

COMMUNITY NEWS

Hazelwood School District appoints new director of communications and public relations

Hazelwood School District (HSD) announced the appointment of Anthony Kiekow as Director of Communications and Public Relations effective July 1. He will replace the current Director Kimberly McKenzie who will be leaving the district to pursue another opportunity.

Kiekow will shape external and internal communications for HSD, including media relations, crisis communications and social media. With a strategic focus on student, parent, staff, and community engagement, Kiekow will use his storytelling skills to build on the district's culture of high expectations and excellence.

"We are thrilled to have Mr. Kiekow join our leadership team," said Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart, superintendent of HSD. "This appointment represents another positive step for the Hazelwood School District. Anthony's experience, character and passion will be major assets."

Kiekow brings a wealth of communications and media ex-

perience to HSD. Prior to this appointment, he served as executive director of communications for Riverview Gardens School District. In that role, he led an overhaul of district-wide communications that included launching 13 websites, quadrupling the district's social media reach, and establishing internal communication guidelines. Kiekow honed his strategic communication skills as a public relations manager for the St. Louis Symphony. The Associated Press award-winning writer also spent seven years as a television reporter for media outlets across the country, including News 4 and Fox 2 in St. Louis.

"As a long-time North St. Louis County resident, I view this as an extraordinary opportunity to serve the community I love," Kiekow said. "I look forward to celebrating the work of Hazelwood School District through consistent, creative, and compelling storytelling on multiple platforms."

The Minneapolis native earned a bachelor's degree in

journalism from the University of Minnesota, where he was a Ronald E. McNair Scholar and interned for the U.S. House of Representatives. Kiekow has also held key leadership roles in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., including the corresponding secretary and Project Alpha mentor.

COMMUNITY NEWS



Commentary: Florissant has Always Worked with Minority Community Leaders

I would like to commend the Florissant Police Department for terminating Detective Joshua L. Smith from the police department so quickly for intentionally running into a non-threatening unarmed black man with an automobile and striking him while he was on the ground. The department's action took place more quickly than in many other departments from around the country. (The officer was charged with assault last week.)

Chief Timothy Fagan deserves a lot of credit for taking this action as quickly as he did. The detective's behavior was truly unexpected and unacceptable. It was unexpected because North County Churches Uniting for Racial Harmony and Justice (NCCU) has been working with this department for approximately 20 years in helping it improve its relations with the community, especially the African-American community.

It has been working with various chiefs of the department over those years including the late Mayor Robert Lowery when he was Chief and his successors including the more recent Chief Timothy Lowery (now mayor) and with the current Chief, Timothy Fagan. Since our first meeting with Robert Lowery the department was very cooperative and willing to make changes as necessary. For example In the early days, at our suggestion, Chief Lowery brought in a community relation specialist to train officers on police community relations. It worked with NCCU and other police departments over the years to improve police community relations and has worked with the school districts in this effort.

In fact, since the Michael Brown killing and the riots in Ferguson, it has been working with our committee that consists of three pastors, four other police departments, the superintendent of Hazelwood School District, a representative of the Ferguson-Florissant School District, a representative of

the St. Louis County Prosecutor's office, and several others, in making changes to improve relations with the African-American community.

In fact, for the last five years, it has adopted NCCU's Program of "Summons of Joy," that takes place every Christmas season. This program is highly

publicized in the media, and it consists of NCCU receiving donations from some of its churches located in the City of Florissant.

It purchases gift cards and gives them to the Florissant Police Department to pass out to those they stop for minor violations, especially to those who appear to have a financial need. Instead of giving them tickets for the minor violations, they give them a warning and the gift card, primarily to African-Americans. They pass out between 45-98 cards each year for a total cost of over \$30,000 for the last five years.

The individuals who receive the gift cards seem to love it and so do the police officers because they receive many thanks and hugs that they have never received before. In fact, before the program begins, the police call and ask when the program will begin.

Therefore, this is why the behavior of the detective was so unexpected and definitely unacceptable. The Florissant Police Department has been working very hard to improve its relations with the African-American Community. This one incident seems to have done a great deal of damage to the image of the department and quickly terminating the officer was justified.

