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**Dr. Natalie Parks, UCHS Class of '95, Named the 2021 Martin Luther King Jr. Spirit Award Winner by the University City Board of Education**

University City, MO – The University City Board of Education is delighted to announce that Dr. Natalie Parks has been awarded the 2021 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Spirit Award by Board members.

The honor, awarded annually by the District's Board of Education, recognizes University City citizens who, like Dr. King, have displayed a commitment to community through public service and who have made significant contributions in the realm of social justice.



Parks, a 1995 graduate of University City High School who attended the District from kindergarten through grade 12, will be honored this Friday, January 15, with the release of a video marking her award and accomplishments. ([www.ucityschools.org/MLKSpirit2021](http://www.ucityschools.org/MLKSpirit2021))

Parks is the program director and assistant professor of the Applied Behavior Analysis program at Saint Louis University and the owner of Behavior Leader, an organization that focuses on building organizations that value diversity and inclusion at every level. She is also a community partner at University City High School.

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Parks' career has always focused on serving others. As a board-certified behavior analyst and licensed psychologist, she spent the first 20 years of her career serving individuals with disabilities and autism with severe behavior problems. During her time in this field, she worked to expand services to individuals who were underserved and also diversify the field of behavior analysis. She left the corporate world seven years ago to focus on fighting for equal rights for all individuals in the United States. She established Behavior Leader, Inc. where she provides services to education, fire, police, and social service organizations to increase diversity and inclusion, provide equitable educational opportunities to underserved youth and increase the diversity of educational curricula. Natalie also serves on a national task force to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion within the field of applied behavior analysis. She is a reviewer of the special edition on police brutality and racial justice for the Behavior Analysis in Practice journal. She also co-hosts the podcast Inclusion Junkie, where she and her co-hosts focus on how our behavior can lead to more inclusive and equitable communities.

Dr. Parks is also a community partner with University City High School where she works with a student entrepreneur development program and leads the school's Ambassador's program, which focuses on building leadership skills among women students at the high school. She has also worked with UCHS teachers, providing consultation on classroom management, instructional strategies and professional development on how to increase inclusion within the classroom. Most recently, she developed a Registered Behavior Technician job training program, which will provide graduating seniors with the requirements to sit for certification.

Parks completed her undergraduate degree at Truman State University and later completed her master's and doctorate degrees at the University of Missouri-Columbia. In college, Natalie served on the executive board of the Association of Black Collegians and became a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., where she served as chapter president as an undergraduate and later became chapter advisor while completing graduate school.

**#UCLionPride**