

# Diversity

## A Business Imperative

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### INSIDE

LONNIE JOHNSON



#### A Fireside Chat with a super inventor

Lonnie Johnson, African-American engineer, scientist, and inventor developed what is now known as the Super Soaker, which has generated more than \$1 billion in sales.

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LATHA RAMCHAND



#### New provost at University of Missouri

Latha Ramchand was appointed provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs of the University of Missouri, effective August 15, by Chancellor Alexander N. Cartwright.

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NESTLE PURINA

#### Embracing diversity and inclusion

When it comes to the workplace culture at Nestlé Purina, the motto is: "No one of us are as good as all of us."

Purina, a premiere global manufacturer of pet products headquartered in St. Louis, strives to create a culture and environment that provides equal opportunity to everyone.

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Photo by LaShana (Shān) Lewis

Nastassia Johnson was a medical technician making about \$10.50 per hour. She got bored with the monotony and short staffing before calling up a friend who told her about the construction apprenticeship.

## Apprenticeships close the skills gap

### SAK Construction works with MSD to diversify workforce on projects

By LaShana (Shān) Lewis  
For The St. Louis American

Antonio Gear always wanted to work in construction like his father, and now he is in his second year of an apprenticeship program with SAK Construction, a tunneling company

headquartered in O'Fallon, Missouri.

A few years ago, the company initiated a diversity training program to mentor minorities and women who want to learn what it is like to work in the construction world – including those who have

fallen on hardships in their past.

Gear's probation officer helped him to find the program. Gear first went through the Metropolitan Sewer District's Building Union Diversity (BUD)

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## Taking care of business

### Why St. Louis needs a strong black chamber

American staff

Midwest BankCentre has made a bold move that recognizes St. Louis can only grow economically if local black-owned businesses are also growing. Toward that end, the bank has recruited Veta Jeffery to head the Heartland St. Louis Black Chamber of Commerce (HSBCC). Most recently, she was manager of community economic partnerships with the State of Missouri's



Department of Economic Development. The imperative is clear.

■ "In order for St. Louis to succeed, we need locally owned black businesses to succeed."

– Veta Jeffery, Midwest BankCentre and Heartland St. Louis Black Chamber of Commerce

efforts to connect business leaders with opportunities. Strong black business communities can only be grown through intentional efforts."

Now in existence for two years, the Heartland St. Louis Black Chamber of Commerce is aiming to reach the critical mass of 250 members by year's end. To jumpstart the effort, Midwest BankCentre tapped Jeffery to devote her considerable skills to the business of

Deliberate efforts to connect business leaders with opportunities. Strong black business communities can only be grown through intentional efforts."

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## Diversifying St. Louis' legal community

Association of Corporate Counsel St. Louis Chapter pairs diverse law students with companies

By Ashley Jones  
The St. Louis American

The St. Louis Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) celebrated its 2018 Diversity Summer Kickoff, a celebration and recognition of two ACC programs, on June 5 at the Anheuser Busch Tour Center.

One is the Street Law Program, a pipeline program for high school students where they are taught basics of intellectual property law, contracts law, and employment law. The program had 87 students this year, nearly double of last year's participation number, and around 50 volunteer lawyers helping.

The second is the Diversity

See ACC, page 23



Photo by Wiley Price

Top: Tamee Reese, assistant vice president, senior legal counsel, AT&T; Chrissy Teske, senior attorney, Commerce Bancshares, Inc.; Toni Douaihy, president of the St. Louis Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel; Denise Whitner, senior counsel, Wells Fargo Law Department; Jan Alonzo, founder of the Diversity Summer Internship Program. Bottom: interns Raquel Maragh, Kyle Garcia, Katesha Long and Lillian Robinson.