

# Fulton Sun

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## Missouri's fix for doctor shortage may need fix

By **Bram Sable-Smith**  
Kaiser Health News

Missouri state Rep. Tricia Derges is pushing a bill to give assistant physicians like herself a pathway to becoming fully licensed doctors in the state.

Not that Derges — among the highest-profile holders of the assistant physician license created in 2014 to ease a doctor shortage — is the most persuasive advocate right now.

Derges was indicted last year on charges accusing her of selling fake stem-cell treatments, illegally prescribing drugs, and fraudulently receiving COVID-19-relief funds. Derges, who did not respond to multiple messages sent to her and her lawyer, has pleaded not guilty. But she has already been kicked out of the Republican caucus, forced to move her legislative office into a statehouse broom closet, put on a three-year probation for her narcotics license, and denied the ability to run for re-election as a Republican following her indictment. A trial is set for June.

Her personal tribulations have jeopardized an already contentious solution for states that struggle with gaps in primary health care. Even

some early proponents now want to rein in the assistant physician license.

Assistant physicians — sometimes called associate physicians, and not to be confused with physician assistants — are medical school graduates who have not yet completed residency training. Similar licenses also exist in Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas and Utah. Virginia is considering adding one, and model legislation is making such licenses easier than ever for other state legislatures to adopt.

Derges' proposed legislation would allow assistant physicians to become licensed — similar to doctors who have completed a residency — provided an assistant physician has practiced for five years with a collaborating physician, passed a licensure exam, and completed certain training requirements.

Her bill would create a new path for training physicians. Competing legislation aims to scale back the license, though, and cap the number of years assistant physicians can practice until they funnel back into residency programs.

Dr. Keith Frederick, a former state representative and orthopedic surgeon from Rolla, proposed the original assistant physician

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## New Bloomfield School Board renews SRO

By **Michael Shine**  
mshine@fultonsun.com

NEW BLOOMFIELD — The New Bloomfield R-3 School District will continue with the same school resource officer (SRO) for the 2022-23 school year.

The district's board of education renewed the contract at its meeting Thursday night.

Deputy Nick Jensen, of the Callaway County Sheriff's Office, serves as the district's SRO.

Through the program, he's on campus when the district is open so he can quickly respond if an officer is needed.

The district pays 65 percent of the SRO's salary, roughly \$40,130, while the county pays the rest along with equipment, training and vacation time.

Superintendent Sarah Wisdom said the cost to the school increased slightly this year because the sheriff's department gave out raises.

However, board members agreed the expense is worth it.

"And you hope you never use it," Wisdom said. Along with being a police presence on campus, she said, Jensen helps with other things around campus.

"Actually, he jumps in and does a lot more than anybody ever asked him," Wisdom said. "He is very happy here. He loves our community, loves our kids. It's a great fit."

### Other business

The board also approved joining BlueMark Energy consortium for the purchase of natural gas. Wisdom said the district has been purchasing gas on its own, but joining the consortium will save the district about \$400 a month.

Additionally, board members approved continuing the district's contract with the food service provider OPAA for the 2022-23 school year. The district will be in its second year of a five-year contract. Wisdom said OPAA asks the board to approve the agreement each year during the contract.

The cost changes slightly each year, she said, and while the board approved the costs each year in the overall contract, this allows the board to be reminded of the changing cost.

Under the approved agreement, the district will pay \$2.4368 for breakfasts, \$3.1347 for lunches and \$0.9729 for after-school snacks.



In this photo provided by the National Institute of Health's "All of Us" research program, people visit a study vehicle March 8 in Silver Spring, Maryland. The study aims to eventually enroll a million Americans from all walks of life in a genomic database, part of a quest to reduce health disparities and offer care that's more tailored than today's one-size-fits-all approach.

## Gene database assisting quest to reduce health disparities

By the **Associated Press**

Scientists are getting their first peek at the genes of nearly 100,000 Americans in what's considered a uniquely diverse genomic database — part of a quest to reduce health disparities and end cookie-cutter care.

The National Institutes of Health released

the data Thursday to help researchers start unraveling how people's genes, environments and lifestyles interact to drive their health. And half the study's participants are from racial and ethnic groups historically left out of medical research.

