



A WARM POOL, A WARM WELCOME:

WHERE THE KENTWOOD COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

Sit at the welcome desk inside Door A at East Kentwood High School at five o'clock in the morning and you will quickly notice something special. Regardless of age, our community continues to come to school. The early-morning draw is clear: the East Kentwood Aquatic Center.

From before sunrise until well into the evening, the pools at the EK Aquatic Center are a vibrant gathering place for community members of all ages.

For the past two years, Dan Kimble has served as Director of Aquatic Operations at East Kentwood High School. Each day, he sees a wide range of swimmers walk through the doors, from toddlers taking their very first swim lessons to senior citizens using the water to stay active.

"We have babies and children getting into the water for the first time," Kimble explains, "all the way up to senior members of our community who use the facility almost like physical therapy, to keep their joints moving and stay healthy."

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Dedicated lap swimmers have also made the Aquatic

Center part of their daily routine. Some have come for decades, which has led to them taking part in amazing events such as the annual Mackinac Bridge Swim.

Dean Heetderks is one of those swimmers. For more than 15 years, he has arrived at the EK pool by 6:00 a.m. most mornings to swim laps. When asked why, his answer is simple. "Mental health is probably the short answer," he shares. "It's a guaranteed bright spot in the day."

Pat Hornick is another regular at the Aquatic Center. When she and her husband were deciding where to move while in their retirement, the pool at EK played a significant role in

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TOWN HALL MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR MAY BOND PROPOSAL

Kentwood Public Schools invites families, staff, and community members to attend upcoming town hall meetings to learn more about the May Safety and Success Bond proposal and to share input on future district plans.

Meetings will be held in March and April. Additional details and registration information are available by scanning the QR code or visiting kentwoodps.org.

If approved, the proposal would result in a 0.5 mill adjustment, bringing the district's millage rate to 4.5 mills.

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A Warm Pool, a Warm Welcome: Where the Kentwood Community Comes Together

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their decision to move to Kentwood.

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Both Heetderks and Hornick agree that while the facility itself is exceptional, it's the people, both the staff and fellow swimmers alike, who make it truly special.



"The feeling of the people is probably the best part," Heetderks shares. "I've made so many good friends here."

Community swimming makes up only a fraction of Aquatic Center

activity. East Kentwood's swim and dive teams and water polo teams train and compete in the space. Fifth-grade students across the district participate in a learn-to-swim and water safety program each year. Lessons are offered for both children and adults. The Davenport University swim and dive team also utilizes the facility.

While often busy, the EK Aquatic Center consistently maintains a warm and welcoming environment for all reflecting our commitment to serving all who live here. Our swimmers include many community members who do not have students in our district but proudly call Kentwood home. They provide a powerful example of how Kentwood Public Schools and our broader community are deeply connected.

To learn more about membership opportunities and programming, visit kentwoodps.org and explore the Aquatic Center page under the Athletics tab.

You can also scan the QR code to watch a video about the Aquatic Center experience, produced in partnership with AVES Films.



BENDERT RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS HONOR

Congratulations to Kentwood Public Schools elementary music teacher Ali Bendert on receiving a 2025 Cynthia Taggart Fellowship Award from the College of Music at Michigan State University.

This prestigious award is presented annually to music educators in recognition of outstanding teaching, mentoring, and service to the profession. Bendert described receiving the award as "a huge honor" and was proud to accept it at a ceremony in late January, surrounded by family and valued colleagues.

Bendert's talent, passion for music, and dedication to her students are evident each day in KPS classrooms. She is part of an exceptional team of music educators who help provide a rich, well-rounded educational experience for our students year after year.

In addition to Bendert, former KPS music teacher and current Kentwood Band Boosters president Amy DeBoer also received a 2025 Cynthia Taggart Fellowship Award. We congratulate both recipients on this well-deserved honor and thank them for their continued service to our students.



KPS SETS THE STANDARD FOR PLANT-BASED SCHOOL MEALS

Kentwood Public Schools' Child Nutrition Services (CNS) team continues to make an impact well beyond our district.

Last year, the CNS department was awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to enhance and promote plant-based menu options for students at KPS and across K-12 districts throughout the state.

As a result, the plant-based recipes developed through the grant have now been published on the Michigan Department of Education's website under its Resources page, making them available to schools statewide.

The recognition reflects the innovation, collaboration, and dedication of our Child Nutrition Services team. Their efforts not only expand healthy options for Kentwood students but also support districts across Michigan in offering nutritious, student-friendly plant-based meals.

