

Black Nurses Association continues mission



Photo by Wiley Price/St. Louis American

Afshanti Hunter is a registered nurse at St. Louis Children's Hospital and a member of the Black Nurses Association of St. Louis.

Afshanti Hunter, a registered nurse at St. Louis Children's Hospital, has been with BNA-STL for a year. She said she joined as a way to step out of her comfort zone. "I decided to join because I find I don't speak up as often as I should and I wanted to change that," Hunter said. "I've been enjoying my time so far in the organization because it feels like I'm at a family gathering." Like Muhammad and many others, Hunter has found herself having to adjust to the pandemic. Her work as a registered nurse on the pulmonary floor looks much different from what it did before. "When I wear my masks the kids want to pull my mask down to see my face, but I can't do that," Hunter said. "So instead I have to come up with innovative ways to make them feel more comfortable like singing them songs or making animal noises." Since Mahoney's time, the scope of the profession has made tremendous strides. Today there are many career choices. "If you don't have the funds to go to a four-year school, you can go to community college and still become a registered nurse," Hunter said. "Everybody's like, 'I wanna be a nurse.' Well, you gotta go to school to become a nurse, but you have multiple avenues to go through." More than a century ago, Mahoney chose nursing as her passion to encourage better quality health care for women and African Americans. She worked as a private nurse until she retired. She died at 80 in 1926, after a three-year battle with breast cancer. Her legacy lives on. [CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW FOR THE COMPLETE ARTICLE](#)

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http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local_news/black-nurses-association-continues-mission-of-pioneer-mary-eliza-mahoney/article_9abd4662-7236-11eb-bae3-df035790466b.html

February 18, 2021

COMMUNITY NEWS

Building the joy of reading



UMSL receives \$5.1 million literacy grant that it will distribute to 40 area schools to improve reading and writing skills for children of all grade levels

“UMSL is excited to work with 40 schools in St. Louis and surrounding areas,” stated Kerkhoff. “We will be collaborating on literacy professional development that is evidence based and culturally responsive and supporting teachers with the difficult task of teaching reading and writing. We hope that our work together will be impactful for young people across the region.”

In addition to some St. Louis Charter Schools, St. Louis Public Schools, Francis Howell Schools, Greenville R-2 Schools, Hancock Place Elementary, Potosi R-III Schools, and University City Schools, the Hazelwood, Jennings, and Normandy Schools Collaborative districts are among the 40 schools that will be involved in two projects that according to UMSL are designed to promote evidence-based literacy strategies and create digital literacy resources, with a particular focus on schools in Promise Zones.

“Highly skilled professionals make all of the difference in a strong literacy program,” shared Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart, Superintendent of Hazelwood School District.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Huneke Publications, Inc.

2139 Bryan Valley Commercial Dr.

O'Fallon, MO 63366

PH: 636-379-1775 | FX: 636-379-1632

Published weekly since 1921.

Serving St. Louis, St. Charles
and Lincoln Counties.

“The opportunities this grant can provide will help expand the resources available to our teachers. We value and appreciate this grant and believe it will open more avenues to help our faculty continue to

grow and learn.”

The Hazelwood schools participating in UMSL’s CSLD program are Grannemann Elementary School, Hazelwood East High School, and Hazelwood Southeast Middle School.

Missouri's top teachers plead for higher coronavirus vaccine priority

A COVID-19 vaccination will come too late for Missouri's 2021 teacher of the year, who came down with the virus two weeks ago.

Darrion Cockrell, who teaches physical education at Crestwood Elementary, is now pleading with state health officials to move all school staff members up the priority list for the vaccine.

"Our state's teachers and staff have faithfully risked their lives" and may not be eligible to receive vaccines until the school year is over, reads a letter sent Wednesday from Cockrell and four other recent teachers of the year to Dr. Randall Williams, director of the state health department.

About 95% of Missouri's school buildings are open to students at some capacity, according to the state education department. In the St. Louis region, only Ferguson-Florissant and **Hazelwood school districts** have remained fully virtual this year, and are set to welcome students to buildings starting in March.

Not all districts enforce masks in schools, particularly in counties that don't have mandates. Schools are also largely incapable of maintaining the recommended 6-foot distancing protocol inside classrooms, hallways and cafeterias, the letter reads.

"We need vaccinations not to 'get back' to schools, we are already in schools, even as emerging viral variants enter our communities and school hallways. Prompt vaccinations will maximize learning; prompt vaccinations will undoubtedly save staff and student lives," the letter states. **CLICK THE LINK BELOW FOR THE COMPLETE ARTICLE.**

School choice bills have been pushed in Missouri for years. Will the pandemic pave the way?

