

THE VOICE

A Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



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THE VOICE

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LOOKING AHEAD

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Here are a few of the stories we've published exclusively online. Go check them out online or sign up for our one of our newsletters so you don't miss any of our great news.

- People are moving out of Kansas City and Wichita, where are they going, you'll be surprised?
- Where Kansas City People are Looking to Live
- Where Wichita People are Looking to Live
- Family of New Orleans Terrorist Seek Answers

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Thank You to Those Who Donated to Our Year End Fundraising Campaign

Thank you so much for your generous support of The Community Voice's fundraising campaign. Your contribution helps us continue our mission of providing empowering news and information to our community. Together, we're building stronger connections, sharing impactful stories, and making a positive difference in the lives of those we serve. We truly appreciate your belief in and commitment to our work. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey!

If you haven't given, we encourage you to join the readers us in making a difference! Your donation to The Community Voice helps us continue delivering empowering news, amplifying community voices, and fostering positive change.

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THE COMMUNITY VOICE

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Wichita Person of the Year 2024

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

If they were asked, many people would say youth are at the root of our community's problems. If you ask Marquetta Atkins-Woods, she would say youth are and can be a major part of the cure for what's wrong with our communities.

Marquetta has spent almost 10 years building up and empowering youth in our community to make positive change in themselves and the community.

Her connection with empowering community youth began in 2015 when she started Destination Innovation and her signature program, Camp Destination Innovation. Camp DI, still in existence, is a summer program

designed to expose marginalized youth to various career options, with a strong focus on entrepreneurship and civic engagement.

Over the past nine years, Marquetta has started and grown an array of programs all focused on empowering youth and empowering our community.

The programs have a proven history of making a difference in the community, but 2024 was a spectacular year for Marquetta and her awesome team.

Programs currently operating under the Destination Innovation umbrella are: Camp Destination Innovation, Root the Power, Progeny, and Cure Violence.

Root the Power is a civic engagement and environmental justice program. Using youth interns,

participants teach young people and the public about the power of their vote. Youth too young to vote are taught to use their voice as a catalyst for change.

Root the Power sponsors two signature events: Vote Mob and Rock the Block. Rock the Block is a party held in late summer to encourage voter registration and Vote Mob is held just days before the fall elections to encourage people to vote. Both programs target Black and Brown youth and young adults ages 18 to 35.

Both events are led by young people. They include performances and speeches by young adults, music and food.

Progeny focuses on reimagining the juvenile justice system and reinvesting in community-based

alternatives. The program aims to transform the juvenile justice system in Kansas by closing the remaining state youth prison and shifting power to the communities most impacted by these systems.

In 2016, Kansas passed a law that promised positive reforms to the state's juvenile justice systems and Progeny has been there all along, working to ensure the changes made deliver as promised.

Based on their experience and advocacy in the area of juvenile justice, this year the Washington, D.C.-based Gault Center reached out to Progeny to assist on their contract with the State of Kansas to train public defenders on how to equitably defend youth.

Progeny's mission is



Marquetta Atkins-Woods

directly aligned with the Gault Center, a national nonprofit dedicated to promoting justice for all children by ensuring excellence in youth defense.

This year Progeny

sponsored a Youth Justice Symposium and, at their request, Gov. Laura Kelly proclaimed November as Youth

See **MARQUETTA**,
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Is It Legal to Drive with Snow on Your Car in Missouri and Kansas?

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

If you were in a rush to get somewhere after our latest midwest snowstorm, you might have been tempted to skip scraping all the snow or ice off your car. But if you're in Kansas, leaving that snow on could get you a ticket.

Kansas law requires drivers to clear snow and ice from their vehicles before hitting the road.

Snow on your roof or hood isn't just an eyesore — it's a safety hazard. If it slides off or flies into another car's windshield, you could face fines or liability for any accidents it causes. Plus, snow covering your windshield, windows, or license plates could lead to a ticket for unsafe driving.

Specifically, Kansas Statute 8-1741 states:

"No person shall drive any motor vehicle with any sign, poster or other nontransparent material upon the front windshield, side wings or side or rear windows of such motor vehicle which substantially obstructs, obscures or impairs the driver's clear view of the highway or any intersecting highway."

In Missouri, the rules aren't as strict. While no specific law requires you to clear off your car, the Missouri Highway Patrol still recommends it. Also, if snow or ice limits your visibility or causes a hazard for other drivers, you could still get pulled over.

Even if you're not legally required to clear the snow, it's just good sense. Taking a few extra minutes to clean off your car could prevent an accident, a fine, or worse. So, before you start your drive, grab that scraper and get to work — it's a small effort that can make a big difference for everyone on the road.

Understanding Missouri's New Distracted Driving Law

Exactly how does Missouri's 'Phones Down' policy work? Make sure you understand to protect your rights.

By **Annelise Hanshaw**
Missouri Independent

Beginning Jan. 1, enforcement of a Missouri law penalizes drivers for using their cell phones while the car is moving. The law has been in place since late 2023, with a warning-only policy. Now, the law is in full effect.

Inattention is a leading cause of collisions, said Capt. John Hotz, director of public information and education for the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

Between 2017 and 2021, roughly 380 people died in incidents involving a distracted driver, according to the Missouri Coalition for Road Safety.

But under this law, officers can't penalize someone just for holding a phone. A driver must also be committing another violation.

Texting while driving is a secondary offense — meaning police officers can't pull a driver over simply for using a cell phone, but it can be added to other citations.

"The seatbelt law is also a secondary violation, but yet we still have almost 90% of people wearing their seatbelts," Hotz said. "Our hope is that even though this is a secondary violation, if we can get nine out of 10 people to stop using these devices when they're driving, that's going to make a huge difference in the number of crashes that we see."

Officers also may not



You may have seen the signs around Missouri, even this one with a missing "p" on "phone." Learn all about the new enforcement policy for a state law.

search a driver's cell phone unless a violation of the law "results in serious bodily injury or death."

Now that the law is in full effect, here are the citation costs for violating the law: up to \$150 for the first offense, \$250 for the second violation in 24 months, and \$500 for the third. Fines can cost up to \$500 for the first offense if the driver is in a construction or school zone.

The law prohibits holding a cell phone, except when stopped. Drivers are also not allowed to record or watch videos, although this can be done hands-free.

The law carves out a few situations in which one can use their phone: Viewing a map, accessing music or podcasts and communicating with emergency services.

Hotz said he didn't think one could hold their phone while looking at GPS and recommended drivers obtain a dashboard mount for a cell phone, but the

carveout may protect drivers in that situation.

Drivers may use hands-free technology, like Bluetooth, Apple CarPlay, headsets and technology built into the car.

In the Missouri House, legislators had concerns the law would lead to privacy violations as drivers try to prove they weren't texting.

"The problem is, ultimately, the vast latitude that it gives to law enforcement to hassle people on the side of the road without any real ability for you to prove that you are not guilty of this infraction without basically giving up your electronic device to be searched," Rep. Tony Lovasco (R-O'Fallon) said during House discussion.

