



Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Alumni & Family News



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Greetings!

Greetings to you and to yours, alumni, family, members of alumni & friends. Much time has passed since our last communication with you; however, we choose to know that you and yours are all okay and in a good and safe space.

My message to alumni, families & friends:

Together we are on a mission, a mission to sustain our histories based in and around our Long Ridge School, Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, its history, and therefore the history of all who attended and all who were impacted. There is a richness in history, and when I think about the story of our school, it embraces this richness and it embodies a soulfulness.

These qualities deepen and enrich themselves, and uphold this school, through those who are the essence of the history. For we are ourselves the school's alumni, descendants, and ancestors.

What is this richness? What does this soulfulness mean for our families, our culture and communities, our entire educational journey, and all who gave us the keys to unlock a whole new world through education.

Maya Angelou wrote, "You can't really know where you are going until you know where you have been." For some, your 'where' began in some parts of Madison & Yancey Counties, NC—there is a history that belongs to you. That history is yours, it is who you are! Delve into your ancestral power, gain awareness and respect the life of those who came before.

Fatimah' Shabazz (a.k.a. Beverly Wilson)
Chair, Alumni Outreach Committee

MISSION STATEMENT: The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, located in the Long Ridge community, will serve as a Community Cultural Center and Interpretive Museum intended to promote a fuller understanding of Southern Appalachian Black History and to enhance education at all levels.

Mark Your Calendar throughout the year (details to come) for the Grand Reopening Celebration:

- February—Kickoff celebration of African Americans, **our** history and **our** journeys—educational, homesteading, and community.
- September 2022—Plan & prepare now to come home next year. Be present for **Homecoming / Family Reunion Weekend**, Labor Day Weekend. Make arrangements now to set up email, text, and Zoom.
- Book release (date TBD): *Our Story, This Place*—a reflection and history of our historic school, its people, and the community that built it
- Technical Abilities & Use—What we will present at the school: events, performances, interpretive exploration, stories from alumni and family members, interactive participation, etc.

Calendar reminders:

MHARS Monthly Meeting Schedule:

Every third Friday, 1–3 p.m., at the school, 225 Mount Olive Drive, off Long Ridge, in Mars Hill, NC—Nov. 19 and Dec. 17. You will always have an open invitation.

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Mollie Roland with her children Geraldine (Deano) [l.], Sherrill [r.], and Sarah [front]

Realizing that our school and its history would be the focal point and the base of the first educational and artistic program since 1965, I knew that doing so without inviting to alumni and their descendants would be very disrespectful. Regardless of end results, they needed to know and be invited, if not for this event, for the next time to come.

Working with and co-creating with Maia Surdam, Program Director for PAGE, was encouraging and brought to the forefront possibilities and potentials, on how the two groups could reflect on a unique history. —Fatimah’

A note from Maia Surdam, PAGE

It was an honor for PAGE to join with the Friends of MHARS to host the first formal educational program in the building since 1965. We are an educational organization for adolescent girls in Madison County. In 2018 our students documented the renovations at MHARS and interviewed some of the alumni; this summer, they learned more about the history of the Long Ridge community. They listened to alumni stories, viewed historic photos, and read about the Rosenwald Fund. Then

they turned the history they learned into individual quilt squares that tell meaningful stories.

As explained by Jenny Pickens, artist-in-residence and educator, the first essential is to research the history; then visualize it; and, finally, use art to create that visual onto a quilting square. “Quilting and hand-sewing, it goes back to the way things were done back then—by hand and with pride.”

Jenny knows that history first-hand: she’s the niece of Charles Pickens of famed Asheville duet Pic ‘n’ Bill, and her Aunt Mary married Billy Briscoe. She remembers seeing her grandmother cut up old clothes to make blankets and then learning to quilt from a woman in a community quilting circle.

“It just came easy, like I’d done the work sometime in another life, like painting with fabric,” she said. “And the girls got just as excited and were teaching each other and creating together and made these squares that really reflected these stories. I think we have brighter futures when we know our past. Sometimes we have to know what other people have struggled through to really understand today.”

Their artwork will help commemorate the people who made MHARS such an important place.

Some of our essential history

Though MHARS, Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, and the family cemetery are all in the Long Ridge community, children were bused in from around the mountains: Yancey County, Bald Mountain in Bald Creek, and later Marshall, Burnsville, Barnardsville, and Hot Springs. With such long bus rides, early school mornings were just that—*very early*. Imagine standing out in the cold each weekday waiting to catch the bus to school. Education is priceless, and our alumni paid a high price to gain knowledge...but gain they did!



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Calling on your memories! If you can identify these alumnae, please contact Fatimah' (828) 273-4236; isaqueen@live.com with any information you have!



Becoming a member of the FRIENDS Group (and the benefits of membership):

Keeping in mind this is your/our history—this building, our friends, the education we received—all this belongs to alumni and our families and descendants. Now we need your participation, input, and creative gifts to continue our work.

Membership is more than having your name on a list: it means being a participant within the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School. Maintaining it, supporting it, creating, giving and receiving, and so much more. Members receive notifications of current events, programs, progress reports, budgets and additional happenings in and about the school.

Your contact information will be added to our members list ... both snail mail & email if available. NOTE: If accessing a computer is a challenge, we encourage you to connect with someone who will share their email and or phone information with us, and that they will support you in receiving notifications, newsletters etc.

Your feedback is very important, your ideas are invaluable, giving your best, when you can, how you can, is what we ask and appreciate. Contact Fatimah' Shabazz (aka Beverly Wilson) by phone

or text at (828) 273-4236 or isaqueen@live.com

Who are **The Friends**? They are volunteers who love history; love supporting and assisting; they are the worker bees; they are alumni; they are *friends*.

