

STL Equity Matters

Welcome to the 32nd edition of our newsletter: STL Equity Matters ...

How It Works: We shine a light on how race, ethnicity, religion, and gender are lived in our region.

Who Is Behind This: This newsletter is brought to you by the [River City Journalism Fund](#), a nonprofit journalism project formerly known as Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson. This rebranding and new collaboration bring additional resources and brainpower that will boost reporting on local government, the environment, criminal justice, the arts, the business community, and more.



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Let's dive in ...



Wesley Bell claims victory in the Democratic primary for Missouri's 1st District congressional seat. (Photo by Ryan Krull)

1. Inside the Campaign to Oust Cori Bush

What's New: Cori Bush's losing campaign to retain her congressional seat in Missouri's 1st District drove a wedge between progressives in the region.

Why It Matters: Many Jews who had supported Bush previously and support Black Lives Matter in general abandoned Bush over her statements in the wake of the Sept. 7 Hamas attack on Israel. It had been part of their growing disenchantment with Bush, who distanced herself from Jewish community leaders. When Wesley Bell entered the race, they aligned with him.

A Kick in the Teeth: That's how Bush supporters viewed financial support from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) estimated to be at least \$9 million. They asserted that AIPAC had basically bought and paid for a congressman.

Fuel on the Fire: It seems unlikely that progressives will coalesce anytime soon given Bush's remarks at her election night rally:

“AIPAC, I’m coming to tear your kingdom down!”

Continuing Angst:

Rabbi Daniel Bogard of Central Reform Congregation and an outspoken progressive observed: “People who are close with each other, people who are on nonprofit boards with each other, people who are allied in so many important ways for bringing meaningful, progressive change, they feel betrayed by each other.”

Go Deeper: Read Ryan Krull's story at [St. Louis Magazine](#).



Jason Q. Purnell (Photo by Whitney Curtis)

2. Bury the Shiny Objects

What's New: Jason Purnell, president of the [James S. McDonnell Foundation](#), one of the largest charitable nonprofits in the region, is calling on civic leaders to invest in people instead of "shiny objects" like stadiums.

Why It Matters: While at Washington University, Purnell was one of the authors of a groundbreaking report in 2014 called "[For the Sake of All](#)," which tracked health outcomes by race and ZIP code in the St. Louis region. The report stated that premature deaths of Black people in the region were costing St. Louis more than \$4 billion a year in lost revenue.

“The report took on international implications,” Purnell told Post-Dispatch columnist Tony Messenger in a recent interview. “It helped to underline the desperation.”

Grabbing the Steering Wheel: Now, Messenger noted: "Purnell finds himself in a role where he can try to address some of the underlying causes of those health outcomes — specifically, the wealth gap that exists between Black people and white people in St. Louis.

"There's a kind of magical thinking in St. Louis that if we build the shiny objects that other major cities have, we will be a major city," Purnell says. "It's a backwards logical fallacy. We've got to at least match, if not outpace, the level of investment in our human and social capital."

Go Deeper:

- Read Messenger's column in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).
- Learn more about the McDonnell Foundation's [mission and accomplishments](#).



Mayor Tishaura Jones. (Photo courtesy of [Flickr/New America](#))

3. Mayor Jones Recalibrates for Re-election

What's New: Nick Phillips at St. Louis Magazine presented a deeply reported profile of Mayor Tishaura Jones that moves beyond her policy prescriptions to her upbringing and motivations. It's the St. Louis mayor like you've never seen or heard her before.

Why It Matters: "Jones will have to navigate a rift in her coalition, tamp down her petty streak, oversee a sprawling spending effort" to

win a second term this spring, Phillips says.

A Challenging Rite of Passage: Jones is the daughter of Virvus Jones, an outspoken former city officeholder who served a year in prison in the 1990s for tax fraud. They remain close. The '90s were challenging in other ways for Jones, who declared personal bankruptcy in 1999.

"I'd fallen down," Jones said. "It took me 10 years to stand back up."

Go Deeper: Read Nicholas Phillips's story in [St. Louis Magazine](#).



Bajra Binino, right, and fellow members of Girls Inc. on a tour of First Bank headquarters in Creve Coeur. (Photo by David Carson of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

4. Eighth Graders Tackle Entrepreneurship

What's New: Girls Incorporated of St. Louis has started a five-year program to introduce St. Louis girls to the world of business.

