



TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast, City of Jacksonville

PRESENTED BY  **VyStar**
Credit Union

The City of Jacksonville's 2026 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast commemorates the 97th anniversary of Dr. King's birth by honoring his lifelong commitment and achievements toward his dream for social change.

Tomorrow's Leaders, presented by VyStar Credit Union, is the marquee component of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast. It recognizes and awards youth in our community who exemplify Dr. King's philosophies through leadership, community volunteerism, and civic responsibility.

The City of Jacksonville is pleased to offer deserving elementary, middle, and high school students the opportunity to be nominated and submit an entry for the Tomorrow's Leaders Award. Award recipients will be recognized at the 2026 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast on Friday, January 16th, 2026.

Students will compete in expanded creative categories based on grade level this year.

- **Elementary School:** 4th & 5th Graders will write a 200-word **essay**
- **Middle School:** 6th – 8th Graders will create a work of **visual art**.
- **High School:** 9th – 12th Graders will write **poetry**.

Tomorrow's Leaders Nomination and Submission Guidelines:

- Educators, mentors, community leaders, and youth-oriented non-profit organizations are encouraged to nominate deserving students who exemplify the ideals and principles of Dr. King, submit a Nomination Form, and encourage students to submit creative work into the competition. Nominations from commercial entities will not be accepted.
- If a child is homeschooled, nominations may be submitted by a parent.
- Nominations and creative submissions will be accepted for students in grades 4-12 in the following counties: Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns.
- Nominations and Creative Submissions can be mailed, faxed, or emailed to the City of Jacksonville Office of Sports & Entertainment (contact information below). Essays and Poems must be submitted as PDF or DOC files. Visual Art must be submitted in photo or video format. Visual art must be accompanied by a one-paragraph submission statement.
- Multiple students from the same school and/or group may submit entries.

All Nominations and creative submissions are due by the extended deadline, Sunday, October 26, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. EST (no exceptions).

Tomorrow's Leaders Award Information

- After the student is nominated, he or she must submit their original work based on the rubric and criteria for the respective category.
- Award recipients will be chosen based on nomination information and their submitted work. Rubrics for judging are available below.
- Award categories: Elementary School, Middle School, and High School
- One (1) first-place and one (1) runner-up award recipient will be selected from each category.
- Award recipients will be notified beginning late November 2025.

Elementary School: Essay – 200 words

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that being brave means moving forward even when things are hard. He also said, "I have decided to stick with love." This year, we want everyone to remember both of these important ideas with our theme:

"When Courage Leads, Love Follows."

Essay Prompt:

Explain what this quote means, why it is important, and how it relates to your life or life in general, (in 200 words or less).

Essay Scoring Rubric:

	Excellent - 16	Strong - 12	Fair - 8	Developing - 4
Idea	Ideas are connected to the quote, are clear and focused, fresh and original, and supported by specific relevant details.	Ideas are clear and focused, supported by specific relevant details, and connected to the quote.	Ideas are somewhat clear and focused, vaguely supported by details, and briefly connected with the quote.	Ideas are incomplete and unfocused or undeveloped, not supported by details, or do not connect to the quote.
Voice	Writing shows a strong sense of personality, individuality, vivid expression, emotion. Writing evokes a strong reader response.	Writing shows occasional moments of personality, individuality, expression, emotion. Writing evokes some reader response.	Writing shows some but not all: sense of personality, individuality, expression, emotion, evokes some reader response.	Writing is lifeless and flat, unable to evoke a reader's response.
Language	Skillful use of varied sentence structure contributes to fluidity of ideas. Use of standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling demonstrates consistent command of standard English conventions.	Sentence structure is varied and demonstrates appropriate language use. Use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling demonstrates appropriate command of standard English conventions.	Sentence structure may be partially controlled or somewhat simplistic. Inconsistent use of correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling, may contain multiple distracting errors, demonstrating partial command of standard English conventions.	Sentence structure may be simplistic or confusing. Use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling may contain a frequent and severe errors, demonstrating lack of command of standard English conventions, often obscuring meaning

Idea ____/16

Voice ____/16

Language ____/16

Final Score ____/48

Middle School: Visual Art

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Courage is an inner resolution to go forward despite obstacles." He also declared, "I have decided to stick with love." This year, we honor both convictions with a theme that challenges us to act:

When Courage Leads, Love Follows

Visual Art Prompt:

What impact does Dr. Martin Luther's King Jr.'s declaration have for you or in your community? Create an art piece that illustrates how Dr. Martin Luther's King Jr.'s statement means to you or in your community. Include a statement (150 words) about your art piece and the impact it represents. Artwork must be an original, two-dimensional piece created by the submitting student. Allowable media include drawing, painting, printmaking, collage, or digital art.

