

Union to settle discrimination suit



District 171 administration center Sunnybrook. FILE

Lansing D171 teachers' union to pay custodian \$110,000 in settlement

By Olivia Stevens
Daily Southtown

The teachers and support staff union at a small Lansing school district agreed to settle a racial discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the department announced in a news release. The Sunnybrook Educational

Association agreed to pay District 171 custodian Eugene Johnson \$110,000 after Johnson alleged the union discriminated against him when it contested his promotion to head custodian in November 2018. According to the complaint filed in U.S. District Court in May 2023, the union either ignored the promotion or negotiated an agreement with the district when non-Black employees were awarded salaries outside of the terms of the collective bargaining agreement. The EEOC found in 2022 that

there was "reasonable cause" to believe that the union violated Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The department said before filing the lawsuit, it invited the union to informally work "to eliminate the unlawful employment practices and provide appropriate relief," but that they were unable to come to an agreement. "Title VII's prohibition of race discrimination applies to labor organizations as well as employers," Victor Chen, an EEOC spokesperson, said in a news release. "The EEOC is committed

to holding unions accountable for their unlawful conduct." The EEOC declined to comment on the settlement beyond the news release. The settlement requires the union to meet multiple conditions outside of direct payment to Johnson, including sending district officials a letter stating that if Johnson is up for a promotion in the future, the union will not grieve the promotion, according to the consent decree filed in the

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Ruth Barajas works with red leaf and green leaf lettuces at Gotham Greens greenhouse, 10636 S. Woodlawn Ave. in Chicago's Pullman neighborhood on Aug. 26. TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Development effort has big impact, study shows

Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives generated nearly \$1.5B impact on Far South Side

By Brian J. Rogal
Chicago Tribune

A development effort targeting Far South Side neighborhoods generated nearly \$1.5 billion of economic impact in a little more than 10 years, filling once-vacant land with advanced manufacturing, new warehouses, retail and restaurants, according to a new study. It's a remarkable change from 2006, when the Ryerson Steel plant near 111th Street and the Bishop Ford Freeway in Pullman closed for good, leaving a big hole in the local economy, along with

vacant storefronts and declining property values. A wind turbine and the eco-friendly Method Products soap factory occupy a portion of the 180-acre site, now called Pullman Park, which also includes distribution facilities for Whole Foods, Amazon and SC Johnson. Nearly 8,000 jobs were created, and Pullman recaptured some of its past energy. "Families finally have a place to shop or get a meal, the kind of things we had when I was a kid and Ryerson was here," said Ald. Anthony Beale, 9th. "To have seen Pullman decline, and then to be a

part of its renaissance and resurgence over the years is a tremendous feeling. To have these dollars reinvested in the neighborhood is something this entire community can be proud of." Nonprofit developer Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives led the effort, eventually bringing more than 20 businesses to Pullman and adjoining areas. President David Doig said it shows the value of focusing efforts on whole neighborhoods, rather than taking a piecemeal approach. "If you keep doing it, over time you'll start to see reductions in poverty, increases in home values

and education, and reductions in crime," Doig said. "That's the larger story here. Ultimately, the community benefits and the city also benefits from that." The study by Anderson Economic Group LLC estimates Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives brought \$1.4 billion to the Far South Side between 2009 and 2023, including \$693 million to Pullman. The totals include direct investment into manufacturing, housing and other businesses, and indirect impacts from those dollars recirculating in the

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Stagg student takes violence prevention message to DC

By Janice Neumann

In an era filled with news stories about high school aged students facing violence and increasing reports of self-harm, Quwiyya Folaji knew she wanted to help keep her fellow high schoolers safe. So Quwiyya joined Stagg High School's Sandy Hook Promise's SAVE Promise Club as a way to spread the word about how violence was affecting students, and how to prevent it. The school has a "Say Something" program where students watch a video made by club Folaji members about how to recognize signs of potential violence and how to step up and tell an adult. They also make banners urging their peers to say something and invite first responders to events to share resources with students, said Quwiyya, junior at the school in Palos Hills. And they have a Trusted Adult Tuesday table for lunch periods during a special SAVE week, where they fill out cards for teachers and staff to hang outside teachers' doors. Club members have also made Valentine's Day cards for residents in a retirement community and gotten special needs students in their school involved in that endeavor as a way to spread goodwill. But Quwiyya took her quest to help out one step further after being chosen for Sandy Hook Promise's National Youth Advisory Board, which is made up of students from SAVE Promise Clubs. This summer she had the chance to visit Washington, D.C., to advocate for violence prevention legislation as one of 12 ambassadors. There she experienced Hill Day, where she and other board members met congressional staff to support the STOP School Violence grant. She and other board members, along with Stagg SAVE advisor Erin Wendt trained, did team-building and advocacy, attended workshops and heard



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INSIDE ICE near domestic violence courthouse

Immigration agents last week arrested at least two near Cook County's domestic violence-focused courthouse, sparking fears the enforcement action would have a chilling effect on people seeking orders of protection and other forms of help there. Page 2

Naval Station Great Lakes gets Dem visit

Three members of Illinois' congressional delegation tried to pay a visit to Naval Station Great Lakes on Friday. Page 3

Fairness has improved for property assessments



Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi speaks to Cook County Board member Bridget Degnen after a news conference at the Cook County Office on March 5. EILEEN T. MESLAR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Study: Cook County has gotten better under Kaegi's authority

By A.D. Quig
Chicago Tribune

Assessor Fritz Kaegi has "clearly improved" the fairness of Cook County's property tax assessment system over his two terms, according to a new study crediting his office with reversing problems that led to the overvaluation of lower-priced homes and the undervaluation of high-priced homes. Those changes brought the office "within industry standards" for fairness in assessing homes "for the first time in years," according to the report by University of Chicago

professor Christopher Berry. Now up for a third term, Kaegi has certainly made the system more fair by treating more homeowners equally, but has not necessarily become more accurate, the report said. Compared with sales prices, residential properties "are increasingly under-assessed on average," it found. Berry, director of the U. of C.'s Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation, acknowledged taxpayers might be skeptical of the findings. "How can Kaegi be making assessments more fair, when my tax bill is going up?" Berry said in an interview with the Tribune. Homeowners were unlikely to feel the difference because prop-

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