

# THE VOICE

Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



## Our Annual LOVE COUPLES

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# THE VOICE

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 3  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2025

## LOOKING AHEAD

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## Kansas Briefs

### Kansas Democrats Propose Minimum Wage Hike In Response To Republicans' No Taxes On Tips

Top Democrats, including the governor, proposed raising Kansas' hourly minimum wage to \$15 in response to Republicans' plan to eliminate taxes on tips.

The announcement from Democrats came on the heels of a news conference Monday held by Republican lawmakers to promote a proposal to eliminate state income tax on tips for service and hospitality workers.

The proposal mimics a federal one that attempts to exempt tips from federal income tax for restaurant workers, servers, valets, bellhops, bartenders and caddies.

"Raising the minimum wage to \$15 will put more money in people's pockets," said a joint statement from Gov. Laura Kelly, Senate Minority Leader Dinah Sykes and House Minority Leader Brandon Woodward.

"There is no reason workers in Kansas should make less than workers in Missouri," they said.

Missouri voters in November approved a plan to raise minimum wage to \$13.75 per hour starting Jan. 1, 2025, and to \$15 per hour on Jan. 1, 2026. The rate is set to increase with inflation.

The Kansas Democrats' proposal would more than double the state's current hourly rate of \$7.25, or about \$15,600 annually, which hasn't changed since 2010 when it was raised from \$2.65.

### U.S. Sen. Roger Marshall Points to DEI Hiring Policies As Factor In Crash Of Flight From Wichita

U.S. Sen. Roger Marshall of Kansas asserted President Joe Biden's attempts to improve diversity among air traffic controllers by rejecting White male applicants factored in the catastrophic midair collision of a passenger jet from Wichita and a military helicopter.

Marshall, a Republican, said

he was convinced the Biden administration's emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion policies within the Federal Aviation Administration lowered hiring standards, increased the frequency of near-miss incidents in U.S. airspace and set the stage for the Jan. 29 crash.

"I think diversity issues did contribute to the accident," Marshall said during a news conference Monday in Topeka. "What I think you're going to find is there were a lot of qualified White men that they were not hiring because they were holding spots for DEI hires."

Marshall, who was employed as a physician prior to election to Congress in 2016, said working in an air traffic control tower was more difficult than being a medical doctor because of the multitude of tasks and responsibilities involved in directing aviators in and out of airports.

### Claytoonz: Maga Cleansing

Yesterday, Donald Trump proposed an ethnic cleansing of Gaza by deporting all the Palestinians to Egypt and Jordan and then turning all of Gaza into the "Riviera of the Middle East."

I'm sure Trump envisions golf courses, casinos, resorts, hotels, and water courses in Gaza that Caucasians will make a lot of money from. Of course, the people who own it don't have a say in this. Trump wants to grab Palestinians by the Gaza.

Trump thinks this will bring peace to the Middle East but anyone believing a land grab from Palestinians will bring peace hasn't been paying



attention. Jared Kushner previously made this same proposal saying one could "move the people out and then clean it up." Do these guys not hear themselves and realize how racist that sounds?

Trump did not cite any legal authority giving him the right to take over Gaza, and he didn't address the fact that forcible removal of a population violates international law. But hey, he made this announcement while

standing next to a fugitive war criminal.

Trump said everyone loves this plan, except Egypt and Jordan, which immediately denounced it and refused to participate in it. Saudi Arabia doesn't like it either and had to debunk a Trump claim immediately after he said the kingdom was not in favor of a two-state solution. The Saudis refuse to officially recognize Israel without a two-state solution.

Republican Senator Thom Tillis said, "There's probably a couple of kinks in that slinky." From my childhood experience, if you have one kink in your slinky, then you have a dead slinky. Most other Republicans in Congress cowardly played the "I haven't read or seen his comments yet" card.

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**Missouri Governor Vows State Takeover of St. Louis Police**

Missouri Gov. Mike Kehoe doubled down on his support for a state takeover of the St. Louis Police Department on Tuesday, telling lawmakers during his first State of the State address that crime in the city is “unacceptable.”

“As the economic powerhouse of our state,” Kehoe said, “we cannot continue to let crime kill growth in the region and drive businesses and families to move outside of our state’s borders.”

Kansas City is currently the only major city in the country where the elected local leaders don’t control the police

department — a state-appointed police board does.

Up until 2013, St. Louis was in the same boat. But the city gained local control of its police department after a 2012 statewide referendum.

St. Louis leaders have pointed to a drop in overall crime in the city, including a decrease in the number of murders. St. Louis Police Chief Robert Tracy, who was name checked in Kehoe’s speech as “one of the nation’s top police chiefs,” travelled to Jefferson City earlier this month to testify in opposition to a state takeover of the city’s police force.

But GOP lawmakers question the statistics showing a drop in crime and note that the city continues to lose population. Kehoe echoed those concerns in his speech Tuesday, saying the days of “political and subjective statistics are done under my administration.”

“The polling data I care about,” he said, “is whether

or not a business feels safe enough to invest in our cities. That’s the barometer. Period.”

**Missouri Legislators Debate Bill to Expand Restitution for Wrongful Convictions**

Missouri state senators on Wednesday held a public hearing on a bill that would expand who could qualify for restitution after a wrongful conviction, and increase the payment amounts

For the 43 years Kevin Strickland spent behind bars in Missouri for a triple murder he didn’t commit, he received no compensation from the state.

The legislation would allow a claim for damages to be filed within two years of being freed from prison. A judge can order payment of \$179 per day for each day of imprisonment, capped at \$65,000 per fiscal year. The restitution would be made as a combination of an initial payment not to exceed \$100,000 or 25% of the award, whichever is greater.

The remainder of the damages would be paid as an annuity not to exceed \$80,000 per year.

The law would be similar to one approved by Kansas lawmakers in 2018.

Similar bills have been filed for the last several years. In 2023, a version of the legislation was included in a large crime package that then-Gov. Mike Parson vetoed.

**Missourians Waiting In Jail For Court-Ordered Mental Health Care Reaches All-Time High**

For nearly a year and a half, a woman has been languishing in Greene County jail, waiting to be transferred to a state mental health facility.

The woman was charged with a misdemeanor, found incompetent to stand trial and ordered by the court into state-run psychiatric treatment, Greene County Sheriff Jim Arnott told The Independent.

She’s been waiting there for a Missouri Department of

Mental Health bed to open up for almost 450 days, Arnott said.

Had she been convicted of the misdemeanor, Arnott said, the maximum sentence would have been 1 year. She would have gotten out in November.

There are 418 Missourians across the state on a waiting list for a mental health bed, up from around 300 at this time last year.

**Missouri Lawmakers Seek to Restrict Cell-Phone Use in High Schools Statewide**

Missouri lawmakers are hoping to reduce cell-phone usage in schools with bipartisan legislation that would require school districts make a policy restricting mobile devices during instructional time.

State Reps. Kathy Steinhoff, a Columbia Democrat, and Jamie Gragg, a Republican from Ozark, presented similar bills in the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee Wednesday

afternoon. The committee’s chair, GOP state Rep. Ed Lewis of Moberly, also has legislation that is nearly identical to Steinhoff’s.

Steinhoff and Gragg plan to combine their bills into a version that recommends or requires school districts to set policies prohibiting cell-phone use during instructional hours while allowing exceptions, like for students who use a mobile device for health reasons.

Gragg said schools would be able to decide “what they feel is best for their community,” so cell phones do not necessarily have to be out of the students’ possession.

State Rep. Kem Smith, a Democrat from Florissant and a former English teacher, said parents often have valid points, like security concerns in case of a school shooting.

“I’ve been on lockdown with students who have survived that, and their parents have wanted to talk to them while we were in lockdown,” she said.

# Kansas Black Legislative Day at the Statehouse 2025

Engage with experts on critical issues and interact directly with legislators.

**Monday, February 17, 2025**  
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM (lunch provided)  
Kansas Statehouse, Topeka, KS.



Registration Required:  
[www.kansasblc.org/blackagenda](http://www.kansasblc.org/blackagenda)



# Controversy Over New Junior League Football Plan Growing

With signups for the 2025 Wichita Junior League football opening, more opposition to the plan is surfacing.

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

Opening of registration for the 2025 season of Wichita's popular Junior League football program, has awakened opposition to the City's planned reorganization of the historic program.

The new structure, announced ahead of the 2024 season, calls for elimination of the community-based structure the program has operated under for more than 60 years. It's a plan that ends all the beloved teams – such as the Colts, Cowboys, and Bulldog –, that families have remained loyal to and supported for generations.

