each student’s academic achievements, community involvement, extracurricular activities and goals for the future. This year 50 donors provided $58,500 in scholarships for 62 students.

This year’s Kalamazoo Public Schools winners were:

**Aliyah Adams**
Kalamazoo Central High School
Parents: Heather and Kevin Adams
Career: Health Science
Next Steps: Kalamazoo College
Program: CTE Professional Health Science
Instructor: Kathleen Nyberg
Scholarship: $500 | Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Bronson Methodist Hospital and Kalamazoo RESA Gayle F. Werme

**Ashley Garcia**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Cristina Nonato Cruz and Jose Garcia
Career: Undecided
Next Steps: Western Michigan Univ.
Program: CTE Business Administration Management & Operations
Instructor: Atiba Ward
Scholarship: $500 | Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Kalamazoo Rotary - DQ Hunter Memorial

**Aiden Goerge**
Kalamazoo Central High School
Parents: Rebecca and Brian Goerge
Career: Social Work
Next Steps: Grand Valley State Univ.
Program: EFA Dance
Instructor: Francesca Pileci
Scholarship: $500 | Kalamazoo RESA Education for the Arts Outstanding Senior

**Ava Loc**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Colleen and Cau Loc
Career: Biology
Next Steps: Michigan State Univ.
Program: CTE Veterinary Science
Instructor: Dr. Noreen Heikes
Scholarship: $1,500 | Kalamazoo Area Retired School Personnel

**Connor Ott**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Angel and Eric Ott
Career: Culinary Arts
Next Steps: Grand Rapids Com. College
Program: CTE Culinary Arts
Instructor: Kharen Shelton
Scholarship: $1,000 | Sue Lignell Foundation

**Damarion Johnson**
Loy Norrix High School
Parent: Stacey Johnson
Career: Fashion Design and Dance
Next Steps: Western Michigan Univ.
Program: EFA Dance
Instructor: Heather Mitchell
Scholarship: $500 | Kalamazoo RESA Foundation; Irving S. Gilmore Foundation in memory of Gayle Werme

**Darian Moubray**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Jennifer Moubray and Matthew Jakubowski
Career: Biomedical Engineering
Next Steps: Michigan State Univ.
Program: CTE Conservation Biology
Instructor: Fahimeh Baziari
Scholarship: $1,500 | Burdick-Thorne Foundation

**Felix Owinga**
Kalamazoo Central High School
Parents: Rose and Bonfas Owinga
Career: Neuroscience

**Felix Owinga**
Kalamazoo Central High School
Parents: Rose and Bonfas Owinga
Career: Neuroscience

**McKenzie Ott**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Angel and Eric Ott
Career: Environmental Studies and Sustainability
Next Steps: Grand Valley State Univ.
Program: CTE Conservation Biology
Instructor: Fahimeh Baziari
Scholarship: $1,500 | Kalamazoo Area Retired School Personnel

**Sebastian Pratt**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Alyson Dehr and Leland Pratt
Career: Barbering
Next Steps: Directly into the workforce.
Program: CTE Barbering
Instructor: Jackie Rush
Scholarship: $500 | World of Work Foundation

**Trenton Snell**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Tana Burns and Chad Snell
Career: Sociology
Next Steps: Western Michigan Univ.
Program: CTE Law Enforcement
Instructor: Brian Brusach
Scholarship: $1,000 | Sue Lignell Foundation

**Sierra Ward**
Loy Norrix High School
Parents: Cherise and Atiba Ward
Career: Public Health
Next Steps: Western Michigan Univ.
Program: CTE Emergency Medical Technology
Instructor: Moriya Hurst
Scholarship: $1,500 | Kalamazoo Area Retired School Personnel

This scholarship committee awards scholarships to students based on their academic achievements, community involvement, extracurricular activities and goals for the future. This year, 50 donors provided $58,500 in scholarships for 62 students.

Instructors nominate students for the honor and a scholarship committee selects the scholarship winners based on each student’s academic achievements, community involvement, extracurricular activities and goals for the future. This year, 50 donors provided $58,500 in scholarships for 62 students.
Kalamazoo College Awards Heyl Scholarships to Six KPS Students

Six Kalamazoo Public Schools students seeking to major in STEM-related fields have earned Heyl Scholarships to attend Kalamazoo College in the 2021-22 academic year. Two other awards were made to students in other Kalamazoo County school districts.

The Heyl Scholarship Fund, marking its 50th anniversary, was established in 1971 through the will of Dr. Frederick Heyl and Mrs. Elsie Heyl.

