



MENU



NEWS

WEATHER

WATCHING OUT 4 YOU

TRAFFIC

GREAT DAY

HAZELWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT DIRECTOR

100% Of Precincts Reporting

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-----|
| BRENDA C YOUNGBLOOD ✓ | 7,106 | 40% |
| MARK J BEHLMANN | 5,522 | 31% |
| MARGO McNEIL | 5,311 | 30% |

IN UNISON Scholars program helps students find their way in the world of music



UMSL alumna Michelle Byrd (at left) serves as the coordinator of the IN UNISON Scholars program, a strategic initiative of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra that provides up to six scholarships for African American UMSL students studying in a music-related field. Cellist and aspiring conductor David Brown (center) and vocalist Alayna Epps, who is pursuing a career in music therapy, were among this year's scholarship recipients. (Photo by August Jennewein)

Being an IN UNISON Scholar has expanded the network he can tap for help pursuing that future. The [IN UNISON Chorus](#) – created by longtime [UMSL Professor Robert Ray](#) and administered by the symphony – aims to encourage diversity in the arts. The scholarship program became an extension of it and supports young African American students pursuing undergraduate degrees in music-related fields at UMSL. IN [UNISON Coordinator Michelle Byrd](#) works in consultation with faculty and administrators in the [Department of Music](#) as well as with high school music teachers to identify students and invite them to apply. The symphony provides renewable \$1,000 annual scholarships, which UMSL matches. “I have visited high schools to clinic choirs and met with band and orchestra directors to get a feel for their students and to see who they may have,” Byrd says. Senior [Alayna Epps](#), a vocalist who has performed with [Stevie Wonder](#) and at [Carnegie Hall](#), wants to go into music therapy, and IN UNISON introduced her to a network of people who could help her get accepted into a top master’s program in that specialized field. IN UNISON also has given Epps confidence and people she can turn to for support to overcome challenges she’s had as an undergraduate. Growing up in Florissant and attending [Hazelwood Central High School](#), Epps didn’t have as many opportunities or receive the same training as students from more affluent schools. She initially struggled with sight-reading and music theory. Epps has seen other African American students from similar backgrounds end up changing to different majors, but she’s persisted. “It’s provided me a foundation to pursue my career,” Epps says. “If they’re willing to pour this much into me, I know I can get through this program.” **Read the complete article at <https://blogs.umsl.edu/news/2020/06/02/unison-scholars/>**

COMMUNITY NEWS

One of the many creative ways school districts are recognized graduates of the Class of 2020 includes displaying their names and pictures on billboards

By Charlotte Beard

Childhood for 2020 high school graduates began with societal changes in norms due to the events of 9/11 and their recent commencement has undergone changes due to COVID-19. It is only normal for these graduates to experience unusual accolades for their educational accomplishment.

Beginning May 18, high school graduates from nine districts were honored with their images in cap and gown on digital billboards courtesy of DDI Media throughout St. Louis County. Those displays will continue through June 8.

DDI Media states that under normal circumstances the cost for digital displays range approximately \$800 to \$1,200 per week depending on the location of the ad-

vertisement. According to LaTricia Clark, a Normandy Schools Collaborative (NSC) Instructional Coach, an estimated 5,000 students or more are displayed on the billboards. The students represent the following school districts: Normandy, Ritenour, Maplewood-Richmond Heights, Hazelwood, Jennings, University City, Ferguson-Florissant, Riverview Gardens and St. Louis Public Schools.

The idea to have the students displayed on billboards in lieu of not being able to walk across the stage to receive a diploma originated with Clark's endeavor to honor the graduating seniors at Normandy High School. Clark states that she decided to use her connection with DDI Media's Media Sales Manager to see what she could ac-

complish.

"I reached out to Matt Gamache to see if they would be willing to donate billboard space to a school or two in the region," Clark explained. "We scaled the project; we didn't intend for it to be as large as it is, but I'm glad we were able to serve these districts and collaborate. It was a great labor of love."

When Gamache was asked what motivated him and DDI Media to get involved in the collaboration, he stated, "It is unfortunate what all these seniors, across the country, are missing out on and it's a shame. So, when LaTricia reached out, I thought it would be a great way for DDI Media to help

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Hazelwood School District to hold virtual graduation events

The Hazelwood School District has partnered with Vego Pictures to provide a virtual graduation event for each of its three high schools.

The Los Angeles-based company specializes in livestreams and digital productions and has worked with major broadcasts and brands including American Idol, Mountain Dew, and Old Spice.

The events are tentatively scheduled for June 13, and will consist of a custom website built for each school where students and parents can log in on the day of the event.

Virtual graduation will include livestreamed speeches from students, individual recognition of each graduate, and a chat feature allowing participants to cheer and talk to one another.

"I'm so proud of our senior class and the perse-

verance they've shown over the last several weeks," said HSD Superintendent Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart. "By partnering with Vego, we're able to provide a memorable experience that will honor their achievements and celebrate graduation despite unusual circumstances. We look forward to the community joining us in celebrating our seniors."

All attendees can be sent a digital recording of the event as well.

Hazelwood high school administrators and staff are working with Vego Pictures on producing the graduation events, and the district is excited to honor the Class of 2020 with a unique and customized event for each high school.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Hazelwood Science Curriculum Coordinator named 2020 Educator of the Year

Dr. Christina Hughes has been named the 2020 Educator of the Year by the St. Louis Association of Secondary School Principals. Dr. Hughes currently is the Science Curriculum Coordinator for the Hazelwood School District.

Photo courtesy Hazelwood School District



COMMUNITY NEWS

Two Hazelwood schools named schools of character

Brown Elementary School and Cold Water Elementary School in the Hazelwood School District have both been named National Schools of Character by Character.org.

The schools are among only 84 in the nation to receive the distinction.

“The students and staff at Brown and Cold Water continue to make our district proud by ensuring students develop strong character values as part of their time in the classroom,” HSD Superintendent Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart.

“This recognition is a testament to the wonderful learning environments both schools have created. I am thrilled for everyone who played a part in earning this honor.”

Schools become a ‘School of Character’ by implementing comprehensive strategies that help students understand and consistently practice core character values such as respect, responsibility, and integrity.