

Vanessa Vaughn West

Vanessa Vaughn West leads inclusion and diversity strategy at Lathrop GPM law firm. As an inclusion and belonging advocate and strategist, she is committed to elevating the voices of underrepresented people. In addition to her commitment to fostering inclusive workplaces, she is passionate about human and civil rights. In the workplace, Vanessa leverages the firm's inclusion networks, diversity education programs, and executive and firm-wide leaders to inspire curious and courageous conversations, partnerships, and understanding. In 2020, she was recognized as a local "Lift Her Up" honoree by Suburban Balance, and in 2017, she was honored by the Olathe Human Relations Council for her leadership and community involvement.

Besides her work at Lathrop GPM, Vanessa has held various community and executive leadership positions with the City of Olathe, Kansas, UMB Financial Corporation, and El Centro, Inc. Throughout her career, Vaughn West has focused on issues related to diversity and inclusion, corporate social responsibility, and community relations.

Vanessa, who grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, received her undergraduate degree in Communications from the University of Missouri. While studying in Columbia, Vanessa gave a cheer for 'Ol Mizzou' as a member of Marching Mizzou and later as a Golden Girl. She also volunteered as a tour guide, worked for Residential Life and has recently served on the University of Missouri Alumni Association Diversity & Nominating Committees.

Vanessa is a past member of the Griffiths Leadership Society and continues to support the Michael A. Middleton Center for Race, Citizenship, and Justice. Vanessa still visits Columbia regularly to recruit at the Mizzou Law School and support law students.

Vanessa also serves as a board member for Starlight Theater, United Community Services of Johnson County, the Johnson County Parks and Recreation Public Arts Committee and the Lenexa Police Department's Community Advisory Board. She is a frequent diversity & inclusion moderator, panelist and event emcee. She has taken part on various steering committees including the Olathe Latino Coalition, as well as the City of Shawnee, Kan. Parks and Recreation Improvement Plan and Citizen Engagement Committees.

Although Vanessa is a native of Show-Me State, she and her husband Jim now live in Shawnee, Kansas. They are parents of two elementary school children, Aristotle and Tycho, who dream of becoming future members of the Mizzou chess team.