



All Hands On Deck!

Mayor Emeka Jackson-Hicks
Shares Her Vision For Our City

PLUS

Q&A with Senator
"Dick" Durbin

and Wisdom from
Ambassador
Donald McHenry



The Katherine Dunham Museum

Take a global journey through our website, www.kdcah.org, to explore more about Miss Dunham's legacy, the museum, dance seminars, children's workshop, membership/giving opportunities, group/private tours, and more.

1005 Pennsylvania Avenue East St Louis, IL 62201 618-795-5970

Operating hours are currently by appointment contact Leverne Backstrom at lbackstrom1947@yahoo.com.

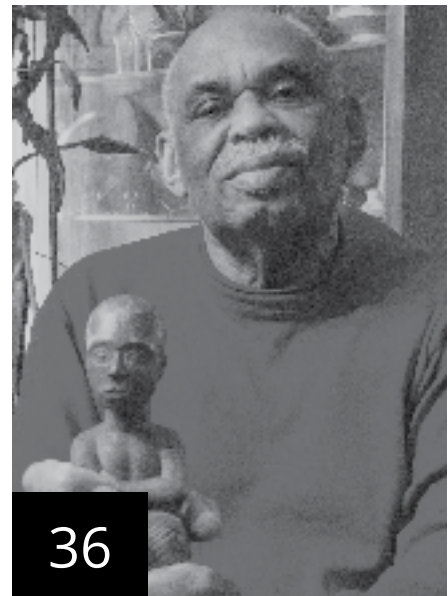
Artist Author Activist Producer Educator Movie Star Anthropologist Choreographer Legendary Dancer



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FEATURED PUBLIC SERVANTS
MAYOR HICKS, SENATOR DURBIN,
AND AMBASSADOR MCHENRY

Mayor Hicks

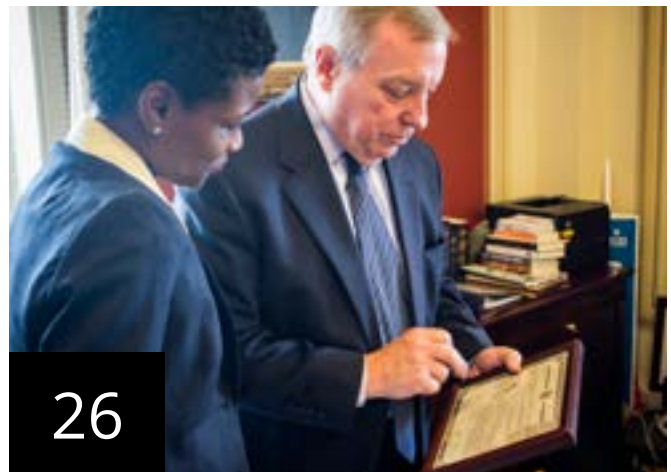
Mayor Hicks is our cover story. I chose her because she is passionate about the potential of East St. Louis through economic development and the community's involvement; and her commitment to serving her constituents with transparency, accountability and implementation. Her advice to those seeking to follow in her footsteps: (1) pray (her favorite scripture – Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”); and (2) be passionate about what it is you are doing.

Senator Durbin

This was the very first interview for the magazine and I was excited to be in the Capitol. Making small-talk after the interview, Senator Durbin asked if I was an East Side Flyer or Lincoln Tiger [I am a Tiger], then reminisced about games between Lincoln and Assumption, and how Assumption would occasionally win in football, but never in basketball! I have to give kudos to Senator Durbin's staff (especially Maria and Berto); they were amazingly accommodating...scheduling an interview with an unknown magazine, providing logistics information for the interview, and arranging a Capitol tour following the interview. Salute!

Ambassador McHenry

We went to Ambassador McHenry's home anticipating an interview and photo shoot with this great American that would last about an hour; we left his home 4 hours later! The elder statesman answered the door and introduced himself as “Don McHenry”. He had recently returned from the gym. He said he is in pretty good shape, but “a little stiff” on that day. Ambassador McHenry looks amazingly fit and dapper. He led us to his stately library, where he captivated us with diplomatic adventures that bring a strong longing for his forthcoming memoirs. I'm excited to feature him, as we have many East St. Louisans who are not familiar with the legacy of Don McHenry.





NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH'S

2020 VISION

WITH GOD'S HELP WE WILL DO THE FOLLOWING BY THE YEAR 2020



- 1) SERVE **20,000+** PEOPLE THROUGH THE JOB TRAINING, FOOD BANK, HEALTH EDUCATION, WELLNESS INITIATIVES, CRIME REHABILITATION, AND FINANCIAL SERVICE OFFERINGS WITHIN THE EAST ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY LIFE LINE CENTER;
- 2) CREATE AND SECURE **250+** NEW JOBS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT THAT SUPPORT THE BUILDING OF STRONG FAMILIES (CREATE NEW BUSINESS IN NEED OF EMPLOYEES; CREATE A PIPELINE FEEDER SYSTEM WITH CORPORATIONS AND SMALL BUSINESSES TO SECURE VIABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES;
- 3) OPEN A DAYCARE CENTER TO SERVE **500+** FAMILIES WHO SEEK TO PREPARE THEIR CHILDREN FOR THE PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN EXPERIENCE;
- 4) PROVIDE MENTORING, TUTORING, AND LIFE SKILL TRAINING FOR **500+** ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO ENSURE THEIR SUCCESSFUL ADVANCEMENT AND PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE;
- 5) OPEN A STAND-ALONE YOUTH CENTER DEDICATED TO THEIR GROWTH, PLAY, FELLOWSHIP, AND WELL-BEING IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT;
- 6) ENGAGE **500+** SENIORS TO RECEIVE VIABLE LEGAL, HEALTH, AND CAREGIVER INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE AND PREPARATION FOR BETTER LIVING;

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

All hands on deck! I love the title of Mayor Hicks' story! First, it is a Navy term, and I am forever a Sailor. Second, and more importantly, it is a perfect call to immediate action. "All hands on deck" calls on citizens, students, clergy, service providers, non-profits, businesses, city employees, elected officials, and the East St. Louis diaspora spread across the planet, to bring our collective gifts to the fight to move our city forward, to a place we can all be proud to live, work, and play.

You can expect my support to the "all hands on deck" call to action through the pages of *I Am East St. Louis, The Magazine*. The magazine is about improving the brand and image of East St. Louis. It will spotlight well-known and little-known East St. Louisans who make us proud. It will celebrate the city's status as the birthplace of brilliant scholars; esteemed professionals; decorated military leaders; award-winning musicians; world-class athletes; gifted artists, authors and poets; entertainment icons; successful entrepreneurs; and amazing public servants, some who have reached the highest levels in their respective career fields. It will also reveal our culture of creativity, uniqueness, originality, and true grit.

The theme for this issue is *Public Servants*. Quite honestly, I chose this theme for the first issue because I wanted to feature Ambassador Donald McHenry in my very first issue. I figured, if I land an interview with Ambassador McHenry, it will lend credibility to my movement, and others would want to grace the pages of my magazine. He and Dr. Gloria Bozeman-Herndon (another great East St. Louisan who will be featured in a later issue), invited us into their respective Washington, D.C.-area homes and treated us with East St. Louis style-hospitality. I will forever be grateful to Ambassador McHenry for being the first to agree to an interview for an unknown concept of a publication, and for being so welcoming and warm.

We have plenty opportunities for you to participate in shaping content for future issues. Visit our website, www.iamestl.com, to interact with the magazine and provide input.

Finally, this is (say it with me) "our" magazine; but it is "my" new baby! My children are both adults now, but this is my new baby and I am as sensitive about it as I was with the birth of Charay and Lorenzo. I welcome your feedback; but as with my other babies, be mindful that this one will also become more attractive, more interesting, more humorous, and more engaging as time goes by.

Enjoy!

Charmaine

Charmaine Savage
Publisher/Editor in Chief

Tell me what you think of the magazine at lovenotes@iamestl.com.





Story Tellers

“Minister B.”

Morgan Thomas

is a philanthropist and world-traveled musician and actor. He is a saxophonist and keyboardist who has shared the stage with well-known musicians from Miles Davis to Jah Rule. Minister B., AKA B-Train, spends his time in ministry and workshop facilitation, and performing throughout the Midwest.



Cindy Lyles

Or Just Cindy when she hits the stage - is a scholar, poet, singer, and proud East St. Louis native. Cindy is currently pursuing doctoral studies. One of her life goals: help rebuild the City of Champions.



L.M.L Aya

Lindsey is an anthropologist focusing on human ecology, the study of people and the social and environmental elements with which we interact. She is co-founder of Aya Grows, a nonprofit dedicated to transforming vacant lots into Multipurpose Urban Green Spaces. She loves writing poetry, practicing yoga, and exploring nature.



Delano Brooks

Delano discovered his talent and passion for poetry, and fell in love with the art. He creates commissioned pieces of work for all occasions and topics. Most importantly, he is a God-fearing man!



Stephen Bennett

Stephen is an up and coming photographer in the Metro East area. He is founder of Visual Dope Media Company. Visual Dope Media brings the latest in entertainment, photography, music, art, and media.



