

# THE VOICE

A trusted voice from the community's perspective

# HERE COME THE JUDGES

MEET 11 BLACK FEMALE JUDGES RULING IN AREA COURTROOMS PAGES 12-14



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Brings Police Support Experience to the Kansas City Police Commission **Page 10**

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# THE VOICE

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 6  
FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2024

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# WYCO Public Works Director's Views Shock

**Commentary by  
Thomas White**  
Kansas City Reporter

Jeff Fisher is the director of Public Works for the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS. He oversees 200 UG employees across six divisions. A military veteran who has worked in public service for more than two decades, Fisher is also a serial entrepreneur with multiple LLCs, including a lifestyle brand with his sons.

Jeff goes by "Maynard" on his podcast and social media - to "honor his grandfather," he says, but it's more likely because he'd like to separate his persona in public service from statements like this one on one of his recent podcasts, where he talks about a potential US Civil War:

*"These crazy ass people trying to change our country are delusional, and they've been getting away with it," said Fisher. "I'm really curious how long we're gonna let 'em get away with it. As soon as we stop putting up with it and really get serious, these f... they have no idea what's coming; we're the ones with all the weapons. It's gonna reach a point where we're gonna stand up and say enough is enough and go to really dramatic lengths to stop it."*

Fisher, appeared on this podcast with his son - who was even more inflammatory - and a citizen brought it to the attention of local TV news.



Jeff "Maynard" Fisher is the Wyandotte County Public Works Director by day, but a pretty radical podcaster otherwise.

Jeff/Maynard didn't back down, saying that people need to listen to the whole podcast and understand the concept of his podcast and brand, that he was talking about bad leadership in our country, and that he just loves freedom.

Well, I listened to the podcast.

I don't recommend it unless you want insight into the grand conspiratorial thinking of the current conservative climate. The episode was tellingly titled "America is Breaking," and here were the highlights of the views expressed:

The great replacement theory kicks things off, as in the Democrats are bringing in migrants to flip states.

Ukraine is a bunch of neo-nazis, and NATO needs to be dissolved.

Biden is unfit; Jeff/Maynard says he'd never hire an 81-year-old at the UG.

The CIA & FBI run the country despite who's president.

Biden would've been hung "in the old days."

There's going to be a civil war, and "the sheep" don't have guns.

Putin made some good points in the Tucker Carlson interview.

"Illegals" should "go back to where they came from" because they are ruining the country.

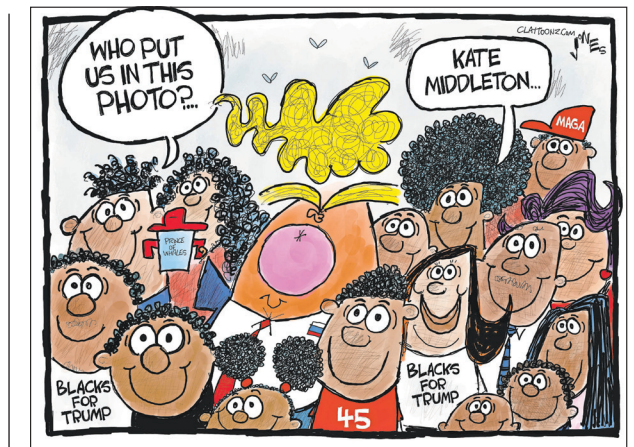
Fisher has the right to his views. No one is saying that you can't have conservative views and do a good job in government. However, Fisher

should answer to the public that he serves since he receives \$181,000 a year in tax dollars.

Two WYCO taxpayers asked him about his views at a recent government function. They said he should be ashamed and that his views were akin to those held by domestic terrorists storming the capital on Jan. 6.

Those residents were run through the mud on the next episode of the podcast. They were called "dumbasses" who should go back to school, never mind that the citizen in question is a well-educated former federal employee. A co-host even said, "In 1776, you'd be hung for calling Jeff Fisher a terrorist."

Fisher's freedom-loving outdoors lifestyle brand (that I've intentionally not named) puts on a podcast (no free publicity here) that is now threatening residents of KCK. That is not acceptable.



### On the Cover:

U.S. Federal Judge Julie Robinson is our Featured Judge in our special Women's HHistory Section on Female Black Judges. Robinson is one of 11 Black Female judges we found in our readership area.

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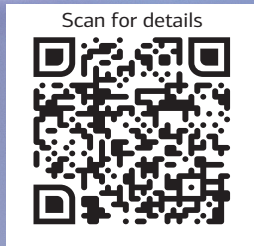
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*Shawn*

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# Biden Beaten in Effigy at Kansas GOP Fundraiser

Event Draws Condemnation From Both Sides

By Voice News Service

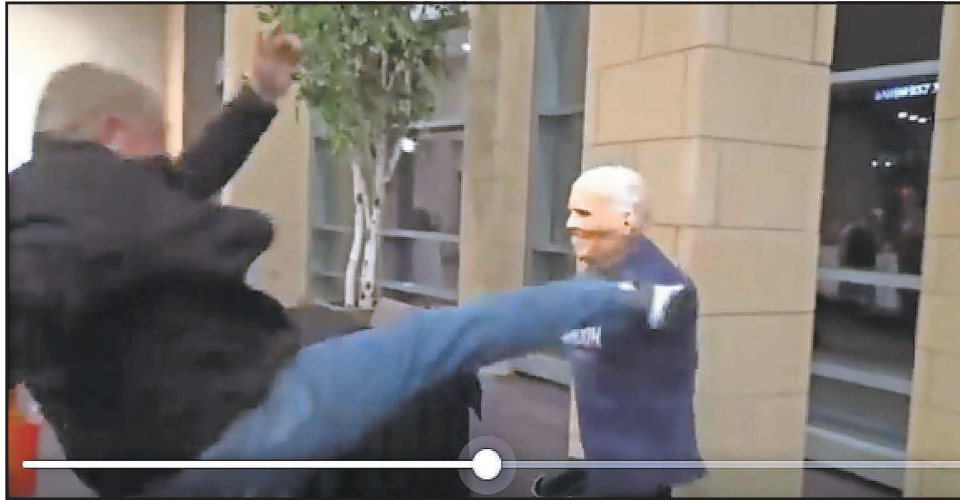
Video from Johnson County, KS, Republicans' "Grand Ol' Party" event in Overland Park showing attendees punching, kicking and swinging a bat at a Biden mannequin wearing a "Let's Go Brandon" shirt has drawn criticism from both parties.

The March 8 event was a fundraiser organized by the Johnson County Republican Party to celebrate the 170th anniversary of the GOP.

Former Kansas Republican Party chairman Mike Kuckelman condemned the antics in a Facebook post and called for the resignations of current state GOP chairman Mike Brown and Johnson County Republican Party chairwoman Maria Holiday. Other prominent Republicans joined Kuckelman in condemning the event.

Kuckelman reminded his fellow Republicans that they were outraged "when Kathy Griffin appeared in a photo shoot with a bloody Trump head as a prompt and rightfully demanded she be canceled." He insisted that party members "must speak equally as loudly in our opposition now."

The simulated violence by Republicans contrasts with the message Biden delivered a day earlier in his State of the Union address. Biden encouraged members of Congress to "respect free and fair elections" and to "make clear political violence has absolutely no place — in place — in America."



Screen shot from video from the Johnson County Republican's "Grand Old Party" that's drawn national attention for people kicking and beating an Effigy of President Joe Biden.



Jenna Repasse

Jeanna Repass, Kansas Democratic Party chairwoman, said Kansans needed to work together to solve issues — "not sow hatred, violence, division and fear."

"There is absolutely no excuse for encouraging or condoning violence of any kind — on a president, a political opponent, a neighbor, or anyone," Repass said. "This sort of extreme behavior is the result of increasingly violent political rhetoric that has gone unchecked over the last several years in our country. As Kansans and Americans, we need to work together to solve the issues we face — not sow hatred,

## What's With the "Let's Go Brandon" T-shirt

The mannequin being beaten by the Republicans was wearing a "Let's go, Brandon" T-shirt. So what's that all about?

The phrase is becoming a rallying cry for the Republican base, filling as a stand-in for insulting President Joe Biden. It originated in late 2021 at a NASCAR race in Alabama. Brandon Brown, a 28-year-old driver, had won his first Xfinity Series race and was being interviewed by an NBC reporter. The crowd behind him was chanting something at first difficult to make out. The reporter suggested they were chanting "Let's go, Brandon" to cheer the driver. But it was clear they were saying, "(Expletive) Joe Biden."



violence, division, and fear."

Dakotah Parshall, executive director of the Kansas Republican Party, said the Biden effigy was the work of "an outside exhibitor in the karate/self-defense space"

who rented a booth at the GOP fundraiser.

Parshall didn't say whether anybody was responsible for screening vendors, or if anyone asked the vendor to leave.

## Topeka Celebrating 70th Anniversary of Brown v. Board

In Recognition of the 70th Anniversary of the Topeka Vs BOE Supreme Court Ruling, the Brown V Board Commemorate Together and the Black American Blueprint Collective have planned an extensive list of activities for March through July.

Now – May 19, **Sorting Out Race Exhibit**, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Topeka.

Sat., March 16, 10 am – 5pm: **Black Family Wellness Expo**, Hillcrest Community Center, 1800 S.E. 21st Street. Sponsored by Topeka Chapter of the Links, Inc.

Thurs., March 21, 6:30 – 8:30 pm: **The Health of the BIPOC Community: A discussion on gun violence** with Dr. Brian Williams. Sponsored by the Brown Coalition, Stormont Vail, 1500 SW 10th St.

Sat., March 23, 10 am & 3 pm: **African American Topeka History Tours**. Leaves from Topeka Center Hotel. Repeats April 20, May 4, May 18 and May 25.

Sun. March 24, 6-7:30 pm: **Our Stories: Topeka and the Exodus Panel Discussion**, Marvin 101 BC, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library

Sat. April 6, 3 – 5pm: **Ritchie Cemetery African Burial Ground**, Topeka Shawnee County Public Library (TSCPL), 1515 SW 10th, Topeka. Marvin 101A

Fri., April 12, noon – 1 pm: **Poetry & Brown V Board Michael Kleber Diggs**, TSCPL, 1515 SW 10th Ave. Sponsored by Humanities Kansas.

April 18 & 19, **Brown v Board at 70: Looking**

**Back & Striving Forward Conference**, University of Kansas, Lawrence. Conference exploring the legacy of the landmark decision, Most spots have been filled, but 19th activities on campus can be streamed. Featured Aug. 19 speaker, Sherrilyn Ifill, lawyer and the Vernon E. Jordan Jr. Esq. Endowed Chair in Civil Rights at Howard University. For conference schedule and streaming info go to <https://bit.ly/3Pj3nBQ>.

Fri., April 26, 6-8 pm: **Our Stories: Topeka's Black Wall Street Panel Discussion**, TSCPL, 1515 SW 10th Ave., Marvin Auditorium.

Sat., April 27, 10 am – Noon: **1st Annual Exoduster's Walk/Run & Plaque Unveiling**, Stormont Vail Event Center, 17th and Topeka Blvd.

**ACTIVITIES CONTINUE THROUGH JULY. HERE ARE A SELECT FEW MAY EVENTS. For a complete listing of events go to [www.black-collective.org](http://www.black-collective.org)**

Sat. May 11, 10 am – 2 pm: **May Mother's Day Brunch**, Sponsored by the Topeka Chapter of the Links, Inc.

May 14 -18: **Academy of African American Business and Development Conference**, Washburn University.

Fri., May 17, 7 pm: **Now Let Me Fly**, Washburn University. Presented by the Brown Coalition.

Sat, May 18, 10am – 3pm: **Brown V. Board 70th Anniversary Homecoming Celebration**, Brown V Board National Park, 1515 SE Monroe St, Topeka, KS

“... if we work  
**together**, there  
is no problem in  
the world that  
can stop us.”



