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Dear friends, neighbors, and community members,

Thanksgiving is just a few weeks away. While this holiday reminds us to take stock of life and practice gratitude, we hope our monthly *Community Connection* newsletter helps carry that spirit of gratitude throughout the year as we seek to celebrate the amazing work in our community. I am thankful for this community in which I live and work with you, and the opportunities that we have to make meaningful change together.

In this issue of *Community Connection*, we are pleased to share stories of growth, excellence, partnership and revitalization in the community. Students are blazing new trails,

cities are transforming, and people are giving their time, talents and treasure to make a difference every day! I am heartened to be in partnership with institutions across the region as we launched the St. Louis Anchor Action Network to leverage our hiring and purchasing to support a vibrant North County and St. Louis City. We look forward to seeing this network grow in the years ahead. I hope you enjoy these stories and we invite you to share the good news taking place in our community so that we can celebrate and be thankful together!

Gratefully forward,

Kristin Sobolik
Chancellor
University of Missouri–St. Louis



Stefani Weeden-Smith has been tapped to serve as the St. Louis Anchor Action Network's inaugural director.

UMSL playing leading role in St. Louis Anchor Action Network with goal of building inclusive prosperity

The St. Louis Anchor Action Network is bringing together institutions, businesses, community leaders, and other stakeholders to address racial, economic, and spatial inequities in the St. Louis region through focused efforts to increase employment, income, health and wealth building.

The idea for the network grew out of conversations among local institutional leaders that began in December 2019 and intensified in 2020 in the midst of growing inequities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued national reckoning with racial injustice.

The University of Missouri–St. Louis and Edward Jones are providing leadership and staffing for the network, whose founding members also include BJC HealthCare, Harris-Stowe State University, Mercy Health, St. Louis Community College, Saint Louis University, the Saint Louis Zoo, SSM Health, Washington University in St. Louis and Webster University.

"We are committed to building inclusive prosperity throughout St. Louis, and we are excited to continue to partner with other anchor institutions to work to eliminate the racial and economic inequality that has persisted for too long in our region," University of Missouri–St. Louis

Chancellor Kristin Sobolik said. All of these institutions have a shared commitment to working together to drive equitable wealth building and economic development that can benefit the entire region. [Read more.](#)



Long shelf life: Some shuttered St. Louis area grocery stores bag new users

St. Louis Post Dispatch, Steph Kukuljan, October 21, 2021

Years ago, neighbors came to this West Florissant Avenue shopping center for groceries. Soon, residents will come for child care, career advice, office space and even worship. Pastors Ken and Beverly Jenkins, through their Refuge and Restoration nonprofit, are repurposing this long vacant Schnucks, north of Chambers Road, into a new, \$16 million community center they're calling R&R Marketplace.

"We see this abandoned property every day," said Ken Jenkins, 56. "We always thought it would be a neat location." Grocery stores, like this one, which shuttered in 2006, have closed here and there over the years. But the 2018 closing of Shop 'n Save dumped dozens of empty stores, each averaging around 50,000 square feet of space, on the market. Most are still empty. But some have turned into discount grocers, health clinics, even a wine and cheese shop... R&R will offer job training for the trades and geospatial industry. They aim to open 100 preschool slots in the day care. They envision a banking center, event space, computer lab and coworking facilities. The Jenkinsees said they also want to move their church into the space.

[Read more.](#)



First-generation student Muriel Miller blazes trail, family tradition at UMSL

Despite still having a few more months of classes to wrap up before earning a bachelor of nursing degree, Muriel Miller has already started a family tradition. The eldest of seven children and a first-generation college student, she's leading the charge for her family's college education, inspiring her siblings to consider school and nursing careers.

"It's felt very good to help my little sister fill out applications, figure out FAFSA," the University of Missouri–St. Louis student said. "That was a really good feeling to know that I inspired her, and my other brothers and sisters all want to go to college, which was something they weren't even talking about before." Things have gone so well that even Miller's mother, who holds an associate degree in business administration, has begun considering more school.

"My mom has been talking herself out of going to college for forever," Miller said. "Like, 'No, I can't do this.' But now that she's seen me do it, she's like, 'OK, yeah, I think I can do this.'" [Read more](#) about this UMSL student and Normandy Schools alumna.



Former Wellston High School Site Returned to City, Part of Revitalization Plan

Students once filled the halls of the former Wellston High School, but the building, once owned by the Wellston School District, has sat empty for years. Now the Wellston community hopes to bring new life to the abandoned building after Normandy Schools Collaborative (NSC) announced the return of the building to the North St. Louis County community.

The Normandy Joint Executive Governing Board approved the donation of the former Wellston High School, located at 6321 Wells Ave., to the City of Wellston, one of 23 municipalities within Normandy's footprint. The acquisition is part of the Wellston Master plan, which looks to revitalize this North St. Louis County community.

