

THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN

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Hazelwood
School
District

"A Culture of High Expectations and Excellence!"

The Hazelwood School District Salutes **Dr. Monica Diggs**



Hazelwood North Middle School
English Language Arts Teacher,
on being recognized for Excellence in Education
HSD Pride, HSD Proud!

St. Louis American
St. Louis City County
St. Louis, MO
Circulation: 70,200
Frequency: Weekly
September 19, 2019

<http://www.stlamerican.com/edition>

THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN

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Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated[®]
OMICRON THETA OMEGA CHAPTER

CONGRATULATES

Dr. Monica Diggs

recipient of the
2019 Salute to Excellence
in Education Award



*Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world.*
Nelson Mandela

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Monica D. Diggs: ‘I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children’

St. Louis American: Tell us about your current position in education, its responsibilities and challenges and how you are able to make a difference.

Monica D. Diggs: I currently teach 6th grade English-Language Arts at Hazelwood North Middle School. I have been teaching at North Middle since the school opened in 2007. I started out as a 7th grade teacher, but moved to the 6th grade when I became a team leader in 2009. Teaching middle school can be extremely challenging, but it is also a lot of fun because 11- and 12-year-olds are adventurous.

One of the biggest challenges that I face is the fact that over half of the students entering middle school are reading below grade-level. This is challenging because if the students can't read, then they struggle with the grade-level curriculum. So I have to provide my students with interventions to help improve their reading skills.

St. Louis American: Although educators often work alone, education is a team sport. Tell us about your current

Excellence in Education Awardee

team, how you fit into it, and who helps to support your work.

Monica D. Diggs: I have the privilege of working with a wonderful group of individuals who are committed to helping our students reach their highest potentials. My team members include Nana Becoat, Kristen Collins, Precious Oge and Angela Waters. We spend hours collaborating to come up with the best ways to help our students.

Our principal, Dr. Tony O. Brooks, has made College and Career Readiness as the primary theme for our school. He believes that we must start preparing students for life beyond high school before they get to high school. So, under his leadership, we have implemented ACT prep for students starting in 6th grade.

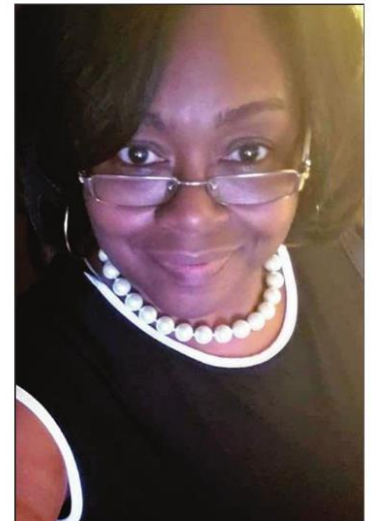
St. Louis American: Tell us about

any previous positions you have held, in education or any other field, that contributed to your development as an educator and helped prepare you for your current role.

Monica D. Diggs: Prior to teaching in Hazelwood, I spent three years working as a teacher's assistant in St. Louis Public Schools and then moved on to Special School District, where I worked at Riverview Gardens Central Middle for five years. While there, I decided to go back to school to get my teaching certificate. I went back to Fontbonne and obtained a certification in Middle School Language Arts and MA degree in Reading Education. I just recently obtained my Doctor of Education degree in Reading & Literacy at Capella University.

St. Louis American: Tell us about your own educational journey as a student.

Monica D. Diggs: When I first went to college over 30 years ago, I had



Monica D. Diggs, Ed.D. is an English Language Arts teacher at Hazelwood North Middle School.

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Monica D. Diggs: ‘I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children’ Cont.

Monica D. Diggs: When I first went to college over 30 years ago, I had absolutely no desire to become a teacher. My dream was to become a television newscaster covering government and politics. I spent my first two year of college at SEMO where I started out majoring in Broadcast Journalism and Political Science. I then transferred to Fontbonne, where I ended up obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in General Studies with an emphasis is Social Science and English Literature. After finishing undergrad, I was not quite sure of what I wanted to do and because my undergraduate studies were focused on Social Science and English Literature my advisor at the time told me that the next logical step was for me to go to law school. The problem was that I had no desire to practice law. So I was idle for a while, taking a job working as an in-home daycare director and, after about three years, I went to work as a Residential Care counselor at the Annie Malone Children’s home in St. Louis.

