



US Police Charge Man Who Killed Promising Liberian Teen In Missouri

Police in Missouri, the United States, have charged 21-year-old Jordan Beck with first-degree murder, first-degree burglary, and armed criminal action, for allegedly killing a Liberian teen in Florissant. The suspect is now in police custody but the circumstances that led to the shooting of 18-year-old Celia Kollie are yet unclear.

However, the mother of the victim, Kebeh Kollie, told the Liberia News Agency via mobile phone that Jordan dated her daughter, but the teen later called off the relationship “because he was dishonest and not willing to go to school.”

In her account, Kebbeh said the man intruded their home on Monday afternoon as she was getting ready for work, while her daughter had just returned from school.

“I saw the man fearfully entering the house from the back door, and I shouted: Celia we’ve got to run! ...and we ran different directions,” she further explained.

Kebbeh added: “I was trying to call the police when I heard my daughter crying and begging the man not to kill her.”

In the event, she noted, “I heard gunfire only to later discover that my daughter was shot and the man escaped the scene even though he was later arrested by the police.”

New data ranks Missouri sixth in U.S. for gun death rate, including intentional and accidental shootings.

The report indicated that 1,307 Missourians died from gunshot wounds in 2017, an increase over the previous year.

Celia travelled to the United States with her parents through the Diversity Visa (DV) program in October 2012. While in Liberia, she attended the ELWA Academy in Paynesville.

The girl, who is said to be fully devoted to her studies, was now a college student, having graduated from the Hazelwood West High School in Florissant, her mother said on Thursday.

NOTE: She was a 2018 WHS graduation. She currently has two siblings In the district, one at Russell, Wundaneh Kollie and another at WHS, Jallah Kollie.

Students earn scholarships to Build Our Future

By St. Louis American Staff

The Construction Career Development Initiative presented full-tuition scholarships on April 1 to nine seniors who are in the first graduating class of CCDI, which seeks to bring diversity to the design and construction industry by mentoring and exposing minority, underrepresented and under-employed men and women to career development in construction. Each Build Our Future Scholarship is tailored to the individual student's needs and will cover each student's full tuition and book costs each year as they pursue an associate's or bachelor's degree.

The scholarship candidate application process required personal essays, letters of recommendation and in-person interviews with the CCDI Education Committee. Additionally, each recipient has dedicated two to three years to the program learning about the construction industry by attending monthly Saturday Academy sessions, job shadowing, volunteering and building a relationship with their mentors. The 2019 Build Our Future Scholarship recipients include:

Divine Adelman, Ritenour High School, who plans to attend St. Charles Community College/ Missouri State in Construction Management. Divine's mentor is Jim Dearduff of Clayco; Jordan Coleman, Jennings Senior High School, who plans to attend St. Louis Community College as an Apprentice Scholar. Jordan's mentor is Morris Hervey of TSi Geotechnical; DaKolby Crittenden-Brown, Clayton High School, who plans to attend St. Louis Community College/Missouri State in Construction Management. DaKolby's mentor is Trevor Becherer of Clayco; Brandon Fain, Ritenour High School, who plans to attend St. Louis Community College/UMSL, UMSL/Washington University Joint Engineering Program. Brandon's mentor is Larry Zelenovich, of PayneCrest; Geraldine Flores,



Ritenour High School, who plans to major in Architecture. Her mentor is Debbie Thomas of Clayco; De-Hon Mull, Jennings Senior High School, who plans to attend St. Louis Community College as an Apprentice Scholar. De-Hon's mentor is Tommy Davis II, of TD4

Electrical; Domonique Nelson, Jennings Senior High School, who plans to attend Missouri University of Science & Technology in Computer Engineering. Domonique's mentor is Christopher Sellers at Jennings H.S.; Jeremy Walker, North Technical/Riverview Gardens

H.S. who plans to attend Missouri Western in Construction Management. Jeremy's mentor is Byron Layne of North Technical H.S.; and Makel Winston, North Technical/ Hazelwood West H.S. who plans to attend Mineral Area College in Construction Management. Makel's

Each Build Our Future Scholarship is tailored to the individual student's needs and will cover each student's full tuition and book costs each year as they pursue an associate's or bachelor's degree.

mentor is Patrick Hanneken of North Technical H.S.