The new team structure will make team assignments based on the high school attendance area the student lives in. Now, players and teams will be Falcons, Blue Aces or one of the other Wichita High School mascots.

## Middle School Structure

The new structure will be operated as a partnership between Wichita Parks and Recreation and Wichita Public Schools. While the

structure of the program is still unclear to most of those who expect to be involved in it, the ultimate goal appears to be establishing a quasi middle-school sports program, something Wichita schools don't have.

Suburban schools in the Wichita area have middle school sports programs and the perception is that structure gives them an advantage. Playing together as middle school students makes for a natural transition to high school with players already familiar with each other, the coaches and the plays.

The arrangement with the school district will help align sports with academics. Students who don't meet the academic requirements or are on behavioral disciplinary actions, will not be allowed to play.

Dr. William Polite, director of equity, diversity & accountability for WPS and founder of the Middle School Challenge Program that focused on academics for student athletes, says that has been one of his concerns with the existing structure.

"A kid could be the worst kid in the district and score five touchdowns and be the biggest hero," says Polite.

Polite says this additional accountability supports gains beyond middle school with the program preparing students for the rigors of football and academics in high school and beyond.

Ulysses "Pops" DeShazar, who's volunteered with the Wichita Junior League football program, and many of the other program "directors" we spoke with, don't have any problems with the proposed middle school structures as long as some of the existing team coaches are given fair and equitable consideration

for the middle school coaching positions, which are paid.

## Elementary Program

It's restructuring the elementary school program that concerns many of the coaches who've operated under the existing structure for years.

Logistically, they say, the program will be a nightmare, due to massive bussing of students for integration and for magnet schools, that has students attending school a long way from their feeder pattern high school or middle school, where football practices are scheduled to take place.

The time spent moving students around will significantly cut into their study



See **JUNIOR LEAGUE**  
Page 7 →

Second grade Wichita Cowboys at the 2005 Unity Bowl. They took on the OKC Titans.  
PHOTO COURTESY MY PICTUREMAN.

## Junior League Leadership Meeting

A meeting is scheduled between leaders of the existing league teams, City of Wichita Parks and Recreation leaders and USD Athletic administrators.

When: Tues., Feb. 11,  
5:30 p.m.  
Where: Orchard  
Park,, 4808 W. 9th St.N,  
Wichita

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# Remembering Kiah Duggins

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

In this 2017 story, we interviewed Kiah Duggins about her recently completed internship in the White House working on the staff for then-First Lady Michelle Obama. We're repeating this story as a way to shine a light on the brilliance that was Kiah Duggins, whose young life ended at age 30 in the recent crash of American Eagle flight 5342 on the evening of Jan. 29, 2025.

After graduating that spring from Wichita State University, she went on to graduate from Harvard Law School where she served as president of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau. As an attorney, she was working with the Civil Rights Corps, challenging unconstitutional policing and money bail practices.

This story covers the four months Duggins spent in the White House. At the time,

she ranked it as the experience of her lifetime. As a senior at WSU, Duggins spent August through December 2016 as an intern in Michelle Obama's office. From her answers to our questions, you can tell it was an exciting time.

**How did you get the internships?** I basically just wanted to intern for Michelle Obama because I love her. So, I googled "How to Intern for Michelle Obama," and the White House Internship Program came up. I applied for the summer internship and was rejected, so I tweaked my application and reapplied for the fall and was accepted.

The First Lady had 13 interns, but there were 150 interns in the White House.

**Was it a paid or free internship and did you receive academic credit?** It was an unpaid internship but it was funded through the [WSU] Honors College, the Political Science Dept. and the Barton School of

Business.

Kiah is a WSU Barton Scholar, a four-year scholarship program that includes her tuition, books, room and board. She was able to use her Barton Scholarship proceeds to help fund part of her expenses. The other monies were made available in addition to her scholarship.

For the semester, I received three credits for an Honors Cooperative Education class. Basically it was like taking a semester off, but I'm still graduating in May. It all worked out.

**Where did you live?** I lived about two Metro stops from the White House. I found my apartment through a Washington intern student housing program. Since there are so many interns in Washington, D.C., there are companies that specialize in renting to interns, who need apartments for weird amounts of times.

**What was the most fun about the internship?** I was there at the end of the administration and also during the holidays, and they were having two holiday parties a day. I got to help with most of them.

I also helped put together the first South by South Lawn Festival, designed to share innovative ways to bring about social change. The festival was modeled after the South by Southwest Festival in San Antonio and featured art, film and musical performances.

I helped with and watched the "Love and Happiness" BET Concert on the South Lawn. Some of the performers at the BET concert included Usher, Jill Scott, Janelle Monét, Bell Biv DeVoe, Leslie Odum Jr. and Yolanda Adams. They also had a lot of famous people who attended, including actors Angela



Kiah Duggins and Former 1st Lady Michelle Obama. In this 2017 story, she shares about her experience as an intern to Michelle Obama during the last few months of the Obama White House.

Bassett and Jesse Williams.

**What is the White House like?** Almost everyone was either young, a woman, or a person of color. It was very diverse and very vibrant. A lot of the major departments were run by Black women. It was very magical; so many Black women in leadership.

It was really fun. There was a lot of joy, but it was extremely professional and everyone had a lot of work to do. They worked long hours, not because they had to, because they wanted to. I admired everyone's commitment to the job. There were a lot of idealistic people who were working hard because they believed in what America could be.

It taught me a lot. Everyone worked so hard and so meticulously and, such a big attention was paid to details. I've never been in an environment where people were so focused.

After the election happened, the President

announced the peaceful transfer of power that described what the White House was like. Everyone continued to be professional. There was no tolerance for tantrums or lack of professionalism. Everyone just worked harder, since they [the Trump Administration] had a different agenda. So, we worked hard to get all of the things in the administration as much of a chance as possible of staying. Then, we were all working at turbo speed. It was all worth it. I loved it.

**How often did you see the Obamas?** I saw the First Lady two or three times per week, when I would help at events or she would come to the office. In her office, she had a desk and couches. It looked more like a living room than an office. And she kept apples in her office. Anyone could come in and take one.

I saw the president at a Marine One landing, concerts, and he talked to the interns. I probably saw

him about 10 times during the three-to-four-month internship.

## KIAH'S PRINCESS PROJECT

**Want a way to help keep Kiah's memory alive?**

Make a donation to Kiah's Princess Project.

Per a request from her family

It's a non-profit established by Kiah to help underserved middle and high school students through mentoring and community involvement.



# No Tax Increase Makes Wichita School Bond Vote Attractive, But Look Deeper

By Bonita Gooch  
Editor-in-Chief

On Tue., Feb. 25, voters in USD 259 School District will have the opportunity to vote on the future of the district. They'll vote on a \$450 million bond issue that goes a long way toward modernizing the district's aging infrastructure.

However, one of the biggest challenges to passing the bond is limited engagement around the bond issue and what's in it, says Bradley Dyer, chair of Yes for Wichita Kids.

Dyer and members of the Vote Yes group have attended meetings all across the City, with the goal of helping people understand what the bond issue does. However, he's noticing a lack of engagement around the bond issue and a lack of understanding of the importance of this vote.

"What happens with the Wichita Public Schools bond issue on

February 25 can have adverse effects in our community for generations to come," said Dyer, who encourages everyone to get involved, informed and to show up and vote.

He feels if people understand what's in the bond issue and how the district and the city will benefit, they'll vote yes.

So, here's what's in the issue and what's at stake.

## What's in the Bond Issue

The \$450 million bond issue rebuilds seven schools, adds two new buildings for targeted learning, but it will leave 10 school buildings empty and a large number of them are in Wichita's Black community.

If Wichita residents vote in support of the bond issue, four of the Black community's historic schools will be a thing of the past. The bond issue shuts L'Ouverture Elementary, Dunbar Elementary, Little Early Learning Center, and Chester Lewis Academic Learning Center, or, as the older set remembers it, Matthewson Junior High.

But, maybe it's time for these old buildings to go. Dunbar was built in 1907 and L'Ouverture was built in 1912.



Among many things the bond issue will address is overcrowding in some schools, like kitchen items being stored in the hallways at Irving Elementary.

They're among the oldest buildings in a district where many – including Mathewson and Little – are more than 60 years old. The bond issue retires 17 of the district's most dated buildings – 10 that are being retired and not replaced and eight that are being rebuilt.