Wellston Mayor Nathaniel Griffin has big plans for the property. He hopes the donation of the former school site will be used for affordable housing or as a senior living facility. Development of the property would contribute to his goal of boosting the local population. "I plan to increase the Wellston community by 1,000 to 1,500 people by next year. We currently have 200 homes being remodeled and rehabbed and we are attracting developers who would like to build mixed-use buildings on Martin Luther King Drive," said Griffin.



Pianos For People Brings Equity to Music Education in Ferguson

St. Louis County Community News, Wendy Todd, October 27, 2021

Pianos for People is reducing the obstacles to receiving music education by providing low-income families with free piano lessons and pianos. The organization, founded in 2012 by Tom and Jeanne Townsend, was created to make learning piano, a longstanding symbol of privilege, accessible to socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. "We want to break down barriers, so that students who have been historically excluded from these activities are able to receive quality music education as well," says Sherry Nelson, the organization's newly appointed advancement director.

The organization originally started with giving away pianos to those who couldn't afford to purchase one. So far, the nonprofit has distributed over 300 donated pianos to students. And in 2014, it expanded its mission and began offering lessons, imparting a deeper experience of engagement with music....The organization's attempt to promote equity in music is demonstrated through its decision to have a music center not only on Cherokee Street in South St. Louis but also in Ferguson. "Kids in Ferguson are often overlooked and assumed to take one path in life. We want to empower them through music and show them they deserve the same resources as students in West County," says Nelson. [Read more.](#)



A Normandy High School alumna with a lifelong love of reading, upon her death she donated \$59,000 to her alma mater for the school's library renovation



A Lasting Legacy

St. Louis County Community News, Wendy Todd, October 13, 2021

Sally Dobrunz, a Normandy High School alumna, passed away in September of 2020 from pancreatic cancer. Dobrunz was a lifelong learner who loved books (particularly science fiction), and upon her death she donated \$59,000 to her alma mater for the school's library renovation. She wanted students to have access to education and resources just as she did. [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

[Click here](#) to sign up for the community connection newsletter.

UMSL Community Card

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

UMSL Contracts

Interested in bidding on projects at UMSL?

[Procurement Bids](#)

[Construction Bids](#)

Community Connect

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

Events & Resources



Vaccine Clinics

Monday through Friday
8:30AM to 4:30PM
John C. Murphy Health Center
6121 N. Hanley Road
Berkeley, MO 63134

[Learn more](#) then make an appointments on the [Revive STL](#) website closer to the event date. This event is open to everyone.

Thursdays
1:00 to 7:00PM
Natural Bridge Library
7606 Natural Bridge Road

Appointments are not required to get a vaccine at the St. Louis County Library clinic, but people can set up appointments in advance at revivestl.com. Neither proof of residency in the county nor proof of health insurance is required.

**Crafted: Beethoven's 5th Symphony**

Friday, November 12

6:30PM

Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center

Participants can join the SLSO at the Touhill to craft their own casual happy hour after work and experience an inspiring hour-long concert. Music Director Stéphane Denève will share insights on the music before a stunning performance of Ludwig van Beethoven's fervent Fifth Symphony. Buy tickets [here](#).

**Nitro Joe Science Show for Tiny Tritons**

Saturday, November 13

10:00 to 11:00AM

UMSL Millennium Student Center - Pilot House

This family-friendly program geared towards children PreK-5th grade offers an impressive science experiment show with Nitro Joe. Balloons will explode, potions will change color, bubbles will flow, and creeping fog will cover the floor. Tiny Tritons will be more excited about science than ever! Register [here](#).

