Johnnie Jackson
Marion

Johnnie Lewis Jackson, the Diversity and Equity Supervisor for Marion City Schools, has become known as a force for social change in Marion County.

In less than a year, Jackson has introduced countless new programs to build racial justice in Marion City Schools, including the Harambee Black Boys group and social justice reading clubs for teachers and community members. The district also passed a resolution in June affirming its “intent to be a leader in overcoming racial injustice and other forms of discrimination.”

Jackson “believes fervently in the power of young people, supporting them while also leading the way in the fight not just for racial justice and equity, but in more free futures for all,” said his nominator.

Since 2017, Jackson also has served as the community coordinator for the Marion Voices Folklife and Oral History Project, a countywide program dedicated to gathering stories and expressive cultural practices that exemplify traditions of historically marginalized communities in the area from the 1960s to now. The group is sponsored by the Marion County Historical Society, which is receiving the 2021 MLK Commission’s Cultural Awareness Award. Working with Jackson and other community leaders, the historical society will launch a community co-curated permanent exhibit showcasing the story of Black life, cultural arts, history, and futures in Marion County.

Along with fellow 2021 MLK Award winner Whitney Gherman of the OSU Extension Services of Marion County, Jackson also launched the Community Voices community leadership training program to train a new cohort of racial justice leaders on Marion’s west side.

His nominator noted “his remarkable ability to see the opportunity for new coalitions and projects to address needs in Marion County with an eye to our county’s incredible assets.

“Like Dr. King, Johnnie Jackson is a tireless and fierce organizer for social, racial, and economic justice in Marion County.

“I cannot adequately articulate how powerful, transformative, and inspiring his vision is to people young and old alike in our community. If Dr. King could meet Johnnie Jackson, he would be proud.”