While school choice bills were the first to be heard in both the House and Senate education committees, they have yet to be debated before the full House and Senate. Bills in both chambers pack a wide variety of issues into a single bill.

“Their thought process was, ‘go big,’” said Arthur, who voted against the bill passing out of committee.

It remains to be seen what provisions make it across the finish line in what Rep. Paula Brown, a Democrat from Hazelwood, called “the spaghetti test” approach.

“Clearly, the supporters of this are trying to move it on a fast track, and probably faster than we’ve seen in other legislative sessions,” Ghan said. “But again, how it’s gonna play out — if these bills will actually reach the House and Senate floor for debate — remains to be seen.” **CLICK THE LINK BELOW TO SEE THE COMPLETE ARTICLE**

After Nearly A Year, Virtual School Drags On For Many St. Louis-Area Families

Heather Vogt tries her best every day to keep her eyes on her work and at least one ear on her younger child's lessons. But that still leaves her older son.

"I can't work and split my ears both ways," she said. "I'm splitting it one way with a kindergartener." The kindergartner is Jack, and Vogt's older son, a third grader, is Benjamin. Both are enrolled in the Francis Howell School District, though they've been doing school completely from their St. Charles County home since last March.

It has been nearly a year since the pandemic first forced schools in Missouri to close. And, like Jack and Benjamin, tens of thousands of children have yet to return to the classroom. For many, the long absence is starting to drag down grades and drain their love of school.

Riverview Gardens opened its elementary schools for a few weeks in the fall but then closed them back down during a virus resurgence. The district plans to bring children back next month. Still, Smith said her son will remain at home.

In Webster Groves, Jennifer Finney's children, both middle schoolers, are able to do music lessons over Zoom. "My oldest does not like being on Zoom all day, it makes him kind of irritable by the end of the day, as I think adults can appreciate," she said.

Otherwise, Finney said her kids are content with virtual school. They're a little introverted, which seems to help. Next month, the Ferguson-Florissant and Hazelwood districts will reopen their buildings to in-classroom learning. It'll be the first time in a year that all public school districts in the St. Louis area are offering in-person school.

Webster Groves School District reopened last fall, but the Finneys plan to finish out this school year online. Jennifer Finney expects her kids will be back in school in the fall.

"But I don't know if that's realistic," she said, or just the easiest thing to focus on. **CLICK THE LINK BELOW FOR THE ENTIRE ARTICLE**

Your body is telling you something: Dancer has a Heart Attack at Age 30



Megan Corbin has everything going right in her life and her career as a professional dancer. Getting her start at Dance Plus studio, the **Hazelwood Central High School graduate** went on to college to study dance and performed on stages from one coast to the other. Now living in northern California, Corbin said she always wanted to open a dance school. And 2020 turned out to be the year she would do it, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and despite having a heart attack in July, just a few months after her 30th birthday. Corbin said she actually had been feeling pressure in her chest for about a month. She had been doing live workouts on Facebook every day. One morning, everything changed.

“Eight o’clock in the morning, I had a heavy feeling in my chest like it was just pain – front and back. I tried to deal with it on my own for about 10 to 15 minutes, and then I finally woke my husband up,” Corbin said. “He carried me to the bathroom, and I thought that I had to vomit ... and I was having cold sweats, so I literally laid across the bathroom floor, because I was cold, but I was hot, and the floor was cool. Me, I kept saying, maybe ‘I need a ginger ale,’ because it felt like gas.” She said it felt like very intense gas, right in the chest area. “It was when I told him my arm was numb and I could not feel my arm, he said, ‘You have to go to the hospital,’” Corbin said. Her husband drove her to a nearby medical facility. Due to COVID restrictions he could not go in with her at first. After an EKG confirmed she was having a heart attack, her husband was allowed to be with her for a short time, before Corbin was airlifted to a hospital in Medford, Oregon, where cardiac specialists could immediately provide the lifesaving care she needed. “The team was waiting for me outside the hospital. They put a beta blocker in to open up the blood clot in my artery, and they said the blood was actually not flowing to my heart,” Corbin said. The health care team at both facilities were amazed that this young woman who by appearance was the healthy picture of youth was anything but. The doctor explained to her that they needed to put a stent in the artery. Corbin said, “Once he got done, I said, ‘Well, I don’t plan on dying today, so let’s just do what we got to do.’” Corbin was hospitalized for 10 days after her heart attack and surgical procedure...[CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW FOR THE FULL STORY](http://www.stlamerican.com/your_health_matters/health_news/your-body-is-telling-you-something/article_da347ae2-7329-11eb-92c4-0f4778c38302.html)

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