

THE Community VOICE

A trusted voice from the community's perspective

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Free



VOLUME 28 NUMBER 23 www.communityvoiceks.com DECEMBER 02, 2021

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PUBLISHER - Kurt Oswald

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Publisher's Delivery Solutions

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Kansas City:
e-mail: cVoiceKC@tcvpub.com
Phone: 316-681-1155

The Community Voice
(ISSN 1090-3852)

Subscribe: Published biweekly for \$27.95 per year in Sedgwick County, \$35.95 per year outside Sedgwick County by:
TCV Publishing, Inc.
2918 E. Douglas
Wichita, KS 67214

Standard postage paid in Wichita, KS.
POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to:
The Community Voice
P.O. Box 20804
Wichita, KS 67208

Rip Gooch, Who Stood Strong for the Community, Passed Away

Rip Gooch, besides being a great citizen of the world, was patriarch of the Gooch family who has owned and operated The Community Voice for the 25 years

By Bonita Gooch
His Daughter

The American Gospel song “Stand” was one of Rip Gooch’s favorites, probably because it reflected the philosophy of this strong community servant, business and family man, who gave his all in every area of his life.

The song asks, “What do you give when you've given your all?”

The answer? “Just stand”

“You just stand, watch the lord see you through

Yes, after you've done all you can
You just stand”

Rip Gooch stood strong for 98 years, but on Nov. 24, his stand ended.

As a pilot, Rip took his final flight.

You may know Rip from the many aspects of his life and there were many. He impacted so many people in so many ways.

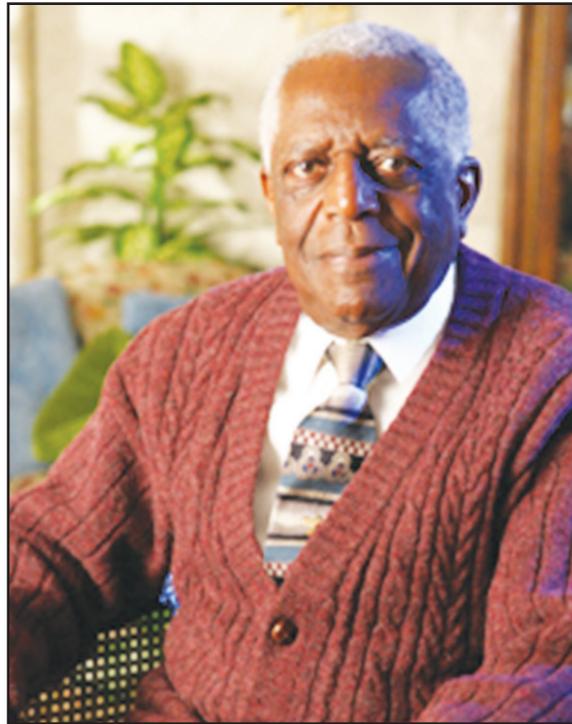
When he arrived in Wichita, KS, from Tennessee in the early 1950s to work at Boeing Aircraft, he, his wife Augusta and daughter Camellia arrived during a big boom time. The city was growing so fast you could hardly find a place to stay. They ended up in small basement apartment and, before long, were also operating the Water Street Cafe.

At a time when Black employees were relegated to the assembly line, Rip became one of Boeing’s first Black quality inspectors, but Rip’s real desire was to fly airplanes. Rip was a novelty: a rare Black airplane pilot. He had learned to fly using his GI Bill. Yes, he was also a World War II veteran.

If Rip would have been born a decade or two later, he would have been an airline pilot, but during those days, that wasn’t an option open to “Negroes.” So, Rip used his flying skills to make extra money giving lessons and in the process, made strong friendships and connections beyond the color line, many of which would last a lifetime.

Before long, Rip was teaching some of the city’s leading executives how to fly. He became one of three local Federal Aviation Administration-certified examiners who was authorized to license new airplane pilots (think driver’s license examiner). Over the years he would examine and license hundreds of new pilots.

His aviation industry connections led him to open Aero Services in 1959. It was an aviation flight school, airplane sales, rental, and service business on Rawdon Field, just north of what was then Beech Aircraft. There, he and his team continued to teach future pilots, operated as a Mooney Aircraft dealer, had the company’s pilots working in a number of cities across the country. After several ups and downs in the economy, Rip finally closed what had been a rather successful business after 15 years.



After those days, he went on to become a top-selling new-car salesman and private pilot for Walt Lesline, a Wichita Buick dealer. There was another close friendship that lasted a lifetime, with the couples taking numerous vacations together. Rip was the first Black salesman ever hired by a new car dealer in Wichita. Over the years people continued to come up to Rip to remind them that they had bought a Buick from him.

It was during his time at Walt Lesline Buick that Rip was solicited to begin his career as an elected official. He always insisted he wasn’t a politician; he never liked those guys. He was an “elected official” who served the community, which he did with a thorough commitment to his constituents, first as a Wichita City Council member before being elected as a state senator. He served admirably in the Senate from 1993 - 2004. He retired from the Senate at age 80. At the time, he was the oldest member of the Kansas Legislature.

He left because, as he said, he was “sick and tired of being sick and tired” with the frustrations of the Kansas Senate. Rip worked hard to get things done for his constituents but was frustrated by the partisan politics.

After his retirement, he continued to work to help members of the community, wrote his autobiography “Black Horizons: One Aviator’s Experience in the Post-Tuskegee Era” and spent time on tour speaking and selling his book across the country.

Rip Gooch was a great story teller, and his book

is full of great stories about his life. He’s reprinted and sold out the book several times. There is also a documentary of his life, “From the Bottom,” that has aired on several public television stations across the country and shown at film festivals.

But at the center of Rip Gooch’s life always was his family. He sadly lost his only son, Kerry, who died in an airplane crash, while Rip was serving on the Wichita City Council. He lost his wife of 49 years, Augusta, during his last term in the Senate. He experienced another unexpected loss with the death of his daughter Camellia in 2010. That left Rip and his daughter Bonita as a dynamic, close and supportive duo.

However, adding joy and friendship to Rip’s life was an official but unofficial member added to the family: Ed Andrews. Ed, who was stationed at McConnell Air Force base in the ‘80s, connected with Rip and Augusta around his love of aviation and family. Ed, his wife Rose and their daughter Roshelle will always remain an active and loving part of the Gooch family.

Rip loved his grandchildren immensely: Dorian (Camellia’s daughter) and her husband Phillip Sanders and their two children, Olivia and Phil Jr.; Kerry Jr. and his wife Karmen; Lauren Cheeseborough (Bonita’s daughter); and Roshelle



(Ed’s daughter).

The family enjoyed holidays and vacations together and regular phone calls to Pops, as the grandkids called him, and to Papa, the name he preferred to be called by his great-grandkids. They were regular callers, visitors and a joy to Rip until the end.

After an extended illness, Rip Gooch’s stand ended.

“Stand through the rain

Through the hurt

Yeah, through the pain

Don't you bow, and don't you bend

Don't give up, no, don't give in

Hold on

Just be strong.”

For Rip Gooch, God has stepped in. ●●

NBA STAR TRAE YOUNG'S FOUNDATION ASSISTS IN FEEDING UNDERSERVED FAMILIES DURING THANKSGIVING WEEKEND

Beyond his presence on the court, NBA star Trae Young is known for his philanthropy, and he's continuing to pay it forward this holiday season. According to Sports Illustrated, the Atlanta Hawks point guard recently led a project to feed underserved families in Atlanta.

The initiative was organized through the 23-year-old's organization, the Trae Young Family Foundation. The nonprofit assisted the Atlanta Mission — a homeless shelter in the city that serves thousands of men, women and children — help over 500 families experiencing food insecurity.



Young

rity during Thanksgiving weekend.

The organization reportedly donated over \$15,000 to support the project. Efforts like the one led by the Trae Young Family Foundation are needed as food insecurity remains a pressing issue in Georgia. The Atlanta Community Food Bank reported that the percentage of individuals battling hunger in the state increased from 13% to 16% amid the pandemic.

The basketball star is no stranger to giving back. Last year, he helped erase over \$1 million of medical debt for families in Atlanta who were struggling to make ends meet. Young also made a historic donation when he and his family gifted the city of Norman, OK, with a \$4 million endowment for the creation of a state-of-the-art sports center dubbed The Young Family Center. In January 2020, he was bestowed with the NBA Cares Community Assist Award.

DWAYNE JOHNSON'S 'RED NOTICE' BREAKS RECORDS AS MOST-WATCHED MOVIE ON NETFLIX

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson is celebrating the success of his new Netflix movie "Red Notice," which is the streamer's most-watched film of all time.

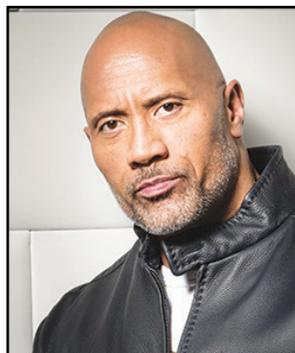
"Red Notice" follows an Interpol agent (Johnson) who partners with an art thief (Ryan Reynolds) to hunt down and capture another of the world's

most wanted criminals, played by Gal Godot.

"It's a history making RED NOTICE @teremana Thanksgiving weekend around the world," Johnson wrote.

"In just 11 days you've officially made RED NOTICE the BIGGEST @Netflix FILM EVER. Shattering all records across the board!!!"

Johnson added that the film was "on its way to becoming the MOST WATCHED @Netflix PROPERTY OF ALL TIME," and that he was "stunned and humbled."



Johnson

TIGER WOODS SAYS "NEVER FULL TIME, EVER AGAIN" TO FUTURE IN PGA TOUR

From the start of his pro career in 1996 all the way to his epic performance during the 2019 Masters, Tiger Woods has defied the odds constantly thrown against him to become one of the most legendary golf players of all time.

However, a February 2021 car crash almost ended everything for the newly-inducted World Golf

Hall of Famer, leaving him in a physical condition that he recently admitted will indefinitely affect his future as a full-time professional golfer.

Speaking with *Golf Digest*, Woods gave his honest take on if he sees himself playing at the same pace as before, stating, "I think something that is realistic is playing the tour one day—never full time, ever again — but pick and choose, just like Mr. [Ben] Hogan did. Pick and choose a few events a year and you play around that. It's an unfortunate reality, but it's my reality. And I understand it, and I accept it."

"I don't have to compete and play against the best players in the world to have a great life. After my back fusion, I can still click off a tournament here or there. But as far as climbing the mountain again and getting all the way to the top, I don't think that's a realistic expectation of me."

Following the crash, Woods went through multiple surgeries and stages of rehabilitation, including three months of bed rest.



Woods

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New Kansas Anti-Vax Bill Sends Mixed Messages to Employers/Employees

By Tim Carpenter & Sherman Smith
The Kansas Reflector

Republican Sen. Rob Olson added his name to the long list of legislators who exited the one-day special session with less than they wanted.

The House and Senate approved

and Gov. Laura Kelly signed a bill supportive of Kansans who objected to COVID-19 vaccination and presented their employers with religious, medical or philosophical objections to a mandate. If subsequently fired for refusing the vaccine, the new state law created a mechanism for anti-vaxxers to qualify for unemployment benefits. It also opened the door to a state-run

Special Session Offers Hint at 2022 Kansas Legislative Session Frustrations

The 2022 session, fueled by election-year politics and reinforced by public frustration with the pandemic, could be a blockbuster. There will be pressure to adopt a medical marijuana law, expand eligibility for Medicaid and implement sports wagering. Don't forget critical race theory, funding of mental health services, election reform and repeal of the sales tax on groceries. And, the Legislature is preparing to redraw Kansas House, Kansas Senate and U.S. House boundaries.

There could be an intriguing debate on the legal theory of "nullification," which some believe would enable the invalidation of any federal law a state viewed as a violation of the U.S. Constitution.

"I think that as we look at the next session ... there will be conversations about going further, and what does that look like, and how can we further protect people? How can we contem-

plate banning mandates?" said Rep. Stephen Owens, a Hesston Republican who served on the special committee on government overreach, which produced the special session bill.

Expect the Legislature to grapple with an assortment of coronavirus bills, including a proposal to add COVID-19 vaccination status to the list of prohibited forms of employment discrimination along with race, religion, color, sex, disability, ancestry, national origin and age.

Waiting in the wings is a measure prohibiting any form of "vaccination passport" indicating who did or didn't get a shot. Another would make it illegal to "profile," or easily identify, people who secured exemptions to vaccination. There could be a bill designed to block businesses from sanctioning workers who take time off the job to get a COVID-19 vaccination.

- Tim Carpenter & Sherman Smith,
The Kansas Reflector



Anti-vaccine protesters observing House debate Nov. 22 from the chamber gallery raise their hands in silent support after being admonished for previous outbursts. (Sherman Smith/Kansas Reflector)

process of financially punishing companies that didn't accept vaccination exemption applications from their workers.

