

Alexandria Times

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Martin Luther King Day in Alexandria

On Jan. 14, 1986, Alexandria Mayor James P. Moran proclaimed Jan. 20 as Martin Luther King Day in the city. This contrasted with the state government, which declared the new holiday Lee-Jackson-King Day. The state continued to celebrate Lee-Jackson Day until 2020, although Martin Luther King Day was separated from the other holiday in 2000.

Alexandria celebrated its first King day by focusing on the life and message of the civil rights leader with the annual Martin Luther King Jr. memorial program at Washington Street United Methodist Church with speeches by Rev. Moses Beasley of Shiloh Baptist Church, Rev. Columbus Watson of Beulah Baptist Church and former Vice Mayor Melvin L. Bergheim.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Poster Exhibition started as a contest in 1990. Created by the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage, Inc., the contest highlights the artwork of Alexandria City Public Schools students. The ASPBH is the friends' group for the Alexandria Black History Museum. Under the leadership of two memorable society presidents, Harry Burke and Carlton A. Funn Sr., the contest grew from a small exhibit and program held at the Alex-

andria Black History Museum to a larger exhibition held in the Viola Lawson Lobby of City Hall in January and February of each year. A formal program is also held in city hall on King day. In 2013, the contest became a memorial exhibition honoring Funn.

The poster exhibition's theme is always drawn from the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History. This organization, founded in 1915 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, has as its mission "to promote, research, preserve, interpret, and disseminate information about Black life, history, and culture to the global community." The 2023 theme is "It Starts With Me: Creating a Beloved Community!"

This year, Historic Alexandria offers three opportunities to celebrate the life and spirit of King.

- On Jan. 16, at 1 p.m., an awards ceremony honoring the student artists who participated in this year's Martin Luther King, Jr. Poster Exhibition will be held. The ceremony is free and open to the public.

- The Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Poster Exhibition entries will be on display in the Viola Lawson Lobby of Alexandria city hall from Jan. 17 until the end of February 2023. The exhibition features artwork by



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MLK poster exhibit at city hall.

ACPS students in grades two through five. How do students create King's idea of the Beloved Community? They create art that shows what we can do in our families, schools and communities to bring King's vision to light.

- Readers are also invited to the City of Alexandria's Martin

Luther King Jr. Celebration on Sunday at the George Washington Masonic Memorial, at 4 p.m. For more information, see drkingmemorialprogram.org/annual-commemoration

Out of the Attic is provided by The Office of Historic Alexandria.