

## NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **UCM Community Lends Helping Hand to Honor MLK's Legacy**

WARRENSBURG, MO (Jan. 5, 2021) – With the theme, “Giving a Helping Hand to Achieve the Dream,” the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be honored by the University of Central Missouri in January 2021 through service and volunteer efforts that include faculty, staff, student and community participation.

UCM annually conducts the MLK Celebration in cooperation with members of the Warrensburg community as a way to pause and reflect on the work and impact of the great civil rights leader. Special activities provide an opportunity to honor King while recommitting to the goal of showing respect and dignity for one another.

The annual observance has traditionally included a fundraising dinner in which the recipients of MLK Freedom Scholarships are introduced. Because of the pandemic, four scholarship recipients this year will be honored through a video production made possible through the UCM Alumni Foundation. According to Dr. Lover Chancler, assistant professor in child and family development and director of the Multicultural and Inclusivity Center, a link to the video will be shared on the MLK Celebration webpage.

The MLK observance is a “day on not a day off” for individuals who are committed to service. A number of groups and individuals have volunteered to assist with projects on Jan. 14 that benefit the community, and will meet between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the UCM Elliott Student Union. Individuals and

groups who want to participate can still register up to 5 p.m. Jan. 7 by contacting Kristie Brinkley, assistant director for Volunteer Services at UCM, at [kbrinkley@ucmo.edu](mailto:kbrinkley@ucmo.edu).

Other volunteers will congregate at the Missouri Innovation Campus (MIC), from 3 to 7 p.m. Jan. 14-15 to assemble toys for dogs which will be presented to area animal shelters. To learn more or to register, contact Rick Smetana, site operations manager for UCM-Lee's Summit at the MIC, by calling 660-543-8250 or email [smetana@ucmo.edu](mailto:smetana@ucmo.edu).

The MLK Volunteer Fair is planned for 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 20 at the Elliott Student Union atrium. This is an opportunity to learn more about ways to assist a number of local nonprofit organizations who need volunteer support to help them fulfill their missions. Anyone who has questions should contact Brinkley for more information.

Area residents can give the gift of life to others by donating their blood during the Community Service Blood Drive Jan. 26-27. The drive takes place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the ballroom of the Elliott Student Union, and walk-ins are accepted as time and staff allow. Contact Brinkley with questions.

The MLK Celebration has traditionally included Community Service Awards, a program sponsored by the Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce, which seeks to honor members of the community who exemplify humanitarianism, leadership, and selfless service. These awards are open to any individual or organization in Johnson County, in addition to an award category for high school students in the county. Due to the pandemic, this program is being postponed in 2021, but will resume in 2022.

The university has traditionally been the site for a Community Praise and Worship Service that is conducted as part of the MLK Celebration. No details are currently available about this event for 2021.

Individuals who want to learn more about the MLK Celebration are encouraged to contact Chancellor at 660-543-8049 or [chancellor@ucmo.edu](mailto:chancellor@ucmo.edu).

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