

The Annapolis Times

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Ready! Set! Read!



Mayor Bernard C. "Jack" Young reads to students during the Sixth Annual Scholastic Book Fair at William Pinderhughes Elementary-Middle School. The event was hosted by the Enterprise Women's Network (EWN), which advocates for, invests in and supports educational enrichment for children and better housing opportunities for their families and communities in and around Baltimore. The event raised more than \$8,000 and highlighted the fun and importance of books. Donations in support of the effort continues to come in from people across the community and country. (See article on page 8) Courtesy Photo

2019 One Maryland One Book:

True tale of doctor's fight to uncover Flint's lead contamination

Baltimore— Maryland Humanities announced the selection of “What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resilience, and Hope in an American City” by Mona Hanna-Attisha for the 2019 One Maryland One Book program.

Dr. Hanna-Attisha, a pediatrician, helped expose and make known the lead in Flint, Michigan's water. Her book was chosen by a committee of librarians, educators, authors, and bibliophiles in February from more than 231 titles suggested last fall by readers across the state under the theme, “Nature.”

“One Maryland One Book brings together a wide range of residents from every corner of the state to talk about issues that matter to them,” said Phoebe Stein, executive director at Maryland Humanities. “I know Marylanders will find Dr. Hanna-Attisha's book about her work in Flint and its profound impact compelling and relevant. I'm looking forward to hearing the important discussions this book will generate.”

“I'm humbled and psyched that What the Eyes Don't See has been selected as the 2019 One Maryland One Book. I am looking forward to engaging with Maryland readers about the many timely issues that the book magnifies including poverty, race, industrial decline, inequality, toxic stress, austerity, and immigration,” Dr. Hanna-Attisha said. “I'm especially happy that the committee recognizes that environmental justice fits neatly within this year's theme of ‘nature.’ In Michigan and Maryland— states with an abundance of natural beauty— the burden of environmental harm does not fall equally.”

“What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City,” chronicles Dr. Mona's relentless pursuit to uncover the contamination of Flint, Michigan's drinking water, which would lead to her testifying in front of Congress. Gripping and emotional, Dr. Mona's personal account reads like a scientific thriller as she vividly recounts the effects that lead poisoning had on her young patients and the

evidence she gathered to share with the world.

When we read a great book, we can't wait to share the experience and talk about it with others. That's one of the joys of reading. In that spirit, through its Maryland Center for the Book program, Maryland Humanities created One Maryland One Book (OMOB) to bring together diverse people in communities across the state through the shared experience of reading the same book. Readers are invited to participate in book-centered discussions and related programs at public libraries, high schools, colleges, museums, bookstores, and community and senior centers around the state.

“Stirring . . . [a] blueprint for all those who believe . . . ‘the world should be full of people...raising their voices.’” —THE NEW YORK TIMES



What the Eyes Don't See



A STORY OF CRISIS, RESISTANCE, AND
HOPE IN AN AMERICAN CITY

Mona Hanna-Attisha

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Editorials/Letters

Boxing gloves will not solve gun murders on Baltimore streets, Mr. Mayor

"If they want to really settle [street beefs], we can have them down to the Civic Center, put a boxing ring up let them go and box it out," the mayor said. "And the best man wins and the beefs will be over. Those are some [different] kinds of things I'm thinking about, hoping that we can get these people to put these guns down."

Baltimore Mayor Jack Young's suggestion that "beefs" or altercations between people on the streets of Baltimore can be solved by fisticuffs instead of shootings and gun battles is very flawed.

The urban myth that "back in the day" street quarrels were worked out in hand-to-hand jousts is only a myth. Sorry Mr. Mayor, we searched for the time when 'beefs' in Baltimore were settled man-to-man without guns and could not identify that period in local history.

The lore of a time when real men resorted to an almost honorable one-on-one physical contest to redress public conflicts, passed on through the generations by oral expression in barber shops and on street corners, does not square with the facts.