Linda Lawson

Linda writes for the St. Louis Post Dispatch and East St. Louis Monitor. Her freelance writing has landed in Black Enterprise, Black Elegance and Upscale Magazines. Linda heads Angel Helper, addressing the needs of individuals in the community. Linda holds a Bachelors in Broadcast Journalism from Howard University.



Beauty Through Ashes

A Love Letter to East St. Louis

 by Just Cindy

If only for a moment in time
I want my voice to become your voice
My hope to become your hope
In hopes of us seeing eye to eye
As I pour out my heart into your hands.
Will you hold it?

For so long
We've been quiet and stifled by insults
Stifled by self-inflicted hurt
To the point of no return
As outsiders turn and look
They look and turn
And point and talk.

All we do
Is suck it up and walk
Away as if they're justified
In hurling "East Side"
Stereotypes and slandering words.

What else would we expect
With such jaded eyes, my dear loves?
All they can see are echoes of mess
Which ripple effects
To every close-minded person they know
With nothing better to do
Than make us nothing more than less.

But I stand in the gap for us
With words that dare not demolish
But words that bless.

The world may give us a reputation
That makes us feel low rent and low rate
When we really ain't
But it's okay.

Because I'm probing below the surface
Below the rough
Beyond the dirt to find the real stuff.
Behold, I've captured the content of our true character!

I see that when fear knocks at the door, faith answers.
I see that when we fall, we rejoice in getting back up.
In our times of need, pulling together isn't an option,
It's a must.

I see our glorious history
That tells tales of turmoil
At Woolworth's counters
On Collinsville Avenue.

And I too can see our friendly battles
Between E. Side Flyers and Lincoln Tigers
Back when they were two different schools.

I even remember hearing about
How our face shined when told
"You're an All-American city!"
In 1959.

I remember those glory days
And I can see how
You think our then
Is better than our now.

But, know that our humble now
Is only preparing us for a triumphant return
Be confident in that
Sooner or later
The rest of the world will learn.

Yes, I know we've been beaten down,
Broken down, pulled down, slowed down,
Talked down, and shot down so much.

But that's why I write these words,
To dust us off,
Pick us up.
For there's an abundance of beauty
Found through our ashes.

I write these words
To help us holdfast.
I write to give us hope,
A voice.

I write to give us freedom
To be proud of exactly who we are
And stand strong in where we're from!

Pump your fist in the air
If you know enough is enough!
This is our day.
East Saint, stand up!

Be courageous!
Be strong!
Dance a new dance
And sang a new song!

And if anybody tries
To put our newfound confidence to the test,
Be humble and ever so kindly remind them
The sun always rises in the East
Before it can set in the West.

©2015 by Cindy Lyles



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I AM EAST ST. LOUIS

A Dedication to the Launch of
“I Am East St. Louis, The Magazine”

by **Delano Brooks**

East St Louis,
City that’s instrumental.
City of champions,
City with much potential.

City of educators, athletes,
A few good politicians.
Home of Mile Davis,
The greatest jazz musician.
A city of good people.
A city of survival.

Here’s a little history,
About our high school rivals.

When it came to football,
East Side #1 in that sport.
When in it came to basketball,
Lincoln was kings of the court.

One thing we can agree on,
No matter how you feel.
Dawn Harper, Al and Jackie,
Know about track and field.

There’s much more to our city,
Haven’t touched the scene.

This is the first edition,
I AM EAST ST LOUIS, THE MAGAZINE!!!

Ask David



Dear David,

I seem to find myself frustrated with my husband quite often. It is usually nothing major, but I tend to be quick to anger which leads to arguments. I value my marriage, but fear if this is not resolved, we may end in divorce, or a life of misery! Please help!

- Angry Wife

Dear Angry Wife,

I will get right to the point. What's really bothering you? It's not your husband. Let me be more specific. We are all responsible for our own emotional experience. There is something deeper going on. Before we get into that, let's take a look at some questions that you can ask yourself when you find yourself in these situations.

Why am I angry? What is he doing that is bothering me? What do I expect him to do? Frustration occurs when our expectations are not being met in life, situations, and relationships. In regards to relationships, it has to do with our needs, wants and desires. So, another question is "What do I need, and is my husband able to give it to me?" After you have asked yourself that question, ask this one: "Did I communicate my need/want/desire to my husband?" This last question is very important. Because, if we don't speak up about our needs, we can't get them met. Often, these needs are not the responsibility of anyone else. They are something we can provide for ourselves, such as validation, comfort and (Are you ready for this one?) love. Ideally, we look inside ourselves to meet these needs. Many of us do so by connecting with our Divine Source (God, The Universe, Nature, Higher Self, etc.) through prayer, meditation, creative practice, or even play. When we are connected to our Self, we can connect with others.

That being said, I sense that there is something deeper going on here. Something is bothering you and it needs to be spoken. You have the perfect opportunity to foster closeness in your marriage by opening up to your husband about your feelings. Once we start asking questions and talking about how we feel, somehow the answers come. The key is not really about knowing the answers, but rather asking the right questions. So, the next time you find yourself frustrated with your husband, instead of arguing, pause and tell him how you feel. Ask him to listen to you without comment, at first. Sometimes, we men feel we need to "fix things" when we really just need to listen. This can help to open up a dialogue that will really get the intimacy flowing, because you aren't alone in this situation and the source of your discord within yourself will become clear. When we speak our truth, it can liberate us from our suffering. The truth really does set you free, but you must first speak it. May you find the peace you seek within yourself, solace in your husband's arms, and strength in your faith.



David Perry is a certified life coach who focuses his gifts and skills on helping the world heal one soul at a time. Send your relationship questions to David at AskDavid@iamestl.com.

Your HEALTH MATTERS



6 Tips for Better Mental Health in the New Year

BY KELECHI LOYND

Mental illness is a condition that affects all of us, whether it's a family member, a friend or even ourselves. But it's something we rarely talk about, especially in the African-American community. Too many people think mental illness is a sign of weakness or failure instead of the biological illness it is.

This year, let's resolve to open our minds about mental illness and open our hearts to those who are living with it. And just as important, to take care of ourselves to protect our well-being throughout 2016 and beyond.

With just a few simple steps, you can take control of the stress in your life and better manage any symptoms you may have.

1. Get moving! Exercise releases endorphins that are crucial for overall happiness and stress reduction. Added bonus – if you take a walk outside, Vitamin D from the sun can help lower your risk of depression symptoms.
2. Watch what you eat. Healthy foods serve up the nutrients we need to stabilize our moods and improve brain health. Be sure to incorporate leafy greens, whole grains and lean proteins into your meals.
3. Put down the vices. Alcohol, smoking and drugs have a direct correlation with depression and other mental health conditions. If you need help quitting, contact your healthcare provider for resources or support groups in your community.
4. Get your rest. Sleep deprivation can quickly send feelings of anger or sadness spiraling out of control. Try to get 7 to 9 hours of shut eye each night.
5. Focus on what makes you happy. Whether it's spiritual enlightenment, your family or your job, celebrate your reason for getting out of bed each day.
6. Seek care when needed. Currently, only 41% of adults suffering from a mental issue ever seek care. If you're experiencing overwhelming feelings of anxiety, depression or stress, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Living a healthy lifestyle is not only important for our physical health, but for our mental well-being as well. For more information on improving your mental health, visit MentalHealth.gov.



Dr. Kelechi Loynd is a board-certified psychiatrist with the Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation staff at Mother & Child Center and Touchette Regional Hospital in Centreville, Ill. She specializes in a variety of behavioral health issues with a special focus on autism and ADHD.

ILLINOISTOWN

EAST ST. LOUIS: A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

BY **L.M.L. Aya**

The character and culture of a city are shaped by numerous variables, many of which fall into two categories: geographical and historical. That being said, the outstandingly rich character and vibrant culture of East St. Louis should come as no surprise given our coveted location and captivating history. The strong and stunning Mississippi River made East St. Louis an ideal location for human settlement thousands of years ago, and history took care of the rest.

Before we could call East St. Louis home another group of people, the great Cahokian civilization, occupied the land spanning through East St. Louis and neighboring communities. Archeologists explain that the city of Cahokia was grander than London in 1250 A.D. and it is recognized by scholars as one of the greatest cities in history. Early European immigrants partnered with Cahokia's residents, only to betray them, laying claim to indigenous soil. All that we have left from the once great city are the striking mounds scattering our topography.

From the very beginning, the story of East St. Louis has been both tragic and extraordinary.

Early European settlements were washed away by the wild and mighty Mississippi, particularly those built too close to the ever-changing shore lines. By 1797, Piggott's Ferry bridged the gap between what would soon be known as Illinoistown and the bustling city of St. Louis. Illinoistown was officially incorporated in 1859; however, by 1861 the name was changed to East St. Louis. Then, in 1874, the Eads Bridge opened, adding a whole new dimension of connection to the proud river cities.

