



St. Mark Center ■ Metro Center ■ North Center



Making Our Mark | A Connection to Friends, Families and Supporters of UICS **Spring 2021**

A Year of Change, A Year of Impacting Futures



A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has changed how we approach health and wellness, and understanding the components of learning, teaching, and technology. Being in early education, UICS' families, teachers, and administrators have been on the front lines of supporting infrastructure for our communities, representing families and staff in five counties. Here's a few ways in how it's being done!

Two of UICS' three schools (UICS-Metro Center and UICS-St. Mark Center) fall into Kansas City, MO's Third Electoral District, possessing the highest COVID-19 rates and related deaths in the city.

With proximity being a leading factor in choosing an early education partner, safety and health are important factors in living our mission of "...impacting futures". Over the past year, more than 6,000 adult- and child-sized masks have been distributed to families and community partners, thanks to Ford Motor Company, Charlie Hustle, UICS Board

Members Mary Jorgenson and Rebecca James, and UICS supporter Irv Dwork. Along with hosting two COVID-19 testing sites in May and June 2020, we realized the need for information access about the COVID-19 vaccine. During recent town hall Zoom meetings, UICS connected families and teachers directly with a medical doctor to answer specific vaccine questions through open conversations and anonymity. As UICS works to secure vaccines for all interested staff/faculty members, this access is imperative in breaking down myths and misinformation.

UICS is proud to be a trusted frontline community partner, working to change lives through our deep and consistent relationships. Thank you for supporting these efforts!

"We're creating a foundation for children to succeed in their academic careers. I love young people. It's why I do this."

- Carl Jung
- Casie Heaton, Lead Pre-K Teacher, UICS-St. Mark Center



Timothy, Abigail
and Cora Whitney

On the Mark



As an occasional feature, we are inviting parents and community members to share their perspectives. Please hear from Timothy Whitney whose daughter attends UICS-North Center.

Dear Friends,

I'm a perfect model for the way our society operates and how foolish we can be if we don't take each student's individual needs into account. I was a Black kid from the inner city. I saw lots of violence early on. I was labeled a "problem child". Growing up, I had teachers who did not relate or even try to understand me, my trauma, or the reasons why I was "acting up". Instead of finding adaptive teaching methods and meeting me where I was, I was punished. They wanted me to fit in the same box as everyone else. I was pushed out.

What I've experienced in education is much different than what my daughter, Cora, experiences at [United Inner City Services](#) (UICS). I'm thankful that UICS encourages Cora to be an individual. Learning from my experiences, I want her in a place where she is nurtured to be who she wants to be. She gets that at UICS.

UICS is tackling the issue of focusing on every child, including the children who need it most. The teachers provide individualized learning and resources to ensure every child reaches their fullest potential.

In the end, we are getting a greater return if we invest in these kids now. These are the kids that are going to change the world.

Through the adversity I went through, I could have given up because of the obstacles that education put in my way to keep me from being successful. I don't fear that with Cora. UICS builds stuff within the kids to help them be successful. This community meets the child's needs to be able to persevere and achieve their highest potential.

UICS is indicative of where we need to be in education. The future of our country depends on it. If we have this individualized and trauma-informed approach in every school, like at UICS, we will change the landscape of education and our society for the better.

Sincerely,

Timothy Whitney
UICS-North Center parent

We can't do what we do without you!
Please share a gift at [UICSKC.org](#)

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OUR VISION

UICS envisions an empowered community where children and families flourish.

OUR MISSION

Building bridges.
Inspiring minds.
Impacting futures.

ADVOCATE

Support Missouri state legislation efforts to boost early childhood education funding. Reach out to your local representative or share your support on social media!

GIVE

Your support makes a difference.
Donate online at [UICSKC.org/invest](#)

CONNECT

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#LittleLearnersKC

Commitment to equity and inclusion



Race & Equity Series

UICS is committed to empowering communities of color. Our monthly Race & Equity series focuses on the role race plays in the education landscape. Dr. Cokethea Hill, CEO and Founder of BLAQUE KC, has led these discussions over Zoom with UICS CEO Deidre Anderson and supported by The Kauffman Foundation.

