



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## DISTRICT STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN RUBY BRIDGES WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

*“We walk because she walked.”*

\*\*\*Photos attached: See end of release for captions.\*\*\*

PATERSON – Hundreds of Paterson Public Schools elementary school students took to the streets this morning to commemorate the historic bravery of a six-year-old girl named Ruby Bridges who 62 years ago walked to a federally desegregated public school in Louisiana in the face of fierce racism.

Walks around two city blocks were held – one at Public School No. 20 and another at the Young Men’s Leadership Academy (YMLA) – in which students, some of them the same age as Ruby Bridges when she made history, carried signs and chanted, “We walk because she walked.”

“Today, many of our children and young adolescents learned just how much a child can accomplish,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. “Through their commemoration of Ruby Bridges’ courage, everyone who marched today has helped all of us remember how long the road to freedom and equality is. All of us need to be reminded that the progress we have made has been because of people like Ruby Bridges, and the work that lies ahead of us to ensure full equality among all people in America will not be accomplished without remembering the lessons that were taught to us by a little girl in Louisiana so many years ago.”

Efforts to hold today’s walks began with Roz Thompson, a longtime Patersonian and a senior public affairs specialist at AAA Northeast in Wayne. AAA partners with school districts, including Paterson Public Schools, in establishing student safety patrols that help school and public safety officials keep staff and students safe as they walk to and from school. The idea to hold a Ruby Bridges Walk To School Day originated with a group of fifth-grade safety patrol members in California in 2018. Since then, Thompson and her team in Wayne have been working to have Ruby Bridges Walk To School Day in Paterson.

“We are proud, and AAA is proud to spearhead these events today with Paterson Public Schools,” said Thompson. “It took our ancestors to stand up then, and it will take all of us to continue to take a stand against racism. Racism is ugly. It should never, ever be in our schools or anywhere else in the world.”

Thompson worked with School 20 Principal Dr. Moses McKenzie and YMLA Principal Marc Medley to plan today’s events, which were preceded by classroom lessons about Ruby Bridges as well as the de jure segregation of public schools in the United States through the Supreme Court’s landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.

“Our students are aware today that because she walked 62 years ago, they are able to walk to school and we have integrated schools today,” said McKenzie. “Today is a day of celebration. It’s a day of awareness and it’s a day that we will never forget.”

# PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Together We Can*



“You are never too young to make a difference, and you are never too young to stand against injustice,” said Medley. “These are among the most important lessons that Ruby Bridges taught us, and that is why the students, staff, and the entire YMLA community proudly walks today in honor of her.”

Photo 1: School 20 students, some of them the same age as Ruby Bridges when she made history, pause during their walk to commemorate Bridges’ courageous walk to a desegregated school.

Photo 2: A School 20 student shows her coloring of a picture of Ruby Bridges.

Photo 3: YMLA students line up to walk.

Photo 4: YMLA students walking the streets near their school in Paterson.

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