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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Winners of 41st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Contests Announced, Will Be Celebrated at Free Citywide Celebration**

*Free event on Monday, January 20, to honor student contest winners and social justice advocates  
Eddie and Mary Sue Short*

**MILWAUKEE** (January 10, 2025) – The [Marcus Performing Arts Center](#) (MPAC), along with We Energies, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association, announced today the student winners of the 41st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. art, speech, and writing contests. The winners will be celebrated at the [41st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration](#), presented by Bader Philanthropies, on Monday, January 20, 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 and performances from Milwaukee High School of the Arts Vocal Jazz Ensemble, The Riverside Brass Ensemble from Riverside University High School, and Paj Hnub Hli dance group from the Hmong American Friendship Association. Immediately following the program, all are invited to the Paulette Y. Copeland Reception celebrating the winners in the Anello Atrium.

The event will also include a special presentation of the **Rev. Joseph Ellwanger Social Justice Award to Eddie and Mary Sue Short**, whose story began over 60 years ago in Shaw, Mississippi, where they risked their lives to fight for voting rights, challenge segregation, and improve conditions in the Mississippi Delta. The Shorts’ partnership, forged through activism and strengthened by 58 years of marriage, stands as a testament to their unwavering commitment to justice and equality.

This year’s theme, “What Are You Doing for Others?,” was inspired by Dr. King’s words from a speech he gave on August 11, 1957, in Montgomery, Alabama, where he challenged his audience by saying:

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’ Every person must decide at some point whether they will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.”

“We are honored to host the 41st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration, a long-standing event that uplifts the voices of Milwaukee’s youth,” stated **MPAC President & CEO Kevin Giglinto**. “This event exemplifies the Marcus Performing Arts Center’s commitment to fostering racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in our community while encouraging the next generation to carry forward Dr. King’s enduring message.”

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, interpreting 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. Educator of the Year Award** will be presented to **Rakia Jones, 5th Grade Teacher at Samuel Clemens School** for her outstanding efforts and dedication in encouraging students to express themselves through the annual Dr. King contests.

“This year’s theme, ‘What Are You Doing for Others?,’ serves as a powerful reminder of Dr. King’s call to action and the impact we can all have through service and compassion,” said Bridgett Gonzalez, Grants Director at Bader Philanthropies. “Bader Philanthropies is proud to support this celebration, which not only honors Dr. King’s legacy but also empowers Milwaukee’s youth to explore how helping others can create meaningful change in their communities and beyond.”

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 and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Writing Contest Sponsors), 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, Islamic Society of Milwaukee, and 101.7 The Truth (Freedom Sponsors); Landmark Credit Union (Peace Sponsor); Copeland Family and Donelle Johnson (Reception Sponsor).

For curriculum resources and more information, visit [www.MarcusCenter.org/MLK](http://www.MarcusCenter.org/MLK)

### **Art Contest Winners**

#### *Grades K-2*

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	Kaia Plautz – MacDowell Montessori School
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Grant Grabowski – MacDowell Montessori School
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	Pamela Greer – MacDowell Montessori School

#### *Grades 3-5*

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	Kyrie Barnes – Samuel Clemens School
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2<sup>nd</sup> Place Chad Roy-Johnson – Samuel Clemens School  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Heaven Patton – Samuel Clemens School

*Grades 6-8*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Lucia Lamers – Milwaukee Parkside School for the Arts  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Noemi Cruz-Gutierrez – Wedgewood Park International School  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Mason Joseph – Wedgewood Park International School

*Grades 9-12*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Olivia Copp – St. Thomas More High School  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Karina Vanegas-Valdespino – Riverside University High School  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Alexis Frazier-Jasper – MacDowell Montessori School

**Speech Contest Winners**

*Grades K-2*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Josie Evans – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Dayon Robinson – Sherman Multicultural Arts School  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Christopher Lundman – Eastbrook Academy

*Grades 3-4*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Eddie Smith – Craig Montessori School  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Mason Walker – Eastbrook Academy  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Oumalkaire Osman – Zablocki School

*Grades 5-6*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Chad Roy-Johnson – Samuel Clemens School  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Renad Kabashi – Golda Meir School  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Nur Zahirah Abu Tahir – Victory School

*Grades 7-8*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Titania McHenry – Fernwood Montessori School  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Justin Eiland – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Carneshia Louis – Green Tree Preparatory Academy

*Grades 9-10*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Dahlia Santiago – Golda Meir School  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Praise Ayodabo – Eastbrook Academy  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Taniyah Purifoy – Riverside University High School

*Grades 11-12*

1<sup>st</sup> Place Leah Serdynski – Wisconsin Connections Academy  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Sage Marshall – Eastbrook Academy  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Joelle Askew – Golda Meir School

**Writing Contest Winners**

*Grades K-1* Sherman Multicultural Arts School, Lori Carmichael and Lynn Beaudoin (Teachers)  
Students: Brooklyn Atkins, Draya Bacon-Howell, Nygel Blount, Ka’Naisa Brown, Lakyrah Campbell, Camryn Dawson, Deovyon Harwell, Narriah Hinton, Mister Madison, Jaiden Ousley-Edwards, Dayon Robinson, Aubriell Smith, Amara Thao, Ray’Mel Thomas, Morris Webster, Anmani Wiley, Skylah Wills-McNeal, Pharoahaudry Wise, Royce York

*Grades 2-3*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Leanna Mitchell – Samuel Clemens School
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Journey Durr-Green – Richard Kluge School
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Thway LaMin – Richard Kluge School

*Grades 4-5*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Malaysia Riser – Samuel Clemens School
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Lailah Brown-Stephens – Golda Meir School
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Kyrie Barnes – Samuel Clemens School

*Grade 6*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Renad Kabashi – Golda Meir School
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Ruth Omoruyi – Eastbrook Academy
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Celeste Ziegler – Fernwood Montessori School

*Grades 7-8*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Yasmeeen Zeriuoh – Salam School
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Jasimah Kobir Ahmad – Salam School
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Maha Awawda – Salam School

*Grades 9-10*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Eternity Hopper – Milwaukee High School of the Arts
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Dimieria Johnson – Riverside University High School
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Ammarie Teague – Riverside University High School

*Grades 11-12*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Calvin Vang – Golda Meir School
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place La'Zerious Hunt – Golda Meir School
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Kaleb Colbert – 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 55 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](http://www.MarcusCenter.org).