

MISSOURI: General revenue needed to fund Medicaid expansion. 4A

BASKETBALL: Joplin boys now 8-5. 1B

# 'Moving forward'



Joplin Mayor Keenan Cortez talks about city issues during Wednesday's event at the Harry M. Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex. GLOBE | ROGER NOMER

More than 200 people attend 'State of the Community' event

BY DEBBY WOODIN  
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An air of celebration filled the Harry M. Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex on Wednesday for the first "State of the Community" event held by Joplin city officials.

The 8 a.m. meeting was sold out at \$25 per ticket, which included breakfast and materials such as the city's annual report and a



Joplin City Manager Nick Edwards talks about progress over the past year during Wednesday's "State of the Community" event at the Harry M. Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex. GLOBE | ROGER NOMER

guide to city finances. "We wanted to start hosting an annual event like this because we wanted something more than just a 'State of the City' speech,"

Mayor Keenan Cortez told the crowd of more than 200. "The municipal government does a lot, yes, but it's not the whole story. Our community is made up of

so much more than City Hall. That's why today isn't about just the city government. It's about the state of our entire community and celebrating everything we are doing better to make Joplin a better place every single day."

He pointed to Joplin's business climate, the variety of nonprofit organizations serving community needs and health services fueling Joplin's growth. He thanked community leaders for their help.

The mayor also said that the "state of our community is strong and moving forward with momentum" for the future generations of the community.

"City Council has defined clear priorities that guide our work. Public safety

SEE EVENT, 2A



Hopeful Bites volunteer Chandler Vorhees helps Joplin residents John and Cindi Harmon pick out snacks and hot chocolate or coffee Wednesday in the parking lot at Seventh Street and Joplin Avenue. Group members said they are not happy with that location. GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

## Hopeful Bites: 'We see people needing food'

Group tests new location during city event across street

BY JOHN HACKER  
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Volunteers with Hopeful Bites gave their own community update Wednesday across the street from the Harry M. Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex just as city officials held their inaugural "State of the Community" event inside.

Grace "Dio" Bennett said volunteers who have been feeding people in front of Joplin City Hall on Main Street for the past three months also have a perspective on what she called the "true state of our city."

"We see people needing food and to an extent needing to know that they're seen, and the city is actively working their best to shut us out," Bennett said. "We are just individuals coming to help people."

The Homeless Coalition of Jasper and Newton Counties, which works to connect people to programs and places where those in need can obtain housing, food, shelter and education through local providers, reported in early December that there were 150 unsheltered people in Joplin that week. Even those with federal housing vouchers cannot find local housing. Members of Hopeful Bites also have said previously that they believe the homeless have been targeted by unfair city ordinance enforcement, and that

SEE GROUP, 2A

## Martin Luther King Jr. Day events set for area

FROM STAFF REPORTS  
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Residents will have several opportunities to honor the legacy and service of Martin Luther King Jr. in the coming days.

### JOPLIN

The Joplin branch of the NAACP will host a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration at 6 p.m. Monday at Missouri Southern State University's Ron Richard

Athletic Center. The event is in collaboration with the Missouri Southern Foundation.

This year's theme is "Awaken from the Dream," and it is free and open to the public.

Featured speakers include Michelle Ducre, human resources director for the city of Joplin; Mischia Fowler, Crowder College instructor and camp director; and the Rev. Willie Rogers, pastor of Handy Chapel AME Church.

Community choirs will also

provide musical performances.

### PITTSBURG

Pittsburg State University's Campus Activities Center will host the third annual campuswide MLK Day of Service on Monday. Check-in will start at 10:30 a.m., and a program will be held at 11 a.m.

This one-day service event encourages students and organizations to give back to the community. Service projects will occur outdoors and indoors, with jobs that include

cleaning, organizing, food pantry work and packaging.

Students and staff interested in participating can sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0844ABA72FA4FBCF8-60680219-2026#>.

### DIAMOND

"In Remembrance of Martin" will be shown at 1 p.m. Saturday through Monday at the George Washington Carver National Monument.

SEE KING, 2A



The Rev. Willie Rogers from the Handy Chapel AME gives an opening prayer during the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration at Missouri Southern State University in 2025. The event returns Monday. GLOBE FILE

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