



# COMMUNIQUÉ

A Publication of Mississippi Valley State University for Faculty, Staff, Alumni and Friends | September/October 2019 Vol.16 Edition 7

## A VALLEY WORLD: HOMECOMING 2019



See pages 5-7 for more photos

## MVSU CELEBRATES NAMING OF MCTEER HALL

“We did it because it was the only logical thing we could think to do,” said a poised Victor McTeer, revealing his motivation for providing financial support over the past several years to the state’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), including Mississippi Valley State University.

MVSU paid homage to McTeer and wife, Mecidees, Saturday, September 21, for their generosity by re-naming its New Men Residence Hall to McTeer Hall. The 25,473 square feet dormitory was constructed in 2006 and has a student bed capacity of 96.

The naming ceremony, which was presided by Dr. La Shon Brooks, included remarks from Margaret Clark, 2nd Vice President of the MVSU National Alumni Association, and Brandon McCall, president of MVSU’s Student Government Association.



See “McTeer” page 8



# MVSU EQUIPS GRADUATE WITH “TOOLS” FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

When Demontra Ewing enrolled at Mississippi Valley State University in 2014, he felt his career opportunities in Engineering Technology would be limited.

Fast forward four years later and the West Point High School graduate is now a college graduate and working for one of the largest tool manufacturers in the world— Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation.

Ewing serves as production engineer for Milwaukee Tool in Greenwood.

“Initially, I figured I would land a job as a maintenance tech or engineering tech. The job I have now is more than I could ever expect. Coming from MVSU only made me appreciate this opportunity more,” said Ewing, a native of Pheba, Miss.

The course work at MVSU is something Ewing is appreciative of along with the flexibility offered by his professors.

“Several of my departmental courses tied directly into the work I’ve been doing,” Ewing said. “MVSU worked with me so that I could continue to work at Milwaukee Tool as an intern and finish classes.”

“The internship allowed me to apply what I learned in school in a real-world situation,” he added.



Ewing said that the learning culture in MVSU’s Department of Engineering Technology, coupled with the support from the faculty, is what helped to build a strong foundation for him.

“The professors in the engineering technology department always encouraged us to excel academically. Mr. (Antonio) Brownlow

specifically was passionate about his students and what he did as an academic advisor,” said Ewing.

“He would take time to meet with students individually and discuss career opportunities and life goals. He took the time to develop relationships with students, and that is what set him apart from everyone else, in my opinion,” he added.

Brownlow, who is the acting chair of Engineering Technology, said Ewing was a student who never slacked on his work.

“Demontra came to us because he had a cousin who came through the department and something that I noticed about both of them was their work ethic,” said Brownlow. “They worked hard and listened to the advice that was shared.”

Looking back on his journey through MVSU, Ewing said that if he had to advise younger students about one thing, he would encourage them to stay focused.

“I would tell any freshman coming into MVSU to stay focused and don’t get caught up in any distractions,” he said. “MVSU is a great institution that can help you to start a great career. You can only get out what you put in, so put your all in so you can get everything out,” he said.

# JOHNSON COMPLETES INTERNSHIP WITH FED EX, OFFERED EMPLOYMENT WITH COMPANY



Life has a way of turning out unexpectedly, and Mississippi Valley State University student Glenn Johnson knows that all too well.

In 2014, Johnson graduated from Humphreys County High School in Belzoni, and he admits MVSU wasn’t his first choice.

“I initially wanted to go to Alcorn, but due to the foundation laid by my father (Glenn Sr.) and my older sister, Brittany Coleman, I thought I would give Valley a try,” he shared.

“Brittany was involved in everything and engaged in campus life, so talking to her gave me the idea to choose Valley and that was one of the greatest decisions I ever made in my young life,” Johnson said.

His college choice is paying off in real-time as the 20-year-old engineering technology major,

who has an emphasis in electronics, recently completed an internship with Fed-EX in Memphis as a customer trade agent.

Johnson participated in the internship from June 3 to August 9. During the internship, he was given the opportunity to build webpages as well as create and manage document libraries.

Now that Johnson has completed his internship, he will be working part-time at the MVSU Fed-Ex Logistics satellite office. Recently, MVSU was selected as the first university to participate in FedEx Logistics’ HBCU program, giving MVSU student the opportunity to gain part-time employment at a facility on campus.

See “Johnson” page 9



# MVSU HOSTS 2019 FALL INTERNSHIP/CAREER FAIR

The Career Services Center at Mississippi Valley State University hosted its 2019 Internship/Career Fair Tuesday, Oct. 22, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the concourse level of the R.W. Harrison Complex.