The convenience of rail roads, bridges, and the ever-flowing river invited a flourishing industrial base

to this region of the country; additionally, restricted business laws in St. Louis made East St. Louis a prime locality for factories. Although job increases benefitted the city, industry left a legacy of pollution and corruption. Crooked public officials also left a scar on the city. U. S. District Judge Michael Reagan stated in a recent historical account, "Corruption within City Hall became the norm in the form of bribes or kickbacks, or simply public officials embezzling from city resources."

Yet, most residents were simply trying to earn an honest living. By the beginning of the 1900's, East St. Louis had a successful and highly skilled African American community, contributing greatly to the development of its vibrant culture. St. Louis blue laws meant that clubs and restaurants had to close by 1:00 AM, even though the party continued just across the river. The impressive night life and music



scene East St. Louis offered attracted celebrated musicians, infamous gangsters, prominent public figures, and more.

East St. Louis was the place to be. Nonetheless, social stressors and a culture of racial discrimination led to fearful European-American residents believing that their highly skilled African-American neighbors would take their jobs. Corporate agitators exasperated tensions, reminding white union members that they were easily replaced with blacks migrating north, seeking employment. The pot was boiling- only time could tell what would happen next.

to be continued in the next issue

EAST BOOGIE GROOVE

BY **Minister B. Morgan Thomas**

PHOTO BY **TINA BENARD OF TINA B PHOTOS**

A Word from Min. B: I have the distinct pleasure of writing this recurring entertainment column for *I Am East St. Louis, The Magazine*. Being a musician gives me the unique posture of familiarity with not only the music, but also the people.

My desire is to give readers a personal experience with our featured artists. We will follow the careers of our local musicians, actors, dancers, rappers, and spoken word and visual artists, as well as those who have taken their talents across the globe. I look forward to establishing a long lasting rapport with you by rendering “dead on” reviews and “pinpoint” suggestions on where to be and who to see to support our homegrown talent. Let’s get this “B” Train rolling!

If you didn’t see Andre’ Delano on November 8th at Four Points Sheraton in Fairview Heights, Illinois, you made a grave error in planning your calendar!

The East St. Louis native and international superstar wowed the crowd and did not disappoint in any respect (especially with the ladies). It was an elegant event that won’t be soon forgotten. The pride of our city displays a command of the stage and confidence in his musicianship that is a mark of long-term success. Andre’ Delano is making a huge footprint in the entertainment world. The East St. Louis Lincoln Sr. High School alumnus has a growing body of work that is catapulting him into the stratosphere of extraordinary saxophonists, and vocalists as well. Andre’ has performed and recorded with icons like Maxwell, Miles Davis, Cameo, and Kenny “Babyface” Edmonds. He has achieved critical acclaim for his solo recording efforts, including his release of “Full Circle”. This recording is a smooth jazz must-have. A master chef mix of chops, sensuality, and East Boogie Soul. Wherever it’s played, it will get the all too familiar refrain, “Who is that?”

Mr. Delano, despite a grueling tour schedule, makes amendments to his calendar to return to East St. Louis more times than should be expected. This is a testament of his commitment to extending the legacy that is EAST BOOGIE GROOVE!!! Following in a tradition that has gifted the world with some of its most talented entertainers and athletes, Andre’ has dedicated himself to not only his personal success, but also to being a model to our youth and anyone else with seemingly unattainable dreams and goals. Despite touring and recording a new CD, Andre’ found some personal time to talk with Min. B and *I Am East St. Louis, The Magazine*:

Min. B: Wassup Dre’?

Andre’ Delano: Wassup B? I’m glad you called me directly B. I’m on my way home but whatchu got?

Min. B: Let’s go straight in Andre’. Who are the most influential people in your life, musicians or otherwise?

AD: Brother that’s tough, there’s a list. O.K. Top 5. Ron Carter, Mike Bobbitt, Sonny Stitt, and of course, Ethel and Harry Robeson [his parents].

Min. B: What was the most annoying stumbling block in your ascension?

AD: Not believing in myself and believing the confirmations of those people who fed my insecurities. That was a big hurdle for a time.

Min. B: Andre’, what advice would you impart to aspiring musicians or anyone else with lofty goals from East St. Louis?

AD: You can’t quit! No matter what! Look past what you see right now! We become discouraged when we can’t see it RIGHT NOW! We cannot BECOME if we quit.

Min. B: I have one more question that I think our readers are anxious to hear the answer to. Name your most gratifying musical experience Dre’.

AD: When I can zone out and forget the arena and return to the practice room at the L. [East St. Louis Lincoln Sr. High School, FYI]. It’s spiritual B., you know exactly what I mean.



THE ART OF PERSEVERANCE

BY **Remy Joh** PHOTOS BY **Stephen Bennett**

In unexpected ways, life teaches you to appreciate its challenges when you least expect it. Through immature eyesight, you could miss the greater things, chasing something or someone that isn't meant for you. With so much debris in your eyes, it's hard to see life through clear vision.

In 2005, my mother relocated my siblings and me from our hometown of Alton, Illinois to N. 75th Street in East Saint Louis. My hometown friends would often tell me that I was living in the worst place of all Illinois. I never paid much attention to all the scandalous myths and rumors they were told.

Outside of my passion to play sports, I ran with my crowd of misfits fueled by art, music, trends, and cars. Whenever I could get away from the house I'd meet up with my friends at the Metro Link where we'd ride to Central West End, The Arch and The Civic Center area of St. Louis.



WHEN LIFE TOOK ME FOR A SPIN

During the summer of my 7th grade year, life took me for a spin; I was sexually abused by my mother's boyfriend. I kept it from her for a year and decided to open up after a night of contemplating suicide. My mother denied it, claiming that I was upset that I couldn't hang with my boyfriend. From that moment forward, I had deep-rooted feelings that she despised me. She and her boyfriend never separated. After this ruined relationship, I experienced a continuous pattern of failed relationships.

In 2007, I became a mother. By 2008, my sophomore year at East Saint Louis Sr. High School, I dropped out and moved out of my mother's house. I took my daughter and moved back to Alton, where I stayed with my boyfriend.

By 2010, I separated from my boyfriend. I was accomplishing nothing - not my diploma, or GED, or even a job. Finding employment was never as easy as adults would say. At age 18, I found myself dancing at a strip club. I chased the streets (I certainly didn't feel like I was earning a living). After three months, I walked away in time to save my dignity.

Soon after, I began to lose other things like my car and friendships, and I started drinking. I'd have dreams of suicide, rape and death. I reached out to my mother and she suggested I come stay with her until I got on my feet. I obliged. After 3 weeks, I went back to Alton to visit a friend. By the second day, I

Three years into my transition as a paraplegic, so much of my mind had changed. I still lived in East Saint Louis. I knew I'd matured because I no longer felt certain situations deserved my reaction.



I AM THE ARTIST

agreed to move in with my friend.

By the fourth day, I was back to drinking. Then on the sixth day, it all came tumbling down. On May 29, 2010, my friend and I took off to a graduation party where a fight turned into a shoot-out. In a crowd of about 200, I was hit twice and left with a bullet in my spinal cord and right foot. I was diagnosed a T10 complete paraplegic. Physical and occupational therapy kept my hopes up and my mind at ease during the first four weeks. I felt that this new transition would be a breeze after seeing two other paraplegics riding around and sharing their stories. It wasn't until I was released to go home when reality sank in. I cried my heart out!

Three years into my transition as a paraplegic, so much of my mind had changed. I still lived in East Saint Louis. I knew I'd matured because I no longer felt certain situations deserved my reaction. I focused on trying to de-isolate myself from the four walls of my house. Wanting to pursue my GED, I enrolled in Southwestern

Illinois College's Adult Continuing Education course. I met with my instructor and found out she was my cousin on my father's side. Just her presence reminded me that my disability would only push me toward the things I once saw as intangible.

In 2012, I caught the bus for the first time since my injury. On the bus I wrote a prayer about wanting to heal all the areas of my past so that I would be at better terms with myself and how I loved others. I shared this with my instructor/cousin; she complimented me on my writing and potential, and recommended I keep writing. Then, she shared two books with me: "Write It Down, Make It Happen" by Henriette Klauser and "One Day My Soul Just Opened Up" by Iyanla Vanzant.

I took Iyanla's book and applied it to my daily regime. I found the book to resonate so well with me considering the fact that naturally I have always been one to revisit the root of whatever is challenging in my life, then find my way to the top with a better

understanding. I decided to study universal spiritual law principles; focusing on honoring myself, honoring my transition, honoring my feelings, and more.

I guess now you can say all the energy I have put out in grounding myself in love and being transparent to others, has pushed me into finding my own purpose in radiating in the lives of others. At the age of 22, I started sharing my practices, tips and resources to help women create healthy lifestyles, incorporate holistic parenting approaches, and experience natural childbirth from a wheelchair. I started advocating for women living with spinal cord injuries, mentoring and educating their families about independent living. Now, at 24, I am launching my own business – Radiant Remy H.M.E (Handmade Essentials). It's a coalition of organic hair and body butters, and oral hygiene products made from essential oils.

As time unravels, I am the Artist and this is how I am crafting my reality.



