


The Annapolis Times

Vol. 27 No. 40 August 2 - 8, 2019

A Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore Publication

Nonprofit recognizes young entrepreneurs, advocates, change-makers, trailblazers



Marcella Mollon-Williams (left) and her daughter, Gabrielle Jordan, are the founders of the ExCEL Youth Mentoring Institute. Mollon-Williams is a fifth generation business owner who helped to create a platform for young trailblazers and their supportive parents, to connect, learn and grow through the village of entrepreneurship. Jordan, now 18, is the owner of an upscale jewelry company called Jewelz of Jordan. (See article on page 9)

Photo: Andrea Blackstone

How to train your mind to think victory, not defeat

By Charles (Chazz) Scott
Team Member, Positively Caviar, Inc.

These past couple of years have been a journey that I never could have imagined. I didn't have to travel across the world or visit a secluded location either to experience the expedition. This excursion just happened to take place in my own mind—at work, at home, while hanging with friends and family, and even during our weekly Positively Caviar, Inc. team phone calls. I was solely focused on one thing—mental self-exploration. I wanted to understand my habits, my beliefs, how to combat adversity, and how thoughts, both positive and negative, influenced my life. It was not an easy process but it was worth it to ensure that I obtain my highest self to adequately provide for my family, friends and colleagues.

A couple of years ago, I read a study by The National Science Foundation which said that the average human has roughly 60,000 thoughts per day. Of those thoughts, approximately 80 percent are considered negative and most of them are repetitive. I was absolutely fascinated by this study and began to monitor and become aware of my own thoughts throughout the day.

Sure enough, it became very apparent that negative self-talk was much easier than positive self-talk while at work, at home, and attaining my goals.

In fact, scientists have confirmed that our brains are wired with what is known as “negativity bias.” This is because our ancestors utilized this technique to stay on constant alert to scan and avoid danger, which posed immediate threats to their lives. Essentially, the human brain is wired to believe that if we expect that something bad will happen then we can be better prepared for survival.

Since then, this innate function of the brain has not changed much and affects nearly all of us today. In the 21st century, I realized just how much of an impact this same brain and way of thinking could have on our relationships, worthy goals, and mental and physical health. I became very curious about my own brain and begin to shift my focus.

So, I did what the experts said to do; I started meditating every day for at least 15 minutes and performed mental self-actualization exercises like the astonishing Rice Jar Experiment, which I personally recommend. I even put myself through mental and physical strife by participating in many long-distance races. You can read about my first marathon experience story in The Baltimore Times' May 2019 issue titled “How I Discovered Mental Peace While Running 26.2 miles.” This marathon taught me two things about life that I will never forget.

Throughout this process, not only did I become very conscious of my own mental



Charles (Chazz) Scott
Courtesy Photo

lifecycle of my thoughts and emotions but I began to witness the true hidden power behind positive and negative thoughts. Optimism and positive thinking is at the center of happiness, being successful, having loving relationships, living a fulfilling life, and bringing any dream into fruition. Taking the time to know whom you are, how you think, and how you make decisions is one of the powerful choices you can make to discover just who you really are. As the Ancient Greek Philosopher Socrates would say, “to know thyself is the beginning of wisdom.”


This process of mental self-exploration increased my ability to remain calm and think sharply during times of stress and adversity in my life. It has provided me strength, clarity, and the awareness to

select thoughts that support my desired outcome in any given situation. I have found true happiness and abundance, but most importantly I have found peace.

Reality is significantly determined by our internal dialogue or self-talk. Taking time to become conscious of this very conversation is the most empowering decision that a human being can make in their lifetime.

Remember, you become what you think about all day long. You wake up with it, you walk around with it, you go to work with it and you go to sleep with it—eventually you are going to act on it, good (positive thoughts) or bad (negative thoughts). Become conscious of your self-talk through strategies like mediation and mindfulness by using apps like “Calm” or “Headspace,” and use it to find clarity in your mind, which will have a compounding effect in every aspect of your life. Your life will move in the direction of your words and thoughts. Speak victory, not defeat.

Positively Caviar, Inc. (PCI) is a grassroots nonprofit organization focused on instilling mental resilience by way of positive thinking and optimism. Each month, a member of the Nucleus Team features a column focused on mental and physical health tips, scientific studies, nutritional facts and stories that are positive in nature to support a positive and healthy lifestyle. To learn more about how you can support, volunteer or donate to Positively Caviar, Inc. visit: staybasedandpositive.com.




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The Annapolis Times

(USPS 5840) is published every Friday by *The Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore*, 2513 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. Subscriptions by mail \$60 per year. Standard bulk postage paid at Baltimore, MD 21233. Postmaster send address changes to:
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\$86 Million in scholarships awarded for 2019-2020 Academic Year

Annapolis— Governor Larry Hogan announced that the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) awarded approximately 46,000 students more than \$86 million to attend one of Maryland's postsecondary institutions.

“These scholarships will provide thousands of Marylanders with access to affordable higher education, helping to keep our students prepared for the jobs of the 21st century,” said Governor Hogan. “Our administration remains committed to funding higher education opportunities so Marylanders can take advantage of all the opportunities our state has to offer.”