Rep. Raychel Proudie (D-Ferguson) said she is worried cell-phone usage will become a secondary violation when people are pulled over and record the interaction or call a loved one for help or accountability.



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Making History: Melesa Johnson Sworn in as First Black Jackson County Prosecutor

New prosecutor pledges tough stance on violent crime while emphasizing rehabilitation and prevention.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

Melesa Johnson made history this month when she was sworn in as Jackson County, Missouri's first Black prosecuting attorney in the same courthouse where enslaved people were once sold on its steps.

Dozens of elected officials and community leaders packed the Historic Brady Courtroom at Independence's Truman Courthouse on Jan. 3 to witness Missouri Court of Appeals Judge Lisa White Hardwick administer the oath of office to Johnson, who stood alongside her mother Melina and sister Stacey.

Johnson assumes the office after a heavily contested primary and general election, earning broad support across Jackson County's diverse communities. She won a three-way primary race against Stephanie Burton and John Gromowsky before defeating Republican candidate Tracey Chappell in the general election.

Former Kansas City councilman Jermaine Reed served as master of ceremonies and highlighted the historic change and setting of the courthouse that was originally built by enslaved people but now hosted Johnson's inauguration.

"Nearly 200 years later, we celebrate an African American, a female, a descendant of slaves, as the prosecutor of this county," said Reed.

The new prosecutor, who previously served as KC's director of public safety, immediately addressed the violent start of 2025, with six homicides recorded in KC before her Jan. 3 inauguration.

"Being smart on crime means being tough on violent crime and repeat offenders," Johnson said. "It means ensuring that those who threaten our neighborhoods face swift and certain justice."



Melesa Johnson taking the oath of office as Jackson County's Prosecuting Attorney.

Johnson campaigned on a two-pronged approach that would offer more support services, programming, and specialty courts but would also be more aggressive in bringing charges against drug distributors, illegal gun sales, property crimes, and even juvenile offenders. Speaking directly to young people caught in cycles of violence, Johnson issued a stern warning.

"Change your life before we have to change it for you," said Johnson. "We are seeing too many of our young people sacrificing their futures to stupidity and poor emotional intelligence. I will always be sensitive to and attack the root causes of crime — I know how we got here, but it is no longer an excuse. We must be better." Johnson, who has been forced to flee at least a dozen shootings herself, speaks from experience on the subject.

"An argument is not worth your

life. Fast money is not worth your freedom," said Johnson. "Street cred does not pay dividends. Do not love a lifestyle that does not love you." Born and raised in KC's Oak Park neighborhood — an area with some of the city's highest crime rates — Johnson studied political science and African-American studies at New York's Ivy League Columbia University before returning home and graduating from law school at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Johnson worked in Emanuel Cleaver's congressional office, clerked for a federal judge, and served for three years as a prosecuting attorney for Jackson County before transitioning to a private law firm.

But, she says the killing of George Floyd in 2020 reignited her passion for driving systematic change.

"I realized I had to get back into

this work," said Johnson. "Not just prosecuting cases, but building programs from the ground up that could intervene before situations escalated to violence."

As KC's director of public safety, Johnson helmed initiatives like Partners for Peace, which directly reaches out to both victims and perpetrators of violence to connect them with services and opportunities.

Johnson recognized that programs, prosecution, and community outreach must be paired with a strong partnership with law enforcement, as she recalled attending the funeral service of Independence Police Officer Cody Allen.

"Attending the funeral of an officer changes you," said Johnson. "As officers move in unison to honor their fallen comrade, you can almost feel the weight of their understanding that any day, any

moment, it could be them."

Johnson pledged to implement innovative programs, including an "opportunity court" for non-violent offenders earning less than \$20,000 annually, offering job training, conflict resolution, and financial literacy education.

"We have mental health court, veteran's court, drug court — all of these courts — but we don't have a specialty court tailored to the leading cause of crime, which is poverty," Johnson explained during a pre-election interview.

The new prosecutor acknowledged the challenges facing Jackson County while maintaining hope for positive change.

"We didn't get here overnight, and not one strategy or policy decision will solve everything," said Johnson. "But day by day, case by case, initiative by initiative, family by family, outreach by outreach, we will take steps towards climbing the seemingly insurmountable hill."

Her new administration brings experienced leadership to the office. Experienced prosecutor Dion Sankar will serve as chief deputy prosecutor, managing drug court and diversion programs. With prior leadership roles in a diverse set of city and county management teams, Gina Robinson steps in as director of operations, while veteran prosecutor Theresa Crayon becomes director of programs. Former Community Voice reporter Jazzlyn Johnson rounds out the executive team as director of communications.

The newly elected prosecutor closed her inaugural address with a call for community partnership.

"Let us meet this moment with courage, compassion and collaboration," said Johnson. "Let us reimagine what's possible, and let us ensure that Jackson County continues to be a place of opportunity for all."

KC Person of the Year 2024

Community Builders' Emmett Pierson Jr. is The Voice's 2024 Person of the Year

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

When Kansas City faced a potential crisis at 31st and Prospect this year, one leader stepped forward to sound the alarm about a decline in public safety — and more importantly, to demand action to prevent a food desert.

Emmett Pierson Jr., president and CEO of Community Builders of Kansas City (CBKC), transformed what could have been the quiet closure of another urban core grocery store into a rallying cry for sustained investment in KC's eastside.

Pierson is our Person of the Year for his bold leadership in challenging times and continued commitment to economic development and opportunities on KC's predominantly-Black east side.

Pierson and CBKC manage the SunFresh at 31st and Prospect and made the remarkable decision in Sept. to publicly detail the store's struggles, including rampant theft, lack of safety, and a staggering \$1.3 million cash investment the non-profit made to cover ongoing operational lost at the store.

Rather than quietly shuttering the location, Pierson orchestrated a public campaign that brought Mayor Quinton Lucas, Police Chief Stacey Graves, and community leaders face-to-face with the challenges plaguing the store and the area — such as prostitution, drug use, rampant theft, mental illness, homelessness and city's poor maintenance of the city-owned shopping center.

This wasn't just about saving a grocery store. His public stand forced city leaders to confront broader issues of urban disinvestment,

leading to immediate commitments like 24-hour police presence in the area and a proposed \$750,000 in city funding to support the store's operations.

Meanwhile, Pierson has continued to drive transformative development projects across Kansas City's east side. Community Builders operates a second SunFresh on MLK Blvd, which was in danger of closure before they took over. CBKC is also reimagining 11 acres along MLK with its p \$80-100 million Offices at Overlook project that hopes to complete first phase construction this year. The Rochester, a recently opened \$12 million market-rate apartment complex, won the Kansas City Business Journal's Capstone Award in 2023, proving that high-quality development can succeed east of Troost.

Under Pierson's leadership, CBKC has become KC's largest urban core developer,

investing hundreds of millions in development dollars. Perhaps more importantly, he's emerged as a powerful advocate for equitable development, consistently highlighting disparities in public investment between east and west Kansas City.

