



KPS HAS A HEART TO SERVE

Usually, school buses in Kentwood Public Schools carry the most precious cargo—our students. However, recently some of our drivers were charged with a different task. They helped gather non-perishable food items as part of East Kentwood High School’s annual “Stuff the Bus” campaign to collect food for those facing challenges in this season of their lives.

Service to the community is not simply an occasional gesture for Kentwood Public Schools.

“Stuff the Bus” is an annual event led by the East Kentwood Student Council. The student council facilitates the collection of food items to donate to Streams of Hope,



which will eventually serve families in our area. While the EK Student Council leads the annual food drive, this is a district-wide effort, with all Kentwood schools partnering with the community to help support those in need.

Service to the community is not simply an occasional gesture for Kentwood Public Schools...

Continued on page 2...

PROMISES MADE...PROMISES KEPT

2021, our community supported KPS with the approval of a bond proposal, here is an update:

- **Promise Made:** To create full-service kitchens and cafeteria additions and/or renovations for added safety, spacing, equity, and quality at KPS elementary schools.
- **Promise Kept:** Most of our buildings now have these upgrades, bringing quality, healthy meals to our students each day. Construction will soon start at other elementaries.
- **Promise Made:** Provide every student with up-to-date personalized learning devices.
- **Promise Kept:** Every KPS student receives a Chromebook; this is critical for 21st century learning.

Continued on page 2...



KPS HAS HEART TO SERVE *Continued from page 1*

It is much, much bigger than that. “KPS exists to serve our community,” affirms Superintendent Kevin Polston. “We are grateful to the Kentwood community and the special way we work to support each other. At KPS we have immense pride in our community and strive to make our schools a source of pride as well. When our students engage in giving back to our community, they learn the importance of a life of service to others, which we hope they continue as they grow and become independent members of the Kentwood community.”

At KPS we want all students to feel empowered as integral members of the Kentwood community.

Serving the community comes in all shapes and sizes. We see large efforts, like “Stuff the Bus”, and other smaller contributions. Younger students step up by working to keep their playgrounds clean, older students volunteer their time on weekends to help younger students learn, or students participate in card writing campaigns to brighten the day of individuals both at home and abroad. Each effort, whether big or small, is significant. Students learn the impact they can have in their community — they matter, their voices are important, they can make a difference!

This is a central belief of Kentwood Public Schools. As part of the district’s recent strategic planning process, a list of student vision statements was created to highlight values we wish to impart to our students. One of those statements is, “I am empowered to influence my community.” Focusing on serving the community, in small ways and large ways, is a means of empowering students which not only impacts

our community today, but it creates a path for even greater impacts in the future. At KPS we want all students to feel empowered as integral members of the Kentwood community.

“Our youth are our future,” says Superintendent Polston. “They have power and influence to make a difference both locally and globally. Teaching these lessons to our children at a young age enables them to learn skills for service over a period of time. We are thankful for our families and members of the Kentwood community as our partners to teach the next generation to make a difference and continue to build a strong and vibrant community.”



Pictured: New EKHS Culinary Arts Center

PROMISES MADE... PROMISES KEPT *Continued from page 1*

- **Promise Made:** To develop Career Technology Education opportunities for students.
- **Promise Kept:** Last month the new culinary arts center at East Kentwood High School officially opened providing students with a path toward a career in the culinary arts. [This video from our construction partners at Owens-Ames-Kimball reviews the new facility.](#)

Thank you for your partnership and support! We look forward to bringing you more updates in the months ahead.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS WITH HARVEST FEST

On Saturday November 18, 2023 Valleywood Middle School hosted a Harvest Fest Craft Show. The craft show was an exciting networking event featuring over 30 different vendors from our community. Students, staff and community vendors served and created connections with almost 200 attendees. While planning this event, we partnered with our neighbor, St. Mary Magdalen, who also hosted a craft show that day. We successfully partnered by sharing each other's events, flyers and shoppers.

Student council and members of the PTC also helped make this event a success. While there wasn't a charge for the event, donations were accepted. These generous gifts will benefit PTC and student council as we continue to plan events for our students, families and community. This was an amazing opportunity to bring our local community into our school. The return of the Harvest Fest Craft Show to Valleywood was delightful! We look forward to hosting Harvest Fest annually!



