Thomas named counselor association Advocate of the Year

Jazell Thomas, coordinator of counseling and social work for the Hazelwood School District (HSD), has been awarded the 2020-2021 Advocate of the Year by the Missouri School Counselor Association. While the award is for last year, the announcement was delayed by the pandemic, so Thomas will receive the award later this month. In her role, Thomas guides the district's school counselors, social workers, and home school communicators. From developing self-care strategies for the entire district to comforting community members during a difficult time, Thomas fills a crucial role that helps HSD serve stakeholders. Thomas, a Hazelwood East High School graduate, has worked in the Hazelwood School District since 1998 when she began as a counselor at Grannemann Elementary School.

Karl Guenther, Patricia Parker honored at North County Inc.'s 44th annual Leadership Breakfast

North County Inc. celebrated the work of two members of the University of Missouri–St. Louis campus community among a list of 20 honorees at the 44th annual Leadership Breakfast on Friday morning at the Marriott St. Louis Airport Hotel.

Karl Guenther, the assistant vice chancellor for economic and community development, shared an Excellence in Partnership Leadership Award with Lynette Watson of the University of Missouri Extension's Small Business Development Center for their joint efforts to launch the North County Small Business Accelerator to support local restaurants and retail businesses. Patricia Parker, the E. Desmond Lee Endowed Professor in Zoological Studies and director of the Whitney R. Harris World Ecology Center, meanwhile, received a Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Award for her role in the creation of the Collaborative Laboratory Internships and Mentoring Blueprint, better known as CLIMB, to benefit high school students at four area school districts. Parker has found it similarly rewarding watching the growth and development of CLIMB since she started imagining the program in 2014, when the killing of Michael Brown shined a national spotlight on racial injustice and inequality.

"I understood that I could not solve that problem, but I could contribute what I was able to contribute to the community-level solution," Parker said. "That is to find the things that each of us can offer to help correct an imbalance."

Parker had spent much of her career working internationally to study disease ecology with a particular interest on avian malaria in the Galápagos Islands as well as helping to train international students from countries such as Madagascar, Peru and Papua New Guinea. But she found herself turning her focus locally to reduce the opportunity gap facing students in underfunded districts.

She developed the paid summer internship program to help high-ability but low-opportunity students from Jennings Senior High gain hands-on lab experience in either chemistry, biology, physics, psychology, education, mathematics or computer science. The students were paid $12 per hour and also received assistance with career development, navigating the college admissions process and learning presentation skills.

The program has grown steadily with the help of Rhonda Key, now the assistant superintendent for high school education, school safety and alternative education in the Hazelwood School District; and Miranda Ming, the regional executive director at EAGLE College Prep. It now serves students in Ritenour, Riverview Gardens and University City, in addition to Jennings, and Parker expects to add Hazelwood next year.

"It's wrong for me to pretend to have done this by myself," Parker said. "It is a partnership. It is a really functional, mutually respectful partnership. Dr. Key and Dr. Ming are in the community every day, and they are deeply invested in it. Because of them, we've been able to expand. It is thrilling to me to see this program grow and to see it be so well received by all these other districts. Once they hear about it, they want to be part of it."

https://blogs.umsl.edu/news/2021/09/20/north-county-inc-2021-leadership-awards-karl-guenther-patricia-parker/

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