CBKC's impact extends beyond physical development. The organization maintains a minimum 25% participation rate for minority contractors on all projects, contributing to the growth of Black-owned businesses. It manages over 800 apartment units, preserving affordable housing in an increasingly expensive market. Its two grocery stores—while challenging to operate—prevent food deserts in underserved communities.

Throughout 2024, Pierson challenged city leaders to match the level of sustained investment seen in other areas of the city. When the KC committed \$43 million for

infrastructure in the West Bottoms, Pierson pointed out that similar investments could transform the east side. His advocacy has helped spark a broader conversation about equitable development in the area.

His work through CBKC demonstrates that community development isn't just about building structures — it's about building opportunities, creating jobs, and ensuring that every part of KC has access to the resources needed for a thriving community.

Emmett Pierson Jr. has earned recognition as our Person of the Year for preventing the creation of an urban food desert while preserving an anchor tenant that drives one of the largest



Emmett Pierson, Jr.

commercial spaces on the east side. We commend his courage in confronting systemic challenges, his continued commitment to

equitable development, and his leadership in sparking crucial conversations about investment in East Kansas City.

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U.S. Surgeon General Calls for Cancer Warnings on Alcohol

New report shows that alcohol is a leading cause of cancer.

By The Voice News Service

Upon issuing a comprehensive report, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy is advocating for a significant change in how we think about alcohol and is calling for new warning labels that would inform consumers about its cancer risks. Current bottles carry warnings about pregnancy and driving, but they don't mention cancer. Yet alcohol stands as the third leading preventable cause of cancer in America, right behind tobacco and obesity.

"Despite decades of compelling evidence of this connection, too many in the public remain unaware of alcohol's risk," said Dr. Bruce Scott, president of the American Medical Association.

The numbers tell a sobering story:



in the U.S. nearly one million preventable cancer cases in the last decade were linked to alcohol. That translates to about 100,000 new cases each year, with 20,000 people losing their lives annually to alcohol-related cancers.

Research shows it doesn't matter if you're sipping wine, beer, or spirits – all types of alcohol increase the risk for at least seven types of cancer, including

liver, breast, and throat cancer.

What's more concerning is that even drinking within current guidelines can increase cancer risk.

"For individuals, be aware that cancer risk increases as you drink more alcohol," Murthy wrote on social media. "As you consider whether or how much to drink, keep in mind that less is better when it comes to cancer risk."

While Congress would need to approve these new warning labels – and the alcohol industry, which spends nearly \$30 million annually on lobbying, is likely to resist – the message is clear: we need to be informed about the risks.

Research has shown that the more alcohol a person drinks – particularly the more a person consumes regularly, over time – the greater the risk of cancer. But even what we think of as "light" or "moderate" drinking, like one drink a day, increases the risk of some cancers.

Biden Administration Bans Medical Debt From Credit Reports

By Associated Press

Unpaid medical bills will no longer appear on credit reports, where they can block people from mortgages, car loans or small business loans, according to a final rule announced Jan. 7 by the Biden Administration.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rule will remove \$49 billion in medical debt from the credit reports of more than 15 million Americans, according to the bureau, which means lenders will no longer be able to take that into consideration when deciding to issue a loan.

The change is estimated to raise credit scores by an average of 20 points and could lead to 22,000 additional mortgages being approved every year, according to the bureau.

Vice President Kamala Harris said in a statement announcing the rule that



it would be "lifechanging" for millions of families.

"No one should be denied economic opportunity because they got sick or experienced a medical emergency," said Harris.

According to 2021 analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation, 14 million people in the United States owe \$1,000+ in medical debt, whereas

about 3 million owe medical debt of \$10,000+.

The White House noted that medical debt is the largest source of debt in collections and, unlike other types of debt, "it is often the result of unavoidable medical complications and medical bills often contain significant errors."

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau research from 2022 showed that medical bills made up \$88 billion of reported debts on credit reports, while the data also indicated that such bills are commonly "confusing and erroneous" and a poor predictor of a person's ability to pay a loan.

Harris also announced that states and local governments have used a sweeping 2021 pandemic-era aid package to eliminate more than \$1 billion in medical debt for more than 700,000 Americans.

HEALTH: Year in Review 2024

First Over-The-Counter Birth Control Now Available

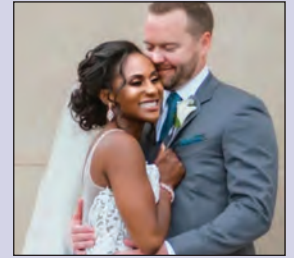
Approved in July 2023 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the first over-the-counter daily birth control pill began arriving in stores in March 2024. Available without a doctor's prescription, the pill will help those who may not have health insurance and cannot afford the costs of a doctor's visit that has been a requirement for receiving birth control in the past.

Market for Intoxicating Hemp Products Surges

Legal in both Missouri and Kansas, intoxicating hemp products surged in popularity and availability and remained almost totally unregulated. Delta-8 infused products including gummies, snacks and drinks are sold in CBD stores, liquor stores and even convenience stores. Missouri Gov. Mike Parson fought to remove Delta-8 products packaged to look like popular snacks and candies from Missouri shelves, but not other Delta-8 products.

KC Cheerleader's Death Spotlights Black Women's Risk of Maternal Sepsis

The death of former Kansas City Chiefs cheerleader Krystal "Krissy" Anderson sadly shed light on the disparities that Black women face with maternal sepsis. Maternal sepsis is the leading cause of maternal mortality in America and Black women are twice as likely to develop it.



Krystal and Clayton Anderson

U.S. Surgeon General Declares Gun Violence a Public Health Emergency

Driven by the fast-growing number of injuries and deaths involving firearms in the country, the U.S. surgeon general declared gun violence a public health crisis.

K.C. Program Steers Residents to Mental Health or Drug Court Rather Than Custody

If you see a person high on drugs or in mental distress, Kansas City has a new alternative to calling the police. REACH, which initially operates along the Prospect Avenue corridor from 27th Street to 45th Street, is staffed by health department employees – not police. Instead of calling 911, call 816-513-6010 or submit an inquiry at reach@kcmo.org to put REACH on the case.

Want to Read More About Any of these stories? Scan this QR Code



ICYMI: Kansas City Year in Review

Here's a look at some of our top local headlines from Kansas City in 2024

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

JANUARY KC Bans Source Of Income Discrimination

KC City Council approved an ordinance prohibiting landlords from discriminating against tenants based on their source of income, including housing vouchers, disability benefits, or child support. The ordinance ensures landlords can no longer reject potential tenants simply because of how they would pay rent, a move that opens doors for many vulnerable residents.

KC Reparations Commission Faces Financial Hurdles

The Mayor's Commission on Reparations struggled to make progress due to a lack of dedicated funding, which underscores the challenge of addressing historical inequities. The commission's work to study and recommend reparations for Black Kansas Citians was hampered by limited resources. It took more than a year for the commission to receive \$360,000 of the \$510,000 it requested in Dec. 2023, but the commission's timeline to complete its work has been extended.