As newly graduating students enter the workforce, CCDI and their mentors offer continuous support. "There is nothing more important to the CCDI mission than job placement upon graduation. The relationships enjoyed by Clayco and our partnering firms will help open multiple opportunities for each graduate," said Tom Sieckhaus, executive vice president, Corporate Business Unit at Clayco. "It is also critical that we help the retention of this new talent in our industry, even after they have landed their first job."

The Build Our Future Scholarships are made possible with annual donations from local businesses and subcontractors in the St. Louis community.

CCDI would like team with new partners to expand its reach into elementary and middle schools. "We would like to help support more hands-on learning in schools through MakerSpace labs, STEM enrichment programs, and earlier exposure to career technical education (CTE)," Sieckhaus added. "By introducing the opportunities within the construction field to children at an earlier age, we will have time to better guide and prepare them for entering the industry."

For more information about CCDI, email rachelboemer@ccdi.org or visit its website at www.ccdi.org.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Valley of Flowers Festival



57th Valley of Flowers Festival Celebrates the Florissant Valley Fire Protection District's 100th anniversary

<https://mycnews.com/st-louis-county/>

St. Louis County Community News
St. Charles County
O'Fallon, MO
Circulation: 30,000
Frequency: Weekly
Apr 30, 2019

COMMUNITY NEWS



Valley of Flowers 2019



"Valley of Flowers Celebrates 57 Years of Festivals"

QUEEN CANDIDATES



Isabella Barbaglia
Incazco Wood Academy
Sponsored by
Citizens National Bank



Megan Battles
Parkway North High School
Sponsored by
Knights of Columbus Council
2012



Sarah Bennett
Hazelwood West High School
Sponsored by
Harrison Valley Fire
Protection District



Alaina Cribbett
Marquette Catholic High
School
Sponsored by
Sacred Heart Catholic Church



Hannah Crowder
Hazelwood West High School
Sponsored by
Greater North County
Chamber of Commerce



Karina DeFour
McClure North High School
Sponsored by
New World Bar & Grill



Lauren Ebert
Beaumont High School
Sponsored by
Festivals & Events Club



Grace Gettemeier
Incazco Wood Academy
Sponsored by
Knapptonline Video
Hardware, Inc.



Meagan Hogan
Hazelwood West High School
Sponsored by
Marty Casella Chrysler Dodge
Jeep Ram



Chloe Hoth
Duckman High School
Sponsored by
Paul Ciccone Auto Group



Amanda Kolbo
McClure North High School
Sponsored by
McStar & Restaurant



Lexy Kosticki
Incazco Wood Academy
Sponsored by
WHPool 400



Kaylin O'Keefe
Hazelwood West High School
Sponsored by
Old Town District



Natalie Patrick
Incazco Wood Academy
Sponsored by
Washed Carpet



Raigan Reynolds
McClure North High School
Sponsored by
North County Chamber
Building for Racial Harmony
and Justice



Sara Schonk
Duckman High School
Sponsored by
Stair Lanes Agency
Silver Wood



Alise Sestro
Beaumont High School
Sponsored by
Blonde Cream Services



Alayna Snelling
Hazelwood West High School
Sponsored by
Commercial Bank



Amelie Stevens
Trinity Catholic High School
Sponsored by
Bayle Lane Film LLC



VALLEY from cover

and of course mouth-watering food everywhere.

The Grand Parade on Sunday, May 5, the highlight of the weekend, leads to the crowning of the Valley of Flowers Queen and Court at the Duchesne Home Association Pavilion (formerly called the Knights of Columbus Pavilion). The parade with more than 100 units features mobile units departing from the James J. Pappas Center at 1:45 p.m. Decorated vehicles and floats proceed west on Parker Road to New Florissant Road where marching units and the marching bands merge with them. The parade travels south on

New Florissant, turns west on rue St. Francis past the official review stands, then left on St. Ferdinand to Washington Street and concludes at the Duchesne Home Association Fairgrounds.

