

National Council of Negro Women helps college-bound students

Bertha Black Rhoda Section gives school and dorm supplies in 'Legacy Trunk'

By Sandra Jordan
Of The St. Louis American

Seven incoming college freshmen have many of the supplies they need to move into their dormitories, thanks to members of the Bertha Black Rhoda Section of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in St. Louis.

At its ninth annual Legacy Trunk Presentation Luncheon, held June 8 at the Orlando Garden's Event Center in Maryland Heights, the seven young women were each presented with a trunk of supplies valued between \$400-\$500, including bedding, rugs, cleaning supplies and a gift card for personal items. The items were donated by NCNW members and purchased through a grant by the Zonta Club of St. Louis.

The seven awardees were nominated by their school counselors. NCNW rotates high schools each year. Once accepted, the students have three NCNW events to attend – a meet and greet where the young ladies meet the NCNW women who mentor them over the course of their senior year; a college preparation day, where the students learn about studying, health and safety and budgeting; and the Legacy Trunk Luncheon.

"A wonderful black woman named Georgette Banks took me shopping for my trunk and school supplies just before I started college," said Lisa Johnson Haire, president of the NCNW Bertha Black Rhoda

Section. "She saw how hard I worked and wanted to see me flourish. Being prepared and having someone else's support was just what I needed at that time. I am forever grateful to her. Being a part of NCNW Bertha Black Rhoda Section and our Legacy Trunk Program has given me the opportunity to pay it forward to others. I hope others will do the same in the future, making it a true legacy."

All but one of this year's Legacy Trunk recipients plan to pursue higher education locally.

Deja Austell, an Incarnate Word Academy graduate, will attend Fontbonne University to pursue a degree in social work. Austell's NCNW mentors are Karen Banks and Tracee Lewis.

Shakira Bent, a Riverview Gardens High School graduate, will attend Lincoln University to earn a degree in elementary education. Bent's NCNW mentors are Gayle Jackson-Evans and DeNisa McGraw.

Gabrielle Brown, a Normandy High School graduate, will attend the University of Missouri-St. Louis to pursue a degree in computer science. Brown's NCNW mentors are Ruth Jamison Banks and Claudia Dillworth-Turner.

Breana Lee, a Hazelwood East High School graduate, will attend Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, to pursue a degree in nursing. Lee's NCNW mentors are Sharron Burroughs and Lisa Johnson Haire.



Photo by Karen Banks

2019 National Council of Negro Women Bertha Black Rhoda Section Legacy Trunk mentees Shawanda Martin, Breana Lee, Deja Austell, Shakira Bent, Gabrielle Brown, Shyann Sampson and Annika Williams

Shawanda Martin, a Jennings High School graduate, will attend the University of Missouri-St. Louis to earn a degree in computer science. Martin's NCNW mentors are Ckarla Banks and Sandra Murdock.

Shyann Sampson, a McCluer South Berkley High School graduate, will attend Berea College in Kentucky to earn a degree in nursing. Sampson's NCNW mentors are Deborah Baker-Dukes and Carolyn Creswell.

Annika Williams, a University City High School graduate, will attend St. Louis Community College, to pursue

a degree in neonatal nursing. Her NCNW mentors are Laura Mabry and Stella Hughes.

Mistress of Ceremonies Ruth Jamison Banks said many mentees and mentors stay in touch throughout their higher education journey.

Luncheon guest speaker was motivational speaker and millennial Kendra Elaine, who encouraged the young adults by letting them know that what they want out in life is available to them – but they must put in the work to achieve it and stay focused on their goals.

"Know and own your power" is what Elaine said she

would have told her younger self on that same journey. "You really have the power to create the kind of life that you want and the legacy that you want."

She said after going from being a youngster with almost no control, in college she was in control of almost everything and kind of got lost in all that power and focused on the wrong things – like where she went or what time she got up.

"If I could go back, I would focus on the power to really control my life – make choices and plan for my future and be more strategic with where I want to go," Elaine said. That is, having an idea of what you

want to be, where you want to go, and how you can get there.