When Mayor Young was a young man, a few years out of high school, 1975, Baltimore experienced 259 mostly hand gun murders, 50 less than were committed last year, in 2018. Moreover, in the 44-year period from 1975 through 2018 Baltimore City has experienced 11,554 murders, an average of 262 murders per year.

The thing that appears to have driven gun violence in Baltimore since the mayor's youth, back in the day, has not been a change by offenders in their conscious preference of whether or not to employ weapons, but simply the ready availability of guns as compared to then.

The proliferation of guns and drugs, is the potent combination that has driven the explosion of murder on Baltimore streets, not fist-fighting as a less desirable option to settle differences, beefs.

Besides, what would be the ramifications of additional "beefs" resulting from contenders under the mayor's boxing versus shooting "solution" who were dissatisfied with the outcome of their bout, for whatever reason?

While an exact number of illegal guns on Baltimore streets could not be reasonably estimated, consider that during a one-year period between 2014 and 2015, 3500 guns were collected by the city under a buyback program, probably a small number of the total out there.

The one thing that has changed since back in the day is the willingness of perpetrators to use guns. If Baltimore City had the same homicide rate in 1975 as it had in its worst year, 2017— of 57.8 per 100,000 residents, instead of the 259 murder victims that year there would have been 499.

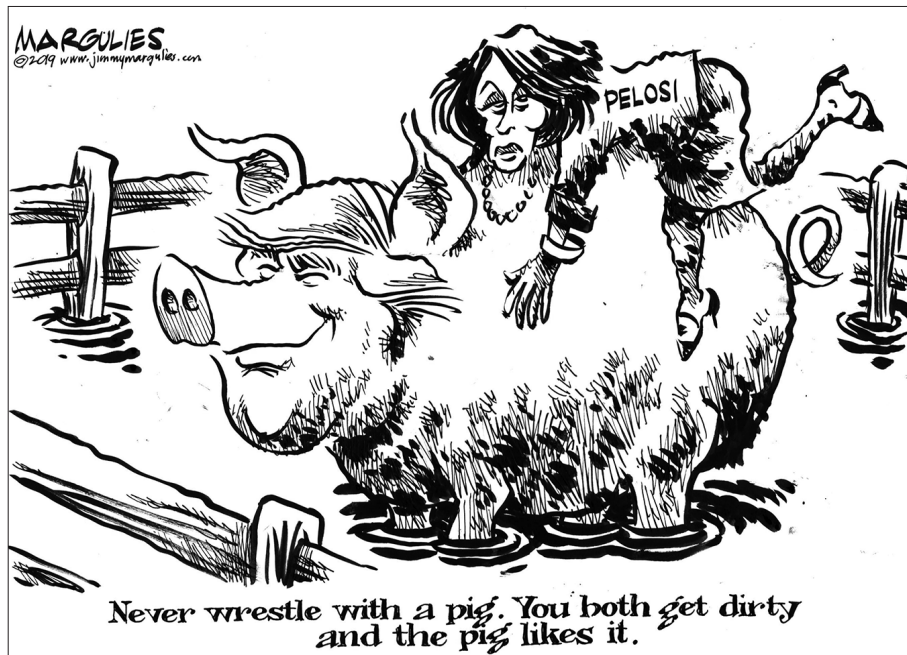
Since 1975 to present the murder rate in Baltimore has nearly doubled from 29.9 per 100,000 despite the population shrinking by 28.25 percent, nearly 245,000 citizens, roughly the equivalent of Norfolk, Virginia or Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Think of how many guns might show up at the Royal Farms Arena by adversaries in a boxing contest in anticipation of unacceptable outcomes by one side or the other? The possibilities of running gun battles downtown and/or when the boxing combatants return to their neighborhoods?

No Mr. Mayor, boxing is not a viable alternative to solving gun violence on the streets, unfortunately. Your well-meaning sentiment and frustration is palpable, but drugs— as a cause of altered psychological state predisposes people to violence, and also as the cause of conflict from drugs as commerce— precludes your recommendation.