– Ewing Marion Kauffman

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# Health Forward Day at Missouri Capitol Focuses On Growing Anti-DEI Legislation

By **Bonita Gooch**  
Editor-in-Chief

Health Forward Foundation team members joined leaders and reps from some of the grassroots organizations they've funded to make the trip to Jefferson City, MO, for the foundation's first Health Forward Day at the Capitol on March 15.

Working to change policies that negatively impact the health of the communities the foundation serves is an essential part of Health Forward's work. The day at the capitol was designed to help leverage the organization's impact on policies, by training and further engaging their funded



Attendees at Health Forward Day at the Missouri Capitol gathered for a photo. Joining Health Forward staff in Jefferson City were representatives from some of the organizations funded by the foundation.

organizations in advocating for effective policy changes.

Individuals from about 20 Health Forward-funded agencies made the trip to Jeff City where they participated in Advocacy 101 training and observed the Missouri

Senate in session, and heard from several members of the Kansas City delegation on bills they're working on.

## Anti-DEI Legislation

Particular attention was paid to the growing list of

anti-Diversity, Equity and Inclusion bills introduced in the senate.

At least three bills – HB2365, HB2448 and HB 2619 – would prohibit any state department from spending any state dollars on DEI programs.

HB 2567 similarly prohibits any medical institutions of higher education from spending any funds on DEI programs.

A Health Forward-commissioned study released earlier this month, analyzed currently proposed legislation in both Kansas and Missouri and found the potential for economic loss

See **HEALTH FORWARD**  
Page 11 →

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Kansas Legal Services, Matt Keenan, Executive Director



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# Historic \$4 Million Investment Unites Minority Chambers in Kansas City

The new Minority Chambers Development Center houses both the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

In what is believed to be a first of its kind collaboration in the country, a new Minority Chambers Development Center has opened in Kansas

City. The 15,000 sq. ft. facility at 9100 Ward Parkway will be home to both the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City.

The ribbon was cut on the new Minority Chambers Development Center March 2, made possible by \$4M in federal funds secured by US Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II.

“This is a historic moment in Kansas City history—American history even,” said Kim Randolph, President/CEO of the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce. “At a time when our nation is deeply divided, Congressman Cleaver has given us the

opportunity to unite.”

Cleaver says the joint effort between the Heartland Black Chamber and Hispanic Chamber exemplifies a shared commitment to fostering equity, access, and partnership within our diverse community. Cleaver says the new center will bring tangible benefits for minority entrepreneurs, business owners, and workers, propelling economic growth and opportunity across the region.

“The Minority Chambers Development Center will provide a space where communities with different cultures can come together to solve a common goal,” said Randolph.



Members and supporters of the Heartland Black Chamber gathered on the steps of the new Minority Chambers Development Center after the ribbon cutting ceremony earlier this month.

The building is believed to be the first property owned by a minority on Ward

Parkway—a thoroughfare renowned in Kansas City history and known for housing the

city’s historic elite.

The three story will be sectioned by floors, with the Heartland Chamber on the third floor and the Hispanic Chamber on the second.

The facility is expected to allow for rental of office space for emerging businesses.

“This facility signifies more than just bricks and mortar; it represents a nexus of opportunity and empowerment,” said Carlos Gomez, President/CEO of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. “By joining forces, our chambers are poised to amplify our impact, extending vital resources and assistance to an even broader spectrum of minority small businesses.”

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

### New Executives to Kauffman Foundation Leadership Team

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation announces the appointment of three executives who will help lead the Foundation as it continues its evolution under Dr. Angela Burns-Wallace. As Dr. Burns-Wallace prepares to share an updated strategic plan, Allison Greenwood Bajracharya, Yvonne Owens Ferguson, Ph.D., and Gloria Jackson-Leathers will be charged with implementing a renewed approach to Program Strategy; Research, Learning, and Evaluation; and Community Engagement to support the mission of economic stability, mobility and prosperity for all.

**Yvonne Owens Ferguson**, Ph.D., M.P.H., joins the Foundation as vice president, Research,



Ferguson

Learning, and Evaluation. Dr. Ferguson’s appointment will be effective on March 28.

An accomplished researcher and evaluator, Dr. Ferguson brings more than 15 years of experience in leading community-engaged research, large-scale program evaluations and data-informed strategic planning.

A native Kansas Citian, she comes to the Foundation from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, MD where she led a \$300



Jackson-Leathers

million, 10-year, first-of-its-kind initiative that funds community organizations directly to work with research partners to conduct health equity research intervening on social determinants of health and structural factors shaping conditions of everyday life.

**Gloria Jackson-Leathers** joins Dr. DeAngela Burns-Wallace in the Office of the President at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation as senior advisor, Community Engagement. Jackson-Leathers, who has



Bajracharya

25 years’ experience at the Foundation, will be responsible for fostering and enhancing relationships between the Foundation and the diverse communities it serves.

**Allison Greenwood Bajracharya** joins the Foundation as vice president, Program Strategy, effective April 15. In this role, Bajracharya will oversee the strategies, results and performance indicators for the Foundation’s programmatic grantmaking and initiatives. A fourth-generation Kansas

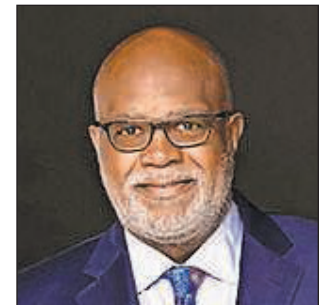


Adams

Citian, Bajracharya comes to the Foundation from Los Angeles, where most recently, she worked for America Achieves, a national non-profit that works with communities to advance inclusive economic growth, more equitable access to opportunity and good jobs.

Bajracharya brings more than 20 years’ experience developing teams, partnerships and coalitions that deliver systems-level change and equity-centered transformation

There, as the chief strategy



Gray

and communities officer, she led the place-based team charged with building trust, strategic guidance and capacity for ambitious local coalitions across the country seeking to leverage federal and philanthropic funding to achieve inclusive economic transformation.

### Gray and Adams Receive UMKC Law School Recognition Awards

Each year, the UMKC Foundation and Law Alumni

See PEOPLE Page 11 →

# WyCo Property Tax Bills Are Out: Here's What To Do Next

Property values on the rise: attend community sessions to understand and appeal property valuations

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

Wyandotte County property owners are gearing up for the 2024 tax appraisal season as the County Appraiser's Office begins mailing out property valuation notices.

The notices, which began hitting mailboxes March 1, mark the start of the annual process where property values are reassessed based on market sales data from the preceding year. As mandated by the State of Kansas, these valuations reflect market conditions as of January 1.

The real estate market in Wyandotte County has seen shifts driven by limited housing supply and robust



Property tax bills are hitting mailboxes in Wyandotte County.

demand for both commercial and residential properties. This dynamic has resulted in increased sales prices compared to previous years, which in turn means a rise in county-appraised property values.

To provide property owners with clarity and guidance on the appraisal and appeal processes, Wyandotte County's Office of the Appraiser has organized a series of community information sessions. These sessions aim to show the methods behind property

valuation and outline the steps involved in appealing assessed values.

"With valuation notices being mailed on March 1st, I would like to encourage anyone who has questions or concerns about your notice to attend one of the eight scheduled informational meetings," said Wyandotte County Appraiser Matt Willard. "Staff from the Appraisers Office will be discussing market trends, how appraisals are conducted, as well as how to appeal your valuation."

## Tax Appraisal Community Information Sessions

- Wed, Mar 6, 6 p.m. — George Meyn Center, 126 State Avenue, Bonner Springs, KS
- Mon, Mar 11, 6 p.m. — Joe Amayo Community Center Gym, 2810 Metropolitan Avenue, KCK
- Wed, Mar 13, 6 p.m. — Turner Recreation Center 831 S 55th Street, KCK
- Sat, Mar 16, 10 a.m. — Virtual, register at bit.ly/WyCoTax
- Wed, Mar 20, 6 p.m. — Piper USD 203 High School Auditorium 4400 N 107 St, KCK
- Mon, Mar 25, 5 p.m. — Municipal Building Lobby 701 N 7th Street Trfwy, KCK

## What to do if you think your appraisal is too high

Property owners who find discrepancies or disagree with the assessed value of their properties are encouraged to file an appeal. The deadline to

file an appeal is March 30.

The appeal process can be initiated through the County Appraiser's website at [wycokck.org/appraiser](http://wycokck.org/appraiser), where instructions can guide individuals through the submission process. The appraiser also accepts appeals by email at [wycopraiser@wycokck.org](mailto:wycopraiser@wycokck.org) or takes paper forms that can be hand-delivered or mailed to the Appraiser's Office at 8200 State Avenue, Kansas City, KS 66112.

Upon receipt of a timely appeal, the Appraiser's Office will arrange an informal appeal meeting, which can be conducted in person, by phone, or virtually. Property owners are advised to provide supporting documentation, such as recent fee appraisals, photographs showing interior conditions, or comparable sales data, to strengthen their appeal. The appraiser's phone number is 913-573-8400 if there are further questions.

## Homeowner Resource Fair

Combined with the Tax Appraisal Information Session on Mon., March 25, the UG will hold a Homeowner Resource Fair. The fair, which will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. will feature numerous resources for homeowners that can help them with the cost of homeownership.

### There will be opportunities to learn more about:

- Tax rebate programs
- Transportation
- Water Quality program
- Code enforcement
- Home-based businesses
- Home repair programs
- Garage sale permits
- Landlord and tenant education
- Lead abatement
- Maps and other property information
- Short-term rentals and more.

The Tax Appraisal Information session will be from 6-7:30 p.m.

Both activities will be in the lobby of the Municipal Bldg, 701 N. 7th St. Trfwy, KCK.



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# Jackson County Launches Senior Property Tax Credit Program to Freeze Tax Bills

Qualified seniors should apply before the end of the year to freeze their property tax bill

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

Property tax bills in Jackson County shocked some this year. While the time has passed to appeal or change this year's tax bill, the county is offering some help to freeze seniors' tax bills in the future.

Jackson County has opened applications to its new Senior Property Tax Credit Program, which aims to assist eligible residents in managing property tax payments and ultimately keeping them in their homes. The program—authorized by a new state law—freezes property tax bills at 2024 levels for

eligible senior residents.

"This initiative offers significant benefits, ensuring financial relief and stability for eligible individuals," said Jackson County Executive Frank White. "We encourage qualified residents to take advantage of the opportunity presented by this valuable program."

While the program won't lower payments this year, it would keep eligible seniors' tax bills the same going forward, so there are no surprise increases.

The guidelines for the county program, established by state law, include specific eligibility criteria, tax credit amounts, and other essential factors. Here's what you need to know:

**Eligibility Criteria:** To qualify for the program, you must prove with documentation that you are a Jackson

County property owner and are eligible for Social Security retirement benefits.

**Tax Credit Amount:** The base amount for the property tax bill freeze is determined by the year an application is approved. This base amount remains consistent for future payments unless there is a change in eligibility status.

**One Primary Residence:** Applicants are limited to claiming one primary residence, which must be occupied by the eligible resident.

**Market Value Maximum:** To qualify for the program, the property's market value must not exceed \$550,000 in accordance with legislation passed by the Jackson County Legislature.

Applicants must submit new applications and supporting documentation via email or in person by December 31

of each year. Upon approval, participants must renew their application annually by August 31 to remain in the program.

Interested seniors can access applications online at [www.jacksongov.org/senior-taxcredit](http://www.jacksongov.org/senior-taxcredit) or obtain a paper copy of the application at county collection department locations at either the Jackson County Courthouse in downtown Kansas City or the Historic Truman Courthouse in Independence.

For additional information on the application process, eligibility criteria, and frequently asked questions, individuals are encouraged to visit the program website at [www.jacksongov.org/seniortaxcredit](http://www.jacksongov.org/seniortaxcredit). If applicants have further questions, reach out via email to [SeniorApplication@jacksongov.org](mailto:SeniorApplication@jacksongov.org).

# Madeline Romious Appointed to Kansas City Police Board

Romious, a vice-president for AT&T brings police support experience to the board.