We are incredibly proud of the CNS team and the meaningful work that continues to position KPS as a leader in student wellness and nutrition.

See recipe for Black Bean Corn Salsa on page 7!

Town Hall Meetings Scheduled for May Bond Proposal

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Even with approval, Kentwood would continue to have the second lowest millage rate among school districts in Kent County.

Bond funds would support a range of safety and facility improvements, including construction of a new Valleywood Middle School, expansion of career technical education and STEM learning opportunities, fine arts upgrades at East Kentwood High School, a continuation of safety and ADA improvements to elementary playgrounds, mechanical upgrades to the EK Ice Arena, and other district-wide enhancements.

Absentee ballots will be available later this month, and Election Day is May 5. More information about the proposal is available at kentwoodps.org.



HANDS-ON STEM SPARKS BIG THINKING AT GLENWOOD ARCH

At Glenwood ARCH, students have a blast learning through hands-on STEM activities. Students explore science, technology, engineering, and math by building, experimenting, and solving fun challenges together. STEM lessons help students learn how to work as a team, think creatively, and solve problems in exciting new ways—all while using their imaginations.

Students often team up with classmates to design, test, and improve their ideas. Whether they are building structures, testing materials, or finding creative solutions, students enjoy learning from one another and sharing their ideas. With access to unique materials and plenty of opportunities to collaborate, students' creativity truly shines. At Glenwood ARCH, STEM learning is active, engaging, and full of discovery, making school a place where kids are excited to learn and create every day.



COMMUNITY ENJOYS ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM

In February, Kentwood Public Schools proudly hosted its annual Black History Month Program, "Voices of Freedom: Roots of Resilience," at East Kentwood High School. The evening began with a welcoming community reception featuring creative displays and in-depth learning projects created by students from every school across the district. These displays highlighted influential leaders, historical movements, and cultural contributions that continue to impact our nation and communities today.

The celebration continued in the Fine Arts Auditorium with powerful student performances through song, dance, and storytelling. Each performance reflected the strength, courage, and resilience woven throughout Black history.

From start to finish, the program was a moving celebration of student voice, talent, and unity. We are proud of our students and staff for honoring the past, inspiring the present, and uplifting stories that continue to guide and strengthen our community.



GROWING LEADERS, BUILDING COMMUNITY AT HAMILTON ARCH

Hamilton's ARCH program continues to build a welcoming environment where student engagement and leadership flourish.

In January, students explored an adventure-themed focus that encouraged teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving while reflecting on academic and personal growth. Daily movement activities — including basketball, soccer, running games, and Zumba — promoted wellness and sportsmanship.

Older students stepped into leadership roles by mentoring younger peers, strengthening positive connections across grade levels. The Youth Advisory Board also continued to shape programming by sharing feedback and helping guide future activities.

Overall, January showcased growing student voice, leadership, and community at Hamilton ARCH.



SUNSHINE, SMILES, AND STRONG CONNECTIONS AT VALLEYWOOD ARCH

Valleywood ARCH students enjoyed a month filled with fun, connection, and community. A silent disco quickly became a student favorite, with many already asking when it can happen again. After spending much of the day indoors, students also appreciated time outside together in the sunshine for a refreshing break.

Family Night brought creativity and service together as students and families decorated pumpkins, created crafts, and designed bags for Kids Food Basket. The celebration continued with matching outfits and shared excitement around the popular "6-7" phrase, strengthening friendships and staff connections.

Moments like these reflect what makes Valleywood ARCH special — a place where students build relationships, celebrate together, and truly know they belong.

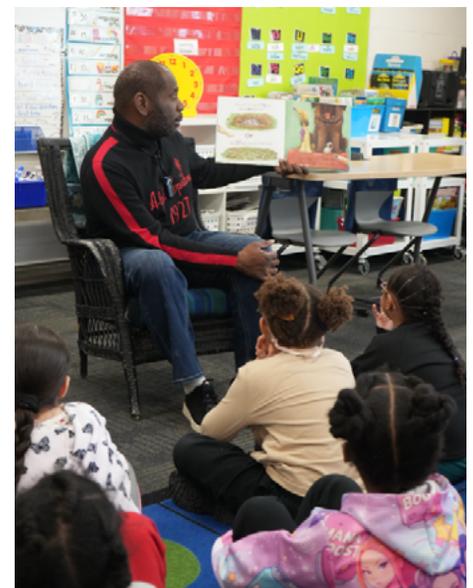
KAPPA ALPHA PSI AND BROOKWOOD UNITE FOR LITERACY

Brookwood Elementary students enjoyed a special visit in February as Principal Lorenzo Bradshaw and members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. spent time reading with students and sharing their love of learning.