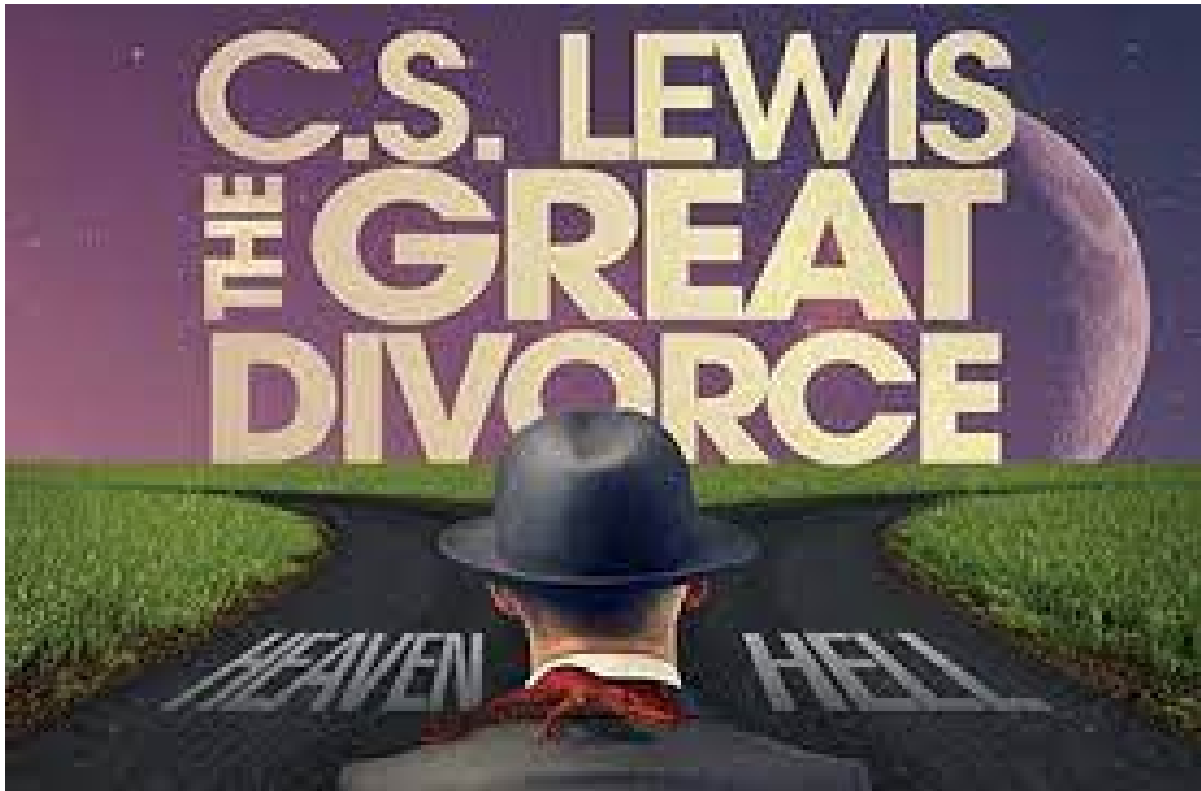
**St. Louis County Library****Art Club**

Wednesday, November 17

1:00 to 2:30PM

online

Participants can enjoy a creative challenge and share their work. Each week the theme will be announced at the start of the session. Participants will receive Zoom information immediately after registering. Register [here](#).



C. S. Lewis: The Great Divorce

Saturday, November 20

4:00PM

Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center

C.S. Lewis' mesmerizing fantasy about heaven, hell and the choice between them comes to life with Lewis' signature wit, amazing actors and dazzling, state-of-the-art stagecraft! Lewis' brilliantly drawn characters take a fantastical bus trip from hell to the outskirts of paradise. Each receives an opportunity to stay . . . or return to hell, forever divorced from heaven. The choice proves more challenging than imagined. Buy tickets [here](#).



The Nutcracker

Saturday and Sunday, November 27 and November 28 at 2:30PM and 7:00PM

Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center

A tradition for families throughout Saint Louis and beyond, Gen Horiuchi's Nutcracker captures the spirit of the holidays with the two-act spectacle originally choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, with a score by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (Op. 71). The libretto is adapted from E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King". Buy tickets [here](#).

**Candy Cane Fun Run**

Saturday, December 4, 2021

9:00AM

January-Wabash Memorial Park, Ferguson, MO

Holiday spirits will be high with plenty of participants dressed for the occasion with candy canes and other holiday treats for all at the finish line. Costumes and holiday cheer strongly encouraged! The Candy Cane Fun Run is a 1-Mile, untimed run (not a race) for all ages and abilities. Click [here](#) for more information

**Holiday Flea Market**

Saturday, December 4

10AM to 4:00PM

St. Vincent Community Center

Participants can take the opportunity to get rid of unwanted clutter as a vendor and sell crafts, antiques, trinkets and specialty items or do some bargaining Christmas shopping. Advance registration is required as limited space is available. For more information or to register, call (314) 615-8788.



Ferguson Winter Palooza

Saturday, December 4, 2021 at 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM
January-Wabash Memorial Park, Ferguson, MO

Join this all new FREE festival celebrating all things winter holidays! The festival will feature: Elsa's Castle, Photos with Santa, Holiday Shopping, Inflatables, Entertainment, & More!



Ferguson Farmer's Winter Market

Every third Saturday
November to April
9:00AM to Noon
St. Stephen's Episcopal

33 N. Clay, Ferguson MO

Shop and go with plenty of favorite vendors! Produce, meat, eggs, hot breakfast, coffee, tea, fresh baked bread, holiday shopping and more! Good Shepherd Arts will continue to provide children's activities and sponsor local artists during the winter market season, too. Mask required. Market will be outside in the parking lot this year.

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

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