East Side Aligned

THE VILLAGE

COMING TOGETHER FOR OUR KIDS

East Side Aligned is Shifting How We Do Business

BY **Nicole Plegge and Evan Krauss** PHOTOS BY **Stephen Bennett**

Like many East St. Louis moms, KeKeisha Beasley saw promise in her city, but was disappointed by promises left unfulfilled over the years. She wanted her six children to have every opportunity possible despite all the obstacles put in their way.

“It’s not just the major issues in East St. Louis, like the lack of employment and the crime rate, that affect families,” she said. “It’s the little issues as well. We need things like safe parks, more rec centers and even dance classes that give our kids opportunities to grow and excel.”

Beasley became involved in Community Organizing & Family Issues (COFI), which trains parents to be powerful leaders. Because of her volunteerism with COFI, she was connected with a diverse group of more than 100 educational, business, healthcare, nonprofit, and faith-based leaders from across the region who share the same hope for their children. Together, through East Side Aligned, these participants are uniting to change the trajectory of an entire generation and the future of East St. Louis.

THE FIVE PIECES OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

THE EAST SIDE ALIGNED DIFFERENCE

East Side Aligned (ESA) isn’t an organization or a program. It’s the name of the Collective Impact process currently underway throughout the East St. Louis area. Collective Impact links together people, organizations and systems to address critical issues affecting our young people. The Collective Impact approach understands that no single organization can create large scale, lasting social change alone. Lasting change is born and bred only when organizations coordinate their efforts around clearly defined goals.

For residents of East St. Louis, it sounds like a story they’ve heard before. But Edmond Brown, President/CEO of ELB Enterprises and an ESA executive committee member, insists this effort is different. “We could have brought the smartest people in the region together in one room and come up with a plan for change in a month,” he explained. “Instead, ESA is about more than creating a document – it’s focused on developing relationships between people of all walks of life, building trust, and coming up with a shared vision that can be put into action. Agencies can learn from each other about what works and what doesn’t. Without a shared interest, trust and strong relationships, no plan can go anywhere.”

Common Agenda | All participants have a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it.

Shared Measurement Systems | Data is collected and measured based on indicators across all organizations to ensure efforts are aligned. It also enables participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other’s successes and failures.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities | Diverse stakeholders work together, but not on the same thing. Instead, each participant focuses on the activity at which it excels and is coordinated with the actions of others.

Continuous Communication | To develop trust, participants need several years of regular interactions to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts.

Backbone Supports | Dedicated staff with a specific set of skills serve as the backbone to facilitate the initiative.

East Side Aligned is beyond a plan. It's about trust, lasting commitment, bold action and shared accountability.

TACKLING THE ISSUES TOGETHER

In late 2012, a number of local nonprofit leaders met to honestly discuss how well they were serving children and youth in the community.

They acknowledged that while they'd positively impacted the lives of many kids within the last two decades, community-wide outcomes were not changing. In some cases, they were getting worse.

In addition, as state funding for these social services began to decline, the urgency to work more collaboratively grew to maximize resources and find new funding opportunities.

At the same time, East St. Louis School District 189 started to explore new ways to build partnerships and leverage community resources they were unable to provide to their students.

Determined "not to allow a child's zip code to determine his or her destiny," District 189 invited diverse stakeholders to discuss developing a more coordinated system to meet the overwhelming needs of students and their families.

Leaders from all walks of life – business owners, neighborhood association leaders, clergy, and even students – were pulled in with District 189 and the nonprofits to rally behind a common agenda. An agenda that focused on creating conditions to equip every child for success in school, work and life.

Since 2013, ESA has continuously evolved and engaged participants in work sessions to learn from one another, collaborate on projects, and put what they've learned into action at their own organizations.

For Beasley, the difference of ESA was obvious from day one.

"These are organizations that already exist and are already making a difference. But by coming together as one – they become that much more powerful. They're sharing data, exchanging information, and letting people in the community know what's accessible to them. Since my time here, I've learned about programs available to my own family, and I want to share these with everyone I know."

In addition, ESA has been able to engage youth in East St. Louis, inviting hundreds of students into its goal-setting process and training over 30 youth to facilitate community forums.

Fifteen-year-old Montez Holton, a sophomore at East St. Louis Senior High School, has built crucial leadership and civic engagement skills as a vice chair on the ESA executive committee. After witnessing the impact of violence and drugs on his school, ESA has empowered him to help fuel change in his city.

"I'm helping bring more youth to the process by assuring and showing them how their voice matters and how they can make the change they want to see

in our community. Most of the students I've encountered feel really excited about it. I feel what ESA does is going to stick and benefit the region because they're empowering the youth. Kids are the heart of any community."

THE GOALS FOR CHANGE

The tactics of the organizations participating in ESA are diverse, but are all focused on one common goal – to ensure children and youth in the Greater East St. Louis community are supported – physically, intellectually, emotionally – and ready for success in school, work and life. From a community standpoint, this ranges from encouraging new busi-

MISSION

East Side Aligned works to align policy, practice and investment across sectors to improve outcomes for young people

2025 GOAL

All children and youth within Greater East St. Louis will be:

- Healthy & Safe in their Environments
- Socially Connected & Emotionally Secure
- Successful in School, College & Work
- Positively Engaged in their Community

CORE VALUES

Cultivate Trust. Persist together.
Empower Everyone. Apply all our strengths.
Pursue Understanding. Know the what and how.
Facilitate Change. Be and do better.

BACKBONE SUPPORT

United Way of Greater St. Louis.



ness development to improving transportation access in the region. Child-wise, strategies include making students feel safer, improving access to healthy food, and creating a stronger college and career pathways system.

Already, with relationships built through the ESA process, District

collaborative of out-of-school-time agencies, received a \$500,000 grant in December 2014 to increase the number of kids served, improve quality, and coordinate programs between agencies. That means more children will have access to recreational activities, academic support, and opportuni-

into Kindergarten.

A FOCUS ON A BRIGHTER FUTURE

For Beasley, seeing the opportunities grow for her own kids since her time with ESA has made her excited about the future of her city. "This city has been segmented for too long. It's hard



189 has been linking local businesses with its students through East Side Works to provide work-based learning opportunities and mentoring to be sure teens are ready for postsecondary education and work. The program has been selected to receive technical assistance, capacity building and funding through the Illinois 60 by 2025 Network.

In addition, through their dedication to the Collective Impact approach, the Greater East St. Louis Youth Coordinating Council, a

ties to lead after school and in the summer!

Collective Impact approaches have also taken root in the early learning space. Through the Greater East St. Louis Early Learning Partnership and Innovation Zone, several early learning programs improved their quality and received a Gold Award of Excellence from ExeRate Illinois. They have also significantly increased the number of kids receiving developmental screenings to best support their transition

to convince people to get behind something new after they've been let down for so long. While it's a struggle at first, this is such a good thing for our city. Everybody is on the same page today. I can't explain how thrilled I am to be part of this – it's just amazing!"

East Side Aligned is beyond a plan. It's about trust, lasting commitment, bold action and shared accountability.

To learn more about ESA or how you can get involved, visit www.eastsidealigned.org. Evan Krauss is the director of East Aligned, reach him at 844.372.2025 or Evan.Krauss@stl.unitedway.org.

East St Louis Senior High School Students Share Their Artwork with The World!

SUBMITTED BY **Kim Jaoko**, East St. Louis Sr. High School Art Teacher

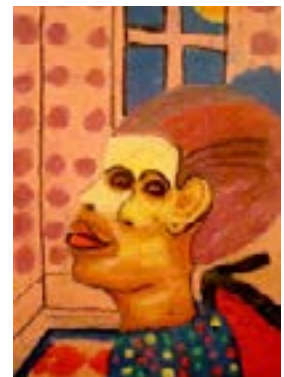
Move Over Famous Artists! East St Louis Senior High School artists are taking over the spotlight! Kim Jaoko, the school's Art Teacher, has teamed up with Artsonia -- the world's largest online kid's art museum -- to display the students' artwork.

Anyone can view the school gallery online at www.artsonia.com/schools/EastLouisSenior1. Visitors can browse the artwork in the school gallery by grade level, or by specific exhibits.

East St Louis Senior High School students join thousands of students from over 130 countries whose artwork is showcased on Artsonia. "This program is a wonderful way to get parents and family members more involved in Art Education," said Kim Jaoko.

All of Artsonia's artwork (35 million and counting!) are viewable online, and any teacher or parent can create an online art gallery for their child or school. Artsonia provides several online features such as fan clubs and personal guestbooks, as a way for families to encourage the creativity and imaginations of their young artists. In addition, Artsonia visitors can purchase keepsakes imprinted with the students' artwork; with 20% of each item purchased from the East St Louis Senior High School's gallery donated to the school to support their arts program.

Headquartered in Gurnee, Illinois, Artsonia was established in 2000 as an online kid's art museum providing free educational resources for kids, families and schools to create art projects. Since its inception, Artsonia continues to integrate technology in the classroom, develop multi-cultural understanding through art, and increase family involvement in children's education. To find out more, submit your recommendations to www.artsonia.com.



