

[View this email in a webpage.](#)



Dear friends, neighbors and community members,

May is a time for new beginnings! This month the University of Missouri-St. Louis is celebrating more than 1,700 spring and summer graduates following our commencement ceremonies on May 10 and 11. We are excited to see these new graduates move forward, joining our over 115,000 alums worldwide, including 85,000 who live and work right here in the region. We are so proud that our Tritons are making a difference in our communities and in the world! For over 60 years, UMSL has provided our students with an excellent education, and today we are still delivering success. I am happy to share with you that U.S. News & World Report recently recognized the strength of UMSL graduate programs in social work, education, business and public affairs in its 2024 "Best Graduate Schools" rankings.

May is also Mental Health Awareness Month. At UMSL, we offer a [network of comprehensive mental health services](#) to help address the great need for care in our area. We are pleased to see other organizations like the Avenues Counseling Center expand services in North County, as well as special programs noted in our newsletter like the Athlete Mental Health Jamboree taking place later this month at The Core Collective at Saint Vincent. As we head into the summer months, we look forward to the many ways we are collectively building a stronger community where everyone can flourish.

Gratefully forward,

Kristin Sobolik
Chancellor
University of Missouri–St.
Louis





Avenues of Hope

Avenues Counseling Center expanded its services to Ferguson providing mental health services to all who have a need, regardless of a person's ability to pay

by Wendy Todd, *St. Louis County Community News*, May 1, 2024

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and discussions surrounding mental health have become a national conversation, particularly since the pandemic. According to the National Institutes of Health, anxiety, depression and substance abuse have increased since the beginning of the global health crisis. Therefore, the need for mental health counseling has been in high demand. That demand has largely been unmet in underserved areas.

The city of Ferguson and its surrounding areas including Berkeley, Bridgeton, Jennings and North St. Louis city have been designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration as a mental health provider shortage area.... To help meet the need and assist traditionally underserved residents, Avenues Counseling Center expanded its services to Ferguson. [Read more.](#)



Normandy Early Childhood Center Principal Dr. Lanor Payne and assistant principal Aman Lado

Normandy Early Childhood Center a benchmark of success

by Sylvester Brown Jr., *The St. Louis American*, updated April 24, 2024

Considering men only represent 2.5% of preschool and kindergarten teachers and 21.5% of elementary and middle school teachers in America, an email to the St. Louis American praising the accomplishments of two Black educators at Normandy Early Learning Center deserved attention and follow-up. LeDominique Rhodes, who described herself as “a parent within the Normandy Schools Collaborative for over a decade,” wrote to say she witnessed “firsthand the remarkable transformation taking place at the Normandy Early Childhood Center.” Rhodes highlighted “the leadership” of the school’s principal and assistant principal, Dr. Lanor Payne, and Aman Lado respectively for the center’s remarkable success and

improvements in its “culture, climate, and academic performance.”

“In the face of numerous challenges, the Normandy Early Learning Center has undergone a truly inspiring transformation under their visionary leadership,” Rhodes said. “Their campus has the highest student and staff attendance in the district, the largest academic achievement gains and 100% certified staff. At the beginning of the school year, only 9% of kindergartners were reading [at] grade level. Now, an impressive 65% are reading on or above grade level.” [Read more.](#)



U.S. News & World Report recognizes the strength of UMSL graduate programs in social work, education, business and public affairs in its 2024 “Best Graduate Schools” rankings

UMSL saw gains in each category with social work, education, business, and public affairs programs ranked among the top 125 nationally. The MSW program climbed to No. 67 nationally in the latest rankings, up 12 spots from when U.S. News last ranked graduate social work programs in 2022. The College of Education’s MEd program continues to rank first in St. Louis and third in the state and also moved up 13 places from last year to rank No. 99 nationally. The part-time MBA program climbed 10 places from last year and has now risen 48 places in the past two years to rank No. 115 in the country. Further, the Master of Public Policy Administration Program moved up 13 places to No. 124 nationally and remained the top-ranked program in the St. Louis region. [Read more.](#)



EPA Region 7 Partners with Jennings, MO to Redevelop West Florissant Business Corridor

by Hannah Nixon, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency news, March 27, 2024

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has

announced that 10 communities will receive technical assistance through the Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program. EPA and these local communities will pursue development strategies that expand upon existing Brownfields efforts to advance clean air, clean water, equitable development, and other local goals.

Jennings, Missouri, a city of 13,000 in the St. Louis metropolitan area, is one of the communities selected to receive technical assistance through the Building Blocks program. During the roughly eight months of the technical assistance project, EPA staff and EPA-hired consultants will work with the community to develop a process and identify next steps for the community to achieve its goals.... “Residents often share their memories of what that corridor once was – a pillar of the community, and a place where residents could get everything they needed,” said Jennings Economic Development Coordinator Anni Dineen. “This opportunity will equip us to restore the thriving aspects of the corridor in an equitable and sustainable way.” [Read more.](#)



Gov. Mike Parson tours UMSL's new Geospatial Advanced Technology Lab

Missouri Governor Mike Parson and his wife, First Lady Teresa Parson, visited the University of Missouri–St. Louis campus and took a tour of the newly renovated [Geospatial Advanced Technology Lab](#). Spot, the robot dog, was waiting to greet them as they arrived, and Chancellor Kristin Sobolik and Geospatial Collaborative Director Reda Amer showed them around the space on the fourth floor of Benton Hall.

