New Mizzou chancellor visits region

The University of Missouri’s new chancellor found out Tuesday just how important farming is to feeding the hungry throughout the state.

R. Bowen Loftin stopped by the Second Harvest Community Food Bank to discover the relevance of the system’s century-old University Extension service to programs that deliver food to those in need. It was part of a rapid tour Mr. Loftin took through Northwest Missouri that concluded with an alumni and university reception and dinner at the Moila Country Club.

The chancellor began his MU duties on Feb. 1, after being hired in early December 2013. He is the former president of Texas A&M University and succeeded Brady Deaton, who retired last November.

His day in the area began with a trip to Chillicothe, Mo., where he met with Extension officials, Future Farmers of American members, and 4-H youths. He also spoke with city and county officials. He later traveled to a dairy heifer operation near Gower, Mo.

“This place is a connection of Second Harvest to MU,” he said ahead of touring the St. Joseph facility. “I’m learning the people. I’m learning the places,” he added.

Northwest Missouri’s prominence in the life sciences isn’t lost on Mr. Loftin.

“MU has extraordinary strength in the plant and animal sciences,” he said. Arriving from a like-minded land-grant institution in Texas, he said the university plays a vital role in promoting research.

Chad Higdon, Second Harvest’s executive director, praised the interrelationship between the agency and Extension in blunting hunger. A volunteer program known as Master Gardeners raises produce that is delivered for distribution by the bank, he said.

Extension horticulturalist Tom Fowler said he was unaware of the convergence between both organizations. Master Gardener members, he said, will participate in the Great Plains Growers Conference set for Jan. 8 to 10 in St. Joseph.

Mr. Fowler said a food demonstration plot, done in conjunction with Kansas State University, has supplied sweet potatoes, turnips and other vegetables to the hungry. The Master Garden program has bestowed 8.5 tons of food to Second Harvest over the past five years, he said. Classes are held in the region each spring.
Community Gardens and Garden to Grow projects also act as links in the food chain.

“(There’s) a lot going on in Northwest Missouri with horticulture,” Mr. Fowler said.

Those who attended the Moila event learned more about Extension services via a Power Point presentation, said Tim Baker, a horticulturalist based out of Gallatin, Mo. The evening’s schedule featured updates on campus and alumni happenings.

Mr. Loftin and his staff also toured Second Harvest’s facilities and viewed a nutrition education demonstration by its food pantry, the Fresh Start Community Market.

The University of Missouri’s new chancellor found out Tuesday just how important farming is to feeding the hungry throughout the state.

R. Bowen Loftin stopped by the Second Harvest Community Food Bank to discover the relevance of the system’s century-old University Extension service to programs that deliver food to those in need. It was part of a rapid tour Mr. Loftin took through Northwest Missouri that concluded with an alumni and university reception and dinner at the Moila Country Club.

The chancellor began his MU duties on Feb. 1, after being hired in early December 2013. He is the former president of Texas A&M University and succeeded Brady Deaton, who retired last November.

His day in the area began with a trip to Chillicothe, Mo., where he met with Extension officials, Future Farmers of American members, and 4-H youths. He also spoke with city and county officials. He later traveled to a dairy heifer operation near Gower, Mo.

“This place is a connection of Second Harvest to MU,” he said ahead of touring the St. Joseph facility. “I’m learning the people. I’m learning the places,” he added.

Northwest Missouri’s prominence in the life sciences isn’t lost on Mr. Loftin.

“MU has extraordinary strength in the plant and animal sciences,” he said. Arriving from a like-minded land-grant institution in Texas, he said the university plays a vital role in promoting research.

Chad Higdon, Second Harvest’s executive director, praised the interrelationship between the agency and Extension in blunting hunger. A volunteer program known as Master Gardeners raises produce that is delivered for distribution by the bank, he said.

Extension horticulturalist Tom Fowler said he was unaware of the convergence between both organizations. Master Gardener members, he said, will participate in the Great Plains Growers Conference set for Jan. 8 to 10 in St. Joseph.

Mr. Fowler said a food demonstration plot, done in conjunction with Kansas State University, has supplied sweet potatoes, turnips and other vegetables to the hungry. The Master Garden
program has bestowed 8.5 tons of food to Second Harvest over the past five years, he said. Classes are held in the region each spring.

Community Gardens and Garden to Grow projects also act as links in the food chain.

“(There’s) a lot going on in Northwest Missouri with horticulture,” Mr. Fowler said.

Those who attended the Moila event learned more about Extension services via a Power Point presentation, said Tim Baker, a horticulturalist based out of Gallatin, Mo. The evening’s schedule featured updates on campus and alumni happenings.

Mr. Loftin and his staff also toured Second Harvest’s facilities and viewed a nutrition education demonstration by its food pantry, the Fresh Start Community Market.

CHILlicoTHE

NEWS

MU chancellor visits students, community

By CATHERINE STORTZ RIPLEY cripley@chillicothenews.com
Posted Nov. 19, 2014 @ 12:43 pm

CHILLCOTHE, Mo.- University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin visited Chillicothe on Tuesday, talking with nearly 300 4-H and FFA students in the morning and then later met with University of Missouri Extension staff members and local business leaders during an afternoon luncheon. There were 268 4-H and FFA students from Chillicothe High School, Southwest R-1 and Tina-Avalon, as well as a few other schools, filling the Mervyn Jenkins Expo Center for the chancellor’s visit. Loftin gave an overview of what he does and then answered questions from the students. He talked to them about his own agriculture background, stating that he was born in Texas and grew up in a ranching/farming family.

“I grew up in a pretty tough environment,” he said. “We had no money, but we had plenty of food. But it was OK. I learned a lot of lessons that way. You learn a lot through agricultural life. You learn about integrity, hard work and people.”

After meeting with the students, Loftin toured the Litton Agri-Science Learning Center Campus. Construction of the first building was completed in 1994 and since that time, the campus has expanded to include an archery range, a hog facility (now being expanded for a second time), a livestock building, horse arena, campground, an ag education building and additional features.
All but a small portion of the ag education building was constructed through donations. Neal Wolf, ag education instructor at Grand River Technical School, provided highlights of the campus’ use. In 2013, there were 42 students who housed 62 animals at the center; and in 2014, there were 50 students who housed 71 animals at the center.

He also told the chancellor that there is strong 4-H and FFA involvement at the state fair and that this year there were 105 youth exhibiting at the fair and, for the third year in a row, Livingston County received the Missouri State Fair Governor’s Cup, which is based upon the number of state fair exhibitors and their placements. Livingston County has received that award 11 of the last 15 years. Wolf also explained that there were 42 activities based out of the Jenkins Expo Center covering 126 days and that there were 164 activities covering 151 days at the Mildred Litton building.