**By Bonita Gooch**  
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Gov. Mike Parson has appointed Madeline Romious, an AT&T vice president, to the five-member board that

oversees the Kansas City police department. She replaces Mark Tolbert, who is also Black, and was the longest-serving member of the police board, having been appointed in 2017.

The five-member police board oversees a \$280 million annual budget, sets policies and makes employment decisions for the Kansas City Police Department and takes control for the department

away from the Kansas City Mayor and City Council.

Romious serves as regional vice president for external affairs for AT&T a position that has her responsible for governmental and external affairs for AT&T in the Kansas City, MO area. She lobbies local, and state elected officials and represents AT&T in the civic and philanthropic community.

Romious holds a Master of Business Administration from Rockhurst University and a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering from Northwestern University.

Her civic involvement includes serving as chair of KC Arts, secretary-treasurer of the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City and board member of PREP-KC.

In the community, she is a member of the Kansas City Links.

Her police-related experience – while not a

requirement for the position – includes serving as a member and past president of the Kansas City Police Foundation. The Police Foundation of Kansas City is a nonprofit organization founded by local business leaders to bolster the excellence of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, help reduce the incidence of violent crime and strengthen police services.

Founded in 2010, the Police Foundation is the only local organization dedicated to raising funds for the police department's public safety programs providing strategic resources beyond the department's annual budget.

During the past year the Foundation, through the generosity of many community donors, raised and supported over \$4.25 million in projects intended to make a safer Kansas City. Projects



Madeline Romious

through an extensive strategic planning process, working with the Kauffman Foundation and other community groups.

"I believe Kansas City will find her to be a new commissioner who will bring a very professional, business-like approach to her new leadership role with the board, along with an objective perspective to each growth opportunity," Grant said.

The Police Board has five members, four of which are appointed by the Governor. The fifth member position is occupied by the Kansas City Mayor.

Kansas City is the nation's only major city whose police department is governed by a state-appointed board. In other cities, that duty falls to locally elected officials, like mayors and city councils, or to people responsible to them, such as city managers.

funded through KCPD by the Foundation include social workers, body-worn cameras, a police psychologist, the police/youth initiative and multiple technology improvement initiatives concentrating on improving the safety within the city's highest crime neighborhoods in KCMO.

Tye Grant, president and CEO of the Police Foundation, said Romious was chair of the board for two years, leading it

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75	\$35.82	\$42.66	\$5,000

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# Wichita Organization Honors Women With Shine Awards

By Bonita Gooch  
Editor-in-Chief

Building on the premise that the essence of a woman is all about using the light she possesses within to illuminate the paths of those around her, Wichita nonprofit Storytime Village honored their third class of Shine Award recipients.

The 2024 Shine Awards honorees include history-making civic leaders, nonprofit executives, esteemed businesswomen, entrepreneurs, several PhDs and more. All of these well-accomplished women share a common belief in themselves and a belief in their communities.

The Shine Awards were presented at a luncheon held March 8 at the Wichita Art Museum's Jim and Darla Farha Great Hall. This year's honorees were:

**Claudia Yaujar Amarao** is founder of AB&C Bilingual Resources and Planeta Venus, an online Spanish radio station, podcast and newsletter.

**Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudeau** represents the 29th District in Northeast Wichita. She serves as the Assistant Minority Leader of the Kansas Senate and the first African-American woman to serve in the Kansas State Senate.

**Tabitha Brotherton** is director of operations at Reading Roadmap, Inc., where she assists children from underserved communities in reaching their maximum potential by first becoming



proficient at reading.

**Shareika Fisher-Eddie, PhD**, is executive director of Rise UP for Youth, a local youth mentoring nonprofit organization.

**Marche' Fleming Randle, PhD**, is the first African-American female vice president in the history of Wichita State University. Her research and academic interests include mental health, child and youth programs, educational leadership and diversity.

**Christina Long** is the owner of CML Collective LLC, an inclusive communication and design firm. She's also founder and president and CEO of Create Campaign, Inc.

**Ricayh Hayden** is head of the Early Learning Center at the Wichita Independent School and is fueled by her genuine love for children.

**Kim McCollum** is

1989, she has helped grow the program that provides free legal services on civil cases to hundreds of area residents each year.

**Judge Jon Gray**, a 1976 graduate of UMKC Law School, was recognized with the school's Lifetime Achievement Award. Judge Gray was appointed to the Circuit Court of Jackson County in 1986 by Gov. John Ashcroft serving for more than 20 years. He is currently a partner at Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP, having joined the firm in 2007.

assistant director of GoCreate, a Koch Collaborative committed to ensuring that people of all ages and backgrounds have access to resources that spark creativity, develop STEM skills and empower entrepreneurship and innovation.

**Natalie Rolfe** is executive director of the Down Syndrome Society Wichita. She's also the owner and chief creative of NatVision Productions, a boutique production company that specializes in creative concepts and

change management.

**Denise Sherman** is executive director of The Kansas African American Museum. An entrepreneur and change agent, she has transformed TKAAM to serve as a cultural hub for the state of Kansas and beyond.

**Angela Smith** is digital content manager at Channel 12 News in Wichita and serves as the Region 2 Director for the National Association of Black Journalists.

**Delia Shropshire, PhD**, is president

of Holy Savior Catholic Academy. She has served at the academy for 26 years.

**Lavonta Williams** dedicated 35 years to educating students at Wichita's Hamilton Middle School. She later became the first African-American female elected to represent Wichita's City Council District 1 as well as the first African-American woman to serve as vice mayor of Wichita.

**Stacie Williamson** is the Wichita State University Foundation's vice president of Alumni Engagement.

## HEALTH FORWARD, from Page 6 ↓

in both states due to proposed anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion laws.

According to their findings, policies perceived to be discriminatory, irrespective of their stated purpose or actual intent, can lead to economic harm.

The study, prepared by the Perryman Group, estimates that bills and initiatives currently under consideration in Missouri that could be seen as discriminatory put the state at risk of losing nearly \$2.6 billion in annual gross product and 23,842 jobs as of 2030.

## Data Disaggregation

Another focus area of the day's agenda was the importance of having disaggregated health data.

Data disaggregation refers to the breaking down of data into smaller groupings, often based on characteristics such as age, ethnicity, gender identity, income, location, race and sex.

In public health, disaggregated data helps individuals and groups better understand the individuals and groups they serve, to create more appropriate interventions and evaluate programs and policies to ensure effectiveness.

Sarah Crosley, deputy director of the Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence (MOCPHE), gave a recent example that the obesity rate is down by 2% in Missouri. However, a further look at disaggregated data found obesity was down 6% in Whites but up 2% in Blacks, which paints a totally different picture for the African-American community.

Health Forward supports requiring standardized and disaggregated data collection.

This year, MO Sen. Barbara Washington introduced a bill requiring disaggregated data collection around maternal deaths.

Her bill would create a "Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Board" within the Department of Health & Senior Services. In its study and

review of maternal deaths, the bill requires the board to review and report disaggregated data.

While MOCPHE is pushing for a much broader range of data disaggregation, McClain Bryant Macklin, Health Forward Foundation vice president of policy and impact, said the foundation is beginning with a much smaller focus in the area of disaggregation.

"Our strategy has been to sort of start, do the case making for that [maternal death] and then go broader," said Macklin.

## Further Advocacy

Health Forward and its lobbyists are continuing to follow and advocate for and against

bills introduced during this year's legislative session in both Missouri and Kansas.

All this was packed into the nonprofit's first "Day at the Capitol." Robert Gibson, Health Forward's impact strategist for policy, says it's something they plan on doing again next year. So, stay tuned.

## PEOPLE, from Page 8 ↓

Association recognize exceptional alumni and friends of the School of Law. We bring to your attention two of their eight 2024 Award honorees: Jon Gray and Latricia Scott Adams.

**Latricia Scott Adams** received the Alvin Sykes Justice Award. She serves as Director of Legal Aid of Western Missouri's pro bono program, known as the Volunteer Attorney Project (VAP). With the program since

# JUDGE JULIE: Kansas' Only U.S. District Judge

Although her looks defy her age, Judge Julie Robinson is the senior Black female judge in our service area and she has wisdom to share.

**By Bonita Gooch,**  
Editor-in-Chief

At five years old, Julie Robinson already knew she wanted to be an attorney. However, as she completed law school, she never thought she'd be a judge.

"That wasn't even in my mind, my frame of reference," said Robinson.

As a 5-year-old, at least she had a few role models. She'd met a few Black lawyers while growing up in Wichita. But it wasn't until she was a law student that she met her first Black judge, something that was a rarity at that time.

Straight out of law school, she became a law clerk for Judge Benjamin Franklin, a U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge and an African American. At the time, he was the only Black federal judge in Kansas.

As her father encouraged her at 5 years old, Judge Franklin stepped into that role in Robinson's adulthood.

"He was someone who taught me so much about life and the practice of law and litigation," Robinson said. "He started talking about me trying to develop my career in a way that I could replace him when he retired" and told her a path she should follow. "He planted the seed during my first few years out of law school, but I don't think I was convinced it would happen," Robinson said.

He laid out a path he suggested she follow. While she didn't completely follow it, she did get appointed to fill his position in 1994.

## Male Domination

While women's equality had come a long way by the 1980s, the field of law was still dominated by men.

After her two-year clerkship

with Judge Franklin, she joined the U.S. Attorney's Office. It was a demanding job, with expectations that associates would work long and hard hours – especially if they aspired to move up.

Robinson, by then a mother of a young child, said the men in the office didn't understand the extra demands she and the few other women in the office had on their plate.

"It was hard being a woman, having little children and being a trial lawyer," says Robinson, "but women in my generation, we felt like we couldn't push back too much."

They knew they were being watched and the overwhelming feeling was women weren't cut out for the job. But she and her female coworkers "toughened up and powered through."

They thought, if they failed, what would it mean to women coming behind them?

"You know, I think as a consequence it has helped other women," says Robinson.

Her point is similar to one made by Missouri Supreme Court Justice Robin Ransom, who is the first Black female appointed to the Missouri Supreme Court.

"I always say that it's OK to be the first; you just want to make sure you're not the last," said Ransom. "I don't care what it is, be it your gender or your race, you want to go in and knock it out of the park and do the best that you can, so the doors remain open for others to come behind you."

## The Judiciary

Judge Robinson was 37 when she was appointed to replace her mentor Judge Franklin, who had died unexpectedly. Her opportunity had come much earlier than she expected and her children were just 3- and 8-years-old.

Judge Robinson says her

elevation to the judiciary had a positive impact on her life because she then had control over her schedule – compared to the 11 years she spent in the U.S. Attorney's Office, where she had no control. While it's not a perfect correlation, it was like moving from worker bee to boss.

Because of her experience as a mom, and a single one for many of those years, Judge Robinson says she strives to be more considerate of the situations of others – both the legal team and the defendants who appear in her court.

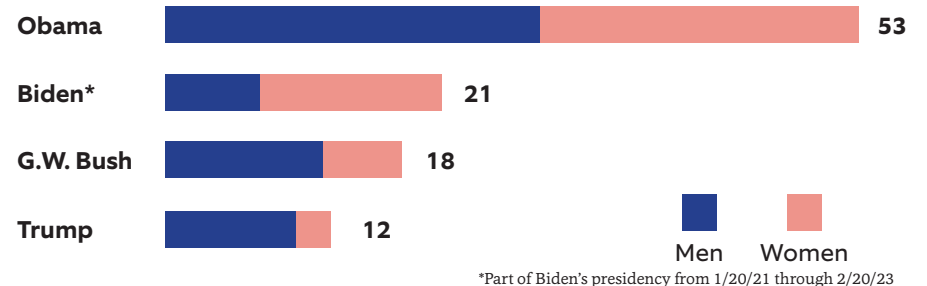
"I think I've been the kind of judge that's much more compassionate about circumstances because I get it. I know how hard it is to be a young mother/father, to have all these competing things you're trying to manage."

But Robinson says she also tries to show the same amount of compassion and empathy for the defendants, particularly when it comes to sentencing, which she describes as the hardest thing she has to do.