When sending letters to the editor, your correct name, address and telephone number must be included with your submission.

**Please send your letter to: Letters to the Editor, The Annapolis Times
2513 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD. 21218 Email: btimes@btimes.com**



Letters to the Editor:

Editor:

As most already know, the opiate epidemic has been worsening each year claiming more lives than the last. However, what is less known, by the general public is the problem with Methamphetamines has been growing over the last several years, as well.

In the most recent data from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, it was found an estimated 964,000 people age 12 or older had a methamphetamine use disorder. This large number of Methamphetamine use can lead to some very serious problems in communities; higher crime rates, destroyed families, and the many risks to public health.

Methamphetamines are made by combining chemicals that can be explosive in bad cases as well as causing long term property damage from toxic chemicals.

Houses where a meth lab was in operation can retain chemicals which are hazardous to those who live in the house afterwards. In fact, even use of the drug within an apartment, home, or trailer can cause negative health effects long after the user or producer has moved one.

More and more communities each year deal with this problem and it is an

expensive thing to repair, with decontamination costing thousands of dollars to inhabitants and landlords both. These problems are far from victimless with acute health effects that include lack of coordination, chest pains, and burns to skin, eyes, nose, and mouth. Possible chronic long-lasting problems may include respiratory irritability, neurological damage, and liver and kidney damage.

In these times it is important that families are aware of both the signs of methamphetamine use and abuse. In addition, community members need to be on the lookout for signs their house was used prior for methamphetamine production or use. To learn more about Methamphetamine affected houses, visit <https://www.safewise.com/blog/tell-buying-meth-house/>. For more information about signs of methamphetamine abuse, visit our website at <https://www.narcononnewliferetreat.org/drug-abuse-information/signs-of-methamphetamine-abuse.html>.

Luke Nichols

Community Relations Director

Narconon

Denham Springs, LA

Black' or 'African American?'

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Correspondent
@StacyBrownMedia

In a recent televised commentary, Dr. Greg Carr, chair of Howard University's Department of Afro-American Studies kick-started a stirring conversation that has mostly taken place inside the confines of black communities around the country.

Carr tackled the sometimes-uncomfortable topic of identifying as black versus African-American.

"Despite the dictionary definitions, there is no term that truly describes people that were taken from Africa and forced into slavery," Carr said during his commentary on Washington, D.C.'s WUSA.

NNPA Newswire followed up by reaching out to several individuals of color—blacks, African Americans—in attempt to gain the pulse of just which way many lean.

"Many Africans who live in North

America but were born and raised in Africa do not like to be labeled as black," said Dr. Tapo Chimbanga, the founder of Future Black Female, an organization that helps create opportunities for black female youth to participate fully and beneficially in academic, economic and social endeavors.

"Growing up in Africa, where almost everyone is Black makes it difficult for

define me and is dismissive of my heritage and ethnic makeup. I am from the Caribbean and prefer Caribbean American rather than African American," Bates said. "There are so many ways to be 'Black' and so many mixtures and countries that when we define people by a single color, we miss multiple parts of who they are. That is true for whites as well."

is 92 percent African, primarily from the Congo/Cameroon region and Benin and Togo."

Further, the term "People of Color" refers to all non-white ethnic/racial groups. It's a very general term, Thompson said.

Hip Hop activist and author Sean XLG Mitchell, said there's a significant difference between the labels of 'black,' 'African American,' and 'People of Color.'

"If we use the term black, we are doing ourselves a disservice. Black only identifies with the color of our skin but it has no cultural connections to who we are as a people," said Mitchell, the author of "How Do We Build A Real Wakanda?"

"As a result of our slave experience, we don't understand the power and purpose of culture and we seem to be naive in how we regard and respect the unifying principles of culture," Mitchell said.

"Other races of people benefit from employing a language, education, religion, names and customs that are centered around their historical experience and we're the only people who fail to do so."