Loftin met with community leaders and MU Extension staff members to discuss programming in agriculture, 4-H, food / nutrition, business and community development and emergency management. Presentations highlighted Extension programming in youth development, including the 4-H LIFE program, which addresses the needs of children with incarcerated parents, and a pilot project training program for responding to animal and agricultural emergencies.

“It is an extraordinary community,” Loftin said later in the day during the luncheon gathering of community leaders and MU Extension staff members. “I was so taken by a number of things. The energy here, and the commitment to education is extraordinary. You’re doing the right thing. Investing in education is the biggest payback there is, personally, and as a community.”

The chancellor also complimented the community on the Litton Agri-Science Learning Center.

“It’s an extraordinary facility,” he said. “To have that facility here is a great investment. “Your children here are benefitting immensely from the assets you have put in place here. To have it paid for through philanthropy astounds me. It speaks to the community, the love and appreciation of education. Clearly, you are concerned about education.”

Loftin said the University of Missouri reached a couple of milestones this year in that the university is 175 years old this year, and that the University of Missouri Extension Service is 100 years old. He talked about how his father utilized the University Extension services weekly in his farming business and noted how the services offered through Extension have expanded.

“We now have individuals involved with leadership, nutrition and youth (4-H),” he said. “All aspects of your lives here can be affected by the presence right here in this county through MU extension. We’re not just a place down in Columbia; they are right here with you, day in and day out, helping you do things better.”
He also talked about MU being a land grant institution committed to access and research and that it is a great asset for the state. “We are the largest institution for higher education in Missouri,” Loftin said. “We are the most comprehensive institution in Missouri. One of the important things about Mizzou is not just its academic programs, which are world class, very impactful and very important to anybody’s future. It’s also a place you can find leadership. We have so many organizations. It’s a practical place to learn to become a leader. Your diploma gets your first job, perhaps; but, after that, you are the one shaping your destiny.”

The chancellor also noted the challenges of managing space with a growing enrollment (2.5 percent increase this year), and Missouri, as a state, that is not growing. He said the university is making an effort to become a better partner with the private sector in developing businesses in Columbia and across the state to give the kind of jobs to the graduates that they want to keep them in Missouri.

“They may come from Minnesota or Texas, but if they come here and they love being here, we need to give them the economic ability to make a good living here so that when they get out, they’ll stay,” Loftin said. “That grows the tax base, it grows the economy, it helps our state to improve.”

University of Missouri receives $1 million gift

COLUMBIA, MO. - The University of Missouri says it will use a $1 million gift from a graduate to support community journalism.

The school announced the gift from Walter B. Potter Jr., of Falls Church, Virginia, on Wednesday. He is a third generation journalist whose father and grandfather owned small-town newspapers.

The gift adds to an existing Walter B. Potter Fund for Innovation in Local Journalism. It will be used for teaching and research on small-town journalism, including rural areas and in individual suburban neighborhoods.
Potter, who is retired, says the gift was to honor his father and repay the university for the positive influence it had on his career.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article4028363.html#storylink=cpy

Virginia newsman pledges $1M to University of Missouri journalism school

Walter Potter Jr. has pledged $1 million to the University of Missouri School of Journalism’s Walter B. Potter Fund for Innovation in Local Journalism.

The endowment was established in 2010, supporting teaching and research on journalism that serves small communities. Potter's gift is in honor of his late father, Walter B. Potter Sr.

The school's Walter B. Potter Sr. Conference — bringing together journalists from across the country to discuss new technologies and strategies for the changing economic climate for local journalists — was first held in 2011. The next annual conference is Nov. 21 at the Reynolds Journalism Institute at Missouri.

Potter Sr. owned and operated six community newspapers in Virginia and was president of the Virginia Press Association in 1959 and president of the National Newspaper Association in 1966.

Potter's mother, Alice Kay, was a reporter and photographer for the Culpeper Star-Exponent.

"The newspaper industry has provided three generations of my family with satisfying and rewarding lives," Potter said. "I just wanted to give back to the profession from which we have received so much."

Potter Jr., who earned a master's degree from the University of Maryland School of Journalism, was a reporter for the Nashville Banner, the Kansas City Times and Presstime. He was also editor at his father and grandfather's Emporia, Virginia, newspaper, The Independent-Messenger.

He is a resident of Falls Church.
MU gets $1 million gift to bolster community journalism

_University of Missouri administrators announced a $1 million gift Wednesday afternoon that will foster teaching and research around small-town journalism._

The gift comes from Walter B. Potter Jr., a Falls Church, Va., resident and MU journalism school alumnus.

This gift supplements the existing Walter B. Potter Fund for Innovation in Local Journalism, which was established in 2010. The endowment previously funded a conference in Potter’s father's name. The first conference took place in 2011, and the second is this week at the Reynolds Journalism Institute. The conference brings community journalists together to talk about technology and the industry climate.

The $1 million will be used to support teaching and research on small-town journalism, including rural areas and urban neighborhoods.

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin introduced Potter, a third-generation newspaperman, saying he had ink in his veins.

Potter spoke to a full room in the Reynolds Alumni Center about his passion for journalism and how he wanted to give back to the industry that carried his career and the careers of his father and grandfather, both of whom owned and operated small-town newspapers.

“It’s natural to want to give back when you’ve received so much,” Potter said.

Potter, who is retired, worked at papers that his father owned in Virginia and as a police reporter for the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, a reporter for the Nashville Banner and a reporter and editor for the Kansas City Times.

Dean Mills, outgoing journalism school dean, said that while many believe the future of journalism is financially unstable, small, local newspapers aren’t just “surviving, but thriving.”

Potter pledged to continue his support of the journalism school with his time and his money.
MU School of Journalism receives $1 million gift to support journalism for small communities

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 | 6:54 p.m. CST; updated 10:11 p.m. CST, Wednesday, November 19, 2014

BY LAURA DAVIS

COLUMBIA — The Missouri School of Journalism received a $1 million gift Wednesday afternoon to support teaching and research focused on journalism in small communities.

The gift, from Walter Potter Jr., will supplement the Walter B. Potter Fund for Innovation in Local Journalism, according to a news release.

Dean Mills, the dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, said community news organizations are crucial to democracy at the local level.

"They give citizens the news and information they need to build and maintain strong communities," Mills said.

Potter is a third-generation newspaperman. He grew up working on the Culpeper Star-Exponent, in Culpeper, Virginia, as a reporter, editor, salesman and newspaper carrier.

"Printer's ink is in my blood," Potter said.

In 1981, he earned a master's degree in journalism from MU. Potter went on to work at the Nashville Banner, The Kansas City Times, The Independent-Messenger of Emporia, Virginia, and Presstime Magazine.

