DELMAR DIVINE™

The INterface - May 2024

Dear Friend,

At the last meeting of our Programming and Racial Equity Committee, I was proudly discussing all the activities that are taking place at Delmar DivINe, many of which you can read about below in this edition of *The INterface*.

One of the members acknowledged the good things that were happening, but reminded me that what was really important was whether we were acting in accordance with our mission and vision. Are we showing fidelity to our "north star," as articulated in our Racial Equity Statement: "Delmar DivINe is committed to racial equity and social justice, and we demonstrate this by encouraging innovation, fostering inclusiveness, valuing diversity, and addressing disparities; respect, authentic engagement, and a willingness to learn from one another and our communities is the bedrock of all that we do."

It was a great reminder of how easy it is to get caught up on our "scorecard" of how many programs we've run and how many people attended. Much more relevant is the extent to which our organization is having a true impact on lives of people. So I was especially gratified when, at the last gathering of our Community Collaborative Board (the group of residents living in the 63112 area that help us live up to our values), one of the members said:

"I can say this place is so beautiful. I come over here on a regular basis for the Wisdom Café and for meetings with my representatives, and I got hooked on coming in. To be here speaks louder than anything else. When you walk inside the building, there's quality here. When you leave, you feel strengthened, because you walked through something that reflects *us*, our history. So [Delmar DivINe] makes a difference, absolutely."

We will continue to create programs and host activities that support our nonprofit tenants and strengthen surrounding communities, but we will always remember what our north star is and why we are here.

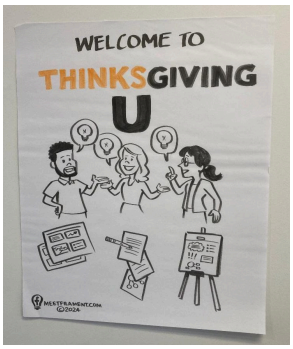
Sincerely,
Jorge Riopedre
Executive Director, Delmar DivINe

Events at Delmar DivINe

Thinksgiving U. Yields Solutions for Nonprofits

Last month Delmar DivINe, in partnership with **Filament** and in collaboration with Washington University's **Center for Experiential Learning** (CEL), presented Thinksgiving U., a program developed from Filament's annual **Thinksgiving** held each fall at Cortex. Many agencies have previously participated in the Filament event and have been extremely pleased with the results.

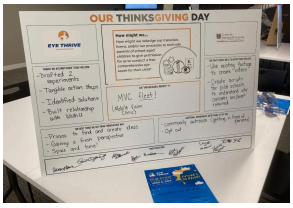
For Thinksgiving U., innovative groups of Washington University students were paired with Delmar DivINe nonprofits to seek solutions to a particular non-monetary challenge that the agencies were trying to solve. The students had previously worked with CEL to do research on the nonprofit they were paired with, as well as completing a workshop hosted by Filament to learn best practices from past Thinksgiving sessions.



After a welcome session in the Berges Family Foundation Conference Center, the students and nonprofits divided into various conference rooms throughout the campus to begin working, with the end product for the day being a poster capturing all the ideas the session generated. This work continued for seven hours, only interrupted by lunch provided by Ben Poremba and the Deli Divine.

Near the end of the day, all of the teams returned to the conference center and presented their posters, and discussed how their strategies could be put into action.

"Thinksgiving U. provided a unique opportunity for our staff and board to engage with fresh perspectives from the WashU community to solve a current challenge we are facing," said Kate McKearn, executive director of **Eye Thrive**. "Not only did we collaborate to find innovative solutions, but our entire team was re-energized by partnering with WashU to collaborate in new and different ways."



Matt Homann, founder and president of Filament, concluded the day with some words of wisdom for the nonprofits.

“Don’t try to do too much right away. First, use this experiment methodology to try another thing. And another thing. Then, turn those experiments into pilots, then turn those pilots into projects, and turn those projects into initiatives. You don't have to solve everything at once.”

Families Engage with "Books and Brunch"

Bridge 2 Hope, an agency with a dedicated team of changemakers committed to advocating for all children and families, organized a successful book drive to close the access gap for families in need of books and promote cognitive development. Entitled, “Books and Brunch,” the event is part of an ongoing effort to address disparities and instill a love of reading in underserved communities by providing books to families lacking access. The program raised awareness about reading and sustainability and also facilitated the distribution of over 6,200 books to more than 1,000 homes and organizations, including daycare centers and elementary schools.

Krystal Barnett, CEO and Founder of Bridge 2 Hope, expressed gratitude for the overwhelming community support, which exceeded an initial goal of collecting 2,000 books and reaching 500 homes.

“This showcases what a collective commitment to literacy and education can achieve,” Barnett said.

She also extolled the partnerships that made the event successful, including author and poet Aja Owens, Made with Love Lemonade by Mikelle Brown, Chosen for Change & Sweet Eats Catering, Re-Re the Reader, Ready Readers, and Village of Moms.

St. Louis Arc Trains Staff, Serves Community

For the first time since 2019, **St. Louis Arc** was able to host its all-team Day Services in Delmar DivINe's Berges Family Foundation Conference Center.

