

Blessings in a Backpack

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Rock star Sammy Hagar launches program to feed hungry students



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Hundreds attend SLPS summit

Nearly 1,000 parents and community members spent a recent Saturday morning at Vashon High School to get an update from the St. Louis Public School District about its Comprehensive Long Range Plan (CLRP). The Special Administrative Board (SAB) organized the public forum around a theme: "Building Our Future: One Community, One School, One Child at a Time."

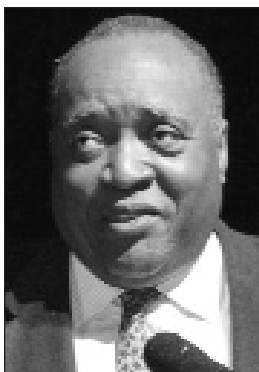
SAB member Richard Gaines, who has served as chairman for the CLRP, welcomed the participants and explained the purpose of the summit.

"A year ago, the SAB approved the development of a Comprehensive Long Range Plan and put into motion a process that would fully engage all sectors of the community in the creation of that plan," Gaines said. "Today we con-

tinue to move ahead with that process."

Gaines encouraged participants to ask questions and to share their thoughts with the district employees assigned to give updates on the implementation of the 30 identified Missouri School Improvement Plan or Quality Standards for improving student achievement.

SAB Chief Executive Officer Rick Sullivan and Superintendent of Schools Kelvin Adams were also on hand. Both district leaders thanked the community members for taking the time to attend and offered their



Richard Gaines

support to ensure the plan is carried out.

"We want you to tell us what you don't think is working, and we're going to respond to that," Sullivan said. "Don't be shy in sharing your thoughts or ideas."

The November summit also featured a presentation from MGT of America, the consultants hired to conduct a facilities study and make recommendations to the SAB regarding the future use of SLPS facilities, one of the 30 identified MSIP/Quality Standards in the CLRP. Gaines moderated a one-hour question and answer session following

the presentation to allow all interested participants an opportunity to have their voices heard.

The St. Louis Public Schools held a pair of summits last April to gather input from more than 1,500 community stakeholders. As a result of those summits, the 30 MSIP/Quality Standards were identified. Since then, district coordinators have been assigned to oversee the implementation progress.

Community members will have another opportunity to participate in the CLRP when the district holds another public forum this spring. To learn more about the SLPS Comprehensive Long Range Plan, visit the district website at www.slps.org, and click on the Comprehensive Long Range Plan newsletter link.



The St. Louis Public School District Office Professionals Leadership Committee (OPLC) recently held its first-ever mini-conference at Harris-Stowe State University. The purpose of the all-day event was to provide SLPS support staff with the training aligned with district goals and objectives included in the district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

SLPS OFFICE PROFESSIONALS ATTEND MINI-CONFERENCE

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Members of the support staff heard inspirational keynote addresses from two very successful St. Louis women. Keynote speakers for the event were Vickie Newton, news anchor for KMOV-TV, and Charlotte Ottley, director of communications and special initiatives in the City of St. Louis' License Collector's Office.

The mini-conference also provided professional development opportunities for the more than 150 support staff members in attendance via six different breakout sessions. Each attendee attended three hour-long sessions and chose from



Vickie Newton was a keynote speaker for the event.

Personal Best

In between listening to keynote addresses and attending breakout sessions, the SLPS staffers enjoyed visiting the various exhibitors supporting the mini-conference. Exhibitors included BC Spa, Crouch's Bangles and Beads,

the following topics:

- Handling Parental Concerns
- Legal Issues For Secretaries
- 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People
- Child Abuse Awareness & Kids Today
- Diversity In The Workplace
- Staying Motivated & Your

Envision Your Office, Fit By Faith, Hand Knit & Crochet by Cecilia, Harris-Stowe State University, Mary Kay, Office Essentials Incorporated, Silpada Designs Fine Sterling Silver Jewelry, Spicey Divas and Universal Business Supply.