Frederick Heyl was the first director of research at The Upjohn Company, and he taught at Kalamazoo College. The scholarship is renewable for four years and cover tuition, fees, college housing and a book allowance.

Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program 2021 Graduates

This year’s KPS recipients of the scholarships, their high schools and their chosen majors or professional goals are:

**Ava Apolo**, Loy Norrix High School and KAMSC, mathematics.

**Anna Buck**, Loy Norrix High School and KAMSC, mathematics.

**Elizabeth “Ellie” Grooten**, Kalamazoo Central and KAMSC, biology.

**Maggie Lekan**, Kalamazoo Central, biology or chemistry.

**Emerson Wessenhoff**, Loy Norrix and KAMSC, biology with an environmental science concentration.

**Laurel Wolfe**, Loy Norrix, biology.

Kalamazoo College Awards Heyl Scholarships to Six KPS Students

Student Athletes Declare Intentions to Play College Sports

Congratulations to the following Kalamazoo Public Schools 2021 graduates, who have committed to continuing their sports careers at the collegiate level.

Kalamazoo Central High School

| Jaden Blanchard, Eastern Michigan University, football | Jaelyn Horn, Kalamazoo College, basketball |
| Breven Brill, Kalamazoo College, soccer | Kaleden Johnson, Union County College, football |
| Kavia Covillion, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, volleyball | Kearney Miller, Albion College, softball |
| Kavia Covillion, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, volleyball | Stefanie Nizzardini, Kalamazoo College, softball |
| Camren Hall, Union County College (New Jersey), football | Laila Vincent, Kalamazoo College, basketball |
| Colin Halloran, Kalamazoo College, soccer | Josh Walker, Kalamazoo College, swimming |
| Cole Hemingway, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, baseball | Morasha Wiggins, University of North Carolina, basketball |
| Moisey Lewis, Loy Norrix High School and KAMSC, biology | Marisol Zarate, Glen Oaks Community College, softball |

Loy Norrix High School

| Garrick Hohn, Kalamazoo College, cross country | Sean Mason, Glen Oaks Community College, baseball |
| Keegan Hughes, Kalamazoo College, cross country | Sophia Santos, Kalamazoo College, swimming and diving |
| Elke Kabombo, Olivet College, soccer | Carter Scheel, Calvin University, soccer |
| Ellie Lepley, Kalamazoo College, swimming and diving | Samantha VanderPol, Kalamazoo College, swimming and diving |
| Ava Loncharte, Kalamazoo College, lacrosse | Nathaniel White, Aquinas College, track and field |
| Annie Mansfield, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, softball | Laurel Wolfe, Kalamazoo College, swimming and diving |
| Daniel Wood, Olivet College, basketball | Daniel Wood, Olivet College, basketball |

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Martavion Mabon: Doing the Hard Work to Get to the Next Level

The way Martavion Mabon figures it, working 40 hours a week actually made him a better student.

It’s hard to say when his day “started” during the 2020–21 school year, but Mabon, who works third shift for auto parts manufacturer MANN + HUMMEL, would get out of work at 7 a.m., take a 30-minute nap, get up to attend classes, go to sleep at 3 p.m. and get to work by 10 p.m.

“Yeah, I didn’t get as much sleep as I should have,” he said with a laugh.

He won’t lie, the first few weeks were difficult.

“I was kind of behind in school. My teachers would reach out to me and call my phone. I told them I was working the night shift, but they didn’t know I was working 40 hours. It was killing me the first few weeks,” Mabon said. “Then, eventually I had to map out a schedule. I had to figure out how I was going to do this. I think working actually helped me.

“I ended up getting used to it. It wasn’t too challenging.” He pauses. “Well, sometimes I get a little drowsy. Sleep is the first thing I think about.”

Mabon has been good at figuring out how to make his education work for him. Mabon attended Washington Writers’ Academy and Milwood Magnet School: A Center for Math, Science and Technology before going to Loy Norrix High School and then Phoenix High School.

His freshman year at Loy Norrix did not go well. He hung out with the wrong crowd, skipped class, and had a hard time focusing because of the group of friends he had. By his junior year, he was behind and didn’t know how he’d catch up. That’s when a counselor suggested Phoenix High School, which he knew about from an aunt’s experience there.

“They’re very helpful there,” Mabon said. “The staff knew how to work with me. The teachers broke down the information for me in the right way, so I knew exactly what I was doing. I had a lot of motivation. When I got to Phoenix, I realized in a snap how much school is supposed to mean to me. I had to get back on track. I graduated a year later.”

