

King's message echoes at events



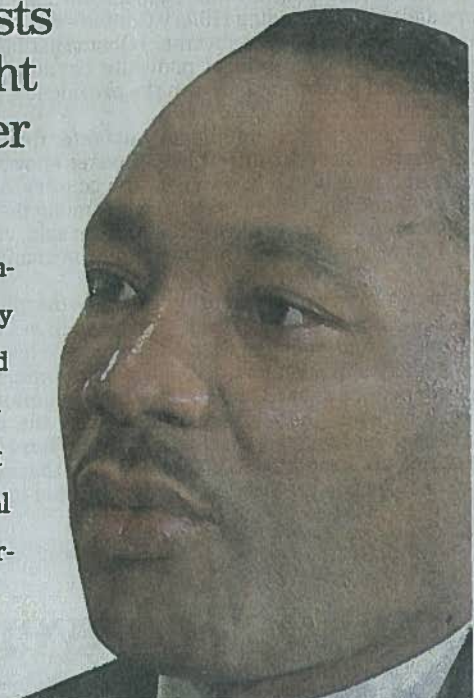
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Students from Cook School re-enact the Montgomery March at Plainfield High School on Monday.

Long-running annual breakfasts in Plainfield, Franklin highlight legacy of the civil rights leader

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CENTRAL JERSEY - Two long-running breakfasts continued the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Monday by honoring the man and his message. ★ Franklin marked the 20th Anniversary Dr. Martin Luther King Community Breakfast at the DoubleTree Hotel in the Somerset section of the township and Frontiers International Plainfield Area Club recognized the day at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 41st Annual Memorial Breakfast at Plainfield High School. See MLK, Page 7A



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Keeping Dr. King's dream alive in Franklin

For decades, the Franklin community has been religiously, racially and ethnically as well as, socio-economically diverse. With a more diverse community than ever, the students in the public schools speak 54 different languages. Participants at the annual breakfast reflect various ages and backgrounds.

The breakfast has become a true community celebration — reflecting the richness and diversity (racial, religious and cultural) of the township, while providing scholarships for its Franklin youth, said Eva M. Nagy, president of the Franklin Township Dr. Martin Luther King Community Foundation, Inc., the organization that hosts the breakfast every year.

"It has brought groups and individuals together who would normally not cross paths," Nagy said. "Bonds and relationships have been formed that extended well beyond the breakfast experience itself. In a time when there is so much hatred and turmoil this event brings our community together to celebrate, break bread and share each other."

Keynote speakers in the past have come from various backgrounds such as state attorney generals, clergy, lawyers, state leaders, graduates of Franklin, television personalities and others — all who had personal experiences in civil rights, diversity and keeping King's dream alive. This year's key note speaker was Frank Pepe, former superintendent of Franklin Township Public Schools.

"Their messages were always thought provoking and helped challenge and reinforce the unity needed in our diverse community and in our lives," Nagy said. "He (Pepe) brought the vision of the MLK Community Breakfast to the District and together with the chief of police and board president and the rest is history."

In 1997, three community leaders — Pepe, Nagy, who was Board of Education president, and then Police Chief Daniel J. Livak — had the vision to create the opportunity to bring all aspects of the Franklin Township's very diverse community together in honoring the life and works of Dr. Martin King and fulfilling King's dream of unity among the races. They created The Dr. Martin Luther King Community Breakfast Committee which was composed of various community leaders and citizens.

A mission statement was developed and remains adhered to, to this day, Nagy said. The Mission of the Franklin Township Dr. Martin Luther King Community Foundation is to fulfill Dr. Martin Luther King's Dream of unity among the races through promotion of racial harmony, equality and justice for all, opportunity for building strong relations among all people, educational opportunities and services, scholarships for the youth of Franklin Township and unity celebrations for our entire community.

The first breakfast was conducted in 1998 in the Franklin High School cafeteria with 250 in attendance and committee members cooking the meal themselves.

"It immediately gained so much support that it was moved to the DoubleTree Hotel," Nagy said. "Each year 400 to 500 people gather to celebrate and commemorate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They represent various members of the Franklin community — civic, religious, government, police and school. The ages span from elementary school children to senior citizens. The breakfast has become a true com-

munity celebration — reflecting the richness and diversity of the Township, while providing scholarships for its Franklin youth."