The money, which will be used by students in the 2019-2020 academic year, comes from the Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards (EEA) Program, comprised of the Educational Assistance Grant and Guaranteed Access Grant programs.

“The EEA program is the state's largest need-based aid program, providing financial assistance to Maryland students with the greatest financial need,” said Dr. James D. Fielder, the Maryland Higher Education Commission Secretary. “Governor Hogan continues to show his ongoing commitment to increasing student success with less debt by providing funding and offering innovative solutions that positively impact our students and graduates.”

Of the 46,000 awards, 2,800 received an award that covers 100 percent of their financial need, with a maximum award amount up to \$19,100. Other grant and scholarship awards in other programs will be announced as they are awarded by OSFA during mid to late summer.

Each year, OSFA is responsible for granting awards to more than 60,000 students in state grant and scholarship programs, with this year's expenditure totaling \$136 million.

Guest Editorials/Commentary

What we can learn from schools that educate military children

Dr. Elizabeth Primas

NNPA ESSA Awareness Campaign Program Manager

It's not uncommon for military programs to be adopted for use in civilian life. Schools in Virginia Beach, Virginia, that have some of the highest percentages of military children in the country, are doing an incredible job helping those students cope with the added stresses of having parents in the military. Other schools and communities can learn from Virginia Beach City Public Schools.

I recently spent a day with families and educators from Shelton Park Elementary School. About 70 percent of the students there were children with a parent in the military or a defense contractor. There is a large population of special forces personnel in Virginia Beach and at any moment, a parent can be called on for deployment to a warzone. Their families often do not know to where they are deployed, which compounds stress and anxiety.

A unique program in Virginia Beach public schools includes 28 Military Family Life Counselors, who work closely with schools' staff and families to support students. One mother we spoke with, talked about the fears her five-year-old daughter had while her father was deployed. After a particularly bad night, the mother let the school staff and the assigned counselor know that her daughter was going through a very difficult time. However, mom was able to send her daughter to school knowing that the school community would play an active role in engaging with her to help her work through her fears. The Virginia Beach counselors, funded under a program by the U.S. Department of Defense, are licensed and specialize in child and youth behavioral issues.

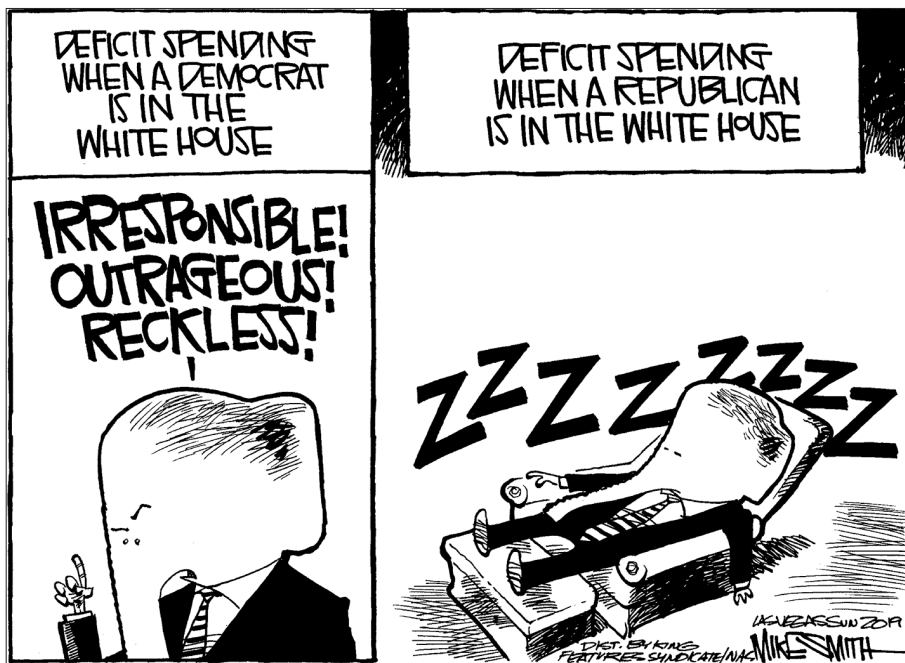
It's not just supporting students through the stress of having a parent deployed where Virginia Beach schools excel in supporting this population of students. A report from The Lexington Institute looks at how schools and districts with high percentages of military families are supporting students, who, on average, move every 2-3 years to far and distant places. Uprooting and moving so often is disruptive to a child's educational progress, and it can stall their academic achievement. However, moving is not the only thing that can disrupt educational progress. Low teacher retention, frequent absenteeism, and unsafe school environments are all factors that can also inhibit academic progress.

The Every Student Succeeds Act, a federal education law, requires schools and districts to have a well-rounded curriculum. Too many schools have eliminated music, art, drama, and essential academic courses like social studies and science to give more instruction time to reading and math. Math and reading are critical, but these other subjects enrich the learning experience and help make a well-rounded, whole human being.

