

Medical Honors:

Affton Seniors Prepare for Healthcare Careers at St. Louis CAPS



Jessica Pierre



Chiryame Robinson



Malahja Smith

Jessica Pierre, Chiryame Robinson and Malahja Smith are spending their senior year at Affton High School preparing for careers as specialized nurses. Jessica and Chiryame both entered the VICC program in the Affton School District in kindergarten, and Malahja joined them in second grade. All already had an interest in bioscience when they started hearing stories from older students about the St. Louis Centers for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) program's course in Medicine, Healthcare and Bioscience.

St. Louis CAPS Medicine students spend their entire senior year, five days a week, in half-day sessions hosted by St. Anthony's Medical Center. During the first semester, they attend classes at the hospital in a special training unit similar to an emergency room. Through guest speakers and mentors they advance their knowledge of human physiology, disease processes, medical terminology, biology, molecules, cells and organisms. But they also learn through observation of healthcare professionals about patient care, professionalism, ethics and career exploration. They get hands-on experience in the bioscience lab at the Danforth Plant Science Center and in a cadaver dissection lab through the Practical Anatomy and

Surgical Education program at Saint Louis University School of Medicine.

The students observe a wide spectrum of healthcare careers such as anesthesia, cardiology, dermatology, obstetrics, oncology, orthopedics, internal medicine, family practice and general surgery through on-site rotations at local medical facilities.

The second semester is independent study, focusing on each student's chosen topics. The students have targeted activities such as more rotations, volunteer work, internships and job shadows.

Only students who are highly motivated, serious about a career in health care, and have a proven academic record may apply. Students earn both high school and college credit.

Jessica Pierre plans to be a neonatal nurse. In her pediatric rotation for mothers and babies at Mercy Health Center, she observed a baby who was having complications. The other rotations, including the cardiac shift where she saw a heart bypass operation in progress, also made an impression on her. The biggest impression, however, has been left by the people she's met, such as Kathy Howard, a forensic nursing coordinator at Saint Louis University Hospital. Jessica was so impressed by Howard, from whom she learned the surprising information that St. Louis is a major sex trafficking locality, that she began considering work as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner.

Chiryame Robinson plans to be a labor and delivery nurse. She's been very impressed by the various rotations, noting that "I got to see careers I didn't know existed." But she's still sold on labor and delivery nursing.

Malahja Smith plans to be either an emergency room nurse or a labor and delivery nurse. Although she knew she wanted to be in the medical field, "the CAPS program really helped me figure out exactly what I wanted to do," she said. "The CAPS program has helped me make this decision because being able to shadow and talk with these professionals has made me very excited to become a nurse."

She had initially thought about being a surgical nurse until she was exposed to so many other specialties in nursing. "I wouldn't have been exposed to the endless nursing possibilities without the CAPS program," she said.

The rotations include cardiac, emergency department, neurology, pediatrics and physical therapy/occupational therapy. Within those categories are opportunities to visit trauma and cardiac intensive care units, urgent care facilities, cath labs, EKG centers, watch traumas and others.

All three students, who are part of a class of 28 from Affton, Mehlville and Lafayette high schools, have participated in job shadows. Jessica shadowed nurses in the emergency departments of St. Anthony's, Mercy and St. Louis University Hospital. Chiryame shadowed personnel in the labor and delivery unit and the emergency department at Hyland Behavioral Health, based at St. Anthony's.

Malahja had the opportunity to shadow and volunteer in the Barnes-Jewish Hospital Breast Mammography Center, making patients feel comfortable and answering their questions, stacking towels and copying papers for the professionals.

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The Glovers of Rockwood

Extended family holds strong commitment to VICC and Rockwood district

Tony Glover and his aunt, Michelle Sanders Glover, are the first in a long line of family members who have attended and graduated from the Rockwood School District through the VICC program. Michelle's daughter will be the 11th graduate this spring.

Tony entered the VICC program in fifth grade at Babler Elementary in 1991, after his mother, Joan Glover-Straughter, began searching for a better education for her son. Joan decided to enroll her sister, Michelle, the youngest of Willie Mae Glover's six children, who happens to be just 9 months older than her nephew, Tony, in the program, too. They both graduated from Lafayette High School in 1999.

