

West-Pruitt joins Hazelwood School Board

Fills vacant seat on all-women led team

By Danielle Brown
Of the St. Louis American

Sparkl West-Pruitt has served in the Hazelwood School District since 2012. Now she adds the Board of Education seat to her extensive resume.

"Mrs. West-Pruitt brings an impressive track record of advocacy for students to the Board of Education," Cheryl D. Latham, board president said in a news release.

"Her dynamic business experience and student-first focus is a welcomed addition to this body."

West-Pruitt was named to the board in November. She has served the Hazelwood School District in

various roles since 2012. She also held several leadership roles with the Hazelwood PTA Council, which includes serving as council president.

As a prominent advocate for students, West-Pruitt strongly believes education is a major key to success. Her passion for influencing the lives of all connected with the educational field inspired her to join the board. She also had another advantage: her formative years were spent in a country that takes education very seriously.

"My goal is to give our students, teachers, and parents a voice



Sparkl West-Pruitt

in the decision-making process," West-Pruitt said. "I also hope to help foster an environment that allows us to have tough conversations about diversity, accountability, transparency, and the future of education."

"Finally, I believe I bring a unique perspective to our push to improve education. I was born in Japan and lived there through elementary school. That experience helped shape some of my opinions about how to best serve students."

With her board appointment West-Pruitt is making history as

one of seven women now serving on an all-female board. She said it would be "fantastic" to have a male perspective on the board, but she's confident that she's surrounded by women who are capable of making smart decisions about important educational issues.

"Women are the first nurturers of a child, so we approach education with a student-first focus," she said.

In a previous role, she served as a key communicator in the district. She participated in monthly meetings held by the superintendent with parent-teacher associations and community leaders to keep them up

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to date on significant issues.

"I've always felt strongly about parent involvement and how important it is in a child's development," West-Pruitt said. "We can't put [responsibility] solely on teachers, especially those teaching our Black chil-

dren."

After relocating to St. Louis from Atlanta, West-Pruitt said she was looking for a good school district for her son. That's when she stumbled upon Hazelwood.

"I immediately got involved with the parent-teacher association and began attending board meetings," she said. "From there, I started volunteering at Jamestown Elementary School

and encouraged students to reach their full potential."

West-Pruitt is a graduate of Georgia Technical Institute and has a background in business and entertainment management. She is also a motivational speaker with an emphasis on goal setting, business marketing, parenting and diversity.

West-Pruitt replaces Mark J. Behlmann, who had served as a board member since 1997. He stepped down earlier this year. Board President Latham, in commenting on Behlmann's departure, said, "Mr. Behlmann has left an indelible legacy on our district, and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him."

COMMUNITY NEWS

Hazelwood School District students address COVID-19 in PSA video

Students from Hazelwood East, Central, and West high schools are featured in a new public service announcement aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19.

"Mask, Wash, Distance"

is part of Hazelwood School District's Help Hazelwood Get Healthy public health campaign. The campaign encourages everyone in the Hazelwood area to wear masks, practice social distancing and wash their hands.

The PSA video can be seen at <https://bit.ly/3miSWgd>.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the zip codes HSD serves have experienced some of the highest infection rates in the state. As a result, school buildings were forced to close. The key to returning to face-to-face learning for all students without constant interruption is improving the health of the entire community. With that in mind, HSD is encouraging the community to Help Hazelwood Get Healthy by wearing masks, practicing social

distancing, and washing their hands. The health of a community greatly impacts the level of health in school settings.

The campaign started with a drive-thru resource event in November.

During the event, the district distributed approximately 4,000 Help Hazelwood Get Healthy resource kits. The free kits included thermometers, disposable masks, information about COVID-19, and a community resource guide.

Campaign Highlights

- Drive-thru resource kit event.
- Public service announcement videos
- Billboards at 270 and McDonnell facing west and 270 and Bellefontaine facing east.
- Resource postcards mailed to all residents in the HSD area.
- Radio advertisements on 95.5 FM and 104.1 FM through January 2021.
- Help Hazelwood Get Healthy website page.
- Building-level health contests supported by the Hazelwood NEA.