More than just looking at what the person did, she says she takes a look at who the person is and their circumstance. It's important to get sentencing right, she says, because most of these individuals are going to come back to the community.

Her approach is to look at the whole person/situation; what the person did and what the person

## APPOINTMENT OF BLACK U.S. DISTRICT JUDGES



needs to come back well and be able to succeed in the community.

"It's a decision that's important for the defendant and for the community," said Judge Robinson.

## U.S. District Court

In 2001 President George W. Bush nominated Judge Robinson to the U.S. District Court, Kansas District.

Her appointment was still a rarity – both as a woman and an African American. During his presidency, Bush only nominated 10 Black judges to the bench and only two of them were women. Compare that to Pres. Joe Biden: Through 2023, he's appointed 21 Black judges, 7 of them men and 14 women.

The change can also be reflected in the courts in Kansas City and Wichita. In most courts, the number of female judges is

usually equal to or greater than the number of male judges. As for African Americans, female judges outnumber the males by almost four to one.

In Kansas, Judge Robinson is still the only Black U.S. District Court judge. While federal judges are appointed for life, Robinson has cut back her caseload and taken on what's called Senior Status. While she doesn't plan on stepping away totally anytime soon, she's still concerned – like her mentor Franklin was – about grooming someone to take her place.

So far, the most ideal candidate would be U.S. Magistrate Gwynne Birzer, in Wichita. However, a big concern would be who is president when she decides to step down.

If Donald Trump is reelected, his previous record

indicates Judge Robinson's replacement will probably not be Black or a women. During his four years in office, Trump only appointed 12 Black district court judges and only two were women.

## Her Advice to Others

"You never can dream big enough, sometimes. You can be overly confident and cocky as a kid, yet you still never really know all that's in store for you. You just need to make sure that you're ready, and positioned and able and willing to accept all that comes your way."

## Judge Julie Robinson

**Senior Judge  
U.S. District Judge  
District of Kansas,  
Kansas City**

**Hometown:**  
Wichita

**Education:**  
BS, University of  
Kansas

JD, University of  
Kansas

**Professional  
Experience:**  
U.S. District Judge,  
Senior Status, 2021

Chief Judge, U.S. District  
Court, 2017

U.S. District Judge,  
District of Kansas, 2001

Judge, U.S. Bankruptcy  
Court, District of Kansas,  
1994

Asst. U.S. Attorney,  
Kansas District, 1983

Law Clerk, U.S.  
Bankruptcy Court, 1981

**WOMEN AND BLACK  
HISTORY MOMENT:**  
Judge Robinson was  
the first U.S. District  
Judge appointed in  
Kansas, male or  
female.



# Here Come the Judges



## JUDGE GWYNNE BIRZER

**U.S. MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
KANSAS DISTRICT /  
WICHITA  
APPOINTED 2015**

**HOMETOWN:**  
Kansas City

**EDUCATION:**  
AA Kansas City Kansas  
Community College

BA Criminal Justice,  
Washburn University

Juris Doctorate, Washburn  
University School of Law

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**  
Following law school, Judge  
Birzer practiced law in the  
public sector in Topeka, Kansas,

as an assistant public defender,  
an assistant district attorney,  
and as an assistant attorney  
general. She practiced in the  
private sector in her own firm.

In 2004, Judge Birzer  
relocated to Wichita,  
Kansas where she worked  
at the Sedgwick County  
Public Defender's Office.  
In 2006, she joined Hite,  
Fanning & Honeyman,  
LLP where she specialized  
in medical malpractice

defense litigation. In 2011,  
Judge Birzer became a  
partner in the firm and  
served in that capacity until  
her judicial appointment

**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Judge Birzer has served on  
the Board of Governors for  
the Kansas Bar Association  
and currently serves on the  
Board of Governors for the  
Wichita Bar Association.  
She has also served those  
organizations on various

committees. She is a  
member of the American  
Bar Association and a  
Fellow of the American  
Bar Foundation.

In addition to her judicial  
responsibilities, Judge  
Birzer serves her community  
on various boards and  
civic organizations,  
including Delta Sigma  
Theta Sorority, Inc.; Music  
Theater of Wichita; and  
StepStone/Dear Neighbor.



## JUDGE LAJUANA COUNTS

**U.S. MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF  
MISSOURI, KANSAS CITY  
APPOINTED 2018**

**EDUCATION:**  
BS University of  
Missouri-Columbia

Juris Doctorate, University

of Missouri-Kansas City  
School of Law

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER**  
Prior to her appointment,

Judge Counts was an  
attorney in the U.S. Attorney's  
Office, Western District of  
Missouri. Her focus areas

included General Crime and  
Narcotics. She also worked  
as an appellate coordinator  
and an appellate unit chief.



## JUDGE LISA HARDWICK

**MISSOURI COURT  
OF APPEAL  
KANSAS CITY  
APPOINTED 2001**

**EDUCATION:**  
BA Journalism, University  
of Missouri - Columbia

Juris Doctorate, Harvard  
Law School

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**  
After college in 1986, Judge  
Hardwick joined the law firm  
of Shook, Hardy & Bacon and  
rose to the level of partner in  
1992. She remained at the  
firm through 1999 when she  
was appointed as a Circuit

Judge in the 16th Circuit Court  
of Jackson County, MO.

She served in that position for  
just over a year before being  
to her current position on the  
Missouri Court of Appeals.  
She has been retained in  
office during two elections.  
Her current from 2010-2012  
she served as Chief Judge.

**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Her professional affiliations  
and memberships include

the Missouri, Jackson County  
and Kansas City Metropolitan  
Bar Associations and has  
served on numerous legal-  
related commissions including  
serving as Chairperson of  
the Judicial Appointment  
Commissions for the Sixth,  
Seventh and Sixteenth Circuits

Hardwick was elected to the  
Jackson County Legislature  
and served from 1993-2000.  
She serves on the Board of

Directors for the Truman Library  
Institute, Swope Community  
Enterprises, Kansas City Girl's  
Preparatory Academy and the  
Kansas City Crime Commission.

She is a member of St. James  
United Methodist Church and  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
She is also the recipient  
of numerous awards and  
recognitions including Judge of  
the Year from the Association  
of Women Lawyers.



## JUDGE ROBIN RANSOM

**MISSOURI  
SUPREME COURT  
ST. LOUIS  
APPOINTED 2021**

**HOMETOWN:**  
St. Louis

**EDUCATION:**  
BA Political Science and  
Sociology, New Brunswick's  
Douglass Residential College

Juris Doctorate, University  
Missouri School of Law

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**  
Ransom began her legal career  
as a public defender in St. Louis  
County in 1992 then became a  
prosecutor in St. Louis County  
in 1995. In 2002, she was  
appointed as a juvenile Family  
Court commissioner in St. Louis.  
She's steadily advanced through  
the state's court system. Later

in 2002, she was appointed  
as an associate justice to the  
Missouri 22nd Circuit Court,  
St. Louis. She moved up as a  
circuit justice in 2008 and was  
unanimously elected to serve  
as presiding judge in 2018.

In 2019, she was appointed to  
serve on the Missouri Court of  
Appeals for the Eastern District.  
Where she served until she was  
appointed to her current position  
on the Missouri Supreme Court.

**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Ransom bowls competitively,  
having bowled since she was  
11 years old. In March, she's  
particularly proud, she finally

bowled a perfect 300 game.  
She tutors children for a local  
church's literacy program is a  
member of the Juvenile Officer  
Performance Standards Work  
Group, the Missouri State  
Foster Care and Adoption  
Board, as well as a mentor of the  
nonprofit The Literacy Project.

### SPECIAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MOMENT:

Judge Ransom is the first African-  
American female to serve on the  
Missouri Supreme Court. She was  
also the first African-American  
woman to hold the position of  
presiding judge of the Missouri  
22nd Circuit Court in St. Louis.



I always say that it's OK to  
be the first; you just want  
to make sure you're not  
the last. I don't care what  
it is, be it your gender or  
your race, you want to  
go in and knock it out of  
the park and do the best  
that you can, so the doors  
remain open for others to  
come behind you."

**JUDGE RANSOM**

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## Recognizing Our Black Female Judges



### CANDICE ALCARAZ

**KANSAS DISTRICT  
COURT JUDGE**  
**29TH DISTRICT,  
WYANDOTTE COUNTY**

**HOMETOWN:**  
Chicago, IL

**EDUCATION:**  
BS Criminal Justice,  
Truman State University  
JD, Washburn University  
School of Law

**PROFESSIONAL  
EXPERIENCE:**  
District Court Judge,  
Wyandotte County, 2023  
Asst. District Attorney,  
Wyandotte County District  
Attorney's Office, 2016  
Intern, Kansas Court

of Appeals  
**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Wyandotte County  
Bar Association,  
Kansas Bar  
Association,  
Washburn Law  
Board of Governors,  
Association for

Women Lawyers of  
Greater Kansas City,  
Big Brothers Big  
Sisters of Greater  
Kansas City, and the  
Kansas City, Kansas  
Alumnae Chapter  
of Delta Sigma  
Theta, Sorority, Inc.

#### SPECIAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MOMENT:

Judge Alcaraz is the first African-American judge in Wyandotte County and at age 32, when she was elected, possibly the youngest judge to serve in the county.



### JUDGE KEA BIRD-RILEY

**ASSOCIATE CIRCUIT  
JUDGE, 2021**  
**MISSOURI 16TH  
CIRCUIT COURT**

**HOMETOWN:**  
Jackson, MS

**EDUCATION:**  
BS, Communications,  
Mississippi College

JD, University Missouri  
Kansas City  
**PROFESSIONAL  
EXPERIENCE:**  
Associate Circuit Judge,  
16th Circuit of Jackson  
County, MO, 2021  
Jackson County Family

Court Commissioner, 2018  
Associate, Krigel &  
Krigel, P.C., 2017  
Staff Attorney, Jackson  
County CASA, 2012  
Associate, Stauffer &  
Nathan, P.C., 2011

Law Clerk, 16TH Circuit  
Court of Jackson  
County, MO, 2008  
**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Jackson County Bar  
Association; Kansas  
City Metropolitan Bar  
Association; and Missouri

Bar Association; Board  
Member, Kansas City Youth  
Court; Board Member,  
Foster Adopt Connect;  
Academy Lafayette and  
UMKC Women's Council,  
numerous roles.



### JENNIFER L. JONES

**CHIEF  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
JUDGE**  
**WICHITA  
MUNICIPAL COURT**

**HOMETOWN:**  
Wichita, KS

**EDUCATION:**  
Attended Emporia  
State University  
BA Social Work, University  
of Missouri-Columbia  
JD, University of

Oklahoma Law School  
**PROFESSIONAL  
EXPERIENCE:**  
Administrative Court  
Judge, 2003  
Municipal Court  
Judge, 2001  
Sedgwick County District

Court Judge, 1992  
Partner, Bruce and  
Davis, 1992  
Associate Attorney,  
Bruce and Davis, 1988  
Prosecutor, District  
Attorney's Office,  
Muskogee, OK, 1982

**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Kansas Commission on  
Judicial Qualifications,  
Chair 2006 and 2007;  
Kansas and Wichita Bar  
Association member;  
Wichita YMCA Community  
Development Board,  
Wichita Chapter of The  
Links, Inc., officer; Jack and

Jill of America, Air Capital  
Wichita Chapter; Alpha  
Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

#### SPECIAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MOMENT:

In 1992, Judge Jones became the first African-American woman judge in Kansas history.