The parade theme is the "Florissant Valley Fire Protection District's 100th Anniversary," so decorations on floats and signs reflect this theme. Participating in the parade are many city officials, local municipal emergency responder vehicles, the Valley of Flowers reigning queen and court and this year's 19 candidates, car



See "VALLEY" page 6

2019 Valley of Flowers Queen Court

Photo courtesy: DM

St. Louis County Community News
St. Charles County
O'Fallon, MO
Circulation: 30,000
Frequency: Weekly
Apr 30, 2019

COMMUNITY NEWS

Hazelwood West High School senior accepted into 22 universities

Decisions, decisions.

Hazelwood West High School senior Gracemary Nganga is like many of her peers this time of year, as she weighs her options and chooses where to attend college.

What sets Nganga apart, though, is the fact her decision might be a little tougher.

How could it not be when you have 22 schools from which to choose?

Throughout the course of her senior year, Nganga has received acceptance letters from almost two dozen different schools.

"I just really wanted options when it came to school and to make sure I could compare things like aid, support, resources, and I applied to a variety of different schools," she said.

The names of the schools are as impressive as the number itself, including: Stanford, Yale, Washington University, Notre Dame, Emory, Oxford College of Emory, USC, Duke, Spelman College, Xavier in Louisiana, Franklin and Marshall, Pomona, Claremont McKenna, Hamilton, Swarthmore, Bowdoin, Grinnell, Saint Louis University, UMKC, Mizzou, DePaul, and UMSL.

Keep in mind that list doesn't include the schools for which Nganga was put on the wait list, among those were Dartmouth and Vanderbilt.

Nganga admits she has narrowed her list down to five schools, and she'll visit some of her top choices in April before making a final decision May 1.

"Obviously the academics at all of these schools are amazing," she said. "I'd be surrounded by brilliant students and professors who have done so



Photo courtesy Hazelwood School District

much in their fields, so now it's about finding the community and finding where I belong."

It seems Nganga would be a natural fit at any of the 22 schools, having excelled throughout her academic career in the Hazelwood School District since emigrating from Kenya with her family before the second grade.

She is the true definition of a student leader, having started the African American Cultural Association at West High School, along with two separate student clubs focused on social justice and awareness.

A tough decision, yes, but one that Nganga has worked hard to earn, and one she hopes will motivate other students at West High School.

"It was a lot to take in because it's very surreal," she said. "It's something you dream about and just having that goal of being accepted into top universities, and for me to actually get there and be accepted and have them want me there, it's a dream come true."

St. Louis County Community News
St. Charles County
O'Fallon, MO
Circulation: 30,000
Frequency: Weekly
Apr 30, 2019



Valley of Flowers Candidates 2019

The 2019 Valley of Flowers candidates: (bottom left to right) Kaylin O'Keefe (Old Town Donuts); Megan Battles (Duchesne Knights of Columbus Council 2951); Amanda Kolbe (BJ's Bar & Restaurant); Grace Gettemeier (Handyman True Value Hardware); Natalie Patrick (Winschel Carpet); Meagan Hogan (Marty Cancila Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram); Isabella Barbaglia (Citizens National Bank); and Sara Schenk (State Farm Agent Steve Wood); (top left to right) Amelia J. Stevens (Boyle Law Firm); Alaina Cribbett (Sacred Heart Catholic Church); Chloe Hoth (Paul Cerame Auto Group); Alise Sextro (Biondo Sewer Service); Hannah Crowder (Greater North County Chamber of Commerce); Raigan Reynolds (NCCU); Karina DuFour (Show-Me's Bar & Grill); Alayna Snelling (Commercial Bank); Lexy Kostecki (VFW Post 4105); Sarah Bennett (Florissant Valley Fire Protection District); and Lauren Ebert (Florissant Rotary Club).



