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A large graphic for the 'Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Observance'. On the left, a black diagonal banner contains the names 'Michele Norris', 'Marquetta Wise', and 'Brian Owens' in white. Below the names, 'JAN 18' is written in large white numbers. Underneath, the word 'Celebrate' is in a white script font, followed by 'KING' in large white letters with a rainbow-colored shadow effect. At the bottom of the banner, it says 'Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Observance'. To the right of the banner are three overlapping photographs: Michele Norris at the top, Marquetta Wise in the middle, and Brian Owens at the bottom. In the background, a sign with 'SMITH AFRICA' and 'FF' is partially visible.



Greetings, Friends and Neighbors!

As we embark on this New Year, we bring our resolve and dedication to transform our community in the days ahead and throughout 2021. Each year at UMSL, we start off the Spring semester honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This year the focus of our program is on "How can we come together for social equality?" As we all grapple with how to answer that question better in our personal, professional, and civic lives, this month's newsletter is filled with stories of people and partnerships committed to progress and a variety of equity initiatives in our community.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously stated, "The time is always right to do what's right." Let us take up that challenge whether it is by reviewing the STL 2030 jobs plan and providing feedback to ensure the plan promotes inclusive prosperity, attending an inspirational event that connects you to new ways of building an equitable region, volunteering, engaging in policy conversations or stepping into a leadership role in your community. To move forward from a pandemic that has had disparate impact across our community and address structural racism and inequity in our region, we must work together to embrace Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call.

I look forward to working with you to do what's right for our community in 2021!

Sincerely,

Kristin Sobolik  
Chancellor, University of Missouri-St. Louis

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## December graduate Zaymon Harris makes a difference educating outside of the classroom

During Zaymon Harris' senior year of high school, he was certain that he wanted to study chemistry or chemical engineering. Then he heard something about his time volunteering at Beyond Housing's after-school program that changed everything. "One of the parents there came up to me and told me about how much of a difference I made in their child's life," Harris said. "That's really what made me want to go into education."

Harris graduated from the University of Missouri–St. Louis with a bachelor's in educational studies with a focus in child and adult development. During his time at UMSL, Harris has interned at Beyond Housing, an organization dedicated to helping communities succeed through individual programs and policy efforts focused on education, housing, health, job training, economic development and personal finance.

This past summer, he helped conduct the organization's virtual summer camp and took a leadership role to keep it running when the supervisor went on bereavement leave. He also helped the after-school program transition to a virtual format during the fall semester. [Read more.](#)

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## UMSL Accelerate accepts six founders into its first Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Accelerator cohort

Excitement and tears overcame Michelle Robinson on [a recent] morning. That was completely understandable as she'd just learned that her business, DEMIBLUE Natural Nails & Creative, had been chosen as a winning founder for the inaugural Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Accelerator at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. In doing so, Robinson had become one of six startups to receive \$50,000 in non-dilutive capital in addition to \$200,000 in in-kind resources and the opportunity to participate in an 8-week, best-in-class business development program in early 2021. "I truly want to serve women," Robinson said. "I truly want to see an impact. This means so much."

Dan Lauer, executive director of UMSL Accelerate and Monique Bynum, program director of UMSL DEI Accelerator and senior director of development at Boone Center Incorporated, presented a check to each of the winners during the virtual announcement event. "St. Louis is home to an abundance of entrepreneurial talent with good ideas, but not everyone has the same access to opportunity," Lauer said. "We are doing our part in moving the needle through significant capital injection." [Read more.](#)

The first accelerator will begin in January 2021. The public will be invited to meet the founders at a Demo Day event in the spring. More information about the program is available at <https://www.umsl.edu/accelerate/dei.html>.



## Enterprise pledges \$55 million to boost racial, social equity

*Karen Robinson-Jacobs, St. Louis American, Dec. 2020*

With a new \$55 million pledge, the St. Louis-based Enterprise Holdings Foundation joins business and philanthropic organizations around the nation in responding to calls for racial and social equity in the wake of the widely viewed killing of George Floyd. Last month the Foundation, the philanthropic arm of car rental giant Enterprise, announced the five-year, \$55 million commitment that, beginning in January, will help fund organizations that support youth of color in underserved communities. At the same time, the Foundation said it will add \$65 million to a separate program, launched in 2016 called Enterprise Fill Your Tank, that's already spent more than \$50 million to address food insecurity globally.