(Rance Thomas, co-founder of NCCU is a well-respected community and clergy voice in North County. Dr. Thomas is a retired administrator at SIU-Edwardsville)



Rance Thomas



Rance Thomas: Building bridges between community and police in Florissant

he Florissant Police Department and city government should be commended for terminating detective Joshua L. Smith as quickly as they did after he, apparently intentionally, ran into a non-threatening, unarmed black man with an automobile and struck him while he was on the ground. They took action more quickly than a number of other departments in the country when faced with similar video evidence of abuse. Chief Timothy Fagan deserves a lot of credit for taking the action he did. The detective's behavior was truly unexpected and unacceptable. It was unexpected because North County Churches Uniting for Racial Harmony and Justice has been working with this department to help it improve its relations with the community, especially the African American community. The group consists of 27 churches of various denominations including six Catholic churches and four different denominational churches in Ferguson, and it works to promote racial understanding and social justice in North County. Over the last 20 years, it has been working with various chiefs of the Florissant Police Department, including the late Mayor Robert Lowery when he was chief and his successors. Among them were the more recent police chief Timothy Lowery and Fagan. Since our first meeting with Robert Lowery, the department was very cooperative and willing to make changes as necessary. For example, in the early days, at the North County church group's suggestion, Lowery brought in a community relations specialist to train officers. It worked with our group and other police departments and local school districts over the years to improve police-community relations. Since the Michael Brown killing and the riots in Ferguson, it has been working with a committee that consists of three pastors, four other police departments, [the superintendent of Hazelwood School District](#), a representative of the Ferguson-Florissant School District, a representative of the St. Louis County prosecutor's office, and several others in making changes to build bridges with the African American community. For the last five years, it has adopted the North County church group's "summons of joy" program that takes place every Christmas season. This program is highly appreciated by the community. Our group purchases gift cards for the Florissant Police Department to pass out to those stopped by officers for minor violations, especially to those who appear to have a financial need. Instead of giving them tickets for the minor violations, officers give them a warning and the gift cards, primarily to African Americans. They have given out 45 to 98 cards each year for a total of over \$30,000 over the last five years. The individuals who receive the gift cards love it, and so do the police officers, because they receive many thanks and hugs that they have never received before. In fact, the police have called and asked when the program will start again. This is why the behavior of the detective was so unexpected and definitely unacceptable. The department has been working very hard to improve its relations with the African American community. This one incident has done a great deal of damage to the image of the department, and quickly terminating the officer was justified. A fair investigation should be conducted, and legal action should be taken against the detective if appropriate. **Rance Thomas**, Ph.D., is a professor emeritus of sociology and criminal justice at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

https://www.stltoday.com/opinion/columnists/rance-thomas-building-bridges-between-community-and-police-in-florissant/article_dbf58865-7c39-51c1-8de0-7c3419e578ab.html

June 25, 2020



Ferguson Brewing Co. hosts fundraiser for Kinloch firefighter wounded in Applebee's shooting

ST. LOUIS COUNTY, Mo. – Arlydia Bufford remains in the hospital after being shot earlier this week at a St. John's Applebee's restaurant. The [Hazelwood East High School graduate](#) will have a long and expensive road back to health.

On Thursday, firefighters from all across the St. Louis area showed up at the Ferguson Brewing Company to raise money on her behalf.

"She's recovering well. She is listed in critical but stable condition," said Kinloch Fire Chief Kevin Stewart. "She underwent a procedure last night and the procedure went well."

Bufford, 20, was one of three women shot Monday night inside the Applebee's. She was with other first responders at the restaurant when a gunman opened fire around 9:20 p.m.

The suspect targeted two women sitting at a different table, killing one and wounding another, who is expected to survive. The gunman then shot Bufford moments later. She was raced to a local hospital inside a patrol car. A fire captain who was with her at the restaurant is credited with keeping her alive. "(Bufford) can't work. No telling how long the recovery will be, she will have expenses and medical bills," Stewart said.

Ferguson Brewery was crowded inside; our cameras were not allowed inside due to social distancing rules. The owner was so busy he couldn't stop to talk, but Chief Stewart said it was his idea to do the fundraiser.

"Out of the goodness of his heart, he reached out to us and said, 'I want to do this for your firefighter and family.' He organized this dine-in to donate event," Stewart said.

Not only are firefighters showing up at events, but Chief Stewart's has not stopped ringing with calls of support.

"Every fire chief in St. Louis County and St. Charles County has personally reached out and given words of encouragement and supported all the fundraising events," he said.

The fundraiser runs until 9 p.m. and includes carryout orders.

On Sunday, June 28, Mattingly's Embroidery in Overland will host a benefit barbecue. T-Shirts will be available for purchase and all proceeds will go toward Bufford's medical expenses.

In addition, BackStoppers has stepped to help her family with her medical bills. Anyone interested in donating to the Bufford family may visit the [following link](#).