STUDENT VISION STATEMENT

I AM
EMPOWERED
TO INFLUENCE
MY COMMUNITY



ARCH STUDENTS LEARN TO SERVE

This year at Discovery ARCH, one of our focus points is to give students a voice and see what they come up with! Our ARCH Student Council came up with an idea to participate in trash pickup around the building and playgrounds. Our students suited up with their gloves and trash bags and picked up any and all trash that they could find. When finished, the group circled up and had a discussion on helping others and what it means to do things for the community. Students shared how one act of kindness goes a long way and that picking up trash around our building is just one act they could do to be a better version of themselves. The students felt empowered and helpful while performing a service for the school.





MEADOWLAWN ARCH PARTNERS WITH MEL TROTTER

Meadowlawn ARCH is grateful to partner with Mel Trotter Ministries to serve others this November. The ARCH Youth Advisory Board voiced that they would like to serve the homeless population in the area this holiday season. Students listened to a presentation on common misconceptions about people experiencing homelessness, and the work Mel Trotter does to help the people they serve. "I didn't know people did that much to help the homeless" said 5th grader Shantal Cooley. Students decorated lunch bags with encouraging messages and pictures for guests receiving lunch from Mel Trotter's sack lunch program. Jazmin Sandee, a 5th grader in the Meadowlawn ARCH program shared, "I liked how we made bags to help people feel good about themselves."

LIGHTS ON! AT THE KENT DISTRICT LIBRARY

The Southwood Elementary ARCH after school program celebrated national Lights On! day with the Kent District Library on Thursday, October 26th. Lights On! is a day celebrated across the United States to highlight the positive impact of after school programs on their students, families, and communities. This year, Southwood ARCH partnered with KDL to bring resources and a night of fun and learning to our ARCH families. Participants were able to sign up for library cards and learn about the different free resources and learning opportunities for both youth and adults provided by the library. Families also participated in story time and fort building activities led by library staff. This event was a night for families to connect with others in the ARCH program, as well as with local resources within their communities.



Heart of West Michigan United Way

KPS GIVES TO UNITED WAY

Kentwood Public Schools stepped up again this year with contributions to the United Way. The district set a goal to reach \$50,000 in employee contributions, which would be a record-level for KPS. When all was said and done, KPS employees donated more than \$51,000 to the United Way during the annual fundraising drive this fall! United Way funds go to a variety of organizations that serve our community, including the Kentwood Education Foundation, Streams of Hope, and Kids Food Basket.

Prior to this year's fundraising drive, Ian Gibson, principal at Crossroads, and Jenin Shamali, assistant principal at Valleywood, received the United Way's Campaign Coordinator of the Year Recognition Award from Heart of West Michigan United Way for their work over the past year. We congratulate Ian and Jenin for receiving this well-deserved honor and thank them for their leadership! We also thank all those in our district who led and contributed to this year's United Way campaign.

The Holidays are upon us, and the Spirit Store is here to help with your shopping!! We offer sizes from newborn to 3XL. Something to fit all your favorite Falcons!

Below is the Spirit Store's Holiday sales schedule:

12/04/23	Free koozie with any apparel purchase
12/11/23	Free Falcon Pride t-shirt with \$50 purchase
12/18/23	Shop till you drop. Sale TBD

The Spirit Store is located off the high school Grand Foyer. Enter Door A and we are just past the pool on the right side. We will be open on the dates listed below:

November 30, 2023	10:30am - 7:00pm
December 5, 2023	3:30pm - 7:00pm
December 7, 2023	10:30am - 7:00pm
December 9, 2023	9:00am - 12:00pm
December 12, 2023	3:30pm - 7:00pm
December 14, 2023	10:30am - 7:00pm
December 16, 2023	9:00am - 12:00pm
December 19, 2023	3:30pm - 7:00pm
December 20, 2023	3:30pm - 7:00pm
December 21, 2023	10:30am - 7:00pm

Be sure to follow us on Facebook at Falcon Fanwear Spirit Store. We update new items and sales every week.