Among the staff who were especially helpful were teacher Scott Hunsinger and principal Mark Hill. Staff didn’t know that he was working 40 hours a week this school year, but when they did see him struggle, they were there to encourage him to get his work done and to touch base with teachers or counselors when he needed extra help.

“The staff at Phoenix actually reach out to the students,” he said. “I went there at a time when I was giving up because I was stuck on my work and I didn’t know how to ask for help. They told me I could not bail out on them. They made sure I graduated.”

Mabon, who is the son of Valarie Mabon and Larry Calhoun, is still working at MANN + HUMMEL but he’d like to learn a trade in the future.
Sierra Ward: Busy Has Always Been a Way of Life

“My parents always pushed me to stay busy to stay out of trouble. I just had so much energy as a child, staying busy was a way to channel that into something positive,” Sierra Ward says.

So, as a student at Loy Norrix High School, Ward:
- Participated in Girl Scouts through high school.
- Took an Education for Employment class, which led to dual enrollment at Kalamazoo Valley Community College.
- Was president of the Merze Tate Explorers Travel Club, which encourages female students to travel. She studied abroad in Europe and earned college credit and represented Kalamazoo in Japan as part of the Numazu Sister City program.
- Played volleyball for four years, and dabbled in basketball, softball and track.
- Was president of DECA, a career and technical education program that focuses on marketing, finance, hospitality and management.
- Was president of Interact, the high school arm of Rotary International.
- Attended church at Bible Baptist Church, where she volunteered.

Some of the positives that came out of all of that activity:
- Gold and Silver Awards — the highest accolades in the Girl Scout program, the Outstanding Senior Award from EFE, certification as an basic EMT, and the Social Justice Youth Award from City of Kalamazoo.
- “I’d like to thank my parents who are both teachers and who have been teaching me since day one.”

Ward created a series of inspirational bookmarks, which she distributed to KPS graduating seniors in 2020, nursing homes and hospitals.

“I had a lot of family who were sick and passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this project was kind of in their honor,” Ward told WMU for a story on incoming freshmen. “I had a lot of friends graduating last year who didn’t get a traditional graduation, and then senior citizens weren’t allowed to have visitors in nursing homes and hospitals because of COVID-19. So, I made the bookmarks to try to lift everyone’s spirits.”

In the fall, she plans to be a leader for a Girl Scout Daisy troop. “I’d like to help other girls, especially girls of color, know they can receive those high honors.”

Another carryover she’ll take from high school to college is her EMT training, which began with the Education for Employment (now called Career & Technical Education) EMT course, and continued with her dual enrollment at KVCC. Through the program she received certification for basic life support, CPR, and disaster assistance. She is studying for her national EMT certification and hopes to work as an EMT while in college.

Ward’s suggestion for all high school students: take advantage of every opportunity. She remembers walking through the hall of Loy Norrix one day when she came across an event for the Interact Club. “They had pizza — and I was just so hungry,” she laughs. She stopped for the pizza — but ended up becoming the social chair, and then the president of the service group.

“I feel like a lot of people do activities for the cords at graduation,” she said. “But, I feel like you can’t replace the experience of being a part of those groups. My mom tells me high school is your least stressful time — it’s an opportunity you want to take advantage of.”

One of her longest-running activities has been the Girl Scouts, which she started in as a first grader at Prairie Ridge Elementary. Her mother has served as her troop leader.

While many people see Girl Scouts as an activity for younger children, the program has many stages that “offer different avenues as you grow through the program,” Ward said.

Among the highlights of her high school career was receiving the Gold Award, which is the highest accolade available to a Girl Scout. The award requires girls to complete a service project with a minimum of 80 hours of work. The girls must research an issue and choose an associated project that is both sustainable and puts the Girl Scout principles into practice, while inspiring others.

“I feel like trying new things. My motto is you never know until you try something,” Ward said.

Ward, 18, is the daughter of Kalamazoo Public Schools teachers Cherise Ward (Arcadia Elementary) and Atiba Ward (Loy Norrix High School). Her younger sister Aliah is a rising freshman at Loy Norrix. She plans to enroll in Western Michigan University to study public health, with a minor in holistic health and chemistry.
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Back to School BASH

FREE!
- Carnival Rides!
- Bouncies!
- Games!
- Concessions!
- Backpacks!
- School Supplies!
- Hygiene Kits!
- & PRIZES!
(While supplies last)

Completed Well-Child Exams (ages 3-12) and up-to-date immunizations are required to attend.

(269)349-2641

PLEASE NOTE:
For your safety, due to COVID-19 we are limiting capacity and each person to a three hour time slot.