

Chippewa Valley African American Parent Network hosts book drive

Book donations accepted at school district's administration building

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Chippewa Valley Schools African American Parent Network is holding an African American History Month book drive. Books will be used to stock school libraries ahead of National Read Across America Day on March 2. (PHOTO COURTESY OF LA'TRISE SMITH)

By [NICOLE TUTTLE](#) |

The Chippewa Valley Schools African American Parent Network is celebrating African American History Month by preparing for National Reading Month, seeking to bring greater diversity of literary voices into schools.

The Chippewa Valley Schools African American Parent Network (AAPN) has been hosting an African American History Month book drive throughout February. The drive began on Feb. 1.

Drop boxes have been located in several schools but with the start of midwinter break in the Chippewa Valley Schools district donations are now accepted at a box in the district administration building, 19120 Cass Ave. in Clinton Township, and open weekdays even during the break from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The administration building will be closed only on Feb. 21 and 22. AAPN Founding Chairperson La'Trise Smith said that donation arrangements can also be made by contacting her at 586-709-6630 or hrsmithla@yahoo.com.

Students, staff and the public are encouraged to donate a fiction or nonfiction book written by an African American author, or dealing with African American subject matter.



La'Trise Smith, a founding chairperson of the Chippewa Valley Schools African American Parent Network, has been collecting books on African American subjects or with African American authors to donate to district libraries. (PHOTO COURTESY OF LA'TRISE SMITH)

“Any K-12 new and gently used book is accepted. Our focus is on elementary, students have to be able to read to a certain level by the third grade,” Smith said.

Donations will be accepted until Feb. 28 according to Smith. Donated books will be used to stock school libraries for a special Read-In day on March 2 from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., hosted by the AAPN on National Read Across America Day.

Smith said that the AAPN decided to begin the book drive to allow district schools to be able to offer greater diversity of book choices and educational information to students districtwide. The drive started off with the school community of parents, staff and students, but expanded to allow donations from the community.

“We learned in conversations with students, there was not a lot of diverse literature in the libraries for all students,” Smith said.

A book drive also offered the opportunity to develop a low COVID-19 risk cause and accompanying activity.

“It is a Read-In on March 2, a Zoom event on National Reading Day,” Smith said. “We are going to have, my 13-year-old son will host, and another eighth grader is a two-time published author. He will read from his books. We are focused on K to 5, elementary kids. He will be doing a reading of

his book and we are going to give away two of his books and then provide bookmarks for students to color. Parents post on social media info from the children, and we put names in a drawing for gift cards to encourage reading.”

The AAPN was founded in March 2020 in Chippewa Valley Schools and is available to families at any grade level in the school district. Smith said it was founded to provide diversity, support and education programming for all students. As the program began during the pandemic, it started out as primarily a virtual and social media focused group, according to Smith. It now includes not only resume building and college panel discussions, but also field trips to locations such as The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit and an upcoming STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) activity. To learn more about the Chippewa Valley Schools AAPN, visit chippewavalleyschools.org/for-parents/aapn-african-american-parent-network. The group accepts donations at payschoolsevents.com/events/details/14672.