

Students mark MLK Day with breakfast, march

Fayette County students, teachers and administrators celebrated the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday Monday in spirit, in song and on foot in downtown Lexington.

Students from Stonewall Elementary School won seats at the 14th annual Unity Breakfast by writing letters to their principal about why they should be allowed to attend.

“I could learn about Martin Luther King and get more knowledge” about his ideas and mission, said 11-year-old Martavius Carter.

Some 200 people from the Fayette County Public Schools system representing 45 schools had registered for the breakfast; an estimated 1,500 people from all walks of life attended.

Fellow fifth-grader Alex Sayre summed up the day well: “Our coming to the breakfast shows that whites and blacks can be friends now and get along even though they didn’t believe that a long time ago.”

District Superintendent Stu Silberman was among several speakers at the Unity Breakfast, sponsored by Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and held in The Lexington Center’s Heritage Hall West. He talked about education from the perspective of explaining schools’ progress and ongoing challenges to Dr. King.

Afterward, organizers passed out song sheets as the crowd sang civil-rights favorites such as “We Shall Overcome” while waiting in the warm corridors of The Lexington Center.

Then came the Freedom March, which looped through several blocks of downtown Lexington. Bundled up against the cold and wind, kids from Beaumont Middle and Millcreek Elementary proudly marched with their school banners, and students from the step team at Lexington Traditional Magnet School carried the district’s “It’s About Kids” banner.

Other speakers at the breakfast included:

- The Rev. Richard Gaines of Consolidated Baptist Church, on spiritualism – “There’s a spirit of God in us that reminds us to respect all of humanity”;
- Dana Branham, president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, on civil rights and King’s emphasis on servanthood (unselfish, humble, focused, sacrificial and outspoken);
- Pamela Sexton, board chairwoman of the Carnegie Center, on humanitarianism – “Millions like me who learned from his example now teach by example.”

Gov. Steve Beshear also attended. He cited King’s courage as not only an inspiration but also an invitation to embody his message – that character is the true litmus test for evaluating humankind.

“Diversity and equality are critical ... to the future of the entire Commonwealth,” Beshear said. “Let us resolve to honor his memory not just with respect but with action.”