

# **SIUE East St. Louis Center for Performing Arts After-School Program now operating with financial community support**

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EDWARDSVILLE - For the first time in years, the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville East St. Louis Center (ESLC) for the Performing Arts Program is functioning predominantly with monies provided by an outside source – the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

ISBE awarded the performing arts program with a \$68,000 Healthy Communities Investment Grant through the spring of 2018, according to SIUE ESLC Executive Director Jesse Dixon.

“The East St. Louis Center for the Performing Arts is exceptional,” said Dixon. “Very few programs in the region combine physical activity, rigorous standards and cultural identity in such an engaging way.”

“The grant provides for after-school programming, as well as other programming outside of the normal school day,” he continued. “We are grateful for our partners at ISBE for recognizing the importance of this program for the East St. Louis community.”

According to Dixon, the purposes of the Healthy Communities Investment Grant include:

Improving academic outcomes for students

Providing opportunities for enrichment activities in a safe and healthy environment

Providing opportunities to strengthen public, private and philanthropic partnerships so that quality support services are more durable for students facing the greatest challenges.

The After School Performing Arts Program in East St. Louis was founded by the legendary Katherine Dunham and has been an integral part of the community for decades. After a five-year hiatus, it returned to the delight of community members in 2015.

“We are back for another year,” said Performing Arts Program Director Jack Williams. “We have more students coming this year. The word is getting around that we are here and are ready to provide a great year of dance, education and culture.”

Classes being offered include Dunham Technique, jazz, African drumming and dance, piano, chimes and guitar for students, ages 6-17.

With a focus on empowering people and strengthening communities, the SIUE East St. Louis Center is dedicated to improving the lives of families and individuals - from pre-school through adult - in the Metro East. Head Start/Early Head Start and a charter high school are among the programs that offer the community renewed hope and an opportunity to reach educational, career and life goals. The Center also assigns first priority to encouraging, supporting and improving the educational success of the residents of East St. Louis and surrounding urban communities. The Center provides comprehensive programs, services and training in the areas of education, health, social services and the arts.