Student Poetry

The voices of East St. Louis Sr. High School art students on the sensitive topics of bullying, self-esteem and sexual responsibility are expressed in here in the poetry. The students were challenged to create artistic projects for the Walgreens Expressions Challenge. At its core, the Expressions Challenge is about guiding students to make better life choices about their overall health and well-being. By combining artistic expression with individual student research, Expressions empowers students to positively influence their classmates, school and community.

The Resilient Attitude

School where so many of us tend to hide, surrounded by ego-centric teens who love to connive
 Standing by watching as our mental states are being swatted
 at like insignificant flies
 Never did I contemplate or consider asking the simplest question "Why?"
 Why should I be classified as unimportant or inferior?
 Who are they to classify me?
 After answering these questions,
 I finally found my place
 I don't fit their standards
 Standards that laughter only occurs when in spite of another
 Where instead of lending a helping hand, they would rather
 throw a fatal blow
 Discouraged to stand out,
 More interested in blending in
 Where did all our self-esteem go?
 It's ironic how we form poses to keep from having our self-esteem low
 When the prefix of self-esteem is self
 Self meaning: a person's essential being that distinguishes them from another
 So when being discouraged by others I rebuttal
 So what if I don't fit in, me and you are two different people
 Raised and nurtured by divergent mothers, with disparate eyes to see through
 You know not of the struggle I live through, nor the journey I've trekked through
 Therefore your words build on to my resilience.

BY FENANDEZ MOSLEY

Senior at East St. Louis Senior High School

Love Yourself

You try to love
 But can you love someone when you don't love yourself?
 Once out done and alone
 You look for love in return
 Do you know love?
 Or are you fooled by your perception of love?
 Your mind knows love but not true love
 Because true love starts within yourself

BY ALLIYAH WILLIAMS

Sophomore at East St. Louis Senior High School

STRENGTH + COURAGE

It takes strength to be firm
 It takes courage to be gentle
 It takes strength to conquer
 It takes courage to surrender
 It takes strength to be certain
 It takes courage to have doubt
 It takes strength to stand out

It takes strength to feel a friend's pain
 It takes courage to feel your own
 It takes strength to endure abuse
 It takes courage to stop it
 It takes strength to stand alone
 It takes courage to lean on another
 It takes strength to love
 It takes courage to be loved

It takes strength to survive
 It takes courage to live

BY ARMON WEATHERBY

Senior at East St. Louis Senior High School

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ALL HANDS ON DECK! MAYOR EMEKA JACKSON-HICKS SHARES HER VISION FOR OUR CITY

BY **Charmaine Savage** PHOTOS BY **Stephen Bennett**

“The future is so bright” for East St. Louis, proclaims Mayor Emeka Jackson-Hicks.

She is entirely optimistic about her hometown’s future; the community where she proudly lives and works.

A true public servant, Mayor Hicks serves the citizens of East St. Louis as mayor, and also serves the Illinois taxpayers as a Compliance Technician in the Illinois Capital Development Board’s unit of Fair Employment Practices. In her role, she ensures minority and female business owners and tradespersons are adequately represented on state and federal building projects within the state.

Yes, you read correctly, Mayor Hicks has a full time job. With East St. Louis’ Council-Manager form of government, the elected mayor and city council members (the policy makers) are all part time, and they appoint, by majority vote, a full-time city manager to conduct the city’s day-to-day operations.





“We have access to the waterway, railroad, and airway; East St. Louis is prime location.”

When asked about her childhood, Mayor Hicks fondly reminisced about playing sports in the neighborhood, where her parents still live on St. Louis Avenue, and competing against the kids on Gaty Avenue. She also enjoyed sports at East St. Louis Sr. High School where she competed in volleyball, and graduated 2nd in her class in 1992. She boasts her East St. Louis education “fully prepared me to compete in all subject areas” at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. These days, she competes in a much different arena – politics.

Mayor Hicks ran for office on a platform of transparency, accountability, and implementation, with the campaign slogan “You Deserve More”. The citizens bought-in – in April 2015, she won 54.5% of the vote in a 3-way contest, and came out on top in 18 of 25 precincts.

Her monthly Town Hall meetings are refreshing; her comprehensive 2015 Transition Plan is necessary; and her private and public work experience is vital. If she has her way, “we will collectively make history”.

THE CITY'S BUSINESS

Mayor Hicks recognizes long-term investments are necessary, but is convinced there are “some things that can take place immediately” that can dramatically shift the city in the direction of the bright future she envisions.

The city must operate more

efficiently and cut expenses. “We must reduce our reliance on outside consultants and contractors,” asserts Mayor Hicks. With the city’s policy-makers being part time, it is imperative to have experts leading City Hall’s key departments. These key leaders propose legislation and city council members rely on department leaders’ knowledge and expertise to provide thoroughly researched and vetted legislation recommendations. Hiring experts on staff, at a much lower cost, equates to tremendous savings for East St. Louis.

The city must also act progressively and increase revenue. Reducing expenses alone will not create a “bright future”. Mayor Hicks is keenly aware of the need to increase revenue through economic development. “It is very risky to depend on gaming for your sole source of revenue,” she preaches; and adds, “We have access to the waterway, railroad, and airway; East St. Louis is prime location. We need to get a couple of manufacturing companies down on the riverfront – this is what the surrounding areas are looking at doing. We need to be progressive and get involved in that...It would bring jobs, which is something we desperately need.”

Mayor Hicks suggests implementing the performance-based model recently adopted by neighboring city, Fairview Heights, Illinois. According to a recent Belleville News Democrat article, Fairview Heights’ Economic

Development Director can boost his salary by up to \$15,000 per year by earning points linked to the size of developments he brings to the city.

Concurrently, a business-friendly environment is critical. “You want your investors to feel safe investing in the city – physically safe, and financially safe,” Mayor Hicks declares. She adds, “We need to allow businesses to come in here without obligations, except a commitment to being good corporate citizens. You can negotiate what you require of your good corporate citizens through memorandums of understanding (MOU).” She suggests, as an example, the city could stipulate “you are coming here with your manufacturing company, we would like an MOU that states 30-40% of the jobs will go to East St. Louisans.”

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Mayor Hicks revealed her 2015 Transition Plan for a transparent and accountable East St. Louis at her first Town Hall Meetings in August 2015. The plan outlined her administration’s top priorities and areas of focus. But since that unveiling, a majority of her newly-hired management team have been laid off...but she is not quitting! Mayor Hicks is working along with the city manager and council to realize her plans for transparency and accountability; and she is also working with the citizens.



PHOTOS BY Hayden Bland

The mayor is passionately committed to effect change through community involvement. "We are pursuing change through three strong arms – Youth, Neighborhood Organizations, and Clergy."

Youth. "We are just beginning!" Mayor Hicks announced. "What we are doing now is just engagement, but it's going to go deeper than that."

Neighborhood Organizations.

"Neighborhood organizations create accountability, provide encouragement and empowerment for the citizens involved, and allows citizens to realize their power," the mayor expressed. "Within the neighborhoods, you also want neighborhood watches; but more importantly, you want to create a sense of community, where people will watch out for what is going on, not only in their backyard, but next door, and across the street," she continues. Especially in light of recent police layoffs. "We need to watch out for each other...when families are struggling, they pool all the resources together – it's all hands on deck!"

Clergy. Mayor Hicks plans to meet

with clergy to discuss their community involvement and contribution to "the vision we all have for the city." One initiative the mayor favors is practiced in Chicago, where clergy partnered with school districts, walking the halls, creating a presence, and getting familiar with the kids. "We have many ideas we are looking at on how we can unite...We envision the churches becoming community hubs...like it was done during the civil rights movement."

Mayor Hicks has a laundry list of exciting projects on the horizon, and initiatives yet to be accomplished; ask her about them at an upcoming Town Hall meeting. "I love Town Halls because they distribute information, and information is power." The meetings provide interaction with citizens and remind Mayor Hicks of what motivated her to seek public office – to work in the best interest of citizens and be a conduit to achieve real business in East St. Louis. Conversations with citizens re-energize Mayor Hicks for the journey toward East St. Louis' bright future.

“We need to allow businesses to come in here without obligations, except a commitment to being good corporate citizens.”

If you missed any of the mayor's Town Hall meetings, you can find them on the City of East St. Louis, Illinois You Tube Channel. You can also find Mayor Hicks on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

If At First You Don't Succeed, Try Again, and Again, and Again!



With the Senior U.S. Senator from Illinois, Richard “Dick” Durbin

BY **Charmaine Savage** PHOTOS BY **Stephen Bennett**

The setting for our interview was the U.S. Capitol – described as one of the most symbolically important and architecturally impressive buildings in the nation. The floor to vaulted-ceiling ornately decorated Capitol corridors led us to the office of the Senate’s Minority Whip and second highest ranking Democrat – Senator Dick Durbin.

I was ushered into the Senator’s inner-office and minimized small talk, determined to squeeze in as many questions as possible before 12:30 (and his departure for another meeting).



