

Alexandria Times

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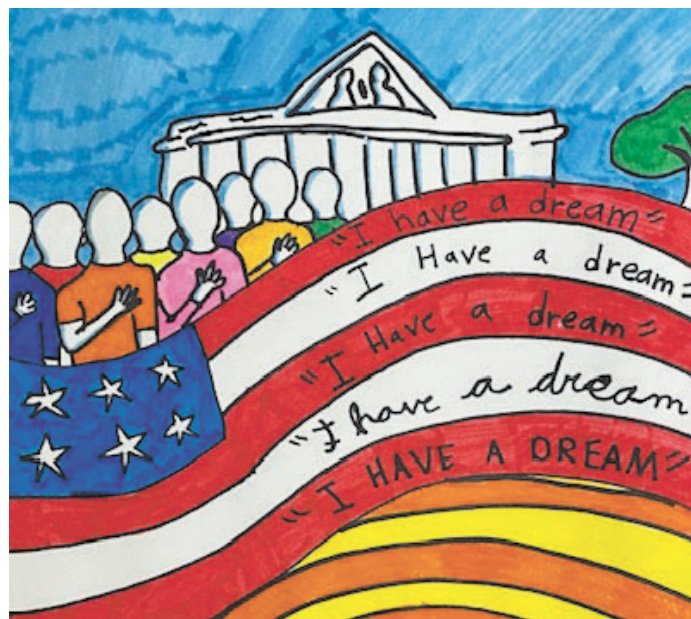
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Martin Luther King Day, past and present

On the night of Jan. 14, 1986, Alexandria Mayor James P. Moran proclaimed January 20 as Martin Luther King Day in the city. Alexandria celebrated 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 the Rev. Moses Beasley of Shiloh Baptist Church, the Rev. Columbus Watson of Beulah Baptist Church and Melvin L. Bergheim, former vice mayor of Alexandria.

Although President Ronald Reagan declared Martin Luther King Day as a federal holiday on Nov. 2, 1983, it wasn't until 1986 that the holiday was first observed. On Jan. 20, 1986, The Alexandria Gazette published the article, "City to commemorate King's life":

"Today marks the first observance of Martin Luther King's birthday as a national holiday. It is also the first celebration of a national holiday to honor a Black American. It is also the natural culmination of what he accomplished during a lifetime that ended early and senselessly ... What



PHOTO/GENEVIEVE PARTEE

A fourth grader's depiction of MLK and his "I have a dream" speech.

he really started was the process that is still going on in Alexandria and across the nation ... What this new national holiday should become is a time to measure the progress of this process of opening up our society ... He set all Americans of all colors and shades on a path that takes us closer and closer towards the American dream."

This year, the Alexandria Black History Museum will honor Martin Luther King Jr.

with the Annual MLK Poster Commemoration and Exhibition on January 15 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Vola Lawson Lobby in City Hall. Started by the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage, Inc., and supported by the Alexandria Black History Museum and the Alexandria City Public Schools, this event highlights the artwork of ACPS students.

The theme for 2024 is "Living the Dream." The

posters remain in City Hall through the end of February for the community to appreciate. The Black History Museum celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day with the following programs:

• **MLK Day of Service:** Volunteers are needed to assist with a clean-up around the Jones Point Lighthouse. Please bring gloves and water. January 15, 10 a.m. to noon.

• **Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Poster Exhibition:** Vola Lawson Lobby, City Hall, January 15, 1 to 3 p.m.

• **Annual City-Wide Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration:** George Washington Masonic Memorial, January 15, 4 to 5:30 p.m. Register for this free event at drkingmemorialprogram.org/annual-commemoration.

38 years have passed since Alexandria's first MLK holiday. On January 15, let us reflect on the progress that the United States, and specifically Alexandria, has made toward racial equality.

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