FEBRUARY KC Launches Alternative To Incarceration Initiative

KC began seriously exploring alternatives to incarceration, focusing on rehabilitation and community-based solutions. Pushed by groups like Decarcerate KC, the city hopes to reduce recidivism and address underlying causes of criminal behavior. The city ultimately passed and implemented KC REACH. The pilot program uses a non-emergency phone line to send case workers - rather than police - to help connect those in need with mental health and community resources.

SouthPointe Development Breaks Ground

After 25 years of delays and challenges, construction finally began on the \$250 million SouthPointe at 63rd development project. Led by minority-owned firms CJR Development and Urban America, the project will transform a 25-acre plot that has long been plagued by blight and environmental hazards, including asbestos contamination from previous failed development attempts. The four-phase development, scheduled for completion by 2032, will feature 240 residential units, office spaces, retail outlets, restaurants, and a 114-room hotel.

MARCH Historic Parade Park Homes Face New Chapter

The historic Parade Park Homes complex, built in 1963 as the country's first Black housing cooperative, was sold at auction after HUD foreclosed on the property. Developers Flaherty & Collins Properties in partnership with Black-owned Twelfth Street Heritage, won the rights to redevelop the project from the City of KC, which purchased the project at the auction for \$12 million. Preliminary plans call for the phased-renovation of the 510-unit complex to over 1,000 residences, incorporating affordable housing,



One of the public art galleries at the Zhou B Art Center.

market-rate apartments, senior living, and ownership opportunities. The \$275 million renovation is expected to be complete in 2030.

APRIL UG Public Works Director Resigns Amid Controversy

Jeff Fisher, Unified Government Public Works Director, resigned following a petition signed by hundreds calling for his firing. Fisher was in hot water after he made incendiary comments about a potential second civil war on a conservative podcast he co-hosts and due to

a lawsuit that claimed racism within his department. The UG paid \$650k to settle a racial discrimination lawsuit brought by a Black former manager in the Public Works Dept.

MAY Zero Fare Bus Program Extended

The KCATA renewed its commitment to accessible public transit by extending the Zero Fare bus program, maintaining its position as a national leader in transportation access. The program started in 2019 and will continue through at least 2025. Some have called for an end to the program, saying buses have become rolling shelters for the homeless, while advocates hope to make the free transit option available indefinitely.

JUNE Swope Health Expands Services

Swope Health announced ambitious growth plans with the new \$100 million Swope Health Village that will include affordable housing, health services, and community resources like green space, offices, and retail. All this after opening the PACE KC Adult Wellness Center in late 2023 and expanding into Leavenworth, KS, with a pediatric operation in January 2024.

Zhou B Arts Center Opens

The Zhou B Art Center, a new cultural hub in the historic 18th & Vine Jazz District, celebrated its grand opening in the revitalized Crispus Attucks School building. The extensive renovation project, led by the world-renowned artists Zhou Brothers and co-developer Allan Gray, has transformed the decades-vacant school building into a vibrant arts center featuring 45 artist studios, multiple galleries, a 250-seat theater, event spaces, and a sculpture garden.

JULY Civil Rights Pioneers Honored In KCK

KCK renamed a portion of 10th Street "Chester & Lillie Owens Lane" in honor of the couple's contributions to civil rights and community advocacy. Chester Owens, a trailblazing political leader and historian, was KCK's first Black councilman elected in the 20th century. Lillie Owens worked side-by-side with her husband and was also a business trailblazer, serving as president of American Woodmen Life Insurance Company. Together, they championed racial equality, voting rights, and economic empowerment for decades.

See KC Year in Review, Page 15 →



Decarcerate KC members at a rally for the REACH program.

Click the QR code to learn more about any of the stories mentioned in our Year-in-Review Kansas City.



ICYMI: Wichita 2024 Year in Review

Here's a look at some of our top local headlines from Wichita in 2024

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

JANUARY

Wichita Passes Policy To Fine Landlords For Retaliating Eviction

Under the ordinance, retaliation can include eviction or rent increase within six months of a tenant's complaints to the city's inspections department.

The ordinance would allow tenants to file complaints about retaliation with the city. If a municipal court judge finds retaliation took place, the judge could fine the landlord up to \$2,500 and give a portion of it to the tenant.

FEBRUARY

Wichita Funds Program Aimed At Preventing Gun Violence

The city awarded a \$1.27 million, one-year agreement to local-non-profit Destination Innovation to operate the community-based program. Core to the program's success are Violence Interrupters and Outreach Workers who are "credible messengers" that can build connections with individuals most at risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence.

The evidenced-based program is based on a national Cure Violence Model that has had proven success.

MARCH

Program To Train Wichita Officers To Intervene Against Bad Cops

WPD announced implementation of a new national research-based program called ABLE (Active Bystandership Law Enforcement). The program is designed to prepare officers to intervene if they see another officer doing something wrong. The Wichita NAACP and the Wichita Ministerial League provided the required support the department needed to apply for and be accepted into the program. A report on the program's progress is due within a year.

APRIL

Settlement Agreement:



Announced changes to Wichita Junior League Football will bring an end to a 60-year-old team structure dominated by historic groups like the Cowboys and, Bulldogs.

WPD Gang List Slashed

A constitutional challenge to the Wichita Police Dept. gang list resulted in people previously classified as inactive or gang associate members being removed immediately from the list. Under court-appointed supervision, police are now required to conduct an annual audit of the "active gang members" to determine whether they meet new stricter criteria to be included on the list. The case was brought by the ACLU of Kansas and Kansas Applesseed on behalf of juvenile justice advocacy group Progeny.

MAY

29th & Grove Toxic Contamination

The saga of the toxic chemical spill at 29th and Grove in Northeast Wichita continued throughout the year. The spill, that's estimated to date back to 1994, drew community attention in 2022 when the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment called a meeting to discuss plans for the further clean up of the spill. A 2023 survey found liver cancer rates in the contamination area double the state average. In 2024 efforts continued to get individuals in the area tested for cancer and KDHE announced the need to conduct tests in certain parts of the affected area due to the

potential for vapor intrusion of the chemical TCE, the cancer-causing chemical released from the spill.

JUNE

Construction Gets Underway For Carl Brewer Recreation Center

After being approved in 2022, construction finally began on renovations of the renamed McAdams Recreation Center. Renovations to the circa-1958 center, renamed in honor of Wichita's first elected African-American mayor, will triple the center in size.

JULY

Could This Be The End Of Wichita's Junior League Football?

In one of our most-read stories of the year, we shared the City of Wichita's plans to totally dismantle the 60-year-old Junior League Football system and replace it with a new model that assigns teams based on a feeder system into area high schools. The proposed change that garnered considerable criticism, creates a structure for middle school football, and addresses some other concerns about bad behavior and the current structure's lack of focus on academic performance.

New Junior League Football Complex Planned for Grove Park

Renderings were released for the complex that will include seven full-size turf football fields, one 80-yard junior turf field, a restroom/concessions building, food truck parking, additional parking, and the addition of a playground and fitness equipment in Glen Dey (formerly Grove) Park. Councilman Brandon Johnson said the project will be constructed as a public/private partnership.