Mitchell says it's important that all of African descent find time to read books like the

"Autobiography of Malcolm X;" "The Mis-Education of the Negro;" "Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization;" and "Chains and Images of Psychological Slavery."

"We would [then] have a better insight and understanding of culture," Mitchell said.

"If we use the term black, we are doing ourselves a disservice. Black only identifies with the color of our skin but it has no cultural connections to who we are as a people." —Mitchell, the author of "How Do We Build A Real Wakanda?"

people who grow up in that environment to understand, grasp and identify with Black as a signifier the same way that people born and raised in the West do," Chimbanga said. "While Africans dealt with colonization and many of the same oppressive practices of white supremacy, they were a majority and once their leaders took over government, for the most part, oppression ceased to be about race and more about tribalism and ethnic rivalry."

Harvard and Yale-trained physician, Dr. Hisla Bates says race is a social construct and shouldn't define anyone.

"I don't like to be called Black or African American because it doesn't

Dr. Gail L. Thompson, the founder and CEO of Inspirations by Gail LLC. Said, "Black is a general term that includes anyone of African descent, including indigenous Africans, African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and immigrants."

"A Black person can live anywhere in the world," she said.

Thompson defined African American as a U.S. citizen of African descent whose ancestors lived in America before and during the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

"I am an African American who can trace my ancestry in the U.S. for five generations," Thompson said. "According to my DNA test results, my ancestry

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Joy Bramble

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Ursula Battle

Stacy Brown

Demetrius Dillard

Rosa "Rambling Rose" Pryor

Imani Wright

Website

Jourdan Taylor

Photographers

Dennis Roberts

Gar Roberts

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Mailing Address

The Baltimore Times

2513 N. Charles Street

Baltimore, MD 21218

Phone: 410-366-3900- Fax 410-243-1627

www.baltimoretimes-online.com

Want to comment on the editorials or any other story?

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Phone: 410-366-3900 Fax: 410-243-1627

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Local coffeehouse offers more than a 9-to-5 'grind'

By Ursula V. Battle

In Baltimore, there is a local coffeehouse that is 'brewing' up much more than the popular hot beverage— CUPS (Creating Unlimited Possibilities) Coffeehouse. Located at 1301 N. Broadway Street, CUPS Coffeehouse works directly with Project I CAN (PIC), a program of Fusion Partnerships, to provide workforce training, and development for youth and young adults ages 16 to 24 living in Baltimore City.

"I joined the company as an assistant manager," said Kenika Walker. "When I found out the company was much more than making coffee, I was on board— especially since it was in my neighborhood. The most rewarding part of being a part of CUPS Coffeehouse is seeing kids grow and illustrate they are so much more than what society has labeled them."

Walker joined CUPS Coffeehouse in July 2012. Today, Walker, who is now 29, co-owns the company along with Holly Shook. She says her co-ownership is another example of the business' ability to provide opportunities.

"For seven months I struggled to find employment after graduating from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice in 2011," recalled Walker, noting the business' former location near Hollins Market. "Either I was under-qualified or overqualified. I applied to work for CUPS, which was located in my neighborhood at the time. Holly saw that I was committed, and gave me a chance. From there, things just grew. I have been so blessed.

"I didn't even drink coffee when I was hired. But now, I know how to make all kinds of coffee drinks and smoothies, which I also taught and continue to teach the kids how to make. I have been able to grow, mature, and give back in a way I can see."

In addition to coffee, CUPS Coffeehouse's menu also includes espresso bar drinks, tea, soup, and breakfast sandwiches. The company also provides catering services. Walker said that each transaction provides youth with real-world customer service training, and social skill building.

"All of our interns are young," she said. "When the kids leave, they leave with a food manager certification that follows them for five years. We pay for the certifi-



CUPS Coffeehouse co-owners, Kenika Walker (left) and Holly Shook (right) holding city resolutions during a fundraising event. CUPS Coffeehouse provides youth and young adults with workforce training.