The \$120 million total comes against the backdrop of growing cries for racial justice and shrinking funding for some charities due to the coronavirus pandemic. In the new initiative, over the next five years, Enterprise Holdings' "ROAD Forward" program plans to donate \$5 million each to four nationally-known nonprofits that work primarily in communities of color — The Obama Foundation's My Brother's Keeper Alliance, UNCF, Girls Inc., and Parents as Teachers.

It was not immediately clear how much of the \$55 million in "ROAD Forward" funds would be spent in St. Louis' Black community. At Girls Inc., national leadership credited the St. Louis Girls Inc. affiliate with forging the relationship with Enterprise that yielded the donation. The St. Louis Girls Inc. will get 10% of the \$5 million, according to Stephanie Hull, CEO of the New York-based organization. [Read more.](#)

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*Submitted photo*

**Lezley McSpadden-Head, mother of Michael Brown, participates via Zoom in the inaugural session of the Michael Brown Program for Social Justice and Leadership at Normandy High School**

## 'Rainbow of Mothers' delivers words of wisdom at inaugural Michael Brown Program for Social Justice and Leadership

*St. Louis County, Dec. 16, 2020 Community News mycnews.com*

What do we do about police brutality?" That question is a heavy one, but for Lezley McSpadden-Head, the question is complex, emotional and extremely personal. McSpadden-Head is the mother of Michael Brown, the young man who was killed by a Ferguson police officer in 2014 and helped spark what is now known as the "Black Lives Matter" movement. A student posed the question to Brown's mother during last month's inaugural session of the Michael Brown Program for Social Justice and Leadership at Normandy High School, Brown's alma mater. McSpadden-Head paused and was noticeably affected by the question. "It's not easy; it's very difficult because it becomes a trigger for you," she reflected. "It's a reminder that you didn't get justice and you know how that mother and the family feels. I know what it feels like." McSpadden-Head was joined by her fellow "Rainbow of Mothers" – Wanda Johnson, mother of Oscar Grant; and Marion Tolan, mother of police shooting survivor and activist (and former St. Louis Cardinal) Robbie Tolan – to share their journeys and words of advice with the students. [Read more in the St. Louis Community News on Page 7.](#)





***"The cohort itself was amazing. Just the people in there, the connection alone goes a long way - like the people that you connect with is just awesome."***

-Shavanna Spratt, Neighborhood Leadership Fellow

## **Neighborhood Leadership Graduates reflect on their training**

*By Dana Rieck, St. Louis American, December 17-23, 2020*

Even after nine months of leadership training through the Neighborhood Leadership Fellows, Shavanna Spratt says she still feels like an ordinary, everyday person. The difference now is she's prepared and ready to take action to make Ferguson a better place. "I think that's what makes my situation even more special because that's kind of where I am now, fighting for fighting for people, the everyday, average person, to speak up and be involved and to be encouraged to get in their communities and do some work," Spratt said in an interview. [Read more, Page A9](#)



## Draft of STL 2030 Jobs Plan released for community feedback

Press Release by Laura Godwin, December 3, 2020

A draft of the first plan to create a significant number of quality jobs for the entire St. Louis Metropolitan area in more than 10 years was released on December 3, 2020, and now broader engagement and feedback from the community is needed over the next several months. The draft is known as the "STL 2030 Jobs Plan: Driving a Decade of Inclusive Growth."

The draft jobs plan is based on an objective assessment of St. Louis' macroeconomic performance, distinctive industry strengths and comparative position relative to peer metro areas. In addition to an extensive quantitative analysis, a diverse group of hundreds of community, business, civic, nonprofit and economic development leaders participated in working groups and feedback sessions to help shape the recommendations in the plan. [Read more in the press release.](#)

Visit <https://www.greaterstlinc.com/jobsplan/> to read a draft of the jobs plan and to **provide feedback through the end of January, 2021.**

## Share with Us

We'd love to hear your questions and comments about UMSL and stories about great things happening in our communities. Your thoughts will help shape content covered in future newsletters to be pertinent to you and your neighbors. Leave any suggestions, questions, or stories [here](#). Thank you!



## COVID-19 Resources

[Click here](#) to view resources for support during the pandemic.