Tony excelled in track, breaking several records. An outgoing kid, Tony tried out numerous activities. He played football, and was in the band, the musicals and choirs. He was active in the "Committee of 520," a group of students who learned outdoor skills. Later, he had numerous legendary adventures through what was then known as the Outdoor Student Education Program (or OSEP). "There were some memorable moments that are priceless to me," he said.

Tony started a group called Peer Mediation, to help students resolve conflicts before the administration had to step in. At a time of great division over the O.J.

Simpson case, the group served as a "liaison between the inner-city folks and the county folks," he said. "We were a bridge."

"I would not be the young man that I am today had I not gone to Rockwood," Tony said. "It's a very loving, caring and nurturing environment."

The VICC program "allowed me to realize the world is not all black and not all white," Tony said. "It allowed me to meet people of other nationalities — foreign exchange students and kids whose parents came here for a new job."

After school, he ran track and played football at Northwest Missouri State University, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees with credentials to coach football. Tony Glover started this year as the football defensive coordinator and head track coach at Vashon High School in St. Louis.

In November 2016, Tony married his high school crush, Candice Franklin (Lafayette Class of '99) after losing touch and then reconnecting in February 2016.

While at Rockwood, Tony's aunt and classmate Michelle was part of the track team and poms squad. She went on to study medical billing and coding through Bryan University.

"Going from city to county was hard," Michelle said. "I was behind about

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News from Your Transportation Department

Summer school transportation cards should arrive in the mail approximately one week in advance of the start of your summer school.

If you need to make any changes for summer school, such as a different daycare address, please let your school know by **April 19**.

Any transportation changes, such as route or time changes, made after the start of summer school will be communicated to you by your child's school. Please be sure that your child's school has current phone numbers on file for you.

Any time temperatures are forecast to be above 95 degrees, your child will be permitted to bring a water bottle to be filled at school, only with water, for the afternoon ride home.

Transportation Changes in 2018

1. The VICC Transportation Department will no longer provide transportation for multiple sessions per day. Transportation will be for one round trip only per day from each school.
2. VICC Transportation will provide summer school activity transportation only in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the VICC Transportation Policy and Procedure Manual. Transportation for athletic day camps and practices may still be provided in some districts. Check the school for details.

In 2017 1,289 VICC students participated in summer school in VICC participating districts. The program used 75.5 buses and 33 cabs during the summer.

For more information about the transportation program, please visit <http://www.choicecorp.org/EnrCICOTrans.htm> or call the transportation office at 314-721-8657.

Hancock Place High School Offers Online Summer School Program

Hancock Place High School will offer students the ability to earn credit via online learning this summer. Students will have the opportunity to earn credits from June 4 through Aug. 3 at their own pace.

Course options include credit recovery in English, Math, Science and Social Studies. Students also have the ability to complete their Health and Personal Finance graduation requirements.

Hancock's summer school can be completed remotely or on campus with a certified teacher. For more information about the online summer school offerings, visit the school's website at <https://hs.hancock.k12.mo.us/> and find it under the academics tab.

The Glovers of Rockwood (from page 1)

two years, so I had to work hard to catch up. I love how they never make you feel like a failure and always encourage you to do your best. And they welcome you in like family."

Michelle appreciates Rockwood's more advanced curriculum and the district's excellent program for reading and learning disabilities. Rockwood takes pride in addressing every student's individual educational needs and adjusting to how they learn.

When Joan saw how well Tony and Michelle were doing at Rockwood, she vowed to make sure "every one of my nieces and nephews went there," she said. Her niece, Rhonda Treniece Glover, entered Babler in 1993 and thrived in the classes of Susan Johnson, Barb Luther and Tina David. After working through Crestview Middle and Lafayette, she graduated in 2005 with two consecutive Choice Student awards to her name.

"I had a very, very difficult time adjusting to life at my school," said Rhonda, who is now a freelance production and talent coordinator in Los Angeles. "However, the staff recognized that I was gifted and placed me in the Talented and Gifted Program to challenge my brain. I really appreciated going to TAG because I felt like I belonged there."

Rhonda also was able, with the help of Dr. Tiffany Anderson, to take a dual enrollment course at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park in her senior year. With that advantage, she secured academic scholarships to Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. She graduated cum laude in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in radio/television broadcasting and was named one of the Top 25 Most Distinguished Seniors.