"I can't force someone else to go in and take that vaccination for a job," argued Olson, who said he refused the vaccine. "If it was me, I would quit that job."

Olson proposed during the Senate's debate a simple amendment to House Bill 2001, which would have shielded employers

from paying more into the state's unemployment trust fund if there was a spike in jobless claims. It wasn't part of the final bill because House and Senate GOP leaders blocked a cluster of COVID-19 reform ideas crafted by lawmakers. Olson and the other legislators must wait until start of the 2022 legislative session in January to make their case.

MIXED MANDATES FOR EMPLOYERS

Sen. Tom Holland, a Democrat from Baldwin City, said the COVID-19 bill

adopted during the special session didn't provide clarity for employers faced with a federal vaccination mandate through President Joe Biden's executive order and the state law aimed at countering the president's directive. Depending on action taken, employers in Kansas could be stripped of federal funding or fined through the attorney general's office.

Adding to the turmoil, Holland said,

See ANTI-VAX page 15

Help Available for Kansas Households Behind on Water Bills

- Kansans may apply for the program beginning Dec. 1

Kansas households adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic may benefit from a new program to help restore or prevent disconnection of drinking water and wastewater services.

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) is the administering agency for the Emergency Water Assistance Program (EWAP), a new temporary federal program authorized

by the American Rescue Plan of 2021 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

"The program's sole focus is to restore or prevent disconnection of water to Kansas households," DCF Secretary Laura Howard said. "Kansas was awarded \$9 million to support hardworking Kansas households who have gotten behind on their water bills because of the pandemic."

Once the funding is exhausted, the program will end. Households may apply only once for the program and it is separate from other DCF assistance programs such as the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).

Applications for EWAP will be available Dec. 1. Kansans are encouraged to visit www.DCF.ks.gov/EWAP for information about qualifying and applying for the program. They may also contact their local DCF Service Center, Office Locator Map - Services (ks.gov).

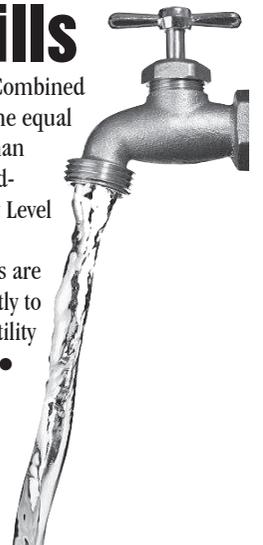
An EWAP qualifying Kansas house-

hold:

- Currently disconnected from drinking water and/or wastewater services or have received a disconnection notice.
- At least one adult household member must be responsible for drinking water and/or wastewater costs incurred at the primary residence payable to either the landlord or to the water utility vendor.
- At least one household member must be a US citizen or meet the lawful residency requirements.

- Combined gross income equal to or less than 150% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

Payments are made directly to the water utility provider. ●●



Missouri Bill Seeks To Forgive Mistakenly Overpaid Unemployment Benefits

• Currently, Missourians can avoid paying the federal benefits back, but not the state, if they are granted a waiver.

Going through an individual waiver process not only requires more work

sistance program — for people who were out of work due to the pandemic

By Rebecca Rivas
The Missouri Independent

The state saw a historic number of Missourians apply for unemployment benefits in 2020.

About 639,000 Missourians filed in the first three months of the COVID pandemic, as businesses shut down to stave off the virus' spread.

"They were encouraged to apply," said Jim Guest, director of the volunteer lawyers program at Legal Services of Eastern Missouri.

Guest was among many service providers across the state who were "swamped" helping people get through the initial unemployment application process.

The state was trying to get the money out to families quickly, he said, which was commendable.

But Missouri — like many other states — later realized that their agencies had made some mistakes. Some people who received unemployment benefits weren't eligible. Others were overpaid.

The state began garnishing wages and putting liens on tax returns of those who were overpaid. Gov. Mike Parson was adamant that he would not accept federal permission to waive overpayments.

In July, the Parson administration changed course. Missourians started receiving letters from the state saying they could avoid paying the federal benefits back if they applied for a waiver within 30 days.

Since the letters went out, the state department of labor has processed approximately 23,000 waiver requests and granted about 10,500 to not pay the federal benefits.

Though it is better than forcing struggling families to pay for the state's mistake, Guest says the overpayments should have simply been forgiven instead of making Missourians jump through bureaucratic hoops.

"It's disappointing to me because it was the state trying to collect benefits

on behalf of the federal government," Guest said. "The federal government wasn't even asking or demanding that they do that. It seems so punitive to me."

Despite the waiver for federal money, these Missourians still have to pay for any state-funded unemployment overpayments — which is something that both House Republicans and Democrats pushed back on this spring, said state Rep. Ian Mackey (D-St. Louis).

Mackey pre-filed legislation Dec. 1 to halt the state from recovering overpayments of COVID-related unemployment benefits for both the state and federal benefits.

"The intent really is just to stop the harassment of these folks who, a year ago, mistakenly received this money and to stop the future harassment of trying to collect it," Mackey said.

BLANKET WAIVER

The U.S. Department of Labor gave state governments the option of doing a "blanket waiver" for people who received more money at no fault of their own.

However, Missouri chose the option to have each person apply for a waiver individually.

This option, the feds advised, would potentially result in "the same amount of overpayment being forgiven, but at a greater cost to the state because of the workload generated from processing individual waivers," according to a May 5 letter from the U.S. Department of Labor.

In addition, the governor demanded that Missouri residents pay back any overpayment residents received from the state, even as a bipartisan group of lawmakers pushed for legislation allowing the state to use federal relief funds to forgive the state debt.

"If this bill were to come back from the Senate with the state portion included and we were able to fund with CARES Act funding ... that is something I would personally be in



Missouri's overpaid benefits can amount to \$4,000 to \$6,000 per person, for a total of \$96 million. The state has sent letters to recipients to return the money.

favor of," said state Rep. Scott Cupps (R-Shell Knob) during a March legislative hearing.

State Rep. Peter Merideth (D-St. Louis) said he receives numerous calls and emails every week about people struggling with this issue.

"If the government makes a mistake, the government shouldn't be hounding you to fix it," Merideth said.

THE LETTER

For many people, the state's letter notifying them that they owe \$4,000 or \$6,000 in unemployment overpayment is intimidating, Guest said.

"I get really worried about the people who we don't even talk to," he said. "They get a letter saying you owe this crazy amount of money, and it scares the heck out of them."

The letter warns of garnishing wages, putting a lien on tax returns and property if people don't fill out a waiver in 30 days or pay back the money. And while it explains the waiver process and a payment plan, Guest says that it's a lot to navigate.

from labor department employees, Guest said, but also from service providers who are helping people fill out the applications and appeals.

"The evidence is that there was a minuscule amount of fraud," he said. "This is not something where people were taking advantage of the system."

The state overpaid roughly \$96 million in unemployment benefits between January and September last year, or about 2% of all the benefits paid out.

In its May letter to state workforce agencies, the U.S. Department of Labor describes two circumstances under which states may process "blanket waivers."

The first scenario is when an individual is eligible for payment under one unemployment program for a given week, but through no fault of the individual, they were paid incorrectly under the pandemic-related programs at a higher weekly benefit amount.

The second scenario is specific to the Pandemic Unemployment As-

— and occurs when, through no fault of the individual, the state paid the individual a minimum weekly benefit amount that did not align with prior department guidance.

"If the state elects to do this, they must apply the blanket waiver to all overpayments meeting these circumstances since the beginning of the CARES Act programs," a U.S. Department of Labor spokesperson told the Missouri Independent. "Individual requests are not required."

Mackey said his bill doesn't outline whether Missouri's labor department continues the individual waiver process or does a blanket waiver. However, he said the amount of potential fraud doesn't warrant the state's manpower.

"Do we really need dozens and dozens and dozens of employees spending dozens of hours a day on this, just to smack the hand of somebody who might have done something they shouldn't have?" Mackey said. "I don't think that's worth it." ●●

“We’re putting
our community
at risk because
of rumors
and lies.
Get the shot.”

-Maggie Thompson, RN

**DON'T WAIT
UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE**

LEARN MORE ABOUT GETTING VACCINATED



Affricana Art Owner Hopes to Increase Accessibility to African Art

By Jazzlyn Johnson
The Community Voice

African art used to be a style marketed to an elite group of art collectors.

While many of Byron Harper's clients are African art curators and collectors, the Kansas City, MO-based gallery owner, is working to push African art to the forefront, expose more people to it and let them know it's accessible for everyone.

"There's an effort to keep African art depressed and to give it some kind of barrier and stereotype that you have to try to overcome," said Harper, who owns Affricana Art in the Location One building, 1734 E. 63rd St., Suite 314.

Harper meets hundreds of new faces every month at his Affricana Art pop ups all over the country and has heard a number of misconceptions people have about African art: that the pieces hold curses, or Voodoo power and that everything costs thousands of dollars.

Since opening Affricana Art in 2017 Harper has sold hundreds of pieces originating from many countries in Africa. He sells everything from jewelry to masks, baskets and statues, with most of his pieces coming from West, Central and East Africa.

Harper has pieces for people with different kinds of budgets, with his items ranging in prices from \$5 to several thousand dollars.

AFRICANA ART GAINING

POPULARITY

When Harper saw several pieces of African art in a recent Architectural Digest video showcasing singer Alicia Keys and her husband, producer Swizz Beatz's California beachside home, he said it helped build his confidence in the growing popularity in African art.

"It's really important for people to see Alicia Keys and Swizz Beatz having African art in their house because people always look to celebrities for the next trends," he said.

Hannah O'Leary, head of modern and contemporary African art at Sotheby's, told "Quartz Africa" that the company has continued to see a rise in African art sales even during the pandemic.

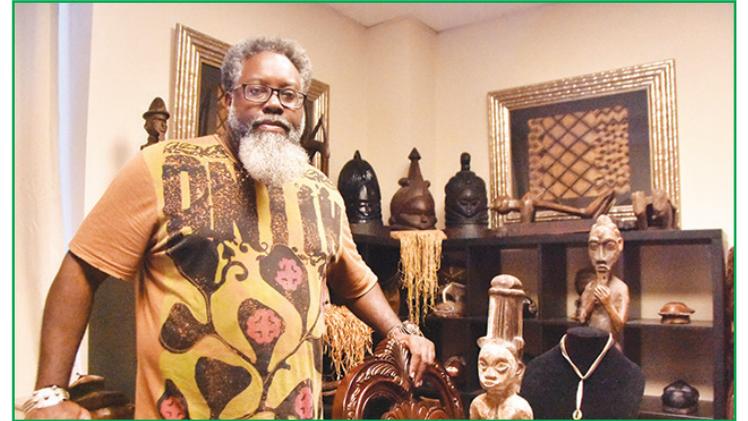
"From 2017 to 2019, we had a 30-50% growth in sales, O'Leary said. "The trajectory was lower last year given the pandemic, but was still a positive growth even as general auction sales went down across other departments."

The company predicts the African art category is poised for even more growth in years to come.

ELEVATING YOUR SPACE WITH AFRICANA ART

With his more than 10 years of experience selling African art, Harper has noticed that many of his clients come back to his gallery because his pieces bring attention and elevation to their home décor.

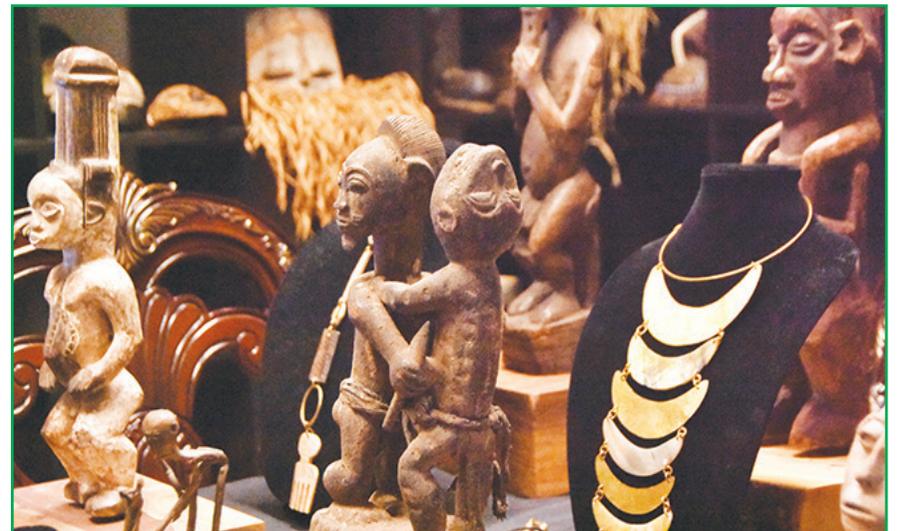
"African art can really elevate your space," he said.