## UMSL Community Connection

[Click here](#) to sign up for the community connection newsletter.

## UMSL Community Card

[Register](#) for a community card to receive benefits and discounts at UMSL events and facilities.

## UMSL Contracts

Interested in bidding on projects at UMSL?

[Procurement Bids](#)

[Construction Bids](#)

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## Upcoming Events



### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Celebrations

Monday, January 18, 2021

11 AM

Touhill Performing Arts YouTube page

**"How can we come together for social equality?"** The community is invited to join a virtual celebration from the Touhill Performing Arts Center at UMSL hosted by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The free program this year features **Michele Norris**, former NPR host & special correspondent, Founding Director of The Race Card Project as guest speaker; **Marquetta Wise** of St. Louis Public Radio as master of ceremonies **Brian Owens**, E. Des Lee Artist in Residence, founder and executive director of L.I.F.E. Arts, Inc., musical performance; and **2021 MLK Scholarship recipients**.

Register at

[umsl.edu/go/MLK2021](https://umsl.edu/go/MLK2021) (note: the link to the virtual celebration will be sent closer to the event date).

[Click here](#) for additional information.



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Friday, January 15, 2021

12 PM - 1PM

**"Embracing the Dream"** is the theme for this virtual event. [Click here](#) for more information.



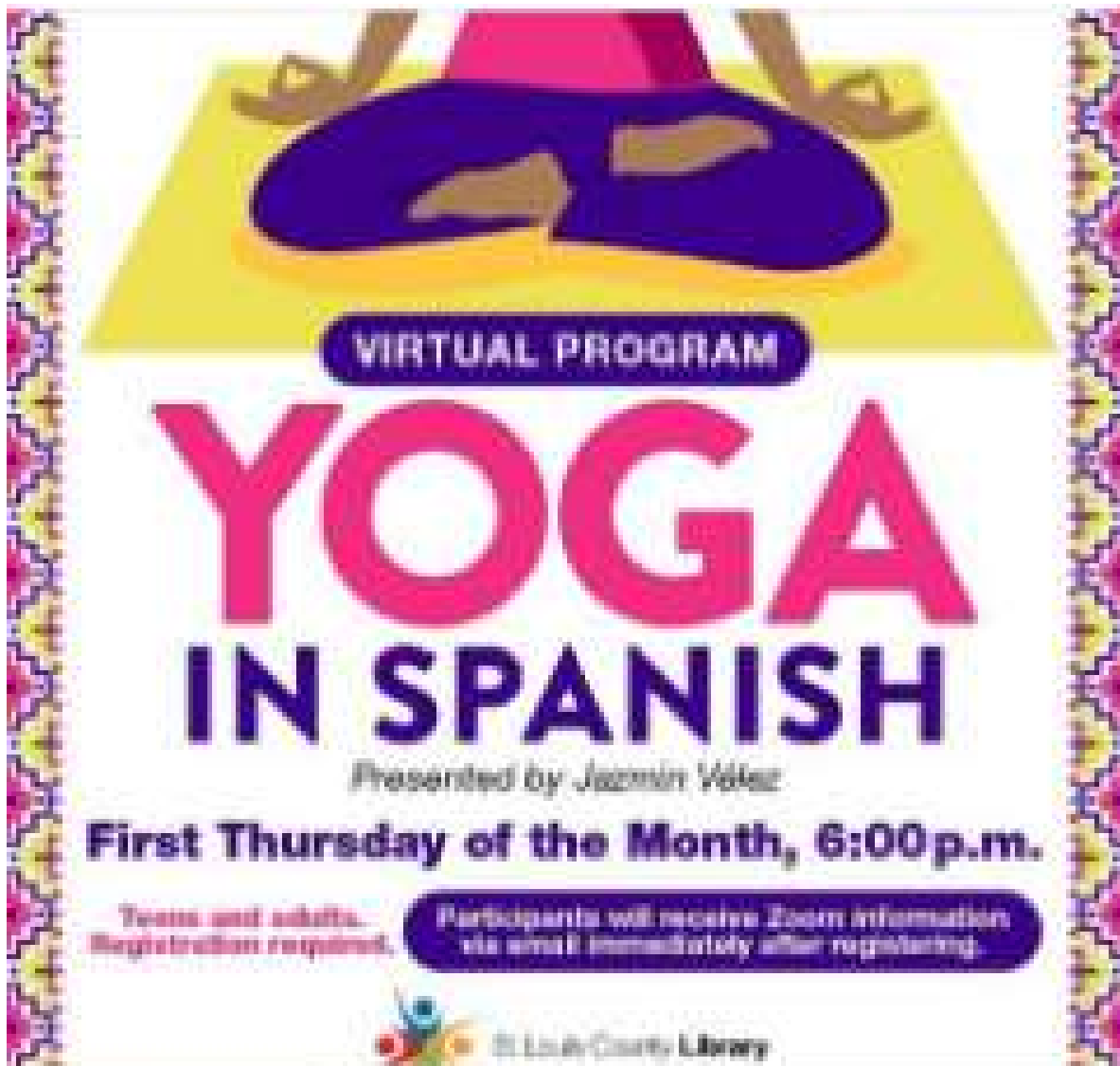
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Tuesday, January 19, 2021  
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley and North County Churches Uniting for Racial Harmony and Justice will virtually host their annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration.