CREATING CARDS FOR THOSE WHO SERVE

For the tenth year in a row, Kentwood Public Schools students took time to write cards to send to men and women who are serving our country overseas during the holiday season. The card writing is part of the David Warsen Legacy's annual care package campaign where boxes, full of special gifts and surprises including the handmade cards from our students, are shipped to those serving overseas. David Warsen was a 2004 graduate of East Kentwood High School who served his country by enlisting in the United States Navy in 2009, eventually becoming a member of the Navy SEAL team. David gave his life while serving his country when his helicopter was shot down during a mission in Afghanistan in 2012. KPS is honored to continue to be part of the efforts honoring David's life and legacy.

MEADOWLAWN CREATES COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

One way we promote family engagement and service-learning opportunities in Kentwood Public Schools is through our PTCs. The Meadowlawn PTC is a family and school staff group that meets monthly to help make a positive impact at the school and in the community.

This school year, the PTC has established “care funds” for families. When there is something to celebrate, or something to support, such as a new baby in the family or the death of a loved one, the PTC reaches out to provide help and/or care with the goal of building positive school-family connections.

Through conversations at recent PTC meetings, a Family Resource Night took place in late November, which included speakers, and community agencies with resource tables, games, food, and prizes. The goal was for families to learn more about resources in the community and for parents to receive support and relevant information to help their children learn at home.

The Meadowlawn PTC feels strongly about belonging, making everyone know and feel they are welcomed, valued, and important to the school and the larger community. The Care Fund and Family Resource Night are just the start of more opportunities to come! These activities help us create connections with our school, neighbors, and the Kentwood Community.



CHALLENGER SCORES A CLEAN PLAYGROUND!

At Challenger, we constantly ask and remind our students to follow the SCORE expectations. SCORE is an acronym for Safe, Control, Organized, Respect, Effort. Students who follow these expectations help create and maintain a culture of excellence.

Second-grade students at Challenger strive for this level of excellence and have taken it upon themselves to give back to our school community. Mrs. Joppie’s 2nd grade class proposed a service-learning project to her that would help make our school successful and tidy. They wanted to help keep the playground clean!

The veteran teacher and her colleagues (Ms. Anderson and Mrs. Yang) capitalized on the opportunity presented by the students. Together, they helped brainstorm and facilitate the project. Ever since, 2nd grade students have been using some of their afternoon recess time to organize themselves for a weekly trash clean-up on and around their school playground. They have plastic gloves and bags to collect trash to create a clean and beautiful Challenger playground! We applaud these students and their initiative to serve our school community!

WE THE PEOPLE IS OFF TO A STRONG START

The competitive season for East Kentwood High School's We The People team is off to a great start! In mid-November, the team participated in the District Finals and was named District Champions at the event. It is the first time since 2020 that the team from EK brought home the district trophy. The team competes in a rigorous competition that tests their knowledge of the Constitution, philosophy, history, politics, and current events in live hearings. Students spent more than 55 combined hours during the past two months preparing for the event, working with a combination of 13+ volunteer coaches and alumni to help them sharpen their constitutional arguments and presentation skills.

In addition to the overall team winning the District Championship, some individuals received recognition: Unit 2's Cristian Schneider received a Gavel Award from the judges in recognition of his analysis of the status of slavery amid the Constitutional Convention; Unit 5's Myonta Walker received a Gavel Award from the judges for her exceptional use of case law in explaining the Supreme Court's jurisprudence around habeas corpus and also 3rd party doctrine regarding data privacy.

Also, 3 Units finished as District Champions in their content area: Unit 3's Tony Pham, Paige Reynolds, and Kerim Suleman for their explanation of the expansion of suffrage in the United States and its relationship with the 1st amendment; Unit 5's Memphis Hartman, Annie Nadolski, Myonta Walker, and Bayan Zeqlam for their analysis of the necessity of adding a Bill of Rights to the Constitution and consideration of protecting additional rights in the modern era; and Unit 6's Nate Moxey, Amna Sabanovic, and Nishan Upreti for their discussion of the issues surrounding modern American citizenship and barriers to effective civic participation today.