Howard Hayes and Donna Woods served as co-chairs for the 2008 OPLC Mini-Conference. Assisting them in putting together the event were committee members Dr. Laura Brock, Georgiaetta Binion, Warice Blackmon-Davis, Pam Bryant, Nakia Cobbs, Rosalyn Collins, Debra Flieg, Diane Francis, Audrey Ford, Angela Hester, Cecelia Jones, Denise Levison, Ruth Lewis, Armando Lopez, Arma Manning, Sharmouel Mosley, Wanda Penrose, Deborah Perkins, Bobbie Richardson, Bethel Smith, Toni Stubblefield, LaTrisha Taylor-Minner and Mary Wantz.

Sumner's Advanced Placement students reflect on Obama's election

Election Day took on a special significance this year, as students throughout the St. Louis Public School District exercised their right to vote in a mock election. Students cast their ballots for candidates in the hot U.S. Presidential race, and made their voices heard in key state and local races. The K-12 mock elections were held as a part of Kids Voting USA, a national, nonpartisan program where students in grades K-12 are taught the importance of citizenship and voting.

On the day following the historic election of Barack Obama as President, students in Advanced Placement American Government at Sumner High School shared their reactions with their teacher, Harold Kelsey.

"It was a giant accomplishment," said junior Shantell Walton. "I didn't think that it would happen in my parents' lifetime, but I thought it would happen in mine." Walton added that she was impressed with Obama because of his opposition to the war in Iraq and his stance on the Wall Street bailout.

When asked about the issue of race in the election, Terry Foston, also a junior, cut to the chase.

"That's all we've seen - white presidents," said Foston. "Barack Obama's election - it's a great thing. This just changed America and the way it is."

Junior Shayna Burns tied the Obama win to another leader.

"Martin Luther King started this dream. He started with what we all wanted to see, but he wasn't able to accomplish it. So Obama went right behind him and took that place."

Of the dozen students in this AP class, Sylvia Haughton can boast that she's a first-time voter.

"The line was long when I got there about 10:00," the junior said, "but it was moving pretty fast. People were helping me. It felt wonderful."

Haughton, like her classmates, watched election returns on various news channels.

Instructor Kelsey said that he's proud of his students and their critical thinking skills.

"The students are very enthusiastic and informed on constructive response," noted Kelsey. "They are also media-prone. They read the newspapers and stay abreast of what's going on."

Public education is often viewed as the cornerstone of democracy. Kelsey is glad his students had the opportunity to witness the process first-hand.

Boeing and local cultural institutions support innovative science pilot

The Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis Science Center and St. Louis Zoo have joined forces and resources to foster teaching excellence and student achievement in science. This pilot program, known as Science Alliance, operates in partnership with Mullanphy Elementary and is funded by The Boeing Company.

Science Alliance program partners work on site with Mullanphy classroom teachers. Services provided include curriculum assistance, instructional materials, ongoing teacher training, hands-on student lessons, and regular student field trips at no cost to the school.

Frequent "science nights" offer opportunities for families to become involved in the experience. Program partners aim to establish a science "lab school" at Mullanphy, creating a model that can be replicated and expanded throughout the St. Louis area.

"This partnership is unique because teachers, students and their families collaborate and learn from leaders in the fields of math and science," said Paula Knight, executive director of curriculum and instruction for SLPS. "The field trips will enrich the experience."

"Excitement does not adequately describe how appreciative we are to work with the Missouri Botanical Garden, Saint Louis Science Center and Saint Louis Zoo," said Principal Ken

Blanton, Mullanphy ILC. "Through Boeing's funding of this project, Mullanphy students benefit from the team approach to making science applicable to the real world."

Mullanphy teachers participated in a week-long training workshop this summer. Garden, Science Center and Zoo educators continue to collaborate with the teachers, providing formal and informal training and assistance to improve science curriculum and teaching techniques. The educators work in the school's pre-kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms on a regular basis, partnering with the teachers to present hands-on science lessons.

Field trips are integrated into the curriculum as each class visits all three partner institutions over the course of the school year. In addition, family members of Mullanphy students are invited to be active participants in their children's education.

"The Missouri Botanical Garden is delighted to partner with our fellow institutions, St. Louis Public Schools, and The Boeing Company to strengthen science education at the elementary level," said Peter Raven, president of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

"The Science Alliance is an opportunity to bring together the outstanding educational resources of our three institu-

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tions to tackle a key challenge, and to work closely with Boeing, which is exceptionally committed to math and science education in our region," Raven

added. "Ultimately, we hope that students will gain not only knowledge, but also an enthusiasm for science and learning that will carry through in later years."