*The 2018 Valley of Flowers Queen
 And Her Court*

(L-R) The **2018 Valley of Flowers** Queen Yen Nguyen, 1st runner up Samantha Eaker, special maid Salley Gacheru, special maid Victoria Dickson, and special maid Elizabeth Goldstein.

Independent News
 St. Louis County
 Florissant, MO
 Circulation: 38,000
 Frequency: Weekly
 May 1, 2019

The Independent News



Greater North County Chamber 2019 Scholarship Award Winners

The Greater North County Chamber announced the 2019 Scholarship Award Winners. The Chamber awards (5) five \$1,000 Merit Scholarships, a \$1000 Perseverance Scholarship and a \$1,000 scholarship from the Florissant Jaycees. The scholarships are awarded to high school seniors who reside in the North St. Louis County community. The Chamber's Partner in Education committee recognizes graduating seniors who have shown a commitment to building a better community and have demonstrated a record of community service in the area.

The Partners in Education Committee of the Chamber selected the following students (n above photo) for Merit Scholarships:

- Gbemisola Fadeyi – Hazelwood East High
- Gracemary Nganga – Hazelwood West High
- Jennifer Tenholder – Hazelwood West High
- Payton Woodruff – McCluer North High
- Desirae Yost – Hazelwood West High School

The \$1000 Perseverance Scholarship is given to a student who has persevered in his or her studies despite facing some tough obstacles.

The Partners in Education Committee has selected Danielle Jones, Riverview Gardens High School for this scholarship. The \$1000 scholarship from the Florissant Jaycees is given to a student who demonstrated above and beyond community service. The Partners in Education Committee has selected Sally Gacheru, Hazelwood West High School for this scholarship. This year, St. Louis Community College – Florissant Valley also gifted the award recipients with 3 credit hours to use at any of their campuses. The scholarship may be used for post-high school continuing education expenses including college or university tuition, room and board, books, fees, or for expenses associated with a trade or technical school program.

The scholarship fund was established with donations from Chamber members and an annual Bowl-A-Thon. This year's Scholarship Bowl will be held on Thursday, Aug. 1 at Crest Bowl. With these recipients, the chamber has awarded almost \$90,000 in scholarships.

DIGEST

HAZELWOOD » School district redrawing boundaries • After nearly two years of studies, planning and community input, the Hazelwood School District is redrawing its boundaries. The school board voted Tuesday on a redistricting plan that will affect students at 15 of its 20 elementary schools and at all six middle schools. Boundaries for the three high schools will not change.

The new boundaries are intended to balance school enrollments and improve transportation efficiency, said Kimberly McKenzie, district spokeswoman. She said the last redistricting occurred more than 10 years ago.

"It's really a process that needs to be looked at every five years," she said.

Though it's a comprehensive plan, only 715 students, or about 4 percent of enrollment, will have to switch to a new school next year.

TRACK AND FIELD

Hazelwood West rallies to win Kansas Relays

BY DAVID KVIDAHL
STLhighschoolsports.com

HAZELWOOD • Joseph Fuller was not going to leave early.

That much he knew for sure.

How he handled taking the baton from teammate Justin Robinson was another matter.

A junior sprinter for the Hazelwood West boys track and field team, Fuller was the third leg of the Wildcats 400-meter relay at the KU Relays on Saturday. Fuller had the unenviable task of receiving the stick from Robinson in the most mercurial sprint relay on the track. Robinson, who currently sits atop the leader board with the fastest 100, 200 and 400-meter times in Missouri, is hard to take the baton from because he enters the exchange zone with so much speed.

"It's tough to have Justin do hand offs," Hazelwood West coach Tim Levine said. "The speed coming in, there's just not someone



GORDON RADFORD, SPECIAL TO STLHIGHSCHOOLSPTS.COM
Hazelwood West's Justin Robinson helped the Wildcats win the 1,600-meter relay on Saturday at the Kansas Relays.

who's going to match that speed on this team."

It worked fine during the preliminary race and now, in the final, Fuller was ready for Robinson, who had a nice lead after Brian Stiles led off the race with a smoldering split.