Besides age, another reason some schools are being closed is shrinking enrollment. Overall enrollment in USD 259 is down from a high of around 53,000 students to around 47,000 today. While the enrollment at some individual schools is growing, some schools have as few as 200 students.

Susan Arensman, USD 259 news and media relations manager, says it's inefficient for the district to keep some of these smaller schools open.

One of the district's biggest selling points for the bond is that these new schools, along with

schools brought on board with the 2008 bond issue, will go a long way toward providing the updated classrooms, labs and career training facilities the district needs to better align with today's best practices in teaching and learning.

In addition, the new schools, along with money in the bond issue to complete some much needed building maintenance, will go a long way towards addressing the district's critical infrastructure needs such as aging roofs, windows, heating and cooling systems, electrical and plumbing.

The proposed improvements also address accessibility issues for students with disabilities and enhance school safety and security issues that were built before the current concerns with limiting school access for security reasons.

See **BOND** Page 7 →

## WHAT'S IN THE BOND ISSUE?

### Wichita's Core – 67214

- 4 buildings will be closed: L'Ouverture, Dunbar, Little Early Learning Center, and Chester Lewis Academic Learning Center (Old Matthewson). Plans have not been announced about what will be done with the buildings.
- A new Little Early Learning Center will be built on the grounds of the Lewis Academic Learning Center.

### North Wichita

- 4 buildings will be closed in North Wichita: OK, Woodland, and Pleasant Valley Elementary schools, and Gateway Alternative Program.

### Schools to be Rebuilt

- Adams Elementary, 10th St. and Oliver, is the only rebuild in our core readership area.
- Other schools to be rebuilt are: 4 elementary schools – Black (near 9th and Zoo Blvd.), Caldwell (on Edgemoor near Harry), Irving (16th and Market), and McLean (just north-west of 21st and Amidon).
- 2 middle schools: Truesdell (near Pawnee and Seneca) and Coleman (off 13th St. between Woodlawn and Rock Road).

### New Facilities

- We mentioned the new Dunbar Early Learning Center in 67214.
- A new Future Ready Technical School focused on construction will be built on land around East High.
- Outdoor athletic fields will be added to Northeast Magnet High School.

### Renovate and Repurpose

- Cessna Elementary will be expanded and converted to a K-8 school.
- Isely Elementary will be converted to a K-8 school.
- Coleman Middle School – the current building will be renovated and repurposed into an alternative learning center. So far, the only programs that will definitely be in the building are Gateway Alternative School and the Chester Lewis Academic Learning Center.
- Wells Alternative Middle School – current building will be expanded and repurposed into a 6-12 center and will include Sowers Alternative High School.

### Also Closing

- Focht Instructional Support Center (downtown at 412 S. Main) will be closed and the programming in that building will be assigned to other facilities.

## CORNER CONVERSATIONS

### USD 259 Bond Issue

Come learn more about the bond issue at this special community conversation around the school bond election to learn more about the bond and why you should or shouldn't support it.

**WHEN:** Thu., Feb. 20 - doors open at 5:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Urban League of Kansas, 2418 E. 9th St. N., Wichita

**WHAT ELSE:** Vote NO will present at 6 p.m. followed by 30 minutes of questions. Vote YES will present at 6:45 p.m. followed by 30 minutes of questions.

**JUNIOR LEAGUE,**  
from Page 4 ↓

time and have many of them arriving home well after dark. Plus, they say, where after school transportation is available, it often doesn't drop students off at their door, but at their nearest community school, which could still be a long way from their home.

Existing coaches are still encouraged to volunteer and build teams, however, they will only be able to recruit players who live in the high school

feeder district they're coaching for. That sincerely limits the pool coaches can draw from. and end the practice of coaches cherry picking the best players from around the city.

Wichita District 1 Councilman Brandon Johnson wholeheartedly supports the change in the program's structure from first grade up. He says the change will shift the programs away from building strong organizations to building strong youth.

"That's what Junior League

Football is supposed to be about," says Johnson. "The focus overall will be to empower our children to be great athletes and great students as well."

Currently, he says, the focus is too much on winning. Organizations focus on building strong winning teams – and youth who may not be as great athletes, but show up and do the work – often don't get an opportunity to play.

"Coaches need to coach," says Johnson. "They need

to teach the fundamentals and help develop good athletes and not just focus on the stars."

Davidson says this is what he's hearing from parents.

"Parents wanted to make sure that kids had a good opportunity to play the sport, learn the sport, and be in an environment where it's conducive for them to do that," said Davidson. "This is what we're trying to do with this, create an environment that's going to help support the kids to be

able to have a good experience moving forward."

**The Missing Part**

At the elementary level, DeShazer says the existing program is about more than football.

"It's about character building, about mentoring and building a relationship with a male role model, something a lot of these players don't have in their home," says DeShazar.

Too often, it's also about providing players transportation

to and from and even going into their own pocket when a player doesn't have the money for fees, equipment or even a meal.

Johnson agrees, there are a lot of great men working in the youth football program who emphasize character, but he says. That's not always the case. That's why the City feels the need to restructure the program to make sure the system is built to make sure the right values are taught, learned and developed.

**BOND,** from Page 6 ↓

**Zero Tax Bond Issue**

Bond issues most often come with an increase in property taxes, but this \$450 million bond issue will not require the district to increase their tax rate. In fact, the district reduced their tax rate by 1/10th of a cent for their 2025 budget and the district's tax rate remains one of the lowest in the region.

In marketing material for the bond issue, the district

says they are able to pay for the bonds without a rate increase, thanks to "careful financial planning."

True, getting rid of a number of old buildings will save the district a considerable amount in annual operating costs, but what they're not telling you is that in part, they're able to offer a zero tax bond because they're taking in more revenue. Even with the decreased 1/10 cent tax rate, the district is taking in more money because

the value of property appraisals have gone up.

The good news, the Vote Yes group says that a bond issue and improved schools is great for property owners. Better schools attract families and businesses to the district, enhance neighborhoods, increase property values and boost the local economy by generating millions of dollars in economic activity.

**Vote Yes Group Active**

The Vote Yes for Wichita Kids appears to have momentum, backed by district employees and board members who are not supposed to tell you how to vote, but are actively in the community sharing the "facts" of the bond issue.

It's hard to find any differences in the Vote Yes and the district's messaging, the group focusing heavily on the high cost of maintaining the district's older building.

"If we don't do this now, it's

possible that millions more dollars will go into maintaining buildings and trying to fix things rather than improve things," Dyer told KMUW.

**Vote No Making Their Case**

A group formed in opposition to the bond issue says the district should focus first on improving student performance rather than building new facilities. They point out that district student performance on state standardized tests are below state average and have been going down instead of up.

In addition, they say the district failed to deliver as promised on their last bond issue, including failing to build two new comprehensive high schools and a new K-8 school in Bel Aire.

**Biggest Challenge**

The biggest challenge is getting the community interested in the bond issue. Possibly



Buckets used to catch leaking pipes are just one of the many maintenance repairs that would be made if the bond issue passes

worn out by the politics of a bitter 2024 election season, people may just be burned out.

"I know that we sometimes wonder if our voices are heard in elections, and I understand that concern, but we cannot allow those concerns to outgrow

our will to persevere for ourselves and our children," said Dyer. "You must show up to vote. Grab your family and neighbors and get to the polls to vote YES on February 25. Your children and their futures are depending on you."

# Chase and Olivia Dempsey

Olivia and Chase Dempsey call Wichita, KS, home. They were both born and raised in the city and have deep roots in the community. Olivia works as an attorney at Martin Pringle while Chase runs his own video and photo business, "Chase Me If You Can Productions." They were married April 15, 2023, at Wichita's Brick & Mortar. Although they don't have children yet, they're excited about the possibility of expanding their family in the near future.

**When did you meet?** At vacation Bible school.

**Where did you go on your first date?**

We went to the Warren Theater for dinner and a movie. Then, we went to Churn and Burn for some ice cream. Little did I know Olivia had a gluten and dairy allergy and didn't want me to know.. She was sick afterwards.

**The turn (how did you know he/she was the one?)** I knew Olivia was the one before we were together! I saw her out one night and shared a drink with her. The energy and vibes were unmatched. After

that I knew I had to have her. I knew Chase was the one when we overcame losing his job after graduating with his bachelor's. The determination and discipline he showed me made me feel he could handle me.

**Tell us a few memorable parts of the wedding.** The first look was magical. Seeing Olivia walk down the aisle in her wedding dress was a feeling I felt through my entire body. I knew it was unique, and to see her smile and our families see the love we shared.