Join us the last Wednesday and Sunday of the month through July (except for April which will be hosted on the third Wednesday). All UICS supporters are encouraged to attend, contribute, and listen to these important conversations.

Additionally, UICS is currently working to expand the accessibility of our website by translating all webpages to six languages. This will contribute to UICS' vision for an equitable landscape in early childhood education for all Kansas City families!

Follow UICS for the Zoom links to the Race & Equity series.



Say "hello" to Nissa and Roberto

Meet our new Directors of Early Learning and Inclusion

What do you enjoy most about your work at UICS?

Roberto: The organization, mission, and the people.

Nissa: Being hands-on with the day-to-day of the children. Knowing we are making a difference.

Name a goal you have for your center.

Roberto: To move towards high quality, every moment, every day.

Nissa: To have quality staff that provide a safe, interactive environment for all who need it.

Why is inclusion important at UICS?

Roberto: I believe it is the foundation to any successful company or organization.

Nissa: All children need to learn to include everyone and be the best people they can be.

Who is a favorite role model and why?

Roberto: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Tupac Shakur.

Nissa: Princess Diana, she didn't care about pretenses. She just did what was right for humanity.

Where did you attend school?

Roberto: California State University - Long Beach B.A., Dominican University M.S., and I'm currently pursuing UMKC for my Education Specialist in Urban Education and Leadership.

Nissa: Truman State University, B.A. and M.A.



Nissa True, UICS-North Center



Roberto Diaz, UICS-Metro Center

What do you like to do on the weekends or in your spare time (when there's no pandemic)?

Roberto: I enjoy murder mystery shows and going for walks.

Nissa: I love crafting, woodworking, and working in my yard.

Name your favorite place.

Roberto: Baja, CA where I can eat some fish tacos by the beach! And camping in the woods.

Nissa: The beach in South Carolina, specifically Beaufort, SC.

Melissa Funaro | Annual Latinx Education Collaborative Administrator Awardee



Congratulations to our very own Melissa Funaro (left), Assistant Director of Early Learning and Inclusion at UICS-Metro Center on being named Administrator of the Year by the Latinx Education Collaborative (LEC)! The LEC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing and retaining the number of quality Latinx education professionals.

"It makes a difference to children who may not know anyone with a name or a part of their identity similar to theirs," said Melissa. "It is important that children have representation in their schools and around them as leaders."

We are proud to have Melissa on staff and in leadership. Thanks for your great work!



Champions of caring!

Kansas City Chiefs & GEHA

[The Kansas City Chiefs](#) and [GEHA Health](#) recently supported our UICS community with generous opportunities.

UICS teacher Jordae' Ferguson recently lost everything in an apartment complex fire. Upon hearing Jordae's story, [Kansas City Chiefs Ambassador](#) and former safety Jon McGraw personally presented Jordae' with a care package filled with Chiefs blankets, hats, and a new Patrick Mahomes jersey to replace one that was lost in the fire.

In January, GEHA provided Jordae' and a UICS Head Start family each with two tickets to the home playoff game against the Cleveland Browns.

"The whole experience was a dream come true," said Jordae'. "I've never been to a playoff game or had a better day. The seats were amazing!"

The Kansas City Chiefs also made the season brighter for another UICS family. Kaprisha W., a UICS teacher and parent of a UICS-Metro Center toddler, was recently surprised by the Kansas City Chiefs and GEHA with a \$5,000 check to cover utilities and furnishings as she gets established in a new living situation. Kaprisha also received gifts for her two children and meal baskets from Hy-Vee.

UICS is grateful for these incredible partners who give back and invest in Kansas City's littlest learners and families!