Three of those publications are no longer around. That fact, as well as Potter's appreciation for his time at MU, are why he made his gift. He wants to do his best to help ensure that local newspapers not only survive, but thrive.

To that end, he established The Walter B. Potter Fund — named after his father, a former president of the National Newspaper Association — in 2010.

"He was an example of what a small town publisher should be," Potter said.
The 2014 Walter B. Potter Sr. Conference, funded by the endowment and dedicated to assisting small-town news organizations with innovation and transformation, will be held Thursday and Friday at the Reynolds Journalism Institute.

School of Journalism announces $1 million donation

The Missouri School of Journalism announced Wednesday a $1 million donation from Walter B. Potter Jr. to benefit innovation in community journalism.

The donation will fund the Walter B. Potter Sr. Conference, which brings together community journalists from around the country to discuss innovations in technology and strategies for the changing economic climate. The first conference of its kind was in 2011, and the next will take place Nov. 20-21 at the Reynolds Journalism Institute.

“It’s an honor to be able to create and support the Potter Fund and, through it, the best journalism school in the world,” Potter Jr. said.

Joumrlaism school Dean Dean Mills said the conference will support community organizations as they transition from print to digital media.

“Community news organizations are crucial to democracy at the local level,” Mills said in a news release. “They give citizens the news and information they need to build and maintain strong communities. This generous gift from Potter will strengthen those organizations through the generations by helping them to use the latest technologies and approaches to provide rigorous and useful journalism to their audiences.”

Potter Jr. started as a paperboy for the Culpeper Star-Exponent, which his father owned. He went on to earn a master’s degree in journalism from MU and worked for several community newspapers.

Potter Jr. said his time at MU was a turning point in his life and referred to the connections he made as the highlight of his time, some of whom were present at the announcement of the donation.
“My career took a sharp turn upward,” he said. “The people I met at Mizzou and ideas I acquired enriched my life to the present day. It’s natural to want to give back when you’ve received so much.”

Potter Jr. named the conference after his late father, who owned and operated six community newspapers.

“He was the prototypical community publisher,” he said. “He was the example of what a small-town publisher should be.”

Potter Jr. said he plans to visit various small-town newspaper publishers in Missouri over a six-week period to discover what they need to cope with new technology, as well as potentially teaching seminars at MU.

Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said Potter Jr.’s donation is the second announced for the journalism school this fall, following a gift of $10 million from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

“These (donations) represent ways for the school to continually do things that are new and exciting and to continue to evolve to meet the dynamic world of journalism,” Loftin said. “We know the impact Mizzou has worldwide in journalism.”

Missouri hosting more foreign college students

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — The number of foreign students attending class at Missouri colleges and universities is on the rise.

New figures from the Institute of International Education show there were 18,205 international students enrolled at Missouri higher education institutions during the 2013-2014 school year.

That marked an increase of more than 5 percent from the previous year, which trailed the nationwide increase of 8 percent.

Missouri ranked 12th among states in terms of international students, the same position it held the previous year.

The University of Missouri-Columbia had the most foreign students, with 2,576, followed closely by Washington University in St. Louis, with 2,449.
U.S. forests are crawling with ‘yummy’ salamanders

Salamander populations are much larger in some US forests than scientists once thought. That’s really good news for vertebrates, which rely on the amphibians as a major source of food.

Researchers at the University of Missouri have estimated that the population of salamanders in forested regions of the Missouri Ozarks are 2-4 times higher than originally thought, and in other regions of the eastern US may be on average 10 times higher.

“Our lab works to identify salamanders as an influential part of the forest ecosystem and food chain,” says Ray Semlitsch, a professor of biological sciences. “Using the latest research methods, we calculated the population size of Southern Redback Salamanders in Ozark Forests and their value as a food source.

“We found that 1.88 billion salamanders inhabit one district of the Mark Twain National Forest alone, which is roughly 1,400 metric tons of biomass. For comparison, that’s equivalent to the biomass found in most whitetail deer in that region.”

There are two methods for estimating abundance. One is to simply count salamanders and plot the numbers on a grid representing the forest landscape. That is how the estimates were calculated for an influential study conducted in the 1970s.

However, Semlitsch’s group, armed with the knowledge that the majority of salamanders are underground at any given time, captured animals on the surface during intensive repeated surveys over two years and used statistical modeling to produce a more thorough accounting of variation in salamander population density.

“Our abundance models also take into account environmental factors,” Semlitsch says. “Factors such as date of collection, time since last rainfall, slope of the terrain, and forest canopy cover are plugged into the model to help predict variation in the surface population over time; that’s what makes our model so powerful.
“The hidden biodiversity of amphibians is something we don’t generally consider; we forget that salamanders are nocturnal and mostly unobserved. Therefore, I think most will be amazed at the quantities of food out there that we just don’t see.”

Semlitsch believes that future research should consider the importance of amphibians to ecosystem processes such as soil enrichment. Future forest management techniques and protection of salamanders are important to healthy forest ecosystems and should be considered in all forest management decisions, Semlitsch adds.

The study was published in the Canadian Journal of Zoology, and was funded in part by the US Forest Service cooperative Agreement with support from the Missouri Department of Conservation.

**THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**

Tension mounts in Ferguson with every day of waiting

BY DUGAN ARNETT AND RICK MONTGOMERY

11/19/2014 11:18 PM

FERGUSON, MO. - The boards have long been in place, large slabs of wood attached to the front windows of her strip-mall hair salon.

A company came and attached them for $350, right around the time the windows of a neighboring business were shattered. Triondus “Tree” Sleet, who owns 3 T’s Beauty Salon on West Florissant Avenue here, figured it was wise to take precautions.

She dislikes the boards. They cut out every inch of sunlight, giving her little shop, which she’s owned for the past 12 years, a bunker feel.

“It’s like being in prison,” Sleet said this week as she worked on one of her remaining regular customers.

That feeling is not unusual in Ferguson.
For much of the past three months, residents have braced for the decision of a grand jury that has been considering evidence in the case of police officer Darren Wilson, who in August shot and killed an unarmed black teenager named Michael Brown.

And with the decision, the fallout it might bring.

Each day without an announcement brings mounting tension, and Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon’s Monday declaration of a state of emergency in Ferguson did little to quell fear.

Then country singer Hunter Hayes canceled a concert scheduled for today in St. Louis, citing possible unrest.

The crowding of national news media also suggests something huge is about to happen. But will it?

Experts far from this St. Louis suburb note that a community can erupt for lots of reasons, but usually order and peaceful protests win out. Civil unrest in America typically ignites from an unexpected spark, not from months of worry, preparation and the worst of fears.

But law enforcement officials have gathered to go over contingency plans.

