

Ken E. Nwadike Jr. to Keynote First Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration in Westborough, MA

Westborough and area residents will join together for a day of Inspiration, Service and Connection

Westborough, MA, January 2, 2019: Central MA Connections in Faith (CMACIF), in partnership with Westborough Interfaith Association, Westborough Connects and Westborough Public Schools, is pleased to announce the first annual Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration in Westborough, MA. The event is free and open to all ages. It will be held from 9:30am-12:30pm on January 21st at Westborough High School. The Celebration is grant-funded by the Lilly Endowment and by Islamic Relief.

Peace activist and filmmaker Ken E. Nwadike Jr. will deliver the keynote address at the 2019 Celebration. Popularly known as the “Free Hugs Guy,” Nwadike was inspired to action after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing and has traveled the country with his Free Hugs Project and messages of love and peace. As a motivational youth speaker, Nwadike shares his experiences of homelessness and insecurities and talks to students about the importance of supporting each other and the power of human interaction. His presence at protests, riots and political rallies has earned him praise for his peacekeeping efforts.

Westborough resident and musician, Luanne Crosby, will lead attendees in music and song, commemorating the legacy of Dr. King.

A student essay contest was held in advance of the Celebration. Middle and high school students from Westborough and communities served by CMACIF were invited to submit entries centered around an excerpt from a 1965 Dr. King speech given in Selma, AL: *“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”* Three winners will be chosen in early January and invited to read excerpts from their essays at the Celebration.

As a National Day of Service, community members are invited to come together in service to Dr. King’s legacy of bringing people together to break down barriers for all. To that end, the Celebration will offer attendees of all ages an opportunity to participate in a Community Art Project through the creation of illustrations of Dr. King’s words. The Project will be completed at the event and will travel on exhibit throughout Westborough in 2019.

To honor Dr. King’s lifelong commitment to civil rights, the Celebration will also include a community discussion of some of Dr. King’s most powerful words, facilitated by CMACIF leaders.

For the youngest Celebration attendees, a Community Reading activity will offer books read by high school students and members of Westborough Connects. Book selections center around

themes of racism, diversity, activism and the life of Dr. King, and were curated specifically for young readers and listeners with help from the Westborough Public Library Children's Room.

Celebration attendees are asked to bring a toiletry donation to benefit the Westborough Food Pantry. Donations of chapstick, toothpaste, toothbrushes, bar soap, liquid hand soap, shaving cream or deodorant are greatly appreciated and will be collected during the Community Art Project.

The Westborough Council on Aging will offer free transportation for Westborough seniors. Please contact the Westborough Senior Center for more information on bus transportation.

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