"He came in a little faster than I thought he would," Fuller said. "We barely got it off."

The Wildcats went from leading the race to chasing

East St. Louis, which went on to win in 42.79 seconds. Hazelwood West finished second in 42.98.

"We had blown the race open," Levine said. "Brian started it off, breaks the stagger for everyone, gives it to Justin and if we make our hand offs the race is done."

Hazelwood West won the 800 relay in 1 minute and 27 seconds. When it came to the last race of the night, the 1,600-meter relay, the

Wildcats found themselves in a hole. Hazelwood West was sitting in third with 18 and absolutely had to win the 1,600 relay to have a shot.

It didn't start the way the Wildcats wanted. Sophomore Edwin Wangui passed the baton to Stiles in sixth or seventh place while trailing the leader by about 60 meters. Stiles had some work to do to give his team a chance. He tried to keep it simple in his head as he rolled through his lap in 48 seconds.

Stiles passed the stick to junior Aaron Holmes with the Wildcats around fourth place. Holmes maintained their place then put the meet in Robinson's hands.

"He kept us right there and handed to Justin in fourth or third place," Levine said. "When we got it to Justin, it was, 'OK, we've got this.'"

Robinson split 46.48 as Hazelwood West finished in 3:19 to edge Waukee, which finished in 3:20. The Wildcats won the school's first

KU Relays championship.

"It was an overwhelming experience," Holmes said. "When I saw Justin pass the leader, it was crazy."

NERINX'S WILLIAMS SITS WITH INJURY

It wasn't obvious but Courtney Williams wasn't quite right.

A junior sprinter at Nerinx Hall, Williams didn't get out of the blocks as she usually does during the 100-meter dash at Saturday's Phil Brusca/Connie Stobach Invitational at Parkway Central. To the casual observer, it was nothing. To those who have watched her, it was a red flag.

Williams won the 100 in 11.89 seconds but scratched the 200 and 400 races later in the meet. A trip to the doctor earlier this week revealed Williams has a concussion.

"Her mom backed into a pole, she didn't see it and gave Courtney a jolt," Ner-

inx coach Gaylerd Quigley said. "It's day-to-day as to when she can do regular school work and get back to training."

The reigning Class 5 400 champion, Williams was off to a sensational start to her junior season. She has the fastest times in Missouri in the 200 (23.91) and 400 (55.74). She went 11.69 in the 100 which puts her third behind Parkway North junior Alicia Burnett (11.61) and Hazelwood Central senior Danielle Frank (11.67).

Quigley said he does not expect a short stint away from the track to do much harm to Williams.

"For sprinters, a little rest almost makes them better," Quigley said. "She's been running track for three years. Her body is used to the rigors."

Quigley hopes the concussion will resolve itself in short order and Williams can return to chasing down her goals this season.

"She's very much a natural," Quigley said.



BLACK HR EXPERT PUBLISHES NEW BOOK ON JOB HUNTING

***St. Louis, MO** (BlackNews.com) — The Black unemployment rate is now 7%, more than double the national unemployment rate. But one new book is topping the bookseller lists in the U.S. and abroad giving Black job seekers a roadmap to navigating the career search in this era of downsizing and corporate consolidation.

Written by St. Louis native **Lisa A. Holmes**, MSHR, the book ***Job Hunting. Now What? Keeping It Real In The Modern Career Search*** is fast becoming the “must-have” practical guide for seasoned professionals and those new to the job market in search of rewarding work.

Holmes, a Human Resources expert, Executive Coach, and author is conducting speaking engagements and a panel from coast to coast with stops in key cities such as Los Angeles, St. Louis, Atlanta, and Boston. The panel discussion was at St. Louis’ Lindenwood University on April 30, 2019 from 1-3pm in the Harmon Hall Dunseth Auditorium.