AUGUST

A New Code Of Conduct Proposed To Address Discrimination In Wichita Public Schools

After a surprise July announcement by the U.S. Dept. of Justice discovered "patterns of discrimination against Black and disabled students," Wichita School District administrators released a proposed new Disciplinary Code of Ethics for consideration by the community. It turned out the code was a requirement of the district's agreement with the DOJ. According to school board member Melody McCray Millier, the code established well-defined and strict standards for

discipline and would help ensure fair and equal disciplinary treatment across the district.

SEPTEMBER

Healthcore Expanding To Downtown Wichita With Mayflower

HealthCore Clinic, located in Northeast Wichita, announced plans to expand into downtown Wichita by taking over the Mayflower Clinic, located at 154 N. Topeka. The downtown center will go from a part-time clinic with a staff of three to a full-time, full-service operation with an initial staff of 15 full-time and part-time employees, with services to include dental, behavioral health, substance abuse and pharmaceutical services. The Mayflower was expected to close at the end of 2024 for renovations.

OCTOBER

City Providing Help Reinstating Suspended Driver's Licenses

With more than 100,000 residents in Sedgwick County driving on suspended driver's licenses, the City of Wichita launched Wichita Area Restoration Program (WARP) to provide individuals with suspended licenses hands-on, personal assistance that will help get them on the path to reinstatement. The assistance includes helping individuals file a fee, fine and cost forgiveness motion.

NOVEMBER

Landlord-Tenant Mediation Program Has Slow Start

Despite nearly 5,000 eviction filings in Sedgwick County each year, only about 50 landlord-tenant cases had been mediated as part of a new Sedgwick County Eviction Resolution Program that encourages mediation over eviction. A 2021 report found one-third of all Kansas evictions took place in Sedgwick County, despite housing less than one-fifth of the state's residents.



Click the QR code to learn more about any of the stories mentioned in our Year-in-Review Wichita.

BreAnna Monk Makes History as New Riverfest CEO

By Meg Britton-Mehlisch
Wichita Journalism Collaborative

Wichita Festivals, Inc., has announced that BreAnna Monk will be its next president and CEO. Monk's hiring marks the first time that a Black woman will lead the organization responsible for the state's largest community celebration, Riverfest.

The Wichita Festivals, Inc., (WFI) Board of Directors celebrated Monk's years of professional event management experience and dedication to the organization in a release about her hiring.



BreAnna Monk

"Her expertise, fresh perspective, and passion for this community are exactly what WFI needs as we work to expand our reach and impact," Cecilia Thibault, chair of the nonprofit's board, said in a statement.

Monk, who most recently worked as the president and owner of a private business consulting firm, served for more than a decade on WFI's volunteer committee.

Prior to opening her consulting business, Monk served as the vice president of operations for Shoulers Trucking, the senior services and transportation director for the City of Derby, and director of career services for Heritage College and the Heritage Institute.

Monk takes on responsibility for the strategic planning and execution of WFI's events, including

this year's 53rd annual Riverfest, from Interim President and CEO Becky (Filiatreault) Miranda. WFI has been led by Miranda since October, when Nancy Duling stepped down from the role.

In a press release, Monk said she looks forward to "bringing even more energy, creativity, and opportunity to our beloved events."

"Wichita Festivals has always been a beacon of joy and connection for our city," Monk said in the statement. "I am honored to step into this role and build on the incredible legacy of WFI."

Denise Sherman Resigns As TKAAM Executive Director

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Denise Sherman, who has served as the executive director of The Kansas African American Museum for six years, has left the museum for a position in higher education.

"I am extremely proud of the work we accomplished at TKAAM," said Sherman. "With the new TKAAM Cultural Center forthcoming, TKAAM will expand its role of supporting and advancing community and cultural awareness. I look forward to my continued involvement as a volunteer."

"We are extremely grateful to Denise for her leadership and hard work these past six years," said TKAAM Board Chair Ed Watson. "From program development to celebrating our 25th anniversary to launching the private and public phases of our capital campaign, Denise has been terrific, and great progress has been made. She



Denise Sherman

led us through the pandemic and developed important partnerships."

In 2023, under Sherman's leadership, the museum announced plans to relocate from their existing facility in the historic Calvary Baptist Church to the former Sunflower Bank Building at 201 N. Main, in downtown Wichita.

The move would nearly double the museum's current floor space to 22,000 sq. ft., and allow for expansion of its educational and cultural programming, allow them to serve more visitors in person and online, and better protect the museum's



Amy Williams

collection of art, photographs and other items.

Sherman had helped lead the museum's \$6 million capital fundraising campaign to purchase and refurbish the building. With the help of several corporate and individual donations, as well as financing from the Wallace Foundation, William Kemper Foundation and The Charitable Foundation, they were halfway to their goal in 2023. By all indications, they were closing in on the fundraising goal and would soon begin renovation work on the Sunflower Bank facility.

The board announced the appointment of Amy

Williams as interim executive director. Williams most recently worked for more than eight years at Spirit Aerosystems as executive director of global community relations and DEI.

"Amy brings community and business experience to her interim role at TKAAM," said Watson.

"She has a genuine passion for our mission, and we appreciate her decision to serve in this transitional role as we seek out our next executive director."

"It is an exciting time to be at TKAAM, and I am proud to serve in this capacity," said Williams. Williams says she will work to continue the momentum that Sherman and the board have created while they look to hire their next executive director.

TKAAM's immediate past president, Ebony S. Clemons, says TKAAM has begun its search for a new executive officer. "The search

See SHERMAN Page 15 →



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MARQUETTA, from Page 3 ↓

Justice in Action Month. The symposium brought together youth and individuals with the power to make change to discuss the changes youth participants would like to see in schools and in the city and state's justice system.

Cure Violence is a new DI

program that the team spent most of the year standing up. Cure Violence is a program under an agreement with the City of Wichita designed to help reduce gun violence. The program is based on an effective model that's being implemented in cities across the country.

The focus of the program is to work in the community to stop violence before it occurs.

Using violence interrupters, people hired for their ability to relate to and build authentic relationships with individuals who might become involved in violent

activities, the program goes where those most at risk are.

Up and officially operating since September, already in its first three months, the program has successfully mediated five potential gun violence incidents, defused three fights before they escalated, and connected 61 families to vital services.

The good news for Wichita is DI's Cure Violence and its team of 13 on-the-street workers has been extended

through June 2026.

"The most powerful thing I can say about Cure Violence is that their work will not make the news," said Marquetta, "and that's because they're preventing gun violence."

A lot of the violence interrupters are younger adults who used to be involved on the "other side." Now, they're fathers, grandfathers, business owners and community activists.

"They don't want kids going through what they went through," says Marquetta, "and who better to reach the kids that we typically can't reach than people who were once those kids."

Marquetta recognizes the Person of the Year honor is for her, but she says she couldn't have done it without her team.

They're doing transformative work and I'm super proud of them.



This year, Destination Innovation's Progeny team proclaimed October Youth Justice Action Month backed by a proclamation signed by Gov. Laura Kelly and a Youth Justice symposium.