INITIATIVE HELPS STUDENTS TO RETAIN KNOWLEDGE OVER HOLIDAY BREAK

The holidays are almost here, and students understandably are anxious to start winter break. The St. Louis Public School District wants students to enjoy their time off, but not at the expense of learning.

On December 15, K-8 students took home a Winter Break Academic Package. This packet contained homework, which is designed to help students practice and retain instruction from the first semester. Principals recommend that parents help their children complete their homework.

The packets must be returned to school sometime between Jan. 6 and Jan. 9.

Students who successfully complete the packets and return them on time will receive credit and a chance at prizes. Children who return their homework on January 6 increase their chances for school recognition. Academic packets will also be available on the St. Louis Public Schools website, www.slps.org, and at the St. Louis Public Library, 1301 Olive St.

To provide support to students and

parents, all 13 SLPS community education centers will be open from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on December 22, December 23, December 29, and December 30. Academic support staff will serve as tutors for students needing assistance. Community education centers are located at:

- Blow Middle, 516 Loughborough Ave
- Clay Elementary, 3820 North 14th St.
- Ford Elementary, 1383 Clara Ave.
- Hamilton Elementary, 5819 Westminster Pl.

- Long Middle, 5028 Morganford Rd.
- Mullanphy Elementary, 4221 Shaw Ave.
- Nottingham CAJT High School, 4915 Donovan Ave.
- Shaw Elementary, 5329 Columbia Ave.
- Sigel Elementary, 2050 Allen Ave.
- Stevens Middle, 1033 N. Whittier St.
- Vashon High School, 3035 Cass Ave.
- Walbridge Elementary, 5000 Davison Ave.
- Yeatman-Liddell Prep, 4265 Athlone Ave.



Sammy Hagar, right, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame legend and Stan Curtis, chairman of Blessings in a Backpack and USA Harvest. The two recently to launch the Blessings in a Backpack program for St. Louis Public Schools.

Photo by Bill Greenblatt/UPI

Rock star Sammy Hagar launches program to feed hungry students

Hundreds of needy students are getting a nutritional boost, thanks to Sammy Hagar, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame legend and Stan Curtis, chairman of Blessings in a Backpack and USA Harvest. The two visited St. Louis recently to launch the Blessings in a Backpack program for St. Louis Public Schools.

Hagar, Curtis and SLPS Superintendent Kelvin Adams shared the news about the exciting program at a high-spirited school assembly held in November at the Patrick Henry Downtown Academy. Students, teachers, parents and community leaders and local media crowded the gymnasium to hear about the program and Hagar's commitment to support it.

Approximately 2,000 SLPS elementary students will receive food to eat on the weekends and a new backpack to carry the items home in. Ten elementary schools in the district will be recipients of the program.

The Red Rocker donated all of the proceeds from his St. Louis concerts on November 18 and 19 for Blessings.

"I don't just want to write a check. I want to see it firsthand. I want to feel it," said Hagar.

Students from the school presented

Hagar with tokens of appreciation, including a special poem and a huge thank you card and a standing ovation from the audience. Following the assembly, Hagar, Curtis, Adams, and SLPS staff filled backpacks with food. Representatives from Schnucks and U.S. Bank, who also support the program, got in on the action.

The backpacks will be packed weekly by volunteers. Schools in other cities involved with the program have seen positive effects through improved academics, school attendance and overall student morale.

Hagar has been a partner with Stan Curtis and USA Harvest for over a decade. Founded in 2005, Blessings in a Backpack has provided millions of meals to children in need throughout the United States. For more information about the program, visit www.blessingsinabackpack.com or contact Kate Stewart at St. Louis Public Schools: 314-345-4694 or kate.stewart@slps.org.

If you are interested in supporting this initiative, contributions may be sent to Mr. Chris Lee, Executive Director, St. Louis Public Schools Foundation, Blessings in a Backpack-St. Louis Fund, 1415 Olive Street, Suite 100, St. Louis, MO 63103, 314-436-2025.



Photo by Bill Greenblatt/UPI

Sammy Hagar greets a SLPS student after a high-spirited school assembly held in November at the Patrick Henry Downtown Academy.