And like Sleet, the vast majority of business owners along a popular city strip have boarded up their windows in an attempt to ward off any looting that might occur.

Such is the current normal here.

On the eve of the announcement Ferguson has taken on an uneasy — and oftentimes eerie — calm.

Unlike the weeks immediately following Brown’s death — when protesters lined the streets three- and four-deep and law enforcement officials stood in front of armored vehicles — there are few protesters still gathering within Ferguson. Neighborhoods that saw protester-police face-offs in August have gone quiet.
Streetlights near the police station have been wrapped in holly and red bows for the holidays.

When civil discord turns to destruction, it tends to happen in a “flash” that few had seen coming, said Brian Houston, co-director of the University of Missouri’s Terrorism and Disaster Center.

“In this country, at least in the last 20 or 30 years, violent protests or riots are more often a flare reaction to an acute event than, say, a plan to burn down a town,” he said.

Even when protests are planned, they can end in chaos if police overreact.

In 1999 tens of thousands of demonstrators converged on downtown Seattle to protest a World Trade Organization meeting. Police fired stun grenades, pepper spray and tear gas to clear streets and intersections.

Soon the protesters were heaving bottles and vandalizing cars and shops.

In Ferguson, Houston said, there were two flash points: Brown’s killing and the aggressive police response.

He wonders if Missouri authorities have learned any lessons: “To say it’s an emergency and we need soldiers to deal with it sounds like a self-fulfilling prophecy.”

On Ferguson’s Lang Drive, a quiet residential road near the heart of where protests turned violent this summer, Katherine S. Wells is one of many retirees who fill the neighborhood. And like many, she is bracing for the upcoming decision.

Even with the possibility of violence, though, she hasn’t considered leaving.
“I’ve been here for 27 years, so I have no plans to go anywhere,” said Wells, who lives roughly a block from where a QuikTrip gas station was burned in the immediate aftermath of the August shooting.

At the Ferguson Burger Bar, as customers came and went — many of them out-of-towners with notebooks or cameras — David Whitt talked about the anticipation in the community.

“It affects you on a lot of levels,” said Whitt, 35, who lives in the apartment complex Brown was killed near. “Dealing with all this and not knowing what’s going to happen tomorrow.”

Like back in August, when local law enforcement drew criticism for the use of tear gas and rubber bullets on protesters, there remains, at least in the eyes of some, a lingering distrust for law enforcement.

Whitt said he doesn’t fear any violence following the grand jury announcement.

“No, I’m not afraid of that,” he said. “I’m afraid of violence from the police.”

In a press conference last week, Nixon announced that the Missouri Highway Patrol, St. Louis County police and St. Louis city police would be handling any potential fallout. Absent from the list was Ferguson’s police department, which is currently under a civil rights investigation by the U.S. Justice Department.

An FBI bulletin warns law enforcement agencies nationwide that the grand jury decision “will likely” provoke extremist protesters to raise havoc, news media reported this week.

Water treatment plants could become targets, and so-called “hacktivists” could attempt to launch cyber attacks against authorities.

While the protests for months have been peaceful, much of the recent reporting out of Ferguson has replayed images of the August fires, the looting and the military-style effort to restore order.
Incendiary coverage, many say. But experts argue the evidence is weak that media attention alone fuels violent unrest.

If the reporting is fair and complete, some contend, it may even avert the brand of rioting that in 1992 followed the acquittal of four Los Angeles police officers caught on video beating a pulled-over Rodney King.

“It was the lack of in-depth coverage that fueled unrest there,” said Judy Muller, who helped cover the deadly Los Angeles riots as a TV reporter. Three days of disorder led to more than 50 deaths, about 7,000 arrests and hundreds of fires.

Now a professor at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School of Communication, Muller attributed the extent of that rampage partly to media fixation on a short, gruesome video of King being beaten. It had been edited by a TV station to exclude a blurry shot of King charging at officers.

Little attention was paid to defense accounts of the circumstances of King’s arrest after a high-speed chase.

Having cringed at the video over and over, “nobody imagined these guys would be let off,” Muller said. “It was that unexpected shock that triggered everything.”

It then may be beneficial to Ferguson that legal commentators, news reports and arguably the governor’s emergency declaration signal a strong possibility that Wilson will not be indicted.

Daniel McMullen, who has run Solo Insurance on West Florissant for 20 years, simply wants things to return to normal.

“Most of my customers just want it over with,” he said Tuesday, sitting in his office accompanied by his giant schnauzer, Maverick.

Not everyone, however, has managed to remain so calm.
A few miles away, inside Metro Shooting Supplies, customers streamed in Tuesday afternoon as phones rang. It’s been that way for two weeks, said owner Steven King, who estimates his business sold 250 guns over the weekend — a massive jump from typical sales numbers.

“We’ve got people that have never thought — never even *dreamt* — that they would need a gun to defend their home coming in now and taking classes and learning how to shoot because they are afraid that somebody is going to come into their neighborhood,” King said. “And they live in gated communities. So if those people are afraid, that tells you a little bit about the mood in St. Louis.”

For their part, Ferguson officials have gone silent in recent days.

Police Chief Thomas Jackson, whose job has been the source of much speculation in recent weeks, declined an interview request shortly after pulling into the station parking lot around 9 a.m. Tuesday.

“Maybe,” he said. “But not today.”

Later, a newly appointed police spokesman said Jackson and the city’s mayor had met the previous day and decided it would be best to decline interviews until the grand jury announcement.

And then there’s Sleet, the beauty shop owner.

Like many across the country, she begins each morning by checking the news to see if there have been any updates regarding the decision. So far, though, there has only been waiting. She worries about the toll the past few months has taken on business, and about what might still be coming. While she hopes the protective boarding she had installed will serve as a deterrent, she knows that, in reality, it’s little more than a decoy.

“What do those boards mean to somebody who really wants to do something?” she asks.

Out on West Florissant this week, nightfall brought nothing of note. A thin blanket of snow covered parts of the ground. Temperatures dwindled. By 7 p.m. most evenings, the street was empty, save for the occasional passerby.
Dusk arrived once again Wednesday in Ferguson, and for one more day at least, its residents went home uneasily, bracing for what the next day might bring.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/crime/article4019818.html#storylink=cpy

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia organizations plan peaceful rallies in response to Ferguson ruling

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 | 7:44 p.m. CST; updated 7:15 a.m. CST, Thursday, November 20, 2014
BY KAITLYNN MARTIN

COLUMBIA — The African American Clergy Coalition of Mid-Missouri and other Missouri organizations are preparing a set of peaceful rallies to immediately follow the announcement of the Ferguson grand jury ruling.