Visual Art Scoring Rubric:

	Excellent: 20	Strong: 15	Fair: 10	Developing: 5
Technical Skill	Full use of space Unified composition is present Integrated use of elements and principles Work demonstrates clear student mastery of chosen medium	Most space in art piece is used Discernible composition is present Clear use of elements and principles to create composition Work demonstrates emerging mastery of chosen medium	Some of use of space, background is present Some or beginning of composition is present Elements and principles are present, but may lack cohesion Work demonstrates good use of chosen medium	Limited use of space Limited presence of composition Limited use of elements and principles Work demonstrates limited mastery of chosen medium
Emergence of Personal Vision	Art piece is original and offers a clear viewpoint from the artist's perspective Art piece offers a creative or fresh point of view in connection to the theme In written response: skillful use of varied sentence structure offering clear insight into student's viewpoint and how it is integrated into art piece	Art piece offers a clear viewpoint from the artist's perspective, connecting this viewpoint to the theme In written response: sentence structure is varied and demonstrates appropriate language use; content of response offers good connection between viewpoint, art piece and theme	Art piece may use some familiar imagery or exhibits a literal interpretation of the theme In written response: developed sentence structure; may include spelling or grammatical errors; content offers some connection between viewpoint and theme	Art piece exhibits a loose interpretation of the theme or lacks a clear connection to theme Art piece lacks discernible viewpoint from the student In written response: sentence structure may be simplistic or confusing; includes 5 or more spelling or grammatical errors
Connection to the Theme	Subject/content of art piece is clear and directly connected to the quote/theme Art piece engages deeper thinking about the theme Written reflection adds to the connection between art piece and theme	Subject/content of art piece is clear and has some connection to the quote/theme Written reflection connects the art piece to the theme	Subject or content of art piece has some or surface level connection to the quote/theme Written reflection mentions the theme and makes some connection between theme and art piece	Subject or content of art piece has little to no discernible connection to the quote/theme Written reflection either not included or does little to connect art piece to theme

Technical Skill _____/20

Emergence of Personal Vision _____/20

Connection to the Theme _____/20

Final Score _____/60

High School: Poetry

“When Courage Leads, Love Follows “

MLK Jr. once said, “Courage is an inner resolution to go forward despite obstacles.” He also declared, “I have decided to stick with love.” These words are a powerful reminder that bold leadership demands more than strength; it requires the courage to press forward, the conscience to do what is right, and the heart to lead with love at the center.

Write a poem that explores how courage and love work together to guide people, communities, or even entire movements through adversity.

Your poem may:

- Describe a person who leads with bravery and compassion.
- Show how love transforms fear into action.
- Use imagery and symbolism to connect courage and love
- Be told from your perspective, someone else's, or even in the voice of courage or love themselves.

Poetry Scoring Rubric:

	Proficient: 10	Emerging: 8	Beginning: 5
Content and Theme	The piece clearly articulates a call to action that resonates with Dr. King's vision. It effectively connects personal experience or observations to broader societal issues. The message is compelling and thought-provoking.	The piece addresses a relevant call to action but may lack depth in the connection to Dr. King's themes. The message is clear but could be refined.	The theme is somewhat relevant but lacks clear connection to Dr. King's ideals. The message may be vague or underdeveloped.
Language and Style	Language is vivid, expressive, and engages the audience. Use of poetic devices (imagery, metaphor, repetition, etc.) enhance the message.	Language is effective but may lack some vividness or creativity. Some poetic devices are present but not fully utilized.	Language is basic and does not effectively engage the audience. Limited use of poetic devices detracts from the message.
Connections to Contemporary Issues	The piece makes strong connections to current social issues, demonstrating relevance and urgency. The vision for the future is clear and inspiring.	The piece connects to contemporary issues but may lack depth in the clarity in expressing the vision for the future.	The connection to current issues is weak or unclear. The vision for the future is underdeveloped.

Content and Theme ____/10

Language and Style ____/10

Connection to Contemporary Issues ____/10

Final Score ____/30

Awards & Recognition:

- Award recipients will receive complimentary tickets for themselves and two guests to attend the 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast on Friday, January 16, 2026.
- Award recipients will be recognized at the breakfast and have their creations screened as part of the official programming.
- First-place award recipients will receive a tablet and other prizes.
- Award recipients will receive the Tomorrow's Leaders Award trophy.
- Award recipients will be recognized in the official breakfast program and on the official website, JaxMLKBreakfast.com.

Nominations and entries must be submitted by the extended deadline, Sunday, October 26th. Essays and Poems must be submitted as PDF or DOC files. Visual Art must be submitted in photo or video format and accompanied with a one-paragraph submission statement.

Mailing Address:

City of Jacksonville | Office of Sports & Entertainment
Attn: Katlyn Krueger
214 North Hogan Street, 4th Floor
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Phone Number: (904) 255-5429

Electronic Submissions:

To: City of Jacksonville, Sports & Entertainment

Email: TomorrowsLeaders@Coj.net

*Subject Line: Tomorrow's Leaders Nomination **OR** Tomorrow's Leaders Contest Submission*



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NOMINATION FORM

Name of Nominee (Student): _____

Title of Entry (Essay, Visual Art, Poem):

Grade: _____

School: _____

Principal's Name: _____

Principal's Email Address: _____

Name of Nominator/Educator: _____

Nominator/Educator's Email: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Address: _____

Parent/Guardian Phone Number: _____

Parent/Guardian Phone Email Address: _____

I give permission to the City of Jacksonville to use my child's name, school, likeness, and entry for promotional purposes, including but not limited to photographic and videography, related to the 2026 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast.

Date: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian

If signing electronically, by typing my initials above,
I acknowledge this is a substitute for my signature
(*must be a parent/legal guardian*)

For the nominator:

Explain how the nominee epitomizes Martin Luther King, Jr. and what he/she represents (community, leadership, and civic responsibility). *Please make sure the information is legible.*