**Who's more social?** Chase is more social

**Who's the neat freak?** Chase because his mother taught him how to clean correctly at age 5.

**What chore does your spouse hate doing the most?** Olivia hates laundry. Chase loves laundry.

**Who does the cooking?** Olivia because her grandmother taught her to make sweet potato pie for me.

**Where is your favorite weekend**

**destination and why?** Jamaica might be our next stop to celebrate our second wedding anniversary!

**Who tends to be more romantic?**

Chase. His love language is physical touch. Olivia loves quality time.

**Who's better at gifting?** Olivia is the best gifter. She knows precisely what Chase needs when he needs it.

**What have you learned to appreciate about your spouse?** We both agreed on patience. As we grow together we understand how much time and effort it takes to truly know someone. We want our bond to last forever and are willing to put the work in.

**What kind of movies do you like watching together?** We love comedy, adventure, and reality shows. Currently, we are in love with "American Primeval." She loves "Married to Medicine," "The Circle," and "Selling Sunset."

**What song is on each of your romantic playlist?** "About me" by Blxst.

**What is your favorite couple song?**



We don't have one! We love to listen to anything romantic!

**Words of wisdom from both of you for other couples.** Learn to listen to your spouse and avoid so many misunderstandings! Love them wholeheartedly.

# Harold and Donna Miller

Harold and Donna Miller have built a life together in Wichita. Harold, a Wichita native, retired as a managing air traffic controller at Eisenhower Airport. Donna, originally from El Dorado, KS, enjoyed an impressive 34½-year career in banking, holding positions at various banks and she became the first Black person to hold a department position at Fourth National Bank. The couple married on June 25, 1966, and now proudly have 3 children, 3 granddaughters, and 6 great-grandsons.

**Tell us about your first date.** Harold: Donna asked me if I would accompany her to a Bank IV event.

**How did you know he/she was the one?** Harold: After work on Fridays I would stop by Nicole's Barbecue and take dinner to Donna and her roommates, so they liked to see me on Fridays. She was as pretty as her personality and easy to talk to. A church member said to me, "she's a winner - do not let her get away." Donna: Harold was the only boy

that my dad liked and actually sat down and talked to. My parents really liked him. Harold was such a nice guy and good looking, very mannerly and respectful. Plus, he made me laugh.

**A few memorable parts of the wedding.** About 30 minutes before the wedding we discovered that my brother's groomsman coat was missing, which caused us to be 10 minutes late starting the wedding. Then as Donna was coming down the aisle, she started crying, not just a few tears, but really shedding tears. Donna: I was really happy Harold's best man and groomsman were really smiling.

**Who is the neat freak?** Both of us are in anything we do.

**What chores does your spouse hate to do?** Donna: washing dishes. Harold: paying bills.

**Who does the cooking?** Harold cooks breakfast, Donna cooks dinner.

**Where is your favorite weekend destination?** New York City to see a Broadway

show.

**Who tends to be more romantic?**

Harold is because he loves me so much.

**Who's better at gifting?** Donna is, she loves sending cards and giving gifts.

**What have you learned to appreciate about your spouse?** Donna: He is truly an honest and caring person. Family comes first with him and he loves God. Harold: Donna will let you know how she feels, whether they are good, bad or indifferent. And she loves God.

**What kind of movies do you like watching together?** Documentaries, "Nature," and "The Young and The Restless."

**What song is on each of your romantic playlist?** "I'll Always Love You" by Whitney Houston and "A House Is Not a Home" by Luther Vandross.

**What is your favorite couple song?** "When Something's Wrong With My Baby, Something Is Wrong With Me."

**Words of wisdom from both of you**



**for other couples.** Always be truthful and honest. Always show love and respect for each other through the good and difficult times. Try not to go to bed angry.

# Diandrai and Shakia Webb

Diandrai & Shakia Webb live in the Kansas City Metro. Diandrai is from Cape Girardeau, MO, and Shakia was born and raised in KCMO. They were married May 7, 2006. They are the parents of 18 year-old Kayleece. Diandrai is a producing branch manager and mortgage loan originator at Cardinal Financial, and Shakia is a VP community development program manager.

**How did you meet?** At a nightclub.

Diandrai: She was staring me down. Shakia: I was watching the door because the club was known to escalate quickly, and every time I looked up, our eyes connected.

**Tell us about your first date.** Diandrai: We went to the movies. She picked it out and it was one of the worst movies we have seen,

**How did you know he/she was the one?** Shakia: Approximately three months after meeting Diandrai, I actually told him I could see him as my husband. Afterwards, we were in each other's company almost daily and enjoyed spending time with one another. I observed stability, strong self-awareness, independence, confidence, a man of faith, family oriented, a great sense of humor, and he's FINE.

**Tell us a few memorable parts of the wedding.** Diandrai: We got married in the justice of the peace's house in Raytown, MO,

with about 15 to 20 family & friends present. The whole thing was comedy but also a very memorable and positive event that we will never forget. My dad was my best man; my mother tripped on the plastic coming down the aisle. The officiant kept saying Shakia's name wrong during the ceremony, causing her mother to snap during the ceremony, and the officiant's wig was not fitting right and everyone noticed.

**Who's the neat freak?** Shakia: He is! I can't be the best at everything.

**Who does the cooking?** Diandrai: She does most of the cooking and she is a pretty great cook. Shakia: I've been cooking since I was about 10, but he likes to think he either taught me everything or it started when I met him. I cook because I enjoy it, it's relaxing and I love when people enjoy my cooking.

**Where is your favorite weekend destination?** Diandrai: Probably our home. LOL Shakia: We enjoy staycations. A nice hotel for the weekend with good food and massages.

**Who tends to be more romantic?** Diandrai: That tends to be more of a man's job/role in a relationship, but we will have to see what she says. I do flowers on special days and dinner, and sometimes we cook together. We've taken trips for special milestones like her 40th and anniversaries.

Shakia: He is, but I will say, I'm thoughtful when I acknowledge and celebrate him.

**Who's better at gifting?** Diandrai: I'm better at gifting. She's better at spending money LOL. Shakia: Hmm, I wasn't expecting that answer from him, but I'm not surprised. He is a thoughtful gifter.

**What have you learned to appreciate about your spouse?** Diandrai: I appreciate her mothering of our daughter. I appreciate her work ethic and aspirations to be more. Her best trait is putting up with me. At times as I can tend to be a straight clown. She has to endure my jokes and laugh even when she doesn't want to. Shakia: I appreciate and value the partnership he brings. We don't have roles per say, and when I need him, whether I say it or not, he steps up. That applies to fatherhood, our unity, supporting me, supporting our family and friends. He is and has always been my biggest supporter and at times believed enough for the both of us.

**Words of wisdom from both of you for other couples.** Diandrai: Make your relationship your relationship and not what you think you see or have seen others doing. Take your time to understand what is important to each of you in your relationship and be prepared to work as a team and compromise. Arguments do not need to be about who



wins, they need to try and hold to helping you both understand the other person's side/perspective in any given situation. Do couple things together on the regular. Shakia: Partner with someone with similar interests, that's how you remain friends. Your relationship is perfectly yours (do what works for the two of you). Be honest. Compromise and share the load. Maintain your identity while becoming a unit (It's a nice balance). Talk about future plans to ensure there's some alignment including parenting. Trust and assume best intentions of each other. Keep your business between you and your partner and lean on one another to solve any problems that arise. If needed seek professional counseling not family and friends.

# Marlyn and Eva Nevels

Marlyn and Eva Nevels are proud residents of Kansas City, KS. Marlyn retired from the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/ Kansas City, and they now enjoy the fruits of a long and dedicated career. Married on Dec. 14, 2002, the couple has raised four children and now cherish three grandchildren. (He's answering.)

**How did you meet?** In church, Greystone Missionary Baptist Church.

**Tell us about your first date.** We met at Jazz at Louisiana Kitchen for dinner.

**How did you know he/she was the one?** She was different from my other acquaintances, but I was still unsure at first. This is our second marriage and I was still hurt from my first. On the insistence of her pastor's wife, I reluctantly went out for our first dinner and afterward we went walking on the Plaza.

**Tell us a few memorable parts of the wedding.** It was beautiful and I was completely overwhelmed by all the people and my excitement.

**Who's more social?** We both are social beings. My wife would say it is me and I say she is the most. We both love people.

**Who's the neat freak?** I am a neat freak, but we both try to keep things neat.

**What chore does your spouse hate doing the most?** Throwing things away that are old, but was a gift from a friend, church member or family. She always finds a place for it to be seen in our home in case that person might visit.

