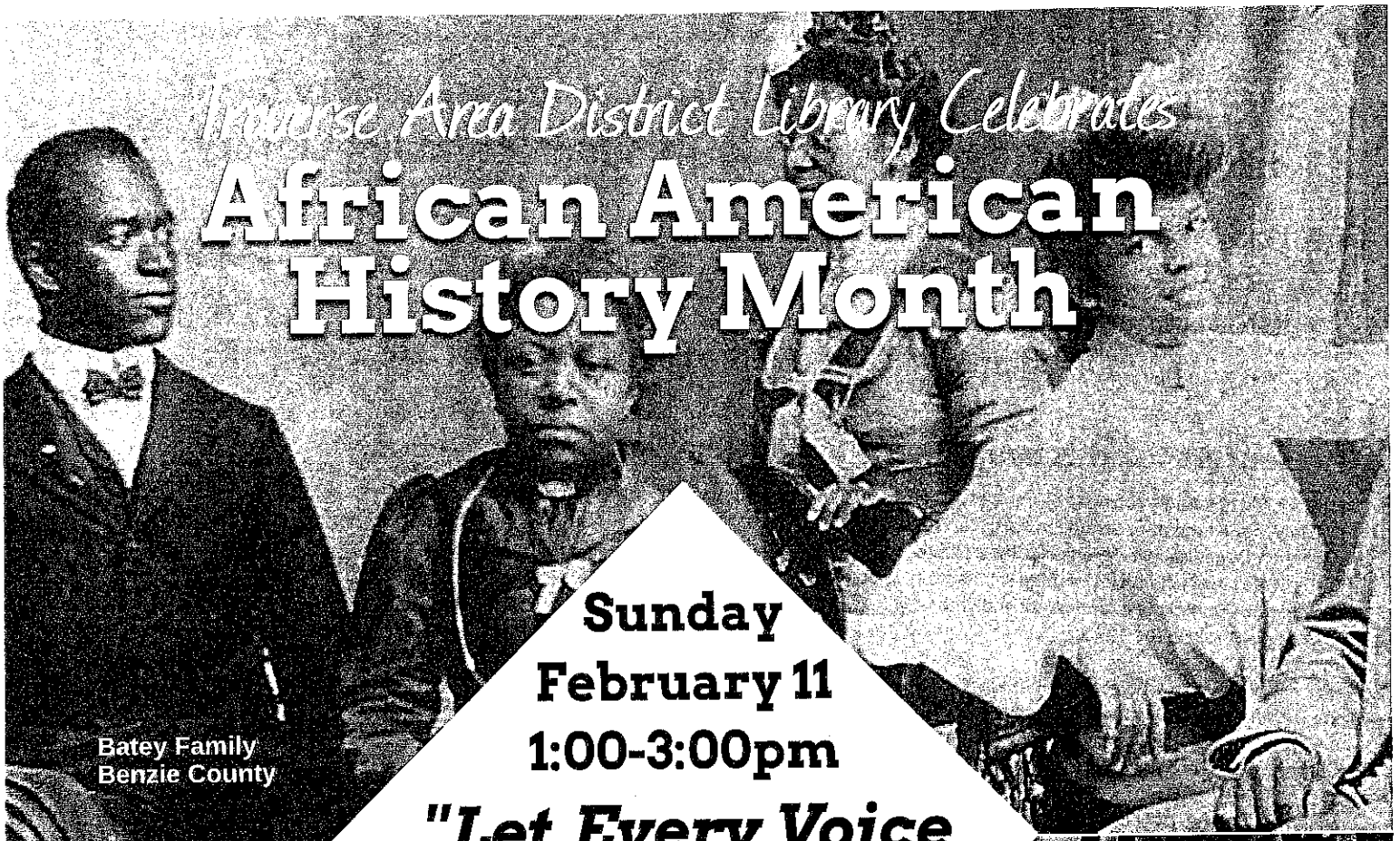
Traverse Area District Library Celebrates