The visit was part of the second annual National Day of Reading, a nationwide initiative led by Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. in partnership with the nonprofit organization Room to Read. Throughout the day, fraternity members visited classrooms to engage students in read-alouds, sparking excitement around books and literacy.

Room to Read's partnership with the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity supports literacy efforts across the United States. Together, the organizations are working toward a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality, where all children have room to read, learn and grow.

Brookwood students were eager listeners and actively participated in the read-aloud sessions, making the visit both meaningful and memorable. Brookwood Elementary is grateful to Principal Bradshaw and the members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. for their continued commitment to education and for helping inspire a love of reading in students.



EXCELLENCE AMPLIFIED: EKHS JAZZ 1 CLAIMS FIRST PLACE AT CMU

East Kentwood High School's Jazz 1 ensemble brought home top honors at this year's CMU Jazz Festival, earning First Place in the AA Division among more than 60 bands from across the state.

The annual festival, hosted by Central Michigan University, showcases some of Michigan's most talented student musicians. Competing against outstanding programs statewide, Jazz 1 distinguished itself with an exceptional performance that earned the highest recognition in its division.

In addition to the overall first-place finish, several individual and sectional honors were awarded:

Jazz 1 Honors

- Isaiah Gilliam – Best Soloist
- Jazz 1 Trombones – Best Section
- Jazz 1 Rhythm Section – Third Place Best Section

East Kentwood's Jazz 2 ensemble also delivered an impressive performance in Class B competition, earning multiple recognitions:

Jazz 2 Honors

- Jazz 2 Trombones – Second Place Best Section
- Aariq Williams – Third Place Best Soloist

These achievements reflect the dedication, talent, and countless hours of rehearsal put in by our student musicians, along with the guidance and leadership of their directors. Performances like these highlight the strength of East Kentwood's music program and the commitment of our students to excellence.

Congratulations to Jazz 1 and Jazz 2 on representing East Kentwood High School and Kentwood Public Schools with pride!



SERVICE, SCHOLARSHIP, AND LEADERSHIP: ROTARY HONORS EKHS SENIORS

East Kentwood High School proudly recognizes Aaron Cobb, Camryn Smith, Quan Cheatham, Deborah Osiri, James Sherrills, and Samaree Williams as recent Rotary Students of the Month for December, January, and February. Each student exemplifies leadership, service, academic excellence, and a commitment to making a positive impact.

These outstanding seniors represent a wide range of future aspirations, from pediatric medicine, nursing, and education to psychology and the arts. Their involvement includes mentoring younger students, volunteering at the Refugee Education Center, competing in HOSA, leading through Student Council, participating in athletics and youth organizations, and serving their communities in meaningful ways.

Across their varied experiences, one theme stands out: a deep desire to uplift others. We congratulate these Falcons for representing East Kentwood with integrity, resilience, and purpose. Their leadership reflects the very best of our school community.



EXCELLENCE THROUGH CONNECTION AT DISCOVERY

At Discovery Elementary, connection is the foundation of success. Families don't just enroll — they stay — because students feel supported and known.

Kentwood School Services Network (KSSN) School Community Coordinator Michelle Beals serves as the link between school and community, connecting families to resources like Hand2Hand, Kids Hope mentoring, and enrichment programs such as Girls on the Run, The Arc, TTQ, and Bible Club. As part of the school's Tier 2 and Attendance Team, she also helps identify early signs of disengagement and connects families with support before challenges escalate.

That spirit of care extends through Discovery's PTC, which recently helped complete a new Sensory Room. This room is a calm space where students can reset and return to learning ready to focus.

At Discovery, support isn't reactive, but, instead, it's proactive. Relationships come first, and that's what makes the difference.

THE PINWOOD WELCOME: BUILDING A BRIDGE TO BELONGING

At Pinewood School, we know the move to middle school is a major milestone. From the start, our team is intentional about making students and families feel welcomed, supported, and excited. The journey begins with 5th Grade Family Night, where incoming families meet staff, explore programs, and tour the building to build confidence for the year ahead.

