

Contact: **Gloria Hawkins**
Phone: (608) 335-8339
Email: gvhawkin@gmail.com

Contact: **Edward Lee**
Phone: (608) 213-7907
Email: elee@ulgm.org

Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, December 28, 2022

Donzaleigh Abernathy, the Daughter of Rev. Abernathy and Goddaughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Keynote the 2023 Madison & Dane County MLK Day Observance

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition of Madison & Dane County is pleased to announce that the 38th Annual City-County observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday will mark its return to an in-person event featuring *Donzaleigh Abernathy* as the keynote speaker. *Abernathy* is the Daughter of *Rev. Abernathy and Goddaughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* She is an award-winning *actress and writer*. She and her siblings witnessed and participated in all of the major Civil Rights Movements and Marches. Along with the King children, her family integrated Spring Street Elementary School which led to mass integration of schools in the South in 1965. She witnessed from her home the integral decisions that helped shape American Laws including creation of the Civil Rights Bill, the Voting Rights Act, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. In 2004, she authored, *Partners To History, Martin Luther King, Ralph David Abernathy and the Civil Rights Movement* and was a contributing author to the Smithsonian Institute's book *In the Spirit of Martin*. Her play *Birmingham Sunday* is a winner of the Tanne Foundation Award.

This year's observance will also feature American Family Insurance President Telisa Yancy as the MC.

The City-County Observance will take place on Monday, January 16, 2023 at the Overture Center for the Arts in the Capitol Theater. The observance will include a freedom songs sing-in from 5:15-5:45 PM following by the program from 6:00-7:30 PM. The Observance will feature presentation of the Madison-Dane County *Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Awards* by Dane County Executive **Joe Parisi** and Mayor of Madison **Satya Rhodes-Conway**. Noted musicians **Leotha and Tamera Stanley** lead the MLK Community Choir. We are pleased to again host the event in person; it will also be broadcast live on **Madison CityChannel** and **WORT FM**.

More information will be posted at <http://mlkingcoalition.org>. Please check for ongoing updates.

THE CITY-COUNTY OBSERVANCE WILL SERVE AS THE CAPSTONE TO A SERIES OF EVENTS COMMEMORATING THE KING HOLIDAY. OTHER KING COALITION HOSTED EVENTS INCLUDE:

**** IMPORTANT NOTICE ****

The MLK COMMUNITY DINNER which normally kicks-off the King Holiday weekend has been cancelled this year due to ongoing health and safety precautions. However, the King Coalition is pleased to support the partnership between Feeding The Youth and Little John's to distribute free community meals to those in need. More details will be announced soon and posted at <http://mlkingcoalition.org>.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15 - MLK ECUMENICAL SERVICE: An Ecumenical Worship Service will be held at 4:30 p.m. at First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison. Hosted by the King Coalition in partnership with a diverse group of faith community leaders, the MLK Ecumenical Service joins people together from

diverse religious traditions, socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities and political beliefs in the spirit of brotherhood/ sisterhood to honor Dr. King's dream of social justice and equality. It also seeks to develop the "beloved community" through spiritual inclusivity and recognition of our shared humanity.

MONDAY, JANUARY 16 – MLK YOUTH CALL TO SERVICE: The King Coalition, in partnership with the City of Madison, Dane County, MSCR, Madison Out of School Time (MOST), Madison Public Library, the Urban League and many others, invite middle school youth to participate at the Madison Central Library (11:45 a.m.-4:45 p.m.) as we explore service and activism in Dr. King's memory. Lunch is provided. There is no cost to participate, but registration is required. For more information, please contact Andrew Schilcher at aschilcher@ulgm.org.

MLK COMMUNITY CHOIR: The MLK Community Choir will again be led by noted local musicians Leotha and Tamera Stanley. The Choir will perform at the City-County MLK Day Observance. The Choir is open to all community members wishing to participate. Interested participants must attend rehearsals on Tuesday, January 10 at 6:30 PM & Saturday 14 at 11:00 AM. Both rehearsals will be held at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 2029 Fisher Street, Madison, WI 53713.

The King Coalition was established in the fall of 1985 as a community group to plan the official City of Madison and Dane County observances of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. The Coalition brings people from all walks of life together in the spirit of true brotherhood and sisterhood to commemorate the life and accomplishments of this renowned leader of the civil rights movement. King Coalition events encourage the people of Dane County to reaffirm their commitment to building a just community out of our racial, religious and economic diversity.

In addition to King Coalition hosted events, other activities commemorating the King Holiday include:

Saturday, January 14 – MLK College Readiness and Success Summit: Designed to help students and parents understand the college process, the Summit will provide resources on precollege program opportunities, how to navigate the college admissions process, and scholarship opportunities from 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at Madison College South Campus. High school students of color, first-generation students, and parents are encouraged to attend. Space is limited. <https://www.facebook.com/mycollegestation>

Saturday, January 14 – Women in Focus 37th Annual Scholarship Dream Ball: Sponsored by Women In Focus, the Ball raises money to provide college scholarships. Visit <https://womeninfocusmadison.org> for info.

Sunday, January 15 – Urban League Outstanding Young Person Recognition: Middle and High School youth who were nominated by their schools for outstanding academic performance and service to their schools and community will be recognized at this INVITATION ONLY event. Additionally, the Betty Franklin-Hammonds and George Anglin Memorial Scholarships will be presented. Media looking to cover the event can call (608) 729-1211 for more details.

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