More than 40 companies registered to attend the annual event, designed for current MVSU students and alumni looking to explore career options and network with employers in a variety of industries.

In addition, mock interviews were conducted on-site to help individuals prepare for prepare and build confidence for future interviews.

According to MVSU Director of Career Services Essie Bryant, companies like Walgreens, ConvergeOne, and Greenwood Consolidated School District were among the many companies returning for this year's event while other companies, like Nissan, the event for the first time.

"Our main goal is to help students obtain full-time, part-time, or internship opportunities and



form relationships with employers that will help them in the future," said MVSU Director of Career Services Essie Bryant.

For more information about opportunities available at the MVSU Career Services Center, call (662) 254-3441 or [careerservices@mvsu.edu](mailto:careerservices@mvsu.edu).

# OMEGAS DONATE \$60K FOR SCHOLARSHIPS



During Mississippi Valley State University's 2019 Homecoming celebration, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. presented the institution with monetary donations.

The presentations were made in celebration of the 50th anniversary of MVSU's Beta Theta Chapter. In keeping with the 50th Anniversary theme, "Lifting as We Climb by Living Our Omega Creed," the group combined to donate

\$60,000 for scholarships in conjunction with the anniversary celebration.

A \$50,000 check was presented to MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr. during halftime of the football team's contest against Virginia-Lynchburg.

Dr. David Marion, 41st Grand Basileus, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. also presented

Briggs with a \$10,000 check for scholarships during the Beta Theta Chapter (BTC) 50th Anniversary Banquet held on the Friday, prior to the Saturday game. The banquet was held at the Leflore County Civic Center in Greenwood.

Approximately 41 members of the fraternity participated in the homecoming game check presentation.



# MVSU REMEMBERS STUDENT JEVONTE CURTIS DURING CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

“He was a very talented and gifted young man,” said Dr. Jacqueline Gibson Preastly to the large group of Mississippi Valley State University students, faculty and staff gathered in honor of Jevonte Curtis.

“He developed himself as a student leader here, and the student body elected him as treasurer for the SGA for this academic year. He was also very well loved by the brothers of Omega Psi Phi, Inc., an organization that he was initiated to this past Spring. This is a sad day for all of us, and it’s really been heavy on my heart as well as the students, staff and faculty,” Preastly added.

Curtis, a native of Chicago, passed away Sunday, Sept. 29, following a car accident near Belzoni, Miss. A candlelight vigil for the 22-year-old senior criminal justice major was organized by the MVSU Division of Student Affairs and Student Government Association (SGA), Inc. Tuesday, Sept. 31 at 4:30 p.m. in the Charles Lackey Recreational Center.

Following the memorial ceremony, a candlelight vigil was hosted at the Pavilion. Members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. then adorned their University plot with a black ribbon in honor of Curtis.



The ceremony included an invocation by Jerome Petty and benediction by Antonio Binder.

In addition to hearing several uplifting selections from Different Generations of Praise, a student music group, MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr. and students Brandon McCall and Zacchaeus Sias shared their memories of Curtis.

“I think we all feel the pain and sorrow of knowing that a very precious life has been lost,” said Briggs. “I knew Tae personally, and he was an outstanding young man. We need to remember the love he had for this University because that speaks about who we are as a community.”

“We all need to lean on each other and support each other’s successes—I know that’s what he would want. We want to memorialize Jevonte, but we also want to give thanks for the time that we had with him and the lives that he touched. I know I’m going to always appreciate that,” Briggs added.

McCall, who serves as president of the MVSU SGA, Inc., said that he watched Curtis progress during his time at the University.

“Tae meant a lot to me. I served as Trailblazer (student mentor) during his freshman year

See “Vigil” page 9

# SIX MVSU STUDENTS ATTEND TMCF LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Six Mississippi Valley State University students attended the Thurgood Marshall College Fund’s 19th Leadership Institute on Oct. 16-20 in Washington, D.C.

The leadership institute is an award-winning program aimed to develop students’ leadership skills, create a community of scholars, provide companies’ access to a talented and diverse student population and help students make connections that lead to careers.

English and Mass Communications major JaQuana Williams of Atlanta; Mathematics and Computer Science double major Roseline Shappi of Conyers, Ga.; Mathematics and Computer Science double major Mubarak Ibrahim of Abuja, Nigeria; Computer Science major Kyanie Waters of Heidelberg, Miss.; English major Jai Cosey of Memphis; and Engineering Technology major Chyna Sawyers of London, England were all selected to attend the four-day conference.