It was there that I learned that there were so many children who were without parents, or homes, and although they went to school, because of their circumstances, many of them were angry and hostile and did not put much, if any, effort into school. I only worked at that job for three months, but the sadness that I saw in those kids left a huge impact on me, and I did not know what, but I knew that I wanted to be able to somehow make a difference in the lives of children. It was around this time that I decided to seek out God’s plan for my life. I needed some direction so I literally prayed and asked God to lead me into a career where I would be able to make a difference and where I could help other people. The next job that I got was working as a teacher’s assistant in St. Louis Public Schools. That was the beginning of my career in education, and it did not take me long to realize that it was exactly where God wanted me to be.

St. Louis American: *Tell us about your future goals in education.*

Monica D. Diggs: In addition to continuing to teach middle school, I hope to do some adjunct teaching at the college level.

St. Louis American: *Tell us about any mentors crucial to your development as an educator.*

Monica D. Diggs: The one that had the greatest impact on me becoming an educator was my late pastor, Dr. Charles M. Roach. Pastor Roach, who was a former middle school teacher, gave me lots of sound advice that I hold onto to this day. The biggest piece of advice that he gave was that the best way to teach children is to build relationships with them so that they knew that I cared about them. Once students know that you care, you can teach them anything.

St. Louis American: *Tell us about any relevant personal information you would like to share with the community – your family, friends, home church, passions.*

Monica D. Diggs: I have been married to Devin Diggs for 21 years, and we have three children, Devin Jr., Malik, and Marina. I am the oldest of three children to my parents Carolyn and Eloyd Thornton. I have two brothers, Justin and Michael. I am also the oldest grand-child of Servisa Croff. I am a member of Trinity Mount Carmel Baptist church where Michael Cleveland Jr. is the pastor. I have been a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. for nearly 30 years and am currently active in the Omicron Theta Omega chapter. In my free time, I enjoy reading, watching Cardinals baseball, and running in Creve Coeur Park.

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THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN FOUNDATION

Presents the

32nd Annual

SALUTE TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Scholarship & Awards Gala



**Lifetime Achievers in
Education**

SHIRLEY BOWDEN BROWN

Retired Administrator,
Saint Louis Public Schools

CHARLES R. BROWN

Retired Assistant Commissioner,
Missouri Department of
Education



**Stellar Performer
in Education**

VALERIE BELL

Board Member
Immediate Past Board Chair,
Saint Louis Public Schools
Foundation

**2019 Bayer School
of Excellence**

**FLYNN PARK
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN • SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

2019

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AWARDEES



Petra Baker



Monica D.
Diggs, Ed.D



Victoria A.
Harris



Kimberly
Patrice Long



Duane
McGowan



Tina Clark-
Scott



Lawrence
Shields



Tanesia L.
Simmons

**2019 PNC Bank
Early Childhood
Education Award**



Chandria Taylor

**2019 SEMO
Counselor of
the Year**



Amber Mitchell

2019 Salute to Education

2019 Donald M. Suggs Scholarships



Photo by Lawrence Bryant

Tekoa Bell
Donald M. Suggs Scholar
Webster University

Tekoa Bell is a 2019 graduate of Hazelwood West High School, graduated Magna Cum Laude with a 3.88 GPA and received a 30 on her ACT test. As a Girl Scout Senior Ambassador, Tekoa contributes in a variety of community service projects including, working in the soup kitchen of the St. Patrick's Center, donating care packages to the USO in Lambert Airport and working with the Girl Scouts during their collection of the April Showers campaign.



Tekoa has also mentored younger Girl Scouts and encourages them to always pursue their dreams.

Throughout high school, Tekoa has been a member of the French National Honor Society, the Tri-M Music Honor Society and the West Preparatory Academy, which encourages and supports African American students to take honors AP level courses which were lacking in diversity in the Hazelwood school district. Tekoa will spend this

Janae Bradley
Donald M. Suggs Dissertation Fellow
University of Missouri-Columbia

Janae Bradley is a native of St. Louis, Missouri and attended Hazelwood East High School. She received her Bachelor of Science in BioEngineering



with a minor in Mathematics from the University of Missouri. Janae was selected to participate in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) IMSD EXPRESS program. Participating in this program allowed her to learn more about

research, graduate school, and helped her secure a position in a biomaterials and biosensors research lab. She has won several awards in her graduate career and served in numerous leadership roles on

The Independent News



REMEMBER 9/11: Students and staff at **Lusher Elementary School** in the Hazelwood School District joined together with officers from the Florissant Police Department to remember the events of 9/11 on Wednesday, Sept.