ACADEMIC SPORT RETURNS TO ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

After a four-year absence, coaches and students in the St. Louis Public Schools are once again learning the fundamentals of organized policy debate. This year, the district has partnered with the St. Louis Urban Debate League (SLUDL) and the SLUDL Advisory Board to bring debate competitions back to its high schools and ninth grade centers.

The St. Louis Urban Debate League works to bridge the achievement gap in St. Louis through an after-school academic debate program for high school students in St. Louis Public Schools. The newly formed St. Louis UDL currently includes ten schools and already reaches nearly one hundred students.

Financing and oversight of the SLUDL are provided by a local not-for-profit organization called the SLUDL Advisory Board. The board is composed of civic-minded leaders in business, law, academia, government and the nonprofit community.

Urban debate embodies the three R's of successful schools: they entail *rigorous* intellectual work, they rely on a bedrock of *relationships* that connect students to the academic life of the school, and they provide *relevant* learning opportunities. Urban debaters have graduation rates at or near 100%. While the vast majority of these students have parents who did not go to college, UDLs send more than 75% of their students to four-year colleges, with some reporting college matriculation rates above 90%.

Debate competition motivates students to read, write, and research for hundreds of hours outside of the school day. This sustained, independent engagement with nonfiction texts refines higher-order literacy skills. A research team at the University of Missouri-Kansas City demonstrated that debate raises literacy scores by 25% in just one year.

Additionally, data from six UDLs show that in one year of participation, debaters raised their GPAs an average of 8% to 10%.

Since 1997, 37,000 students from 350



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urban public secondary schools – in districts with approximately 87% minority and 78% low-income student populations – have participated in Urban Debate Leagues.

The inaugural SLUDL tournament was held on Saturday, October 25, at Gateway IT High School. Tournaments are scheduled monthly through March 2009.

For more information, contact Ravi Rao, SLUDL League Director, at 314.691.4417 or ravirao@urbandebate.org.

It's not too early to plan for summer school

It may be the holiday season, but summer will be here before you know it. SLPS parents are encouraged to plan now for this year's summer school schedule.

Summer school will begin June 15, 2009 (barring inclement weather)

and will last for six weeks. Parents with questions about summer school may contact Warice Blackmon-Davis at 314-345-4692 (elementary) or Debra D. Irons-El at 314-345-2418 (middle and high school). Keep these dates in mind as you plan your vacation schedule.

SLPS: On the move!

St. Louis Public Schools is building a generation of lifelong learners. Our students achieve great things inside and outside the classroom, thanks to the district's innovative programs, highly qualified teachers, research-based instructional techniques, and wide variety of services.

Because quality education is our business, SLPS students graduate with choices. They are armed with practical skills to go directly to work. Strong academics also prepare them to pursue postsecondary education. Our students' success stories tell it all.

SLPS graduates attract national attention

In May, St. Louis Public Schools graduated four students who were selected for a prestigious scholarship program. We are proud of our Gates scholars: Brandon Bolden and Whitney Stovall (Gateway Institute of Technology), Renaldo Gordon (Beaumont High School), and Charonn Woods (Metro Academic and Classical High School). The Gates Millennium Scholars program provides the cost of tuition and living expenses for the students' undergraduate studies, as well as fund their graduate studies. All four SLPS grads are now studying at universities of their choice.

Fast facts about SLPS

All St. Louis Public high schools are either accredited or in the process of becoming accredited by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA).

All St. Louis Public high schools offer Advanced Placement courses. This past year, nearly 1,300 students were



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enrolled.

SLPS is the only area school district to offer full-time gifted education at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

St. Louis Public Schools have magnet schools at every level. No other area district can boast this award-winning programming.

The St. Louis Virtual School presents e-learning opportunities to K-12 students to accommodate those students who need flexible scheduling, credit recovery, and nontraditional options.

The St. Louis Public Schools continue to expand its early childhood program.

The district's ESOL Welcome Center provides services and a warm environment to the area's expanding population of English Speakers of Other Languages.

After-school programs operate in virtually all SLPS schools.

The district has installed broad-based

special education services that begin at the pre-kindergarten level.

The district's Big Picture schools present individualized instruction, small student-teacher ratios, and innovative uses of the creative processes to foster academic success.