Since 1998, 155 Franklin High graduating seniors have been awarded scholarships totaling \$157,400. Scholarships are given to Franklin High seniors, regardless of race or religion, who are candidates at an accredited college or professional school, have demonstrated a record of community involvement and volunteerism, and have shown outstanding citizenship within the high school and community. Each student is also required to submit an essay on "How We Can Keep Dr. King's Dream Alive."

In receiving this scholarship, students feel that their community supports them, their education and their future plans, Nagy said.

In order for the Dr. Martin Luther King Community Breakfast Committee to preserve its mission and vision, committee members decided in February 2015 to incorporate into the Franklin Township Dr. Martin Luther King Community Foundation, Inc. and has been granted nonprofit organization status.

"While it always was an independent committee, its monies were held in trust by the Board of Education," Nagy said. "Now the foundation is fully independent and is committed to furthering and expanding its mission."

Also, participating Monday was the Community Fellowship Mass Choir, a choir made up of several Franklin churches and a student from the NJ Orators, Somerset Chapter.

Honoring community members

Frontiers International Plainfield Area Club recognized the city's public schools' students, staff and members of the community at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 41st Annual Memorial Breakfast.

"This is a service organization that honors students, educators and community volunteers who have exemplified excellence in education, leadership and community service," said the Rev. Louis C. Slade, president of Frontiers.

Frontiers International is a national service organization founded in 1936 by Nimrod Allen in Columbus, Ohio. The international flavor comes from having at one time establishing a club in British Guyana and the Bahamas, said Michael Pyne, assistant district director of the Frontiers New York, New Jersey, New England and chairman for the MLK Breakfast.

"The Plainfield Area Club was founded in 1961 by Westry Horne and Frederick Johnson," said Pyne, who also was chairman for the memorial breakfast. "Dr. Mel Davis along with Westry, Johnson and others established the Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Breakfast in 1976."

Horne was a musician and it is in his name that the Community Service Award to Music is given. This year the Westry Horne Excellence in Education Award for Music was presented to Gregory Williams, Plainfield public schools' music teacher and director of the district's Marching Band.

The breakfast program is older than the national holiday that was signed into law in 1983. It was officially observed in all 50 states for the first time in 2000.

This Plainfield Public Schools' 2017 Frontiers International Plainfield Area Club Scholarship recipients are Kenar Myers, Dejanay Caldwell, Ashley Pyne and Jovan Fuller. Volunteer Nancy Jordan received the Community Service to Youth Award, and Plainfield High School's Resource Officer Bernell Harrison was given the the Community Award.

"Dr. King was a man of conviction and hope." Superintendent of Plainfield Public Schools Anna Belin-Pyles said at



Nancy Jordan, winner of the Community Service Award Service to Youth and Gregory Williams, Plainfield High School Band Director, received the Westry Horne Music Award at the Frontiers International Plainfield Area Club's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 41st annual Memorial Breakfast in Plainfield.

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the breakfast. "His quote — 'We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope' — means, to me, that we must continue to dream as Dr. King and must not let the momentary disappointments discourage us from our goals and from the things we would like to achieve."

This year's keynote speaker was Civil Rights activist Lawrence Hamm, who is founder and chairman of the People's Organization for Progress (POP), a grassroots political organization. Known for his advocacy for quality of education, employment opportunities and access to health care, Hamm made history becoming the youngest member of a Board of Education in the US when he was 17.

"The Plainfield Public School District is honored and pleased with the acknowledgement and recognition of our students and staff by the Frontiers International Plainfield Area Club," Belin-Pyles said. "We salute the Frontiers for their dedication and tireless efforts in support of our community and for keeping the memory and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. alive and at the forefront of the discussion in our community."

For more information on the Frontiers International Plainfield Area Club, go to their Facebook page or contact John Brinkley at 908-868-8704.

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Publication Date	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Deadline Date	Thursday, 4:30 pm	Friday, 4:30 pm	Monday, 4:30 pm	Tuesday, 4:30 pm
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- Ads are accepted on a space-available basis.

***** JANUARY 21 *****

Big Indoor Flea Market
Saturday January 21st 9am-1pm. Over 125 tables of new, used and antique merchandise. Baked goods table. Breakfast and lunch available in the cafeteria. Roselle Catholic High School, Raritan Road, Roselle NJ



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