Courtesy Photo

cation. When some of the kids start, some of them come in loud, but when it comes to customer service, they sound like little mice. They are scared to get it wrong. But by the time they leave here, they can tell me what to do. They say, 'We got this Miss Kenika.' They become such strong leaders."

According to Walker, the company's coffee supplier is Zeke's Coffee a family-owned, small batch coffee roastery located on Harford Road.

"We choose local," said Walker. "We offer over 12 different varieties of coffee. We also offer specialty coffees."

Walker, who also serves as Store Manager, says the company's most popular drinks are 'The Drink Master,'

'Lavender Mocha,' 'Banana Chai,' 'Ace of Spades and 'The Fluffy Bunny.'

Walker says the company's origins began with an assignment that Shook, 43, completed while attending the University of Baltimore (UB).

"Holly had to complete a Business Plan when she was in college," said Walker. "Youth and coffee were two things she loved the most. She also was tired of having to go to other areas to get coffee, and the lack of opportunities for youth. She felt people were complaining about them, but where not providing anything for them to do.

"The day she graduated from UB, she signed the lease to the building in the Hollins Market area. From there, she put up a sign, and within the first month, 150 people applied. I was one of those people."

In addition to Walker and Shook, CUPS Coffeehouse has three other employees— Avery Rich, Catering Manager; Jon Law, Advancement Officer; and Brittany Clapp, Youth Services Specialist; plus 10 interns.

The Baltimore native talked about some of the added 'perks' of working at CUPS Coffeehouse.

"A part of our employment requirement is that employees participate in enrichment courses and projects," said Walker. "They have to be ready to invest in themselves and give back to the community. They learn news skills, about new resources, and new ways of navigating life. They learn more about how to conduct themselves as positive members of society and becoming advocates.

"We also offer Therapy Tuesdays, which are thirty-minute long group therapy sessions. Seventy-one percent of the staff receive therapy once a week at the store. It is cognizant talk therapy to help the employees cope with grief and loss. Driving through the city and seeing balloons on a pole means someone lost their life there. We want to help provide stability and well being."

Walker says another location is "peculating."

"Right now we have a second location in the works in the Belair-Edison neighborhood," she said. "Our long-term goal is to be anywhere where kids are located."

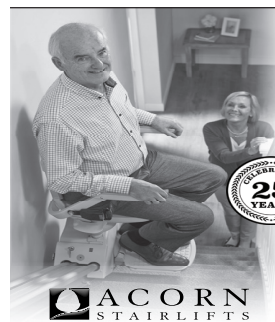
For more information about CUPS Coffeehouse, visit <http://www.cupscoffeehouse.org/>.

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Ready! Set! Read!

Sixth Annual Book Fair at Pinderhughes Elementary-Middle School

By Ursula V. Battle

Baltimore Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young was among the volunteer readers for the Sixth Annual Scholastic Book Fair recently held at William Pinderhughes Elementary-Middle School located on Gold Street in the Sandtown-Winchester community. Every student at the school was provided with “Scholastic Books Bucks” to purchase books.

Teachers at the school also received gift certificates to add books in their classrooms.

The event was hosted by the Enterprise Women’s Network (EWN), which advocates for, invests in and supports educational enrichment for children and better housing opportunities for their families and communities in and around Baltimore.

The event raised more than \$8,000 and highlighted the fun and importance of books. Donations in support of the effort continue to come in from people across the community and country.

“Our goal was to raise \$5,000 and we more than exceeded that,” said Sherry Phillips, education chair of the Enterprise Women’s Network.

EWN advocates for, invests in and supports educational enrichment for children and better housing opportunities for their families and communities in and around Baltimore.

“These students live in a disadvantaged community and don’t have access to regular books,” said Phillips. “We recognize that and are bringing books to them through this very special Book Fair.”

Since 2000, EWN has raised more than \$2 million and contributed over 15,000 volunteer hours to support the work of Enterprise Community Partners, which has been building opportunity in Sandtown-Winchester since the 1990s.