"I think the best way to do that is to always have a northern star – have something that you're working toward – understanding, for you, what does success mean to you?"

She suggested journaling and taking time to think about what a successful life would look like for them, beyond material things.

"That way, when you go throughout your life and you come against those difficult times that are going to come up during college and come up during life, you have that goal that is going to keep you focused and keep you steady in where you are going," Elaine said.

"There are going to be a lot of things that knock us off our path, and they're going to try to distract you and take you away from what you're trying to do. But when you have that solid vision of what you want for your life, it's easier to stay focused. It's easier to remove those things that are not in line with the vision that you want for your life."

The trunk committee members are Karen Banks, Ckarla Banks, Ruth Banks, Debora Baker Dukes, Gail Jackson Evans, Lisa Johnson Haire and Laura Mabry.

For more information about membership in the Bertha Black Rhoda Section of the National Council of Negro Women or its mentoring program, email ncnwbbbr@gmail.com.

Breana Lee
EHS 2019 Graduate

COMMUNITY NEWS

Hazelwood School District Board of Education Recognized by MSBA

The Missouri School Boards' Association recognized the Hazelwood School District Board of Education with the 2019 Governance Team Award.

The HSD Board of Education is one of only 33 school boards in Missouri to earn the award, presented June 8 during the MSBA Leadership Summit in St. Charles.

The Governance Team Award is given to school boards that show commitment to ongoing professional development in areas such as student achievement, school law and finance, board operations, and contemporary issues in education.

It also recognizes the board's commitment to regional and state-wide leadership and to active participation in legislative advocacy for public schools and the students it serves.

"I am immensely proud of the dedication each of my fellow board members has shown to the students in our district," Board President Mark Behlmann said. "Each individual is committed to professional growth and the opportunity to work together as we lead our students, staff, and schools. It is a privilege to serve our students and community and we look forward to another exemplary school year in the Hazelwood School District."

The Hazelwood School District Board of Education is comprised of: President Mark J. Behlmann, Vice President Dr. Brenda C. Youngblood, Secretary Cheryl D. Latham, Treasurer Diane Livingston, and board directors Margo McNeil, Betsy Rachel, and Dr. Zella Williams.



Photo courtesy Hazelwood School District

The Hazelwood School District Board of Education President Mark J. Behlmann (left) and Treasurer Diane Livingston with the Missouri School Boards' Association 2019 Governance Team Award.

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Board President **Mark Behlmann** and Treasurer **Diane Livingston** with their award June 8 at the MSBA Leadership Summit

More than 20 fourth-grade students are spending part of their summer learning about the farm-to-table process from volunteers at the Seeds of Hope Farm in Spanish Lake.

Larimore Students Learn Farm-to-Table Lessons Through Seeds of Hope Farm

Students at Larimore Elementary School are learning about the science behind what they eat and how it can help a community. More than 20 fourth-grade students are spending part of their summer school coursework learning about the farm-to-table process from volunteers at the Seeds of Hope Farm in Spanish Lake.

Seeds of Hope Farm helps increase access to

affordable, fresh produce through community-supported agriculture, along with supporting community garden groups and providing education. The hands-on science lessons include measuring plants and understanding how they grow and learning about soil types and what supports growth.

Many of the volunteers are UMSL students who provide the lesson plans and lead the

hands-on demonstrations.

Students help plant a variety of vegetables and will help harvest the crops later in the summer.

As part of their last day of summer school, students and Seeds of Hope volunteers will use part of the harvest to prepare a meal for the class to enjoy, while the rest is provided to the community. Seeds of Hope Farm is a project of the non-profit Community Action Agency of St. Louis County.