From the very beginning, students at Shelton Park Elementary School are exposed to art, music, leadership strategies. The well-rounded curriculum combined with support from the military counselors creates a school environment that can— and should— be modeled across the country.

As a lifetime educator, I am inspired to see how Virginia Beach Public Schools are supporting military children. They are truly a model to be emulated by any school, because every kid—military or not—deserves this kind of high-quality support and instruction.

Dr. Elizabeth Primas is the ESSA Program Manager for the National Newspapers Publishers Association.



Community Affairs

RFL Museum hosts author of "Notes From a Young Black Chef," in celebration of Baltimore's Restaurant Week

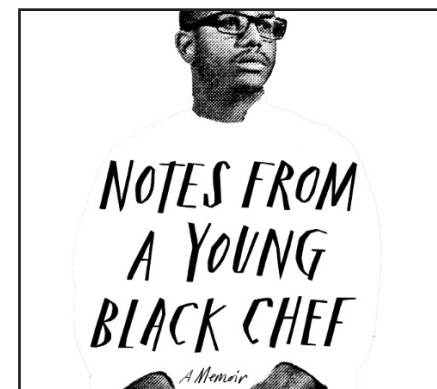
The 2019 James Beard Award Winner and Top Chef Contestant will come to the Lewis for an author talk and book signing during Baltimore Restaurant Week

Baltimore— The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture will host Chef Kwame Onwauchi for an author talk and book signing in honor of Baltimore Restaurant Week on Thursday, August 8, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.

Onwauchi is the author of "Notes from a Young Black Chef" and recently received the 2019 James Beard Foundation Award for Rising Star Chef of the Year. Onwachi will share the story of his culinary coming-of-age as told in his inspiring memoir at the Lewis.

Kwame Onwuachi is the executive chef at Kith/Kin and owner of the Philly Wing Fry franchise in Washington, D.C.

Onwuachi trained at the Culinary Insti-



tute of America and has opened five restaurants before turning thirty. A former Top Chef contestant, he has been named one of Food & Wine's Best New Chefs and a "30 Under 30" honoree by both Zagat and Forbes.

Notes From a Young Black Chef will be available for sale in the Museum Shop. This event is free to the public with museum admission. To RSVP, visit: lewismuseum.org.

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum is Maryland's largest museum dedicated to the State's African American experience. A Smithsonian affiliate, the museum engages visitors through its permanent and special exhibitions, community events and family programming.

Black women taking on the fight against diabetes

**By Linda Goler Blount, MPH,
President and CEO
Black Women's Health Imperative**

The cost of insulin is skyrocketing and people—especially Black women—are dying because they cannot afford or don't have access to vital medication. There is not enough being done to lower the prices of prescription medications that could mean life or death for so many African Americans that depend on it to live.

Over 30 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes—including nearly 13 percent of all non-Hispanic black people. According to the Office of Minority Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, African Americans are 80 percent more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and the majority of them are women.

Many of those suffering from diabetes depend on insulin to regulate their blood

sugar to remain healthy so that the food they eat does not threaten their lives.

Instead of ensuring that people with diabetes can have access to this life-saving drug, some political leaders have put up road block after road block to make it harder for patients to receive care, despite bipartisan outrage by the excessively high cost of prescription drugs.

This isn't just bad politics: this is a life

prescriptions because of the rising cost. Sadly, some of these people are dying as a result—and many black women are specifically at risk.

African Americans are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes and unfortunately suffer fatalities from type 2 diabetes at twice the rate of their white counterparts. Black people are overwhelmingly more likely to suffer from

precisely the point in life when income decreases. African American women are especially affected. They are likely to be care-givers and spend their hard-earned money on ensuring family members are healthy making access to insulin a greater challenge.

The health and wellness of black women must be a top priority so we must take action.

Recently, a coalition of health care, social justice, and faith organizations launched "Affordable Insulin NOW," a campaign demanding lower drug costs for those suffering from diabetes. Together, we are raising our voices, amplifying each other's stories, building on-the-ground teams, and demanding our policymakers and pharmaceutical companies work together to provide access to high quality and affordable insulin.

We need affordable insulin now. Too many lives depend on it.

“Over 30 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes—including nearly 13 percent of all non-Hispanic black people. According to the Office of Minority Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, African Americans are 80 percent more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and the majority of them are women.”

or death issue for working families across the country, and African Americans are disproportionately paying the price.

Instead of focusing on lowering drug costs for all Americans, some lawmakers continue to attack the Affordable Care Act and its health care protections for those that have pre-existing conditions. While they do this, as many as one in four people skips insulin doses or ration

debilitating complications caused by diabetes such as amputations, blindness and kidney failure more than their white counterparts. Due to lack of health resources in predominately African American communities, black people receive poorer quality care and get care later when the disease has progressed. The risk for getting type 2 diabetes increases with age with the highest incidence occurring between 65-75. This is

Linda Goler Blount, MPH, is President and CEO of the Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI). She oversees BWHI's strategic direction and is responsible for directing the organization toward achieving its mission of leading efforts to solve the most pressing health issues that affect black women and girls in the United States.