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**January 24th, 2025
4:30P - 7:30P
Located at
The Urban League
2418 E. 9th St. N
Wichita, KS**

Events across Kansas and the Kansas City Metro Area

By Voice Staff

WICHITA

Mon., Jan. 20, 7:30 am: ARISE 9th Annual Dr. MLK Heroes and Sheroes Scholarship Breakfast, Rhatigan Student Center, Beggs Ballroom, Wichita State University. For tickets call 316-258-2749. **COST \$30**

Mon., Jan. 20, NOON: Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, WSU Metroplex, 29th & Oliver. Keynote speaker: Pastor Kneeland Brown, Tabernacle Bible Church. Vendors & community resources available. **FREE**

Mon., Jan. 20, 2 - 4pm: MLK Luncheon 2025, WSU Metroplex, 29th & Oliver. Lunch with the Greater Wichita Ministerial League and guest speaker. **COST \$40** <https://bit.ly/3DDb2YH>

Fri., Jan. 24, 4:30 - 7:30 pm: Masters and Mentors, Urban League, 2418 E 9th St. Day of service - the event will focus on mentoring and empowering at risk and justice involved youth in the community. Raise awareness about racial disparities in juvenile justice. Strengthen community ties through mentorship and skill building. Keynote speaker is Raneisha Hunter, Hunter's Journey Family Therapy. **FREE**

KANSAS CITY, MO

Mon., Jan. 12, 2:30 p.m.: SCLC MLK Interfaith Service, Community Christian Church, 4601 Main Street. Theme: "The Only Way Forward Is Together" with music by Lezlie Zucker, Millie Edwards and Charlie Williams. **FREE**

Fri., Jan. 17, 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.: The Metropolitan Community

This year's King Holiday calendar of events offers a lot to do. Our online calendar may grow with more. To add your King Holiday event, or any event, use this QR code.



College Foundation presents 2025 Chancellor's Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Luncheon, Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd. Keynote speaker: Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr; and Alvin Books Kansas Citian Inspiration Award recipient Bridgette Williams, and event emcee Nick Haines. Contact Ryan Morehead, ryan.morehead@mckck.edu or 816-604-1901.

Sat., Jan. 18, 8:30 am: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc - Beta Lambda Chapter's Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Observance Event UMKC Atterbury Student Success Center, Pierson Auditorium, 5000 Holmes St. Continental breakfast; program begins at 9:30 am with panel discussion "What's Next For The Black Community: Building Our Agenda And Taking Action." Panelists are Pastor Darren Edwards, United Believers Community Church; the Rev. Dr. Vernon

Percy Howard Jr., Saint Mark's Church KCMO; Dr. Toya Like, associate dean and professor of humanities and social science.

Mon., Jan. 20, 6 p.m. SCLC MLK Mass Celebration, St. James United Methodist Church, 5540 Wayne Ave. "Where do we go from here?" with panelists Dr Jennifer Collier; U.S. Congressman Emanuel Cleaver; Kerry Muhammad; Janay Reliford; Bishop James Tindall; Ryan Sorrell; Dwayne Williams; Councilwoman Melissa Robinson. 2025 Award recipients: Community Service Award - Family of Cameron Lamb; Legacy Award - the Rev. Dr. Samuel E. Mann; and President's Award - Kevin Woolfolk.

Mon., Jan. 20, 9 am - 12 pm: MLK Jr. Walk, starting at 15th & the Mahomies Playground at MLK Jr. Square Park. Ending at Bruce R Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, 3700 Blue Pkwy.

Mon., Jan. 20, 12 - 1 pm. Brown Bag Concert - MLK Jr. Celebration, Westport Presbyterian Church, 201 Westport. **FREE**

KANSAS CITY, KS AREA

Wed., Jan. 15, 6 - 8 pm: Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration for Teens, KCK Main Library, 625 Minnesota Ave. **KCKS.** Celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 's birthday with a screening of the film "Our Friend Martin," followed by a community art project and cake. Event is for ages 9 to 19. Please register by calling the Main Library - call Chantel at 913-295-8250.

Sat., Jan. 18, 3 p.m.: 4th Annual I Have A Dream / MLK Celebration, Village Presbyterian Church, 6641 Mission Rd, **Prairie**

Village. Honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with the aim of uniting individuals from all walks of life to reflect, connect, and commit to fostering love and unity in our community. Four distinguished speakers represent diverse faiths and perspectives: Rabbi Stephanie Kramer offers insights from the Jewish faith on unity and compassion; Iman Mohamed Herbert shares lessons from the Islamic tradition on love and mutual respect; The Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka provides Christian reflections on community restoration; and African-American Pastor Marvin Daniels speaks on the enduring call for justice and reconciliation. This hour-long program will also feature music and dance performances. Following the program participants will gather to share various breads, a communal blessing, and meaningful conversations.

Mon., Jan. 20, 1 - 2:30 pm: Darkness and Heading Towards Joy!, First Christian Church, 148 Nettleton Ave., **Bonner Springs.** Performances by Clark Middle School Choir, BSHS Diversity Ambassadors and more. **FREE**

JOHNSON COUNTY, KS

Mon., Jan. 20, 10 am - 1 pm: MLK Jr. Day of Service & Celebration, 16100 W. 135th, Indian Creek Library Branch, **Olathe.** A day of service projects for local nonprofit agencies and celebrate with learning, storytime and crafting activities. The library will have several projects that you can assist with. MLK Jr. Food Drive: Barrels for non-perishable donations available at both libraries from Jan.

19 - Feb. 16 to benefit local pantries that partner with Harvesters. **FREE**

Mon., Jan. 20, 2 - 5 pm: MLK Jr. Day of Service & Celebration, Downtown Library, 260 E. Santa Fe St. **Olathe.** The library will have several projects that you can assist with. **FREE**

TOPEKA

Mon., Jan. 13, - Fri. Jan. 17: Respect for Elders and Pre-Schoolers Week. Members of Living the Dream, Inc. and community volunteers will present storytelling throughout this week about the life and legacy of MLK to various Topeka-area pre-school students and will be delivering personal care baskets to select Topeka-area senior centers in recognition of elderly citizens.

Tue., Jan. 14, 6 pm: Education Outreach Day, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Marvin Auditorium, 1515 SW 10th Street. The 18th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Poetry Competition for students in Grades 5 - 12.

Thu., Jan. 16., 11:30 am: Governor's Annual MLK March and Proclamation Signing, from south doors of the Kansas Capitol. Proclamation signing on the first-floor rotunda around noon. The traditional march around the Kansas Statehouse will be led by Gov. Laura Kelly, legislators, and members of the Kansas African American Affairs Commission. The march will culminate with Kelly signing the MLK proclamation. Keynote speaker is Donna Rae Pearson, curator at the Kansas Museum of History.

Sat., Jan. 18, 5:30 pm: Scholarship and Community Awards Banquet, Ramada Hotel &

Convention Center, Regency Ballroom, 420 SE 6th St. Program starts at 6:30 pm. Guest speaker is Ernest Thomas, actor and community activist. Graduating high school senior scholarship winners and community awards recipients will be recognized. **COST \$85** - for tickets contact livingthedream785@gmail.com.