The Renovation & Grand Reopening:

Our Grand, Grand Opening will take place beginning February 2022 (Black History Month) through HOMECOMING/FAMILY REUNION over Labor Day Weekend, September 2022.

We will be giving birth to our history for the world to know—the journeys, the children, teachers, parents, and grandparents; the church and our communities; the celebrations, meals, healings, joys, sadness, the births, the deaths, and the memories. This eight-month birthing experience is designed to honor, acknowledge, remember, and connect with our Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School and its affiliates, past and present.

For this is what happens when we let go of our cherished past:



And this is what happens when we cherish it again!





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Greetings from Madison County Schools Superintendent Will Hoffman

The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School is a beautiful, living example of history—one that allows us, even forces us, to have an honest view of the nation’s history—in particular your history as alumni and their descendants. Rooted in a legal system of segregation that unraveled many of the gains of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the school brings to life our nation’s struggle to live up to its original ideals while serving as a reminder of our flaws.

Nationally and in North Carolina, social studies standards are at the center of discourse that is often controversial and layered heavily along political lines. Members of state legislatures claim that if we talk honestly about our history our children will be harmed by learning that, for generations, we fostered a racial caste system of inequality. But what happens when those with the power to tell our history are challenged? When those previously ignored demand to be heard? Can we ask hard, uncomfortable questions about our nation’s past without being viewed as unpatriotic?

I want our graduates from Madison County Schools to understand and be proud of our history and feel that they have the power to contribute to that rich story. MHARS will be a valuable means to address the state’s social studies standards and our teaching of North Carolina history, hosting student field trips, faculty professional development, and community events. The school will function as a lens on the past to teach our students about our local history and culture, the history of education in America, and the realities of segregation and the fight against it.

The Madison County Board of Education appreciates the incredible work of the Alumni and Friends of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School. As Superintendent of Madison County Schools, I have been truly impressed by the dedication this group of alumni and friends of MHARS have shown for the past twelve years. Now their work is nearing completion, and our school system is eager to work with the Friends of MHARS in any way we can to fulfill our shared goals.
—Dr. Will Hoffman

Remembering our Alumnae & Alumni

These beloved alumni/alumnae, family, and friends who went home to the heavens in 2020 and 2021 contributed to the life on the Ridge and in the church and the school.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mr. Herbert Barnette | Mrs. Louise Ray Braxton |
| Mr. Billy Briscoe | Mr. Tommy Briscoe |
| Mrs. Pauline Cheek | Mr. Edwin Cheek |
| Ms. Maude Gaines | Mr. Willie Henson |
| Mr. Eugene Jones | Mrs. Dora Wilson McClain |
| Mrs. Dorothy Ray Koon | Ms. Charity Ray |
| Mr. Preston Ray | Mrs. Sylvia Ray Stokeley |
| Mr. Altheston Stokeley | Ms. Edith Stokeley |
| Ms. Ethel Stokeley | Ms. Peggy Wilson |

May They Always Rest in Heavenly Peace

Commemorative Window Project

You can remember and honor family, friends, teachers, alumni, ancestors—and share this recognition with your descendants—by adopting a window for various prices depending on the size. See **Page 5** for details about how you would like to support this important part of the restoration, while remembering those who came before and made our success possible.



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UPDATE on Renovation Tasks:

- Dividing doors, interior doors, are installed
- Vintage hardware for all doors is installed
- Bathrooms are done
- Insulation is in place
- Painting is completed

[The cloakroom alone has the original paint from the beginning of the school. It was never painted over and remains as it was when we were kids.]

- One blackboard is in place

Technical abilities & use

- Wiring, HVAC, & Security System are in place
- Stucco is on the exterior foundation walls
- 25 wireless hot spots for use by laptops

Renovation tasks still to be done:

- Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is good to go
- Upgrade step railings
- Install security light
- Finish downstairs storage space
- Insulate, seal, and secure for storage, including plywood under the insulation
- Arrange additional land for parking

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is Success.

—Henry Ford

While it is true that we cannot control our past, it is also true that we can control how it is remembered.

—Fatimah' Shabazz

Commemorative Window Project: We need your contribution!

Front Window – 4 still available

Cost of a full window \$1,715.00

Cost of a half window \$857.50

Back Window – 7-1/2 still available

Cost of a full window \$728.00

Cost of a half window \$364.00

Side Window (behind stage) – 0 still available!



What statement would you like on our Donors Wall?

___ In Memory of []; ___ In Honor of [];

___ In Recognition of []; ___ In Gratitude to []

Name of honoree: _____

Your name or business _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Please make your check payable to:

Madison County Education Foundation

5738 Hwy. 25/70, Marshall, NC 28753

Indicate that your donation is for the *Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Window Replacement Fund*. All contributions are tax deductible.



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Vol. I, Number 1

Contents of this issue

As time has passed, much has transpired among the families of MHARS and with the physical building. This Newsletter is to update you with all of the changes, to include the following:

- Our Alumni/ae
- Our Connections: Madison County Board of Education (owner of the historic property), National Historic Registry, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Madison County Tourism Development Authority (TDA), NC Dep't. of Natural & Cultural Resources, US Dep't. of the Interior, PAGE (Partnership for Appalachian Girls' Education: *see below*)
- Collaborations and Future Programs
- Membership in MHARS Friends Group
<https://andersonrosenwaldschool.com/>
- Remembering those we have lost
- Dr. Will Hoffman, Superintendent, Madison County Schools
- Commemorative Window Project
- Facility Rehabilitation/Renovation