Harper says you can decorate with African art all over your home and suggests hanging masks side-by-side on walls, using statues as centerpieces on a table, baskets as key holders, and some pieces can elevate your space standing on their own.

"I want people to be aware of African art, enjoy it and start to value it," Harper said.

Affricana Art is open by appointment only, Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. To schedule an appointment, visit: <https://AffricanaArt.ecwid.com/>. Check out their Facebook page for upcoming popup events: www.facebook.com/AffricanaArt.



Byron Harper' Affricana Art sells everything from jewelry to masks, baskets and statues from his gallery in the Location One building and popup events.

Jazzlyn Johnson is a Report for America corps member based at The

Community Voice covering Kansas City's African-American community.

There's a Boom in Retiring and Unretiring:

Roughly 2 million more people than expected retired during the height of the pandemic, says a new study. Many of them were forced into retirement after losing their jobs or quitting out of fears of exposure to COVID-19, that doesn't mean they are permanently out of the workforce.

There's a constant flow in and out of retirement, says researcher Owen Davis, who conducted the analysis for The New School's Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis.

While some happily chose to retire early, others were forced into retire-

ment after losing their jobs or quitting out of fears of exposure to COVID-19.

But there's an open question: Are these retirements permanent, or will these workers rejoin the labor force?

The answer could have big implications for the U.S. economy and even the finances of everyday Americans, at a time when overall labor force participation has remained stubbornly low.

The number of retirees re-entering the job market is picking up, according to Nick Bunker, economic research director for North America at Indeed.com.

That's largely a positive thing —

most pandemic-era retirements seem to have been for "bad" reasons (forced retirements amid a health crisis) rather than "good" ones (like inflated nest eggs), he said.

- [The trend] suggests there's a group of people out there who want work and are increasingly finding it," Bunker said.

Bunker analyzed data from the Current Population Survey (a household survey from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



There has been a noticeable pickup in "unretirement" relative to other periods during the pandemic, says a new study.

See **UNRETIRE** page 10

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Post Pandemic Buy Black Saturday a Step Towards Normalcy

After taking the event virtual last year in the midst of the pandemic, this year, the annual Buy Black Saturday marketplace returned for a COVID-aware-ninth year.

Prior to the pandemic, the event sponsored by the Kansas City Chapter of the National Black United Front had gained a reputation as an excellent shopping opportunity to buy cultural gifts and support Black-owned businesses. The event returned with its reputation in tack.

Shoppers found plenty to buy from a group of creative artisans who had an array of jewelry, clothing, ties, soaps, skin care creams, scents, and candles. Even The Community Voice was on hand, introducing people to our online platforms and signing Kansas City readers up for the new KC Voice Online newsletter that will launch this month.

The Kansas City Chapter of the Black United Front is an affiliate of the national organization that values self-help, economic opportunity, positive community change and social justice. The National Black United Front (NBUF) was founded in Brooklyn, New York in 1980 with a goal of uniting, educating and organizing African-Americans nationwide.

In addition to Buy Black Saturday, BUF Kansas City holds monthly meetings and an array of cultural activities. They are also a strong leading organization in the KC reparations movement.

BUF KC is also well known for sponsoring the week-long Kansas City Kwanzaa celebration. This year they will hold their 40th annual Kwanzaa celebration. Kansas City is one of only a handful of cities nationwide that celebrates Kwanzaa a full seven days.

The first six days, Dec. 26-Dec. 31, are celebrated at the Historic Gem Theater on 18th and Vine, Kansas City, MO. Each evening begins at 6 p.m. with an African Market. So if you missed the vendors at the Buy Black Saturday, you can find even more great cultural items to purchase at Kwanzaa.

We will have more details about the 40th Annual Kwanzaa celebration and each nights programming oin the next issue of The Community Voice and online as soon as it becomes available.



PHOTOS: 1. Wichita vendor Breanna Monk was at home in Kansas City, with the help of her mother, selling her assorted oils and scents. 2. Vendor Lashunda Cole had a great helper young Christian Cole who was creating and selling his notebook paper art on the spot. 3. Crystal with CW's Heal Thyself offered earth based health and wellness items including soap. 4 & 5. The day was about more than vending, the atmosphere was upbeat with music provided by DJ Wren and shoppers were also treated to a great fashion show curated by Artline Agency. Many of the clothes were provided by Africa 2000 in the City Market.



PHOTO: Shopper Ellis White may have purchased this beautiful fan as a Christmas gift. Look surprised if you see it under the tree.

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10 Top 10 UnRetirement Benefits

If you're like many people, the prospects of retirement could seem enviable: more time with family, travel, leisurely days by the lake. The realities of retirement, though, might not be as appealing. Following are 10 reasons you might want or need to unretire:

1. Extra income: It can come in handy! Today's boomers and seniors are at greater risk than ever for being short of cash in retirement for several reasons, including the recession of 2008. In a survey conducted by Home Instead Inc., income was selected by the most respondents as a top motivation for returning to work, and 33% said the best part of returning to work was making money.

2. A remedy for boredom: Fighting boredom was another reason (at 43%) that older adults returned to work, according to Home Instead research. Some people don't anticipate the isolation that can result when they leave the workforce or the absence of the type of work that gave their lives meaning and purpose.

3. You're boosting Social Security and the economy: Over the next 10 years, workers 55 and older are expected to become an even larger portion of the U.S. workforce, rising from 23.1% in 2017 to 23.7% in 2027, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Theoretically, people who are working longer will continue paying into Social Security, delaying benefit payments.

4. An antidote for brain drain: Research boosts the "use it or lose it" theory about brainpower and staying mentally sharp. People who delay retirement have less risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia, a study of nearly a half a million people in France found. For each additional year of work, the risk of getting dementia is reduced by 3.2%.

5. Increased energy: Work, especially a job you enjoy, could be invigorating and give you a reason to jump out of bed in the morning and renew your outlook on life.

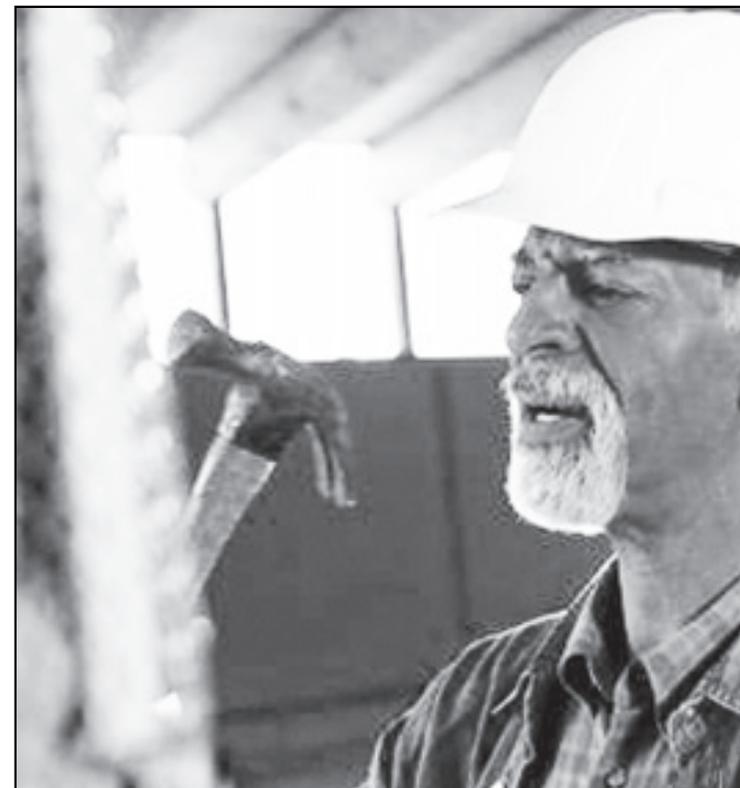
6. Mentoring give and take: It

can be fulfilling to pass along advice to co-workers from years of experience in the workforce. However, you'll learn plenty from other generations as well.

7. A longer life: Research has shown that working longer correlates to longevity. The researchers found that healthy adults who retired one year past age 65 had an 11% lower risk of death from all causes, even when taking into account demographic, lifestyle and health issues. Adults who described themselves as unhealthy were also likely to live longer if they kept working, the findings showed.

8. Better health: Without the structure of a job, healthy habits could slide. More employers than ever have wellness programs, health incentives and benefits. Absent that support, it could be more difficult to keep weight down and activity levels up.

9. Emotional support: Aging can bring loss as friends and family members pass away or move. Your parents may be gone as well as your spouse.

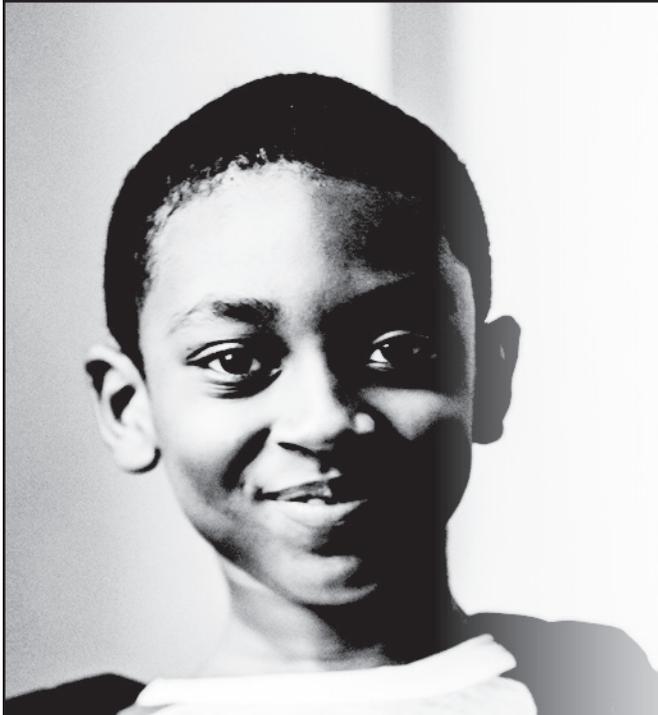


Benefits of "unretiring" include boosting physical, mental and social health, as well as making extra income.

The support of a work family and co-workers can mean a lot when you're facing loss. For some, the distractions of a job can help ease the pain of losing someone you love as well.

10. Social connections: Many people will tell you they count their

closest friends among individuals they have met on the job. From workplace outings to after-hours get-togethers, the social connections you make at work could last well into your retirement years. And staying connected is important to healthy aging. ●●





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UNRETIRE from page 7

used to piece together part of the monthly jobs report) to determine the so-called unretirement rate.

(Of the people who reported being retired in 2020, this rate measures the percentage who said they were employed 12 months later.)

In October 2021, the unretirement rate was 2.6%, above the 2.5% rate for September and 2.4% in August, Bunker found.

This is a noticeable pickup in "unretirement" relative to other periods during the pandemic, he said. The rate had cratered to 2.1% by June 2020.

The current rate is still a bit below its pre-pandemic trend around 2.5%-3%, Bunker said.

BOUNCING BACK

But even seemingly small upward shifts in that rate can have a meaningful impact since it applies across a huge

swath of people, according to Aaron Sojourner, a labor economist and associate professor at the University of Minnesota.

"We can see there's some reversal occurring now," Sojourner said. "We seem to be bouncing back a little bit."

Covid vaccination rates are climbing; restraints on childcare seem to be easing, relieving grandparents of care responsibilities they may have shouldered for working parents; job prospects are improving and wages are rising. ●●



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Philip Morris Wants Cigarettes Banned by 2030?

Philip Morris, maker of Marlboro and other major cigarette brands, drew attention a few months ago when they announced they wanted combustible cigarettes banned by 2030 in the UK. This announcement wasn't about getting people to quit tobacco. Instead, it was more about switching smokers to other addictive forms of nicotine, like their IQOS systems that heats tobacco rather than burns it.

"Our objective is a world without cigarettes; a world where cigarettes are replaced by smoke-free alternatives that are a better choice than continued smoking," said Jacek Olczak, the chief executive officer of PMI, in a press statement.

By heating tobacco without burning it, IQOS gives users vapor and flavor without the hazards of smoke and tar from cigarettes, cigars and pipes, the company says. It's different from e-cigarettes, another popular "reduced risk" product, which don't contain tobacco but instead vaporize a liquid usually containing nicotine.

Philip Morris says research it has funded shows health risks are reduced with IQOS, though they are not zero. The device's lower temperatures release less cancer-causing substances than when tobacco is burned in regular smoking, while still providing nicotine to the user.

PMI press statements says wider use of the device would help people's



health. Critics accuse the company of glossing over the hazards in its effort to lure new generations of tobacco users, an allegation it denies.