Why It Matters: The program "is an investment for the future," said Cheryl Jones, Girls Inc. president and CEO. The girls began the six-week summer portion of the program in June and met for six hours a day, five days a week. They participated in three college-prep modules each week.

Best and Brightest: Jones said Girls Inc. chose 15 of the "best and brightest" students from University City, Normandy and Jennings middle schools. The program will continue for five years in partnership with the University of Missouri-St. Louis and First Bank.

Go Deeper: Read Ansley Franco's story in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).

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A Coalition Life "sidewalk counselor" stands outside the Planned Parenthood clinic in Fairview Heights, Ill. (Photo by Neeta Satam, special to ProPublica)

5. Missouri Is Funding an Anti-Abortion Group That Works in Other States

What's New: With millions in expanded tax credits and direct state funding going to anti-abortion groups, the nonprofit Coalition Life has expanded its operations beyond Missouri and into states where the procedure is still legal, Jeremy Kohler reports for ProPublica.

Why It Matters: In effect, Missouri taxpayers are subsidizing anti-abortion efforts in other states where the procedure is still legal.

Go Deeper: [Read Jeremy Kohler's story at ProPublica.](#)



Welcome Neighbor's family support coordinator, Lindsay Spencer, shares a moment with young Afghan refugees. (Photo courtesy of Jessica Bueler)

6. Baffling Decision on Refugees

What's New: St. Louis needs more immigrants to increase our population, most agree. But a state official involved in refugee resettlement, who also is vice president at the International Institute, is standing in the way, Sarah Fenske reports for St. Louis Magazine.

Why It Matters: [Welcome Neighbor STL](#), founded by Jessica Bueler, is a local group with a track record of helping refugees. It has aligned itself with a national organization, the [International Rescue Committee](#), to bring more of them to town,

Fly in the Ointment: Paul Costigan, the state refugee coordinator with the [Missouri Office of Refugee Administration](#), refused to consent to the group's application. He asserts that the St. Louis area doesn't have the capacity for additional families. But, as Fenske notes, "Costigan is also a vice president at the [International Institute of St. Louis](#), which has several initiatives to bring more refugees to town and touts them as critical to the region's future."

Not a Forever No: Costigan said that he wasn't saying "no" so much as "not now."

What's Next: Hearing that Costigan has opened the door to try again as soon as October, Bueler is hopeful and plans to reach out again to the International Rescue Committee for support.

Go Deeper: Read Sarah Fenske's story at [St. Louis Magazine](#).



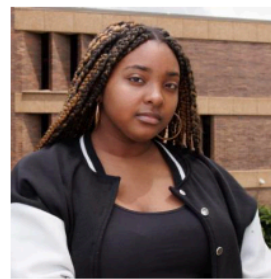
Tammie Holland



Sharon Harvey Davis



Jenifer Lewis



Elizabeth Franklin

7. Milestones

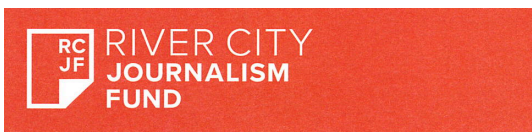
Tammie Holland: The St. Louis radio personality, 53, died July 20 of cancer. She was a star of R&B radio and a sounding board for the community, Read more in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#). Photo credit: John L. White of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Sharon Harvey Davis: A champion for diversity, Harvey Davis, who worked most recently at Ameren, died Aug. 12 at age 68. Read more in the [St. Louis American](#). Photo credit: Courtesy Forward Through Ferguson.

Jenifer Lewis: The actress and Kinloch native was enshrined on the St. Louis Walk of Fame in July. Watch Rene Knott's interview with Lewis at [KSDK](#). Photo credit: Screen capture from KSDK interview.

Elizabeth Franklin: The Parkway West grad was named the 2024 Missouri Interscholastic Journalism Association's Student Journalist of the Year. As St. Louis Public Radio contributor Ulaa Kuziez noted: Franklin "drew from personal experiences in her reporting about complicated subjects like the divide she saw between her West County peers and her family

in North County, hoping that her writing would inspire empathy in her peers." Learn more about Franklin at [St. Louis Public Radio](#). Photo credit: Sophie Proe of St. Louis Public Radio.



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