

The work is not done: Commitment to an inclusive community

When in crisis mode, it is so easy to realize the importance of diversity, inclusion and equity. But how do we operate outside of crisis mode? How do we ensure that momentum is not lost once we perceive everything to be “back to normal”? Even better, how can we be proactive in our efforts with a desire to thwart any need for operating in crisis modus operandi?

In 2015, our community was forced to deal with equity challenges brought to surface by students advocating for change on their campus. Regardless of how any one citizen felt about the community discord, there are a few things that can be agreed upon: 1) dialogue opportunities opened up that would not have been

addressed organically, 2) the national spotlight was on the community for all of the wrong reasons, and 3) the obstacles presented were not isolated to the campus alone.

Many began to wonder how leadership both on and off campus would begin to address the needs of the students, faculty, and staff as well as the community at large. Silence and aversion were not options. While the work needed involved and continues to involve much more than just one tactic or tool, a strategy to begin the work both personally and professionally proved to be just what was needed to move an entire community toward real and intentional change.

Campus executives brought in leadership with

a fresh perspective that introduced the inclusive excellence framework and began a system-wide initiative to implement the framework into each department, school, and division. With this work being done by Dr. Kevin McDonald on campus, community leaders could see the potential solution for local businesses as well. The opportunity presented itself to get Columbia’s business leaders on the same page as higher education leaders in the understanding of inclusive spaces and language. Dr. McDonald was able to translate the higher education terminology of the Inclusive Excellence Framework to business language and partnered with community organizations, Heart of Missouri United Way and Inclusive

Impact Institute, to lead the charge of educating the business community on the importance of inclusive excellence. Leadership across the community was learning the details of the five dimensions of the framework: access and success; training and education; community engagement; organizational climate and intergroup relations; and organizational infrastructure.

As a model, Inclusive Excellence incorporates diversity efforts into the core of organizational functioning to realize the benefits of diversity. Applying Inclusive Excellence concepts leads to infusing diversity into an organization’s recruiting, and hiring processes; into its training; and into its administrative structures and practices. Inclusive Excel-

lence means an organization has adopted means for the cohesive, coherent, and collaborative integration of diversity, inclusion and equity into the organizational pursuit of excellence. Accepting the Inclusive Excellence model reflects the understanding that diversity, inclusion, and equity are catalysts for organizational excellence, are to be invited and integrated into the very core of the business enterprise, and are not isolated initiatives.

As part of this inclusive work, organizations that accept the integration of the framework make the statement that they have a respect for and understanding of diversity, inclusion, and equity and stand on the principles that it represents. They are in the process of making the practice of inclusive excellence a part of who they are and what they do. They will stand on this statement both in practice and on paper through the signing of a document entitled “Principles of Community.” The principles of community are aspirational statements that embody an organization’s level of commitment to diversity and equality and reflect the ideals they aspire to uphold.

As we continue the work in our higher education spaces and our business community we are compelled to understand that the change we seek will only be as sustainable as the leaders in place making way for systemic change. Those leaders cannot allow periods without crisis to give the false understanding that “we have



Nikki McGruder

DIRECTOR
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arrived” and the work is finished. It is not.

We will continue the work necessary to create the community that we wish to see. We are not done, there is much work left to do, but our community can take pride in the progress being made. We are committed to not allowing our diversity, inclusion and equity work to be the latest trend that everyone aspires to follow. One business at a time; one citizen at a time. The journey will continue.

The Inclusive Excellence model is based on three monographs disseminated by the Association of American College and Universities: Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective, Achieving Equitable Educational Outcomes with All Students: The Institution’s Roles and Responsibilities, and Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Postsecondary Institutions.



The fight for diversity, equity and inclusion

I had the opportunity this spring to do an internship with Heart of Missouri United Way. I went into the internship with virtually no idea what United Way did or how it operated. I, in fact, had some harsh assumptions that I quickly realized were simply false. I imagined an organization that was pseudo political and prioritized pleasing its donors. I really had no idea how United Way functioned, and my problematic assumptions did not end with the structure of the nonprofit world.

Being a student of philos-

ophy and gender studies, I have come to be very aware of the multitude of forces that generate inequity within our society. I can’t help but see it nearly everywhere, whether it be a grocery bagger patronizing a person with mobility issues by insisting they need help carrying their bags, a landlord refusing to rent to people because of the color of their skin or a construction contractor refusing to hire certain people, whom they keep insisting need to get an “honest job”. I am often uncomfortable aware of the continued social “othering”

that creates inequity within our community.

Knowing this I began my internship with an eye on how nonprofits interacted with different groups suffering various barriers to equity, and I wondered if I was about to enter an organization that was just as problematic as the the rest of society.

The skepticism I had going in was quickly undermined by the culture I encountered there. I did not expect breakfasts focused on building awareness of unconscious bias (shout-out to Nikki McGruder and the

Inclusive Impact Institute), nor did I expect required reading material on the issues that prop up systemic racism. Nor did I expect to be witness to an organization in the process of internalizing the same values I was learning through MU’s Women’s and Gender Studies program.

I suppose that was a lesson on assumptions for me, and how my tendency for viewing inequity can at times reinforce my automatic skepticism.

