

Thirty-two children in Baltimore celebrate ‘forever’ families on National Adoption Day



Judge Kendra Ausby, Mitchell Lanier, age 5, Elladonna Lanier, Messiah Lanier, age 2, Judge W. Michel Pierson, Chiquita Polk, social worker and Judge Emanuel Brown take a moment to celebrate after the National Adoption Day Ceremony at The Clarence Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse November 23, 2019. Courtesy Photo

By Imany Dye
Morgan State University SCOM student

If you told 56-year-old Belair-Edison resident Elladonna Lanier two years ago that she was going to be a parent, she would have said it was never going to happen. Fast forward to last weekend, she is now officially the proud mother of two brothers, Mitchell, who is five-years-old, and Messiah who is two-years-old.

“This is the greatest thing that has happened to me,” said Lanier. “I am now on a journey with two amazing boys who show me every day what unconditional love means.”

Lanier was just one of a number of families who gathered at The Clarence Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse to celebrate the finalization of their adoption process during the Bar Association of Baltimore City’s National Adoption Day November 23, 2019.

Lanier started the process in 2017 when she took the kids into her home when a family member could no longer care for the boys. “I said to myself, I could either step in, or risk these babies going into foster care and being split up. It was an easy choice for me,” said Lanier.

This is the 19th year the Bar Association of Baltimore City has partnered with the Department of Social Services to salute new families. This year 32 children between the ages of one and 14 found new permanent homes.

“We’re trying to change the dynamics for children, so it really starts at the home,” said event organizer Ashley Ward. “If we can make their home permanent, and give them that stability,

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The Key to Ending the HIV Epidemic: HIV testing and prevention

By Sarah Schmalzle, MD

Nearly 40 years after the first diagnosis of AIDS in the United States, which was later found to be caused by HIV, HIV and AIDS remain misunderstood. But two facts remain certain—the best way to stop the spread of HIV and prevent progression to AIDS is for everyone to be tested, and for those living with HIV to take HIV medications.

December 1 is World AIDS Day, and the University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus—along with partners the THRIVE program and JACQUES Initiative of the Institute of Human Virology—will host the Red Ribbon Route on December 2, 2019.

The Red Ribbon Route is an opportunity for the community to get free HIV testing, education, prevention tips, and connection to HIV care, at three locations in Baltimore City.

Look for the UMMC Community Education van with the red ribbon at these locations:

—30 West North Avenue

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

—Community Health Education Center, University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus, Linden Avenue 10 a.m.- 3 p.m.

—JACQUES Initiative Journey Center, 880 Park Avenue, Suite 300 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.



If you are living with HIV and are not currently in care, ask for the ‘Red Carpet’ treatment at any of the screening locations, to get re-connected to care. Insurance is not required for this event, and results are completely confidential.

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the body’s ability to fight infection, making a person more vulnerable to other infections and illnesses. It is spread by contact with cer-

tain body fluids of a person with HIV, most commonly during unprotected sex (sex without a condom), or through sharing supplies for injection drug use. It cannot be spread by kissing, hugging or touching.

AIDS is the late stage of untreated HIV infection that occurs when the body’s immune system is badly damaged by HIV. If people are tested routinely, and HIV infection is diagnosed and treated early in the disease process, AIDS will not develop. If AIDS does develop, it can still be treated so that people’s immune system can become strong again.

The human body can’t get rid of HIV and no effective HIV cure exists. So, once you have HIV, you have it for life. However, by taking HIV medicine as prescribed, people living with HIV can live long and healthy lives.

For people who did not have HIV but are at higher than average risk, there are also effective methods to prevent them from getting HIV through sex or drug use, including PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis). PrEP is a way for people who are HIV negative but at high risk to prevent HIV infection, by taking an HIV pill every day. PEP means taking HIV medication to prevent HIV infection very soon after being exposed to HIV. Learn more at PrEPMaryland.org.

How Do I Know If I Have HIV?

Most people with HIV will not have any symptoms! The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get tested. And testing is simple. You can ask your health care provider for an HIV test, or get tested for free at multiple locations throughout the city.

Sarah Schmalzle, MD is Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases and Associate Program Director, Infectious Disease Fellowship, University of Maryland School of Medicine; and, Medical Director, THRIVE program of the Institute of Human Virology at the University Of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus.

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Clifton Morgan helps fulfill dreams at Year Up Baltimore

By Stacy M. Brown

Clifton Morgan has worked at Year Up Baltimore for nearly a decade, and one of the primary challenges he says is getting people to believe in the program is authentic.