According to a news release from the coalition, organizations like Missouri Faith Voices, the MU chapter of the NAACP and the Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation have joined together with the Columbia branch of the NAACP to carry out a nonviolent response to the ruling and to address systemic racial injustices.

"As soon as the ruling is announced, a series of events will be triggered," said Carl W. Kennedy II, executive committee member of the clergy coalition. Two rallies are planned: one at Second Missionary Baptist Church and one for students at Speakers Circle.

Afterward, the plan is for participants from both rallies to march to the Boone County Courthouse.

No matter which way the grand jury decision goes, Kennedy said the coalition will gather for the rallies.
"We believe that the underlying issues will continue to exist no matter what the ruling is," Kennedy said. "And if there is a ruling for indictment, we will still have to endure a trial, so the struggle continues."

People can stay updated on the rallies by signing up for updates through a text message server. Those interested can text "/fergusonu" to 81010 to receive the updates.

Kennedy said word about the rallies is also being spread through local congregations and organizations.

Despite not knowing when the ruling will be announced, Kennedy is confident about the rallies' turnout.

"This is an issue that has resonated with a lot of people in Columbia for many reasons," he said. "I think it is historical for Columbia to have a gathering of people transcending from different races and ideologies to come together for a common cause and for justice."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Readers share hopes for community responses to Ferguson

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 | 5:58 p.m. CST
BY MISSOURIAN READER COMMUNITY

We're asking people with a variety of perspectives to reflect on this question:

With a Ferguson grand jury decision expected soon, what are your hopes for how our community responds and moves forward?

Here are the responses we've received so far. Contribute your own by emailing submissions@ColumbiaMissourian.com. Please include a couple of sentences about yourself and your background.

Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz is an associate professor in the MU Department of Communication. She researches the effects of mediated depictions of race, ethnicity and gender on people's perceptions of themselves and others.
The news media and social media will be central to how communities — not just in Missouri, but around the nation and the world — respond to the anticipated Ferguson grand jury decision. Media can be healing in creating shared perspectives and fostering a sense of community resilience. However, media can also create division and have a tendency to focus on the most sensational aspects of an event.

For example, the repetition of emotionally charged images and language used in the media may contribute to heightened feelings of fear, anger and distress surrounding the Ferguson case.

The ability for news media to have access to report on the scene and provide transparent coverage is essential, and the efforts to provide thoughtful rather than sensational coverage may be crucial to communities moving forward in productive ways.

Social media such as Twitter, on the other hand, will feed both the news media and the community conversations. It is hopeful that through media we can work to heal and strengthen our communities and work toward more positive outcomes.

Carl Kenney is an adjunct instructor at the MU School of Journalism and former adjunct instructor at Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies. He was named North Carolina’s top serious columnist by the North Carolina Press Association for his work with the News & Observer in 2011. He is an associate pastor at Bethel Church.

One hundred and sixteen miles. That’s the distance between Columbia and Ferguson, Missouri. It’s close — close like kinfolk battling over who gets the last word.

Ferguson sheds light on more than the death of Michael Brown. The messages from Ferguson teach residents of Columbia lessons regarding the systematic suppression of black people.

We’re taught the consequences of limited black participation in law enforcement. We absorb warnings about the implications of too few black people holding public office. We
have witnessed the brewing rage facing black youth. More than any of that, we have discovered how deeply divided America is on issues related to race.

Many rebuff the messages of black youth by pointing to the consequences of their own actions. Some contend violent protest is evidence of trivial claims. Many maintain confidence in law enforcement and the judicial system, while refuting contentions that racism and racist institutions are the root causes of the agony felt by black youth.

After spending time in Ferguson, and listening to black people in Ferguson, Columbia and throughout Mid-Missouri, a group of black clergy decided to form the African American Clergy Coalition of Mid-Missouri (AACCMM). We heard far too many stories of men and women caught in a web that dehumanizes them based on their race. The stack of disadvantages facing them was matched only by the assumptions people make when they show up to plead for justice. Since organizing in August, The AACCMM has fostered relationships aimed at moving Mid-Missouri toward productive change. The hope is to end the unhealthy silence that burdens black people in Mid-MO. The pile of pain in Ferguson intensified after years of not being heard. There is a comparable angst in Mid-MO. The same can be said in communities across America.

Mending the wounds opened by the death of Michael Brown will require action beyond a grand jury decision. We should expect an escalation of demonstrations over the next few weeks. As people go to the streets to express their mounting disdain toward the criminal justice system, it would benefit all of us to pause and listen. Those youth are broken for reason that many may not understand.

The first step toward healing is to listen. Hopefully, we will show up with both ears planted on the heartbeat of rage.

**Michael Trapp is Columbia's Second Ward City Council representative.**
My hope is Columbia can learn some lessons from the tragedy in Ferguson and take proactive steps to close the divide between the police and the people they serve. I would like to see the Police Department continue to emphasize unconditional respect and community members look for opportunities to instill in our young people a greater sense of cooperation with law enforcement.
William E. "Gene" Robertson is an MU community development professor emeritus. He was the second black faculty member hired at MU.

I believe that Columbia has a particular responsibility to Ferguson. MU is a land grant university and has a mission to serve the state through its extension programs. There is a St. Louis county and a St. Louis city extension program, which should be assisting people in both areas. Community Development Specialists and Business Specialists ought to be intimately involved in Ferguson, as well as Home Economics and 4H Specialists. The president's office ought to make sure that each campus assesses itself to determine what additional assistance might provided to the Ferguson community.

President Obama's My Brother's Keeper program and the related program for girls that is being proposed ought to be coordinated with appropriate extension programs, as well as other service and empowerment programs in the Ferguson area.

Michael Ouart is vice provost and director of MU Extension.

A productive path forward includes a respectful dialogue where community members express themselves while community leadership listens and seeks solutions in a collaborative manner that builds trust and security. University of Missouri Extension is committed to helping build communities. Once the immediate crisis is resolved, we stand ready to help facilitate dialogue and find solutions that will contribute to long-term stability.

Audit: Missouri charter schools botched closings
KANSAS CITY, MO. - **Missouri audits released this week claim two Kansas City charter schools botched their closures by overspending and poor bookkeeping.**

The Kansas City Star reports (http://bit.ly/1vpYdXr ) Imagine Renaissance Academy and Urban Community Leadership Academy failed to properly plan for the 2012 closures of their schools, according to reports from Auditor Tom Schweich's office. A 2012 state law now requires that schools include a closing plan in their application for a charter.

Schweich's office alleges the Urban Community Leadership Academy did not provide records for almost $118,000 in closing expenses, even after the auditor issued a subpoena for them.

Calls from The Kansas City Star to the school board president were not returned, and a call from The Associated Press to board member Kendra Kemp-Trammel was not returned Wednesday.