How does United Way really work? I find it interesting how many, myself included, didn’t know. This presents a problem, as we tend to make assumptions and those assumptions tend to have a negative bias. United Way works as a kind of central command for non-profit organizations in the area. It does this primarily in three ways. First, it operates as a fund-raising entity; most of us know that part. Second, it builds awareness; awareness of the needs of the community and the services available within the community. Third, it acts as a bridge between the people in our community who need help and the resources that they need. United Way is

structured apolitically. The staff have no control over who receives funding, an advisory council drawn from the community (that anyone can be on, check out the Heart of Missouri United Way webpage) makes all decisions on funding allocation.

An accurate, honest view of United Way and organizations like it is critical in earning their trust the next time they ask for our time and money. Naturally, we’d prefer to have control over where our money goes. What I’ve come to learn is that the people there are incredibly qualified and dedicated toward fairly distributing our donors’ collective resources within the community.

If you think about it, many of us just don’t know our communities as well as we think we do. We might overlook agencies that are underfunded, and desperately need the most help. That’s where United Way comes in. It’s literally their job to find, evaluate, and aid those agencies.

Heart of Missouri United Way is a major fighter in the battle against inequity within our region. It achieves this by embodying its values, practicing



Thomas French

INTERN
COMMUNITY IMPACT

self-awareness and adopting evidence-based practices to help improve the lives of those most vulnerable in our community. Central to this approach is becoming aware of the issues that drive inequality within our community, such as systemic racism.

All in all, my internship was an amazing opportunity to learn, apply my education and see what my degrees are worth outside the classroom. It put me in direct contact with organizations that I might seek employment from after I graduate. Finally, it allowed me to sit at the table and truly see what working for the betterment of a community looks like.



MISSION

The Heart of Missouri United Way fights to improve lives in our community.

VISION

Our community wins by Living United: By responding to changing community needs. By forging strategic partnerships and fostering effective solutions to tackle local issues. By harnessing the best resources and inspiring others to join the fight in defeating barriers to basic needs, health, education and financial stability.

VALUE STATEMENT

Heart of Missouri United Way

- Secures community dollars
- Raises awareness of community issues
- Builds organizational capacity for the nonprofit sector



LIVE UNITED®

Certified Agencies

Community Impact : Education - Health - Financial Stability - Basic Needs

- ADULT DAY CONNECTION

ALZHEIMERS ASSOCIATION OF GREATER MISSOURI

AMERICAN RED CROSS EASTERN MISSOURI REGION

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CENTRAL MISSOURI*

BOONSLICK HEARTLAND YMCA — COOPER COUNTY*

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE COLUMBIA AREA*

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA - GREAT RIVERS COUNCIL

CENTRAL MISSOURI AREA AGENCY ON AGING

CENTRAL MISSOURI COMMUNITY ACTION

CENTRAL MISSOURI FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION ASSOCIATION*

CHILD CARE AWARE

CITY OF REFUGE*

COLUMBIA CENTER FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE*

COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY LOW-INCOME SERVICES*

COMO YOUTH WORKS

DEFENSE AGAINST DIABETES

EASTERSEALS MIDWEST

FAMILY COUNSELING CENTER OF MISSOURI INC.*

FAMILY HEALTH CENTER*

FIRST CHANCE FOR CHILDREN*

FUN CITY YOUTH ACADEMY*

GIRLS ON THE RUN

GIRL SCOUTS OF THE MISSOURI HEARTLAND

GRADE A PLUS, INC.*

GREAT CIRCLE*

HARRISBURG EARLY LEARNING CENTER*

HARVEST HOUSE — COOPER COUNTY*

HEART OF MISSOURI CASA*

IN2ACTION
- JABBERWOCKY STUDIOS*

JOB POINT*

LIFE NETWORK OF CENTRAL MISSOURI

LOVE INC*

LUTHERAN FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES*

MARY LEE JOHNSTON COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER*

MEALS ON WHEELS

MID-MISSOURI LEGAL SERVICES CORP.*

NORA STEWART EARLY LEARNING CENTER*

PEDNET COALITION, INC.

PHOENIX HEALTH PROGRAMS*

RAINBOW HOUSE*

RILEY EQUINE CENTER

ROCK THE COMMUNITY

SERVICES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL)*

SOUTHERN BOONE AREA YMCA

ST. RAYMOND'S SOCIETY

THE BLUFFS

THE FOOD BANK FOR CENTRAL & NORTHEAST MISSOURI*

THE SALVATION ARMY*

TRUE NORTH*

TURNING POINT*

UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY HEARTLAND CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

UNITED COMMUNITY BUILDERS*

UNIVERSITY Y

UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITIES INC. — COOPER COUNTY*

VOLUNTARY ACTION CENTER*

WELCOME HOME

* DENOTES FUNDED AGENCY

Text “LiveUnited” to 91999 to give a donation.

UPCOMING EVENT DATES

- September 6, 2019

Campaign Kick-off and Day of Caring
COLUMBIA AGRICULTURE PARK - 8:00AM
- September 25, 2019

Peer - to - Peer Networking Conference
THE FOOD BANK - 7:30AM-4:00PM
- October 19, 2019

United Way Party at the Station OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- October 23, 2019

Community Summit OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- November 21, 2019

LIVE UNITED Day

THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY

WE AFFIRM the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.

WE AFFIRM the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.

WE AFFIRM the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and our organizations. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.

WE REJECT all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, diverse ability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.

WE PLEDGE our collective commitment to incorporate these principles into our mission.



**GET INVOLVED.
LIVE UNITED.®**

Learn more about how you can
get involved at our website:
www.UWHeartMO.org
or call our office at (573) 443-4523