“People think it’s a scam. They often think it’s just too good to be true,” Morgan, the site director for Year Up Baltimore said.

Because much is offered—and consequently, much is expected—Morgan says he understands the initial skepticism.

“So, you’re telling me that I get to go to school, and I’ll be taken care of? That’s what I hear in addition to, ‘you’re going to give me a stipend to come and train, and learn how to work? You’re going to train me, and then you’re going to send me on an internship?’”

Year Up counts as a college and career development program for low to moderate-income students between the ages of 18 to 24.

The students earn money while they learn, and officials say that the training they receive at Year Up is imperative because an estimated 12 million jobs requiring candidates with post-secondary education will go unfilled in the next decade.

Morgan and others at Year Up say to solve that dilemma, they must connect young and underserved individuals with opportunities to work for companies who need their talents.

Year Up officials speak with companies to better understand the skills needed and participants spend six months in a classroom learning the hard skills sought by employers and the soft skills successful team members need.

Students then intern for six months with a Year Up partner company, applying their skills while gaining critical work experience. When they graduate from the program, students are then prepared to embark on a career that pays life-sustaining wages.

“We support our students with coaches and mentors as well as a student services support team. For exam-



Clifton Morgan, site director for Year Up Baltimore, a college and career development program for low to moderate-income students between the ages of 18 to 24. Approximately 83 percent of students who complete the program are employed and earn about \$17 per hour. Courtesy Photo/Year Up

ple, we now do soft skills training, and we hold high expectations for the contractors we work with,” Morgan said. “We do deliver on the internship opportunities in the professional environment and allow our students to gain the skills necessary to move into other full time opportunities, if there isn’t one available.”

Year Up recruits two classes of 120 students per class each year, which begin in January and end in August.

The students spend six months in a learning and

development phase at Baltimore City Community College (BCCC). The next six months are spent working as an intern in one of Year Up’s dozens of sponsors who are associated with the program.

Approximately 83 percent of students who complete the program are employed, and earn about \$17 per hour. It’s all more reason for Morgan to remain excited about Year Up.

“It’s about the light bulb moments that I have when I see some of our young adults,” said Morgan, who grew up in Chicago and later graduated from Hampton University in Virginia.

The married father of two recalled his upbringing and contrasted it with many of his Year Up students.

“I was born and raised on the south side of Chicago, and I’ve been in Maryland for the last 13 years; and the thing that I think is interesting is that people believe no matter where you go—our young adults are the same. But, as a young kid in Chicago, I was looking for an opportunity for a better life,” Morgan said. “Fortunately for me, I was able to go to school and that worked out. And here I am. But the thing that I say to that young man who left Chicago is that he really thought he had a clear plan, an idea of what his life was going to look like. But, I’m majoring in something that I’ve never worked in. But I found the interest that I have in working with young adults in education in higher education.

“And I’m able to do that every day; and help our young adults figure out how to navigate situations that sometimes can be difficult.

“To see the light bulbs go off for somebody who struggled and kind of pulled themselves together, remain focused and display that grit and then achieve an internship and get hired in that job or even have multiple offers for different job opportunities at the end of the program...those are the things that get me going.”

For more information or to apply to participate in the Year Up program, visit www.yearup.org/Baltimore or call 410-919-9530.

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Becoming numb to mass shootings

By Bill Fletcher, Jr.
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Each time we experience a mass shooting, we repeat the pattern—a point I have made in previous columns. Shock, grief, prayer, throwing up our hands, and proponents of unlimited gun ownership arguing that this is not the time to discuss sensible gun control; instead we should restrict ourselves to prayer.

And then nothing ever happens. Except for one thing. We become increasingly numb to the impact of gun violence, which I have come to conclude, right-wing gun fanatics wish to encourage. When we no longer see mass or just random killings as outrageous and uncivilized, the demand for sensible gun regulations diminishes in importance. Gun fanatics would like us to accept that this violence will happen and that the best that we can do is to further arm US society, e.g., arm teachers in schools.

There is no easy way to avoid becoming numb to mass shootings and random violence.

When you read about it or hear about it or witness it nearly every day and you conclude that it will not change, your mind searches for safety. That “safety” plays itself out in our becoming less shocked and—to be blunt—more accepting of the reality that our children may get killed at school or that our family or friends may get shot at a parking lot or by an outraged former employee at any number of facilities. The mind says to us that we cannot exist on a permanent level of tension and anxiety.