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Doctors at Saint Agnes Healthcare offer tips to help keep children safe around swimming pools

Baltimore— According to the latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children ages one to four have the highest drowning rates. And, behind motor vehicle crashes, fatal drowning remains the second-leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children between the ages of one and 14 years old.

Populations of children at an increased risk of drowning, include:

•**African American children.** The fatal unintentional drowning rate for African Americans was significantly higher than that of Caucasian children across all ages. The disparity is most pronounced among African American children between the ages of five and 19 years old, as they drown in swimming pools at rates nearly six times higher than those of Caucasian children.

•**Children with autism who are prone to wandering.** In fact, drowning is the cause of death for nearly three out of every four children with autism who wander off alone.

While these statistics are alarming, several practical steps can be taken to help reduce the risk of drowning. Doctors at Saint Agnes Healthcare offer the following layers of protection to help keep children safe in and around pools this summer:

When not swimming:

•**Use barriers.** Barriers, such as pool fencing, can help prevent young children from gaining access to the pool area without caregivers' awareness. A four-sided isolation fence (separating the pool area from the house and yard) and standing at least four feet tall can help reduce a child's risk of drowning by 83 percent compared to three-sided property-line fencing. Having a self-closing and self-



The fatal unintentional drowning rate for African American children is significantly higher than that of Caucasian children across all ages, according to the latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. African American children between the ages of five and 19 drown in swimming pools at rates nearly six times higher than those of Caucasian children.

Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

latching gate can serve as an added layer of protection.

•Use pool covers, alarms and locks.

Use pool covers that completely blanket the entire pool surface and do not allow space for a child to slip under or for water to accumulate on the surface. Use alarms to indicate whether someone is near the pool gate or swimming area. Exterior door alarms, door latches, window guards, doorknob covers can also help to prevent children from entering the pool area unsupervised. Make sure members of the household remember to

always close the door behind them.

•**Remove all pool toys and empty wading pools when not in use.** This can help to prevent children from being tempted to enter pool areas unsupervised.

When children are swimming:

•**Keep a close eye.** Provide close, constant, undistracted supervision in and around water. With toddlers practice "touch" supervision— where you are within arm's reach and close enough to touch them. While flotation devices can provide a sense of safety, they aren't a

substitute for adult supervision.

•**Designate an adult to serve as a "Water Watcher."** No cell phone, no conversation, no alcohol. Commit to short 'shifts' and rotate duties with another designated adult "Water Watcher." It is also good to have an adult on-site who knows CPR.

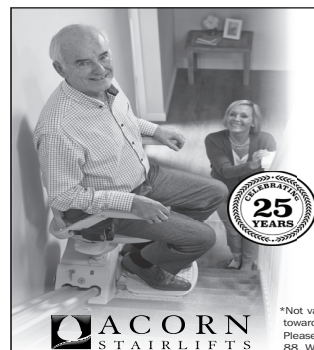
•**Start swimming lessons ASAP, and as early as age one.** However, remember that children taking swimming lessons and experienced swimmers are not "drown proof" and still require safety precautions.

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Will Smith chosen as new executive director of Belair-Edison Neighborhoods

Baltimore— Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc. (BENI) Board of Directors announced that Will Smith is the organization's new executive director. Beginning his tenure at BENI in 2013, Smith built upon his neighborhood revitalization experience while continuing to transform Belair-Edison into a healthy community where residents and local businesses can thrive.

"After an extensive search for a new executive director, we determined that the best candidate was already a member of the BENI family," said Tanya R. Dorsey, president of the Board of Directors. "Will, has been a true asset to Belair-Edison, bringing a wealth of knowledge of both the organization and the community, building upon decades of successes throughout the neighborhood."

Smith joined BENI as the Community Engagement Specialist and has grown throughout his tenure to also serve as Main Streets Director, Schools Liaison and most recently Community Development Manager.

Born and raised in Baltimore City,



Will Smith will continue his 28-year legacy of revitalizing the community as the new executive director of Belair-Edison Neighborhoods. Courtesy Photo/BENI

In 2017, Smith was awarded the Mayors Community Engagement Citation and the Community Champion Award from the Belair Edison Community Association, as well as many other City Citations.

Located in the heart of northeast Baltimore City, Belair-Edison features an abundance of accessible green-space with the adjacent 300-acre Herring Run and Clifton Parks - offering a diverse, welcoming and family-friendly neighborhood experience. With its picturesque front-porch rowhomes and premier location, just a 15-minute commute to downtown and minutes to major highways, Belair-Edison is a growing neighborhood of choice.

Smith will lead a staff of 11 people and oversee just under a \$1M annual operating budget in a community of 18,000 residents. He has developed and grown several relationships with key stakeholders, as well as the community, and will continue to expand upon these critical partnerships.

A partnership with St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center began with combating blockbusting and predatory lending in the community in the late 1980s. That work has translated into a highly successful program where over 200 homes have been acquired and renovated by St. Ambrose and sold to new homebuyers throughout the Belair-Edison neighborhood.