**Who does the cooking?** My wife does most of the cooking.

**Where is your favorite weekend destination?** A weekend trip for us both would be

Branson, MO.

**Who tends to be more romantic?** I love to show my wife off when we are out in public and hold hands. My wife seems to be just fine just walking, but I am a show-off!

**Who's better at gifting?** Definitely my wife. She's good at remembering dates and creating items to send or give to others.

**What have you learned to appreciate about your spouse?** The first marriage was what I wanted and the second was what the Lord wanted me to have. Wait on the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Needless to say, the Lord was right.

**What kind of movies do you like watching together?** I love action, comedies and adventure, and my wife watches love stories, Lifetime movies and gospel-type shows.

**Words of wisdom from both of you for**



**other couples.** Being in love and being in lust are two very different emotions. What people must realize first, is God in the midst of your feelings? Marriage is not a commitment; it is a bond. The devil is a formidable foe that will always be the ruler of this world and he will always prey on your weaknesses. I now have a LIFE PARTNER that God has given me.

# Wendell and Sharon Hamilton

Wendell and Sharon Hamilton, originally from the Kansas City area, currently live in Independence, MO. Sharon is considered a teacher/preacher of the gospel, life coach, marriage mentor, and Wendell works in transportation/ministry. They were married Aug. 14, 1982. They are the proud parents of 5 children (1 deceased), 16 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

**How did you meet?** Sharon: We met after giving my life to the Lord at the church my husband was attending. Wendell: At a church fellowship.

**Tell us about your first date.** Sharon: Top of the Towers - more dessert than dinner. Wendell: It was a couple's date. We went out to dinner and then home.

**How did you know he/she was the one?** Sharon: The Lord revealed it during prayer. Wendell: The Holy Spirit told me so.

**Tell us a few memorable parts of the wedding.** Sharon: One unforgettable - the groom was late hanging out with my dad

& best man (brother) smh. Wendell: We started late and I was filled with excitement of becoming a husband.

**Who's more social?** Sharon: We both can be pretty social at times. He will probably say me. Wendell: Sharon.

**Who's the neat freak?** Sharon: Wendell more than me because he's very meticulous. Wendell: Sharon. She believes everything must be in order.

**What chore does your spouse hate doing the most?** Sharon: I'll have to say mowing the lawn. Wendell: Dishes

**Who does the cooking?** Sharon: I do the cooking seeing I'm at home more and he still works a 9-5.

**Where is your favorite weekend destination?** Sharon: I enjoy Ozark weekends - a beautiful relaxing place not too far from home. Wendell: Hawaii.

**Who tends to be more romantic?** Sharon: I'd say Wendell he's a man lol! He tends to be more sensitive. Wendell: Sharon, because she is always thinking of me and my needs.

**Who's better at gifting?** Sharon: Wendell - He gives more thought.

Wendell: Sharon. It is a gift of hers to personalize the gifts that she gives.

**What have you learned to appreciate about your spouse?** Sharon: I've learned to appreciate how patient Wendell is. Wendell: Her intelligence. She is a true learner and loves to learn.

**What kind of movies do you like watching together?** Sharon: Hallmark and Pure Flix. Wendell: Pure Flix, clean family movies.

**What song is on each of your romantic playlist?** Sharon: "You Are So Beautiful to Me."

**What is your favorite couple song?** Sharon: "To God be the Glory." Wendell: "I Won't Complain."

**Words of wisdom from both of you for other couples.** Sharon: There are 3 types of love essential for a happy marriage  
Friendship Love - makes marriage enjoyable  
Commitment Love - makes lasting

marriages



marriages

Romance Love - keeps marriage sweet  
Finally, communication is key. Never assume - because assumption is the lowest form of communication. Your spouse is not a mind-reader. Wendell: Marriage is made up of communication, which is assertiveness and active listening.

# AJ & Angela Jones

AJ and Angela Jones of Wichita have built a beautiful family together, raising two children who have blessed them with 5 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. They have been married since Nov. 24, 1979.

AJ was born in Chicago and Angela is originally from Texas, but both were raised in Wichita, AJ was a radio DJ for many years, and Angela was self-employed, owning her own business.

**When did you meet?** We met back in 1976 at a party at the old YMCA on North Cleveland - I was 16 and he was 17.

**Tell us about your first date.** Our first date was at the Wichita State University Art Museum to see the wax statues. It was different but fun - we laughed, talked, and got to know each other in a unique way.

**How did you know he/she was the one?** AJ said he knew I was the one from the moment he first saw me. For me, it took a little longer to be convinced. Over time, his kindness, patience, and the way he genuinely cared for me won me over. Eventually, I realized I couldn't imagine life without him.

**Who's more social?** AJ is definitely the more social one between us. He loves meeting new people, striking up conversations, and making connections wherever he goes. Whether he's at a community event, or just out and about,

he's always the one who naturally draws people in.

**Who's the neat freak?** AJ is the neat freak in our relationship. He loves everything to be in its proper place. He likes things to be just right, and I have to admit, it helps keep us both on track!

**What chore does your spouse hate doing the most?** Angela really doesn't like cleaning in general. She'd much rather focus on other tasks, but when it has to be done, she gets through it - just not with much enthusiasm!

**Who does the cooking?** Angela does most of the cooking because she enjoys preparing meals and making sure everyone is well-fed. Cooking is her way of bringing everyone together.

**Who is more romantic?** AJ is definitely the more romantic one between us. Whether it's remembering important dates or simply making sure I feel loved every day. His thoughtful gestures and affectionate nature make it clear that romance comes naturally to him.

**Where is your favorite weekend destination?** We'd really love to go on a cruise. There's just something so cool about being out on the ocean. We could enjoy the food, the activities, and just the fun of exploring new spots together.

**What song is on each of your romantic playlist?** DeBarge - "I Like It"



**What is your favorite couple song?** Frankie Beverly and Maze - "Golden Time Of Day"

**What kind of movies do you like watching together?** We watch boxing together.

**Words of wisdom from both of you for other couples.** Angie: Be committed, pray, always be patient. AJ: I appreciate how much she does to take care of me, especially since my stroke.

# Final Beam Placed: Jackson County's New Detention Center Nears Completion

The new facility aims to enhance rehabilitation with modern design and direct supervision model.

By **Thomas White**  
Kansas City Reporter

The final beam was crane-lifted into place as part of a "topping-out" ceremony at Jackson County's new \$301 million detention center, marking symbolic progress in the county's largest-ever taxpayer-funded investment in criminal justice infrastructure.

The county says that the 1,000-bed facility, located at 7000 E. US Highway 40, represents a shift from traditional jail design toward a more rehabilitative approach. County Executive Frank White Jr. addressed the gathered crowd of workers, officials, and dignitaries at the ceremony.

"Today is a significant milestone in Jackson



A worker adds his signature to the beam

County," said White. "This moment represents progress, collaboration, and a commitment to building a facility that meets the needs of our community while reflecting our shared values."

Following a centuries-old tradition, workers and officials signed the final beam before it was hoisted into place adorned with an evergreen



(L-R) County Executive Frank White Jr., Sheriff Darryl Forté, and legislator Venessa Huskey stand beside the final beam before its placement.

tree, American flag, and county flag. The tree symbolizes that construction has reached its highest point without loss of life.

## Addressing Overcrowding & Modernizing Detention

The new facility replaces the aging downtown detention center, which has faced overcrowding and deteriorating conditions for years. After studies showed renovation would cost more than new construction, county leaders approved the project with completion scheduled for early 2026.

Lead designer Gary Retel of DLR Group, one of the nation's top justice architecture firms, told the Martin City Telegraph that the new facility breaks sharply from traditional jail design.

"The projects I've been working on in the last 15 years, such as the Jackson County Detention Center, are not about locking people up," Retel said. "They're about trying to get people better."

Gone are the long gray corridors and barred cells. Instead, inmates will find painted walls filled with natural light, artistic murals, and acoustic panels to reduce noise. The 276 cells are arranged in "hubs" of 64 beds each, opening onto spacious day rooms with access to outdoor recreation, classrooms, and medical treatment.

## Safety, Supervision & Facilities on Site

A key innovation is "direct supervision," where unarmed officers work directly in housing units rather than watching from security boxes. Research shows this approach reduces violence when officers are well-trained and inmates are properly classified.

"There's quite a bit of victimization that

occurs between residents," Retel said. "An officer being in the space is reassuring for many."

The facility includes specialized housing for elderly inmates and those with mental illness or chronic medical conditions. An on-site medical clinic will provide mental health care, dentistry, and telemedicine services.

