

# NAACP

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane." Martin Luther King jr.

## Missouri Legislators Finish Work this Session

One of the bright spots this session was the extension of Medicaid coverage for new mothers that have Post-partum depression from 60 days to twelve months.

The Medicaid work reporting requirements bill did not pass which will make Medicaid expansion simpler in the fall.

## Greene County Health Department Reaches Out to the African American Community

The Greene County Health Department, the Community Partnership of the Ozarks and the NAACP. Teamed up to do free COVID testing for the African community. All negative tests so far. June 4th and 5th the National Guard will be at the fairgrounds and conduct 850 tests each day. Thanks to the Health Department for their efforts.

## Meet Michelyve Petit, Speech/Language Pathologist

*Please tell us about your background.* I was born in Brooklyn, New York, the youngest of four siblings. My mom and dad are both Haitian-American with Cuban heritage. We moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when I was a petite one year old. We lived in an underserved African American/Latino neighborhood in North Philadelphia with statistically poor outcomes. We grew



up in a strict Haitian household. Reading was encouraged, TV was discouraged (unless it was "Reading Rainbow" or "Jeopardy"). Hip Hop music or Rap was not allowed. I listened to Jay-Z secretly and Mozart openly. The stringency imposed on us as children made

us book smart and opened many doors although it closed some socially. My older sister was a straight A student who set the bar for me to better apply myself in school. She is currently a dentist while my older brother is a managing director for one of the largest banking institutions in the world. My second oldest brother is a Senior Clinical Research Associate at a large pharmaceutical company.

*Where did you attend college?* I went to undergraduate school at Drexel University in Philadelphia and earned a bachelor's degree in English. *Have you ever experienced racism?* In a literature course I

## 2020 COVID-19 Poll of African American Voters

May 1-7, 2020 polling was done across the country with African Americans by the African American Research Collaborative with the Yale school of Medicine and the NAACP. Some of the results are as follows:

- 36% lost a job or hours. 19% have had additional family members move in. 15% lost insurance through an employer.
- 64% believe blacks less likely to be tested than whites.
- 57% more likely to vote despite pandemic.
- On the question: On 10 pt. Scale, how much do you trust different spokespeople and groups to provide honest and factual information about the current pandemic to the African American community?

Doctors and nurses-7.85

Local officials-7.24

Dr. Fauci-6.93

Dr. Jerome Adams-6.35

Fox News- 4.55

President Trump-3.05

The complete polling and additional information can be reviewed at the National NAACP site [NAACP.org](https://www.naacp.org)

had spent a great deal of effort on an English midterm and due to the language I used, was accused of plagiarism. My phrasing, “ensconced in her scriptorium” was deemed unlikely to be mine. Thankfully, another professor came to my defense. On another occasion, a different professor told me my verbiage was “pompous”. Both of these instances were racial micro-aggressions. To this date, I enjoy spicing up my verbiage with the occasional esoteric term. I had considered becoming a lawyer but switched gears after witnessing all of the time constrictions. I believed such time constrictions might affect my ability to be a present wife and mother. When I shadowed an acute care speech pathologist, the science, empathy and flexibility seemed like the perfect fit for me.

Following graduation I applied to a number of East Coast schools and was waitlisted or denied so I worked tutoring students in Washington D.C. After a year of working, I applied to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and was accepted with a full scholarship! I graduated and was awarded “Outstanding Masters’ Graduate Student Award”. As I applied for jobs, a hospital here in Springfield made an offer and I have been working here for about a year. I am currently working on a COVID-19 research project with a PhD aromatherapist and an Italian Otolaryngologist in Brescia, Italy. We are working to quantify/qualify the peculiar COVID-19 symptoms of loss of smell (anosmia) and taste (ageusia).

*What are your current job duties?* I assess, diagnose and treat speech, language and social communication disorders, cognitive communication and swallowing disorders in patients that present to the hospital with stroke, brain injury or degenerative disease. *What hardships have you had to endure?* When I was rejected from Masters’ speech pathology programs, I thought I was going to be a tutor forever. It was through God’s grace that I applied to LSU and began what has been an amazing career path.

*What books are you currently reading?* Right now I am mostly reading COVID-19 articles, the last book I read was “Kindred” by Octavia Butler. On my list are: “Mastery” by Robert Greene , “Becoming” by Michelle Obama and “Tipping Point” by Malcolm Gladwell.

*What advice do you have for young people?* Explore as much as you

can as a youth. If you're interested in neurosurgery, find a neurosurgeon and request to follow them. If you want to be a biochemist, do the same. Exposure is everything and you truly have the capacity to do whatever you want. Go for it, observe, ask questions. It's true; seek and you shall find.

## Interview with Clay Goddard: Greene County Health Department Director

*What is the percentage of African Americans in Greene County affected by COVID-19?* Due to the very small numbers of cases, that statistic could be misleading, 97% have been caucasian, the remainder have been people of color. All of the asymptomatic testing we have recently performed solely within the African American community, has been negative.

*What difficulties had to be overcome in order for Cox, Mercy and the Health Department to stand up the testing site?* None. We inherited wonderful relationships due to the work of previous directors Harold Bengsch and Kevin Gibson. The relationships were already established.

*Any communities or groups of people appearing to bear the brunt of this illness in Greene County?* Primarily it seems to be people of means that can travel. Trips to destinations with high transmission rates within our state, our country and internationally brought back the virus and affected their contacts.

*What has been done to protect vulnerable communities?* The Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO) and One Door have done well. Nursing homes have been locked down. We have tested in the jail, no cases there. We are looking at ways to test the homeless, the Latino community and refugees.

*Have you noticed a difference in outcomes between urban and rural populations?* No, the outcomes seem to be related to co-morbidities.

*We seem to have avoided significant pushback from our community. How has this been accomplished?* It is related to good timing and the organizational trust we enjoy. We have had some small demonstrations but nothing like what has been seen other places. Americans in general are not wired for this type of crisis. The "Flattening the Curve" piece was intended to buy us some time, and it did.

*What is the capacity at the drive through testing site?* We can do 125 tests a day with the ability to expand if needed. Cox and Mercy both have capacity and labs also. June 4th and 5th we will have testing for anyone who wants it. The National Guard will test 850 people a day at the fairgrounds. The following link will allow you to sign up for the free testing. <https://dcpbd002redcap.azurewebsites.net/redcap/surveys/?s=FAMNRL3LF7>



*Are there any short term or long term plans to increase trust in the African American community?* We had been having internal discussions about this very issue prior to the pandemic. Those plans are on pause for now but will return to them as we can. We had planned to work with Prosper Springfield, increase student experience, perhaps have an internship and ultimately employment of African Americans.

*What are you anticipating in terms of spiking cases during the summer? What about fall and winter?* Michael Olsterholm is a Minnesota State epidemiologist who thinks that this will continue until 60-70% of the population get the virus or until we have a vaccine. Perhaps we'll have a "slow burn" through the summer, perhaps peaks and valleys or it could go away and then come roaring back in the Fall like the flu. Probably we'll be playing viral whack-a-mole until we get a vaccine. An interesting article in The New York Times looked at previous pandemics and how they end. The medical end is when the illness runs its course or we come up with a treatment, the other way they end is societal, we just accept it and go on.

*How has this affected the other services you offer?* We decreased STD and vaccine services but we have continued work on the Hepatitis A outbreak. We have continued the WIC program virtually

*Thank you for your time during this incredibly busy pandemic season!*