"We rarely resort to subpoenas, and even then we still can't find the documentation," Schweich said in an interview with the newspaper. "All we can say is that we don't know where (the $117,980) went."

The state also found that the school's business manager signed 11 checks to herself worth more than $8,400. A board member also made cash withdrawals to buy more than $55,000 worth of cashier's checks, according to the audit.

There was no documentation of the expenses.

Another audit released Tuesday says Imagine Renaissance Academy wasted thousands of dollars by doling out too many closing responsibilities to its law firm without reviewing less-expensive options.

The school paid its law firm $194,000 to help with the closure, including $1,460 for organizing a holiday party for employees.

The audit says some of the money for planning the event has since been repaid.
The school turned to the firm after staff failed to handle duties related to closing, according to a response from the Board of Directors listed in the audit.

"We were under pressure to meet deadlines and we had no personnel to get it done," said Dana Cutler, attorney at the James W. Tippin and Associates law firm that represents the school. "We did what we did the best way we knew how."

Schweich's report also notes that the school spent more than $3,000 on meals and alcoholic drinks for board members after the school closed, including paying the law firm $2,070 for organizing the meetings. The school later reimbursed the state for those expenses, according to the audit.

Both of the closed schools suffered from poor academic achievement and faced losing their required sponsorship.

Imagine Renaissance was a K-12 program sponsored by the University of Missouri-Columbia, serving more than 1,100 students when it closed.

**UCLA was a middle school sponsored by the University of Central Missouri, serving 230 children.**

**Stung By NY Times, Koster Announces Personal Campaign-Finance Limits**

To repair his reputation, Missouri Attorney Chris Koster has announced self-imposed guidelines on what campaign donations he will accept as he runs his office while also running for governor in 2016.

In a statement, Koster said he was advancing “sweeping new transparency measures” that he acknowledged were intended to address some conflict-of-interest accusations that have been leveled against him.
But he also suggested that the General Assembly consider imposing similar campaign limits on other public officials.

His key restrictions include:

- No donations from individuals or entities involved in cases “currently pending” before the attorney general’s office, or that “have been been resolved in the past 90 days.”
- No donations “from lobbyists, attorneys and their law firms” who represent those individuals or entities.
- No donations from anyone employed by Koster’s office, either as staff or as a contract worker.

Koster said in a statement that he also will “no longer accept gifts of any value from registered lobbyists.”

Koster is not imposing any limits on the size of his campaign contributions; he maintains that campaign-donation limits don't work.

Koster said in a statement that he recognized “contributions are part of the political process and there is no perfect campaign finance system. My goal is to put in place a contribution policy that increases confidence in the electoral process.”

Koster wrote that his new campaign-donation practices will go into effect immediately. He is asking all future donors to attest to a written declaration that states:

“To the best of my knowledge:

- Neither I personally nor any entity which I control has litigation presently pending against the MO Attorney General’s office nor has had such litigation resolved by that office within the last 90 days;

- I am not a lawyer, a law firm that employs a lawyer, or a registered lobbyist, personally engaged in current litigation against the MO Attorney General’s office, nor have I represented any entity engaged in such litigation in the past 90 days;

- I am not a current employee or contract employee of the MO Attorney General’s office, nor have I been so employed in the past 90 days.”

The declaration will be something that donors will sign. An online version will simply require a check mark.

Koster’s new self-imposed policy comes amid continued criticisms of his campaign practices, in the wake of the Times’ story that implied a link between how his office has handled some high-profile legal cases and his highly successful campaign-donation operation.
Koster has denied any alleged improprieties. Even so, outgoing Missouri House Speaker Tim Jones, R-Eureka, recently announced a special committee to examine Koster’s actions as attorney general and as a candidate.

In reply to emailed questions from St. Louis Public Radio, Koster replied:

"The New York Times article highlighted the issue of perceptions relating to campaign contributions to public officials, including attorneys general. When a problem is focused in this way, most any public servant wants to solve it. Our goal with this new policy is to address these issues as fully and transparently as possible."

**Legal scholars praise plan, modeled after New York restrictions**

Koster’s new policy is modeled after one already in place in New York, which applies to his counterpart, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. But Koster says his own policy is stricter because it "also applies to lobbyists, lawyers and law firms directly involved in pending litigation. The New York policy does not."

"We have reviewed similar policies across the country, and we believe this is the strictest conflict-of-interest policy of any elected attorney general in the United States," he added.

Koster’s announcement included accolades from two prominent legal scholars who had apparently gotten an advance look at his plan.

Mike Wolff, dean of St. Louis University’s School of Law, and former chief justice of the Missouri Supreme Court, said that Koster’s new campaign restrictions “substantially raise the bar for ethics in our state. I hope other elected leaders will follow Koster’s example and adopt conflict-of-interest policies that increase confidence in our state’s political system.”

**Dean R. Lawrence Dessem, professor of ethics at the University of Missouri School of Law, said in a statement, “By limiting campaign contributions from attorneys, clients, and lobbyists, these new rules positively address the appearance of governmental conflict-of-interest.”**

**Times story hit hard**

Koster has acknowledged that his reputation took a hit with the New York Times story, published in late October, that asserted that he and other state attorneys general were being unduly influenced by influential lobbyists and corporations to drop investigations or settle cases for lower amounts. Those lobbyists and corporations often were campaign donors.

Koster, who has disputed some of the Times’ assertions, said that the story gave a false impression of his record against major corporations – notably Pfizer and AT&T – and made inaccurate and unfair accusations about his campaign practices.
A Republican-turned-Democrat, Koster has been far more successful at campaign fundraising than his likely GOP rivals for governor. He also has become a major force within the Missouri Democratic Party. He and U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill have become the state party’s top donors and money-raisers.

But Koster has broken ranks with some Democrats, including Gov. Jay Nixon, who support restoring some sort of campaign-donation limits. The state had such limits from 1995-2008, when Republicans controlling the General Assembly voted to eliminate them, with the support of then-Gov. Matt Blunt.

Koster says that restricting the size of donations simply forces donors to find less transparent means to get their money to the campaigns or candidates they support.

However, he recently outlined some ethics proposals he supports, including:

- A ban on lobbyist gifts
- Restrictions on non-profit 501(c)(4) committees and their ability to advertise in Missouri
- Expanding the reach of Missouri’s 48-hour reporting requirements on large donations.