"The Belair-Edison neighborhood is vital to the overall health and future of our City," said Gerard Joab, Executive Director, St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, "and we are proud to be part of the continued renaissance of this community and partner with BENI, delivering regional and national resources to support community development priorities."

High-impact work through the community will continue under Smith's leadership. BENI is acquiring a property on Belair Road that was heavily damaged by fire several years ago and has been an eyesore to the Main Street corridor since they will be working with a development partner on the much-needed renovations.

Smith brings 20 years of experience in the private and non-profit sectors to the organization. He has been a partner in several small business ventures, including a convenience store and a landscaping company. With his "Will-Talk" radio show on WOLB-AM, Smith gave a platform to budding entrepreneurs, business owners, community activists, and community-based organizations to help facilitate increased engagement throughout the city.

"I am honored to be selected to continue to build upon the long legacy of success of BENI," said Will Smith, Executive Director, Belair-Edison Neighborhoods Inc. "We have created a great deal of positive momentum in the last several years along our Main Street corridors, with residents and our community art installations, creating homebuyer incentives and building stronger relationships in the real estate industry and I look forward to expanding this work."



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A Crowning Achievement:

Baltimore author shares 'her-story' in two new books

By Ursula V. Battle

Homelessness, domestic violence, losing her children, an addiction to marijuana, low self-esteem and anger problems were among the issues that Ashley Tate has faced over the course of her life. The 29-year-old has taken her tumultuous experiences and packaged them into two books that she hopes will help other young mothers avoid the pitfalls she encountered. Tate is the author of #CROWNED A Spiritual Journey Guide and #CROWNED I Promise Never To Be Broken Again.

"I have battled against so many things and I've had to overcome many hardships and trials in my life," said Tate. "At the age of 13, I wrote out my whole Obituary, because I felt that I would die by age 21. I have been through a lot. I come from a tough past, which includes, selling drugs, molestation and rape, which made me the monster I was. I had so much anger and rage. I was an erupting volcano ready to blow. But I prayed to God to renew my heart and He did.

"I decided to write these books because I wanted to share my testimony with other young moms and single moms to help them on their journey.

Especially those who are currently dealing with trials and tribulations in their life. Many people don't understand how hard it is to be a young mom or a single mom or both. I want to uplift, motivate and inspire women to become the best versions of themselves by sharing my story."

Tate is the mother of three girls, ages, six, four and four months.

"I also wrote these books for my daughters," said Tate. "I don't want them to go down the same path I went down. That's a path of destruction. I want them to follow the right path."

Tate completed her first book, #CROWNED A Spiritual Journey Guide in May 2019. The book's chapter titles include Leaving Your Past Behind You; The Pitfalls Of Depression and Stress; and What A True and Loving Friend We Have in God.

"I always started something and never finished anything," recalled Tate. "I



Baltimore native Ashley Tate is the author of "#CROWNED A Spiritual Journey Guide" and "#CROWNED I Promise Never To Be Broken Again." Tate's hopes to encourage other mothers through her books. For more information about Ashley Tate, visit her website: www.poshmark.com/closet/authorashleyt or follow her on Instagram @authorashleyt.

Courtesy Photos/Ashley Tate

dropped out of high school. I dropped out of college. I dropped because I didn't see instant results. I was all over the place and couldn't keep a steady job. I also battled with an addiction to marijuana and I had a bad anger problem. I held a lot in, so there was a lot of pinned-up anger. "Finding affordable daycare was also a challenge, and I felt there weren't a lot of resources out there to help. In 2015, I became homeless, and my children were taken away."

Tate says the loss of her children helped change the course of her life.

"I had negative people around who told me I would not get my children back," recalled Tate. "But I prayed and asked God to help me get back my children. I also brushed aside all the negative things people were telling me. The judge had compassion for me, and I got my children back.

"I know God is real, and is saddens me when people say they don't believe in

Him. I know what He did for me. In these books, I also give spiritual advice about building a relationship with God. There was a time when I felt that I didn't have any meaning. But I realized my life has a purpose. I shouldn't be here. But the fact that I am here with three children lets me know that God is right there."

On July 4, 2019, Tate's second book, #CROWNED I Promise Never To Be Broken Again was published. The book's chapter titles include Leaving Someone You Love, Removal Of Toxic People, and Finding Love in All The Wrong Places and Things.

"I also battled low self-esteem and was a victim of domestic violence," said Tate. "Some men target women with low self-esteem who don't love themselves. I thought I was ugly, fat, and didn't like my complexion. In this book, I talk about self-care, self-love, and knowing your self-worth. You can't love anyone if you don't love yourself.

"I also talk about domestic violence.

Women in abusive relationships have to leave. Women have to love themselves for the queens we are, and not settle for just anything. I suffered from spiritual, emotional and physical abuse, but I found the strength to leave. I've had to overcome a lot of hardships in my life and I couldn't have done it without God."

Tate's books were both published by Polk Publishing. Tate, who is also a motivational speaking, said her books sell for \$10.

"I love writing," said Tate. "It empties the hurt, pain and regret. These books allowed me to give away a piece of my story to help someone else."

