February marks the observation of Black History Month or African-American History Month. Its roots date to 1926 when historian Carter Woodson announced the observance as the second week of February because Abraham Lincoln’s birthday is Feb. 12 and Frederick Douglass’s is Feb. 14. The week aimed to teach African-American history in public schools. It was expanded to a month-long celebration initially in 1970 at Ohio’s Kent State University. The rest of the country followed in 1976 and then-President Gerald Ford recognized the commemoration during the nation’s bicentennial.

YCSD schools plan several programs to mark the occasion. The district’s Visual and Performing Arts performances will honor Black History Month with “A Harlem Renaissance Experience” at both East and Chaney high schools. East’s program begins at 6 p.m. Feb. 13 in its auditorium and doors open at 5:30 p.m. Chaney’s program begins at 6 p.m. Feb. 22 in that school’s auditorium with doors opening at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free to each performance.

The programs will pay tribute to the Harlem Renaissance and artists that were later inspired and influenced by the cultural explosion that occurred during that era. Each school’s performance will be unique in its presentation, cast and performance pieces. The only similarity between the two performances will be in the set design and performance pieces presented by the combined East and Chaney students who attend the 11th and 12th grade VPA tracks at Choffin Career and Technical Center. Performance pieces will include dramatic readings of poems by Langston Hughes, Angelina Weld Grimke and Countee Cullen. Dance and instrumental music pieces will feature songs from Cab Calloway, “Fats” Waller and Duke Ellington as well as more contemporary artists like Stevie Wonder and Curtis Mayfield.

Taft Elementary School’s Black History Month program is from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Feb. 23. Youngstown Mayor Jamael Tito Brown will open the program with a greeting then the HarambeeYouth Dancers will take the floor. The Black History Month program at Martin Luther King Elementary begins at 2 p.m. Feb. 28 at the school. Days and times for programs at other schools are expected to be announced soon.

Frederick Douglass, writer and abolitionist
Rosa Parks, Civil Rights activist
Elijah McCoy, inventor
Seventh-Grade Success

The Youngstown City School District’s seventh-grade boys’ basketball team defeated the Canfield Cardinals 50-45 in overtime last week to capture the AAC Red championship title.

The team is coached by Steve Flores, Marcus Higgs and Mark Cherol and team members include Ty’Juan Brown, Keivon Mitchell, Jason Hewitt, Korell Bush, Jashawn Johnson, Zy’Aire Hill, Caleb Beachum, Gamior Jackson, Edwin Bonilla, Kalen Turner and Demetri Rivera.