### SHAYLA MARSHALL

**KANSAS CITY MO  
MUNICIPAL JUDGE**

**HOMETOWN:**  
Kansas City, MO

**EDUCATION:**  
BA Social Psychology,  
Park University  
JD University of Kansas  
School of Law

**PROFESSIONAL  
EXPERIENCE:**

Municipal Judge, City  
of KCMO, 2023  
Director of Diversity, Equity  
and Inclusion, Missouri  
State Public Defender,  
Kansas City 2020  
District Defender,  
Managing Counsel,  
Missouri State Public

Defender's St. Joseph  
Office, 2018  
Managing Attorney,  
Marshall Law Firm, 2015  
Asst. Public Defender  
Missouri State Public  
Defender's Office, St.  
Joseph, 2011-2014  
**PRE-LAW EXPERIENCE:**

Early childhood  
teacher, Salvation  
Army Early Learning  
Center, Kansas City  
Foster care and  
adoption social worker,  
Cornerstones of Care,  
a contract agency of  
the Missouri Children's

Division in Kansas City.  
**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Kansas City Metropolitan  
Bar Association, Jackson  
County Bar Association,  
National Association  
of Women Judges  
and Sheffield Family  
Life Center Church.



### JALILAH OTTO

**PRESIDING JUDGE**  
**MISSOURI 16TH  
CIRCUIT COURT**

**HOMETOWN:**  
Kansas City

**EDUCATION:**  
BA Communication  
and Political Science,  
Tulane University  
JD, University Missouri-  
Columbia School of Law

**PROFESSIONAL**

**EXPERIENCE:**  
Presiding Judge, 2023  
Circuit Court Judge,  
2017 - present  
Associate Circuit Judge in  
Jackson County, 2014-2017  
Chief Trial Assistant  
for the Jackson County  
Prosecutor's Office, 2013

Special Assistant, United  
States Attorney, U.S.  
Attorney's Office, 2019  
Prosecutor, U.S.  
Attorney's Office, 2010  
Assistant Prosecuting  
Attorney, Jackson County  
Prosecutor's Office, 2005  
Judicial Law Clerk

to Judge Lisa White  
Hardwick, Missouri  
Court of Appeals, 2002  
**ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Kansas City Commission  
on Violent Crimes, the  
Kansas City Municipal  
Ethics Commission, the  
Kansas City Youth  
Court, an Missouri Bar

Association Committee on  
Minority Issues, President  
of the Jackson County  
Bar Association, Kansas  
City Metropolitan Bar  
Association: Vice-Chair  
of the Public Service  
Committee of the  
Association of Women  
Lawyers and Chair of the  
Criminal Law Committee



### MARTINA PETERSON

**KANSAS CITY  
MUNICIPAL  
COURT JUDGE**

**HOMETOWN:**  
Kansas City, MO for over  
50 years, but she was  
born on a military base  
in Landstuhl, Germany

**EDUCATION:**  
BA Business  
Administration, University

Missouri Kansas City  
Masters Degree, University  
of Missouri Kansas City  
JD, University of  
Missouri Kansas City  
**PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**  
Municipal Court Judge,  
Kansas City, 2018

Criminal and traffic cases  
and Mental Health Court  
Jackson County Family  
Court Commissioner, 2009  
Asst Public Defender,  
Missouri Public  
Defenders Office, 1996  
**ASSOCIATIONS:**

Jackson County, Kansas  
City Metropolitan, and  
Missouri Bar Associations;  
UMKC Alumni Association,  
Young Achievers  
Program, The Community  
Assistance Council Board  
of Directors, and the  
Urban League/Black MBA

Association Mentoring  
Program. Judge Peterson  
has received the Kansas  
City Metropolitan Bar  
Association's President's  
Award and the Missouri  
Lawyers Media Women's  
Justice Award for  
Public Service.

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KIMBRELL**

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# Wichita Police Learn Peer Intervention Tactics

ABLE program encourages officers to stop bad behavior by fellow officers.

By P.J. Griekspoor  
Wichita Reporter

The scenario is unfortunately all too familiar – one law enforcement officer steps over the line, using excessive or even deadly force against a suspect, while other officers stand by and watch it happen.

The Wichita Police Dept. has just implemented a new training program designed to empower any officer to intervene to prevent harm – even if the out-of-line officer holds superior rank or is a supervisor.

The program called ABLE (Active Bystandership Law Enforcement) was introduced nationally in 2020. Wichita Police Chief Joe Sullivan, who took charge in Wichita a year ago, said one of his earliest goals was to bring the program here.

He said the program was developed with input from the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement.

“Policing is very much a paramilitary organization,” said WPD Chief Training Officer Ken Kimble, a 34-year veteran with the force. “You learn to respect rank and obey superior officers. ABLE provides the training that teaches officers effective ways to intervene when they observe misconduct taking place and encourages them to step in when they witness inappropriate behavior.”

Sullivan said the program does not replace any existing training program but instead builds on training already in place to encourage and support peer intervention. The program was made possible in Wichita with support from the



Chief training officer Ken Kimble explains how the ABLE program works to help officers learn to intervene and prevent misconduct by fellow officers

NAACP, the Greater Wichita Ministerial League and civic engagement.

The initial training is eight hours, conducted in one day. So far, Kimble said, he has completed six classes. Upgrades are ongoing and will be conducted annually.

“I think one of the powerful things about this training is that officers can embrace it as a way to not only prevent harm from being done to the public but to help officers build their career,” Kimble said. “I know that if I were out of line, I’d want somebody to stop me from making a mistake that could cost me my job or my reputation.”

The need for training, Sullivan said, is to help officers not only recognize inappropriate behavior but to teach them how to successfully intervene to stop it. Over time, it creates an internal culture shift and contributes to positive change within law enforcement agencies.

Police Information Officer Andrew Ford said the department is striving to make

continuous improvements to other training programs such as de-escalation, negotiations, and ICAT (Integrating Communication Assessment and Tactics) training, which involves persons in crisis who are unarmed or armed with weapons other than firearms.

Ford said some incidents, including those that involved heavy fire, result from officers at the scene attempting to protect not only themselves but fellow officers.

“Any time you are in a situation where shots are being fired, it can escalate. The better way is to try to avoid shots being fired at all,” he said.

Sullivan said he is committed to seeing the department strive to always do better and also continue to grow.

He expressed concern about officer-involved shootings and about the prevalence of Hispanics among the recent victims. He said outreach to the community will continue in an effort to build positive relationships.



New bridges concepts



15th Street bridge to be replaced

## Approval of New 15th Street Bridge Expected

Design calls for new pedestrian bridge across the Wichita Drainage Canal at 15th Street

By P.J. Griekspoor  
Wichita Reporter

Final approval of a plan for a new bridge over the Wichita Drainage Canal at 15th Street North is expected when the Wichita City Council meets on April 2.

The proposed improvements will include a new 12-foot wide multi-use pedestrian bridge over the canal, a multi-use path connecting 15th street to 14th street, a small parking area on the east side of the canal and 6-foot sidewalks connecting other walking paths in the area.

The current bridge was built in 1925 and had an expected 75 year lifespan. An inspection in 2019 resulted in a recommendation that the bridge be closed to traffic or require annual inspections. It is currently considered structurally deficient.

Only the North pedestrian way of the bridge is currently open. The south walkway was permanently closed in 2021. In 2023, fewer than 200

vehicles a day used the bridge.

The concept proposal includes removing the existing bridge and replacing it with a pedestrian bridge. The existing budget of \$400,000 in Local Sales Tax funding was approved by the City Council

on Jan. 17, 2023.

The project is expected to cost \$3 mil with most of the funds coming from local sales tax revenue set aside for capital improvement projects. Once the project is approved, the city will move to making final decisions about planned artwork to enhance the walkway.

### MORE IMPROVEMENTS FOR MCADAMS

By Bonita Gooch  
Voice Editor-in-Chief

First District City Councilmember Brandon Johnson remind us he committed to make McAdams Park a destination park when he ran for office and he’s continuing to deliver on his promise with more than \$17 million in investments made or pledged for the park.

Soon to be under construction after floodplain issues stalled the project is the new Carl Brewer Community Center. Other completed improvements include expansion of the field, new entryway and building for the League 42 youth baseball program.

Then there’s the totally new Charles McAfee swimming pool. Recently approved is \$250,000 for improvements to the Goose Doughty tennis courts and \$50,000 for improvements to the Barry Sanders football field.

# Wichita Launches One Heart Project with Film Viewing

'One Heart' movie screening at Dunbar brings in \$30,000 Walmart donation for second-chance youth program.

## Key Points:

- Viewing of feature film "One Heart" at the Dunbar Theatre was the kickoff of the expansion of the "One Heart Project" to Wichita.
- One Heart Project aims to help justice-involved and at-risk youth find opportunities for success.
- Walmart contributed \$30,000 to the launch of the program.
- Event also focused attention on ongoing renovation efforts at the Dunbar.

The movie is based on a real-life football game played in November 2008 between Grapevine Faith Christian School and the Gainesville State School Tornadoes, a team from the maximum security prison housing some of the most violent juvenile offenders in the Texas system.

At the encouragement of Grapevine Coach Kris Hogan, members of the Grapevine community and school rallied behind and gave support to the Gainesville team, something they'd never received. It proved to be a positive and emotional moment for both sides.

Eterne Films CEO Steve Riach, Eterne president Russell Lake and film producer Carmen Studer all had children who attended Grapevine and witnessed the events that unfolded.

"It was a night that changed the lives of both teams," said Riach, who decided to base a feature film "One Heart," on the events of that night. The film was completed last year and is expected to be in theaters across the country by the end of this year.

In addition, Riach and others started the One Heart Outreach Program that equips



Pictured at the screening event for "One Heart" at the historic Dunbar Theatre are (L-R) Ryan Irsik, representing Walmart, state Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudau and "One Heart" producer Steve Riach. PHOTO BY RICHARD HARRIS

justice-involved and at-risk youth with the skills, tools, and healthy relationships they need to navigate life successfully upon leaving the judicial system. That initiative was launched in 2014.

## Wichita One Heart Project Launch

The event at the historic Dunbar was the launching point for the One Heart Project in Wichita. After the screening, Walmart, a longtime supporter of the Dunbar Theatre restoration, presented a check for \$30,000 to support the launch of the Wichita One Heart Project.

One Heart has been active in northeast Kansas for about eight years, but it was a meeting before the Kansas Senate Committee on Juvenile Justice Oversight that connected state Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudeau with Riach and led to the expansion of the program into the Wichita community. Riach was testifying before the committee about the One Heart Program.

"She [Faust-Goudeau] said it [One Heart Program] should be here and I agreed," said Riach, who attended the screening and praised local efforts.

"We are so thankful for Walmart's partnership and

Sen. Faust-Goudeau's leadership in making the screening of One Heart in the historic Dunbar Theatre possible," Riach said. "Providing the opportunity to gather community and state leaders and potential partners, around collaboration on a proven initiative that can change the futures of youths in the greater Wichita area is powerful. We are honored to work with these great leaders to impact the youth of this community."

"One Heart Project's mission will enhance the city of Wichita by providing social and economic growth for future generations to come," Faust-Goudeau said.

## Dunbar Restoration Effort

Screening the film at the Dunbar had a dual benefit of launching the One Heart Project for Wichita but also called attention to the ongoing effort to restore the Dunbar.

The Dunbar was built in 1941 and until 1963 was the only movie theater in Wichita that was available exclusively to the African-American community.

It sat vacant for decades until Phase One of a massive restoration effort by Power

Community Development Corporation was completed two years ago. That work involved stripping the theater to a shell and bringing it back with all-new infrastructure.

With the completion of Phase 1, the theater functions as a community center. Phase I work brought the theater back to being able to be used.

"We now have about 125 red velvet covered chairs as well as the stage and a movie screen which provides a community space," Faust-Goudeau said. "Eventually, we'd like to have 250 permanent theater seats. And the goal is to expand to the vacant lot next door to add a community events center that would also provide an event space that people could rent for special occasions such as weddings, graduations and so forth."

Faust-Goudeau, a major supporter of the Dunbar project, said fundraising to continue building out the project is ongoing. WalMart has been a long-time supporter of the renovation, donating \$130,000 to the revitalization effort. In December, the Union Pacific Railroad Community Foundation donated \$25,000 to the effort.

# Activist Increases Effort With Reparations Petition

Several events & online effort will help make the case for social justice reparations.

