

# blend



## DISCOVERING DIVERSITY IN SPRINGFIELD

**ACTION PLAN:** Increase Springfield's diversity.

Springfield's public image, both within and beyond our region, is a critical element of our economic future. It is vital that our community understands the competitive dynamics of today's economy, and that we support programs and policies that embrace diversity as we move forward.

**Objective 1:** Dispel myths about Springfield and better differentiate the region nationally.

**Objective 2:** Increase greater Springfield's community diversity.

**Objective 3:** Initiate internal dialogues on Springfield's competitive dynamics.

--taken from *Competitive Assessment of Springfield, Missouri, Market Street Services Inc.* See the complete report at [www.springfieldchamber.com](http://www.springfieldchamber.com)

## WHY IS DIVERSITY IMPORTANT TO SPRINGFIELD?

*By Lisa Turner, Director-HR and Administration for City Utilities*

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce is actively working to bring diversity information and issues to the forefront in Springfield. Leading Springfield public organizations (City of Springfield, City Utilities, Greene County, Springfield-Greene County Library District, Springfield Public Schools, Missouri State University, and Ozarks Technical Community College) are committed to improving Springfield's diversity demographics. You may ask -- Why do we want Springfield to be more diverse?

As we evaluate our community's economic outlook, it is apparent that a lack of diversity in the business community, including available jobs, will be a barrier to our growth and ability to attract and retain a quality, diverse workforce. The employees that all businesses will hire also have families that will attend our schools, shop at our retail stores, support our sports teams, contribute to our community, attend our churches, and the list goes on. The bottom line: Our community needs to increase diversity to continue to grow and prosper.

The leading Springfield public organizations mentioned above have committed to improving our community's diversity. You may see those commitments at [www.springfieldchamber.com](http://www.springfieldchamber.com). Here are a few of the initiatives being pursued:

- Create a formal mentoring program with the local schools.
- Develop scholarship programs for diverse groups, e.g., minorities/females/disabled.
- Formalize a business-related educational program for

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CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, CITY UTILITIES OF SPRINGFIELD, GREENE COUNTY, MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY, OZARKS TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE, SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT, SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# MAJOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

## APRIL 2011

- 4-12 RAMAYANA - Hindu
- 17 PALM SUNDAY -Christian
- 19-26 \* PESACH (PASSOVER) \*  
-Jewish
- 26 TO 5/3: MAYAN RAIN FESTIVAL
- 22 GOOD (HOLY) FRIDAY  
- All Christians
- 24 EASTER - Christian
- 29 ARBOR DAY

## MAY 2011

- 1 BELTANE - SAMHAIN \* -  
Wicca/Pagan
- HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE  
DAY
- 5 CINCO DE MAYO
- 6 ARTSFIESTA! (Founders  
Park)
- 7 - 8 ARTSFEST (Walnut Street)
- 8 MOTHER'S DAY
- 17 BUDDHA DAY
- 30 MEMORIAL DAY

## JUNE 2011

- 1 PARTNERS' DAY
- 5 WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY
- 12 PENTECOST - Christian
- 19 FATHERS' DAY
- 21 SOLSTICE
- FIRST NATIONS DAY -  
Canadian Native People
- 23 CORPUS CHRISTI-  
Catholic Christian
- 28 LAILAT AL MIRAJ \*- Islam



## REAPING THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

*By Melanie Williams, HR Specialist for the City of Springfield*

Many people who live and work in Springfield have had little exposure to working in an environment that consists of people who are dissimilar to themselves. Even in 2011, most Springfield employers have little to offer in terms of working with people of significantly different cultures, religions, racial backgrounds or persons dealing with a disability. As that trend shifts, and as Springfield takes an active role toward encouraging its community to support a more diverse population, the individual employees will have the opportunity to benefit personally, just as their employers will benefit professionally, from diversity.

Benefits of diversity on a personal level can be as simple as finding the lifestyle or the background of another person interesting, and embracing the opportunity to learn about other cultures, backgrounds and experiences. Whether a coworker grew up in Alaska, Africa or Asia, their experiences would be vastly different from someone who

has lived their entire life in Springfield, Missouri. People eat exotic cuisines and travel to distant countries mainly because most of us have an inherent interest in things that are unfamiliar. What better opportunity to learn about different cultures and lifestyles than by working side-by-side with someone with vastly different life experiences?

Similarly, where business is concerned, encouraging a diverse work force has become necessary to remain commercially competitive. It will be impossible to develop products or services that appeal to diverse populations both within and outside of our country unless we seek knowledge, input and collaboration with people who represent those demographics. Springfield is already a great place to live, work, and raise a family, and we can only increase our marketability to business investors and working professionals by becoming an even more welcoming and inclusive community.

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- diverse groups, e.g., minorities/ females/disabled that desire to learn about opportunities and responsibilities of supervision within our entities to enhance potential promotability.
- Advertise job opportunities with more diverse organizations such as UNITE and Latino Americana, as well as maintain contact with the Missouri Career Center and the Chamber.
- Create a Diversity Awareness Calendar and celebrate different nationality-based themes twice a year.

- Develop a quarterly joint public organization quarterly Diversity Newsletter.
- Develop ways to measure areas of success and/or improvements.
- Develop a recruitment plan with local universities for diverse groups, e.g., minority/women/disabled graduates seeking future employment.

Please join us as we forge ahead to make Springfield more welcoming to diversity and to help build understanding of the importance of diversity to a successful future for all of us.