A study by tobacco researchers at Stanford University says such promotions are part of the company's "normalization" strategy. That strategy, it says, aims to scrub the company's image as a maker of cigarettes that cause cancer ... and market its smoking alternatives as youthful, upscale lifestyle products. The Stanford professor who led the study says Philip Morris is trying to resurrect the glory era of smoking by associating IQOS with a glamorous and stylish lifestyle.

Already, PMI generates a quarter of its \$28 billion in sales from smoke-

free products, and aims to boost that share to more than half by 2025.

The smoke-free revolution is also one of necessity: Cigarette sales in the developed world have been declining, and government regulation is getting tougher. The U.S. is considering a total ban on menthol cigarettes, while Brookline, a suburb of Boston, is going to prohibit tobacco sales to anyone born this century.

Earlier this year, Ruth Malone, a professor at the University of California-San Francisco and editor in chief of the Tobacco Control journal, wrote an op-ed in the British Medical Journal criticizing the tobacco industry's embrace of "harm reduction" as a way to weaken tobacco control and take over the narrative about their products.

Given how hard some smokers find it to quit, some authorities, like Public Health England, are taking a more relaxed stance on new products, saying

they can be a tool to help people. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized IQOS to be marketed as a modified risk tobacco product, meaning switching can reduce a person's exposure to harmful chemicals.

A whopping 68% of adult US

tobacco users want to quit tobacco, and 55% make a quit attempt every year, according to CDC. Unfortunately, just 7.5% of smokers who try to quit succeed initially, and many return to tobacco use within one year of quitting. ●●

Quitting Smoking Can be Hard

Most adult cigarette smokers want to quit.

- In 2015, 68% of adult smokers (22.7 million) said that they wanted to quit smoking.

More than half of adult cigarette smokers report having made a quit attempt in the past year.

- In 2018, 55.1% of adult smokers (21.5 million) said that they had made a quit attempt in the past year.

Fewer than one in ten adult cigarette smokers succeed in quitting each year.

- In 2018, 7.5% of adult smokers

(2.9 million) successfully quit smoking in the past year.

Four out of every nine adult cigarette smokers who saw a health professional during the past year did not receive advice to quit.

- In 2015, 57.2% of adult smokers (18.8 million) who had seen a health professional in the past year reported receiving advice to quit.

- Even brief advice to quit (less than 3 minutes) from a physician improves cessation rates and is highly cost-effective. ●●

Philip Morris IQOS Imports Barred From U.S.

Philip Morris International Inc. and partner Altria Group Inc. have to stop importing their IQOS heated-tobacco sticks into the U.S. after a deadline passed Nov. 29 without any action by the Biden administration to stop it.

Philip Morris and Reynolds America Inc. had each been talking with administration officials since

September, when the International Trade Commission ordered the import ban in September after finding that IQOS infringed two Reynolds patents for electrically-powered devices with a heater to generate an aerosol. The order entered a 60-day presidential review period.

The order entered a 60-day presidential review period. In an email

Nov. 29, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative confirmed no action was taken, which means the ban automatically took effect. The next step for Philip Morris and Altria is to seek a delay with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, the nation's top patent court, which will hear any appeal of the underlying patent case. ●●

The Latest Technology: Tobacco Heating Systems

Time passes and progress does not stand still. Such is the case with electronic cigarettes.

Introduced for sale in America approximately 15 years ago, like most technology, the product has changed considerably.

The Community Voice wrote our first articles about these "new fangled" smoking devices in Sept. 2019 with a headline "Are E-Cigs Less Addictive Than Regular Cigarettes?" (The answer to that question is yes they are.) Even since that article, the technology

has changed considerably.

The early standard of the product was vaping. These devices are still available and remain popular for vaping purist whom might be compared to the cigarette smoker who prefers to roll his own smokes. Vaping requires a vaporizers that has a tank that holds the vape liquid. As the tank gets low, or if you want to change flavors, you simply add additional e-liquid of your preferred flavor and nicotine strength to the tank.

Electronic cigarettes are often

referred to as "cigalikes" because they were created to imitate the look and feel of a traditional (combustible) cigarette. They generally consist of a one-piece unit that you use until it runs out and then throw it away. Unlike traditional vaping, you can buy brands, just like you buy tobacco brands. Users often find a brand and stick to it, expecting the same flavor and taste consistently.

Today, not only are ordinary cigarettes losing their relevance, but even vapes and e-cigarettes which

are already considered obsolete. They were replaced by two new generations of electronic devices for smokers: tobacco heating systems (IQOS, glo, jouz) and salt vapes, also known as pod-systems (JUUL, Logic Compact, Joint).

Both of these types of devices are the newest generation of smoking devices. But in technology and user experience, they are strikingly different.

LIQUID VAPING WITH

NICOTINE SALTS:

This system is a close cousin of traditional vaping, which is based on evaporation of a



See **TOBACCO** page 15

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14 US Panel Backs First-of-a-Kind COVID-19 Pill From Merck

A panel of U.S. health advisers on Nov. 30 narrowly backed a closely watched COVID-19 pill from Merck, setting the stage for a likely authorization of the first drug that Americans could take at home to treat the coronavirus.

The Food and Drug Administration panel voted 13-10 that the antiviral drug's benefits outweigh its risks, including potential birth defects if used during pregnancy.

"I see this as an incredibly difficult decision with many more questions than answers," said panel chair Dr. Lindsey Baden of Harvard Medical School, who voted in favor of the drug. He said FDA would have to carefully tailor the drug's use for patients who stand to benefit most.

The recommendation came after hours of debate about the drug's modest benefits and potential safety issues. On Nov. 26, Merck released updated data that paint a less compelling picture of the drug's effectiveness than just a few weeks earlier.

Merck said final study results showed molnupiravir reduced hospitalization and death by 30% among adults infected with the coronavirus, when compared with adults taking a placebo. That effect was significantly less than the 50% reduction it first an-

nounced based on incomplete results.

Most experts backing the treatment stressed that it should not be used by anyone who is pregnant and called on FDA to recommend extra precautions before the drug is prescribed, such as pregnancy tests for women of child-bearing age. FDA scientists told the panelists earlier Nov. 30 that company studies in rats showed the drug caused birth defects when given at very high doses. FDA staffers concluded the data "suggest that molnupiravir may cause fetal harm when administered to pregnant individuals."

The vote specifically backed the drug for adults with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 who face the greatest risks, including older people and those with conditions like obesity and asthma.

The FDA isn't bound by the panel's recommendation and is expected to make its own decision before year's end. The antiviral is already authorized in the U.K.

Merck's drug uses a novel approach to fight COVID-19: It inserts tiny errors into the coronavirus' genetic code to stop it from reproducing. That genetic effect has raised concerns that the drug could spur more virulent strains of the virus.

While Merck and its partner Ridge-



Merck & Co. shows its new antiviral medication molnupiravir. An experimental COVID-19 drug that could soon become the first U.S.-authorized pill to treat the coronavirus faced one final hurdle ahead of FDA authorization: A panel of government experts scrutinized data on the medication from drugmaker Merck. (Merck & Co. via AP)

back Biotherapeutics were the first to submit their COVID-19 pill to the FDA, rival drugmaker Pfizer is close behind with its own pill under review.

Pfizer's drug is part of a decades-old family of antiviral pills known as protease inhibitors, a standard

treatment for HIV and hepatitis C. They work differently than Merck's pill and haven't been linked to the kind of mutation concerns raised with Merck's drug.

Both drugs require patients to take multiple pills, twice a day for five days.

The U.S. government has agreed to purchase 10 million treatment courses of Pfizer's drug, if it's authorized. That's more than three times the government's purchase agreement with Merck for 3.1 million courses of molnupiravir. ●●

First Long-Acting Option HIV Prevention Approved For Use

The first long-acting option to protect women from HIV has been recommended for use by the World Health Organization (WHO).

For nearly two decades, researchers from the School of Pharmacy at Queen's University Belfast have been supporting development of a new drug-releasing vaginal ring to protect women from infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). It will be the first long-acting option that women can use to reduce their risk of HIV transmission representing an important milestone in prevention technologies.

The monthly dapivirine ring, developed by the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) with critical research and development support by Queen's University Belfast and other organizations, is expected to reach

market in 2022 in sub-Saharan Africa, where women's needs for urgent prevention is needed.

HIV, which if left untreated leads to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), is a major global disease and remains a leading threat to women's health and well-being worldwide. According to recent estimates, 37.7 million people globally were living with HIV in 2020. Despite global progress against the epidemic, HIV/AIDS continues to be one of the primary causes of death among women of reproductive age in sub-Saharan Africa.

The ring is made of silicone elastomer, a flexible rubber-like material that is easy to insert and comfortable to use. The ring works by releasing the antiretroviral drug dapivirine from the ring into the vagina slowly over 28 days. The sustained delivery

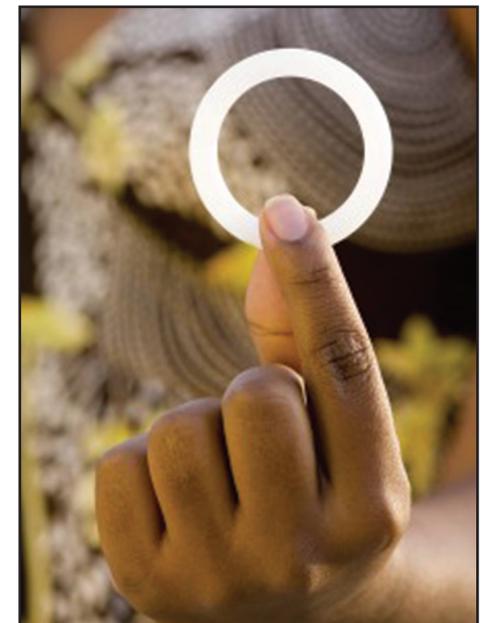
of the antiretroviral drug, dapivirine, has previously been shown to reduce HIV infection in two large-scale clinical trials, supporting its later market approval.

Professors in the School of Pharmacy at Queen's University Belfast have long been involved in developing tools for women, including different types of vaginal rings, and are collaborators with the not-for-profit International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) to develop a range of products designed to protect women against HIV and unintended pregnancy, with a focus on the need for solutions that are long acting and female-controlled.

IPM and the Microbicide Trials Network conducted two large-scale randomized clinical trials that found the

WORLD AIDS DAY
DECEMBER 1

ring to reduce the overall risk of HIV-1 infection in women by 35% and 27%, respectively. Further studies suggested an improved risk reduction of about 50%. Queen's researchers are also working with on a product, providing continuous release of two drugs – dapivirine and levonorgestrel – over three months, for protection against both sexually-transmitted HIV infection and unintended pregnancy. ●●



HIV Prevention Ring

TOBACCO from page 12

liquid using an electric heater. But in a more modern implementation.

For quite a long time, chemists have known how to make synthetic nicotine, similar in composition and effect to natural. It is diluted with glycerin and propylene glycol, and that way we get the liquid, which is used in classic vape and electronic cigarettes.

There are disadvantages of classic vapes: you do not oversmoke because glycerin vapor and liquid nicotine have large molecules that are slowly absorbed into the blood. Because of this, you have to vape a lot and often.

But if you add acids to nicotine, you get nicotine salts. The key to nicotine salts is that they have fewer molecules, and by entering the blood, they are absorbed much faster – in much the same way as nicotine from natural tobacco or tobacco sticks.

When we sorted that out, the nicotine salts vape tech was created. These are also called pod-systems, as nicotine salts are stored in small cartridges – the so-called pods. Let's

look at them.

Some of the products in this category are Juul, Logic Compact and Joint.

They are slightly different in size and shape, but the principle is one – they are small elongated steel tubes, with a charging connector, from the reverse end they receive closed capsules called pods, that contain the nicotine salts. On the bottom of the capsule is a magnet that connects to the heating device on the other end. The top of the capsule is the mouthpiece for drawing the vapors.

The main advantages of salt vapes: a short session of use, a feeling that you smoked enough. There are still a lot of tastes and they are less harmful than cigarettes. In addition, it is possible to get rid of the large tank with liquid involved with traditional vaping.

TOBACCO HEATING SYSTEMS

This is the entry into the market by traditional tobacco companies, trying to maintain their profits by entering the “smokeless” market. Unlike vapes that use liquid nicotine, these products use tobacco. The key play-

ers in this market are IQOS by Phillip Morris and Glo with both having similar operating principles.

Both use tobacco sticks, very similar to regular cigarettes. The tobacco in the sticks does not burn, instead it heats up to 250-350 degrees, releasing tobacco steam. You inhale the steam receiving the tobacco taste and nicotine. There is no burning, so there is no harmful smoke and tar does not enter the lungs.