Joining Valley students were 394 other HBCU students and 600 corporate, government and education partners, speakers and recruiters.





# VALLEY WORLD

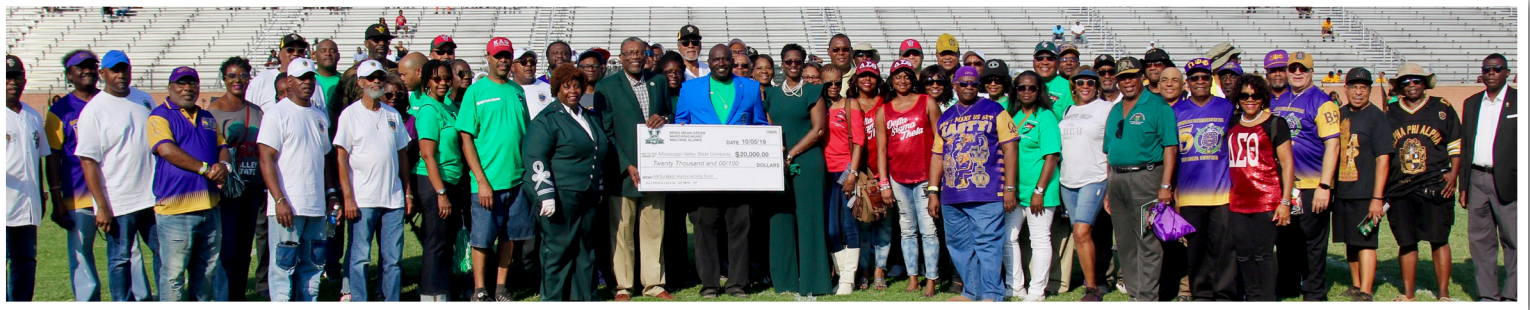
## HOMECOMING HIGHLIGHTS







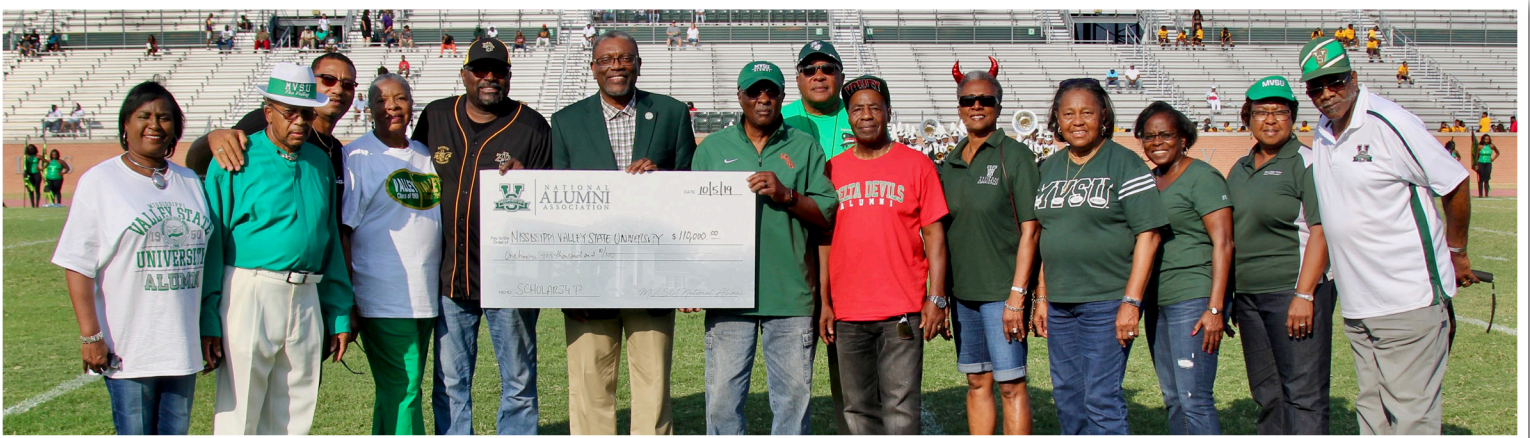




The Mississippi Valley State University Mean Green Marching Machine Alumni presented a check to Dr. Jerryl Briggs Sr., in the amount of \$20,000 for the MVSU Band Alumni Activity Fund during halftime of the school's homecoming contest.