Charmaine Savage: Where did you live in East St Louis?

Dick Durbin: I lived at 44 North 29th Street, which was at the corner of 29th and Jefferson; then we moved to 612 North 39th Street, between 39th and State Street.

CS: Where did you go to school?

DD: St Elizabeth’s Grade School, which was at 25th and Ridge; and then Assumption High School, which is now the Southwestern Illinois Correctional Center, on Kingshighway.

I did the undergraduate there and went on to finish law school.

CS: Why public service?

DD: When I was out here [in D.C.] as a student, I was a volunteer intern in the office of a U.S. senator and I loved it! I thought it was exciting. I saw all these great senators and I thought, “Man, I want to get involved in this”. So, I started working on political campaigns. Then, I met Senator Paul Simon, who became my friend. He hired me after law school

field-based 20th congressional district. In 1996, he won election to the U.S. Senate.]

CS: Who were your mentors along the way?

DD: Well, I had a lot of them. My father passed away when I was a sophomore in high school; and I didn’t realize how vulnerable young people are at this age. But I was lucky; I had an older brother, Bill, who took me under his wing even though he had his own family to worry about. Then

I had a teacher at Assumption High School, Brother John Manahan (now Father John Manahan) who gave me a little extra attention. And then a football coach at Assumption named George Martz. I wasn’t a very good football player; I could tell he was going out of his way to make sure that I felt that I was part of the team. So, you just never know, when you’re growing up, who’s going to have an impact on your life – those three people did for me.

CS: What kind of advice would you give young people in East St. Louis with aspirations to be a Senator Durbin?

DD: The basic message:

my mother was an immigrant to this country and came to East St. Louis as a little girl; my dad was a farmer who came from the country to work in the city – they had 8th grade educations – and I ended up here. So you think to yourself: there are some opportunities there [East St. Louis]...and East St Louis, the struggling town that it is, still offers opportunities for people who will work for it.



CS: What were your aspirations for yourself when you left East St. Louis?

DD: It’s interesting, because I did not think at all about politics or law. I wanted to go to college, so I went a year to Saint Louis University; but I didn’t like the idea of commuting to college – I thought I was missing out on something. So, I transferred out here [D.C.] to Georgetown University.

and encouraged me to work up the courage to run for office, and I did, in Springfield (after I got out of law school I moved to Springfield). So I ran; I lost; I ran again; and I lost; I ran a third time; and I lost; I ran a fourth time; and I won! So I got elected to Congress representing Springfield. [Senator Durbin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1982, representing the Spring-

CS: What are you proudest of that you've been a part of in your time in office?

DD: Well there's been a lot of things that I worked on that I think could make a difference. I introduced the law that banned smoking on air-planes. My father died of lung cancer at St Mary's Hospital on November 13, 1959. I had a chance, with that little change in the law, to change a lot of things. As soon as we banned smoking on airplanes, people started saying, well then why are we smoking on trains; and buses; and offices; and in schools; and hospitals; and restaurants; and taverns. So it was kind of the beginning of a big change in America, and I played a small role in starting it and I think lives were saved as a result.

CS: Is there anything that you would like to see accomplish before you leave office?

DD: There are three things very important to me:

- (1) Change sentencing standards – we put too many people in prison and for too long, and it wrecks their lives and we can be a lot smarter. We have 5% of the world's population and 25% of the world's prison population.
- (2) Medical research – I really believe in it and I don't believe we are putting our investment in it as we should.
- (3) The DREAM Act – I introduced it 15 years ago; it said if you are brought to this country from another country under the age of 16, you lead a good life, finish school, with no criminal problems, you ought to have a chance to become an American citizen.

Watching the mantle clock, I see it is nearing 12:30...

CS: Two more questions for you sir... What do you see as the future of East St. Louis; and how

do you see us getting there?

DD: The question is whether East St. Louis is ready for change. The last election for mayor told me that they are ready for change. They elected a new mayor. So, if East St. Louis is open to constructive change, I think there are a lot of good things that can happen and I will help.

The mantle clock says it is 12:30, and I am proud of myself!

CS: Okay thank you so much I know you have a lot going on today.

Senator Durbin continues, unprompted, with a very relevant story and childhood experiences.

DD: So let me tell you a story! While I'm traveling I go down to Haiti, and they tell me "You've got to see this park in Port au Prince". They take me to this beautiful park overlooking the ocean. Well, it used to be a private residence, and the owner left it to Port a Prince to become a park after she died. I said, "What was her name?" and he said, "Katherine Dunham". There's an exhibit of Katherine Dunham that was put together, with information from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, all about her life. You see the students in the park studying in this library setting, and you think, "Wow", an East Saint Louis woman whose legacy lives on in Haiti and whose life still continues to touch



so many people.

The senator wraps-up with experiences from his time living in East St. Louis.

DD: Well I'll tell you, I had a wonderful childhood in East St. Louis and I was surrounded by my cousins who lived within a block or two. We did what kids do: ride bicycles, play baseball, go to carnivals, and all the rest of that stuff. It was a wonderful childhood; but I know in all honesty that I lived in the white part of town. Gordon Bush [Former East St. Louis mayor] and I had lunch once and we were talking about growing up in East St. Louis. We kind of lived parallel lives, doing the same things – he's black and I'm white – but our lives didn't come in contact.

We wrapped the interview, took some photo, and prepared to leave.

DD: Well I'm glad you came by, it was good to meet you Charmaine. Good luck with your magazine, I look forward to reading it.

After Andrew Young's resignation, President Carter selected Donald McHenry for the highly visible post of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. In his remarks at the swearing-in of Donald F. McHenry in September 1979, President Jimmy Carter described McHenry as "a man who is a foreign policy professional in the finest sense of the word"; "a man whose moral character is unstained"; and in many words described him as a man more prepared for the job "than anyone who's ever served there".



OPPORTUNITY, MEET PREPARATION!

The Wisdom of Donald F. McHenry,
the 15th U.S. Ambassador to the
United Nations



BY **Charmaine Savage** PHOTOS BY **Stephen Bennett**

There is so much written and reported about Donald McHenry to be found on the Internet. Simple google searches reveal his impressive credentials as a diplomat (United States Ambassador to the United Nations); scholar (prestigious Washington, D.C.-based "think tanks," Distinguished Professor in the Practice of Diplomacy at Georgetown University); and corporate director (the first African American on the Coca-Cola Board of Directors, and one of Black Enterprise Magazine's most powerful corporate directors). This level of success does not come by chance; Don McHenry was prepared when key opportunities emerged – he was lucky!







But what is his formula for success? How did he come to be so “lucky”? Sure, he was strongly encouraged and influenced by his mother, teachers, and even business leaders in his hometown of East St. Louis, Illinois; and further prepared at Illinois State University, Southern Illinois University, and Georgetown University (where he pursued a PhD). McHenry’s advice on creating luck is simple - do your best! “It’s getting some place, doing your job well, trying to learn as much as you can, and putting yourself in a position where you have an advantage over [others in the organization] no one knows about.”

McHenry entered the State Department in 1963, at the age of 27, prepared to “do his best” and create his own luck. He worked his way up to head the same office Ralph Bunche headed when he was in the State Department [The Office of Dependent Area Affairs]. “I started at the bottom of that office and worked myself to the top to the point I could do that stuff in my sleep.” A career diplomat, McHenry continued taking special diplomatic assignments for the State Department, the White House, and the Secretary General of the U.N. long after he left his role as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.

in 1981.

ON ADVICE

Applicable in general, a piece of advice McHenry gives students going into Foreign Service is “hitch your wagon to a star.” He goes on, “If you look at American history, you will find that many of the people that we look upon as successful, really had the right assignments as a principal aide or assistant. From that position, you know all the other principals. You have a bird’s eye

view of the policy problems. You know which jobs are going to

be available, when, and who to go to to push your case to get it. Being a special assistant is a lousy job. The hours are long and unpredictable, but you are near the action. Al Haig, Tony Lake, Dick Holbrooke, and [President] Eisenhower all had staff positions.”

So, to which “star” was McHenry’s wagon hitched? It starts with Joe Sisco, then Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. Sisco designated McHenry for several special assignments. While on one of those

special assignments, McHenry made a pivotal impression on William (Bill) Rogers, the former Attorney General for President Eisenhower, who would later become President Nixon’s Secretary of State. That encounter helped change the trajectory of McHenry’s career.

“Rogers calls me and says, ‘Hey Don, Nixon is going to appoint me as Secretary of State and I want you to work with me in the transition,’” McHenry recalls. After the transition, he worked as special assistant to Rogers; and the

Luck Is What Happens When Preparation Meets Opportunity” This quote, attributed to Roman philosopher Seneca, reminds us that we make our own luck.

rest is history.

Another bit of advice for students going into the Foreign Service: “Look at your career as a whole and take the long view. Don’t get caught-up in the glamour of Rome, Paris and London. You want to get sent to a small post. There are few people there and your great hope is that all of them will have some reason for leaving, and you are left in charge. That’s the way you learn the diplomatic service [and make a name for yourself].”

