

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## NCI awards community leaders for making a difference in North County

North County Incorporated (NCI) will recognize local leaders for their contributions to the North County region at its 45th Annual Leadership Breakfast on May 6 from 7:30 – 9:30 a.m. at the Marriott St. Louis Airport. More than 550 business, civic, and community leaders attend this celebration annually. Sponsorship packages are still available. More information can be found at [NorthSt-LouisCounty.com](http://NorthSt-LouisCounty.com).

“Celebrating champions of North County is always an honor. We are excited to recognize the many dedicated people, businesses, and organizations working to improve our community, better the lives of others, and advance the local economy,” said NCI President and CEO, Rebecca Zoll.

### 2022 NCI Leadership Award Honorees

#### Business Development Leadership Award

- Beyond Housing’s Carter Commons Development
- Nyshaun Harvey, Business Owner, North County

#### Community Development Leadership Award

- Angie’s All-Inclusive Playground at Manion Park
- The Bread Basket at SSM Health DePaul Hospital
- Pattonville Fire Protection District COVID Response Partnership

- Nancy Wolff, Executive Director, The Emergency Assistance Ministry
- Mercy Clinic in Ferguson
- Rose Jackson-Beavers, Director of Faith-Based Initiative, Behavioral Health Network

#### Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Leadership Award

- Hazelwood School District Board of Education

#### Elmer Belsha Leadership Award

- Rick Stevens, President, Christian Hospital

#### Public Service Leadership Award

- Joe Eagan, Councilperson, City of Florissant
- James Knowles III, former Mayor, City of Ferguson
- Tony Maldonado, Chairperson, Hispanic Leaders Group
- Carol Stroker, Councilperson, City of Hazelwood
- Jim Carver, Economic Development Manager, City of Maryland Heights
- Pamela Westbrook-Hodge, Advocate, North County

#### Special Recognition Award

- St. Louis Metropolitan Pandemic Task Force
- St. Louis County Library’s GrandPad Initiative

## Wentzville School District hires first woman superintendent



WENTZVILLE — Danielle Tormala has been named superintendent of the Wentzville School District starting July 1.

Tormala replaces 2022 national superintendent of the year Curtis Cain, who has led the district since 2013 and has taken the top job in the Rockwood School District.

The announcement from the Wentzville School Board comes one week before local elections when voters will select two members for open seats on the seven-member board.

Tormala is the first woman and 19th superintendent to lead Wentzville schools, one of the fastest growing districts in the state. She is associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction at the City of St. Charles School District, where she has worked since 2006.

“I am thrilled to join the Wentzville School District by continuing to serve students throughout St. Charles County,” Tormala said in a statement. “As the Wentzville superintendent, I look forward to working alongside the staff and community by building upon WSD’s strong foundation to ensure that Wentzville becomes a recognized leader of excellence in education for strong educational programming and the ability to meet the unique needs of our students and community.”

Tormala started her career as an elementary school teacher in the **Hazelwood School District**. She has held various administrative positions in the St. Charles and Francis Howell school districts and been an adjunct professor at Maryville and Lindenwood universities. She has a bachelor's degree from St. Louis University, and master's and doctorate degrees from Maryville in educational leadership.

“Dr. Tormala brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to our District,” said Betsy Bates, Wentzville School Board president, in a statement. “She has a proven history of driving student achievement in her current role, and we look forward to seeing her grow that vision on a larger scale. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Tormala to the WSD family.”

# Sultan: Will Smith sent a message with that slap

Our 17-year-old son has no interest in the Oscars, but he rushed into the room where I was watching the awards show to confirm the reports that took over his social media feed.

“Did Will Smith really punch Chris Rock?” he asked.

It was more like a slap, I said. It was an awful response to a bad joke, I added.

I was still trying to process what millions of us had just witnessed on the live telecast. Rock was about to present the award for best documentary when he said to Smith’s wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, that he couldn’t wait to see her in “G.I. Jane 2.”

It’s an act of violence. We teach toddlers to “use their words” when they feel big emotions like anger, frustration and hurt. Parents of Black and brown boys in this country know that lesson is even more urgent for our sons.

Those who lack the protection of superstar fame and wealth don’t get standing ovations after they hit someone. They get suspended from school. Or they get sent to jail. Or in places like Missouri, where anyone could be carrying a gun at any time, they get shot.

While the Oscars ceremony continued seamlessly after this fracas, I thought about a scuffle that happened last summer at West County Mall in Des Peres. Jason Hill, a 2018 graduate of Cleveland Junior Naval Academy and by all reports an upstanding, law-abiding 21-year-old, fatally shot 20-year-old Malachi Maclin on July 3 inside a Champs store. A **grand jury found** he had acted in self-defense after Maclin made a threatening comment and punched Hill in the face.

The young men did not know each other. It might have been a case of mistaken identity.

Maclin’s father, Lonnie Maclin, had told the Post-Dispatch that his son, who graduated in 2019 from **Hazelwood Central High School**, had a job delivering auto parts and dreams of playing professional baseball.

I’ve thought about those young men a lot since that incident. A young man’s life lost — for what?

Those who are part of my generation likely remember the fights that would break out over insults, perceived and real, when we were growing up. More often than not, a few punches were thrown, and it was over.

That’s not the world our children live in. They shop and work and study in places where slapping someone carries the risk of getting shot.

Clearly, that’s not Will Smith’s reality.

# Boys volleyball season preview notebook: St. Pius X, Hazelwood West among five new programs



The perseverance of St. Pius X senior Joseph Lehn paid off.

Lehn has been trying to spearhead the creation of a Lancers boys volleyball team since he stepped on campus as a freshman. He finally found a coach in Maura Rabun.

“He came to me at the beginning of the school year and was like, ‘Do you want to do this,’ because he knew I played in college and I played at Lutheran South,” Rabun said.

St. Pius is one of five schools that is a newcomer to the varsity boys volleyball scene this spring in Missouri along with **Hazelwood West**, Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience, Soldan and Saxony Lutheran in Jackson. That brings the total of teams to 47, just three shy of the minimum needed to move from club sport to being officially sanctioned and managed by the Missouri State High School Activities Association.

**Hazelwood West coach Michael Vaughn** will field an 11-member varsity squad, with another 13 players on JV. It is a restart for the Wildcats program, which originally was disbanded about 20 years ago.