By P.J. Griekspoor  
Wichita Reporter

Wichita community activist Mary Dean is ramping up her efforts to get members of the Wichita City Council to appoint a commission to study the impact that centuries of discriminatory practices have had on Wichita's Black citizens and to propose specific ways amends can be made.

Kansas Justice Advocate

Inc., a nonprofit formed by Dean, is conducting a petition drive to show community support for forming the reparations commission. So far, she's held in-person petition drives at Paradise Baptist Church and ICT Launchpad.

The next signature drive is scheduled for Mon., March 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Rhatigan Student Center on the Wichita State University campus. Individuals can

also sign an online petition on change.org. You can find that petition at <https://bit.ly/49Jki8x>.

Her goal is to collect 500 signatures and to have a significant presence at the city council meeting when the issue is addressed.

## Growing Reparations Movement

Nationally, a movement is growing in support of

reparations, with an expanded definition that looks beyond compensation for centuries of slavery into more recent discriminatory practices that have impacted African Americans.

As an example, in the Black History issue of The Community Voice, the paper explored the impact decades of discriminatory housing practices have had on the Black/White wealth gap in

America. Many of these policies were adopted and promoted by the United States government.

Read about those policies at <https://bit.ly/3Tu981I>.

Many other cities and states across the country are forming commissions to look at the impact of past discriminatory practices on people of color and to look at ways – not just cash payments – that can help address the impact.



Mary Dean

# First Look at Proposed 18th & Vine Street Changes

## \$5.4M project hopes to give 18th & Vine a facelift and make the area more pedestrian friendly.

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

In a bid to inject life into the historic 18th & Vine Jazz District, Kansas City is putting \$5.4 million toward transforming the streetscape in the area into a pedestrian-friendly haven. The enhancements aim to limit vehicular presence and enhance walkability, with construction set to begin in the fall.

The plan — in the works since 2021 — eliminates street parking along 18th Street, replacing parking with expansive walkways without curbs. The design also allows for street closures during events, creating a storefront-to-storefront pedestrian mall.

Developers from Black-owned Taliaferro & Browne have worked on the project and say the new streetscape underscores a concerted effort to revitalize the Jazz District's allure and stimulate economic activity.

"What this project is all about is creating street life on 18th street and we are trying to do everything that we can to support that," says Leonard Graham, president of Taliaferro & Browne at a recent meeting to gather more community input.

The project will be funded by a combination of city and federal funding. Kansas City committed \$1.4 million. Jazz District visionary Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II secured \$4 million in federal dollars for the project.

The project will be constructed in phases, but will ultimately see changes along 18th Street, 17th Terrace, Vine Street, 19th Street, Highland Avenue, Woodland Avenue, and the intersection of Paseo and 18th.

The first phase focuses on 17th Terrace and 18th Street. Curbs and parking spaces will be removed along 18th Street from Paseo to Woodland and the wider sidewalks will be installed allowing for more



Rendering looking south on 18th St. during an event and closed to vehicles.

outdoor cafe seating.

To replace the parking spaces eliminated on 18th, 55 new parking spaces will be added along 17th Terrace behind the Jazz and NLBM building. It's space is currently part of the grassy area often used for concert seating.

Project leaders want to construct the parking first to limit disruption to the businesses in the area.

On 18th Street there will be one lane in each direction. During events, 18th Street can be closed to traffic with decorative bollards and converted

into a walkable environment with tents, food trucks, and musical performances.

The design incorporates new street lighting, including a dynamic light feature across 18th Street, between the Jazz Museum and Gem Theatre. The plan also shows a pocket park at Highland and 18th with a small amphitheater and stage to enhance events.

From input received from previous community sessions, the planners eliminated closing 18th Street to vehicular traffic.

"We wanted to see what [the community wanted to see]," says



A map of the full project including future phases.

Graham. "Now we're starting to take those concepts and turn them into a reality; we're about 60% of the way there."

There will be a call for more community input after a construction firm is selected later this year. Construction is slated to begin in the fall and will likely take a year, with completion

of the 18th & 17th Terrace improvements finished well before the 2026 World Cup.

See more drawings of the 18th & Vine Pedestrian improvements online at <https://bit.ly/3Tx1JPp>

## KC Considers Community Response & Pre-Arrest Diversion Program

Proposed REACH program would give an alternative to calling police and connect people to resources.

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

Kansas City Council is in the throws of putting together a budget for the upcoming year and is considering funding a new program — called REACH — to reduce incarceration and connect people with non-emergency services.

The City Council is expected to vote on the ordinance that forms REACH, which stands for 'Responding with Empathetic Alternatives and Community Health,' by the end

of the month. The program comes from the recommendations of the city's Alternatives to Incarceration Commission and would allow people to call 3-1-1, instead of 9-1-1, for issues involving mental health, substance use, homelessness, or other quality of life issues.

"I know what it's like to be in a dark place with no hope and without support," says Nadra Barnes of the advocacy group Decarcerate KC. "If I had a positive presence and a helpful place to turn, my outcome would have been different. Instead, I was incarcerated."

### How REACH Works

As an example, if a person is found sleeping in front of a business, the owner could call 3-1-1 instead of calling for a

police response. REACH teams would then connect the person to resources like housing, mental health, and social services.

"We talk all the time about how there isn't just one solution to how we build a safer and healthier city for all, and I agree with that," said Mayor Quinton Lucas, one of the ordinance's sponsors.

If passed, REACH will be run and staffed by the KCMO Health Dept., and the legislation proposes \$1.26 million from the budget for a staff of twelve and an additional \$500,000 for housing services.

"That is a lot cheaper than a \$317 million budget for enforcement or a \$200 million jail," said Lucas.

The idea for the program was pushed by advocacy groups

like Decarcerate KC and is modeled after similar successful programs in Atlanta, Denver, and Tallahassee. Lucas pointed out that Tallahassee diverted more than 1000 offenders in its first three years of a similar program, and just 6% of those 1000 were arrested after being connected with resources.

"For far too long in Kansas City, we have focused our resources toward systems of punishment and have failed to fund systems of care that build up our communities," said Councilman Johnathan Duncan at the legislation introduction. "We have overburdened our courts, our jails, our first responders by forcing them to address issues they are not equipped to handle: folks who need mental health

treatment, food, and a place to stay at night."

### REACH Program Components:

- Community Response: Trained community responders would address crisis situations, providing immediate assistance and support.

- Short-Term Care Navigation: Individuals in need would be connected with essential services, including food, shelter, and transportation.

- Long-Term Care Navigation: A dedicated Care Navigator would assist individuals in

- accessing sustained support services, such as mental health treatment and permanent housing options.

- According to Lucas and Duncan, REACH will leverage existing city resources, better coordinate with the city's service providers, and lower the burden on courts, police, and police dispatchers.

Plans are for the program to roll out in phases. REACH efforts will initially be focused on the downtown area, the Prospect corridor, and hotspots of need identified by the KC Transit Authority.

The ordinance tells City Manager Brian Platt to report back with a plan for a REACH Center — that would house multiple services under one roof — within 180 days of passage. The ordinance language also clarifies that REACH is not a policing entity and will not interfere with KCPD.

# Auctioned on Courthouse Steps - What's Next for Parade Park

Parade Park, the nation's oldest Black-owned housing cooperative, will undergo a \$275M renovation, but what about the current residents and preserving its history?

By **Thomas White**  
Kansas City Reporter

Parade Park will undergo a \$275 million renovation after the nation's oldest Black-owned housing cooperative was sold at a foreclosure auction for just under \$12 million on the courthouse steps.

The U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development had the winning bid, although two others bid on the historic 510-unit housing complex that sits in the heart of the 18th & Vine Jazz District.

As was previously agreed, HUD then gave the property to the City of Kansas City (for \$10) who then transferred the property to redevelopment partners Flaherty & Collins Properties and Twelfth Street Heritage Development Corp.

The complicated change in ownership of the property was agreed upon after Parade Park Homes were foreclosed on last year. City officials, recognizing the significant history of the property that had fallen into disrepair, put together a plan with HUD to redevelop the property. The City put out a request for proposals that had to include an option for home ownership possibilities, low-income housing, and some preservation of Parade Park's history.

Four development proposals were received and the



Parade Park will be redeveloped into over 1,000 residences over three phases.

City Council voted unanimously in January to choose the proposal from a partnership of Flaherty & Collins and Twelfth Street Heritage, because “they are long-time developers in Kansas City with a shared vision for the future success of Parade Park.”

“Since my first week as a city councilman, as mayor, and through two presidential administrations, I have fought to return dignified housing and development to Parade Park, a crown jewel of Kansas City's east side, our Black community, and our entire city,” said Mayor Quinton Lucas.

Flaherty & Collins and Twelfth Street Heritage have collaborated on redevelopment projects in the past, including nearly 200 affordable housing units at Jazz Hill Apartments. Alexis Williams, director of operations at Twelfth Street Heritage, says the project has been years in the making.

“This is the biggest development on KC's east side that's ever been done,” says Williams. “The east side deserves the same development and opportunities as anywhere else; for so long it's

been overlooked.”

## What About the Residents of Parade Park

Of the 510 residences currently in Parade Park, only about 165 units are occupied. Developers have taken ownership of the property and are working to issue new leases but say they will not raise rent through the duration of construction, which is expected to be through 2030.

“Some residents have lived in Parade Park for 60 years,” says Williams. “This is home for them — and even though the conditions don't look that way now — this was a place of joy where doctors, lawyers, and baseball players have all come out of Parade Park. We don't want to just come in and disrupt their living.”

Parade Park Homes had a unique cooperative housing structure that allowed low-cost ownership options. The new developers have set aside 60 new units for ownership but say their plans are all preliminary and can be changed based on current residents' input.

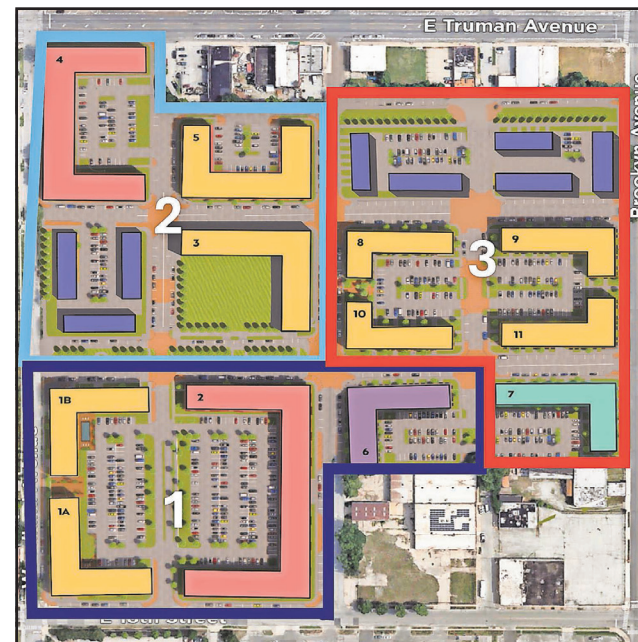
“We want the residents to feel like they are a part of this and have some input

in the design phase,” says Williams. “Right now, it's 60 [ownership opportunities] but if we find out that all the current residents want to own, we'll work with them to try to figure that out and make it possible.”

HUD has issued Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPV) to Parade Park residents to help maintain affordable housing costs throughout the redevelopment. These vouchers will help cover the cost of rent to those who must move during redevelopment and also feature a right-to-return policy that ensures residents can return to their units after the redevelopment is complete.

“They won't be displaced, we'll be taking care of residents every step of the way,” says Williams. “When we start the construction, they will have a relocation specialist to help them move for the time being and then they will be the first one to come back and enjoy this new development project.”

A relocation specialist will meet one-on-one with residents to figure out their best options and assist with the logistics up to helping residents pack and move.



The phases of construction on the Parade Park property.

Williams says that those with vouchers will pay the same rent indefinitely and that returning residents would only have a change in housing cost if they purchased a unit or opt for a market-rate apartment.

Developers say they will be in open communication with residents, have regular meetings, and have a monthly newsletter to keep residents informed. They also say they will seek resident feedback on the redevelopment project itself.