Seeds of Hope food share makes fresh food more accessible



Fitting squash, scallions, beans and beets in a 2-foot cardboard box is no trouble. But adding in an outside head of napa cabbage? That's where the system starts to break down. Jen Loui of [Seeds of Hope farm](#) arranges and rearranges the produce to accommodate the cabbage's crinkly leaves, but they are just too prolific. Jake Smith, the farm manager, tells the small assembly line of volunteers that the cabbage will have to be bagged separately. Smith oversees the community-supported agriculture farm behind St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Spanish Lake. Throughout the growing season, two to three dozen different crops will be harvested from the three-quarters-acre lot donated by the church. Seeds of Hope takes a unique approach to the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, which typically involves customers purchasing a subscription for a regular yield of a farm's offerings. Each Seeds of Hope farm box has a market price of about \$20; sponsors pay \$28 to subsidize shares for low-income members. For members with incomes at less than 125% of the federal poverty level — about \$32,000 a year for a family of four — an income-tiered share costs \$12. The Double Up Food Bucks program for food stamp recipients can bring that down to \$10. The farm is one of 22 projects under the umbrella of the [Community Action Agency](#) of St. Louis County, a federally funded organization focused on ending poverty. It started in 2012 as a way to "increase physical accessibility and economic access to fresh food," said Randy Tempel, the community garden coordinator. In Spanish Lake, 19% of residents fall below the poverty line, though CSA members who buy subsidized farm shares can be from any part of St. Louis County. Each Thursday from late May to late October, customers can pick up their boxes at the farm or the Community Action Agency in Overland. Tempel also drops off several sponsor boxes for employees of the Missouri Botanical Garden. The nonprofit farm partners with the University of Missouri-St. Louis to host cooking classes and community dinners at nearby Bethany-Peace United Church of Christ. UMSL also works with the [Hazelwood School District](#) to take students on field trips to learn about small-scale farming. "It's a way to pair production and education and increase supply and demand at the same time," Tempel said. "If people know more about fresh fruits and vegetables, they'll demand them more often." Zora Guthrie already requests carrots for snacks at home. The 6-year-old also is a cabbage fan. "It's so sweet," she said Wednesday as she helped her grandmother, Deborah Lewis, clean and package vegetables. Zora has been accompanying Lewis to the farm all summer. She has the routine down: "After we pull the plants out of the dirt, we wash them and put them in the bags. Then we wash our hands." Zora and her mother live in the same North County apartment complex as Lewis, and the three generations share a food box. As a regular volunteer, Lewis receives hers for free. "We juice now," said Lewis. "Arugula, grapes, Fuji apples. It makes me feel so good." She has always included fruits and vegetables in her diet, but the convenience of Seeds of Hope makes it easier to try new things. The farm also tries to respond to what clients want. This year, that means growing green tomatoes through a special project funded by a \$25,000 grant from the Missouri Department of Agriculture. The money allowed Loui to join Tempel and Smith on staff. Neighbors had been requesting the unripened nightshade, said Smith, who has managed Seeds of Hope for three years. "We're always trying to grow things that people around here want. We're always evolving." Dedicating space to the green tomatoes has limited the number of weekly shares to 30, down from about three dozen. But it was a tradeoff the farm was willing to make. "There is a growing awareness that good food should be available to everybody," Loui said. "We need to start addressing the issue by putting green spaces in our communities, making small farms part of the community." The grants for specialty crops — which include most fruits and vegetables, except corn and soybeans — were awarded to 11 organizations across the state this year. It's about finding new ways to help a specialty crop thrive and developing farming techniques to grow a specialty crop that will be marketable," said Liz Roberts, the grants manager with the Missouri Department of Agriculture. "We were really intrigued with what (Seeds of Hope) wanted to do," said Roberts, who recently toured the farm. "Part of our initiative is to get more agricultural products into the hands of more people." The green tomatoes will be included in the food shares and sold at markets such as Local Harvest and the Ferguson Farmers Market. They aren't quite ready yet, but that's not likely to be noticed with last week's bounty, which weighed in at about 13 pounds a share. After the boxes were packed, Tempel slid a flyer under each lid, explaining what was inside and how it could be used. Six-year-old Zora doesn't need the suggestions. She already knows what to do. "I like to blend stuff, like salads," she said. "I like to eat different foods."

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