HELP HAZELWOOD
GET HEALTHY!





Mom, toddler found slain on Christmas in north St. Louis County

SPANISH LAKE — A mother and her toddler daughter were killed in a Spanish Lake home on Christmas, St. Louis County police said Saturday. Police identified the deceased as Charese Garvin, 28, and Alayah Butler, 23 months old. Both suffered fatal gunshot wounds. Officers from the North County Precinct, who had been called at 6:57 p.m. Friday for a welfare check, found the victims at 1519 Lakeside Lane.

No suspects were in custody. The address, a light blue ranch-style home, is located in a residential neighborhood, just south of the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area. Garvin worked as a teaching assistant at the Special School District of St. Louis County. Her sister-in-law, Kristin Thorps, 29, said Garvin was pregnant at the time of her death. Garvin's job and her three children were her passion, Thorps said, and described Garvin as a beautiful spirit and a good mother. "She always had a love for children, always had a love for people," Thorps said. "She kept to herself and her neighborhood. She was a kindhearted spirit. She would do anything for anybody. Her children were her everything." In a statement, Special School District spokeswoman Jennifer Henry said, "All of us at SSD are saddened to learn of the tragic death of Charese Garvin and her daughter. Ms. Garvin joined the SSD family in August 2019 and was currently working as a paraprofessional in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. Our thoughts are with her family and her school community during this very difficult time." Garvin's family set up a [GoFundMe](#) for her surviving children, Tailse, 6, and Tyrese, 4. Few neighbors said Saturday they knew Garvin or her daughter Alayah. A neighbor, Adelaide Beiser, 39, said Garvin kept mostly to herself. "The neighbors on this street are pretty friendly," Beiser said. Beiser said she hears gunshots, occasionally, but not in the immediate area. Karen Nelson, 60, said she's had someone try to kick in her door once, but otherwise the neighborhood is peaceful. She lives around the corner from the address on Lakeside Lane, on Garden Lane. "It's crazy; that stuff doesn't go on around here," she said, looking down the street in disbelief. "We got our problems, but nothing like that." Six other homicides have occurred in the Spanish Lake area this year, according to the [Post-Dispatch homicide map](#). Spanish Lake is home to about 17,500 people, according to the latest census estimates. Anyone with information is asked to contact St. Louis County Police at 636-529-8210, or call CrimeStoppers anonymously at 866-371-8477.

2010 EHS alum

Fine arts teachers help the show go on during the pandemic

Students and alumni from **Hazelwood East middle and high schools** watched videos of choral director Robert Swingler teaching them to sing his original composition, “Mama — A Performance in Remembrance of George Floyd.” Floyd called out “Mama” as he died at the hands of Minneapolis police last May.

“He said it on one pitch, and I took that pitch and wrote the song,” Swingler said. “I was probably at that table anywhere from four to five hours into the next morning writing down the words that came to me, writing down the music, and to tell you the truth, I never want to be inspired like this again.” Swingler’s students used a program called Flipgrid to submit their parts of the performance, and Swingler edited them together. It took more than 100 hours to produce the four minute, 30-second video, he said.

The [video was shown](#) at a Hazelwood School Board meeting this month and has been viewed more than 2,000 times on the district’s website and social media.

“Music does so much for us, the arts in general does so much for us,” Swingler said. “I hope that this song and this performance are all part of a solution to something we’re all grasping for.”

Rule changes allow church to provide additional meals



New Hope Fellowship first started supplying meals to children through the USDA programs in October 2017.

At that time, New Hope Fellowship was sponsored by a different church and served three school districts in the area. In October 2018, however, New Hope Fellowship began working with the programs independently, and the next month it expanded the number of food distribution sites and started sponsoring other churches in the federal programs, Braswell said.

“It has grown from there,” she said.