The design of the Glo and IQOS are different, but sensations for both come very close to the classic taste of tobacco. Sensations during the session: very close to the classic taste of tobacco, and at the same time the taste is also slightly different for these devices, or rather, tobacco sticks. The cigarettes or “heets” used in the devices are marketed on their richness of their tobacco flavor, unlike liquid nicotine which is often marketed in a variety of fruity and sweet flavors.

If price is your issue, according to vapebeat.com IQOS' heels are cheaper than Juul's pods. “The IQOS is – generally speaking – a cheaper device to run in the short, medium, and long term.” ●●

ANTI-VAX from page 4

was the reality of Kansas being a right-to-work state. In other words, Kansas is an at-will employment state, which enables an employer to fire an employee for any reason or for no reason at all.

“We're giving Kansas citizens the false impression that they are getting additional privileges and rights which violate that right-to-work tenant,” Holland said. “This bill did not do our Kansas employers any favors. It creates confusion.”

House Minority Leader Tom Sawyer, a Wichita Democrat, said he understood the frustration with federal mandates associated with the pandemic. He said he was upset with the possibility of people losing jobs, but was convinced state legislators couldn't overrule federal mandates.

“Whatever we do here today does not change the fact that federal mandate is still in place,” Sawyer said. “That's

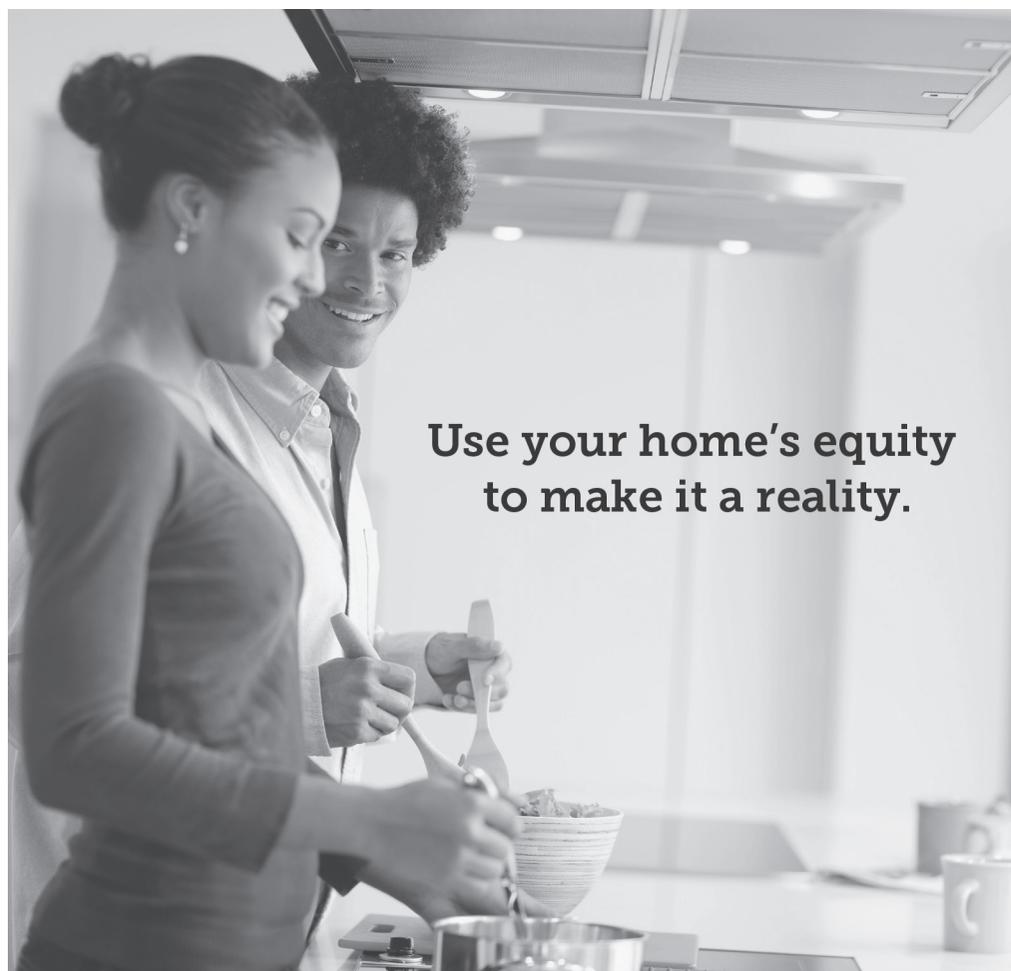
been adjudicated by the courts. The courts will decide that issue. We need to be very careful.”

Sawyer said he was wary of legislators driven to “hurry up and do something, and then there's lots of unintended consequences later.”

“All we're doing is adding some additional regulations and mandates on our businesses,” Sawyer said. “We're trying to solve a problem we can't solve.”

Senate Minority Leader Dinah Sykes, the Democrat from Lenexa, said Kansans were justifiably eager to put the coronavirus behind them. She said people would be justified to seek worker rights affirmed by state government. House Bill 2001, she said, delivered little more than a false sense of security.

“It does not guarantee that you will have a job regardless of your personal health choices or religious beliefs. Instead, it provides a patina of support while leaving Kansas businesses in an impossible position,” Sykes said. ●●



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Education

Test Scores Show Kansas Students Fell Further Behind During Pandemic

• Before the pandemic, 28% of students were below grade level in math. After the pandemic, that number shot to about 34%. In language arts, the falling-behind number went from 27% to just over 30%.

By Suzanne Perez
Kansas News Service

It turns out a year of shutdowns and quarantines generated lousy test scores for schoolchildren across Kansas.

More than 30% of students fell behind their grade level in math and language arts in the 2020-21 school year.

That marked a sharp decline that lines up with the COVID-19 shutdown of in-person school in the spring of 2020 and launched the following school year into an ad hoc combination of online teaching and stop-and-start opening of school buildings.

Before the pandemic, 28% of students were below grade level in math. After the pandemic, that number shot to about 34%. In language arts, the falling-behind number went from 27% to just over 30%.

The picture for high-schoolers is more grim: 47% scored below grade level in math, up from 41% two years ago. About 35% scored below grade level in English language arts.

The scores offer one metric in understanding the potential learning loss caused by the pandemic.

Gov. Laura Kelly ordered schools closed in March 2020, and schools have since been disrupted by switches to remote or hybrid learning plans,

COVID outbreaks, quarantines and staff shortages.

Kansas Education Commissioner Randy Watson said comparisons with previous years are complicated. Tests weren't administered in 2020 because of school closures, and not all students took them this past spring.

But he said Kansas isn't alone. "Every data point we have is down," Watson said, "and so is everyone else's

across the country."

Results from the state tests are searchable by district and individual

Wichita, the state's largest school district, showed dramatic declines, with 58% of students scoring at the lowest



Students in public school districts around Kansas have fallen behind on skills this year, likely as a result of pandemic interruptions that included closures and moving to online classes.

“Wichita showed dramatic declines, with 58% of students scoring at the lowest level in math — up from 46% in 2019.”

level in math — up from 46% in 2019. About 48% of Wichita students scored below grade level in English language arts — up from 44% in 2019.

Among Wichita high school students, more than 68% scored below grade level in math, up from about 60% in 2019.

Other key findings from the 2021 state test results:

- Students tend to fall further behind their respective grade levels the older they get. About 77% of third-graders met or exceeded grade-level expectations in math. By eighth grade, that number is only 65%. Among high-schoolers, only 53% met grade-level standards.

- Across grade levels, there remains a significant achievement gap between

schools on the Kansas Department of Education website, at <http://KSReportCard.ksde.org/>.

Statewide, results from the 2021 test scores showed declines in most areas. Only 28% of Kansas students were considered on track for college or career in math, and about 35% in language arts — a drop of four percentage points in math and one point in English since 2019.

See **SCORES** page 23

KCPD Officer Found Guilty, New Audio Brings Scrutiny to Department

By Jazzlyn Johnson
The Community Voice

Two weeks after Kansas City Police Department detective Eric DeValkenaere was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and armed criminal action in the death of Cameron Lamb, the department is facing additional scrutiny.

Jackson County prosecutors released audio from KCPD Chief Rick Smith saying, “Everyone’s good, house is clear, bad guy is dead,” minutes after plain-clothed DeValkenaere shot and killed Lamb while he was backing his truck into his garage.

“As a father of a Black son and as a Black man, it pains me to hear audio during an official police investigation that denigrates a fellow human being,” said Mayor Quinton Lucas in reaction

to the footage. “I will ask Chief Smith about the veracity of the audio and will withhold further comment until after our discussion.”

DeValkenaere testified during the weeklong trial that he and KCPD detective Troy Schwalm followed Lamb’s vehicle to his residence at 4154 College Ave., where they knocked over a grill and car hood to get to the backyard where Lamb was backing into his garage.

DeValkenaere said he saw Lamb pull out a gun and point it at Schwalm. Schwalm said he did not see a gun in Lamb’s hands. DeValkenaere testified saying there was no time to deescalate the situation and that he needed to back up his partner.

Police say Lamb had his left arm and head hanging out of the driver’s side window and on the ground near

his left hand was a handgun. Prosecutors during the trial argued the crime

scene was tampered with and evidence was planted.

The prosecution also argued that DeValkenaere violated Lamb’s Fourth Amendment rights when the officers entered the property without a warrant, which makes any actions the officers make unconstitutional and possibly criminal. In that case, prosecutors

See GUILTY page 23



(L) Cameron Lamb and his three children. (R) KCPD Det. Eric DeValkenaere was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter in Lamb’s killing, during which the detective illegally entered Lamb’s backyard.



KC Planning for Winter Sheltering for Unhoused

Kansas City is working to create more sheltering options for the unhoused as temperatures begin to drop. The Housing and Community Development Department conservatively estimates that there are 1,700 to 2,000 unhoused people in Kansas City, with an increase expected in the next year.

To keep the unhoused safe this winter, the city council approved a \$650,000 contract with existing agencies and services, including community centers, to provide extreme winter weather services for the houseless population.

The city is also putting \$300,000 toward the creation of 34 affordable housing units for houseless and low-income single mothers at Amethyst Place. Construction will start next year and could be completed in 2023.

Working to connect the unhoused with more permanent housing solutions, the city council has issued a proposal for a hotel conversion project to convert the Days Inn Hotel at 5100 Linwood Blvd. into 100 transitional units. The \$1.3 million project will help transition clients into affordable housing, with wrap around services



Kansas City Councilwoman Ryana Parks-Shaw speaks at the City Union Mission Community Assistance Center, surrounded by boxes of winter clothing donations for unhoused people.

Photo: Bek Shackelford-Nwanganga

provided by Lotus Care House.

The city is also proposing a \$1 million tiny home transitional housing project with Hope Faith Homeless Assistance Campus and Merging KC. The project will support 30 pallet-style tiny homes neighboring Hope Faith, which is located at 705 Virginia Ave., near The Paseo and Admiral Boulevard. The site will have 24-hour security services, bathrooms, water

and laundry services onsite. Case workers, counselors and employment assistance will also be available.

The city will continue implementing the Extreme Weather Activation Plan, which enacts when the daytime high is below 32 degrees, or the overnight low is less than 20 degrees. The activation will include:

- KCMO Emergency Operations Center opens a hotline to coordinate shelter bed availability.
- Ride KC offers free bus rides to shelters and

people can warm up on the heated buses.

- When shelters are full, the city will open one or two temporary overflow locations based on need.

“The community’s input has been so important in creating new and better policies,” said 5th District Councilmember Ryana Parks-Shaw. “The issues surrounding houseless-

ness are vast and won’t be solved in one year. This is a positive step in the right direction to provide compassionate, sustainable and intentional solu-

tions to end houselessness in Kansas City. We still have more work to do.”

•• The Community Voice

Dashboard Will Help Coordinate Shelter Bed Availability

An online dashboard to track shelter bed availability is active on the city’s website. The dashboard will be updated daily with data shared by service providers. This dashboard can be used by shelters, community groups, street outreach workers and others to find available

beds quickly.

“When the worst of winter hits, we’ll be ready to help people find shelter space quickly, and make sure that all available space is being used,” said Parks-Shaw. “This new tool is made possible by increased collaboration by the many shelters across the city.” ••

Donations Being Accepted for the Houseless

Kansas City 5th District Councilmember Ryana Parks-Shaw worked with the United Way and the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation to facilitate the creation of a special fund to collect monetary donations to help the unhoused. Funds donated <https://bit.ly/3EfVXaT> or here will be used to buy blankets, clothes and other personal items for the

houseless.

Community members can also drop off supplies including new boots, shoes, blankets, sweatshirts and sweatpants, scarves and sleeping bags at the City Union Mission Community Assistance Center, 1700 E. 8th St., Mon. through Fri. from noon to 6 p.m. and Sat. from 9 a.m. to noon. ••

Evergy Introduces New Missouri Pay as You Save Program

Evergy hopes to help customers reduce their bills while creating more efficient, healthy and comfortable homes through their new Pay As You Save (PAYS) program.