---

**ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

**Editorial: Bureaucratic chaos is choking off help to needy kids, parents**

By the Editorial Board

**Millions of federal** dollars that should be flowing into Missouri to help low-income working parents pay for child care are stuck somewhere in Washington, D.C., because the state Department of Social Services is in such massive disarray. The same is true for federal and state Medicaid dollars and food stamp allocations. Helping the poor and working poor is not a priority for Missouri’s lawmakers, including its Democratic governor and its Republican Legislature, even when the money is there to do so. The bollixed-up social services department is an arm of Gov. Jay Nixon’s executive branch. Were any other executive department so bollixed up, lawmakers would have pounced gleefully on the problems.

Imagine the outcry if the departments of Agriculture or Economic Development were leaving farmers and developers in the lurch. Social services? Well, too bad.

Legislators and elected officials who don’t make poor kids and their working parents a priority ought to be ashamed. Heads need to roll.
The problem can be traced to the Family Support Division of the Department of Social Services, which child care advocates contend is mired in hassles associated with downsizing, reorganizing and installing new technology.

They say it’s been that way for several years and that they have been struggling to get state authorities to acknowledge the problem and take steps to fix it. They won’t. The result is fewer kids in safe child care settings, more food insecurity and less access to health care.

That’s because the problem extends beyond child care subsidies. Enrollment is declining precipitously in other support programs overseen by the Family Support Division — such as Medicaid and food stamps. Advocates say the drops are due mostly to administrative difficulties and staffing cuts among critical front-line employees, including case managers and eligibility specialists. Without person-to-person support, the system is too cumbersome for many elderly and low-income aid recipients to navigate.

“All they (the Family Support Division) touch turns to crap. There’s no nicer way to put it,” said Glenn Koenen, former executive director of the Circle of Concern food pantry in Valley Park and an advocate for the hungry.

As reported by the Post-Dispatch’s Nancy Cambria on Monday, last year Missouri lost more children than any other state from the federal program that helps pay for child care.

A survey by the Center for Law and Social Policy, using federal enrollment data, shows that 12,300 fewer Missouri children were enrolled in the child care subsidy program than the previous year. CLASP said that figure was more than a quarter of the net loss of enrollment for the entire country.

The number of children receiving a federal child care subsidy nationwide fell by 47,500 children from 2012 through 2013. Second to Missouri were New York and Texas, each of which had an enrollment drop of 9,500 children.

Jeanette Mott Oxford, executive director of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare, told Ms. Cambria she is concerned that growing numbers of Missouri’s neediest children are being forced into unsafe child care situations because their parents aren’t getting the federal subsidies.

“Finding affordable, accessible, high-quality child care arrangements is very difficult with people who have low income and lack of transportation,” Ms. Oxford said.

A state study of the program, using data provided by state officials, showed a smaller decline in enrollment of about 6,325 children. The state figures showed an average of 39,464 children in Missouri used the subsidies each month last year.
Based on those figures, the state paid out $149 million in state and federal money in child care subsidies in 2013. The bulk of the money comes from the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, although some state money is used for support.

The Missouri Legislature has set one of the most stringent income qualifiers for the federal subsidy in the nation. Under the state guidelines, a single mother with two children making $23,000 a year — $1,917 a month — is ineligible to receive assistance for child care costs, according to the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Missouri. Meanwhile the average cost for child care in the state is about $11,325 a year, which would be nearly half that single mom’s total income.

The department says Missouri’s income eligibility for child care assistance is 127 percent of the federal poverty level, which puts the state in 47th place in the nation on the meanness scale. These low eligibility limits can be a deterrent to parents advancing in the workplace because a small increase in income can push them over the eligibility threshold for child care assistance.

Added to that problem for a working mother or parents is Missouri’s miserable child care subsidy rate, which a new report by the National Women’s Law Center says is one of the worst in the country. It pays about 43 percent less than the average market rate for child care in the St. Louis area.

These are among the many ways in which Missouri’s lawmakers are failing the state’s neediest and most vulnerable citizens. As Mr. Koenen put it, “At the most basic level Missouri doesn’t have the will to help its own people.”

The money is in the pipeline to help these people. It’s been allocated and authorized and now it needs to be spent. Legislators and the governor need to stop making excuses for the Department of Social Services, get the upheaval under control and streamline the process for getting help to people who need it.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Child care providers, parents getting inventive to nurture kids' taste buds
Thursday, November 20, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST; updated 7:12 a.m. CST, Thursday, November 20, 2014
BY SABRINA RUSSELLO

COLUMBIA — It was a Friday at a Columbia day care, and the 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds sat at half-circle tables, swinging their legs and humming into their empty plastic cups as
they waited for lunch. On the menu: salad with grilled chicken strips, mandarin oranges and crackers, with Asian toasted sesame dressing on the side.

The dressing was the toughest sell. Some kids watched skeptically, and some held their noses and made faces as the teachers poured it into tiny condiment cups.

"Smell it, smell it," a 5-year-old blonde instructed her neighbor before she finally tried the dressing, which clearly was not ranch.

In the end, however, it got the thumbs up from almost everyone.

Although introducing new, healthy foods into children's diets can be difficult, the United Cerebral Palsy Heartland Child Development Center and other child development centers in Columbia are trying to combat the national problem of child obesity.

In 2012, more than one-third of children and adolescents in the United States were overweight or obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Child obesity has doubled in children in the last 30 years. In 2011, 15 percent of adolescents age 10 to 17 were overweight in Missouri, and 14 percent were obese, according to the National Conference for State Legislature.

As the problem of child obesity in Missouri persists — measured by comparing a child's body mass index to a variety of factors such as age and gender — child care providers and parents are making lifestyle changes that involve getting their kids to eat healthier foods, some starting before their children are a year old.

**Habits begin young**

*Although preferences in taste can change, healthy eating habits begin in the womb, said Jennifer Schnell, an MU professor of nutrition and exercise physiology, said.*

Flavors of food that a mother eats while pregnant can affect the child in utero, giving the baby its first experiences with flavor before birth, according to National Institutes of Health. For example, if a mother drank carrot juice during her pregnancy, research has shown that the baby is less likely to have an adverse reaction to the taste of carrots.
“So what mom is eating is impacting what they prefer whenever they are children. And typically, what you prefer as a child influences what you prefer as an adult,” Schnell said.

Studies also suggest that breastfed babies tend to consume less and have less of a likelihood of becoming obese later in life, according to the National Institutes of Health. Parental influence plays an integral role in the acceptance of food at a young age, according to the website. The types of food parents eat and serve at home have a direct effect on the child's acceptance of certain types of food.

Because eating choices affect children at such a young age, programs such as Eat Smart help child care providers modify eating plans. UCP Heartland is one of the child development programs in Columbia that is Eat Smart certified. For certification, a program must submit menus, labels and homemade recipes for evaluation.

"If it all meets standards, they do a spot inspection to prove that you’re doing what you say you’re doing," Christy Brookins, site director of UCP Heartland Child Development Center, said. "If you pass that spot inspection, you’re awarded that Eat Smart certification."