Student leaders play a key role in the transition, offering tours and practical guidance so every new Falcon knows a friendly face from day one. Our counseling team also partners closely with families to create schedules tailored to each learner, with strong core instruction and a wide range of exploratory courses including fine arts, PE, world cultures, health, teen leadership, and STEM.

Through collaboration and a shared commitment to student success, Pinewood ensures every student feels seen, supported, and valued — because here, every Falcon belongs.



FALCON CLASSIC GOLF OUTING RETURNS JUNE 8

The Falcon Classic Golf Outing returns on Monday, June 8 at StoneWater Country Club, bringing together educators, community members, and local businesses for a great day on the course in support of Kentwood Public Schools.

Proceeds from the Falcon Classic benefit the Kentwood Public Schools Education Foundation (KPSEF), the district's strategic fundraising partner. Through events like this, KPSEF funds teacher grants that bring classroom ideas to life - supporting everything from robotics equipment and art supplies to student wellness tools. Thanks to last year's outing, 20 teacher grants were funded, and this year our goal is to double that impact and support 40 grants, reaching even more classrooms across the district.

We are currently seeking sponsors for this year's outing and invite local businesses and community partners to get involved. Sponsorships offer meaningful visibility while directly supporting students, teachers, and innovative learning opportunities across KPS.

Whether you golf, sponsor, or simply cheer from the sidelines, the Falcon Classic is a powerful reminder that when Kentwood Public Schools thrive, we all thrive.

To sponsor:



ENROLLMENT OPEN FOR 2026–27 SCHOOL YEAR

Kentwood Public Schools is excited to announce that enrollment for the 2026–27 school year is now open.

All students, including new students, returning students, and School of Choice students, must complete registration each year. Annual registration ensures that we have the most accurate and up-to-date information to support your child's success.

Families can begin the enrollment process by visiting kentwoodps.org and clicking on the **Enrollment** tab. The process is quick and important for planning purposes across the district.

We strongly encourage all families to complete registration by **May 15**. Meeting this deadline allows our team to efficiently plan class assignments, staffing, and transportation routes to ensure a smooth start to the school year.

If you have questions or need assistance with enrollment, please contact your child's school office.

We look forward to another outstanding year at Kentwood Public Schools where every student belongs, and every family is valued.



KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS School Calendar 2025-26

- Mar 4..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
- Apr 2..... ½ Day K-12/KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
- Apr 3 - Apr 10.... No School / Spring Break
- May 25 No School / Memorial Day
- June 4..... ½ Day K-12 /KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
- June 5..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	4:05 PM	12:15 PM
Middle	8:19 AM	3:04 PM	11:35 AM
EKFC & EKHS	7:35 AM	2:20 PM	10:50 AM
Crossroads	7:34 AM	2:10 PM	10:40 AM

MARCH							APRIL						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30		

MAY/JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>■ No School For Students</p> <p>■ Half Day</p>

BLACK BEAN CORN SALSA

FOR MEXICAN SWEET POTATO

50 Servings



INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Red bell pepper, diced: 4 large | Corn (frozen is ok): 1p t+1 ¼ c |
| Green bell pepper, diced: 4 large | Low sodium black beans, drained and rinsed: 1pt + 1 ¼ c |
| Red Onion, diced: 1pt+1c | Smoked Paprika: 2T + ¼ t |
| Cilantro, finely chopped: 1c | Kosher salt: 2t |
| Lemon juice: ½c | |

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl, stir gently to incorporate
2. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed.

This should yield approximately 3qt + 1 cup of product

Kentwood Board of Education
KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
5820 EASTERN AVENUE SE
KENTWOOD, MI 49508

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APRIL 6-9, 9 AM - 3 PM

COVENANT PARK CLUBHOUSE, 3724 SHAFFER AVE SE

WEEKLY SUMMER DAY CAMPS
JUN 8-AUG 14, 9 AM - 3 PM

COVENANT PARK CLUBHOUSE, 3724 SHAFFER AVE SE



KENTWOOD
PARKS & RECREATION

Designed for kids in grades 1st - 5th grade, these camps are the perfect way to keep kids engaged during the school break.



REGISTER ONLINE

ALL SPRING & SUMMER PROGRAMS ONLINE NOW!
KENTWOOD.US/PARKS

Kentwood Parks and Recreation Department · 355 48th St. SE Kentwood, MI 49548 · 616.656.5270 · kentwood.us/parks