



# City Honors School

AT FOSDICK-MASTEN PARK

William A. Kresse, Ph.D. PRINCIPAL   Tandy J. Hamilton ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL   Angela R. Hannah ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL   Carla L. McDow ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

May 24, 2022

## CHS Community:

On Saturday, May 14, our community was devastated by a racist, hate-filled, and deadly attack which took the innocent lives of ten individuals and injured three more at the Tops Market on Jefferson Avenue. This store is blocks from our school, and many of our students and staff visit this grocery store regularly. It is hard to imagine any greater evil descending upon our community and specifically a place that has been a critical source of community-building, a pharmacy and fresh foods since it opened some twenty years ago.

Our school community has many connections to the victims of this attack. Celestine Chaney, a graduate of Fosdick-Masten Park Girls Vocational High School, was killed in the shooting. Zaire Goodman '19 was working at the store at the time of the attack. Zaire was hit by the gunman's fire but miraculously escaped more significant harm. While we are grateful he is alive, we are grieving the loss of those who were not as fortunate that day.

As a city-wide magnet school, about half of our students come from minority backgrounds and from households speaking 34 different languages. We are also home to a large and specialized program for students with autism that has flourished for almost two decades. We pride ourselves on helping to develop young people who are open-minded, caring and see diversity as our nation's greatest strength. This tragedy will not deter us from this mission.

We recognize that every student responds to trauma differently and that many of our students and staff wanted to take action after this event. This is a sampling of how our school community has mobilized:

- On Sunday, May 15, students and staff attended an interfaith vigil at Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church across the street from City Honors. Special thanks go to our longtime partners, Pastor Cook and the Macedonia congregation, for including our school community.
- At the start of school on Monday, May 16, we observed an extended moment of silence at the school for Celestine Chaney, Roberta Drury, Andre Mackneil, Katherine "Kat" Massey, Margus D. Morrison, Heyward Patterson, Aaron Salter, Geraldine Talley, Ruth Whitfield and Pearl Young. Please take a moment to understand a little bit about each of these special individuals [at this link](#).
- That same day, our teachers put their trauma-informed training to work, leading restorative circles in extended homerooms as our Student Support Team worked with students needing more attention throughout the school day. This was only the beginning of the care and healing. Students have continued to receive assistance and will for some time to come.

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186 EAST NORTH STREET   BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14204   TEL 716.816.4230   FAX 716.888.7145



- The Buffalo Public Schools are supporting staff through immediate and in-person counseling, the Collective Care Café, The BPS Employee Assistance Program, and the Headspace App.
- Students and staff at all grade levels spent the week writing cards and assembled a care basket from our school bookstore that was taken to Zaire and his mother this past Friday.
- On Monday, May 16, the CHS Student Council asked each of our students to consider how they thought the student body should respond and to submit their ideas. Based on feedback in the days that followed, Student Council began organizing activities around the following goals:
  1. Honoring those who lost their lives and were wounded.
  2. Taking action to help those impacted by the attack.
  3. Sending prominent and clear messages that their generation will not succumb to hate and racism.
- At the request of Student Council, we held an extended forty-four minute homeroom on Friday, May 20. Student Council set this time aside for students to decompress after a traumatic week and to create signage honoring those who died and calling for action.
- Based on student feedback, Student Council requested and received approval for the following activities that took place yesterday:
  - All students and staff were asked to wear black to school to recognize that the individuals killed on 5/14 were specifically killed because they were black and that black lives matter.
  - At 9:00am, all students who wished to participate exited the school building and marched in a solemn procession around the perimeter of our campus ten times, one time in honor of each victim murdered in this attack. This is 3.6 miles in total. We had approximately 1050 students march and 115 staff.
  - At the completion of the march, all students were invited to walk onto Fosdick Field where lines were painted across the field spelling out “Choose Love” as well as ten large hearts. Students filled in the letters, and a photo was taken with a drone. Our students wanted this to be used as a powerful statement to the world from their generation.
- A delegation of students from Lancaster High School joined our students for these activities seeking to show unity with their peers in the city. They were welcomed by a group of grade 11 ‘CHS Ambassadors’.
- Black staff and administrators at our school are organizing a special gathering of ‘healing and dialogue’ specifically for Black students in early June.
- Yesterday and today during all lunch periods, the CHS CLRI (Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Initiatives) Scholars and the CHS Student Council collaborated for a collection of non-perishable food items, paper goods, and health and hygiene products to share with the community and families affected by the loss of their grocery store.
- This evening, from 5:30-7:30, CHS CLRI Scholars will join with other BPS CLRI Scholars to host a special event at MLK Park entitled ‘Honoring and Healing through the Arts: Our Response to Hate is Love.’
- Last week, the City Honors/Fosdick-Masten Park Foundation made a \$5,000 donation to the Buffalo 5/14 Survivors Fund and the Buffalo Together Community Response Fund. Our Student Council and the

Foundation ask you to consider a donation to one of these funds if you are looking for a way to help the families directly impacted by the attack or to support Buffalo’s East Side. More information about both funds and buttons to donate can be found [at this link](#).

For several years now, our staff, students, and administrative team have been engaged in intensive study and action through the [Buffalo Public School’s Office of CLRI](#). The past few years have also been a time of great activism around social justice issues by our student and staff. The Centaurs of today are risktakers, principled and communicators. They fiercely reject hate, racism and violence. Whether a member of our school community from past or present, local or out-of-town, please join them as an agent of change and hope.

Sincerely,



William A. Kresse, Ph.D.  
Principal