Two courtrooms on site will allow for arraignments and trials without transporting inmates across town. Retel said this efficiency could help reduce overcrowding by speeding cases through the system.

## KC Plans Adjacent Facility

After rejecting ideas for a joint city/county jail, Kansas City has moved forward plans for a \$2.3 million land purchase near the new detention center for a planned municipal jail, which would house municipal offenders separately from the county's detainees.

Noting county inmates await felony trials with average stays of 200 days, while city detainees face misdemeanors and typically stay less than two days, the city opted for a separate facility.

The city closed its jail in 2009 and has since relied on contracting with rural jails, a controversial practice that has drawn criticism from community leaders and businesses.

Voters will decide in spring whether to approve funding for the new city facility. If built, it could house up to 250 inmates, though officials are still working on cost estimates.

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# MO Courts Struggle to Clear Past Marijuana Convictions

The expungement of marijuana possession cases was required under the 2022 law legalizing recreational marijuana in Missouri. 140,000+ records have been cleared but manual record reviews and staffing shortages have slowed the expungement process.



**By Thomas White**  
Kansas City Reporter

More than two years after Missouri voters approved recreational marijuana, courts across the state remain backlogged with expungement cases required by the constitutional amendment, leaving some waiting for promised relief from past convictions.

The 2022 constitutional amendment that legalized cannabis required courts to automatically expunge non-violent marijuana-related offenses involving three pounds or less. The law excludes expungement for cases involving driving under the influence

and distribution to minors.

Under the amendment, the deadline for expunging charges was June 2023 for misdemeanors and December 2023 for felonies, but there's still lots of work to be done.

State court data shows Missouri has expunged 140,000+ marijuana cases, representing about 46% of the estimated 307,000 cases reviewed. But according to court administrators, that count excludes thousands of paper records that must be reviewed manually, suggesting the true backlog may be much larger.

"I thought, 'How in the world are we going to accomplish this?'" Iron County Circuit Clerk Sammye White told The Missouri Independent when she learned her team had one year to review every marijuana

case in the county.

The process of reviewing paper records has moved at a snail's pace. In smaller counties like Iron County, White spends hours balancing on a stepladder in the courthouse storage room, pulling down heavy boxes of decades-old case files.

Each potential cannabis expungement case requires multiple steps: scanning indexed records for drug charges, locating the physical file, determining if the offense involved marijuana and not another drug, and then seeing if it qualifies for expungement.

The process proves just as complex in urban areas. According to court officials, St. Louis staff must retrieve archived files by van from an old newspaper building, bringing them back to the courthouse for manual review. The physical nature of many records, especially those before the early 2000s, means no shortcuts exist — each file must be individually examined.

Jackson County has expunged almost 3,000 marijuana cases — markedly lower than other counties due to years of

See **CONVICTIONS** Page 16 →

## What To Do If Your Record Needs Expungement

If you believe your marijuana charge should be expunged: Check your record through the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Criminal Justice Information Services Division or Case.net. Contact the court where you received the conviction to check your case status.

Consider seeking help from legal aid organizations like Missouri Legal Services or local expungement clinics. File a formal expungement motion with the court if needed.

For KC-area residents, organizations like Legal Aid of Western Missouri and the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office offer expungement assistance.

The Missouri Office of State Courts Administrator oversees marijuana expungements and can provide guidance on next steps. Each case requires individual review, as factors like additional charges or circumstances of the offense may affect eligibility.

## WINTERLUDE JAZZ FESTIVAL

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Artists Deborah Brown, Eddie Moore and many others join in the fun!

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**WICHITA**

**Sun., Feb. 9, 8 pm: "Lifting Jane - An Inspirational Movie,"** AMC Theater, 3151 Penstemon St. In the family movie "Lifting Jane," Jane is abandoned by her abusive husband, left with her teenage daughter to care for. She is emotionally bruised and feels that love or marriage is not worth it. Reserve tickets at [www.LiftingJane.com](http://www.LiftingJane.com) or stream the full movie on your device at <https://lewabo.com/programs/lifting-jane>.

**Mon., Feb. 10, 9:30 am: Career Fair,** Hilton Garden Inn, 401 E. Douglas. Open positions: Hiring managers are onsite to fill positions in sales, retail, customer service, education, admissions, production, financial services, banking engineering, healthcare, project management and more. Hiring companies: For a list of open positions and attending companies please forward your resume, city of employment and salary requirements to: [hr@nationwidecareer-fairs.com](mailto:hr@nationwidecareer-fairs.com). **FREE**

**Mon., Feb. 10, 6 -7 pm: Expand Your Shelf Book Club,** Wichita Public Library, 711 W. 2nd St. Looking to broaden your reading horizons? Join the library for this quarterly book club that explores diverse authors and perspectives. This quarter's book is Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." Register at 316-261-8500 or [WichitaLibrary.org/events](http://WichitaLibrary.org/events). **FREE**

**Tue., Feb. 11, 6 pm: Celebrate Aviation, Kansas Aviation Museum,** 3350 S. George Washington Blvd. A special evening celebrating men and women from across Kansas who are impacting aviation, this event will feature keynote speaker Leanne Caret, former CEO of Boeing Defense and Kansas native. Recognizing five different categories of award recipients. COST \$60 <https://bit.ly/3WMTpRA>

**Thu., Feb. 13, 10 am: Senior Thursday, Kansas Aviation Museum,** 3350 George Washington Blvd. Speaker: Harold Miller, who was the first Black air traffic controller at Wichita's Mid-Continent Airport in the 1970s. Please note that the museum is closed on Thursdays and will not be open to tour after the lecture. **FREE**

**Thu., Feb.13, 6:30 - 8:20 pm: City Elders Panel on Improving Race Relations,** Petroleum Club, 100 N. Broadway. A panel of speakers from the Black, Asian, Hispanic and Caucasian communities. Bishop Herman Hicks

will be on the panel. The panel will be facilitated by Dr. Howard Hatcher from Tulsa, OK. Register at 316-644-3070 so that we can take responsibility of your meal! **FREE**

**Fri., Feb. 14, 9 pm: Kimberly Paige Band,** Vorshay's, 417 E. Douglas. Our Valentine's Day lineup starts with a comedy show and then a night of R&B featuring Kim's sensual vocals. You must purchase tickets to the comedy show. COST \$10+

**Fri., Feb. 14, 6 - 9 pm: Wine & Dine – The Lover's Dinner,** Simply Sangria, 243 N. Cleveland. Bring your love and partake in a five-course feast, bathed in candlelight's gentle glow. As you sit in a warm and comforting haven with sweet melodies performed by Cydnée Alyxzan & Justin Noel Hall, Mi Sueño's culinary artistry shall grace your table. A night of loving delight is assured from its beginning to its sweet conclusion. COST \$120 square.link/u/JTnG3Rd

**Sat., Feb. 15, 7 - 9 pm: 2025 Miss ICT & Miss ICT Teen Pageant Preliminary Competition,** Duerksen Fine Arts Center, 2102 N. Hillside. Witness an unforgettable evening of grace and beauty as contestants vie for the coveted crown. Marvel at their confidence, poise, and charm as they showcase their skills in various categories. Be a part of this extraordinary event and cheer on your favorites. COST \$35

**Sat., Feb. 15, 8 pm: KC & the Sunshine Band,** Wichita Orpheum, 310 E. 1st St. KC is ready to light up the stage with all the classic funk and disco vibes you love. COST \$59.75+ [bit.ly/KCSB-Feb15](https://bit.ly/KCSB-Feb15)

**Sat., Feb. 15, 11:30 am - 3 pm: Publishing Your Family History,** Wichita Public Library, 711 W. 2nd St. Many genealogists have written their family history, but taking the next step and publishing it is a mystery. Hear a panel share their experiences and recommendations for publishing a family history. **FREE**

**Sun., Feb. 16, 7 - 9:30 pm: 2025 Miss ICT & Miss ICT Teen Pageant Final Show,** Duerksen Fine Arts Center, 2102 N. Hillside. COST \$25+ <https://bit.ly/4asQfDw>

**Sun., Feb. 23, 3 - 5 pm: Celebrating Black Athletes & Entertainers,** Fred Douglass Lodge #99, 2221 E. 12th St. Door prizes, family fun, guest speakers, performances, and refreshments. Come and learn about the rich history and culture, trivia and dinner. **FREE**