Except, we do harbor that tension and anxiety. It’s just that we may not display it. Rather, it eats away at us in our insides.

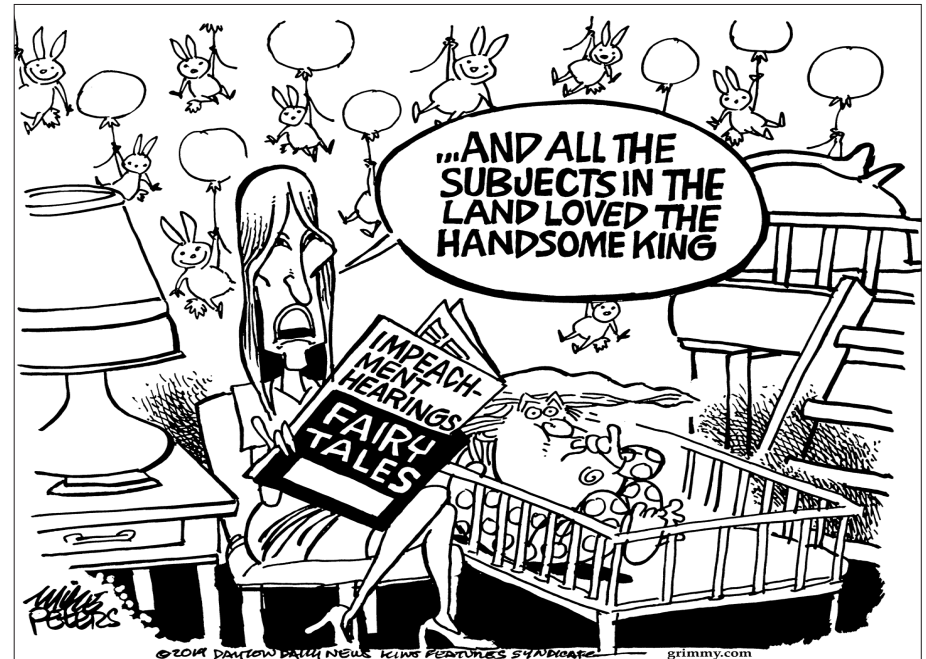
Is there any way around this, in addition to legislation? Yes. First and foremost, it necessitates community organizing and community organization. As simplistic as it may sound, our youth need to be forced to confront the finality of death. Death is not an action video game. Nor should it be the immediate recourse when someone feels emotionally injured. Thus, the victims—including families—of gun violence need to be at the center of discussions about the ramifications of gun violence.

A second route is the establishment of legitimate gun clubs. This may sound strange but hear me out, and this is especially important in African American communities. Guns are not going away so, there needs to be training and discipline associated with the use of fire arms. Just as with martial arts, the younger members of our communities must understand when, where and how to utilize firearms, and when not to.

Platitudes and prayer are nearly meaningless when one is up against a combination of a multi-million-dollar gun industry linked directly with a fanatical, right wing movement opposed to sensible gun ownership. At the end of the day, the barbarians must be out organized.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is the executive editor of globalafricanworker.com and the former president of TransAfrica Forum.

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Community Affairs

Maryland Department of Health launches portal to give parents access to vaccination records online at no cost

Baltimore— The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) announced a new portal that will enable Maryland residents to access vaccination records online at no cost. Users will be able to view and print official copies of their vaccination records, and those of their family members, on demand via MD.MyIR.net — without an additional request to a health care provider.

“This free portal will be a great resource for all Marylanders — patients and health care practitioners alike,” said MDH Secretary Robert R. Neall. “Not only is it a tool to help improve vaccination rates, but it will also help reduce the administrative burden of vaccination record requests.”

“Having easy access to records is the

first step in staying up-to-date on vaccinations,” said Deputy Secretary for Public Health Frances B. Phillips. “This portal will help empower patients to take greater control over their health.”

MD.MyIR.net is part of a pilot program funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Chief Technology Officer. The portal is linked to ImmuNet, the state’s immunization information system, where health care practitioners upload and store vaccination records.

Using a simple, one-time registration process, users can create an account via MD.MyIR.net, with the option to add family members. After the account is activated, users are able to view and print official copies of their vaccination records. The records, will be accepted by schools; daycare facilities; camps; employers; state agencies; and other organizations that require proof of immunization.

