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13th Annual MLK Parade and Festival overcomes the cold;

Warmth of love conquers all



The crowd begins to form for the festival soon after the parade. There was a bounce house in the parking lot, and there was a variety of tasty treats available too.

**Story, Photos and Video By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 15, 2018 10:37 p.m.
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CROSS CITY – The 13th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parade and Festival in Cross City showed the people were undaunted by cold weather and they came out in full force on Monday (Jan. 15).

That day would have been Dr. King's 89th birthday, (Jan. 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968 {age 39}).

Always a strong event, this year's parade and festival again provided people with speeches, songs and dance as well as the fun of the parade. There was also an assortment of food, including free hotdogs, and for sale -- barbecue ribs, barbecue chicken, boiled peanuts, sweet potatoes, brownies and other baked goods.

https://youtu.be/H9_DwCHyaGc

In this set of video clips, members of the Boys and Girls Club of North Central Florida, from Perry, leave after marching the entire parade route from Dixie County High School to the Dixie County Courthouse in Cross City. The drummers and flag corps performed in the parking lot of the courthouse, as well as along the parade route. After that, there is the ceremonial releasing of balloons. The final part of this set of three video clips is 9-year-old Tiffany Braswell giving her speech about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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Caroline Walker opens the program as she begins to speak from atop the steps of the Dixie County Courthouse on Martin Luther King Day (Monday, Jan. 15).



Cross City Correctional Institution Officer Recruiter Paul Bloom (left) and CCCI Sgt. Sean Morris man a table where they showed people reasons to take a job with the Florida Department of Corrections. There are openings, including 50 open jobs at CCCI.

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(from left) Caroline Walker, Katrina VanAernam and Mary Spencer stand near the Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition banner.



Larry Walker stands next to the barbecue area where he is cooking ribs and chicken.

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Smokey Bear waves from inside a Florida Forest Service tractor used to create fire breaks.



Some of the drummers from the Boys and Girls Clubs of North Central Florida (Perry) perform in the parade.

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One piece of candy in the upper left of this frame and a heart-shaped lollipop are among candy thrown by members of the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce.



Katrina VanAernam, Rebecca Dion Fusco and others ride in the Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition vehicle in the parade.

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Dixie County High School musicians march during holiday for students.

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Cub Scout Pack 24 had a unit in the parade. Some of the adults and other members are out of frame in this shot, but they were active.



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Eleven of the 12 volunteers on the Dixie County Sheriff's Office Citizens On Patrol (COP) were kept busy with handling traffic. The DCSO COP members always give of themselves freely to help the community remain safe as they direct traffic.

Leading the parade was a cruiser from the Cross City Police Department.

Among the other participants in the parade were the Dixie County Fire Services – with an engine; Dixie County Emergency Services – with an ambulance; Central Florida Electric Cooperative – with a boom truck; the Florida Forestry Service – with Smokey Bear riding in a tractor that was placed on a trailer pulled by a semi tractor-trailer.

People came from Perry and Chiefland.

The North Central Florida Boys and Girls Clubs sent a contingent of drummers and flag girls from Perry. The Dance Divas and Swag Boys of Chiefland were in the parade as well.

Dixie County Superintendent of Schools Mike Thomas and the Dixie County School Board were represented, as was the Dixie County Board of County Commissioners. The Cross City Town Council was on board with representation in the parade as well.

The Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition and the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce were among the many organizations throwing candy to children and adults.

Other units in the parade included the Dixie County High School Redcoat Regiment Marching Band; Cub Scout Pack 24; the Dixie County Retired Educators; and the Dixie County Education Foundation.

The parade not only had a marching band and floats, but there were big and small horses, as well as child-sized motorcycles and scooters.

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THE FESTIVAL

As is the tradition, the festival lasted for a few hours after the parade.

Caroline Walker opened the program by welcoming everyone.

The 50-year-old woman served as emcee this year.

She said every person has a dream, and that everyone is part of the dream to be united as one people.



These are placards that were on one float. They are five concisely worded thoughts from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Bob Leichner of Dixie Music Center of Old Town notices a photographer watching him prepare the sound equipment for the event.

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Dotti Leichner is seen moments after being asked to again test the microphone. She had minutes before been helping her husband Bob prepare the sound system.



Bob Leichner brings the microphone lower to let Tiffany Braswell share her essay with the crowd. In the background on drums and keyboard are Trevor Atkins of Williston and Harry Bell of Cross City respectively. They are the B U Band, and during the day they performed gospel music for singers.

Each person can decide what their contribution to society will be.

“We are encouraged to be the change that we want to see,” Walker said. “It’s easy for

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us to sit back and say ‘Well, Sally should do it or Suzy should do it.’ Even if you just show up here and sell sodas for a dollar, we all have something we can do.”

Since 2018 is the 50th year since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., she is encouraging people to do something in that regard – whether it is 50 acts of kindness, or anything that can be seen as a contribution to the community.

King was among the individuals who in the 1960s helped Americans remember the concepts of equality and freedom.

In 1963, as part of a speech, he told people about an idea – a dream he had for the future.

“I have a dream,” Dr. King told the crowd stretching from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument on Aug. 28, 1963, “that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’ I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.”

The late Felita Carter of Dixie County had a dream, Walker said, and 13 years ago she started a tradition of releasing some helium-filled balloons.

“She (the late Felita Carter) had a dream with Teeva Tyson,” Walker said, “to do something positive for her community, for their community.

“Since then,” Walker continued, “Angela (Carter) and her family has attempted to keep that dream going.”

Walker reminded listeners that God has not given His people the spirit of fear, but instead He has given people the power of love and a sound mind.

“Fear is what keeps so many of us from doing that which we are called to do,” Walker said. “Don’t let fear stop you from being the change that you want to see.”

With that Angela Carter released black and white balloons in honor of the late Felita Carter and Teeva Tyson in absentia.

Tiffany Braswell, 9, of Gainesville was among the talented people at the event. She recited a short essay she had composed about Dr. King.

The young Miss Braswell said her dream is to inspire others to go after their own dreams, and to never concede defeat on a goal.

“No matter what happens in your life,” she said, “remember God is with you.”

She said Dr. King brought people together. He was among the American leaders who helped bring equal rights to people regardless of their race, color or gender.

Now, she said, it is up to future generations to continue to strive for equality, freedom and greatness.

Among the musical performers were the B U Band comprised of Harry Bell of Cross City on keyboard and Trevor Atkins of Williston on Drums.

Josh Hage played guitar and his sister Hannah Hage sang during the program as well.

Life Gate Ministries was among the dance performers.

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For people who want to read about the 2017 event in Cross City, please click [HERE](#).