We congratulate the team for this impressive academic achievement as well as the volunteer coaches who support them throughout the process! Up next is the State Finals competition that will take place at Michigan State University's College of Law in mid-January.



We The People - **EKHS** Team 37

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Divya Bhandari Peter Hnin Oummu Kabba	Robel Abebe Dawt Khun Cristian Schneider Bradley Vilcans	Tony Pham Paige Reynolds Kerim Suleman
Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Noah Avalos Nicolas Longstreet Dawt MenPar	Memphis Hartman Annie Nadolski Myonta Walker Bayan Zeqlam	Nate Moxey Amna Sabanovic Nishan Upreti



Volunteer Coaches:

Ahjah Bailey-O'Conner, Tyler Buck, Nhu Dang, Eric Dubois, Lucy Fornetti, Sophie Gemmen, Branden Graf, Katrina Hainline, Keaton Nguyen, Ken Ozanich, Justin Robbins, Connor Shaw, Ebise Tarekegn, Mike Traywick, Avalon Wiczorek



CRESTWOOD EMPOWERS STUDENTS WITH CPR/FIRST AID SKILLS

Crestwood students in 8th grade health were offered a unique opportunity to attain CPR/FIRST AID certification, a valuable skill set that can make a crucial difference in emergency situations. The school's investment in CPR manikins was important in facilitating a hands-on learning experience for our students. The certification empowers students to play a proactive role in their community's well-being by teaching them how to respond in a medical emergency. A special acknowledgment goes to Mrs. Lowe for her instrumental role in providing this enriching experience to Crestwood's students.

ML LEADERSHIP STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT HOLIDAYS

At Endeavor Elementary, 4th and 5th grade ML (Multilingual) Leadership students are working to serve our community by educating our school about cultural holidays celebrated at KPS. This November they have been busy sharing about Día de los Muertos and Diwali.

To prepare, our Endeavor ML Leadership students met to create an overview of each holiday. They highlighted the history, traditions, and a language learning opportunity of the holiday with the rest of the ML leadership team. Students have been busy conducting interviews about the holiday traditions, and then sharing this information through educational bulletin boards and informational slideshows with the rest of the school. The ML Leadership team has also been visiting classrooms and reading student-chosen stories to continue learning about Día de los Muertos and Diwali.

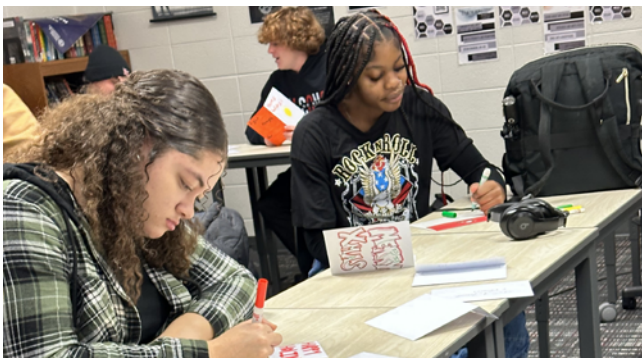
As the year continues, the leadership team will continue to educate our school about major cultural celebrations. Our goal is to increase awareness and understanding of all the amazing cultures within Endeavor and KPS and continue to show that WE BELONG!



CLASS OF 2027 CREATES CARDS FOR THE COMMUNITY

The class of 2027 took on a service-learning project the day prior to Thanksgiving break. Our class officers, Solaya Chisholm and Natalie Krause, worked with our co-advisors, Cody Bennett, Josh Zolen, and Sydney Yates, to organize hand-made cards that would go to people who are less likely to receive visitors over the holiday season. Our officers created a video emphasizing the importance of this project and how the class could come together around service to our community. Handwritten cards will be delivered to Pine Rest's In-Patient program, Senior care facilities in partnership with the Make a Smile Project, local Veterans homes and people currently housed in the Kent County jail.

Our students did a great job creating cards and sharing their joy around the holiday season. Thank you to our class officers and sponsors who made this project possible!



EKFC LEVEL UP

On Wednesday, November 15, EKFC hosted the Level Up Conference with 170 young men participating, learning and engaging with community leaders from the Greater Grand Rapids area. The volunteers shared their traditional and non-traditional education/career paths.