EWN’s work has included mentoring students at Pinderhughes to build self-esteem; make healthy choices; to develop strategies to address problems; and achieve academic and life success.

“We wanted to give 200-plus students a book certificate to bring to the Book



Federico R. Adams, principal of Pinderhughes Elementary-Middle School; Sherry Phillips of the Enterprise Women’s Network (EWN); Pam Malester; Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young; David Bowers, Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Market Leader for Enterprise Community Partners; Anthony Hancock, a sixth-grader at Pinderhughes Elementary-Middle School; and Noreen Smith during the Sixth Annual Scholastic Book Fair at William Pinderhughes Elementary-Middle School.

Courtesy Photo

Fair,” said Phillips. “Excess funds will go to school events such as field day and cookouts. Hopefully, the memories of the event are instilled in the students. It was an overwhelming success.”

David Bowers, Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Market Leader for Enterprise Community Partners was among the volunteer readers.

“One of the students told us that they wanted to be a paleontologist, and there was a section of books on dinosaurs,” said Bowers. “Others indicated they wanted to go into gaming. To watch the students interact with one another and pick the books up was a success you can’t quantify.”

“Kudos to the Enterprise Women’s Network and the great work that they do. Events like this provide students with a runway to dream and a doorway to what’s possible. Down the road, they can become what they aspired to be because someone took the time to read to them and put a book in their hand.”

Enterprise is a nonprofit that improves communities and people’s lives by mak-

ing well-designed homes affordable. The company brings together partners, policy leadership and investments to multiply the impact of local affordable housing development. According to the company, over the past 35 years, Enterprise has created nearly 585,000 homes, invested \$43.6 billion and touched millions of lives.

“We are trying to foster and nurture opportunities that make life better for people,” said Bowers. “That is very important to the work that we do. Showing

the community we care is critical. It’s important and powerful to pour into the lives of young people.”

Federico R. Adams is principal of Pinderhughes Elementary-Middle School.

“Our students and teachers are committed to learning, but often lack enough resources,” said Adams. “The Book Fair helps overcome that obstacle. The generosity of the community— both in time and money— enables our school to put our students on a smoother path to success.”

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STOP CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN



Seven-year-old continues to help homeless veterans

By Stacy M. Brown

As a single mother, Andrea Blackstone has always been careful to remind her seven-year-old son Tyler, that the sky is the limit. Blackstone says Tyler knows he has her support and the youngster continues to display a willingness to work at what he wants.

"I never want him to make excuses for not meeting his potential. He has grown up traveling with me on work assignments, while I juggled many concerns independently and I think that my desire to be the very best mom that I can be led Tyler to be a go-getter, too," Blackstone said.

Tyler continues to prove he is not only a go-getter but he is an amazing philanthropist.

In partnership with the Maryland Center for Veteran's Education and Training (MCVET), Tyler and the online mattress store, Leesa Sleeps, have donated 125 mattresses and 250 pillows to help homeless veterans have a place to rest comfortably at night. This is the second such partnership involving Tyler.

"Leesa is honored to continue our partnership with MCVET to give our country's heroes a better night's rest. We partnered with MCVET because they are building better tomorrows for the homeless veterans they serve, we hope our mattresses get to play a role in that," said Jen-Ai Notman, Head of Social Impact at Leesa.

"I think the partnership with Leesa and MCVET is important because the veterans should get a good night's sleep," said Tyler, who is known for wearing a cape when filling "Hero Bags" of goods to help veterans. "I also think that it's

important that they wake up refreshed and ready to do what they need to do to get back on their feet."

Tyler has also raised tens of thousands of dollars through Go Fund Me campaigns for homeless veterans.

"I am extremely proud of Tyler for thinking of others at a young age, and for wanting to take action," said Blackstone, who taught her son about the plight of homeless veterans back in 2015.