Career Education: Expanding students' vocational and academic options

St. Louis Public Schools' first-class career education program attracts talented students from the city and county. Career education opportunities are in every SLPS high school. Graduates go straight to work with specialized skills and/or accept generous scholarships to college and other postsecondary institutions. Strong business and community partnerships, excellent curricula, and

thriving internship opportunities serve as a foundation for one of the strongest career education programs in the region.

Moving ahead with a vision

In many respects, the St. Louis Public School District is growing. We're expanding programs and services, and continuing to diversify our academic offerings. Fostering academic success for all students – and providing a safe, nurturing environment for learning, are our most important responsibilities. We owe this to our students and to our parents who serve as great advocates.

We could not exist without the ongoing support of parents, teachers, students, and community members. To our SLPS family: Thank you. You belong here.

District-wide college fair series helps an estimated 3,000 juniors and seniors

During the week of October 13-17, the Division of Career and Technical Education, in collaboration with eight college admission counselors, hosted the SLPS College Fair Series.

Representatives from thirty-six colleges and universities travelled to each high school to assist students with admissions applications, deadlines and information. Prior to visiting the fair, students participated in a preparatory session led by college admission counselors. The fairs took place at Gateway IT, Central VPA, Beaumont, Sumner, Soldan IS, Vashon,

Roosevelt, and Metro.

The colleges, universities, and organizations participated:

- Bradley University
- Saint Louis University
- Fontbonne University
- SEMO
- Harris Stowe State University
- Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- Johnson C. Smith
- Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville
- Lincoln Tech Institute
- St. Louis College of Pharmacy

- Lincoln University
- St. Louis Community College—Forest Park
- Lindenwood University
- The Illinois Institute of Art Chicago
- Maryville University
- The Scholarship Foundation
- Missouri Army National Guard
- Truman State University
- Missouri S & T-Rolla
- UM-Columbia
- Missouri State University
- UM-Kansas City
- New Horizons Computer Learning

- UM-Saint Louis
- Northwest MO State
- University of Central Missouri
- Ottawa University of Tulsa
- Patricia Stevens College
- Washington University in Saint Louis
- Ranken Tech
- Webster University
- Robert Morris College
- West Point
- Saint Louis College of Health Careers
- Western Illinois University

SLPS students honored for leadership and service to others

Congratulations to SLPS students Neonna Campbell of Ashland Elementary, Andrew Givens of Ford Elementary and Kevin Nunez-Ortiz of Gateway Middle! These young role models received the "Do The Right Thing" Award at a ceremony held at the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department in October. The students were recognized for their positive leadership and service to others. They were selected from hundreds of children who were nominated by area parents, teachers, neighbors and friends.

Neonna Campbell

A normal day at recess suddenly took a turn for the worse. As Neonna played with her friends, she observed a student fall and hit his head. Realizing the seriousness of the injury, Neonna comforted the boy and then told him she would get help. After she told two nearby adults what happened, she ran into the building to alert the school's office staff and the principal. She then told the school nurse and the boy's teacher. Due to Neonna's appropriate and immediate actions, the student received prompt medical attention and successfully recovered.

Andrew Givens

Two fifth-grade boys were arguing and about to fight, when Andrew



stepped between them to stop the altercation. He told the students, "Whatever it is, it's probably not worth fighting and getting into trouble." When the students were taken to the office for counseling, the boys said

they would have thrown punches if Andrew had not intervened. Not only did Andrew prevent the fight, but he helped the students realize they needed to think before using their fists. His admirable and responsible actions are

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a positive example for his fellow students.

Kevin Nunez-Ortiz

Since Kevin speaks Spanish and English fluently, he acts as a translator at Gateway Middle. A new student was unable to properly communicate vital information that the school needed from his parents. Kevin willingly befriended the student, and then conveyed to his family what information the school needed from them to finalize the paperwork. Thanks to Kevin's kindness and service to others, a student and his family were able to experience a smooth transition at their new school.

The "Do The Right Thing" program is sponsored by KMOV Channel 4, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, St. Louis County Police Department, *Suburban Journals* and Cooperating School Districts. To nominate a child, go to www.kmov.com/forms/DTRT_email-form.html.

A Win - Win Situation

Save Money While Helping the District

Just in time for the Holidays!

Save 10% every time you buy shoes at shoes.com.

5% of every purchase goes directly to St. Louis Public Schools

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