The Day Services team, composed of over 100 members, reviewed best practices in for community supports, engagement, and policies. The day closed with a diversity, equity and inclusion workshop facilitated by Tabari Coleman of The Coleman Group that focused on individual identities. The resulting thought-provoking conversations allowed the group to see how everyone shows up in different communities.

In addition, the agency held its first City Services Open House, a free event for St. Louis City community members interested in learning more about St. Louis Arc's resources, services, and support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, including its Adult Day and Leisure programs, family support resources, transition services, and summer programs for teens.

Intake staff was on-site assisting people in registering and signing up for eligible programs, while also providing expressive arts activities and prize giveaways from community partners.

Wisdom Cafe Has Full Slate of Programs

April was active at the Wisdom Cafe! It kicked off with a visit from our friends at the **Saint Louis Public Library** (SLPL). The staff discussed many of the library's services and issued library cards on the spot. They also shared interesting information. For example, some branches can assist with passport applications and photos. Also, the SLPL Cabanne Branch, built in 1907, was made possible by a $3 million gift from Andrew Carnegie. (That's the equivalent today of over $99,000,000!)

Next up was Washington University's **Friedman Center for Aging**. Brian Carpenter, the organization's co-director, engaged the group in substantive conversation about aging and death. These opportunities to connect with communities on important topics are part of the center's mission to advance a society in which people of all ages have maximum opportunity for health, security, and engagement.

Food is at the heart of communal experiences, so later in April we were happy to welcome **Operation Food Search** and its **St. Louis Metro Market**. The Ameren Community Convening Room was converted into a pop-up market where residents of the West End gathered to access bags and boxes of fresh produce. Another of our partners, **St. Louis Oasis**, was also there to encourage Wisdom Café members to volunteer in a variety of capacities with organizations across the region.

The Café convenes in May with another installment of "Sex After Sixty," a grief support seminar, a senior resource fair, and a Tai Chi class. Keep an eye on our **Facebook** page, **Twitter** feed, and **website** for event registration.

Delmar DivINe Explores Blue Zones

Life expectancy of an American born today averages 78.2 years. But in 2024, over 70,000 Americans will celebrate their 100th birthday. What are they doing that the average American isn't?

Since the vast majority of Americans spend 90% of their lives within 20 miles of their homes, what your environment is like matters a lot. Those areas where researchers have discovered clusters of centenarians have become known as Blue Zones.

Research **has identified some commonalities** between these zones, with the implication being that they can be replicated.

Delmar DivINe, in collaboration with the Clark-Fox Family Foundation, is launching an initial set of meetings with West End neighborhoods to explore what it would take to start working on making these communities places where people can live longer, better.

The first community exploratory meetings will take place at Delmar DivINe's Berges Family Foundation Conference Center on May 21, where **members of a multidisciplinary team** of scientists and strategists will make an introductory presentation and facilitate a discussion. Use the QR code below to register to attend.

Community News

WashU Community Engagement Office Opens at Delmar DivINe

Washington University has been an integral partner of Delmar DivINe since it opened in the fall of 2021 with the aspiration of being a place where stakeholders would convene and work together for the good of our region.

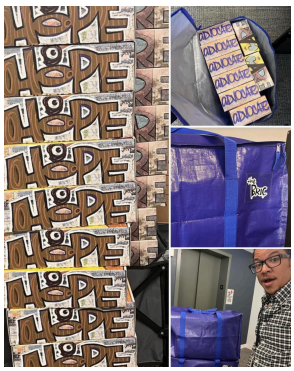
That aspiration becomes more of a reality with the launching of the university's Community Engagement Office in a 5,800 square foot space immediately adjacent to Delmar DivINe's main entrance.

The office is led by Lisa Weingarth, senior advisor for St. Louis initiatives, and will also house the Center for Community Health Partnerships and Research and the Office of the Provost's new St. Louis Confluence Collaborative for Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Practice. The office also will make classrooms, drop-in spaces, and conference rooms available to WashU's staff and faculty for their everyday work in the community. And as reported last month, it will host a new education program for refugees.

Lisa Weingarth

In **the university's announcement** of this new commitment, Chancellor Andrew Martin said, "WashU must not only be in St. Louis — it must be for St. Louis as well. And we can do that only if we meet people where they are and work alongside them as we together make our region as vibrant and equitable as we all know it can be. That's what the new WashU Community Engagement Office is all about."

The BRIC Expands Programming, Presence



The Bullet Related Injury Clinic (BRIC) announced that it is expanding its programming methodology to **Regional One Health**'s Elvis Presley Trauma Center in Memphis.

In addition, the organization, led by trauma surgeon Dr. LJ Punch, **has secured a new building** within which it will consolidate its treatment services.

Dr. Punch stresses that, when it comes to dealing with bullet-related trauma, hospitals and prisons are insufficient.

"Much of what we don't like about criminal behavior is often survival behavior, and that survival behavior is a trauma response," Punch explained to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. "When people have what they need, when they're not in pain, when their needs are being met, when their wounds are being healed, they don't have to respond in a way that's violent to other people."

Briefly

Film Screening Highlights Maternal Mortality

As part of Black Maternal Health Week, Delmar DivINe hosted a screening of "Sister Doula" by **Jamaa Birth Village**. Mayor Tishaura Jones was on hand for the event, which also featured a variety of art and informational exhibits.