She added with a smile, "I actually started something and finished it. I love seeing my books published. It's a great feeling, and a personal success."

For more information about Ashley Tate, visit her website: www.poshmark.com/closet/authorashleyt or follow her on Instagram : @authorashleyt.

Nonprofit recognizes young entrepreneurs, advocates, change-makers, trailblazers



On June 21, 2019, Gabrielle Jordan and Marcella Mollon-Williams hosted the first awards gala to recognize the year-round excellence of adults and young people who are entrepreneurs, advocates, change makers and trailblazers. Hundreds of people of all ages gathered at University of Maryland in the Samuel Riggs IV Alumni Center for the official launch of the ExCEL Youth Mentoring Institute's (ExCEL) inaugural event. Both youth and adults were recognized for being trailblazers, leaders, and entrepreneurs. Photo: Andrea Blackstone

By Andrea Blackstone

This time of year, many parents strive to find summer programs or adventures to keep their children occupied during their long summer vacation. Families with older children, have the opportunity to pursue summer employment for youth. Additionally, there are an underserved percentage of young people who want to work in certain environments but are simply not old enough. Now, Gabrielle Jordan and her mother, Marcella Mollon-Williams have taken effective action in the nonprofit world to fill in the gaps created by factors such as these.

On June 21, 2019, Jordan and Mollon-Williams hosted the first awards gala to recognize the year-round excellence of adults and young people who are entrepreneurs, advocates, change-makers and trailblazers. Hundreds of people of all ages gathered at University of Maryland in the Samuel Riggs IV Alumni Center for the official launch of the ExCEL Youth Mentoring Institute's (ExCEL) inaugural event.

The ExCEL Youth Mentoring Institute™ is a division of Sound of Nations, a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, a youth-based mentoring program that provides mentorship opportunities and educational resources to develop creativity, interpersonal

skills, leadership, and entrepreneurial mindsets.

"Two years ago, the vision... came together to honor outstanding youth, and supporters of youth making an impact on this world despite [limited] expectations of what someone under the age of 18 can do. That vision came to pass, and that was the inception of the ExCEL Honors," Jordan explained.

Jordan, now 18, is the co-founder of ExCEL. She was once a very young girl who understood her unique value at an early age. She started her jewelry company "Jewelz of Jordan," when she was nine years old. Her many accomplishments, include: becoming a #1 Amazon best-selling author, sought-after speaker, and TEDx speaker.

"Both, my husband and I had a responsibility to encourage her, and we saw that. And we knew that as many of the parents are here understand, it is truly our responsibility to not just plant the seeds but to water them," said Mollon-Williams, also noting the past and potential future challenges of youth attendees.

"Their journey is not very easy. Many of these kids have felt isolated. They've been told they're weird. They've been told that they'll never succeed or that their ideas are dumb. They've lost friendships. They've been bullied, and they've

been left feeling alone," Mollon-Williams said. "So at ExCEL, we created a platform where these young trailblazers not only find the resources and the education they need to thrive in their endeavors, but build a community of like-minded individuals who are eager to support one another.

"Daughters of Destiny" was recognized as the gala's honored youth organization. Youth and adult honorees included: Haile Thomas; Mozhiah Bridges; Susannah Wellford; Alana Andrews; Nyanna Harris; Alana Andrews; Gabby Goodwin; Miguel Coppedge; and Jahkil Jackson.

"I'm here to receive the youth change maker award, because of my organization, "Project I Am," where I build awareness for homelessness [by] providing blessing bags full of toiletry items like soap, tissue, wipes, socks, hand sanitizer, things that help the homeless on a daily basis," said Jahkil Jackson, 11 who is from Chicago, while explaining his organization's mission.

Along with his parents, the young changemaker came up with a way to help the homeless, besides giving money. The global organization has been running for three years, even though Jahkil had been taking action before that. Blessing bags have even been distributed to orphans as far away as Africa, and volcano victims in Guatemala.

"Kids have some of the best ideas in the world. It has been proven because of all of the youth change agents that have been coming around. So, I think that the adults just need to listen," Jahkil said.

Darius Brown, founder of "Beaux & Paws," was among ExCEL's finalists. The 12-year-old from New Jersey is an animal lover who found a creative way to help prevent cats and dogs from being euthanized at some shelters if they are not adopted due to limited space. His passion is making custom bow ties for dogs, cats and people. When four-legged friends wear his donated creations, it helps them to get adopted faster. Over 500 furry friends have been rescued with Darius's assistance.

"I made it my mission to help as many dogs as I can," Darius said, happily.

Additionally, ExCEL partnered with Wellspring Manor & Spa to celebrate World Entrepreneurs' Day by hosting the 2019 Youth Entrepreneur Forum scheduled for Wednesday, August 21, 2019 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

To learn more about ExCEL's mentoring program and upcoming events, visit <https://excelyouthmentoring.com> or like the organization's Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/excelyouthmentoring/.