**Thu., Feb. 20, 6 - 7:30 pm: USD 259 School Bond Meeting,** Urban League of Kansas, 2418 E. 9th St. A conversation around the upcoming school bond election to learn more about the bond and why you should or shouldn't support the bond. Vote NO will present at 6 pm followed by 30 minutes of questions. Vote YES will present at 6:45 pm followed by 30 minutes of questions. **FREE**

**Sat., Feb. 22, 4 - 7 pm: Art That Touches Your Heart Foundation: Black Educators Hall of Fame,** WSU Rhatigan Center, 1st Floor. Honorees: Dr. Delia Shropshire, Larry

Bell, Emalyn Rogers, Sandra Barnes, Jesse Adams, Dr. John Gaston, Doris Wooden, Ester B Anderson, Frankie Perkins, Deltha Colvin, Dr Anna Chandler, DrGalyn A Vesey, Berniece Westbrook, and Linwood Sexton. **FREE**

**HUTCHINSON**

**Mon., Feb. 17, 2 - 7 pm: Hutchinson Black History Month Program -** What's Emancipation Got to Do With It?, Memorial Hall, 101 S. Walnut St. Workshops and panel discussion. **FREE**

**KANSAS CITY**

**Sat., Feb. 8, 3 - 5 pm: Zach & Friends Comedy Show,** Kansas City Kansas Community College Performing Arts Center, 7250 State Ave., KCKS. The city's most exciting up-and-coming actors, comedians, and puppeteers. This talented crew has come together to create a one-of-a-kind show that's bursting with energy and packed with fun. From hilarious sketches to catchy original numbers, Zach & Friends have crafted a performance that will keep you laughing, singing, and maybe even dancing in your seat. COST \$12

**Sat., Feb. 15, 11 am - 2 pm: 33rd Annual KCK Black History & Scholarship Celebration,** Memorial Hall, 600 N. 7th St. A memorable event celebrating the Legacy Building Through the Foundational Pillars of HBCUs, awarding scholarships to local deserving students, and the UG Black History Committee will also be presenting a community and business award to voted-on community members that have demonstrated cultural pride and community leadership for Wyandotte County and KCK. COST \$60+ <https://bit.ly/4g5qyK4>

**Sat., Feb. 15, 2 - 3 pm: Books and Brews - Black Authors,** Aizen Root Remedy, 1106 E. 30th St. Bring a book written by a Black author wrapped up for a white-elephant-style exchange and leave with something new to read. COST \$5

**Sun., Feb. 16, 6 - 9 pm: Kijji Universe Presents The Black August Art & Fashion Show,** Gem Theater, 1615 E. 18th St. Come for a night of creativity and style, Kijji Universe commemorates all the real-life Black heroes and sheroes who put their lives on the line for the liberation of our people from national and global oppression. Those who threw bricks back and never get mentioned during Black History Month (i.e. Nat Turner & Assata Shakur). There will be a fashion and art show that enables up-and-coming Black designers to showcase their talent and allows local businesses to sell their products to promote and advance Black Owned Businesses. COST \$50+ <https://bit.ly/3E5ldWc>

**Sun., Feb. 16, 3 - 5pm Johnson County NAACP Presents "I'm So Glad Project,"** Aztec Shawnee Theater, 11119 Johnson Drive, Shawnee. The "I'm So Glad Project" is a film and series of events focused on gospel music

that are being created to preserve, promote and celebrate this amazing music and the people who make it. Don't miss out on this opportunity to learn and preserve history. **FREE** [www.imsogladproject.com](http://www.imsogladproject.com)

**Sat., Feb. 22, 8:30 am - 3:30 pm: The Summit 2025 - Restore,** Kauffman Foundation Conference Center, 4801 Rockhill Rd. The Educator Academy's annual educator conference, The Summit. Each year the programming creates space to recognize all the good happening in education while also envisioning an even better future in education. This year's conference theme is "Restore: imagining a fresh tomorrow today." This year's Summit will focus on rejuvenating teachers. Keynote speaker: Omkari Williams. **FREE**

**Sat., Feb. 22, 3 pm: Reel Black Film Fest,** The Truman, 601 E. Truman Road. Join Kansas City PBS in celebrating Black History Month with exclusive film premieres, panel discussions, community vendors and more. This exciting event will showcase three local films highlighting the history and vibrancy of Black Kansas City. **FREE**

**Sat., Feb. 22, 5:30 - 8 pm: Harlem Nights - Celebrating Resilience & Community** Supporters, Advocates, and Friends of the Kansas City Black Mental Health Initiative (KCBMHI), Park39, 300 E. 39th St. What to Expect: Great food and music. Together, we'll weave stories, share laughter, briefly listen to speakers, enjoy good food and drinks, dance and ignite constellations of hope. <https://bit.ly/3CjkbP>. General Admission \$75 per ticket.

**Sat., Feb. 22, 11 am - 3 pm: Women's Empowerment Brunch,** Southeast Community Center, 4210 E. 63rd St., KCMO. Panelists: Marquita Davis, Stacey Hardman, Royce Martin, Felicia Tyler, Andrea Shelby, Dolores Woodard Davis, Latonya Long, Dee Barker. Register at [www.zeffy.com/ticketing](http://www.zeffy.com/ticketing). COST \$65+

**Thu., Feb 27, 7 pm: Setting the Stage – A Journey Through African American Dance** presented by Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey. Gem Theater, 1615 E 18th St. **FREE**

**Wed., March 5, 6 - 8 pm: Vivid Visions – Women In The Kansas City Jazz Scene,** Folly Theater, 300 W. 12th St. Celebrate the talented women shaping the vibrant jazz scene in Kansas City. COST \$20 <https://bit.ly/3CCCfdG>

**Thu., March 27, 11:45 am - 1:30 pm: 2025 Difference Maker 67th Awards Luncheon,** The Abbott, 1901 Cherry St. Profound conversation speaking "Power of Truth; Unshocking Potential for Justice, Equity and Empowerment for All" featuring Melesa Johnson, Jackson County Prosecutor; Dr. Eddie Glaude Jr, NYT bestselling author, professor at Princeton University and MSNBC commentator; and moderator Gwendolyn Grand, president & CEO, Urban League of Greater KC. COST \$100 <https://bit.ly/3CD5IUP>

# 'Broke-ology' Returns Home

## KC Rep Honors Native Son's Legacy

The play features a ticketed theatrical run Feb. 11 - March 2

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

When Nathan Louis Jackson wrote "Broke-ology" as a Juilliard student in 2007, he set his story in the working-class neighborhoods of Kansas City, KS, where he grew up.

The play gets its name from a term coined by the character Ennis to describe "the study of being broke." The play follows the King family and two brothers facing a dilemma. One pursues academic dreams in environmental science while the other prepares for fatherhood. Both must decide how to care for their ailing father and honor their late mother's legacy.

Kansas City Repertory Theatre's revival of this acclaimed work opens Feb. 11 at

the Copaken Stage in downtown KCMO and is followed by a free community tour.

The production marks a homecoming for a play that ran at New York's Lincoln Center before returning to the streets that inspired it — a return that carries extra weight following Jackson's untimely passing in 2023 at age 44 after years of heart issues. Jackson served as the KC Rep's playwright-in-residence from 2013 to 2019. He produced several acclaimed works and earned multiple honors including the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award, Kennedy Center's Gold Medallion, and the Mark Twain Comedy Playwriting Award. He also was a writer-producer on the Marvel-Netflix show "Luke Cage."



Playwright  
Nathan Louis Jackson



Director  
Francois Battiste

Director Francois Battiste brings rare insight to this staging of "Broke-ology." In 2008, he performed in the original cast, an experience that shaped his understanding of both the play and its author.

"The play became part of walking me into manhood, along with meeting Nathan Jackson," says Battiste. "It was a pivotal time for me as a performer, but also just as a man and having known Nathan all those years and still being close to his

### Broke-ology

Copaken Stage, 1 H&R Block Way, KCMO  
Feb. 11 - March 2 • Tickets \$39 to \$65 at KCRep.org

family, I feel a heavy obligation to tell the story as truthfully as possible."

For this production, Battiste cast primarily local actors who understand the play's cultural geography.

KC locals Robert E. Coppage III and Rafeal Sears portray brothers Ennis and Malcolm, while Teonna Wesley appears as their mother Sonia in pivotal flashbacks. Broadway veteran Melvin Abston plays William King, the father whose declining health forces his sons to confront difficult choices.

"To cast actors who are legitimately from Kansas City, who know all the nooks and crannies of what is being discussed in the play, grounds this story in genuineness," says Battiste. "We have an amazing ensemble who will lift Nathan's legacy in the right way."