Visit [STLCC's YouTube Channel](#) to watch the event and [stlcc.edu](http://stlcc.edu) for details.

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Practice yoga poses to relieve stress, increase strength and improve flexibility. This class will be taught in both Spanish and English. [Click here](#) to sign up to participate.

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St. Louis County **Library**

**Virtual Program: Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19**

January 20, 2021  
7:00 - 8:00 PM  
Online

Presented by Places for People. Learn skills and techniques for identifying and managing stress, keeping your mental health intact and coping with the effects of COVID-19. Adults and teens. Registration required. Participants will receive Zoom information via email. [Click here](#) to register.






**HORTICULTURE**  
NUTRITION & HEALTH  
SUSTAINABLE LIVING SERIES

This series of online workshops will assist practitioners and novices on the steps to sustainable living.

To register, search our events at:  
[extension.missouri.edu/stioulia](https://extension.missouri.edu/stioulia)

**\$12** per individual course  
\$30 for three courses | \$75 for the entire series

  
**Extension**  
University of Missouri

MU Extension launches a series of online workshops to assist practitioners and novices on the steps to sustainable living.

Sessions will be via Zoom. [Click here to Register](#) and for more information.



### Join Tiny Tritons & Circus Kaput for a Kids Variety Show

Saturday, January 23, 2021  
10:00 – 11:00 AM  
Online

Join UMSL Tiny Tritons for an hour of interactive fun! Kids will be entertained through watching magic tricks (and learning some of their own tricks), watching funny skits, and interacting with each other. This, free, fun variety show is no to be missed!

[RSVP](#) to receive the login link.

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## Candidates Announced for the 2021 St. Louis County Extension Council Elections

### Elections Held:

January 17 & 31, 2021

The St. Louis County Extension Council is excited to announce the seven (7) candidates for its upcoming election. St. Louis County Extension Council members are responsible for the local fiscal management and work with Extension specialists and staff in educational programming.

Current St. Louis County residents, 18 years of age or older, are eligible to vote. Information about the University of Missouri Extension of St. Louis County, as well as, where to cast a ballot in this election, can be found at [extension.missouri.edu/stlouis](http://extension.missouri.edu/stlouis)

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### Great Rivers Greenway Strategic Plan OPEN for Comment through January 15, 2021

Great Rivers Greenway updates their strategic plan every 5 years with public input and wants your help envisioning their next 20 years working side-by-side with the St. Louis Community.

Everyone who takes this survey (open through January 15, 2021) will be entered in a drawing to receive a \$300 gift card to the grocery store of their choice.

[Take their "Envision the next 20 years" survey here.](#)

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In case you missed their newsletter, **the STL Vacancy Collaborative recently released their own, *2020 Year in Review*.**

[Read here](#) about the various steps they took toward accomplishing the goals outlined in the 18-month work plan which was released in February 2020! For more information or to receive updates, [click here](#).

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**Urban Vacancy and Abandonment**

February 3 and 10 at 3:30 PM

Online

The first program of the UniverCities Exchange series in 2021 will focus on the vacancy challenges in St. Louis and Kansas City. Free and open to the public, this two-part series on abandoned structures and houses will be held online. Information and registration links can be found at <https://community.umsl.edu/>.

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