Ravens DT Michael Pierce settling in at training camp

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens were without one of their key defensive players when training camp started. Defensive tackle Michael Pierce was held from practice during minicamp because of weight issues. He made it his mission to come back for training camp ready to go.

Pierce reportedly shed between 20 and 30 pounds before reporting to training camp. The 2019 season is a pivotal one for Pierce as he is entering a contract year after signing with the Ravens as an undrafted free agent in 2016.

He passed the conditioning test and took part in the first Ravens practice of training camp. Getting to the point of being able to pass the test didn't go unnoticed by head coach John Harbaugh.

"I'm very impressed with the progress Michael Pierce has made. He's lost a lot of weight. He lost the bad weight, not the muscle," Harbaugh said. "He passed the conditioning test, and I think that's quite an accomplishment."

There aren't many big men who can



Baltimore Ravens Defensive tackle Michael Pierce was held from practice during minicamp because of weight issues earlier this year. He shed 20 - 30 pounds and passed the conditioning test and took part in the first Ravens practice of training camp.

Courtesy Photo/BaltimoreRavens.com

squat 725 pounds and do a perfect cartwheel. That's the kind of freakish athlete

that Pierce is. With the minicamp and conditioning test ordeal behind him,

Pierce can now go back to focusing using his rare blend of size, strength and athleticism to help Baltimore's defense.

Normally a six-foot, 340-pound man would be hard to overlook. But since Pierce doesn't fill up a box score, his impact tends to go unnoticed by casual observers of the game.

Pierce is a space-eating defensive tackle for the Ravens. He causes traffic jams at the line of scrimmage. The inside linebackers for the Ravens benefit from Pierce taking up blockers that would normally be an obstacle for them. They get clean, free shots at running backs allowing the linebackers to make plays on the ball.

The Ravens defense lost some of their leaders to free agency during the offseason. Pierce is in a position to be one of the new leaders on the defense. He is earning that title by being the first in line for drills.

Pierce apologized to his teammates for what happened in minicamp. Now he is letting his effort throughout practice speak for him and it shows he was sincere. Now, that's a leader!



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Volunteer Maryland “Class 31” Celebrates Graduation

Annapolis— Volunteer Maryland announced the graduation of Volunteer Maryland Class 31 last week. This service year, the graduating class consisted of 24 AmeriCorps members, also known as Volunteer Coordinators, who worked to mobilize and manage more than 6,100 volunteers to serve 51,882 service hours in communities throughout Maryland. Among 6,100 volunteers more-than-half, were newly mobilized by the Class 31 during this service year.

“Since 1993, a diverse group of people have been coming together to serve Maryland through the Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps with Volunteer Maryland. We are proud of the work that Volunteer Maryland Class 31 has accomplished in communities throughout Maryland,” said Nicki Fiocco, Director of Volunteer Maryland. “By helping our service sites to grow and expand through volunteer management, our members are leaving a lasting legacy at their site. Sites will continue to bear fruit for years to come, improving our communities and addressing issues important to Marylanders.”

Established in 1992, Volunteer Maryland places Volunteer Coordinators in partner organizations to increase the efficiency, development, and scope of volunteer programs. In 1993, Volunteer Maryland began utilizing funding from the Corporation for National Community Service to recruit AmeriCorps members to serve as Volunteer Coordinators.

Since its inception, Volunteer Maryland has built more than 350 partnerships with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and schools across Maryland. Volunteer Maryland places and trains more than 700 Volunteer Coordinators to bridge the gap between communities facing critical problems and citizens who want to volunteer to solve those problems.

Volunteer Maryland is currently accepting applications for the 2019-2020 service year. For more information on serving as a Volunteer Maryland AmeriCorps member, visit: <http://volunteer.maryland.gov/acm/>.

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How parents find hope when their children are victims of violence

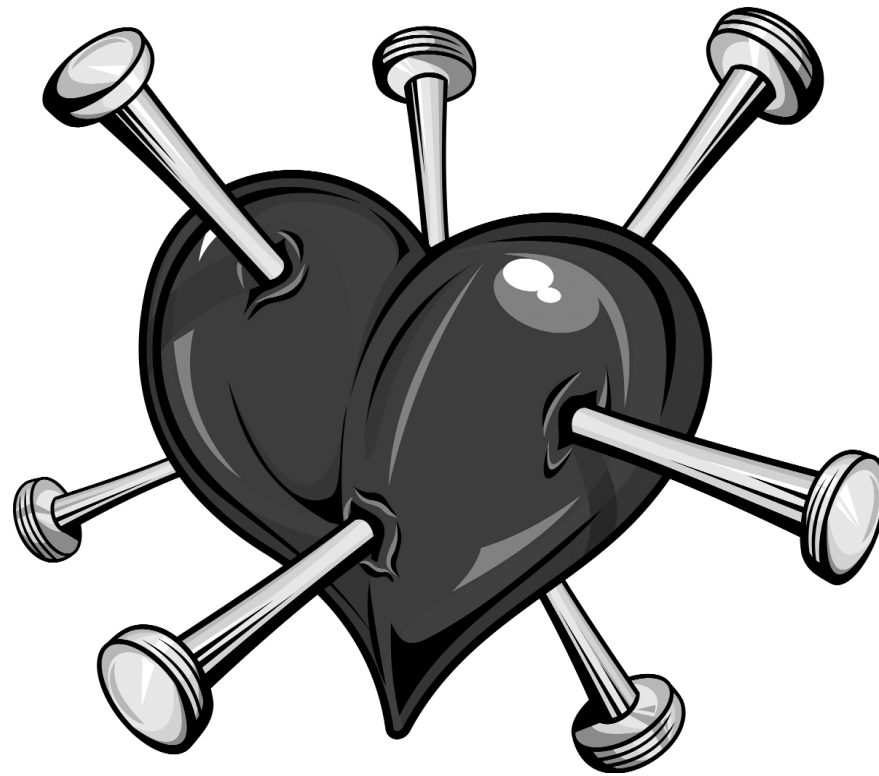
News & Experts— School shootings, gang violence, domestic abuse and other heinous criminal acts in the U.S. have claimed the lives of many young people, devastating families and sending shockwaves across communities.