Like many KCK families, the Kings face universal challenges against a uniquely local backdrop.

Malcolm's return home with a college degree sees him confront changes in his childhood neighborhood. Ennis's impending fatherhood raises questions about breaking cycles of economic hardship. Their father William's declining health pushes both brothers to examine what they owe their family versus what they owe themselves.

"Nathan was wonderful at keeping our mouths open with laughter but also showing the truth down there," says Battiste. "Every character on the stage has a stance that is difficult to argue with. That's



Broke-ology-cast members (L-R) David Emerson Toney, Postell Pringle & Larry Powell in KCRep's 2010 production of BROKE-OLGY  
PHOTO-DON IPOCK

### KCRep For All Community Tour

Following its ticketed run at Copaken Stage (Feb. 11 - March 2), the production will tour community venues across the metro area. This free program, KCRep for All, brings professional theater directly to neighborhoods through March 16.

Each performance includes post-show discussions with the cast and crew. While the production contains strong language and is recommended for ages 14 and up, its messages speak across generations.

For a complete list of Community dates and locations, check out our story online @ Communityvoiceks.com. Search KCRep For All

the definition of good conflict: when everyone is right."

"It's a love letter to Kansas City, Kansas," Battiste says, "but it surpasses any financial or demographic boundaries because it's a human story told very specifically through the King family."

"He's talking about some very humanistic elements," Battiste notes. "There's not one issue that these characters go through that will not resonate. Anyone will be able to relate: It will hit them in their chest, in their heart, and in their minds."

### KCRep For All Community Tour

Following its ticketed run at

Copaken Stage (Feb. 11 - March 2), the production will tour community venues across the metro area. This free program, KCRep for All, brings professional theater directly to neighborhoods through March 16.

"When we go out into the community, we strip down all the pomp and circumstance to deliver this story," says Battiste. "That's what people are going to hang on to - the heart of what Nathan Louis Jackson was writing about."

Each performance includes post-show discussions with the cast and crew. While the production contains strong language and is recommended for ages 14 and up, its messages speak across generations.

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# Broke-ology

BY NATHAN LOUIS JACKSON  
DIRECTED BY FRANCOIS BATTISTE

FEB 11 THRU MAR 2  
COPAKEN STAGE

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.

Order today for the best seats!  
Visit **KCREP.ORG** or call **816.235.2700**

Kansas City Repertory Theatre is the professional theatre in residence at UMKC

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A Legacy of Service... Built upon more than 90 years of knowledge and community trust

**Warren McGill, 67**

Nov. 5, 1957 - Feb. 1, 2025

Service will be held at 2 p.m. on Fri., Feb. 14 at the Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E 13th.

**Sherlie Thomas, 79**

March 28, 1945 - Jan. 31, 2025

Service will be held at 11 a.m. on Fri., Feb. 21 at the Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E 13th.

**Annie M. Brooks, 73**

Dec. 28, 1951 - Jan. 26, 2025

Service will be held at 10 a.m. on Sat., Feb. 15, at St. Mary M.B.C., 1648 E. 17th St.

**Louise H. Polite, 87**

July 20, 1937 - Jan. 26, 2025

Service will be held at 11 a.m. on Fri., Feb. 14, at St. James Missionary Baptist Church, 1350 N. Ash Ave.

**Donna Chandler, 61**

Nov. 4, 1963 - Jan. 23, 2025

Service will be held at 1 p.m. on Sat., Feb. 15, at St. Mark United Methodist Church, 1525 N. Lorraine.

**McNeal Irving Sr., 66**

Jan. 6, 1959 - Jan. 22, 2025

Service was held Feb. 7 at Tabernacle Bible Church.

**Gladys McKay, 82**

March 22, 1942 - Jan. 22, 2025

Service will be held at 11 a.m. on Sat., Feb. 8 at St. Matthew C.M.E., 841 N. Cleveland.

**Robert A. McClellan Sr., 72**

March 28, 1953 - Jan. 20, 2025

Service was held Feb. 1 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

**Mother Laverne Walker, 80**

Dec. 3, 1944 - Jan. 16, 2025

Service was held Feb. 1 at Faith Mission Church of God in Christ.

**Covette Barnes, 51**

Sept. 3, 1973 - Jan. 15, 2025

Private graveside service was held Jan. 25.

**John Allen McGill, 69**

July 5, 1955 - Jan. 15, 2025

Graveside service was held Jan. 24.

**Corey J. Jefferson, 50**

Feb. 11, 1975 - Jan. 10, 2025

Service was held Jan. 24.

**Red Rock LLC** seeks Safety Officer in Wichita, Kansas to safely manage hazardous waste generated at worksites (for ex. gasoline, spent spill cleanup absorbents, spent fuel filters, catchment basin waste, etc.). Inspect leak detection and sump sensors for proper functioning. Identify and prevent spills and releases of gasoline and other dangerous chemicals. Maintain up-to-date work practices, provide adequate employee training, and ensure clean and well-maintained fuel pumps to prevent spills or leaks of hazardous chemicals. Bachelors degree and experience required. Tank Management Service Operator Training Class A/B Certificate required.

Mail resume to Rupan Dev, 1931 N. Timberwood St., Wichita, KS 67206.

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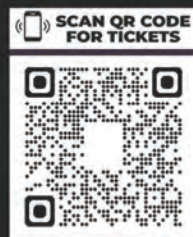
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## KC Melting Pot Brings Fresh Vision to "Fences"

The play kicks off KCMPT's 10th anniversary season

By Thomas White  
Kansas City Reporter

As Kansas City Melting Pot Theatre kicks off its 10th anniversary season, the company boldly tackles August Wilson's "Fences," an award-winning play that saw a 2016 film adaptation featuring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis.

Opening Feb. 13 at Just Off Broadway Theatre, this production promises to honor Wilson's powerful narrative while bringing fresh perspective to the landmark drama.

Director Lynn King says she who made a deliberate choice to approach the material with fresh eyes, and asked the cast to avoid the temptation of mirroring previous stagings.

"I really wanted their personal input and their impressions of the script without any other influence," says King. "Then it becomes yours, as opposed to anyone else's."

Set in 1950s Pittsburgh, "Fences" follows Troy (played by Lewis Morrow), a former Negro League baseball player whose dreams of major league glory were crushed by racial barriers.

Now a sanitation worker fighting to become the city's first Black truck driver, Troy's bitterness and pride complicate his relationships with his wife Rose (Melonnie Walker) and teenage son Cory (Terrace Wyatt Jr.), who seeks his own path through a college football scholarship.

The production features Dennis Jackson as Troy's war-injured brother Gabriel, Tim Burks as his musician son Lyons, Jerron O'Neal as his longtime friend Jim Bono, and Zionne Dandridge as Raynell. Together, they bring to life Wilson's exploration of family, responsibility, and the weight of unfulfilled dreams in Black America.

"People should expect to be surprised a bit by what

they see, but also very entertained and pleased with our performance and production," King notes. "When folks are going home, I think they're going to be talking about the acting and how well the story was told."

The play, which earned both the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play in 1987, remains strikingly relevant today. Through Troy's struggle to secure opportunities for himself and define success for his children, "Fences" examines how personal dreams and disappointments shape family legacies across generations.

Tickets are available at [kcmeltingpot.com](http://kcmeltingpot.com). All performances take place at Just Off Broadway Theatre located at 3051 Central St, KCMO.

### "Fences" Performance Schedule:

Feb. 13 - 10 am\* &amp; 7:30 pm

Feb. 14 &amp; 15, 7:30 pm

Feb. 16 - 2 pm\*

Feb. 19 - 22, 7:30 pm

Feb. 20 - 7:30 pm\*

\*Post-show discussions with cast and creative team offer audiences the opportunity to engage with the production's themes and artistic choices.

### CONVICTIONS, from Page 12 ↓

de-emphasis on prosecution for marijuana possession.

According to Scott Lauck, spokesman for the 16th Judicial Circuit in Jackson County, the court completed its local review of nearly 20,000 case files in December 2023, going back to 1989. Lauck noted that the county sometimes discovers additional cases as people complete probation, and these cases are sent to the sentencing division for review.

The Missouri Legislature approved special

funding from the marijuana tax revenue to help courts hire temporary staff and pay overtime. However, many jurisdictions struggle to find qualified workers willing to take on the tedious review process, leading to continued delays.

The delays particularly impact Black communities, who faced disproportionate enforcement of marijuana laws before legalization. According to a 2020 study by the ACLU, Black Missourians were 2.6 times more likely to be arrested for possession than White residents.