UCP Heartland was certified in 2013. The center follows Eat Smart's intermediate level guidelines, which require programs to limit processed meat to twice a week, serve cereal with fewer than 9 grams of sugar and serve fruit in its juice instead of syrup, among other measures.

Over time, kids have adapted to the healthy eating modifications, Brookins said. They've grown used to eating foods such as broccoli, carrots and mandarin oranges — all three of which are on the menu.

Eat Smart also requires meals to be served family style: Teachers and students sit around the table, and kids are expected to serve themselves from community bowls set in the middle. Teachers don't force kids to eat a certain amount of food, but they highly encourage them to try new things.

There was that day, for example, when the Asian toasted sesame dressing was served.

"Ew," a 4-year-old girl said loudly enough for her classmates to hear.
"Remember when we had baked potato, and you said it was 'ew', but then you tried it and liked it?" the teacher asked as she continued to serve the dressing.

The child reluctantly tried the dressing. Ten minutes later, she was licking it off her fingers.

**Growing curiosity**
Some child development centers are growing healthy food themselves.

Michelle Mathews, director of the child development laboratory at MU, said the children who go to the day care have become more adventurous about trying foods since the debut of their learning garden last summer.

"I'll see toddlers coming back holding a cucumber, and just gnawing on it, on the way back to the classroom," Mathews said. "It's been great."

This past summer, the children even ate lasagna baked with kale they grew themselves.

Brookins also has seen the benefits of having a learning garden in which they grew tomatoes and zucchini from straw bales, peppers in five-gallon pails and squash in an old Radio Flyer wagon. She was surprised at how kids' tastes grew with the garden.

"I think part of that was they had a part in planning that and a part in watching it grow," Brookins said. "The teachers talked about it every day. They physically saw it go from a bloom to a squash and got excited about (it, asking) 'Is it ready to eat yet? Is it ready to eat yet?' And then when it was time to actually harvest it, they were ready to try it."

Positive peer pressure also helps.

"When they're here and watching everyone else doing it and their best friend is eating it like crazy, and goes, 'Oh, this is really good,' then they're going to choose to eat it, also," Brookins said.

Peer pressure was effective with Friday's introduction to the Asian toasted sesame dressing. After a few brave kids tried it, the rest gave it a taste. By the end of lunch hour, each child had either poured the dressing over the salad or eaten it straight from the cup, dipping a finger, fork or food.

**Keep offering**
Unfortunately, healthy peer pressure isn't as handy at home.

So Schnell, the nutrition and exercise physiology professor, uses other tactics with her own child. She asks that her daughter take a "no-thank-you bite" of food she doesn't want to try before she's allowed to have a second helping of a food she prefers. Schnell said she wants her daughter to be truly aware of what she likes and doesn't like, so she can make her eating choices mindfully.

"I keep offering and offering and offering," Schnell said. "And then the no-thank-you bite gets bigger. And eventually, they start to eat more."

She also said familiarity plays a role in whether or not a child chooses to eat a particular food. Schnell takes her daughter grocery shopping so she can see what she's buying, and then she lets her help prepare meals when she can.

At any age, "kids can stir," Schnell said. "You can use kid scissors to cut soft things. They can help you measure. They can help you count. So, there's other academic skills that you can use, and that makes them much more likely to try (a food) than they would be if they had this magical food appear before them."

Kids' acceptance of healthy foods can also be increased through fun activities. Head Start — a national program that partners with day cares and preschools to provide education, health and nutrition for children — incorporates health learning into its daily curriculum. For example, a plastic black pot stuffed with toy vegetables allows the children to re-enact the popular children's book, "Stone Soup."

The activity helps the kids learn about healthy foods, said Jackie Rivera, health administrator for Central Missouri Community Action Head Start.

"Kids like characters," Rivera said. "They like stuff with a face. They recognize the Cheetos guy, but we don't have a guy with a carrot face or anything. So we incorporate this into their everyday experiences."

While children are learning in the classroom, Head Start parents can attend training through a program created by Head Start called Eat Healthy, Stay Active! that teaches them about MyPlate, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's dietary guidelines that
replaced the food pyramid. They also learn how to read nutrition labels, prevent diabetes and shop for healthy foods on a budget.

Laura Thomas, whose son was in Head Start for five years, said the program has encouraged her to make healthier homemade meals and stay active with her family.

"They encouraged us to get out and try new things, and so we started hiking more frequently and over the summer went to Moab, Utah, to Arches National Park," Thomas said.

Thomas said programs that incorporate children and parents, such as Head Start's, are important for the success of living a healthy lifestyle as a family.

"If you get the child on board and the parents on board, you have the whole family as a unit working together," Thomas said. "Not only does the child see the information at home, but it's being reinforced at school."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Lee Elementary to host pilot project for grief awareness

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 | 6:49 p.m. CST; updated 10:04 p.m. CST, Wednesday, November 19, 2014

BY MEGAN BEDFORD

COLUMBIA — Lee Expressive Arts Elementary School is serving as the pilot school for a children's grief awareness and education project.

The project includes marking Children's Grief Awareness Day on Thursday. The day is intended to bring awareness to the grief experienced by children and teens, according to information from Tashel Bordere, who is coordinating the project in Missouri.

An event marking the day will be held at 2 p.m. at Lee Elementary, 1208 Locust St. Although the event is meant for parents and teachers to help children through grief and loss, the public may attend, according to Bordere’s email.
The project includes previous grief informational sessions, the event on Thursday and future programming and support for the school as well as continuous training for parents and teachers based on feedback from the event, Bordere said.

Lee Elementary is the first school in Missouri to use this program, she said. Along with grief education, the school is offering grief support kits, which include items such as books on grief for children, teens and parents, a DVD for children, a memory book and a comfort item. These kits are meant to serve as a support tool for the whole family in dealing with death and loss.

The event will feature a balloon launch in memory of the losses experienced by the people in attendance and a New Orleans-style celebration of the ending of life, Bordere said.

Bordere is a specialist in youth development for MU's Human Environmental Sciences Extension and an assistant professor of human development and family studies.

Last week, Bordere held an informational session for parents and teachers at Lee about grief and the most beneficial ways to help children cope with it. Six parents attended.

"It seems we still live in a society where grief is uncomfortable for those experiencing it and for those observing it," parent Casey VanDyke said. "As a community, we would benefit from understanding that grief is a normal part of our everyday life, and with that as the case, we can normalize our conversation about it with our kids."

VanDyke thinks that it is important to grieve. Every loss of relationship, every life transition, every international tragedy, every change in our bodies, every death of those we love — all these and more create a need to engage in the grief process, VanDyke said.