Sun., Jan. 19, 6 pm: MLK Communitywide Worship Service Love Fellowship Church, 2636 SE Minnesota Ave. The Topeka Ministers MLK Celebration in partnership with Living the Dream, Inc. is hosting a community worship service. The Rev. Marcus Clark, pastor. Guest speaker is the Rev. Delmar White, pastor of the New Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church. Musical selections will be provided by the New Mount Zion Church Choir, Love Fellowship Praise Team, and the Parker Sisters.

Mon., Jan. 20, 5:30 pm: Dr. King National Holiday and Day of Community Service, 31st Annual Community MLK Celebration and Chili and Soup Dinner, New Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, 2801 SE Indiana Ave - the Rev. Delmar White, pastor. The Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Park hosts the Student Recognition Awards program; winning student artwork will be on display. Special musical selections will be provided by a variety of diverse groups. Program begins at 7 pm with keynote speaker Lt. Col. Brian Gregory of the Kansas National Guard. Representation will also be provided by the Jewish, Mennonite, Baha'i, and Islamic faith community.

See MLK CALENDAR Page 13 →

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MLK CALENDAR,
from Page 12 ↓

Tue., Jan. 21, 9 am: MLK Day of Community Service, Topeka Rescue Mission Ministries. Check in at the Shelter Building, 600 N. Kansas Ave. Volunteers will be sorting clothing and serving meals. All volunteers must be age 13 or older unless accompanied by an adult. Volunteers are encouraged to wear closed-toe shoes and bring canned goods or peanut butter. To register for the various shifts, visit <https://bit.ly/3PiD2mW>

Wed., Jan. 22, 6 - 7 pm: 2025 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, Washburn University Memorial Union, Rooms A and B, 1700 SW College Ave. Join the Washburn community as it remembers and continue exploring the legacy of Dr. King. Guest speaker is Dr. Beryl New, Kansas State Board of Education. **FREE**

HUTCHINSON

Fri., Jan. 17, 6 pm: Kids Movie Night, Hutchinson Community College Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th St. event presented by HutchCC, the City of Hutchinson Human Relations Office and the NAACP. **FREE**

Fri., Jan. 17, 6 pm: Money Mastery 101, Hutchinson Community College Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th St. Q&A session, consultations with industry experts, budgeting and credit, investments, life insurance, trust and estates, family planning, home buying 101, entrepreneurship 101. **FREE**

Sat., Jan. 18, 11 am: #Leadthechange Summit. Hutchinson Community College Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th St. Empowerment workshops for children and adults with several guest speakers. The future of our community matters. The vendor Fair. **FREE**

Sun., Jan. 19, 2 p.m. The Community Celebration, Hutchinson Community College Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th St. Featured speaker: Dr. Marche' Fleming-Randle, Wichita State University, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer. 3:30 pm: the concert: Songs of Faith **FREE**

Mon, Jan 20 10 am: The Unity Project. The Community Celebration, Hutchinson Community College Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th St. A day of connecting people and building a stronger community. Together we will create care packages that service the needs of our community. **FREE**

LAWRENCE, KS

Mon., Jan. 20, 10:30 am: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration, Lawrence Public Library, 707 Vermont St., Lawrence, KS. Honoring Dr. King and celebrating his legacy with a day of community-focused events for the whole family. Urusula Minor, president of the NAACP Lawrence branch, will give a welcoming statement and emcee. 10:30-11:15 am in auditorium; Storytime with local poet and musician Barry Washboard Barnes. 11:15 am-12 pm in Readers' Theater; MLK Day Craft for Kids. 12-1 pm in auditorium; Community lunch provided by Taco Zone. 1-2 pm in auditorium; Angela Bates, executive director of the Nicodemus Historical Society, will give a slide presentation about Nicodemus. **FREE**

MANHATTAN

Jan. 14 - Feb. 7: Exhibit "Roots and Resonance," Manhattan Arts Center, 1520 Poyntz Ave. Reception on Sat., Jan. 18, 2 - 4 pm at the MAC - community celebration in partnership with the Manhattan Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Committee.

Fri., Feb. 7, 5 - 7 pm: Black Entrepreneurs of the Flint Hills Reception at the MAC, 1520 Poyntz Ave. Huge exhibit and celebration. **FREE**

Sat., Jan 18, 2 pm: MLK Jr. Community Celebration, Manhattan Arts Center, 1520 Poyntz Ave. Awards, refreshments, and speaker Curtis Pitts, CEO of International Institute to Improve Race Relations. **FREE**

FORT SCOTT

Wed., Jan. 15, 12 pm - 1 pm: Martin Luther King Jr. Lunch & Learn Tribute Reading Event, Fort Scott Community College Ellis Fine Arts Center. Reading of the speech "I Have a Dream" and quotes by Dr. King, with students from Fort Scott Community College & Pittsburg State University. **FREE**

Mon., Jan. 20, 9 am - 2 pm: MLK Holiday Celebration Food Drive "Day of Service" Bring canned and non-perishable food items to donate to the Beacon Food Pantry, 525 E. 6th St., Fort Scott.

Mon., Jan. 20, 10:30 am - 11:30 am: Film showing - "Martin," a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by Gordon Parks, Fort Scott Community College Ellis Fine Arts Center/Auditorium. This is the 35th anniversary of the ballet tribute written and directed by Gordon Parks. **FREE**

Mon., Jan. 20, 12 pm - 1 pm: Lunch & Learn Presentation - "The Power of Imagery and Civil Rights Experience" by Ann Dean, artist and photographer, Fort Scott Community College Ellis Fine Arts Center. This presentation will delve into the impact of photography on the Civil Rights Movement in the aftermath of the landmark Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education, (attendees may also bring their own lunch). **FREE**



"Missing You" is currently the number one streamed show on Netflix.

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

'Beyond The Gates' Black Soap Opera to Debut Feb. 24

"Beyond the Gates" is set to make waves in the world of daytime soap operas with its groundbreaking portrayal of affluent Black characters. Premiering on CBS on Feb. 24 at 1 p.m., the series is the first to center on Black characters since "Generations" in 1989 and the first new soap since "Passions" in 1999.

Set in an upscale Maryland suburb, the show follows the Dupree family — led by Vernon (Clifton Davis), a retired senator, and Anita (Tamara Tunie), a former singer — who are seen as the epitome of Black royalty. The family dynamics include high-achieving philanthropist Nicole (Daphnee Duplaix) and free-spirited momager Dani (Karla Mosley).

Netflix's Miniseries 'Missing You' is a Twist-Filled Tale of Deceit

Netflix has released yet another miniseries based on a thriller book by U.K. author Harlan Coben. The Jan. 1 release "Missing You," adapted from Coben's 2014 bestseller, stars Rosalind Eleazar as Detective Inspector Kat Donovan, a police officer who specializes in finding missing persons — except for her fiancé, who vanished over a decade ago.

The story begins with a shocking twist when Kat finds her long-lost ex-fiancé reappearing on a dating app, leading her to unravel long-buried secrets.