"When I showed a YouTube video to Tyler about veterans, when he was four, I never expected him to tell me that he wanted to help them. I simply wanted to plant seeds of gratitude in him, but I suppose that wanting to help others is something that he inherited," said Blackstone who comes from a family of veterans.

"It is easy to talk about what we do not like in life, but doing something about injustices, social issues, or volunteering requires action and hard work," Blackstone said. "Since the age of four, Tyler wanted to help veterans and other kids who needed or wanted free books. His level of commitment to improve his projects, and the impact that he is making, reminds me that each individual has different capabilities and gifts."

Tyler is unafraid to embrace "what God put in his heart to do, even when it is hard or if it seems impossible," Blackstone said. "Even when people doubted him, he learned to deal with it and keep going. He taught me a thing or two about having better faith"

For his part, Tyler says it's important for others who may want to assist to understand that money shouldn't be a deterrent.



(Left to right) Jen-Ai Notman, Head of Social Impact, Leesa Sleep; Tracy Morrison, Leesa HR Manager; Tyler Stallings, Leesa Social Changemaker; Cereta Spencer, MCVET Director of Development and Community speaking; Cameron Chappell, Leesa Customer Experience agent Courtesy Photos/Leesa Sleep



Tyler Stallings in partnership with the Maryland Center for Veteran's Education and Training (MCVET), Tyler and the online mattress store, Leesa Sleeps, have donated 125 mattresses and 250 pillows to help homeless veterans

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"You don't have to have a lot of money to make a difference," Tyler said. "You can ask a parent or adult to help you to get started if you're a child. If you're an adult, you can start off by giving small things such as deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste by taking it to homeless veterans and local shelters."

Additionally, Tyler believes fundraising through crowdfunding sites like GoFundMe can be an option.

"You can always do something good, no matter what," he said.

Jen-Ai Notman, Head of Social Impact at Leesa regarding our event: "Leesa is honored to continue our partnership with MCVET to give our country's heroes a better night's rest. We partnered with MCVET because they are building better tomorrows for the homeless veterans they serve, we hope our mattresses get to play a role in that."

Ravens are becoming Oklahoma East

By Tyler Hamilton

Back when Ozzie Newsome was the Baltimore Ravens General Manager, the roster was packed with prospects from the University of Alabama. Newsome's preference for former Crimson Tide players is evident. There are six former Alabama players on the Ravens.

However, another school is becoming a pipeline for Baltimore's roster. The University of Oklahoma has five players on the Ravens roster, four of which were added in the last two NFL Drafts.

Tight end Mark Andrews was selected in the third round in 2018. Andrews figures deeply into the Ravens plans under new offensive coordinator Greg Roman. Roman wants to make the offense more friendly, to quarterback Lamar Jackson, which will allow him to show off his passing skills in addition to his running ability.

The high percentage throws that are directed at tight ends are quarterback-friendly and get them in a rhythm. Andrews is a talented pass catcher and gets yards after the catch. Perhaps Jackson's best throw last year was a 68-yard strike to Andrews for a touchdown in Baltimore's 22-10 regular season win over the Chargers.

The Ravens added another Oklahoma product when they selected wide receiver Marquise "Hollywood" Brown in the first round of the 2019 draft. Brown's speed will stretch the field, opening things up for Andrews and others to operate in the of the field. Brown can also get free yards for Jackson and the Ravens by catching screen passes and taking them for big gains.

Brown wasn't the only Oklahoma prospect added this year. General Manager Eric DeCosta bolstered the offensive line by selecting guard Ben Powers on day three of the draft. Powers will



Oklahoma wide receiver Marquise Brown celebrates after making a catch during the 2018 season.

Courtesy Photo/SoonerSports.com

immediately compete for a starting spot and brings a nasty, aggressive mindset to the offensive line. Ironically, Powers mentioned current Ravens guard Marshal Yanda as one of the players he looked up to before becoming a pro.

Now, Powers will be able to learn first hand from Yanda every day in practice.