The goal of the conference is to empower young men by developing leadership skills while presenting them with multiple career paths to explore in their futures. "Level Up" is a fitting name; encouraging youth to step up and improve their conditions to create better opportunities for themselves and their community. We are so grateful for our KSSN Community School Coordinator Farris Withers, who made this event a HUGE success!

EKHS HOSTS VETERANS

On Tuesday, November 14th, East Kentwood High School Student Council hosted a Veterans Day Program and Luncheon for KPS staff, alumni, and community members. Those who attended were warmly welcomed by numerous high school students and staff cheering and waving American flags as they entered the building. Veterans were honored by a performance from Varsity Voices as they sang the “Star Spangled Banner” and “Let There be Peace on Earth” by Keith Hampton—two songs that share melodies of patriotism and unity. The program also included a catered lunch, engaging conversations with students, and a slideshow highlighting each of the veterans sharing more about their service and accomplishments.

This event served as a reminder of the debt of gratitude we owe to those who have served and protected our nation. Thank you to the EKHS Student Council for their hard work planning this event to honor our veterans and their unwavering service and dedication to our nation. We are grateful for all those who serve and have served our country.



EK STUDENTS SERVE AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Students from East Kentwood High School’s student council are working hard to serve the elementary school community here in Kentwood. Members of EK’s student council recently visited every second-grade classroom in the district to share a lesson on self-growth. The EK student council members shared a book that they had made with each second-grade class and also led them in some activities. The book and activities helped second graders see that determination and hard work are the keys to self-growth.

In addition, the high school students wanted to connect with the younger students in our district, giving them a positive introduction to East Kentwood High School and its students.

“I feel when you’re in second grade, you’re not thinking about high school because it seems so far away,” said EK Senior and student council member Allie Cahill during her visit to a second grade classroom at Endeavor Elementary. She added that the EK students taking part in this project want to be role models for the second graders. “Seeing us coming to their classrooms and leading by example, I think that does help them,” Cahill added.

SATURDAY SCIENCE AT EKHS

Science students at East Kentwood High School stepped up to serve their greater school community as teachers for elementary students in November. The EKHS students were leading the learning at Saturday Science School, a new extension of EK STEAM Summer Camps that have taken place the past two years. During the classes on three Saturdays in November, elementary students from across the district took part in engaging science learning, including an up-close look at animals and animal survival.

East Kentwood Science teacher Chad VanHouten is overseeing this unique learning experience. VanHouten understands the important role his high school students play in impacting the learning of younger students as well as impacting the community on the whole. “I want my high school students to be valued community members,” VanHouten says, “thinking about, not just their learning, but how they impact the community through their learning.”

[Checkout this video to learn more about the Saturday Science School experience.](#)





KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar 2023-24

- Aug 21 *First Day of School
- Sep 1 No School
- Sep 4 No School
- Sept 27..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff

- Oct 12..... ½ Day K-12 / Conferences
- Oct 13 No School

- Nov 1..... No School / PD for Staff
- Nov 22 - 24 .. No School / Thanksgiving Break

- Dec 22 ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- Dec 25 - Jan 5 ... Winter Break

- Jan 15 No School for Students & Staff / MLK Day

- Feb 19 & 20 No School for Students & Staff / Mid-Winter Break

- Mar 6..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
- Mar 28..... ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- Mar 29 - Apr 5.... No School for Students & Staff/ Spring Break

- May 24 ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- May 27 No School / Memorial Day
- May 31..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	3:59 PM	12:15 PM
Middle	8:20 AM	3:04 PM	11:35 AM
EKFC & EKHS	7:41 AM	2:31 PM	10:48 AM
Crossroads	7:30 AM	2:18 PM	10:46 AM

AUGUST							JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
27	28	29	30	31			28	29	30	31			

SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2					1	2	3
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	25	26	27	28	29		

OCTOBER							MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7						1	2
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	30	31					24	25	26	27	28	29	30

NOVEMBER							APRIL						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	5	6
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
26	27	28	29	30			28	29	30				

DECEMBER							MAY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2				1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

No School For Students
 Half Day