“We'll hold town halls with residents to make sure they know what's going on,” says Williams. “They'll be part of the design, we'll bring in architects and engineers to speak with residents about what they want and what that looks like.”

## Redevelopment Plan

Developers' preliminary plan puts \$275 million into the property, and when finished, Parade Park would have more than a thousand residences, including apartments, townhomes, and senior housing. There would be small retail developments

on the corners of the property, along with a park or green space.

“We promised to work with residents, and so we will include them,” says Williams. “So while we have a preliminary design, anything can change based on their feedback.”

A substantial chunk of the property will be affordable housing units for those making less than 80% of the area's average income. Williams says that the strongest communities are mixed-income, so the property will also feature market-rate apartments, senior living, and ownership opportunities.

Williams says that from start to finish, the project is expected to be completed in three phases over seven years. Groundbreaking is expected by the end of the year, with Phase 1 construction to start within 18 months.

Preliminary plans call for Phase 1 to include low-income, senior, and market-rate housing. Phase 2

See PARADE PARK, Page 23 →

# KC Chiefs Unveil Renovation Plans for Arrowhead Stadium

Renovations to cost \$800M and hinge on an April 2 vote to extend 3/8th cent sales tax

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

The Kansas City Chiefs have presented their \$800M renovation plan for Arrowhead Stadium. The team says the project will enhance the fan experience and secure the future of one of football's iconic venues.

The announcement comes as Jackson County residents prepare to vote April 2 on a proposed 3/8th cent sales tax extension. Clark Hunt says the project will be funded with \$500M from the proposed tax, and the Hunt family will cover the remaining costs.

Both the Chiefs and the Royals are asking taxpayers to foot a large part of the bill for their respective stadium projects. The Chiefs want to renovate, and the Royals want to build a downtown stadium in part because



A thousand new club and suite seats will be created in each endzone.

they say the concrete is bad at their stadium.

Chiefs President Mark Donovan was asked about how Arrowhead Stadium is in good shape while Kauffman Stadium has 'concrete cancer' despite being built at the same time.

"Believe it or not, it was a bad batch," said Donovan. "One team got a good batch of concrete and one team didn't."

The Chiefs renovation plans do not include an entertainment district, hotel or even a roof as had been

rumored. A roof for the stadium was a big push in 2006, but Hunt sees things differently now, pointing out the team maintains a competitive advantage by playing outdoors. Donovan, nixed the entertainment district, saying the team did not seriously consider it.

"This is not an area worthy of developing," said Donovan. "As harsh as that sounds, that's the reality from a business standpoint."

The team did say that any overrun costs during the renovation project would be



Infrared heaters and large fans will be added to concourses that will also have partial cover.

paid for by the Hunt family and that taxpayers would not be on the hook for demolition costs to Kauffman Stadium.

## Renovation Details

The proposed renovations aim to modernize Arrowhead Stadium while also keeping 'the spirit' of Arrowhead Stadium. The renderings, revealed by Chiefs Chairman Clark Hunt and team President Mark Donovan, showcase a revitalized but preserved Arrowhead Stadium.

"We are keeping the spirit of the building but bringing the best of the best into the building," said Donovan.

At the forefront of the renovation plans is the creation of a "fan activation zone," which will be built on the site of the current Royals' Kauffman Stadium. This area is envisioned as a partially covered entertainment space that can be used year-round. The area also has a full-size football turf



Pedestrian bridges will be added as well as an increased number of entry points.

aimed at enhancing the tailgating culture synonymous with Kansas City football.

The renovation plan also adds 3,000 more parking spaces and re-orientates the entire parking lot for efficiency when entering, exiting, or tailgating gameday. Donovan says parking prices will remain around the NFL's league average. Permanent restrooms will be added to the parking lots as well as pedestrian bridges and new entrances.

Inside the stadium, concourses will be added to connect both sides on the upper level. The concourses throughout the stadium will be covered and fitted with heaters & fans to allow a respite from the elements for fans. An on-field visiting team tunnel will be added, which helps on gamedays but also helps to more effectively set up and break down large-scale concerts at the stadium.

See STADIUM Page 22 →



**Sylvester Thompson**  
Retirement and Insurance Advisor  
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Sylvester Thompson

WICHITA

**Wed, Mar 20, 8 – 9:30 am:** Sunrise Scramble, Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion. Courtyard by Marriott, 820 E 2nd. JSunrise Scrambler, Women's History Month Edition, will feature Danielle Johnson, Executive Director of Wichita Habitat for Humanity. Explore how she utilizes her DEI background to unite and provide access to affordable housing, all while aiding attendees in understanding the historical context of housing issues. COST \$20+ <https://bit.ly/3Iu9mjk>

**Thu, Mar 21, 4 - 6 pm:** **National Rosie the Riveter Day**, 830 W 1st 1906 Lounge at Hotel at Old Town. Join us in celebrating women in aviation. Women in Wichita were integral during World War II in the production of the B-29 Bomber Jets. To celebrate those courageous women and the women throughout history involved in aviation, the Wichita Aero Club is hosting a mingle and a STEAM-education outreach opportunity, beginning in March.

**Fri, Mar 22, 6 – 9 pm:** **Ladies Night With CM Consulting and Development Services**, Botanica at GROW, 302 S Market. Join us for Women's History Month with Conni Mansaw with CM Consulting & Development Services! Enjoy El Gusto Food truck, vendors, DJ Detroit, fun drinks, creating and the Plant Bar! \$10 <https://bit.ly/43eQxdA>

**Sat, Mar 23, 12 – 3 pm:** **COVID Shots**, Chisholm Trail Church, 5833 E 37th St. COVID shots, bring ID

**Sat, Mar 23, 12 pm:** **Egg the Park**, McAdams Park, 1329 E 16th St. Join us for our annual Easter egg hunt, Egg the Park! Everything is FREE! Age-specific egg hunts, bounce houses, games, hot dogs, snow cones, giveaways and more! There will be over 20,000 eggs! FREE

**Sun, Mar 24, 2 pm:** **SCDP Sunday Fund Day Fish Fry**. The Artichoke Sandwich Bar, 811 N Broadway. Event by Sedgwick County Democratic Party. COST \$15 <https://bit.ly/48QDX5j>

**Tue, Mar 26, 10 am – 2 pm:** **Wichita State University Criminal Justice Career Fair**,

Rhatigan Student Center, WSU. Sponsored by the WSU Criminal Justice Student Association. Annual Career Fair, FREE.

**Thu, Mar 28 10 am – 2 pm:** **2024 Diversity Career Fair**, The Center, 1914 E. 11th. Speak with different employers and learn more about career opportunities. We encourage all applicants to bring their resumes and be prepared to talk directly with employers about potential job openings. Sponsored by the Urban League of Kansas. FREE.

**Fri March 29, 8 pm: Wichita Night of Comedy**, Lava Hookah Lounge, 6160 E 21st. From Memphis the hilarious Oscar P, from Oklahoma City, my sister in comedy Georgina, and two of Wichita's own DeeDee and Alonzo Ross. Great laughs with great food and drinks. Pay at the door.

**Fri March 29, 5 – 10 pm: Food Truck Rally**, Wichita Boathouse, 515 S Wichita. Xclusive Booze Truck, yard games, 20+ food trucks, over 25 local artists & small business vendors. FREE

**Sat, Mar 30, 6:30 pm:** **Kimberly Kim Paige Quartet**, Walkers Jazz Lounge, 252 N Moseley. An evening filled with captivating harmonies and refined musicality awaits, promising an unforgettable immersion in the world of jazz. COST \$10 - \$12 at door.

**Wed, Apr 3, 10:30 am: Get Ya Color On** Wichita Art Museum, 1400 W Museum Blvd. Join artist Sontia Levy-Mason, owner of Get Ya Color On Studios, to fuel your creativity and boost your mental wellness. Experience the combination of art and mindfulness by coloring a custom-designed coloring sheet inspired by WAM's collection. COST \$2

**Fri, Apr 5, 1-4 pm: invitation to Dr Vesey's present**, Mennonite Church of the servant, 2401 N woodland. Come here Dr Galyn Vesey tell the story of the 1958 Dockum Drug Store Sit in as he experienced it as a college student and a member of the Wichita NAACP FREE

**Fri, Apr 5, 6 pm: Wichita Black Professionals Mixer**, Hotel at Old Town, 830 E 1st. CM Consulting & Development invites you to a night of elegance

and connection. Indulge in live jazz, appetizers, door prizes, and a cash bar. Don't miss this opportunity to network, engage, and support Wichita Black Professionals. Cost \$15 advance tickets or \$20 at the door. <https://bit.ly/4c5Tf99>

**Sat, Apr 6, 12 – 3 pm: COVID shots** Oaklawn Activity Center, 4904 S Clifton COVID shots bring ID

**Fri, Apr 12, 1 – 4 pm: Veterans Enrollment & Claims Fair**, Wichita Marriott, 9100 Corporate Hills., Let the VA assist you in gaining access to your VA benefits. Team will be providing PACT Act education, enrolling into veterans' health care, and assisting with disability claims and other benefits. Bring a copy of your DD214. Hosted by Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. FREE

**Sun, Apr 14, 12 – 4 pm: Open Streets ICT on 17th St.** 17th Street, just south of Wichita State University, transformed into a vibrant hub of activity. A day filled with physical fun, delicious food trucks, and uplifting music. FREE.

**Sat, Apr 20, 12 – 3 pm: COVID shots**, The Center, 1914 E 11th, COVID shots bring ID

KANSAS CITY

**Tue Mar 18, 6:30pm: Johnson County NAACP Executive Committee Meeting.** Shawnee Church of the Nazarene, 6639 Quivira, Shawnee, KS

**Wed. Mar 20, 6:30 -- 8:30 pm: Brewing Opportunities KCMO Entrepreneurship**, Rochester Brewing, 2129 Washington St. At this happy hour, you will learn how the city can cut red tape for small businesses through regulatory reform, connect with fellow entrepreneurs and the Small Business Task Force, and enjoy some free delicious beer and tacos. FREE

**Thu., Mar 21, 11 am – 12 pm: Special presentation on Military Veterans**, Black Archives Of Mid-America 1722 E 17th. This special presentation will honor and celebrate the brave men and women who have served in the military. Hear inspiring stories, gain insights into their experiences, and learn about the sacrifices they have made for our country. FREE

**Thu Mar 21, 8 pm: Play:**

**Reverse Happy Hour**, Privee Restaurant & Lounge, 700 Southwest Blvd. It's Exclusive! It's Upscale! It's happy hour, reverse that is. Come join us for a vibe each and every Thursday to celebrate or just to hang. COST \$7

**Sat. Mar 23, 11 am: Brunch With a Purpose**, Bruce R Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, 3700 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Celebrating the Legacy of Senator Yvonne Starks Wilson and supporting the park named in her honor. COST \$25. WHERE ARE TICKETS

**Sun, Mar 24, 1- 2:30 pm: Fatherly Celebration, Community Health Council of Wyandotte County**, 803 Armstrong Av. KCKS. Recognizing our Black Fathers with a Dads Only Fatherly Celebration. Partnering with the Crown Initiative, KBEN and Community Health Council of Wyandotte to bring awareness and resources that fathers do exist. FREE

**Sun, Mar 24, 7 – 8 pm: Making History: Kansas City's Black Suffragists.** Kansas City Public Library, 14 W 10th. Carmaleta Williams, CEO of the Black Archives of Mid-America, discusses the research of the long history of Black women's activism, and the intersection with the struggles for abolition, suffrage, economic freedom, and civil rights. She further details the contributions of Black Kansas Citizens. FREE

**Sun. Mar 24, 3 – 5 pm: The Revolving Academy Door: African American Women in Higher Education**, William Jewell College (Yates-Gill College Union Room #121), 500 College Hill, Liberty, MO. The program will feature keynote speaker, Dr. Vanessa Garry, Associate Professor in the College of Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and a member of The Missouri Humanities Speaker's Bureau. FREE

**Mon. Mar 25, 11am – 12 pm: Medal of Honor Day Ceremonial Wreath Laying.** Black Archives Of Mid-America 1722 E 17th. a special event commemorating the brave recipients of the Medal of Honor! On this day, we honor the extraordinary individuals who have demonstrated

exceptional valor and selflessness. FREE Reserve a spot. <https://bit.ly/49Qo0xi>

**Thu. Mar 28, 11:45 am – 1:30 pm: Greater Kansas City Difference Maker 66th Awards Luncheon**, Starlight Theatre, 4600 Starlight Rd., The theme for the luncheon is "From Redlining to Chalk Lines: The Costs of Economic Injustice." During our signature Fireside Chat, Dr. Elliott Currie, author of A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America, and Dion Sankar, Chief Deputy Prosecutor for Jackson County, will speak in depth about the root causes of and remedies for addressing urban violence. COST \$100

**Sat., Apr. 6, 12 pm: Johnson County NAACP General Membership Meeting.** Shawnee Church of the Nazarene, 6639 Quivira, Shawnee, KS FREE

**Sat., Apr. 13, 1 -3 pm: Sigma Gamma Rho, Psi Sigma Alumnae Chapter, Unitea Lunch**, Disabled American Veterans ,14605 E US Hwy. This unique gathering is not just a tea party; it's a celebration of education, empowerment, and community.. COST \$35. <https://bit.ly/49v1dHc>

Featured Event

**Sat., Mar 30, 2-4:30 p.m. Dollars for Scholars , Robert J. Mohart Center**, 3200 Wayne Ave. Event will include an informative session designed to guide students through the intricacies of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and provide valuable insights into preparing for the ACT. Special guest FAFSA and ACT representatives will be attending to provide professional guidance. FREE

Have an event you would like to see featured?