New Hope Fellowship now serves meals at the Northwest School District’s High Ridge and House Springs elementary schools; Grandview R-2’s middle school; Richwoods R-7’s elementary school; and Meramec Valley R-3 School District’s Pacific Intermediate and Truman and Robertsville elementary schools; as well as the Peace Pantry in Cedar Hill for the Northwest District; **the Garage Sale Store in Florissant for the Hazelwood School District**; the Reach St. Louis Church for the Ritenour School District; the Melvin Theater for the St. Louis School District; the Potosi First Baptist Church for the Potosi School District; Grace Assembly of God for the Ferguson-Florissant School District; and sites for the Bismarck and Bunker school districts, Braswell said.

Helen Marie Frederick



Helen Marie Frederick died at AdventHealth hospital on December 14, 2020, at the age of 91. Helen was born on December 31, 1928 to Carl and Lillian Bruning Hess. She graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia with a Bachelor of Journalism degree in 1950. She married Arthur C. Frederick II on April 25, 1953. After raising her children, Helen pursued a career in education. She graduated from SIU with a B.S. in Education and then earned an M.S. in Education from UMSL. **She taught elementary school in the Hazelwood School District**, ending her career teaching in the gifted program, which she loved. Helen will be remembered for her sense of humor, dedication to her family and a lifelong love of learning. She is preceded in death by her husband, Arthur Frederick II and her sister, Doris English. Survivors include her son, Arthur Frederick III (Kathy) of Wildwood, MO; daughter, Amy Vranicar (Jim) of Shawnee, KS; grandchildren, Arthur Frederick IV (Julie); Anna Head (Chris); Abbey Frederick and Jonathan Vranicar and two great-grandchildren, Madeline Head and Finnian Frederick. **Services:** A private service will be held at a later date with interment at Wright City Cemetery.

THE Pathway

Hazelwood church meets need in annual Christmas giveaway, despite COVID-19



HAZELWOOD – Hazelwood church volunteers prep food boxes to be distributed to needy families during the church's Lifelines Christmas Giveaway event. Photo supplied by Hazelwood Baptist Church. (Photo courtesy of Hazelwood Baptist Church.)

HAZELWOOD – Each December, Hazelwood Church members look forward to ministering to their needy neighbors through the church's Lifelines Christmas Giveaway. The event supplies physical needs but also addresses individuals' spiritual needs for Christ. Participants receive the Gospel message when they come to pick up needed clothing or toys. On Saturday, Dec. 5, the giveaway served 60 families through its toy and coat distribution, which included approximately 150 children. Church member Ginny Willey leads the church's Lifelines ministry that hosts the giveaway. "The purpose is to bless our community with material things while offering them Jesus when they come to pick up their packages." Lead Pastor Jim Walker explained that the event's number one priority "is always to share Christ's love and message of salvation" with every participant. This year there was at least one known profession of faith during the event. In previous years the giveaway had up to 100 volunteers for a walk-through event in the church building. In addition to receiving various items each family or individual also spent time with a counselor where prayer and a Gospel presentation were offered. Willey said the church has seen "several people receive Christ as their savior through the years and many... are now part of the ministry." Due to COVID-19 this year's event used about 30 volunteers and a drive-thru process. However, each recipient still spent time with counselors who connected with them by telephone. "After people were checked in they were able to pick up a box of food items donated by the Missouri Food Bank," said Walker. "They were then instructed to go to a certain parking spot" and spiritual encouragers called each car. "We had some great conversations with people," Walker said. "We were able to pray about specific needs, encourage people in their faith, and one lady professed her faith for the very first time over the phone." After the calls volunteers took age appropriate new or lightly used toys, coats, hats and scarves to each participating family. Items were donated by church members, with some contributing handmade items. "Our desire is that everyone gets a personal touch of encouragement," Walker explained. "We seek to share love, encouragement, prayer, and the message of Jesus with everyone who participates." To get the word out about the event the church **contacted social workers in the Hazelwood School District** who referred families. Social media, flyers and yard signs have also been used. Another Lifelines community ministry is an August back-to-school giveaway of backpacks filled with necessary school supplies. "At the end of each event, we, the volunteers, are the ones who are so blessed," Willey said. "If one person receives Christ, it is all worth it."