Members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. presented Dr. Jerryl Briggs Sr., with a check in the amount of \$30,594 for MVSU Scholarships during halftime of the school's homecoming festivities.



The Mississippi Valley State University National Alumni Association presented a check in the amount of \$110,000 to Dr. Jerryl Briggs Sr., for MVSU scholarships during homecoming 2019.



Robert and Gwendolyn Strong presented Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr. and Dr. Jacqueline Gibson-Prestly a check in the amount of \$5000 during homecoming festivities for the Robert and Gwendolyn Strong Annual Scholarship.



Mississippi Valley State University recently faced-off against Jackson State University and Alcorn State University during the Annual Soul Bowl Blood Drive, a friendly competition to see which university can get the most blood donations over three days. For the 5th consecutive year, MVSU came out on top. Student Reginald Love was recipient for this year's scholarship.





MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE  
UNIVERSITY™

## MCTEER HALL

MR. VICTOR & MRS. MERCIDEES MCTEER



### McTeer *continued from cover*

Before unveiling the new marker and plaque bearing the McTeers' name, MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr. stated that the occasion was a special one for the MVSU community.

"I want to take the time to say thank you personally for all that you have meant to this university. You all have done tremendously great things for us, and we want to make sure that your legacy will continue," Briggs said to the honorees.

"We're so grateful to Mr. and Mrs. McTeer for all that they continue to do to grow and build our university. This opportunity means so much to me because I know from the conversations that I've had with you, all the passion and the love that you have for higher education, and I know the passion and the love that you have for Mississippi Valley State University," he added.

McTeer, a retired civil rights attorney, said the occasion was a special one with this past July marking the 50th anniversary that he and his wife relocated to the Mississippi Delta from Baltimore, Maryland.

"I never dreamed I'd see anything like this. As a matter of fact, the only thing I remember about that first year was that I wanted to get out of Mississippi so fast," he chuckled.

McTeer then acknowledged his wife, an accomplished public-school educator, whom he

said stuck by his side, even after he announced such an implausible decision.

"She had to give up her dream job in Baltimore as a second-grade teacher. I was making a third of what I'd been offered in New York and Baltimore, and she was going to earn just \$7,000 in Mound Bayou. As long as I promised her that we would be gone in two years, she went with it. Well, we all know how that worked out," he said.

Looking back on his career, McTeer said he feels indebted to those who trusted him to represent them—even when it could've cost them their lives.

"People heard this story about this young black guy from Baltimore who'd come to Mississippi, and they gave me a chance. But it just didn't happen once. It happened over and over again," he said. "I felt, as did Dee (Mercidees), that we had to do something."

Initially, the couple started the McTeer Foundation, ran by their daughter Heather, to help college students from the Mississippi Delta pay for the first two years of college.

"We did that for a while, and it worked well, but it still wasn't enough. We decided that we wanted to take another step. That's when (Attorney) Fred (Clark) came to me. We'd been working on a couple of cases and done unbelievably well. Fred said, let's do something special, something unheard of."

The duo agreed to make significant donations to HBCUs. While Clark decided to support his alma mater, Jackson State University, McTeer chose MVSU.

"It was easy for me—my home college in Mississippi is Mississippi Valley State University. Part of that was also because (MVSU alum Attorney) Carver (Randle, Sr.) was one of my best friends in life," he explained.

Over time, the two continued to support their selected schools while also making contributions to other schools.

"We figured that we had to give back as much as we had been given and as many times as we could give back, and that's exactly what we did," he said.

McTeer said that the naming of McTeer Hall is a very touching gesture.

"I thank you all for this great honor that you've bestowed upon us," he said. "But I also come here to thank you for proving us right—that an investment in one's own is an investment in one's self; that love, honor, cordiality and the willingness to work for the whole always comes back."

He concluded his remarks by adding his spin to a popular phrase.

"What goes around comes around, and for us, it has been blessings."





and later as his RA and SGA president,” he shared. “This was the very last suit that we bought together, so I wore it today in memory of him.”

Sias, who spoke on behalf of MVSU’s Beta Theta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. said that he spoke with Curtis nearly every day after joining the organization together.

“He had the ability to leave an impact on everyone that he met,” said Sias. “People say the phrase ‘gone but never forgotten’, but if

we don’t learn from his life and death, sadly he will be forgotten. I just want everyone to treat people the way they’d want to be treated and love everyone.”

Sias recalled shaking Curtis’ hand one final time after the MVSU football game against Alcorn State University Saturday.