Send us your events at [CommunityVoiceKS.com](https://CommunityVoiceKS.com)

## In Loving Memory

# Aquilla Lewis-McKnight

June 29, 1938 - February 14, 2024

**Aquilla Delores Lewis-McKnight** was born on June 29, 1938, in Calhoun, Louisiana to her parents, Algie Lewis and Mary E Britton Lewis. She was the second child born in the family. She was raised surrounded by her brother, Prentice and sisters Lejoyce and Alice.

Aquilla received her early education by graduating from Wichita North High School in 1956. She furthered her education by attending St Francis School of Nursing in Wichita. She earned her certification as a Licensed Practical Nurse. She had a long and successful career in Wichita KS, Columbus OH, and Denver CO. She retired after many years of faithful and dedicated service.

In 1960, Aquilla wed, Paul D McKnight in Wichita KS. To this union, Paul D McKnight, Jr was born. She was a loving and devoted mother who took pride in the care and nurture of her family. She was later blessed with two grandsons, Marquise, and Paul, who both were an additional source of joy and pride in her life.

A woman of faith and belief in the Lord, Aquilla joined New Hope Missionary Baptist Church when she was a youth and remained active until relocating to Columbus OH. She then moved to Denver CO and joined Shorter Community AME Church. She was certainly known for her willingness to do what she could do to aid and assist others.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Paul D McKnight; her son, Paul Delano McKnight Jr; and her parents, Algie and Mary Lewis.

Those left to cherish her memory and mourn her loss include her brother, Prentice Lewis, sisters Lejoyce and Alice, two grandsons Marquise (Shantel) Hickory, NC and Paul, Los Angeles, CA 4 great grandchildren and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives and many friends.

Aquilla Lewis McKnight departed this life on February 14, 2024, in Denver Co.

Service was held February 28 2024 at Shorter Community AME Church Denver CO.



### STADIUM, from Page 20 ↓

The team plans to excavate the entire lower bowl of the stadium for new Sideline & Endzone clubs and suites. Donovan says the clubs and suites will create a new viewing and hospitality experience similar to those seen at SOFI Stadium in LA or Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas. These additions will reduce the full capacity of Arrowhead Stadium, but the capacity

will remain above 70,000.

The renovation plans also include the addition of larger video boards and LED banners along with improved technology infrastructure, like enhanced WiFi and sound systems. The plan adds 170 new toilets and 120 new food and beverage points of sale, including grab-and-go stations.

The proposed upgrades also include sustainability measures aimed at

mitigating environmental impact. Trees will be planted throughout the area to help with drainage, all lighting and fixtures will be updated to be more efficient, and the concrete from the demolition of Kauffman Stadium will be milled and used as filler.

Construction on the renovation plan would not begin until after the 2026 World Cup and would debut before the 2030 or 2031 season, according to team officials.

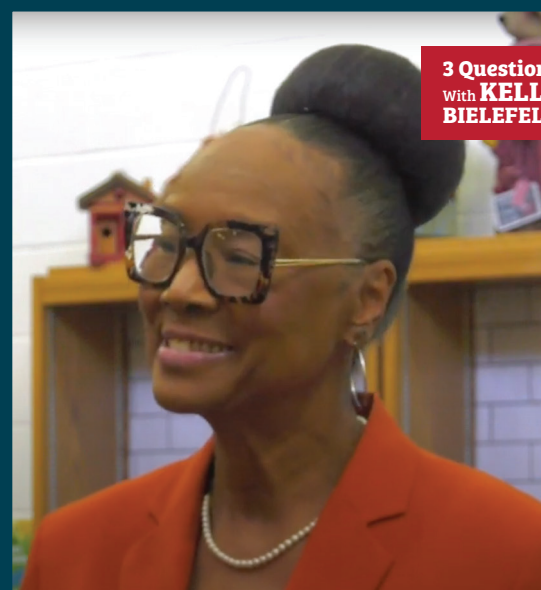
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Check out our recent episode of **3 Questions with Kelly**, featuring community activist and WPS alum, Lavonta Williams.



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## MARCH MADNESS PREVIEW

# Former KU Star Calvin Thompson

Former KU star Calvin Thompson and head coach of the KC Sizzlers shares predictions and excitement for NCAA tournament

By **Thomas White**  
Kansas City Reporter

The excitement and drama of the NCAA Tournament is just around the corner. Among those eagerly awaiting the tip-off is former Kansas University standout player Calvin Thompson, who shared his thoughts on the tournament with The Community Voice.

Thompson, a graduate of Wyandotte High School in KCK, played for the Jayhawks from 1982 to 1986. He etched his name in Kansas basketball history, setting KU records for consecutive free throws made, and was named to the All-Big Eight team in multiple seasons.

After playing in a Final Four, Thompson transitioned to a successful nine-year stint in the Continental Basketball Association (CBA) and overseas. He then



coached in the semi-pro leagues and currently serves as the owner & manager of the KC Sizzlers and oversees the Junior Sizzlers sports and education program for underprivileged youth.

As March Madness approaches, Thompson says he still likes his Jayhawks despite a challenging season — by Kansas' high standards. He says some injury issues and a short bench have hurt KU, but he remains optimistic.

"Kansas are still the champs until they aren't," says Thompson. "We'll find out in March."

While Thompson's loyalty lies with Kansas, he's quick to acknowledge some other formidable contenders. Thompson likes what he sees with the University of Connecticut but says Houston, in particular, has caught his eye with their strength and camaraderie on the court.

"Houston seems to enjoy each other," says Thompson. "A lot of teams that have a lot of good players don't like each other sometimes. It shows up in big games, it shows on the road especially when it's tight and the environments tough.

They just seem like they care about one another, which makes a huge difference when you're battling."

Thompson also identified fellow Big 12

team Iowa State as a dark horse to watch, saying the Cyclones have the potential to make a deep tournament run.

"I like them as a tournament team," he remarks. "Their fans travel well, and that makes a big difference."

Thompson says he doesn't regularly fill out a bracket — with the exception of a couple of times with his daughter when she was in grade school — but shared his thoughts on the types of teams that do well in the Big Dance.

"Whoever's the healthiest and luckiest in March," says Thompson, "that's who's going to end up winning."

Thompson admits he may be a touch biased but says his pick for national champion is the Kansas Jayhawks.

"The tournament is a new season, and I wouldn't want to go to bat with anybody but Coach Self," says Thompson.

Check out the KC Sizzlers online at [kcsizzlers.org](http://kcsizzlers.org)

### WANT MORE MARCH MADNESS NEWS?

Check out these stories in our sports section online

Most Surprising March Madness Winners of All Time

Another March Madness Prediction of Wichita State University Standout Xavier Bell

Where Kansas City and Wichita Rank as College Basketball Cities

PARADE PARK, from Page 16 ↓

integrates ownership opportunities along with low-income and market-rate housing. Phase 3 would include retail development, more ownership opportunities and market-rate apartments. The redevelopment plan does call for a near-total demolition of the existing structures.

"The residents have made clear that they don't want to look at the same buildings

that they've been living in," says Williams. "However, we do want to preserve the history in some way."

Williams says that developers are working with the residents to figure out a way to honor the history of Parade Park. Current ideas include a wall of artifacts commemorating the families and history or somehow memorializing a metal playground slide that has been enjoyed by generations of residents.

## MBE / WBE | INVITATION TO BID

JE Dunn Construction Company is bidding the Blue Springs R IV School District - Career Innovation Center Main Package and request your bid proposal for applicable material and/or labor. In particular, we are soliciting M/WBE Subcontractor/Supplier Bid Proposals for the following scope(s) of work including, but not limited to:

01I - FINAL CLEANING; 03D - CAST-IN-PLACE CONCRETE AND PAVING; 04A - MASONRY; 05A - STRUCTURAL AND MISCELLANEOUS STEEL; 06D - ROUGH CARPENTRY, DOORS-FRAMES-HARDWARE; INSTALL, FINISH CARPENTRY INSTALL, SPECIALTIES; 07B - WATERPROOFING, AIR BARRIERS, EXPANSION JOINTS, JOINT SEALANTS, AND FIRESTOPPING; 07E - METAL WALL PANELS AND ARCHITECTURAL SHEET METAL; 07G - MEMBRANE ROOFING; 07H - ROOF TERRACE AND PAVERS; 08A - DOORS, FRAMES AND HARDWARE (SUPPLY); 08G - ENTRANCES, STOREFRONTS, CURTAINWALLS; 09A - METAL STUD FRAMING, DRYWALL, AND ACOUSTICAL; 09B - PAINTING AND WALLCOVERING; 09C - TILING; 09D - TERRAZZO; 09E - FLUID APPLIED FLOORING; 09G - WOOD FLOORING; 09H - RESILIENT FLOORING AND CARPET; 10G - SIGNAGE; 11C - FOODSERVICE EQUIPMENT AND RESIDENTIAL; 11H - ATHLETIC, GYMNASIUM AND PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT; 12A - MILLWORK AND FINISH CARPENTRY (SUPPLY); 12C - WINDOW TREATMENTS; 14A - ELEVATORS; 21A - FIRE PROTECTION; 22A - PLUMBING; 23A - HEATING, VENTILATING, AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC); 26A - ELECTRICAL, LOW VOLTAGE, COMMUNICATIONS, AUDIO; VISUAL, FIRE ALARM; 31G - EARTHWORK AND SITE UTILITIES; 32A - ASPHALT PAVING; 32B - PAVEMENT MARKINGS; 32G - LANDSCAPING AND IRRIGATION; 32H - FENCES AND GATES; 32I - SITE RETAINING WALLS

We would appreciate your indication of the scope of work you will include in your proposal by April 4, 2024. Proposals must be submitted to [buildingconnected.com](http://buildingconnected.com) or our office by April 4, 2024, before 2:00PM. A pre-bid meeting will be held at 2103 NW Vesper Street Blue Springs, MO 64015 on March 18, 2024 at 1:00PM CST.

JE Dunn invites M/WBE subcontractors to call if any assistance is required or questions arise concerning work segmentation, work and contract requirements, or the form of proposal requested. Questions should be directed to Darren Younker, Project Manager, by phone at (707) 327-6338, or by email at [Darren.Younker@JEDunn.com](mailto:Darren.Younker@JEDunn.com).

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