

## Alexandria Times

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Alexandria  
 COMMUNITY MEDIA

# Celebrating Dr. King's legacy in Alexandria

Like many cities and towns across the nation, Alexandria is celebrating the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this January. Some annual city events this year include:

- The 53rd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial on Jan. 15. "Dawn of Justice and Hope" is this year's celebration theme, and offers an opportunity for reflection, community, connection and recommitment to the principles of hope and justice that defined Dr. King's work. You can register in advance at [drkingmemorialprogram.org](http://drkingmemorialprogram.org).

- On Feb. 1, The Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Poster Exhibit opens from 1 to 3 p.m. featuring opening remarks by Mayor Alyia Gaskins. The exhibit will be available to the public from Feb. 1 to March 1 at the Charles Houston Recreation Center.

The annual Martin Luther King Jr. Poster Exhibition is an interactive program for Alexandria City Public Schools children. It allows them to learn about Dr. King and his dedication to service, as well as allowing their teachers to relate it to a current event or topic. Between 50 and 100 entries are submitted each year.

Teachers are encouraged to have their students create a poster based on the theme:

- On this 250th birthday of the United States of America, we look at the influence of the Declaration of Independence on Dr. King.

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech was inspired by some of the ideals written in the Declaration of Independence: that all people are created equal and deserve freedom and justice.

- Create artwork that shows how we can honor the past while dreaming of a brighter, fairer and more peaceful future for all people!

The exhibition started as a contest in 1990. Created by the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage, Inc., the contest highlights the art work of ACPS students. The ASPBH is the friends group for the Alexandria Black History Museum, formerly known as the Alexandria Black History Resource Center.

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 Alexandria Black History Museum, to a larger exhibition held in the Vola Lawson Lobby of City Hall in January and February of each year.

Not only does the exhibition honor Dr. King, it allows ACPS students to have their artwork displayed for all of Black History Month. In 2013,



PHOTO/DICK DEMARSICO VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The City of Alexandria will celebrate the 53rd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial on Jan. 15.

the contest became a memorial exhibition honoring the late Funn Sr.

The poster exhibition's annual theme is often 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."

One of Dr. Woodson's legacies is Negro History Week,

created in 1926. It is the forerunner to today's Black History Month, which figures prominently in ASALH's mission.

The 2026 national theme is "A Century of Commemorations" in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the first celebration. The City of Alexandria's poster contest's related theme is "Dreaming Together: Learning from the Past, Shaping the Future."

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