



Winners of the high school spoken word contest are pictured with elementary orator winners. The theme of this year's MLK celebration, held at Dakota High School, was "Love Is Spoken Here."
Photo by Erin Sanchez

Community comes together for MLK Day in Macomb County

By: [Alex Szwarc](#) | C&G Newspapers | Published January 29, 2020



Sheila Eshaki was presented with the "Rise Beyond the Horizon" Mel Miller Memorial Award Jan. 20 at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration of Macomb County. Eshaki teaches at L'Anse Creuse High School-North in Macomb Township.
Photo by Erin Sanchez

MACOMB COUNTY — Individuals from around Macomb County gathered in Macomb Township to hear a message of "Love Is Spoken Here."

The 33rd annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration of Macomb County, hosted by the Interfaith Center for Racial Justice, or ICRJ, was held Jan. 20 at Dakota High School in Macomb Township.

The program included a keynote presentation, "This Is What Love Sounds Like," where Macomb County students sang, recited speeches and performed tributes to King. Winners were also announced for the high school photo and middle school art contests, as well as an award for educators.

The theme of this year's celebration was "Love Is Spoken Here."

The night began with a welcome from Dakota High School Principal Kevin Koskos.

“The work of the ICRJ inspires others to join the organization in its crusade to promote and encourage the development of a community dedicated to valuing inclusion and to ensuring a respectful and equitable treatment of all races, cultures and beliefs,” Koskos said.

A video message from Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist was shown at the event.

In it, Whitmer said she is confident that the life and legacy of King will be celebrated at the highest level at Dakota High School.

The “Rise Beyond the Horizon” Mel Miller Memorial Award was presented to Sheila Eshshaki, a teacher at L’Anse Creuse High School-North in Macomb Township. The award is given annually to a teacher for serving as an advocate for social change by bringing to the classroom extraordinary practices that help students understand, analyze and make decisions that promote positive social interactions.

“I am so excited to be given this award from an organization that has such important goals,” Eshshaki said. “I am incredibly honored to have an award in Mel Miller’s name.”

For the high school photo contest, Macomb County students were encouraged to submit a photograph that conveys their interpretation of the celebration’s theme.

Jade McGuffey, of Chippewa Valley High School, took first place. A pair of students from Mount Clemens High School, Jayden Tillman and Shionna Patterson, finished in second and third place, respectively.

The winners’ photos will be displayed around Macomb County during Black History Month in February.

At the middle school level, students were given the opportunity to display their talents in comic book art that conveys their interpretation of the theme.

The first-place winner was Finn Wittrock, a seventh grader at the Warren Consolidated School of Performing Arts. Second place went to Khalia Jomaa, an eighth grader at Jefferson Middle School in St. Clair Shores. Third place went to Kendall Bauman, a sixth grader who also attends Jefferson Middle School.

Wittrock’s submission appeared on the cover of the holiday celebration publication.

In the keynote presentation, Chippewa Valley High School senior Dwayne Lawson, a member of the Detroit Youth Choir, sang “We Need Love,” by John Legend. Reading poems were Dakota High School junior Taylor Burnham and L’Anse Creuse High School students Malik Lewis, Jordan DuBay, Siarra Montgomery and Tyrese Smith Jr.

Elementary school orator winners were fifth graders Avishek Chowdhury and Katie Gorges, of Roose Elementary School in Warren. The Dakota Senior Choir also performed “What a Wonderful World,” by Louis Armstrong, and Chippewa student Deshay Hayes sang “Greatest Love of All,” by Whitney Houston.