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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Winners of 40th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Contests Announced, Will Be Celebrated at Free Citywide Celebration

Milestone 40th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration will celebrate winners at free event on Monday, January 15

MILWAUKEE (Jan. 3, 2024) – The [Marcus Performing Arts Center](#) (MPAC), along with We Energies, Milwaukee Public Schools, and Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association, announced today the student winners of the 40th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. art, speech, and writing contests. The winners will be celebrated at the [40th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration](#), presented by Bader Philanthropies, on Monday, January 15 at the Marcus Performing Arts Center.

This free event, coordinated by the MLK Steering Committee, will begin at 4:00 p.m. in Uihlein Hall and highlight this year’s youth contest winners as well as feature remarks from elected officials; performances from Rufus King International High School Varsity Drumline, Steffon Dixon, Xegon UniVerSoulist, and Antoine Reynolds and The Sound; and a special presentation of the **inaugural Rev. Joseph Ellwanger Social Justice Award**.

The Celebration activities will conclude with a free gospel concert featuring Antoine Reynolds with Anthony McGahee & Praise Motivated.

This year’s theme, “What Affects One...Affects All,” was inspired by Dr. King’s words in his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” which was written in April 1963 as he was imprisoned for leading non-violent protests:

“I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

“We are honored to host this long-standing community event and provide this opportunity for Milwaukee’s youth to learn about the life and legacy of Dr. King,” said **MPAC President & CEO Kevin Giglinto**. “This enduring tradition reflects the Marcus Performing Arts Center’s commitment to the principles of racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.”

Since 1984, Milwaukee has proudly stood alongside Atlanta as one of the only cities in the country to host an annual celebration in honor of Dr. King’s birthday. For four decades, young people have been the heart of this celebration, expressing Dr. King’s timeless messages through art, speech, and writing contests.

This year’s entries were submitted by students from Milwaukee and surrounding school districts. The complete list of this year’s contest winners can be found below.

Additionally, the **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Teacher of the Year Award** will be presented to **Rose Peterson, English Department Chair from Barack Obama School of Career and Technical Education** for her outstanding efforts and dedication to providing a high-quality, equitable education to all students.

“Bader Philanthropies is proud to support this milestone celebration at the Marcus Performing Arts Center,” said Bridgett Gonzalez, Grants Director at Bader Philanthropies. “This program has impacted the lives of countless Milwaukee youth, providing a platform for creativity and encouraging a deeper understanding of Dr. King’s teachings.”

This event is free and open to the public. There are no tickets required to attend, and complimentary parking will be available in the MPAC Parking Structure.

Event sponsors include Bader Philanthropies (Presenting Sponsor); We Energies and Milwaukee Public Schools (Speech Contest Sponsors); Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association (Writing Contest Sponsor), and Marcus Performing Arts Center (Art Contest Sponsor); Milwaukee County Transit System (Legacy Sponsor); Milwaukee County Office of Equity, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, Educators Credit Union, and 101.7 The Truth (Freedom Sponsors); Landmark Credit Union (Peace Sponsor).

For curriculum resources and more information, visit www.MarcusCenter.org/MLK

Art Contest Winners

Grades K-2

- 1st Place Akella Walker – Milwaukee German Immersion School
- 2nd Place Faith Skreland – Milwaukee German Immersion School

Grades 3-5

- 1st Place Amya Ramos – Luther Burbank School
- 2nd Place Rana Arlwais – I.D.E.A.L. School
- 3rd Place Emma Vang – Richard Kluge School

Grades 6-8

- 1st Place Rinalee Xiong – Wedgewood Park International School
- 2nd Place Claire Cruz – Wedgewood Park International School
- 3rd Place Safwaan Aqueel – Salam School

Grades 9-12

- 1st Place Geraldine Maldonado – Barack Obama School of Career and Technical Education

2nd Place Aida El-Hajjar – University School of Milwaukee
3rd Place Paw Wah Ker Boh – Milwaukee High School of the Arts

Speech Contest Winners

Grades K-2

1st Place Cameron Barki – Lowell Elementary
2nd Place Mason Walker – Eastbrook Academy
3rd Place Haniah Cross – Craig Montessori School

Grades 3-4

1st Place Eddie Smith – Craig Montessori School
2nd Place Zebdee Larfeeva – Golda Meir School
3rd Place Ashe Henry – Lowell Elementary

Grades 5-6

1st Place Zaida Smith – Samuel Clemens School
2nd Place Renad Kabashi – Golda Meir School
3rd Place Priscilia Nsau – Lowell Elementary

Grades 7-8

1st Place Victoria Gagliano – Louisa May Alcott School
2nd Place Dahlia Santiago – Golda Meir School
3rd Place Bibi Mohamed Yunus – Victory School

Grades 9-10

1st Place Basma Sarsour – Salam School
2nd Place Sage Marshall – Eastbrook Academy
3rd Place Dadria Veal – Golda Meir School

Grades 11-12

1st Place Nevaeha Tarver – Golda Meir School
2nd Place Jonah Denae – Milwaukee High School of the Arts
3rd Place Nathan Merriweather – University School of Milwaukee

Writing Contest Winners

Grades 2-3

1st Place Khalise Warren – Richard Kluge School
2nd Place Lore'al Douglas – Richard Kluge School
3rd Place Gianna Rivera – Honey Creek School

Grades 4-5

1st Place Journee Grandberry – Samuel Clemens School
2nd Place Amere Brewer – Samuel Clemens School
3rd Place Renad Kabashi – Golda Meir School

Grade 6

1st Place Meadow Mertes – Fernwood Montessori School
2nd Place June Rickman – Fernwood Montessori School

3rd Place Layla Parker – Fernwood Montessori School

Grades 7-8

1st Place Mylah Monk – Congress School

2nd Place GuZa Nar – Victory School

3rd Place Michael Tempesta – Burdick School

Grades 9-10

1st Place Isaiah Washington – Riverside University High School

2nd Place Abdul Sarip Kurban Ali – Riverside University High School

3rd Place Bruce Harris – Riverside University High School

Grades 11-12

1st Place Anuar Nur Hassan – Milwaukee High School of the Arts

2nd Place Saleem Kadadha – Salam School

3rd Place Kimberly Martinez-Sierra – Golda Meir School

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About Marcus Performing Arts Center

A mission-based non-profit organization located in downtown Milwaukee, the Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC) brings high-quality arts and cultural programming to Southeastern Wisconsin. MPAC strives to act as an energizing force that connects the community to the world through collaboration, innovation, social engagement, and the transformative power of the performing arts. Through multiple performance series, community events, and educational experiences, MPAC brings a diverse range of celebrated artists to the region. A fixture in Milwaukee for over 50 years, MPAC is proud to be part of the Milwaukee Theater District as well as a dedicated War Memorial facility. Learn more at www.MarcusCenter.org.