ON THE VIETNAM WAR

In his role during Rogers' tenure, McHenry was in and out of the White House during the Vietnam War and grew increasingly uncomfortable with President Nixon's policies. As students came to Washington, D.C. to protest the war, McHenry and his wife repeatedly put up 10-12 of them in their home. "It was clear that I was very uncomfortable. A couple of my staff got in hot water because they signed a protest letter against Nixon on the Vietnam War." As things got worse in Cambodia and Vietnam, McHenry says, "I had to put some distance between myself and Nixon's policies."

His advice on leaving a government agency: "If you are not making policy and you don't like the policy, I see no reason why you should leave. You are part of a large bureaucracy. But if you are in a position where you are making policy or very close to the policy makers, you can have a moral dilemma."

As a result of his moral dilemma, McHenry took a leave of absence from the State Department. In 1973, after a two-year leave from the State Department, McHenry had to make a decision; return to the State Department or resign. "My great hope that Nixon would not be reelected turned out to be false. I got reelected, and I resigned."

ON THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

During the 1960s, McHenry

had a real debate with himself on where he should be spending his time during the civil rights movement. He supported the views of Roy Wilkins, then Executive Director of the NAACP, who believed in achieving reform by political pressure, legislation, and the courts (although he assisted young activists with attorneys and bail following their numerous arrests). "I concluded that everybody had a role to play and you should do what you do best, and mine was right there in the State Department doing the best I could in foreign affairs; and there were not too many of us [African Americans]

around."

ON BEING LUCKY

When asked, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how lucky are you?" McHenry responded, "Oh, Ten!" He elaborated, "You can have all the preparation you want. You can be as bright as anybody. But if you aren't in the right place at the right time, you've had it. On the other hand, if you ARE in the right place and you have not done your homework, then you've also had it!"

Don McHenry was clearly prepared, in the right places at the right time, creating his own luck.!





LIFELONG FRIENDS FORMULA FOR SUCCESS: COMMUNITY, CARPENTRY, AND COMMITMENT TO GREATNESS

BY **L.M.L. Aya** PHOTO BY **Stephen Bennett**

Y*ou might mistake lifelong friends, Fines Cole Jr. and Domonique Burrage, for brothers,* by their energetic smiles, uplifting attitudes, and well-founded ambition. Their personalities complement each other, creating a lively atmosphere that fills a room. Looking around I noticed mathematical equations on a white board and other evidence of a quality hands-on education.

For example, the room we were in contained the roof, attic, and wall of a small cabin. It was built right into one side of the room, allowing students valuable experience in roofing, insulation, and much more. On our tour, I learned that each room was a unique learning environment, nicely complimenting the diverse student body.

Domonique is a young man with a warm, welcoming smile and a calm peacefulness far beyond his years. Fines, the older of the two, would make a good public speaker - outgoing and entertaining. We start off with introductions and sharing stories from the past. It quickly became apparent that the two talented young men be-

reminiscing with a smile, "As soon as I saw them in my Weatherization Program, I knew that I had something special!"

He was right: the two are set to graduate in May and hope to work for the local carpentry union. As sure as a bright torch lights the sky, their dreams do not stop there. Fines and Domonique are planning for dynamic futures that allow them to take care of their families and give back to their community. They talked about starting their own company, Domonique as Executive Director and Fines as his second in command. Above all, both young men desire to inspire those around them to stay committed to personal greatness.

Youth Build students are invited to start each day by sharing something positive they did for someone else. Once accepted into this free program, students are guaranteed to find a supportive community that cares just as much about their success as they do, maybe even a little more. "They give you so much advice,"

"As soon as I saw them in my Weatherization Program, I knew that I had something special!"

fore me were shaped by their many experiences, particularly the influences of their families, the Gompers neighborhood, and the greater East St. Louis community. As they shared their stories, it seemed as if fate brought them to this point, finding their passion in a Youth Build Weatherization Program offered through the Emerson Park Development Corporation. They completed the Weatherization Program right before the Governor pulled funding for the grant.

The Weatherization Program was where Phil Humphreys entered the story. He is one of their teachers, an important mentor for students, and another talented product of our great city. Sitting off to the side, Phil unknowingly gave me an important insight into the pride he takes in his students. As he sat there, around eight feet from us, he beamed joyfully. Phil is a humble man and he enjoyed bearing witness to their success,

declared Domonique with his signature smile. Phil elaborated, explaining that each student receives a personalized development plan that includes setting short and long term goals.

Fines mentioned, that each student takes a pledge, "In our pledge it says not to be influenced by negative traps." Yet, the two are determined to do more than avoid negative traps. They live, moment by moment, aspiring to be positive influences. Fines is an inspiration to his children and Domonique to other young family members. Towards the end of our interview, Domonique mentioned, while Fines nodded in approval, "The things that I learn here, I can't wait to go home and show somebody else. I have no kids; but, my nephews look up to me. I'm just so eager to teach somebody what I learned." As I leave, one thing is for sure, these two hard workers are inspiring more people than they realize.



LOCAL LEGEND REGINALD PETTY SPEAKS ON ART AND ACTION

BY **L.M.L. Aya** PHOTO BY **Stephen Bennett**

The heart of a world traveler is usually filled with art. It is as if art makes them whole. They are forever searching for and finding inspiration. I come from a family of artists. So, I felt right at home stepping into Mr. Petty's simple, strikingly decorated living room. In a welcomed surprise, the first hour of our interview turned into an interactive lesson on African and East St. Louis art. He married a talented artist. Her work, prominently displayed through their

home and even worked into the architecture, demonstrates one of my favorite qualities of art: With the arts, anything is possible. A similar thing can be said about East St. Louis and the people it inspires, people like Reginald Petty.

Petty has always considered East St. Louis home. He shared stories from his childhood while explaining what makes East St. Louis unique. Growing up, he lived between 21st and 29th Street and later moved to 27th and Bond, "just before Louisiana Boulevard." Back then, he ran

track and "played a little bit of basketball." He speaks with a smooth and soulful lull. His words are a carefully fashioned masterpiece. His voice draws you in and holds you there. I gazed at his impressive resume, more in awe of his outstanding personal presence. He is a handsome man with a warm smile. He wore a deep red long sleeve shirt and could have easily been my grandpa. In fact, he met my grandpa working in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in the early 1980's.

As we talked, he reminisced on growing up in East St. Louis, "From about thirteen on, I was going to clubs." Club patrons felt it was their duty to protect the youth from the drug scene and violence; but, they let the teens enjoy "the things that were hip." He continued with a modest grin, "The boys wanted to listen to Miles Davis and the girls wanted to dance." He admits to sneaking out at night; but, his parents knew. His mother was a dedicated and talented school teacher. She worked in Venice and the Golden Gardens neighborhood because the East St. Louis laws prohibited school teachers from being married. When the law was changed, she worked in East St. Louis for approximately 60 years. His father studied embalming at Washington University; but, he worked at Aluminum Ore and as a Precinct Committeeman.

Petty learned from his parents and from experience. At a young age, he was turned off by political dishonesty and has remained continuously unimpressed with the predictable and familiar patterns of politics. Yet, he is a born leader. A persistent trailblazer, Petty worked with several noteworthy organizations, including the Peace Corps, Job Corps, African Development Foundation, African-American Heritage Association, and more. Petty served as a consultant to ten African countries and travelled extensively throughout Africa. He considered Malcolm X a dear friend and comrade. I understand his calm demeanor after I hear some more of his stories. A man who lived through the likes of Reginald Petty would have to be a calm and sturdy being.

It was no surprise that while working abroad he visited South Africa, once to see a newly released movie, in a theatre that the laws of Apartheid barred him from entering. The U.S.

Embassy accompanied to insure his safety, only after failing to discourage his plan. He laughed a full-bodied laugh, as he recalled entering a bathroom filled with white men. His presence left them shocked and speechless. Still, another visit left him stranded in an airport overnight, unable to relax and unwind in the "Whites Only" airport restaurant and hotel. He thought about retiring in South Africa, explaining that Cape Town is very beautiful. Luckily for us, he came back.

Wherever he went and whatever he saw, there was no place like home. He describes fondly, "There were always these things that East St. Louis had that the rest of the world didn't have." He explained that East St. Louis has unique traditions and a rich, vibrant

Petty explains, living in East St. Louis means living in a city that continuously produces greatness, showcasing human ingenuity and creativity. Living in East St. Louis also means living in an unfinished masterpiece, ripe with potential.

Location and history tend to shape a city and we are no different. East St. Louis has a prime location, nestled into the mighty Mississippi River and neighboring the metropolis of St. Louis. Naturally, we have an iconic and lively history. East St. Louis has long attracted brilliant scholars, famed performers, notorious gangsters, powerful leaders, and more. Yet, as Petty laments, "East St. Louis is the only place around here that doesn't have a historical society. That's absurd." The more I learn about our history, the

"There were always these things that East St. Louis had that the rest of the world didn't have."

culture. "You always had some of these special musicians from East St. Louis, who were different. People, who were different," he continues after pausing, "and for some reason, you always had a high percentage of people from East St. Louis who were success stories." He explained, that wherever he traveled, he ran into someone from East St. Louis doing something outstanding.