“I didn’t know that it would be the last time, but I’m at peace because he wasn’t just a fraternity brother—he was a friend. He was there for me when I needed him, and I was there when he needed me.”

## MVSU ALUMNUS, PROFESSOR SERVES ON PANEL DURING SCREENING



*Dr. Lemondra Hamilton (pictured third, from left) participated in a panel discussion on Aretha Franklin’s Amazing Grace film. He is joined by, from left, Micheal Davis, Andy Daniels and Jose Watson.*

Mississippi Valley State University alumnus and Visiting Professor of Music Dr. Lemondra Hamilton was part of a group of experts discussing never before seen footage of the legendary Aretha Franklin during a screening of the film “Amazing Grace” at the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center Thursday, Oct. 10.

Themed “Gospel Transcends: A Conversation on How Gospel Promotes Racial Healing”,

the free event was hosted at the B.B. King Museum Gin and included a film screening and panel discussion.

The panelists included Hamilton, along with Andy Daniels, Jose Watson & Michael Davis. Rev. Herron Wilson of Indianola served as the moderator.



“I will be doing pre-clearance, meaning I will be checking off packages outside of the United States before it reaches U.S. soil,” Johnson explained.

For Johnson, the experiences gained during his internship are an example of the type of commitment MVSU has toward its students’ success.

“My experiences are preparing me for life because I am utilizing everything Valley has and I am going after all the opportunities presented to me. Valley encourages students to complete both internships and community service hours which I think is great,” Johnson said.

Johnson said he’s grateful for the doors that have now opened for his future.

“By putting myself out there, I landed an internship and have the possibility to land a full-time position upon graduation. I’ve used the opportunities to network with executives, and I have their contact information so if I need any assistance I can reach out to them,” he said.

Johnson’s ultimate goal is to pursue a career in technology, which is rooted in his desire to be more hands-on while also using his knowledge of the software.

“I did not want to do computer science because it focused more on software so because I wanted to be more hands-on, I majored in engineering technology. I am already working for a Fortune 500 company, and I plan to stack enough money and explore entrepreneurship. I also want to own a tech company where we repair things and create things. Ultimately, I want to create my brand.”

Johnson said his advice to new students would be to prioritize.

“College is temporary, and it is four years minimum, so what’s next? If you are not setting yourself up for gainful employment while you are in college, what’s next? I want to encourage the Class of 2023 to use Valley as a stepping-stone to get to where they want to go in life and not just waste four years and come out with no plan.”



# MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE HONORED WITH PRESTIGIOUS NASA AWARD

Nathaniel A. Bocclair, III, a graduate of Mississippi Valley State University, was recently awarded an Exceptional Service Medal at NASA's Marshall Space Flight located on Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala.

This prestigious NASA medal is awarded to any government employee for sustained performance that embodies multiple contributions which contribute to NASA projects, programs or initiatives. Bocclair has served as a leader and a mentor at NASA for more than 40 years.

He joined Marshall Space Flight Center in 1977 through the Cooperative Education Program at Mississippi Valley and worked within the Data Systems Laboratory until transferring to the Systems Analysis and Integration Laboratory in 1982.

Since that time, he has served within in Flight Operations Branch of the Systems Analysis and Integration Laboratory and Data Management Branch where he was responsible for end-to-end data management planning and Payload Operations Control Center requirements, analysis, integration, and implementation.

Subsequently, Bocclair has supported each Spacelab Payload mission in operational positions. Bocclair has also served as Chief of the Huntsville Operations Support Center (HOSC), where he was responsible for the direction of ten NASA engineers and approximately 100 contractors.



In that position he maintained technical and operational expertise in the ground network to ensure the operational readiness of the HOSC to support Space Shuttle pre-launch activities, Spacelab and Space Station Freedom missions. He had the responsibility to ensure that the HOSC provided communications, data processing and display facilities required to support real-time mission support activities which included: 1) simulations, 2) pre launch testing and checkout, 3) launch operations, and 4) flight operations; and post-flight evaluation.

Bocclair currently serves as Manager of Space Systems Operations. His chief responsibilities include advising and guiding the implementation of operations planning and

analysis activities of the branch for International Space Station payload operations command and control and data management functions. While in this position, Bocclair effectively led the special study team activities required to enable the transition from ISS to an improved Command and Control/Data Systems Architecture for the NASA Exploration Initiative.

His expertise and leadership resulted in the definition of the scope and content of the Data Storage and Retrieval Capability for future space missions. He has continuously demonstrated a commitment to developing others. He has sought new opportunities to help employees excel in their career through Agency formal training, detail assignments, special study teams, etc.