The company will cover all or most of the upfront costs needed to install energy efficient equipment in your home. Evergy will then recover the costs for the upgrades over time by placing a fixed monthly PAYS charge on your utility bill that is less than the estimated annual savings.

Since the new energy efficient upgrades saves money by using less energy, your annual bill should be lower than before. The program enrollment period started in Sept. 2021 and runs through Sept. 30, 2022.

Energy efficiency programs like this one helps Evergy to reach their carbon reduction goals. Efficiency upgrades can be costly, so PAYS provides an opportunity to make major improvements to their home while helping to lower their bill at the same time.

There are no loan, debt, or credit requirements to participate in the program. The monthly charge to your bill that is less than the estimated annual savings is fixed to the metered location, and does not follow you should you move.

ELIGIBILITY

Participation is open to all Missouri residential homeowners and renters (with owner consent), including those in apartments or condos. Mobile home customers can participate, but must be on a permanent foundation and cannot be more than 25 years old.

Regardless of the structure type, the home must be free of structural, health, or safety concerns that could prevent an installed upgrade from functioning in the home for the upgrades' expected lifetime (mold, foundation concerns, water damage, missing roof sections).

GET STARTED

Fill out an interest form to schedule a free home energy assessment, which also includes free installation of energy saving measures such as LED bulbs, smart power strips, faucet aerators and more.

If your home is eligible for more upgrades, you'll also receive a detailed audit and a customized plan outlining the energy saving measures offered through PAYS. If you like the plan, an authorized contractor will perform the installation.

Customer payment history does not affect eligibility for the PAYS program.



Upgrades that are offered at no charge with participation include:

- Low flow Showerheads
- Faucet aerators
- Water heater wraps
- Standard LED lights
- Smart Power Strips

Additional cost-effective measures paid for upfront by Evergy through PAYS include:

- HVAC upgrade
- Attic Insulation
- Air sealing
- Duct sealing
- Heat Pump water heaters
- Smart Thermostats

What does cost-effective mean?

For your offer to be considered "cost effective," the estimated bill

savings from the installation of the upgrades must be more than the cost to install them over a term of no more than 12 years. To ensure the measures installed through PAYS are "cost effective," Evergy will help fund the upfront costs as long as the cost of the equipment and installation are no more than 80% of the estimated annual bill savings over a 12-year period.

What happens if my offer is not fully cost effective?

If the total cost of the recommended upgrades exceeds the estimated savings as described above, then customers will have the option to pay a co-pay, which is a portion of the total project cost you pay directly to the contractor performing the work.

Evergy will then pay the contractor the remaining balance.

There is no cost if the customer decides to not move forward with the upgrades.

The PAYS program does not guarantee bill savings. The net result of participating in the PAYS program is that the annual bill should be lower than it would have been without the upgrades. The PAYS program cannot guarantee a certain level of energy savings since changes in weather, occupant behavior,

or changes in energy rates, can and will always affect the total bill amount.

The PAYS program will apply any existing Evergy rebates on insulation, air sealing, and HVAC upgrades. This helps reduce the overall project cost.

What happens if I move?

The monthly PAYS charge applies to your current residence, so once you move, you're no longer responsible to pay the bill at that location. Instead, whoever lives there next will simply continue to pay the bill and as part of it, the monthly PAYS charge.

Homeowners and landlords are responsible to inform the next owner or tenant of their responsibilities and have them sign an Efficiency Upgrade Notice explaining the PAYS upgrades installed at that location prior to executing a lease or sale.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PAYS

Call 855-907-6930 (toll-free) Monday-Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., or visit Evergy.com/PAYS.

Current PAYS customers should call 877-987-7112 (toll-free) Monday-Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

If a customer falls behind on their bill, Evergy encourages them to reach out immediately so that they can provide the most assistance possible. Contact Evergy at 1-888-471-5275. ●●

More Than \$1 Million Donated to Support Wrongly Convicted Kevin Strickland

By Jazzlyn Johnson
The Community Voice

Just days after wrongly convicted Kevin Strickland was released from prison after serving 43 years for a crime he did not commit, more than 1,000 people had donated more than \$1.6 million to his GoFundMe fundraiser.

The Midwest Innocence Project set up the GoFundMe account as they fought for Strickland's release, noting that he wouldn't receive compensation from the State of Missouri and would need help paying for basic living expenses. The state only allows wrongful imprisonment payments to people who are exonerated through DNA evidence, so the 62-year-old Strickland wouldn't qualify.

Judge James Welsh, a retired Missouri Court of Appeals judge, ordered his

release Nov. 23, finding that evidence used to convict Strickland had since been recanted or disproven.

In 1978, Strickland was 18 years old and convicted by an all-White jury for a triple murder. He maintained his innocence the whole time, telling authorities he was at home watching television.

"I had absolutely nothing to do with these murders," he said. "By no means was I anywhere close to the crime scene."

Cynthia Douglas, a survivor of the shooting, recanted her identification of Strickland at the scene of the crime, but she passed in 2015. Her family testified at Strickland's evidentiary hearing, which began on Nov. 8. They testified that police pressured Douglas to identify Strickland and that her identification of Strickland burdened her up until her death.

Two other men sent to prison for the murders also testified that Strickland was not part of the crime.

In August, Jackson County Prosecutor Jean Peters Baker announced that she was taking legal action to free Strickland.

"Most of us have heard the famous quotation that 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,'" said Jackson County Prosecutor Jean Peters Baker. "Kevin Strickland stands as our own example of what happens when a system set to be just, just gets it terribly wrong."

Gov. Mike Parson refused to issue a pardon for Strickland, saying he wasn't convinced Strickland was innocent. Parson, however, then pardoned Mark and Patricia McCloskey, the St. Louis pair who faced charges for brandishing guns at Black Lives Mat-

ter protesters last year.

As Strickland left prison, he said he was "thankful for God walking me through this for 43 years."

On Nov. 26, Mayor Quinton Lucas honored Strickland at the Mayor's Christmas Tree lighting at Crown Center.

"We welcome Kevin Strickland back to Kansas City. Our community owes him more than we can imagine and we commit to doing all we can to support him," Lucas said. Donate to Strickland's GoFundMe here: www.GoFundMe.com/f/help-kevin-strickland-after-wrongful-conviction. ●●

Jazzlyn Johnson is a

Report for America corps member based at The Community Voice covering Kansas City's African-American community.



Strickland

WSU Reactivating Programming Supporting Neighborhoods Surrounding the Campus

By Malcolm Carter
The Community Voice

In 2014, after the violent rape and murder of Letitia Davis in Fairmount Park, WSU launched its Enough is Enough Campaign to help address community concerns in the nearby Fairmount neighborhood. Initially, the university's efforts focused on the Fairmount neighborhood. However, as initially planned, the university expanded their outreach to include strengthening the identity and economic sustainability of all neighborhoods around the campus.

Earlier this month, the university began a renewed effort to address the concerns of and services to this expanded area, now referred to as the Shocker Neighborhood. The geographic area for the Shocker Neighborhood is bound by Interstate 135 on the west, Oliver on the east, Kansas Highway 96 on the north and Center on the south.

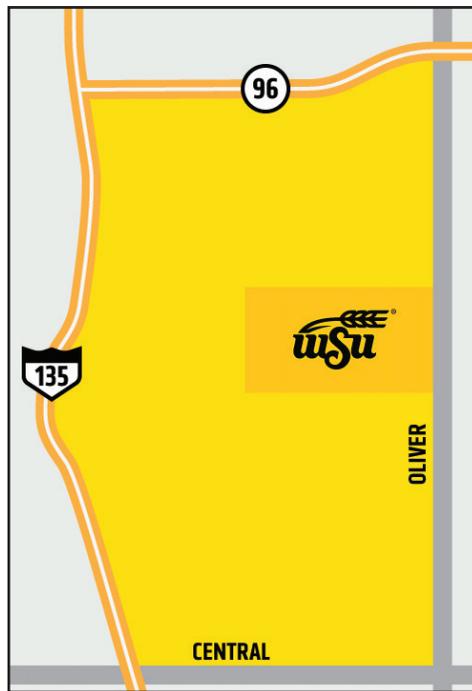
While the university's Office of Engagement is leading the effort, they're supported by a coalition of neighborhood businesses, nonprofits, churches, the Wichita Police Department, USD 259 and community organizations working together to bring prosperity to the neighborhood

and its residents.

The coalition hosted their second meeting at the Atwater Center to discuss their future collective impact on northeast Wichita communities. At the meeting, the Office of Engagement tasked the 30 attendees with working in groups to brainstorm tangible, actionable items the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition could help solve and how they could come together with community members to achieve them.

After discussing several important topics, like better sidewalk lighting and infrastructure, the groups identified education and food insecurity as the top concerns the neighborhood coalition could address within the community.

Lonnie Barnes, a longtime community activist, raised concerns about WSU's history of disenfranchisement and lack of investment in its



Shocker Neighborhood

surrounding community. While pleased with the initial meeting, he encouraged the university's commitment to further reaching out to engage and work with the community and local non-profits.

"WSU has sat in the heart of the Black community for years, and there has been very little interaction

WSU Earns High National Ranking For Its Support Of Low-Income Students

Wichita State University's efforts to recruit and retain students from historically underserved and underrepresented areas rank it in the top 28% of the 2021 Social Mobility Index (SMI).

The 2021 SMI, calculated by Colleg-eNET Inc., benchmarks 1,549 four-year colleges and universities in the United States according to how effectively they enroll students from low-income backgrounds and graduate them into well-paying jobs.

For institutions such as Wichita State, where 22% of students are from traditionally low-income households, the pandemic underscored the need to support their most vulnerable populations.

"Even before the pandemic hit, Wichita State prioritized making education accessible and affordable to underrepresented populations," said Dr. Rick Muma, president of Wichita State. "We know that higher education is a means to boost prosperity and increase socioeconomic status."

Wichita State's strategies to help students includes success coaches, who reach out to first-generation students and students with downward trending grade-point averages. Collaboration with Wichita State's CARE Team, which helps students with health concerns, mental health, academics, financial issues and food insecurity, is also important.

"What this means is that we are not waiting for students to come forward to alert us that they may be struggling in some way," said Kim Sandlin, director of Student Success.

The SMI was founded on the principle that growing disparity in economic opportunity is the most pressing problem of our time, and that higher education is in the strongest position to address it. The SMI seeks to redirect the attribution of prestige away from colleges that are merely wealthy toward those that are advancing U.S. economic opportunity and social mobility. ●●

between both sides," said Barnes. "Our voices unified is what's going to help, doing a survey that shows what

30 people want doesn't make it a

See **SHOCKER** page 20

DEC. 02, 2021

Wichita Library's New Internet Bundle Program Provides Free Home Connectivity

By Malcolm Carter
The Community Voice

The Wichita Public Library has established a new internet connectivity program to provide 250 internet bundles for library cardholders to borrow. Each bundle comes with a Chromebook 3100, a T-Mobile hotspot, and a how-to guide for using the devices.

The bundles were made possible through \$150,000 in Emergency Connectivity Fund Programming authorized under the American Rescue Plan Act. The program provides funding to schools and libraries for the costs of laptop and tablet computers, hotspots,

routers, modems and broadband internet connections for use by students, school staff and library customers at locations other than a school or library.

"This service gives the library a unique opportunity to bridge the digital divide in Wichita by giving residents with low or no internet connectivity at home the tools they need to access necessary infrastructure from home," said Jaime Prothro, director of libraries for Wichita.

Customers can call (316) 261-8500 or visit Catalog.WichitaLibrary.org to place a hold on an internet bundle.



Internet Bundle Checkout Details

- Internet bundles can be checked out for up to 28 days at a time, with a limit of one device per library card. Internet bundles can be placed on hold and may be renewed up to 2 times if no one is on the waiting list.
- If an internet bundle is not returned on time, it will accrue a 25¢ per day overdue fee up to a maximum of \$5.
- Borrowers will need to attest that they either lack or have insufficient access to the internet or connected devices at checkout.
- Residents must have a library card in good standing to use this

service.

Cardholders can also check out Chromebooks from the library's portable device dispenser for use anywhere inside the Advanced Learning Library. Chromebooks can be checked out free of charge for up to 3 hours at a time, once per day, but may not leave the library.

Call (316) 261-8500 or visit Catalog.WichitaLibrary.org to place a hold on an internet bundle. ●●

Malcolm Carter is a Report for America corps member based at The Community Voice covering Wichita's African-American community.