During the panel discussion helmed by Holmes and other career specialists, attendees will learn how to better understand the emotional journey of the job search. The panel is free and open to the public. Three other panelists will be available for questions and discussion by attendees. They are Maris Lather, Demand General Marketer based in St. Louis with specialization in content creation, distribution, and engagement; **Jazell Dailey Thomas, M.A. L.P.C., Counselor and Social; Work Lead for the Hazelwood School District in St. Louis;** and Alana Pease, M.B.A., President of Headstrong Leaser as consultant and coach.

Holmes and the book have been hailed by such noteworthy publications as *Money Magazine*. In the article “[8 Most Valuable Career Skills Right Now, According to HR Experts](#)”, Holmes says, “Candidates will need to be emotionally intelligent – have a solid grasp of who they are and how those emotions can affect their leadership – as well as recognize and understand the emotions of others to effectively manage relationships.” According to Barnes & Noble, the book is a “soup-to-nuts” guide that will help you hone your hunting skills, land and keep your desired job in an ever-changing market. The book is selling in markets worldwide and most recently reached Australia.

As college graduation season approaches, graduates might take special note of the book’s approach to navigating the job market. Barnes & Noble sums it up saying, “Whether you are a college senior, or ‘downsized,’ or in transition, or looking to get back into the job market, Lisa A. Holmes will help you overcome the stress associated with job hunting. You will better understand your current skills and gaps, develop a career strategy, and create the right résumé. Launch from there into practical networking techniques, negotiating with prospective employers, and understanding how to stay relevant in this evolving economy.”

In St. Louis, the 90-minute panel discussion will go step-by-step through this process and allow for a question/answer session with participants. Elsewhere, Holmes will speak on several book-related topics such as how to remain relevant in an ever-changing economy and the 5 keys to career success for women.

The tour’s panel discussion will be held at Holmes’ alma mater, Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri, just outside of St. Louis. She holds both Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the University. Presently, Holmes serves as Chief Business Strategist for Strategic Performance of Los Angeles.

More high school grads taking different paths than predecessors



Jefferson City High School and other similar-sized public high schools have reflected a Missouri-wide trend over the past 10 years: fewer graduates have been going on to four-year colleges right out of high school. Instead, more graduates have been attending two-year colleges or entering the workforce. Among Missouri's class of 2009, about 60 percent of public high school graduates reported six months after graduation that they were attending college, according to data reported to the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. That percentage had not really changed as of the end of the 2018 school year — the most recent for which data is available from DESE. But the state's data does show about 2 percent fewer Missouri public high school graduates reported attending a four-year college six months after graduation compared to 10 years earlier. At the same time, less than 1 percent more students reported attending a two-year college, and almost 4 percent more students reported being employed. The trends can be even more pronounced at individual high schools. For example, between 2009-18, almost 10 percent fewer of JCHS's graduates reported attending college six months after graduation, and more than 16 percent fewer students reported attending a four-year college in particular. More than 6 percent more JCHS students reported attending a two-year college, and 14 percent more students reported they were employed. JCPS Director of Secondary Education Gary Verslues said he thinks the two main reasons for those trends are the state's A+ Scholarship Program and the continued increase in the school district's rate of students' eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches — from 43 percent in 2009 to 59 percent in 2018. "More and more students are working to help support the family," Verslues said of what the increase in the meal subsidy rate means. Other public high schools of similar enrollment and with comparable free or reduced-price lunch eligibility rates saw the same trends to some degree. Those high schools comparable to JCHS are located in or near St. Louis, Troy, Kansas City and Joplin. ***Of those eight high schools — Blue Springs, Hazelwood Central, Hazelwood West, Joplin, Lee's Summit West, Lindbergh Senior, Marquette Senior and Troy Buchanan — half also showed significant decreases over the past decade in the percentages of their graduates who reported attending a four-year college. The other four high schools showed increases ranging from just over 1 to more than 10 percent.*** Four of those high schools — Hazelwood Central and West, Joplin and Troy Buchanan — had eligibility rates for free or reduced-price lunch similar to JCHS and showed decreased attendance at four-year colleges. JCHS's free or reduced-price lunch eligibility rate in 2018 was 47.9 percent. ***Hazelwood Central High School had the highest rate of the group at 52.4 percent.*** Of the eight high schools examined by the News Tribune, five showed an increase in the percentage of students attending a two-year college six months after graduation. Most of those high schools had closely comparable free or reduced-price lunch eligibility rates as JCHS. Only one school of the eight — Marquette Senior High School in western St. Louis County — showed an increase in the percentage of students attending either a four-year or two-year college, though it was a less than one-quarter of 1 percent increase for two-year schools and almost 10 percent for four-year schools. Marquette Senior had the third-lowest free or reduced-price lunch eligibility rate out of the group of eight high schools.