Reminders of these tragedies— and the dark side of human nature— are never far away, especially when those horrific events drew national media attention.

Amid the intense grief that surviving family members of the victims experience, how do parents find a way forward to lead the healing process? Some take on a larger role in community activism— turning their deep personal sadness and love for their child into actions that can help others. For example, in the wake of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School (Newtown, Mass.), the parents of a 6-year-old boy killed in the attack founded Sandy Hook Promise, a nonprofit whose goal is to protect children from gun violence.

Dr. Buck Blodgett, whose daughter, Jessie, was raped and murdered, founded The Love>hate Project (www.lighth.org) and wrote the book “A MESSAGE FROM JESSIE: The Incredible True Story of Murder and Miracles in the Heartland.” The organization and book spearhead his mission to end male violence against women and to “inspire people to choose love over hate in our violent and sick world.”

“Finding purpose in tragedy can make the world a better place,” Blodgett says. “As a loving parent, I had to speak for Jessie and make her life matter. I had to



forward her legacy project and turn this unthinkable tragedy into something good.

“Grieving parents are sometimes the best-positioned people to create awareness and change by taking action.”

What various roles can parents take when tragedy strikes their children or those of other people, and how can their actions make a difference in the world?

Here are some examples:

•**Get involved in local and national solutions.** Grieving parents can be pow-

erful advocates for change. Following the murder of 17 students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the families of the victims started a foundation demanding school-safety reforms, served as commissioners on the inquiry into the mass shooting, won seats on the school board, and assisted efforts to improve campus security throughout the country. A school shooting spree that killed 10 students and wounded 13 in the Houston area led to parents of the victims forming advo-

cacy groups and nonprofits.

•**Start support groups.** Grieving families sometimes find the best help they can give is to other grieving families. After the 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas that claimed killed 58 people, a Bradenton, Florida, couple who lost their daughter in the tragedy started a program at their church called “Grief-Share.”

•**Stage or sign off on peaceful protests.** Young people are more prone to protest than their parents, but parents can give kids the green light to be heard about social issues. About 50 students at Glencoe School District, near Chicago, got the written consent of their parents to participate in a nationwide 17-minute silent protest on the one-month anniversary of the shootings in Parkland, Fla. Many carried signs with slogans such as #ENOUGH or “Not One More.”

“You can’t always choose what happens,” Blodgett says, “but you can choose how you respond.”

Dr. Buck Blodgett is the author of A Message from Jessie, the Founder of The LOVE>hate Project (www.lighth.org), and the 2015 Resilience in Education Person of the Year. He and his wife, Joy, were the parents of Jessie, who was murdered when she was 19. Since her death, Blodgett has worked to end violence and to educate, motivate, and inspire young minds to choose love over hate. He speaks nationally in schools, conferences, and prisons.

Reginald Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture Needs Volunteers

The museum is dedicated to serving the community by providing multifaceted support through meaningful interactions with history and material culture of Maryland African Americans. Volunteers are needed to assist at the Information Desk, as Docents, for Special Events, and more. There are ongoing opportunities on Saturdays and Sundays for assistance with greeting guests and patrons at the main entrance and to work with kid’s activities during public hours. The minimum age for volunteers is 14. Volunteering is open to adults, seniors, college, and high school students. Service learning credit hours can be earned by high school students. We are accepting applications for the following volunteer positions: Special Event Volunteer, Administrative Assistant, Curatorial Assistant, and Visitor Services. Contact Joy Hall at 443-263-1800 or email: hall@lewismuseum.org; or visit the website: www.lewismuseum.org.

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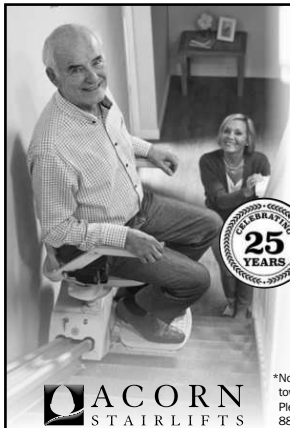
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