"Participation in the VICC program completely changed my life," Rhonda said. "I learned things and gained access to a variety of topics, subjects and facets of life. For example, the Outdoor Student Education Program taught us how to go camping."

Legends of her cousin Tony preceded her: the time he accidentally hiked miles with wet boots and the nights he kept the group laughing around the campfire. "Subsequently, I knew how to pitch a tent and exercise valuable team-building skills that I otherwise would never do in another school."

Rhonda still keeps in touch with a few staff members. "It's good to tell them how they affected our upbringing 10 to 20 years later."

Clockwise from left: Michelle Sanders-Glover, Lafayette High School, Class of 1999; Tony Glover with his younger brother Terran and his mother, Joan Glover, on graduation day in 1999 and Rhonda Glover accepts her Choice Award in 2004, accompanied by her French teacher Barbara Davis, who nominated her.

Next in the Glover/VICC/Rockwood pipeline were Wakkita Gibbs and Tony's brother Terran Glover and stepsister Andrea Straughter, who all graduated from Lafayette in 2008. They were followed by Joan's stepson, William Rodney Straughter Jr. (Lafayette/Individual Learning Center, 2010); and Rhonda's siblings Ryan Glover (2011) and Ra'Necia Porter (2017).

But wait, there's more. Michelle's oldest son, Johnnie, graduated from Lafayette in 2015 and now serves in the U.S. Army. Her daughter, Julia, will graduate this year — from Lafayette, of course. Two more of Michelle's five children, Jarrell and Joshua, are in grades seven and three at Crestview Middle and Ellisville Elementary, respectively.

Joan's granddaughter and Andrea's daughter, Dashiya Straughter Houston, is in seventh grade at Rockwood Valley Middle, and Dashiya's sister Nikole has been accepted into Babler for kindergarten next year.

The commitment continues.



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The young women's college planning is well underway. Jessica has been accepted by and plans to attend Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO) in the nursing program. At press time, Chiryame had applied to the nursing programs at SEMO and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville but was waiting to hear back. Malahja has been accepted to nursing programs at Missouri Western State University, Missouri Southern State University and Tuskegee University. She also has applied to Hampton University and Howard University, two of her top picks, along with Tuskegee, but was waiting to hear back at press time.

All three students are confident they wouldn't have had the same opportunity outside the VICC program at Affton.

"CAPS has helped me build my network and grow as a person," said Malahja. "I'm really happy that I get to work alongside these professionals and see what it is like in the real world. I would encourage anyone who thinks they are interested in the medical field to apply to the CAPS program."

This is the third full year for the St. Louis CAPS

program, said Tim Knox, who leads the instruction in the Medicine, Healthcare and Bioscience course along with nurse educational specialist Dawn Wotawa-Bennett. St. Louis CAPS also offers courses in Global Business and Entrepreneurship, Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing, and Technology Solutions and Logistics.

The CAPS program started in 2008 in the Blue Valley School District in Overland Park, Kansas, and the national network started in the 2015-16 school year.

Dr. Travis Bracht, assistant superintendent of the Affton School District, is the administrator of St. Louis CAPS, which is was started by the Affton School District. The other participating high schools are: Bayless, Lafayette (Rockwood School District), Mehlville and Oakville (Mehlville School District).

Next year, St. Louis CAPS expects to welcome students from seven additional high schools, including Brentwood, Fox, Kirkwood, Lindbergh, Seckman, Webster Groves and the Collegiate School of Medicine & Bioscience.

Serving as the chief executive officer of the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation is a tremendous privilege. While this job, like so many others, certainly presents many challenges, there are also many opportunities to celebrate successes. It is easy to focus on the daily problems that need to be solved and forget to celebrate the many accomplishments of our students and their families. It is always a great encouragement to me to learn more about the many amazing things that our students are accomplishing. It is our job to provide such opportunities to our students but, ultimately, it is the students and their families that make or enable great things to occur.

In the current issue of the Parent Link, we learn more about the success stories of students preparing for a career in healthcare through the St. Louis Center for Advanced Professional Studies. Another article highlights the many members of the Glover family who have attended and graduated from the Rockwood school district through our program. It is always a tremendous encouragement to me to see multiple family members experiencing the benefits of our program and then desiring other members of their family to share in this success.

So while there may always be problems and challenges for each of us to solve, I would encourage each of you to take a few minutes today and celebrate your children's successes.



MESSAGE
from the CEO