Due to his commitment to teamwork and transparency between team members, he promotes a general atmosphere of cooperation and trust between NASA and its partners. Bocclair has been a resident of Huntsville for the past 39 years. He is married to the former Sharon Denise Benford of Itta Bena, Mississippi, and is the father of two sons, Alex Mathis and Nathaniel IV and one daughter, Latoya. As a dedicated member of Saint Joseph's Catholic Church, Bocclair serves as the director of the "Gift Bearers." He is also an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated, and the community service organization "Vets for Vettes."



*The MVSU Office of Admissions Recruitment Team recently participated in the Inspire Charter School College Fair in New Orleans. The participating schools included: Karr, Eleanor Mc Main and McDonogh 35 Senior High School. MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr. is a graduate of McDonogh 35.*



*Pictured, from left, are Jannette Adams of MVSU VIM; Chopped winners Brandon Smith and Angel Darcus; Celebrity guest Chef Jernard Wells; Chopped winners Tyonna Williams and Mante Noble; and Shayvonne Ford, MVSU VIM Project Coordinator.*

Mississippi Valley State University's Valley in Motion health initiative hosted its Pre-Homecoming Chopped Competition Sept. 23-25 in the Charles Lackey Recreational Center. During three rounds, MVSU students, staff and faculty members competed for the title "Best Chef on the Yard". During the final two rounds, Food Network's Chef Jernard Wells served as a judge and host. The competition ended in a tie among two teams.



# WELCOME ABOARD



**Chandrika Anderson**  
*Residence Hall Monitor*  
Residential Life



**JaCheri Brown**  
*Admissions Counselor*  
Admissions & Recruitment



**Derrick Calvert**  
*Groundsmen*  
Facilities Management



**Mary Cotton**  
*Hall Monitor*  
Residential Life



**Kenneth Davis**  
*Language Arts Instructor*  
Distance Learning



**Anthony Doyle**  
*Groundsman*  
Facilities Management



**Annette Fields**  
*Night Hall Monitor*  
Residential Life



**Theodore Johnson III**  
*Admissions Counselor*  
Admissions & Recruitment



**Roshunda Jones**  
*Pre-K 4 Teacher*  
MVSU CDC



**Rosie Manuel**  
*Custodian*  
Facilities Management



**Brittney Manual-Carpenter**  
*AR Clerk*



**Robert McPherson Jr.**  
*Residence Hall Monitor*  
Residential Life



**Florina Moreno**  
*Language Arts Instructor*  
Distance Education



**James Payne, Jr.**  
*Patrolman*  
MVSU Police



**Aubrey Powell**  
*Residence Hall Monitor*  
Residential Life



**Rosalyn Randle**  
*Data Entry Clerk*  
Admissions & Recruitment



**Duana Robie**  
*Admin. Asst.*  
Social Work



**Derrick Singleton**  
*Janitor*  
Facilities Management



**Sandra Stringfellow**  
*Office Administrator*  
Student Support Services



**Alyssa Webb**  
*Alumni Manager*  
Alumni Affairs



**Laquita White**  
*Residence Hall Monitor*  
Residential Life



**Sonjia Young**  
*Receptionist*  
Facilities Management



Two  
Minutes  
with...

# Temeka Jones

First Year Experience Coordinator



*Tell us a little about yourself and your background.*

I was born in Indianapolis, Ind., and reared in the small cozy town of Belzoni, Miss. I am the mother of one son, Jairod Davis, who is seventeen years old. I am a two-time graduate of MVSU with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Master of Science in Criminal Justice. I am currently employed in University College as the First Year Experience Coordinator. In this capacity, I assist first-time students with a smooth transition to college by providing events and activities that will help them adapt to their new environment at MVSU.

*How do you approach providing service?*

I approach providing service with "Superb Customer Service." You may have heard

the popular adage "First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions." When providing service, I make sure that everyone who crosses my path is treated with the utmost courtesy, kindness, and respect.

*Where are we most likely to find you when you are not at work?*

When I am not at work, you will most likely find me in the comfort of my home cooking and cleaning or at an Outlet Mall shopping.

*What is something we would be surprised to learn about you?*

You would be surprised to learn that I love to "Shake-A-Tail-Feather". Yes, I love to dance.

# COMMUNIQUE

The Communiqué is published for faculty, staff, alumni and supporters of Mississippi Valley State University by the Office of Communications and Marketing

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**New Hashtag: #ValleyinMotion**

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