Clockwise from left: Jon McGraw and Jordae' Ferguson; KC Wolf, GEHA's Cristi Allen, and the Chiefs' Bailey Milne Dagel with Kaprisha (wearing cap) and children Rayyan and Royalty; Marquis Williams and Jordae' Ferguson.

All around UICS



Clockwise from top left:

Ramon, UICS-Metro Center pre-K student, proudly wears a firefighter uniform. His classroom is conducting a transportation study and learning about firetrucks.

The doctor's in! Our friends at UICS-St. Mark Center participate in project-based learning by engaging in play that involves everyday activities like going to the doctor.

The Animators classroom at UICS-Metro Center welcomed a special canine visitor to culminate their pet study, an exploration of household pets.

Our friend Lance, at UICS-North Center, rides a bicycle on a cloudy day.

Students like 3-year-old Aylin at UICS-St. Mark Center experience the beauty of brown and how the color's different hues represent all of their unique skin tones.



Students created cardboard gingerbread houses (right) at a virtual Snow Much Fun event in December.

UICS COMMUNITY STARS



Hallmark & Kaleidoscope

[Hallmark](#) and UICS share many things in common: a passion for creativity, valuing the arts, and support for a child's self-expression. Our friends at Hallmark continued their support of UICS' arts-based curriculum with a donation of [Kaleidoscope](#) at Crown Center art sacks!

In addition to providing our students and teachers with art materials, Hallmark also used their creativity to inspire safety within our community.

By using their plastic card box casing and Lawrence plant machinery, they manufactured new face shields to protect our early education teachers and staff. Thank you for providing opportunities to inspire creativity and safety in our community.



Diana Houle and Lori Eshelman

Sisters Diana Eshelman Houle, Lori Eshelman, and their families continue to show up for UICS through volunteerism and advocacy. Most recently, they volunteered and significantly improved projects at UICS-Metro Center for our Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service.

This was their third consecutive year lending their time and talents with us on this day. While the event was smaller than previous years because of safety and social distancing, the impact was great for our students and teachers!

Students can now enjoy creating on the new chalkboard art wall they painted and teachers are inspired by random acts of kindness through the new bulletin board they constructed. Thank you, Diana and Lori!



Royals Charities



We're grateful to [Royals Charities](#) for making quality early education available to all families.

Kansas City Royals pitcher Mike Montgomery and wife Stephanie supported UICS' work through the release of her new children's book, ["Max & Ollie's Guide to Baseball"](#) which introduces young people to the national pastime. The Montgomerys gifted a book to each of our three schools, along with a grant to provide student scholarship assistance and new books featuring more characters of color, girls, and women!

Thanks to you all for thinking of our students and teachers. They LOVE the books and the Royals!



QUOTABLE

“With our growth and success in using the arts and education to positively impact students and families, we will continue advocating for policies for all children to have access to a high-quality early childhood education!”

- UICS CEO Deidre Anderson on Missouri Governor Mike Parson's establishment of the [Office of Childhood](#).



2008 E. 12th Street ▪ Kansas City, MO 64127



You're invited!

UICS invites YOU to help tell our story!
Help us create a BIG impact for our Little Learners and their families by joining the **Little Learners Ambassadors Program**.

Members will connect with like-minded arts and education enthusiasts, engage in advocacy, community outreach, friendship and exclusive events to support our mission.

Visit UICSKC.org/Ambassadors to learn more.

**NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION**

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UICS is supported by these generous community partners:



UICS Arts Wish List



Acrylic paint (all colors)
Aluminum foil
Colored cellophane
Contact paper
Fabric
Fake flowers
Foam core
House paint brushes
Key rings
Large smooth rocks
Magnet strips
Packing peanuts
Paper bags
Pinecones
Pipe cleaners and MORE!

View the full list
at UICSKC.org!

Ways to Give

Share a monthly gift.

Round up your spare change
with the RoundUp app.

Donate in-kind goods.

Purchase items on our
Amazon Wish List.

Give at UICSKC.org



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