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## March, speeches honor King's legacy

By JUSTIN STORY [jstory@bgdailynews.com](mailto:jstory@bgdailynews.com) Jan 15, 2018





With temperatures hovering around the freezing point, a large gathering massed outside the Warren County Justice Center to embark on a march to honor those who braved harsher conditions decades earlier to secure their civil rights.

The celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and legacy culminated Monday with a commemorative march to State Street Baptist Church, where a program honoring his memory featured inspirational songs and impassioned calls to action, 50 years after an assassin's bullet claimed King's life.

“Many people have died for us to be here today, so we will not let 34-degree weather keep us from celebrating the legacy of Dr. King,” said Shannah Dixon, MLK Planning Committee member and mistress of ceremony for the program at the church.

Nnamdi Igwe, a Warren Central High School graduate and Cornell University freshman, gave a stirring rendition of what has become known as the “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech, which King delivered the night before his death in Memphis amid a sanitation workers’ strike there.

Keynote speaker Jeremiah Castille, a former professional football player who is now a minister and chaplain for the University of Alabama football team, said character, confidence and courage were the attributes that imbued King with hope during his struggles with entrenched segregation and enabled him to exert an influence that continues to inspire today.

“He had a character that was instilled in him that said every man, woman, boy and girl has worth and has value,” Castille said during remarks that earned an enthusiastic “amen” at many points from the audience.

“When a man has character and confidence, he can receive and apply instructions, and when he confronts the unknown, he has the courage to conquer it.”

MLK Planning Committee member Howard Bailey, retired Western Kentucky University vice president for student affairs, announced at the program that the committee was funding two \$500 scholarships for local high school students.

Named for prominent local African-American educators Amanda, Christine and Irene Barlow and Herbert Oldham, the scholarships will be awarded to students based on academic achievement, and applicants will be asked to write an essay that discusses a personal experience interacting and developing with individuals of another race.

Another educator, Ron Lewis, was presented with the Humanitarian Award by the committee.



Lewis graduated from WKU in 1970 and taught industrial arts, construction, manufacturing and technology in the Bowling Green Independent School District while also coaching multiple sports and working with the maintenance department after hours.

Now retired from teaching, Lewis has also been involved with the Bowling Green Human Rights Commission and has been president of the Bowling Green-Warren County NAACP.

“There were and are many others well-deserving of this award,” Lewis said.

Chris Johnson of Bowling Green joined other marchers Monday after work obligations had kept him from participating in previous years.

“Being able to do it for the first time is definitely inspirational,” Johnson said.

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