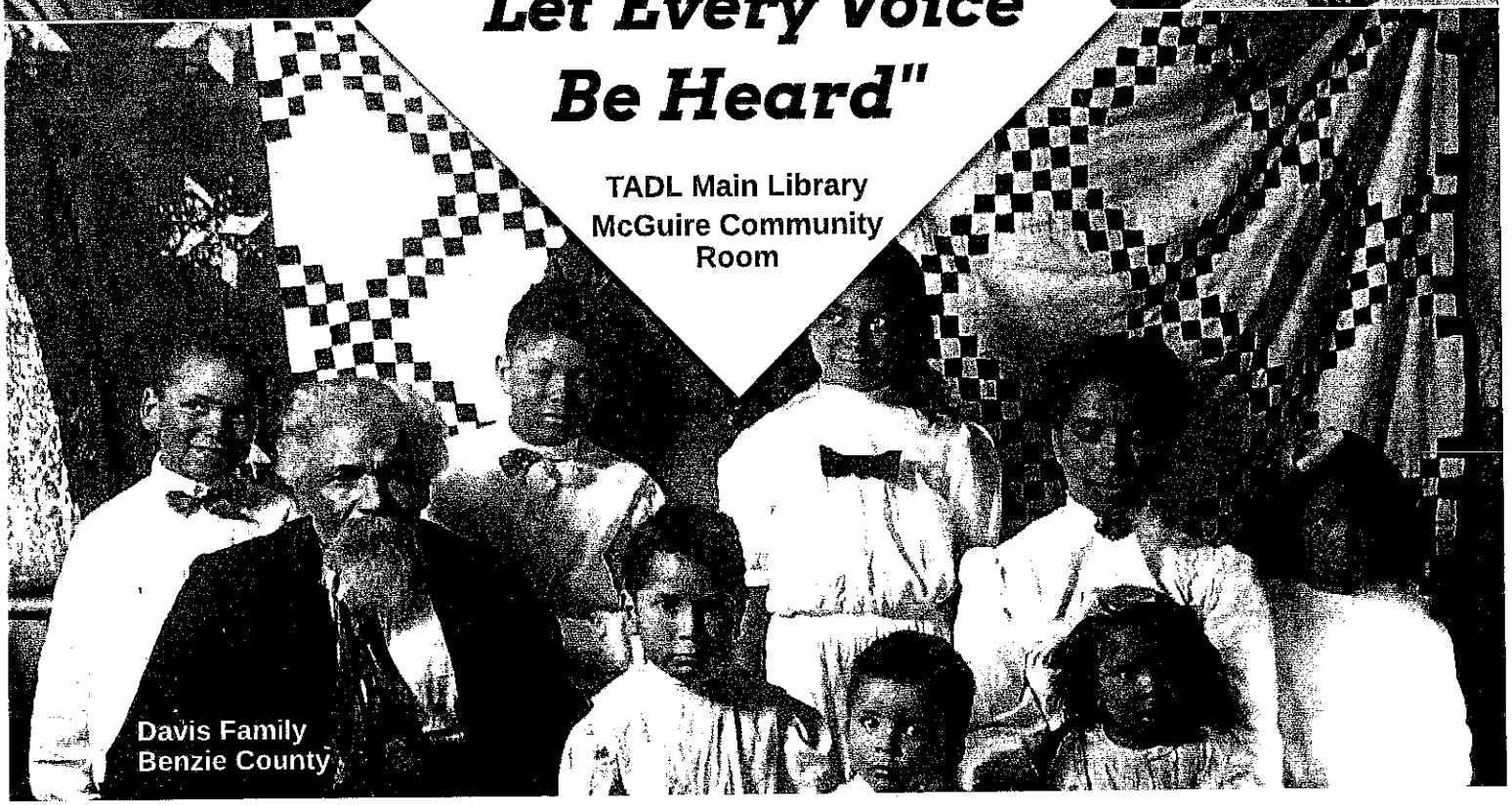
African American History Month



Sunday
February 11
1:00-3:00pm

"Let Every Voice Be Heard"

TADL Main Library
McGuire Community Room



A program of song and story for all ages. Learn about local African American pioneers, history and culture.

TRAVERSE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

tadl.org/aahm

BENZIE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"Let Every Voice Be Heard", African American History Month

February 11, 2018 @ 1:00-3:00pm | Woodmere (Main) Library

This event is a celebration of African American history and culture in song and story. Please join us as stories are told, songs are sung, poems are read, and history comes alive. Learn about local African American families and what drew them to this area in the late 1800s to present.