THE COMMUNITY VOICE

Ashton Conley Named TCV Student-Athlete of the Week

• **The Community Voice Black Student-Athlete of the Week will serve as a platform to spotlight Black athletes in Wichita for their standout efforts in competition and the classroom.**

By Malcolm Carter
The Community Voice

This year, sophomore goalkeeper Ashton Conley was a key defensive piece in the Butler women's soccer team's best season since 2016. After finishing with a 17-5-2 record and capturing the Kansas Jayhawk Community College Conference (KJCCC) and regional titles, the Lady Grizzlies earned a berth in the national community college tournament in Dayton, FL, losing 2-0 in the second round to Salt Lake Community College.

Conley, a second-year health science major, recorded 21 saves in 10 starts

for the Lady Grizzlies this year. In week three, her five-save game against Northern Oklahoma-Tonkawa College earned her KJCCC goalkeeper of the week honors.

"As a goalkeeper, you're that last line of defense. You have to be willing to sacrifice your body for the team so that you don't get scored on," said Conley.

Despite her recent success, Conley only began playing soccer four years ago when as a sophomore, she joined the Wichita Heights team. Before this season, she was a dual-sport athlete. She also played small forward for the

Heights and Butler women's basketball teams.

At Heights, Conley was the Class of 2020 valedictorian, graduating with a 4.0-grade point average. She was also a member of the choir, the Falcon Athletic



Leadership Team, and a cheerleader.

"In middle school, my grades weren't great, but when I got to high school, my mom promised to pay my sister and me \$30 a semester if we got a 4.0," said Conley. "I looked up, and it was my junior year, and that's when it clicked that I'm on track to be valedictorian. After that, I really started to focus on finishing high school with all A's."

With a 4.0 GPA so far this semester, Conley is on track to earn Butler College President's List honors. She earned Dean's List recognition both of her freshman semesters for maintaining a 3.5 or better GPA.

After completing her associate's degree in the spring, Conley plans to enroll in Wichita State's dental hygiene program, one of the nation's top 100 college dental programs. She dreams of educating and inspiring youth to

take better care of their oral health, the same way she was inspired as a child.

"Whenever our middle school had people come clean our teeth, I was always super excited because I didn't get regular cleanings outside of school until high school," said Conley. "I want to be able to give teeth cleanings and provide other resources on better oral health to communities that can't afford it."

Outside of being a stellar student-athlete, Conley loves being a resident assistant and "mom" to the freshman girls in her dorm. She enjoys helping the girls matriculate through their first year of college and ensuring they have everything they need to succeed.

Conley's preferred hobby is watching action and superhero movies. "Guardians of the Galaxy Volumes 1 and 2" are her favorites. ●●

SHOCKERS from page 19

whole community issue."

Naquela Pack, director of the Office of Engagement at WSU, acknowledged the university's past limited interaction with and support of its nearby

neighbors and hoped the office's revitalization of the neighborhood coalition could serve as an opportunity to close that gap.

"Part of our mission as a public research institution is to work alongside and build with the community. It's going to be a priority of ours to get into all of the Shockers' neighborhood and tap in with community members," said Pack.

WSU launched the Enough is Enough campaign, with a \$250,000 grant from the Kansas Health Foundation. They began by conducting a comprehensive survey to understand the community's perceptions and needs better. They eventually used some of the funding to improve the lighting in Fairmont Park, update the park's tennis and basketball facilities, and organize a medical mission event in the park that provided free medical services to members of the community.

In addition, WSU's Shocker commitment has included support to future Shockers growing up in the Shocker Neighborhood. That initiative includes the new Shocker Promise scholarship that provides last-dollar funding to make attending WSU more attainable for students from the Shocker Neighborhood. The program also makes available five programs to support the personal

and academic success of Shocker Neighborhood students who attend WSU. Included in the programs is PASS (Promoting Academic Student Success), a program that facilitates the retention, academic success and timely graduation of underrepresented students at WSU through academic support services, educational and cultural programming and mentoring.

In addition to education, WSU's commitment to the Shocker Neighborhood is in four areas:

- Childcare,
- Safety
- Community Development, and
- Health and Wellness.

During the meeting, Pack also announced the Office of Engagement's new partnership with AmeriCorps VISTA, which sponsors a Vista member to work alongside Pack and the Engagement office to strengthen their efforts on building up the Shocker Neighborhoods

Community members are encouraged to attend the next Shocker Neighborhood Coalition meeting, Jan. 10, from 4-5 p.m. at the Atwater Center. For more information about the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition or to join, contact. engagedstudent1@wichita.edu. ●●

Malcolm Carter is a Report for America corps member based at The Community Voice covering Wichita's African-American community.

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**Jackson Mortuary
Wichita**

Bennett Ulee R., 56, died 11/25/21. No further details.

Bernard, Dorothy F., 92, died 11/15/21. Service will be held at 3:30 p.m. on 12/11/21 at St John Missionary Baptist Church, 215 S. Chicago Street, Salina, KS. She is survived by: Children; Cynthia Bernard- Weaver, Patricia Bernard-Egans, Adrienne Bernard-Presley, Calvin Bernard Jr., Lawrence, Carey & Richard Bernard, Brothers & Sisters; Josie McMillan, Carolyn Madison, Franklin Butler, Donald & Brenda Butler.

Gooch, U.L. "Rip" 98, died 11/24/21. Memorial service will be held 2 – 5 p.m. on 12/18/21 at Wichita Aviation Museum, 3350 George Washington Blvd, Wichita. He is survived by: Daughter; Bonita, Grandchildren; Kerry, Lauren & Dorian.

Hood, Karen, 57, died 11/22/21. Service was held 12/01/21. She is survived by: Daughter; Keesha Pauler, Brothers & Sisters; Daisy & David Cunningham, Jerry Cunningham, Denise King, Donald Parker Jr., Firby Hood-Coleman, Shirley Gay, Kenneth Hood, Caroline Fritches, Tracie Holmes, Jarald Hood & Shanetta Porter.

Jackson, Phyllis (Banks), 90, died 11/21/21. Service was held 11/30/21. She is survived by: Children; Lavonta Williams, Robert Jackson, Audrey Jackson, Wesley Jackson & Keith Christopher Jackson, & Sister; Geraldine Johnson.

Johnson, Roy M., 73, died 11/ 22/21. No further details.

McDaniel, Charles A., 64, died 11/17/21. Service will be held at 11 a.m. on 12/11/21 at Colonial Heights Assembly of God, 5200 S. Broadway. He is survived by: Children; Shasta Webb, Sarah Humble, Derek McDaniel, Patrick McDaniel, Sister; Wanda Swango, Brothers; Roger & Fred McDaniel.

Pryor, Raymond H., 66, died 11/13/21. Service was held 12/04/21. He is survived by; Children; Natalia Pryor-Rhodes & Zachariah Andrews, Brothers & Sisters; Randall, Jeffrey and Ronnie Pryor, Theresa Wolfe & Elisa Turner.

Robertson, Allan J. "Romi" 61, died 11/ 22/21. No service detail. He is sur-

vived by: Sisters; Jean Wright, Chequita Robertson-Seaborn, Jackie Robertson, Laveter Tanner, Brother; Thomas B. Robertson.

Shackelford, Carl J., 67, died 11/16/21. Service was held 11/16/21. He is survived by: Wife; Lauren, Children; Monai Shaw -Davis, Elijah Shackelford, Brothers; Joseph Ray & Nathaniel Ray

Tillis, Evelyn, 52, died 11/27/21. No further details.

Washington, Zuetta M., 91, died 11/12/21. Service was held 11/27/21. She is survived by: Husband; Clarence L. Washington, Children; Gladys Cobb, Patricia Rich, Rosetta Badgett, Sharon Williams, Barbara Wilson, Clarence Jr., Larry, Jerry, Tommy, Robert, Brothers & Sisters; Ruth Wright, Joyce McGrown, Lorell Mayo, Joann Stokes, Vernon Marshall & Lawrence Leather.

**Heavenly Gates
Wichita**

Brocks, Monzell, 45, died 11/ 10/21. Service was held 11/27/21.

Magana-Gonzalez, Reynaldo, 58, died 11/16/21. No service details.

Nicks, Gary, 62, died 11/11/21. No service details.

Phillips, Marcus, 58, 11/15/21. Service was held 12/04/21.

Price, Clifford, 73, died 11/17/21. No service details.

**Biglow Funeral
Wichita**

Alford, Quenterious, 43, died 11/13/21. Service was held 11/29/21.

Gaston, Milton, 69, died 11/12/21. Service was held 11/19/21.

James Sr., Johnny L., 66, died 11/10/21. No service details.

Springsteen, Stanley, 87, died 11/17/21. Service was held 11/27/21.

**Old Mission
Wichita**

Laham, Alice, 95, died 11/23/21. Service was held 11/30/21.

Mason, Evelyn D., 89, died 11/24/21. Service was held 12/01/21.

O'Donnell, Zenett A., 96, died 11/17/21. Service was held 11/24/21.

**Thatcher Funeral
Kansas City**

Landrum Sr., Jonathan G., 65, died 11/12/21. Service was held 11/27/21.

Williams, Adrian D., 31, died 11/20/21. Service was held 11/27/21.

**Duane E. Harvey
KCMO**

Pasley, James E., 66, died 11/16/21. No service details.

West, Hubert B., 65, died 11/17/21. No service details.

**E. S. Eley & Sons
KCMO**

Bolder, Laura M., 89, died 11/14/21. Service was held 11/29/21.

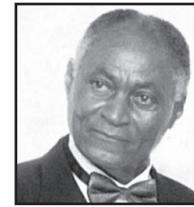
Friends, Nathaniel, 90, died 11/13/21. Service was held 11/27/21.

**Bowser Johnson
Topeka**

Haynes, Sherita C., 72, died 11/17/21. Service was held 11/20/21.

**In Loving Memory of
Kenneth L. Davis, Sr
October 28, 1935 - November 19, 2021**

Kenneth L. Davis Sr. was born October 28, 1935, in Kansas City, Kansas, to the union of Hosea and Leona Davis. He was the youngest of five children. He transitioned to heaven November 19, 2021. At a



Although the "Visionaire" has transitioned to heaven, the Scholarship Foundation will continue to "Make Dreams A Reality" as "THE DAVIS LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

FOUNDATION." young age he accepted Christ, and became a member of New Covenant COGIC serving faithfully as Minister of Music.

Kenneth met the love of his life, Joyce M. Butler, and they married Dec. 18, 1954. They accepted their call to ministry together working faithfully with the youth ministry and the music department, under his Father at Plainview COGIC.

In 1964 Kenneth boldly accepted his calling and begin to Pastor Faith Temple COGIC Salina, KS. Later on he also begin Pastoring at Immanuel Outreach Centre Church, Wichita, KS In the year of 1981. The Rev. K.L. Davis, a musician in his own right, held the first Black Gospel Concert at Century II Theater, that encouraged music to generate more scholarships for the youth to obtain a college education.

In 1995 the Rev. K. L. Davis introduced the Immanuel Outreach Centre Scholarship Foundation.

The Rev. Kenneth L. Davis Sr. was the most loving, compassionate, tenacious and courageous leader. He spent precious hours with family and close friends pouring into the lives of young people.

He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, uncle, brother and a friend to everyone. He leaves to cherish his memory, his beloved wife of 67 years Joyce M. Davis.

Children: Keita Lewis (Richard); Joann Redic (Clarence); Deborah Daniels; Melinda Johnson (Timothy); Kenneth Davis Jr.; Jacqueline McGilbray (Darren); Krystal Thomas (Billy); 23 Grandchildren and 18 Great Grandchildren, a host of nieces, nephews and other relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, two brothers and two sisters.

Service will be held Dec. 4, 2021 at 12 pm at St Mark Cathedral Church of God In Christ - 1018 Dellrose, Wichita.

In lieu of Flowers, please make contributions to "THE DAVIS LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION"

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Celebrating the Holidays

Kansas City

Now – Jan. 2, 2022: Winter Magic at Swope Park. Drive-thru Christmas lights event. \$20 per car. Check available times and purchase tickets at [WinterMagicKC.com/buy-tickets](https://www.wintermagickc.com/buy-tickets).

Now – March 13, 2022: Crown Center Ice Skating on Crown Center Square. Sun. thru Thurs., 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Fri. through Sat., 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Adults and children 8 and older: \$8. Children under 4: Free. Skate rental: \$4.

Dec. 7: Hallelujah Holidays by the Kansas City Jazz Orchestra at Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for Performing Arts, 7 p.m. Tickets starting at \$33. Visit [Tickets.KauffmanCenter.org/18091](https://www.tickets.kauffmancenter.org/18091).

Dec. 8: Ugly Holiday Sweater Group Run, 6 to 8 p.m. at 200 E. 135th St. \$10. Register here: <https://bit.ly/3xJlOFD>

Dec. 9: Holiday Luminary Walk, 5 to 10 p.m. at Overland Park Arboretum & Botanical Gardens, 8909 W. 179th Street Overland Park, KS. Free.