11. The school held a moment of silence, followed by a singing of "God Bless America." Officers spent time visiting with students following the ceremony.

'North County Churches Uniting' Presents Annual Awards on Oct. 6

The North County Churches Uniting for Racial Harmony and Justice's annual awards dinner is Sunday, Oct. 6 in the Paul F. Detrick Building in the Atrium at Christian Hospital. The speaker will be St. Louis County Prosecutor Wesley Bell and the master of ceremonies will be Rev. Cedric Portis, pastor of Third Presbyterian Church located at 9990 Lewis and Clark Blvd.

Awards will be presented to:

Elizabeth Perkins, President and Chief Academic Officer at St. Louis Community College Florissant Valley for Outstanding Education Achievement

Bonita Jamison, Executive Director of Integrated Support and Accelerated Learning at Ferguson-Florissant School District for Outstanding Education Achievement

Matthew Phillips, associate superintendent for Students Services and Elementary Education at Hazelwood School District for Outstanding Education Achievement

Colleen Wilkerson, manager service excellent, at Christian Hospital, for Outstanding Community Service

Hazelwood Police Department, for Outstanding Community Service

Third Presbyterian Church, President Award.

Tickets are \$40 each or \$300 for a table for eight. Registration is at 3:30 and Program begins at 4:00 p.m.

For more information, contact NCCU at John Knox Presbyterian Church, 13200 New Halls Ferry Rd., Telephone number 314 921-5833 or Rance Thomas at 314 238-6828.



Parents and children in the Hazelwood School District will have the chance to see learning materials and ask questions about curriculum during the Kindergarten Information Night.

Hazelwood District 2020 KG Information Night Oct. 7

The Hazelwood School District will host a Kindergarten Information Night on Monday, Oct. 7 from 5:45- 7:30 p.m. at Hazelwood Central Early Childhood Center, 15955 New Halls Ferry Road.

The event is open to families with children who will be Kindergarten eligible in August 2020. To enroll for Kindergarten in the 2020-2021 school year, a child must be five years old before Aug. 1, 2020. Registration is required; please call 314-953-7650 to register by Oct. 1.

Attendees will learn about a typical day in Hazelwood's full-day Kindergarten program, have the opportunity to see learning materials and ask questions about curriculum, and discuss parenting topics with HSD's Parents as Teachers educators.

The first 100 families who register will receive a free book. Registered attendees will receive a light dinner. Free childcare is provided for registered families for children ages 3 to 11. Families should call 314-953-7650 to register.



Cold Water parents and students join together in PTA-sponsored events throughout the year, thus earning a spot as a School of Excellence.

Cold Water Elementary PTA Honored with National Award

The Cold Water Elementary School PTA has been recognized as a 2019-2021 School of Excellence by the National PTA. The designation honors accomplishments in building a strong and effective family-school partnership that enriches the educational experience and overall well-being for all students.

Cold Water is one of only eight schools in Missouri to receive the recognition and the only school in the St. Louis region. Cold Water's PTA organizes several events throughout the school year including a yoga program, different meals for parents and guests, and Chalk the Walk, where PTA volunteers write inspiring messages for students on the school sidewalk.

"When I chose to become PTA President of Cold Water Elementary, my mission statement was: Be informed, be involved, be empowered. [My goal was] to enrich the lives of all students by maintaining a strong supportive PTA and encourage involvement in the school, home, and community," Cold Water PTA President Donielle Grooms said.

"Pursuing the PTA School of Excellence Award helped us meet our goals by concentrating on strengthening family school partnership, focusing on the mental and emotional needs of students, and community collaboration."

"Mrs. Grooms and our PTA partnership at Cold Water are key pieces to Cold Water's academic and social-emotional success. Our staff, parents, students, and community work together to provide not only materials to help with learning, but opportunities for families to work alongside one another at Cold Water." Cold Water Principal Luke Dix said.