More high school grads taking different paths than predecessors, cont.

An A+ reason behind trend?

It's possible the A+ Scholarship Program has contributed to the trend of more students choosing to attend a two-year college immediately after high school, which is supported by the findings of a study from the University of Missouri. José Muoz, James Harrington, Bradley Curs and Mark Ehlert — as doctoral candidates in educational leadership and policy analysis at the University of Missouri — published a study in *The Journal of Higher Education* in 2016 that found the A+ program has "provided a democratizing effect by increasing overall post-secondary enrollment, while simultaneously creating a diversionary effect through increased two-year enrollment and a decline in four-year enrollment," according to the study's abstract. The A+ program was established in Missouri in 1993 to encourage all high school students to graduate with more rigorous studies and to go on to college or directly into a high-wage job. High school students who attend a designated high school and graduate with the required grade point average, attendance record, completed hours of tutoring or mentoring, citizenship record, and other stipulations are eligible to receive money to attend designated two-year schools — usually community colleges or career, technical or vocational education schools. All of the high schools the News Tribune analyzed are participants in the program.

'A huge incentive'

Hazelwood West High School Principal Dennis Newell said the financial rewards for students who meet the requirements of the A+ program are difficult to pass up, and that contributes to more students choosing two-year colleges immediately after high school.

"This year, 33 percent of our senior class will be listed as A+ scholars. They'll have an opportunity to have the first two years of college for free. That's a huge incentive," Newell said.

He added: "When we register our seniors, our guidance department actually flags students that we're registering, that by their credits and by their history, we see that they're going to be eligible for the A+ scholar program. We flag them just so that we can let them know, 'Hey, you're eligible for this; this is something you need to take advantage of.'"

Of the nine high schools including JCHS that the News Tribune analyzed, Hazelwood West in northern St. Louis County showed the biggest increase over the past 10 years in the percentage of its graduates who reported attending a two-year college right after high school — a 16 percent increase, compared to a more than 35 percent decrease in the percentage of its graduates who chose to attend a four-year college right after high school.

Asked whether how students are prepared for graduation drives post-graduation trends or if graduation prep is simply following students' interest, Newell said: "I think it's both." Verslues, too, said: "It is a combination of both. As part of the transition from middle school to high school, eighth-grade students along with counselors begin working on a student's Individual Career and Academic Plan. Through conversations and interest inventories, this plan is developed as a student prepares for high school and becomes a working document all through high school when counselors meet with students each year to review and select courses each spring for the following school year."

Other post-graduation paths

Employment is another post-high school graduation path students choose, and JCHS had the biggest increase over the past decade of its graduates reporting being employed six months later, among the nine schools the News Tribune looked at. JCHS had a 14 percent increase in graduates reporting being employed. On average among the nine schools over the past 10 years, about 15.1 percent of graduates reported being employed six months after high school. But at Jefferson City, Troy Buchanan and Joplin high schools, more than a quarter of graduates were reporting being employed in an average year. On average among the nine high schools analyzed, the share of graduates who reported they were serving in the military six months after high school increased about nine-tenths of 1 percent over the past 10 years. On average over those same years, about 2.9 percent of graduates at each school reported serving in the military six months after high school. College, employment and military service together accounted, on average, for the post-graduation paths of almost 92 percent of high school graduates over the past decade for each of the high schools the News Tribune analyzed.

April 28, 2019