Dec. 11 through 21: Polar Express Movie Showing, at Union Station. Times vary. \$3. Reserve tickets at <https://bit.ly/3lru6x5>

Dec. 11: Santa Dash, 10 a.m. at the intersection of Westport Rd. and Pennsylvania Ave. To participate in the 5K run, register here: <https://runsignup.com/Race/MO/KansasCity/KansasCitySantaDash>

Dec. 12: Trombone Christmas, 3 p.m. at the Haverty Family Yards Outdoor Space at historic Union Station. Trombone players come together to perform holiday classics.

Dec. 15, 21: Christmas Movie Themed Mixology Class, 2016 Main St. KCMO. \$65. Buy tickets @ <https://bit.ly/3lrroaQ>

Dec. 16: Kansas City Symphony Presents Christmas Festival, 7 p.m. at Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. Proof of full vaccination required. \$43. Purchase tickets here: <https://tickets.kauffmancenter.org/18164?z=0>.

Dec. 18: Holiday Bazaar, noon to 7 p.m. at Street Savage, 4425 Prospect Ave, KCMO. Local Black-business vendor event.

Dec. 25: Santa's Workout Shop, 1 to 2p.m. at Brickhouse Fitness, 2830 Guinotte Ave., KCMO. \$15. Register @ <https://bit.ly/3DeDEBm>

Dec. 26 – Jan. 1, 2022: City-Wide Kwanzaa Celebration by the Kansas City National Black United Front. Gem Theater, 1615 E. 18th St, KCMO. 7 to 9 p.m. each night. Updates at www.facebook.com/NBUFKC

Dec. 27, 28: New Years' Cabaret, 7:30 p.m. at Crown Center. \$39. An evening of upbeat tunes to bring in the New Year.

Wichita

Now- Jan 1.- Illuminations at Botanica Gardens Wichita, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. | \$13 admission

Botanica's Illuminations is an annual tradition in Wichita, which fills the night sky with holiday lights (up to two million of them!) and Christmas music. In addition to all the traditional favorites, two new displays premiere this year at Illuminations. The Children's Garden Meadow and the Koch Carousel Gardens each feature over-the-top

displays.

Pre-purchase your tickets online—walk-in tickets will not be available. Print your tickets at home or simply pull up the barcode in your confirmation email or text on your phone when you arrive at the admissions desk.

Now- Dec. 19 (weekends only) - **Watson's Christmas Express,** Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays | VIP Pass & General Admission | \$16 admission for both

All Aboard the Watson Christmas Express! This year they're offering two ways to enjoy Watson's Christmas Express. Choose to purchase your tickets early with VIP Pass or purchase General Admission at the park. The VIP fun begins with a reading of Chris Van Allsburg's The Polar Express and is followed by a craft and train ride to visit the North Pole. Enjoy s'mores and hot chocolate at the campfire circle, while singing holiday songs. Kids are encouraged to wear pajamas. An adult must also attend and register.

A la Carte Activities

(Prices below are per person)

\$10 - Enjoy a train ride to see Santa

\$3 - S'mores and unlimited hot chocolate

\$5 - Upgrade to "Fast Pass" lines

Dates: November 26 & 27

December 3, 4, 10, 11

*GA available 5: - 6:30 p.m. on these dates.

December 17, 18 & 19

*GA available 5 - 7:30 p.m. on these dates.

Now- Feb 23- Winter Wednesdays at the Sedgwick County Zoo, 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. and 6 - 9 p.m. | \$3 admission

Migrate to the Zoo for Winter Wednesdays! Every Wednesday from November thru Febru-

ary, general admission tickets are only \$3 per person.

Now through Dec. 5 (Every Wed., and Sat.) **Wildlights at the Sedgwick County Zoo,** 6 - 9 p.m. | \$17 member/ \$15 non-member for adults | \$15 for kids | \$52 for member Family 4-Pack/ \$60 for non-member Family 4-Pack

Wild Lights will be open to freely roam the Zoo after dark, with your path illuminated by larger-than-life sculptures of all things WILD! Indoor exhibits will be closed and resident Zoo animals will not be in attendance.

Sat., Dec. 11 -Winter Wonderland at Naf-tzger Park, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. | Free admission

Holiday cheer will be in the air at Winter Wonderland! Visit Nafztzger Park and take in the lights and decorations while listening to music and entertainment at the Every Pavilion. This event is free to the public. The Mayor's Tree Lighting will start at 5:20 p.m. Watch the iconic tree light up then stay for the festivities!

Dec. 11- Santa at Cheri's Bakery, 10 a.m.- 1 p.m. at 2121 N Tyler Rd | Free Admission

Come see Santa at Cheri's! Kids can visit with Santa and will receive a Christmas Cookie from him! Remember to bring your camera to capture these Christmas Memories!

Dec. 12- The 38th Dennis Family Christmas Concert 4 p.m. - Tabernacle Bible Church, The Dennis Family tradition for 37 years has been to present a December family concert in honor of the birth of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ! A portion of the proceeds from the concert (free will offering) is donated to charitable organizations. Last year's concert was virtual due to COVID concerns. ●●

More Holiday Gift Ideas From Black-Owned Businesses

• We did this in our last you as well. Go check out our list online -- 10 Kansas City and 10 Wichita businesses to support.

1. **Decorated Candy Apples** from Keisha Kandi Apples. \$25-\$100. <https://keishakandiapple.com/collections/candy-apples-1>.
2. **Donna Sue Spicy Seasoning from KC-based FieldsVille Seasonings and Rubs.** \$12. <https://myfieldsville.square.site/>.
3. **Winter Spice Simple Syrup** from Breathe Beverages. \$9. <https://www.breathebeverages.com/shop/p/simple-syrups>.
4. **Historic Jazz Venue Prints** from artist Sheron Smith. Prices vary. <https://mikcexplore.com/home/2020/6/1/black-businesses-kc>.
5. **Books from Bliss Books and Wine.** Prices vary. <https://www.blissbooksandwine.com/online-new-books>.



Kansas City



Wichita

1. **A custom designed mas or tshirt** by Carlos Morgan @ Invent A Tee and Beyond. (316) 461-4553 or reach him on Facebook.
2. **A great one-of-a-kind vintage jacket, handbag or a gift card** from Dead Center Vintage, 626 E. Douglas. [deadcentervintage.com](https://www.deadcentervintage.com)
3. **Urban wear they'll love** for one of the young men in your life from Game on 316 Men's Clothing Store, 2251 E. 21st St., N., Suite 103
4. **Give the gift of experience at Baby Bump Maternity Art Studio,** paint a festive holiday bump or one to ring in the new year, 5921 E. Central 247-0302 or [ravon-k.wixsite.com](https://www.ravon-k.wixsite.com).
5. **Hand drawn premium quality holiday cards** by local artist Paris Jane. Dec. 15 is the deadline for custom holiday orders. www.theparisjane.com/parisjanecreates ●●

New Inspirational Mural Unveiled in KCK

By Jazzlyn Johnson
The Community Voice

Rodney “Lucky” Easterwood began his art career in the 1980s as a pictorial painter, painting giant advertising billboards and signs by hand. It was a difficult task transferring a small image onto a canvas of a much larger scale and it took considerable training to perfect the lettering and sizing.

As computers and printers took over, the need for pictorial painters diminished, but that did not stop Easterwood from continuing his passion for art. He began painting murals across the country including Atlanta, GA, Chicago, IL and his hometown Kansas City, KS, while spreading positive and inspirational messages through his work.

“I don’t just paint colors on the wall,” Easterwood said. “I want to inspire.” Easterwood is known for art that instills cultural pride and hopeful-

ness through his realistic style of painting.

Another one of Easterwood’s many inspiring murals was unveiled Sat., Nov. 27, at the Community Boxing and Fitness Center, 2055 N. 17th St. in Kansas City, KS. The mural is sponsored by the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS.

The mural, which Easterwood named “Brighter Day,” features two young children who Easterwood says reflect the children in KCK. He hopes the mural will inspire KCK youth to pursue the bright futures ahead of them.

Anita Easterwood, Easterwood’s daughter, is also an artist and was influenced by her father’s work.

“He really is an amazing, talented artist,” she said.

Last year, the two worked together on the Black Lives Matter mural on 18th and Quindaro that was featured



in the visually-focused book “Call and Response: The Story of Black Lives Matter.”

That mural features a Black child kneeling and writing affirmations on the ground like, “I will inspire,” “I will grow,” “I will breathe.”

Easterwood also painted the “Stony Road We Trod” mural at the Garrison School Cultural Center in Liberty, MO. The mural depicts the history

of education for African Americans in Liberty with images of the Laura Armstrong School which in 1865 was the first school for African Americans in Liberty, former Garrison teachers and principals, and an image of Linda

Brown and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Easterwood has plans for more murals across Northeast KCK. Keep an eye on his website for updates: www.LuckyEasterwood.com. ●●



Lucky Easterwood’s mural “Brighter Day” graces the Community Boxing & Fitness Center at 17th and Parallel in KCK.

GUILTY from page 17

argued the defense’s self-defense arguments wouldn’t apply.

Judge J. Dale Youngs agreed and said DeValkenaere and his partner had no probable cause to be in Lamb’s back yard and did not have a search warrant or evidence to obtain a search warrant.

The sentencing date for DeValkenaere has not been set yet.

Following the verdict, the Kansas City Star reported that after years of community effort to get Smith out of his position, finally there appears to be enough votes on the Board of Police Commissioners to remove him.

A statement released from the

board announces it supports Smith and never held a vote to terminate the police chief. The commissioners also said Smith will stay at least through the current budgeting process and that he remains in good standing with the board.

Smith said he would retire in spring 2022 and said he never planned to hold the position for more than five years. Smith was hired in August 2017.

Local activist groups including MORE2 and the Urban League of Greater Kansas City have been calling for Smith’s removal since the protests in 2020, due to transparency issues and misconduct.

“As an elected official who has sponsored several bills designed to reduce violent crime ... I sincerely

hope that all members of the department’s highly trained command staff are fully considered for (the police chief) position and not passed over for outside candidates,” said a statement from MO District 36 Rep. Mark Sharp. “While we all can agree there are some culture changes that need to happen, I’m certain there are individuals within the department capable of knowing our communities and personnel while also implementing positive change for better community relationships as this city moves forward.”

The search for a new chief is facilitated by the Board of Police Commissioners, who vote on the final candidate. ●●

SCORES from page 16

White students and students of color. Nearly 61% of Black students and 50% of Hispanic students scored below grade level in math, compared with 27% of White students and 20% of Asian students.

• Low-income students continue to score lower in all areas than their

higher-income peers. Consequently, districts with high numbers of students living in poverty, such as Wichita and Kansas City, KS, did not perform as well on state tests as higher-income suburban districts. sioner, said test scores aren’t the only metric that got worse during the pandemic.

The rate of chronic absenteeism — students who miss more than 15 days of school a year — rose from 14% to 17.5% statewide since 2019. Truancy

cases climbed from 767 to more than 2,200 over the same period.

“The last 18 months have been the hardest on our state — and schools are a microcosm of that — in the history of our public and private schools,” Watson said.

In coming years, Kansas districts will get about \$1.4 billion in federal aid to address impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, including learning loss. ●●

PBS KANSAS

Holiday
EXTRAVAGANZA
of Prizes

**Grand Prize & Other Prizes Deadline:
December 10, 2021**

Find details at
kpts.org or
call **316-838-3090**.

Scan Me To Enter Online.

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CHANNEL 8
SERIOUSLY GOOD TV



Partnering to help create opportunities

Last year, Bank of America committed \$1.25 billion over five years to advance racial equality and economic opportunity. To date, we've directly funded or invested one-third of this amount on top of long-standing efforts to make an impact in our communities and address society's greatest challenges.

Here are some of the ways we're working to make a difference:

- Investing \$300 million in 100 minority-owned and minority-led equity funds for diverse entrepreneurs and small business owners, helping them create more jobs, financial stability and growth.
- Investing \$36 million in 21 Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs) and Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) banks that support minority-owned businesses, building pathways to economic vitality in our local markets. This is in addition to approximately \$100 million in deposits to MDIs and our existing CDFI portfolio of more than \$2 billion.
- Providing funding and support through innovative programs and partnerships with community colleges, universities and nonprofits that offer training and credentialing programs connecting more people to high-wage, in-demand careers.

We're doing this work in collaboration with community partners, business leaders, experts and academics across the public and private sectors to ensure that our investments are directed where they're needed most. Together, we can help drive sustainable progress in Wichita.

What would you like the power to do?®



Shawn

Shawn Lancelot
President, Bank of America Wichita

Learn more at bankofamerica.com/wichita

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