As an artist, I believe, that the artist shapes the art just as much as the art shapes the artist. The two are inseparable: one cannot exist without the other. The city of East St. Louis and the people it inspires have a similar relationship. We can live without visiting home for years, only because home is ever present inside of us. As

more I agree.

It seems to me as if East St. Louis is already the cultural and artistic capital of the St. Louis area; but, the title is unofficial. If you're not from East St. Louis, then you might not initially understand its charm. Reginald Petty hungers to see East St. Louis do more with its uniqueness. He doesn't look to outside investors or local politicians to determine the city's destiny; instead, he looks to the people. The future, he explains, lies in the East St. Louis Alumni, their abilities, talents, and efforts to unify, maximize, mobilize, and capitalize on the strengths of our city. He leaves our team wondering: What kind of a legacy do we want to leave?



Billie's Pastries Spin Sweet Memories

BY **Linda S. Lawson** PHOTOS BY **Stephen Bennett**

Approximately a decade ago, a local politician noted if someone wanted to get the pulse of this town's sentiments, they needed to make a stop at 7301 State Street.

There on that corner, Billie's Pastries continues to hold court, a feat for more than thirty-five years. It stands as one of the few remnants harkening to the time of an old-fashioned town with businesses serving as a safe havens and an old fashioned gathering.

In those thirty-five years, nostalgic homespun memories reside for many children who lived on the East end of the city.

At its helm is a pumpkin of a lady, Matriarch Billie Miller, known simply as "Miss Billie" who still finds her way to the shop on a daily basis. Her legs a little worn, dependent on a walker to help her get around, she'll shuffle to one seat and still be the engaging owner that generations have come to know.

"I'm always here. I may hop a little bit, but I'm still here," she smiled.

On this day is a flurry of activity as always from regulars conducting business to several men playing chess, a tradition started by tax consultant James Reed.

Miller, along with her husband Henry, didn't intend for a pastry shop to be a part of their life's roadmap until they

about their views," she said.

One thing the shop is not, is exclusive. On a shelf, besides the bible and other religious books, sits the Qur'an. Proper information is something the Millers have always striven to provide.

"It doesn't matter who you are. All religions are welcomed and we can discuss our faiths. If there's a debate about something and something needs to be looked up, they can do that," Miller notes.

The shop also served children on several levels as a sweet treat stop, a teenage dance hall, and as the neighborhood daycare where parents knew their children would be safe while waiting for the school bus. Students from King Junior High along with children from Kennedy and Edgemont Elementary Schools found their way to that corner---and parents knew where to find them.

"So many kids have come through here. Darius Miles' mother was a bus driver and would drop him off here in the morning for him to stay until it was time to go to school. We always had somebody's child and loved having them," said the mother of seven.

With her husband's passing in 1992, the sprouting of convenience stores and the advancement of age, Miss Billie is now sharing the reins with her daughter, Gina

"This has taught me how to be a self-starter and how to get things going. I have learned how to be a self-starter and know that working a conventional job is not the only option."

crossed paths with a door-to-door salesman.

"This man was selling encyclopedias and convinced me to buy a set. I became friends with him and he owned the building with a pastry shop already there. He was trying to sell it and offered it to us," she recalled.

The then caseworker used six hundred dollars from their tax refund as a deposit for the store.

Once the purchase was made, the shop became more than a place to buy donuts. It became more than the place to pick up a quick cup of coffee. Its intrinsic value was steeped in providing a place for the area's youth and for adults to actively engage in conversations.

"People will come in and talk about politics, what's going on in the world, what's going on in the city, whatever is on their mind. People who come in here to talk have passion

Miller, to ensure the shop remains a cornerstone for the community. In doing so, the younger Miller, who has helped in the business since she was twelve years old, is implementing the lifelong lessons instilled by her parents.

"This has taught me how to be a self-starter and how to get things going. I have learned how to be a self-starter and know that working a conventional job is not the only option," Miller said.

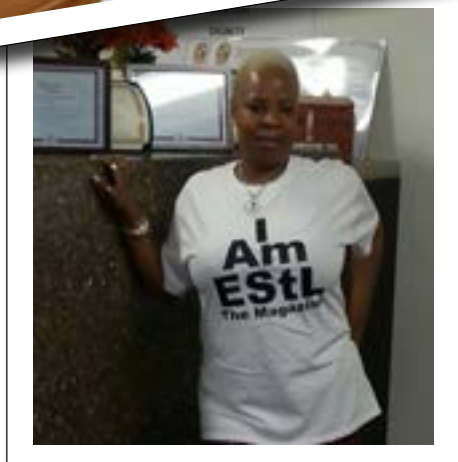
As several look around, businessman F.G. McGraw compliments them on their longstanding commitment that exemplifies the respect this institution holds.

"This has come with dedication and determination. They've had both to last this long."

Got the Shirt?

They Do!





SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From Our Publisher and Editor in Chief

Nothing of this magnitude is accomplished by an individual. There are so many people to thank, but I must first acknowledge God's divine influence in the idea for this magazine. Since I received the vision to pursue this project, people have been placed in my path to bring that vision to fruition. The following people helped in small and large ways on the journey to publish this first issue.

Outside my family and close friends, **Mr. Reginald Petty** and **his wife, Edna**, were the first to know about the project. They both committed to supporting me on this journey and have brokered introductions whose value cannot be measured. One of those introductions was **Ambassador McHenry**, who was the first to agree to an interview. I'm sure Mr. Petty will make many more of these introductions and I cannot thank him enough. **Ray Coleman** also provided key introductions early-on in the project; and **Evan Krauss** continues to provide unending support via introductions and inclusion.

Before the magazine, there was the media kit. **Stephen Bennett** allowed me to drag him and his camera around East St. Louis to photograph our city. The media kit and this issue are beautiful because of his work. I appreciate **Sylvester "Sunshine" Lee** and **Arthur "Flash" Johnson** for allowing us to photograph their non-profit work, and my niece, **Janay Todd**, and nephew, **Jeffrey Hill, Jr.** for allowing us to photograph their children for the media kit.

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The individuals who will regularly contribute to the magazine all volunteered and have inspired me in many ways. **Stephen Bennett (photographer)**, **Lindsey Laird (writer)**, **Linda Lawson (writer)**, **Minister B Morgan Thomas (writer)**, **David Perry (life coach)**, **Maurice Scott (writer)** were all selected for their passion, talent, and experience (in that order). I look forward to working with this team many issues into the future. I am grateful for the other contributors to this issue: **Delano Brooks** and **Just Cindy (poets)**, and **Remy Joh (writer)**. I am amazed at their work.

I must thank **Pastor Kendall Granger** for offering the first ad, and my New Life Community Church growth group for the prayers, support, referrals and recommendations.

Credit goes to the wonderful **Ms. Mamie Cosey** for being inspired to offer the phrase "*a real place, with real people*" in describing East St. Louis for the magazine. This phrase is featured on our cover.

The financial donors include family, friends, and a host of veterans I served with over my 21 years of active service: **Simonia Blassingame**, **Roderick & Barbara Brown**, **Zorina Brown**, **Jeff Chapman**, **The Clay Group, LLC**, **Lucia Dupard**, **Frances Dysart**, **Karl Giles**, **Edna Greer**, **Gerrian Hawes**, **Kim Hawkins**, **Lynette McDuffie**, **Jeff Peters**, **Lillie Reeves**, **Varian Reeves**, **Lorenzo Savage, Jr.**, **Samantha Savage-Lee**, **Machelle Vieux**, **Anisa Washington**, **Demitra Williamson**, **Toni Williamson**, **Tracee Worley**, **Faye Young**. This would not be possible without their generosity!

My sister, **Nanette Weatherby**, my brother, **Quixote Thomas**, and my girlfriends **Edna Turner**, **Angela Drisdell**, and **Payton Bennett** are always deep in my corner and supportive in all ways necessary.

I know my mother and step-father, **Barbara and Roderick Brown**, are ready for this magazine as if it was their own doing – they have encouraged me like no other; and my patient aunt **Lillie Reeves** transcribed for me...what a God-send!

My children are my biggest fans and my daughter is my biggest cheerleader with her consistent motivating text messages and voicemails. Her message when we landed in D.C. for the first interviews – "Kill it Mom! The city is watching!"

Lorenzo, my husband, does whatever is necessary to make my dreams become reality; he has a magazine by default! This would not be possible without his support.

Finally, I must acknowledge my sister friend and high school classmate, **Gerrian (Oliver) Hawes**. She was the only person I knew with a successful community publication ("*We Are Clayton*" Magazine)...I called; she answered. She told me she would show me everything I needed to know to manifest a magazine...that was February 2015; and here we are! It is impossible to repay Gerrian for the time and education she has given to me, but I intend to make her proud of her investment!

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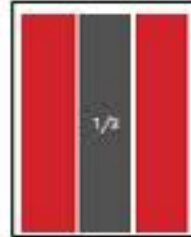
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