The Parsons dropped in to observe a class of students working in the GIS lab – which is equipped with 24 workstations featuring the latest geographic information systems software – and also stepped next door into the virtual reality lab. There, Amer pointed out some of the technology tools on hand, including an interactive table, VR headsets and a drone that can be deployed to gather geospatial data. “It’s great to be here, and it’s great to see all the new stuff and the renovations you’re doing,” Parson said as he spoke to a room filled with UMSL administrators and members of the Chancellor’s Council in the virtual reality lab. “It’s all been first-class.”

The state-of-the-art facility was built with the help of \$1.1 million in funding from the [MoExcels Workforce Initiative](#), one of Parson’s signature programs that he’s championed during his tenure as governor. “UMSL is absolutely grateful to Governor Parson for his continued support of higher education at the

University of Missouri–St. Louis and across the entire University of Missouri System and the state,” Sobolik said during her remarks. [Read more.](#)

Share with Us

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

UMSL Community Connection newsletter

Received this as a forward?
[Click here](#) to subscribe.

UMSL Community Card

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

UMSL Careers

[Click here](#) to learn about job opportunities at UMSL. Check back regularly for new listings.

UMSL Contracts

Interested in bidding on projects at UMSL?
[Procurement Bids](#)
[Construction Bids](#)

Community Connect

[Click here](#) to learn about UMSL resources, services and programs available to the community.

STL Community LAB

[Click here](#) to learn about community development trainings and programs.

Events & Resources



Spring to Dance Festival 2024

Friday, May 24 and
Saturday, May 25, 2024
7:30 PM
UMSL Touhill Performing Arts
Center

The Midwest region's most

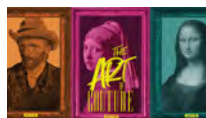
celebrated dance festival returns for the 16th year! National professional dance companies from coast to coast flock to St. Louis to bestow their artistry. It's an unmatched buffet of dance, featuring two days of nonstop dance from a wide array of companies. As one of the region's must-see festivals, Spring to Dance offers something for everyone, from modern, ballet and contemporary to tap, aerial, hip hop, flamenco and more, with a distinct, dynamic program each night. Tickets start at \$10. For information and tickets, [click here](#).



Athlete Mental Health Jamboree

Saturday, May 25, 2024
 11:00 AM
 The Core Collective at Saint Vincent

Wrap Up Mental Health Awareness Month by attending the Athlete Mental Health Jamboree! This free community event offered by the LM39 Foundation in partnership with The Core Collective at Saint Vincent will serve as a celebration of mental health and offer a wide range of resources, engaging activities, and relaxation techniques. [Click here](#) to reserve your free spot.



UMSL's Art of Culture Exhibition

Friday, May 31, 2024
 7:30 PM
 Touhill Performing Arts Center

Join UMSL and the St. Louis community in the Anheuser-Busch Performance Hall for an experience of “The Art of Couture” celebrating the finest artists in history, and immersing in the true appreciation of each piece. For more information and tickets, [click here](#).



Greater North County Chamber's 55th Annual Golf Tournament

June 7, 2024

10:00 AM

Florissant Golf Club

Join Greater North County Chamber of Commerce co-hosts the 55th annual golf tournament. For more information, [click here](#).



Annual Juneteenth Celebration

Saturday, June 15, 2024

4:00 - 9:00 PM

Plaza @ 501

501 S. Florissant, Ferguson

Enjoy live music and entertainment, food trucks, new business ribbon cutting, art fair, children's area and more! To become a vendor or learn more about the event, [click here](#).



Viking Advantage Matched Savings Program

For families living within the

boundaries of the Normandy Schools Collaborative, Viking Advantage is an Individual Development Account (IDA) or matched savings program offered through Beyond Housing, the Normandy Schools Collaborative, and US Bank. The program is designed to assist with saving for college by providing financial tools and assistance.

To learn more, contact Ivana (314) 376-5650 or ipease@beyondhousing.org.



Summer Farmers' Market

Recurring every Saturday
8:00 AM - 12:00 Noon
Plaza @ 501
501 S. Florissant, Ferguson

Founded in 2002, the award-winning Saturday morning tradition offers fresh fruits and veggies, picked within 24 hours and brought directly to market by the friendly farmers who grow them. This market offers live music and special events in a festive family atmosphere, along with a wide variety of edible delights including homemade jelly, farm fresh eggs, honey, spices, and meats. It also offers an ever-changing array of gift and specialty vendors, selling everything from cut flowers and bedding plants to hand-painted artwork and small-batch soaps. For more information, [click here](#).

University of Missouri–St. Louis
Economic & Community Development
1 University Boulevard
341 Woods Hall
St. Louis, MO | 63121