That diversity "will add a kind of knowledge that just isn't out there," said Dr. Josh

Denny, who heads the NIH's massive "All of Us" study that eventually aims to have such data from 1 million Americans.

Until now, more than 90 percent of people in the world's large genome studies have been of European descent, a lack of diversity that hinders scientific progress, he said.

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## New program invites residents to support law enforcement officers

By the **Fulton Sun staff**

An statewide advocacy group for law enforcement officers is inviting the public to join them in offering support for lawmen and their families.

This week, the Missouri Fraternal Order of Police announced the Community Member Team project would allow residents to become part of the FOP and help their efforts to care for injured police, support the families of officers killed in the line of duty, improve community education efforts, and stand up for pro-law enforcement public policy.

Along with supporting officers and their families, contributions made by those in the community member program would also go toward:

- Supporting public relations, legislative and educational efforts that foster respect for our law enforcement officers and improve the conditions under which they serve society.

- Support the annual service held at the Missouri Law Enforcement Memorial on the north side of the state Capitol in Jefferson City to honor law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the line of duty.

- Contribute to FOP scholarship opportunities for dependents of law enforcement officers.

Missouri's FOP membership is comprised of 8,000 full-time rank-and-file law enforcement officers employed in Missouri and has 30 local lodges that provide support to their respective membership. The FOP is a nonprofit organization, and contributions are not tax-deductible.

Memberships and additional information about the organization are available at missourifop.com or by visiting the Missouri FOP's Facebook page.

## Missouri to stop offering at-home COVID-19 test kits

By the **Fulton Sun staff**

A little more than a month ago, demand for at-home COVID-19 test kits outstripped state and federal supplies.

Those days are apparently long gone.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services said Thursday

there has been a dramatic decline in testing during the past several weeks. It announced in a news release it will end its at-home testing kit program March 31.

Missouri residents who do not already have one of the at-home test kits may still order one for free through the end

of the month at picturegenetics.com/covid19?c=MOPROMO.

It typically arrives in the mail in two days.

Individuals have six months to use the kit before it expires. The kit includes a free FedEx shipping envelope for sending specimens to a laboratory. Results

are received within 72 hours of mailing the specimen back to the laboratory.

People who already have a Picture by Fulgent Genetics test kit on hand are encouraged to use the kit now or prior to the six-month expiration mark, especially if symptoms are experienced or exposure to high-risk

individuals is planned.

Missouri began offering the free kits about 10 months ago, but most uses of the kits occurred in January during a surge of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

Federal test kits can continue to be ordered at www.covidtests.gov.

### CALENDAR

Send your events to news@fultonsun.com.

#### Saturday

- "Alice in Wonderland (Not the Musical)" by the Brick District Playhouse Children's Theater, 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., Brick District Playhouse, 613 Court St., tickets cost \$8.

- Community yoga class, 10-11 a.m., 515 Nichols St., Fulton.
- Callaway Senior Center dance, 6-9 p.m., 531 Commons Drive.

#### Tuesday

- Callaway Senior Center dance, 6-9 p.m., 531 Commons Drive.

- Fulton City Council meeting, 6:30 p.m., Fulton City Hall, 18 E. Fourth St.

- Playhouse music studio lessons, 2-8 p.m., Brick District Playhouse, 613 Court St., Fulton.
- Veterans Coffee Talk, 8:30-10 a.m., Grand Prairie Baptist Church, 104 P. Old U.S. 54, Auxvasse.

#### Wednesday

- Central Missouri Community Action group self-preparation volunteer income tax assistance program, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., CMCA, 610 Collier Lane. For Callaway County residents with low-moderate income. For more information,

call 573-642-3316.

#### Thursday

- Bingo, 6 p.m., VFW Post 3772, 2100 N. Jefferson St., Mexico.
- Neighborhood Watch meeting, 7 p.m., Holts Summit Civic Center, 282 Greenway Drive, Holts Summit.

### TODAY'S FORECAST



**HIGH:** 61  
**LOW:** 39  
**SKIES:** Rain likely.