Powers will also join a fellow Oklahoma product on the Ravens offensive line. Tackle Orlando Brown was added in the 2018 NFL Draft. Due to overemphasis on a poor showing at the Combine, Brown fell to the Ravens in the third round. Fortunately, he has rebounded in Baltimore.

The defense features safety Tony Jefferson, the longest tenured former Oklahoma player for the Ravens. Jefferson is also a team captain.

The key to the Ravens success will be Jackson's ability to show that he is a capable passer. Jackson did so in spurts last season. However, with an offense designed to suit Jackson's talent along with the Oklahoma playmakers, Baltimore is in a very good position.

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How to cut distractions and boost energy at work

News & Experts— Have you ever left your office feeling drained from an eight-hour workday — but also frustrated because you got little accomplished?

Join the crowd. Many Americans struggle to get things done at work; over half spend less than one-fourth of their time in the office on priority, deadline-driven assignments.

The day gets away from us for a variety of reasons, studies show— everything from emails to meetings, project or customer issues, social media use, conversations and conflicts with co-workers.

It's important to know what those time and energy drains are that lower productivity and to implement a strategy to minimize distractions and maximize work time, says Cynthia Howard, an executive coach and performance expert.

“There is a vicious cycle of distractions that fill the typical workday and interfere with getting the job done,” said Howard (www.eileadership.org), author of *The Resilient Leader, Mindset Makeover: Uncover the Elephant in the Room*. “People need to learn to focus in ways that get beyond the distractions and stress. It calls for resilient thinking.”

Howard offers four common workplace energy drains and solutions for them:

•**Shortage of time.** “Constant interruptions and the inability to concentrate compel many people to spend their energy and internal resources on the most urgent issues that show up,” Howard says. “This leaves the most important work sidelined. So you need a time strategy to manage interruptions. The best way is sticking with an operational plan that makes clear the time involved to do your job correctly or, if you’re a leader, a plan that details your team’s tasks and how time-sensitive those are. The less-important interruptions won’t be allowed to get in the way.”

•**Lack of priorities.** Having too much work to do can make it difficult to establish priorities and easy to get sidetracked by everyone else’s issues. The solution, Howard says, begins with having clarity of your long-term goals and letting the priority list flow from there. “Visualize your work,” Howard says. “Use whiteboards to show the workflow. Also, limit your work in progress. Spreading yourself too thin results in errors and burn-out.”

•**Status quo.** “Most organizations have their sacred cows— the untouchable subjects, protocols, or people who continue to operate within the system without any scrutiny,” Howard said. “This conditioning creates a mental default



mode and change is resisted.” But you can get beyond the status quo and the resistance, she says, by asking yourself and/or your team three questions: 1) What if we ... ? 2) What would it take ... ? 3) How can we ... ?

•**Office politics – i.e. drama.** “Drama drains energy faster than anything else,” Howard said. “It’s what most people in the workplace complain about. Progress toward solutions starts with your own drama self-check. Ask yourself these questions: Do you compromise to avoid conflict and feel resentful? Do you use intimidation to get your way? Are you impatient when things don’t go your way? Do you take feedback as a personal attack? Do you feel your opinions don’t matter? Then what will you do differently to extricate yourself from

drama, or to develop boundaries with those who engage in it?”

“Work has become a major stressor for people,” Howard said. “Making progress is a major motivator for most, but chronic distraction dulls momentum and demands a new approach for one to move forward.”

*Cynthia Howard is an executive coach, performance expert and the author of *The Resilient Leader, Mindset Makeover: Uncover the Elephant in the Room*. She holds a Ph.D. in human development and in the past 20-plus years she has coached thousands of professionals, leaders and executives toward mindset mastery and consistent success. For more information, visit: www.eileadership.org.*

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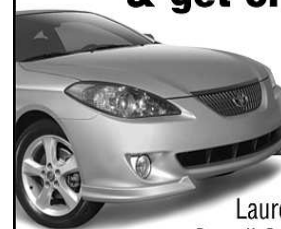
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