

Kalamazoo Valley Museum  
230 North Rose Street  
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Kalamazoo, MI 49003-4070  
269.373.7990  
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Texas Township Campus  
6767 West O Avenue  
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Arcadia Commons Campus  
202 North Rose Street  
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The Groves Campus  
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### **Peace is the theme of the Museum's Fifth Annual Storytelling Festival**

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum's Fifth Annual Storytelling Festival: Searching for Peace brings together a full lineup of nationally-recognized storytellers from across the United States to explore unity, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all. This two-day event starts with Art Hop Friday night and continues on Saturday, February 4, at 10 a.m., with storytellers starting at the top of each hour.

Patricia Polacco has a distinguished record as an international advocate for the rights of children. She has written and illustrated 115 books for children, many of which reflect her Russian and Irish background and incorporate problem-solving and learning to get along. She is the winner of two Presidential Commendation Medals, numerous Parents' Choice Gold Awards, and several awards for Children's Book of the Year. Her stories portray the human experience in an honest and often humorous way. Polacco opens the morning at 10 a.m., reading several of her stories and sharing the stories behind them.

Adam Mellema, storyteller, producer, and actor, will move you to tears, have you laughing on the floor, and create memories you will not soon forget. He plays each character, from the silly to the aging WWII soldier who transforms right before your eyes. He lives in California and travels throughout the year telling stories everywhere from libraries and schools to the 2002 Olympics. As a children's television producer, he has worked with Enthusiastic Productions and the Disney Channel, and is currently producing a show for School Zone Productions. His high-energy performances are chock-full of personality and depth. Mellema will perform at 11 a.m.

Mark Binder, author of 20 books and audiobooks, tells stories about peace, tall tales, classics, and original autobiographical lies. The Providence, Rhode Island resident surprises his audiences with sound effects, audience participation, and lots of character. Hear a variety of stories from his book *Stories for Peace* and his latest audio book, *Transmit Joy*, at noon. *Transmit Joy* was awarded a Parents' Choice Gold Award for Audio Storytelling.

Tim Cusack has been described as a combination of Garrison Keillor, Robin Williams, and the Dalai Lama. Author of *Me Too: Extraordinary Everyday Stories That Connect Us*, co-host of a morning radio talk show, television and commercial actor, motivational speaker, trainer, and storyteller, he brings a list of unique experiences, including time on an Alaskan fishing boat and knowledge that engages his audience in unique and humorous ways. His degree in psychology with training and experience in theater allows Tim the rare ability to relate to large groups of people on a personal level. He will take to the stage at 1 p.m., "balancing humor with impact and then inspiring action through engagement."

Noa Baum, award-winning performance storyteller, author, educator, and keynote presenter, focuses on the power of stories to heal across the divide of identity and build bridges for peace. She has won many awards for storytelling as well as her memoir, *A Land Twice Promised: An Israeli Woman's Quest for Peace*. Born and raised in Jerusalem, she has toured in Turkey, Sweden, the UK, and Israel. She currently lives in the Washington D.C. area. She will share her deeply touching stories at 2 p.m.

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Sidney Ellis and Sidney Ellis II perform together at the Storytelling Festival at 3 p.m. Sidney Ellis has been acting in plays, created a variety show that ran on Cable Access for 10 years, and even performed a puppet show at the Museum over 20 years ago. He is noted for his work as executive director of the Black Arts and Culture Center in Kalamazoo and now as Director of Mission Advancement at the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo. He is the recipient of the Regional Gannon Community Arts Award, an award given to individuals who use art and culture to enlighten, inspire, and impact the world around them. Sidney Ellis II, comedian, actor, storyteller, puppeteer, African drummer, singer, and dancer is pursuing a degree in acting and musical theater at Western Michigan University. Sidney II won the Gold Medal in the NAACP-Act-So competition, and first and second place at the United Teen Talent Show. He performed at the first Storytelling Festival. "We are excited to have father and son unite at this year's Festival!" said Museum Programs Coordinator Annette Hoppenworth.

Judy Sima, award-winning Michigan storyteller, author, and teaching artist has been delighting audiences since 1987. Her warm, engaging performances combine folk, traditional, and modern tales with humor, song, and loads of audience participation. Well-known for her highly interactive and practical workshops and performances, Sima has been featured at schools, libraries, and storytelling conferences across the nation. With over 20 years' experience coaching students and adults, she has helped many others become storytellers. Judy will close out the Festival at 4 p.m.

This year's Storytelling Festival includes a wide range of storytellers who will all approach the subjects of unity, equity, diversity, and inclusion from very different perspectives for audience of all ages. "You won't want to miss a moment of this year's Festival: Searching for Peace!" Hoppenworth said.

Museum admission and the Storytelling Festival are free.

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and is governed by its Board of Trustees.