Presenters for this event listed in alphabetical order:

Eugene "Geno" Allen– owner of Geno's sports Bar and Grill in Thompsonville, known for his fundraisers for Christmas for the children at the Betsie Valley Elementary School and also for bus trips from Thompsonville to games in Detroit to raise money for NFL players who have trouble paying their medical bills for injuries incurred during playing. A graduate of Benzie Central High School, a state wrestling champion who went to Ferris State University on a wrestling scholarship, Allen worked downstate until he came back in 2008 and bought the sports bar in Thompsonville, making it famous for the Thursday night barbecue ribs based on his mom's secret recipe. He will talk about how his family came to Thompsonville in the 1950s.

Fleda Brown– poet who has a column in the Traverse City Record-Eagle and commentary on Interlochen Public Radio. She's professor emerita at the University of Delaware and was poet laureate of Delaware from 2001-2007. Her newest book of poems, "The Woods Are on Fire," was chosen by Ted Kooser for his University of Nebraska Poetry series. Fleda Brown will read "The Fifth Day" a poem by Jane Hirshfield from the April 1917 Gathering of Scientists in Washington, D.C.

Marshall Collins, Jr.– educator and soccer coach with TBAISD, is one of nine children of the legendary Reverend Marshall Collins, Sr. who, along with Collins Jr.'s mother, Mary, a gifted singer, inspired the Northport community and was honored in 2013 by the History Center in Traverse City. Collins Jr. was the December 6, 2017 featured speaker at the Leelanau County League of Women Voters where he spoke about his family and his love of Northport. Marshall Collins, Jr. explain how his preacher-father and singer-mother and nine children traveled annually between Florida and Northport in the 1960s.

Terry Connolly– gifted story-teller from the Brethren-Irons area, and cousin to James Earl Jones, comes from a large family that moved north from Mississippi during the Great Depression. This family with many children founded a church in Brethren, among other civic achievements. Connolly worked in the auto industry downstate before retiring back to Irons. He will speak about how his family came from Mississippi to Brethren-Irons during the Great Depression.

Emerick Dee— choir teacher from Traverse City Public Schools and a graduate of Central Michigan University, is an active member of the Michigan School Vocal Music Association (MSVMA) where his students consistently receive top ratings. He and his choir from the Traverse City West Middle School will perform a medley of songs.

Meredith Parsons McComb– contralto and Traverse City native who recently moved back from Manhattan, was mentored by Traverse City musicians Dave Parrish and Byron Hanson, among others. She graduated from Middlebury College and has sung at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City and for royalty in Europe. She performed November 5, 2017 at the Old Art Building in Leland. Contralto Meredith Parsons McComb will sing the poem, "Heart," by Langston Hughes.

Misty Sheehan– Director of the Benzie Area History Museum, Dr. Sheehan was professor of Asian Studies at the College of DuPage in Chicago and of philosophy at Northwestern Michigan College. Dr. Sheehan travelled widely for many years in China and India before settling to Empire, Michigan. She will direct us on the history of African American pioneers on the northwest coast of Michigan in the mid-1800s through the early 1900s.

Isiah Smith, Jr.– attorney from Washington D. C., Smith has an Master's in psychology and a law degree from the University of Miami. He retired in 2013 from the Department of Energy's Office of General Counsel where he served as a Deputy Assistant General Counsel for Administrative Litigation and Information Law. Smith was a columnist for the Miami Times and is currently a columnist for the Northern Express. Mr. Smith will emcee the event.

Crystal Turner - lyric coloratura soprano originally from Detroit, Michigan. She has starred in the Vy Higginson off-Broadway musical "Mama I want to Sing" in New York City and Detroit, and has performed with the gospel musical "Perilous Times". She has performed at the Detroit City Opera House, Music Hall, the Fisher Theater and with some of gospel music's most talented artists, including the Clark Sisters, Vicki Winans, and Yolanda Adams.

This program is in collaboration with the Benzie County Historical Society and the Empire Area Museum with appreciation for their photo archives.