FOR EMPLOYERS, SECURING  
AND RESPECTING A  
DIVERSE WORKPLACE  
IS BENEFICIAL FOR ALL  
EMPLOYEES



# GETTING TO KNOW....CITY OF SPRINGFIELD FIRE CAPTAIN JOHN GRIER



*By Melanie Williams, HR Specialist for the City of Springfield*

Captain John Grier, known to many of his friends and colleagues as “Rosie,” has been with the City of Springfield Fire Department for 12 years. He takes pride in his respected reputation and explains that his personal philosophy stems from a quote he heard years ago,

**“Successful people are willing to do what others won’t.”**

**Q:** What led you to become interested in Public Service?

Interestingly, Captain Grier’s decision to apply with the City of Springfield Fire Department was in response to about a decade-long recruiting effort! The idea was first suggested to him during a conversation in 1987 with the City’s Fire Chief and an Assistant Fire Chief. Grier was working in a motorcycle shop at the time and when they suggested he would make a great firefighter, his initial response was, “run into burning buildings? Nah, no thanks...” Eight years later, when passed over during a promotional bidding process for a private sector position, he began seriously thinking about what some of his firefighter friends had told him about career opportunities available in fire service. Once he decided to go for it, he threw himself into the effort of preparing for the competitive firefighter testing process. In 1999, he scored 96% on the written exam and was subsequently selected and hired. “I came to the City,” says Grier, “to explore the career opportunity. I stayed because of the opportunity to help others.”

**Q:** What do you love about the career field you chose?

Grier’s love of his job focuses on people –both the public he serves, as well as those he serves shoulder-to-shoulder with on 24-hour work shifts. “We are a big family and it doesn’t matter if it’s 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m., if one of your brothers or sisters needs something, they know they can call and help is on the way.”

In addition to his daily responsibilities at the fire station, Captain Grier is also a regular contact for the City of Springfield’s Partners in Education partnership with Parkview High School. A Parkview graduate himself, Captain Grier enjoys getting the chance to mentor and encourage Parkview students who are still contemplating their professional aspirations.

**Q:** What’s the most rewarding experience of your career?

“There have been hundreds of firefighters that have come before me and expectations in this job are very high, but having your work ethic and integrity speak for you is a tremendous accomplishment.” Early in his fire career, Grier received a compliment from his captain that he always remembers, “he told me that in all his years in the fire service he had never met anyone who worked harder than me.”

**Q:** How have you adjusted to working in a traditionally non-diverse environment?

“I’ve never really thought about working in a non-diverse environment. As a child, I played Abraham Lincoln in my 1st grade play!” In 1983, Grier was the first black man to work at Domino’s Pizza; first to work at McSalty’s; first union steward at Hiland Dairy and first firefighter to be honored as an Everyday Hero in Springfield. “I’ve had lots of these types of firsts, but I’ve never really looked at myself that way. Just doing what I was called to do.”



## THE MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER HAS A STRONG COMMITMENT

Missouri State University is a community of people with respect for diversity. The University emphasizes the dignity and equality common to all persons and adheres to a strict nondiscrimination policy regarding the treatment of individual faculty, staff and students. In accord with federal law and applicable Missouri statutes, the University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, or veteran status in employment or in any program or activity offered or sponsored by the University. In addition, the University does not discriminate on any basis not related to the applicable educational requirements for students or the applicable job requirements for employees.

Diversity is comprised of the multiplicity of people, cultures and ideas that contribute to the richness and variety of life. It broadly encompasses a mixture of similarities and differences along a multitude of dimensions including, but not limited to, values, cultures, concepts, learning styles and perceptions that individuals possess. According to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, diversity “is represented in many forms.”



# DIVERSITY PROGRESS REPORT - COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

	Community Availability*	Composite of Organizations Listed Below	Missouri Availability*
WHITE	88.8%	93.82%	82.80%
BLACK	4.1%	1.59%	11.60%
AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE	0.8%	0.54%	0.50%
ASIAN	1.9%	1.13%	1.60%
HISPANIC	3.7%	1.20%	3.50%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	0.2%	0.01%	0.10%
TWO OR MORE	3.2%	0.36%	2.10%
OTHER/NOT SPECIFIED	1.2%	1.41%	1.30%
HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED TOTAL:		5.24%	4.48%
TOTAL:		100.00%	100.00%
MALE	48.4%	46.24%	48.90%
FEMALE	51.6%	53.76%	51.10%
(Census data for over 18)			
AVERAGE AGE	35.4	43.5	37.3
	(Median Age)		

\*U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary Files

	SPS*	MSU*	Library	OTC	CU	City of Springfield*	Greene Co.	Totals
WHITE	3219	1823	240	1356	943	1469	703	9753
BLACK	59	30	0	27	15	20	14	165
AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE	6	18	2	13	11	5	1	56
ASIAN	18	56	3	9	5	17	9	117
HISPANIC	30	32	0	23	10	20	10	125
NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2 OR MORE	0	35	1	1	0	0	0	37
OTHER/NOT SPECIFIED	1	44	7	62	19	0	14	147
TOTAL:	3333	2039	253	1485	1003	1531	751	10395
HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED TOTAL:	113	216	6	73	41	62	34	545
MALE	792	966	55	637	771	1091	494	4806
FEMALE	2541	1073	198	848	232	440	256	5588
AVERAGE AGE	45	48	40	43.3	46.7	43	38.4	43.5

\*Includes full-time employees only

**DIVERSITY AND YOU** Public organizations and their employees are leaders in our community. That's why the Springfield-area entities listed on the cover of this newsletter have made an important commitment: We support diversity in our workplaces, which we believe also will encourage diversity in our region. That commitment helps create a strong foundation for future economic success. As an employee, you can encourage an environment that celebrates the diversity of our workforce.

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