Eleazar describes Coben as a "genius" at leading audiences down the wrong path before delivering shocking conclusions.

Co-star Richard Armitage adds that the ending of "Missing You" does justice to the "hair-raising" surprises typical of Coben's stories, with a shocking twist that pulls the rug out from under the audience.

Viola Davis Receives Cecil B. DeMille Award

Actress Viola Davis delivered a moving, 16-minute speech while accepting the prestigious Cecil B. DeMille Award at the "Golden Gala: An Evening of Excellence" held two days ahead of the Golden Globes televised presentation.

She reflected on how her turbulent upbringing fueled her passion for acting as an escape and how financial necessity often influenced her choice of roles.

"If I waited for a role that was written for me, well crafted, then I wouldn't be standing up here," said Davis, who joined Ted Danson, recipient of the Carol Burnett Award, in being celebrated for their career achievements.

Davis said she couldn't afford to wait for the perfect role, especially as a "dark-skinned Black woman with a wide nose and big lips."

"So I took it for the money," said Davis, who won praise for a string of compelling characters in films such as "Fences," "The Woman King," "The Help" and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" while captivating TV audiences through the legal thriller drama "How to Get Away with Murder."

"I don't believe that poverty is really the answer to craft," she said. "I don't think there's any nobility in poverty."

A HEARTWARMING PLAY THAT EXPLORES THE COMPLEXITIES OF FAMILY, SACRIFICE, AND RESILIENCE.

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BY NATHAN LOUIS JACKSON
DIRECTED BY FRANCOIS BATTISTE

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Set against the backdrop of a working-class neighborhood in Kansas City, Kansas, the King family navigates the challenges of love and duty as they confront the realities of limited resources and unbreakable bonds. With a perfect blend of humor and pathos, *Broke-ology* invites audiences to witness the strength of familial ties and the enduring power of hope in a touching and beautifully crafted exploration of the human spirit that will resonate long after the final curtain falls.

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Wichita State University

Bishop Mark L. Gilkey
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Dr. Kneeland C. Brown
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WICHITA, KS

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Amaree Fitchpatrick, 20
June 9, 2004 - December 20, 2024

Memorial Service will be held at 11am on Sat., Feb. 1, at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, 1001 N. Ohio.

Alfred "Poochie" Dmitri Dickson Sr., 74

October 27, 1950 - December 26, 2024
Service was held on Jan. 3, at New Life Church.



Rev. Glenn Nelson, Jr., 88
December 15, 1936 - December 26, 2024

Service will be held at 10 am on Tue., Jan. 14 at St. Paul AME Church, 1756 N. Piatt
John F. Thompson Jr., 59
March 10, 1965 - December 26, 2024
Service was held on Jan. 11

at St. Mark Cathedral Church of God in Christ

Sherman Sanders, 79
November 12, 1945 - December 16, 2024

Service was held on Jan. 2, at Paradise Missionary Baptist

Johnnie L. Benford Sr., 71
February 24, 1952 - December 15, 2024

Service was held on Dec. 28 at St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church.

KC Year in Review,
from Page 8 ↓

**AUGUST
Jazz District Restaurants Face Challenges**

Restaurants continued to struggle in and around 18th & Vine, with both the Soiree and The Prospect KC closing in 2024. We looked at the historic challenges that have forced these and other restaurants in the district to shutter and how the city

is working to address these challenges.

**OCTOBER
Historic Boone Theater Revival Begins**

Groundbreaking on the renovation of the historic theater marked a crucial step forward in revitalizing the 18th & Vine District. The renovated theater will host the Black Movie Hall of Fame, the Black Repertory Theatre of Kansas City, event spaces, and a state-of-the-art cinema. The theater hopes to be operational in 2026.

**NOVEMBER
Mayor Garner Announces Political Transition**

Wyandotte County CEO and Kansas City Kansas Mayor Tyrone Garner announced he would not seek reelection, signaling upcoming changes in the UG.

Wyandotte County Development Boom

Multiple major development projects, including transforming the former Indian Springs

Mall into the \$1 billion sustainable community dubbed Midtown Station, signaled an economic renaissance in Wyandotte County, promising new opportunities for growth and investment in the area.

**DECEMBER
Golubski Died: Justice Denied**

Former KCKPD Detective Roger Golubski was found dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound the morning his federal civil rights trial was set to begin. Golubski faced six federal charges for allegedly kidnapping and sexually assaulting two women while serving as a police officer, with prosecutors planning to present testimony from up to nine women describing instances of rape, stalking, or attempted assault. The case highlighted broader allegations of systemic corruption within the KCKPD. His death has left survivors without their day in court and raised questions about how he accessed a weapon while under house arrest.

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Sherman, from Page 10 ↓

committee has been commissioned and the search is active-ly underway."

It is TKAAM's mission and work to be the premier place where people and communities experience and learn about the Kansas African-American story so that the present and future can develop an understanding and appreciation for

the experience lived by minority populations.

TKAAM has created and continues to build an archive and collection of Kansas African-American history and heritage that allows for original and meaningful exhibitions and educational programming for people of all ages that immerses visitors into the Kansas African-American experience.

2024 Year in Sports: A Look Back

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

Chiefs Win Super Bowl, Celebration Turns Tragic

The Kansas City Chiefs secured a second Super Bowl victory in a row. However, the parade was marred by gun violence, casting a shadow over the region's joy and prompting urgent calls for community action.

Jackie Robinson Statue Stolen & Replaced

A statue of Jackie Robinson was stolen—all but the cleats, which were donated to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum— from Wichita's McAdams Park. An outpouring of donations and support

led to a new replacement statute being unveiled in August.

Negro Leagues' Historic Recognition

We detailed local historian and author Larry Lester's dedicated work to preserve and compile Negro League statistics that ultimately helped lead to their official inclusion in Major League Baseball record books. Jackson County Rejects Stadium Funding, Kansas Makes a Bid

Jackson County voters rejected a proposal to publicly fund new stadiums for the Royals and Chiefs. Kansas officials seized the opportunity, making a bold pitch to lure the teams across state lines with promises of modern facilities

and lucrative incentives.

Caitlin Clark's Record Breaking Shines Light on Lynette Woodard's Legacy

Caitlin Clark surpassed the NCAA women's career scoring record held by University of Kansas standout Lynette Woodard, whose achievements remain officially unrecognized by the NCAA due to historical gender disparities. The Lynette Woodard Center in Wichita also unveiled stunning murals celebrating her impact.

Youth Brilliance in Spelling

Andover's (a Wichita suburb) Carey Chesire shone in academics, winning the state spelling bee in March and



Carey Chesire



Larry Lester

advancing to the semifinals of the National Scripps Spelling Bee in May, representing Kansas well on a grand stage.

Olympics So Black

This summer's Paris



Rendering of Renovated Chiefs stadium



KU basketball standout Lynette Woodard with another Wichita basketball standout Larry Dennis

Olympics showcased Black Girl Magic" trio of athletes excellence including U.S. headlined by the return of Simone Biles. Gymnastics sending a "Black

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