The system is HIPAA-compliant and records are only available to authorized users. For more information, visit MD.MyIR.net.

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Report reveals 35 million Americans still have 2018 holiday debt

By Stacy M. Brown

Black Friday, the knockdown, drag-out, mother-of-all-shopping-days, and the traditional start of the Christmas shopping season is here.

With consumers expected to dig deep into their wallets and spend as much as \$1.1 trillion this holiday season, the time is now for gift buying, deals, savings and debt—lots of debt.

A new report from the District of Columbia-based personal finance website WalletHub, has revealed that 35 million Americans still have credit card debt from last holiday season, and nearly one-third of consumers will spend less this year than in 2018. The study also found that 52 percent of people don't think Black Friday sales are anything special including 54 percent of women; 49 percent of men; 64 percent of those 59 years-old and older; and 37 percent of individuals between 18 and 29.

The study noted that one in five Ameri-

cans will owe holiday credit card debt into at least February.

While 58 percent will pay for holiday purchases made by credit card in full by the due date, 23 percent said they will have a holiday balance after January. Just 19 percent said they would pay off their holiday purchases in full by New Year's Day.

ties, rewards and 0 percent financing deals.

The study noted several questions for consumers to consider, including should everyone have at least one credit card? Are credit cards safer now than before the Great Recession? Are consumers good at picking credit cards? What are the biggest pitfalls?

and assistant professor of Accounting at the Eastern Connecticut State University, said credit cards are safer now than they were prior to the Great Recession.

"But due to the amount of data that is transferred and the sophistication of hackers no one is completely safe at all," Hartmann said. "The chip technology is a good addition to security for credit cards and I also think the credit card are proactive in trying to head of fraudulent charges. My wife had her card declined the other day; she tried it again and it [was] declined again.

"She called the card company and they had flagged her card for a suspicious transaction. That transaction turned out to be our weekly breakfast spot and it was inconvenient, but the take is they are trying to get it right. So, safer now yes; safe—not so much."

Family background, familial behavior pattern, personality, and financial education are all factors in knowing whether a consumer is good at picking the right credit cards, said Nan Li, a WalletHub expert and associate professor of Business and Economics at California University of Pennsylvania.

Li noted some of the pitfalls.

"The biggest pitfall is deceiving yourself by thinking you can pay the credit card bill later when you can't pay it off now," LI said. "People should use credit card the same way as they use their debit card, deeming it as their own money, never overspending."

To view the WalletHub survey, visit <https://wallethub.com/credit-cards#survey>.

"While 58 percent will pay for holiday purchases made by credit card in full by the due date, 23 percent said they will have a holiday balance after January. Just 19 percent said they would pay off their holiday purchases in full by New Year's Day."

As a side note, Americans also noted what they would pay extra for this holiday season just to make something go away.

Seventy-five million Americans said they would pay extra for no tweets this holiday season from President Donald Trump; 49 percent said they'd pay extra just for peace and quiet; and 32 percent said they'd pay additional for faster delivery of products and services.

While debt is the primary focus of the study, experts noted that credit cards can be confusing, perhaps even dangerous if used irresponsibly.

WalletHub experts say credit cards can also be the ticket to hundreds, maybe even thousands, of dollars in savings, thanks to their credit-building capabilities,

"Yes, everyone should have at least one credit card simply because it is the easiest method of establishing and maintaining credit," said WalletHub Expert James Estes, a Professor of Finance at California State University San Bernardino. "In addition, I believe that a second credit card, with the lowest fees, should be kept as an emergency fund substitute. Often when an emergency occurs, it is not the best time to liquidate assets, and at current interest rates, one would lose money in light of inflation.

"A credit card for emergencies would allow a 30 day window to pay off its use with invested funds, possibly mitigating the inopportune time to sell in need of immediate funds."

Harold Hartmann, a WalletHub expert

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GYMGUYZ want to help Thanksgiving feasters work the calories off

By Stacy M. Brown

Thanksgiving is upon us and, for many it's a holiday that reminds folks to be thankful for all of the delicious things they love to eat. It's also synonymous with feasting, and for those counting, the average Turkey Day dinner will cost an average of 4,000 calories.

"We want people to enjoy Thanksgiving, so we explain to clients that exercising consistently during the holidays will help keep off those dreaded holiday pounds," said Aaron Behrens, owner and president of GYMGUYZ, a mobile personal training service that brings state-of-the-art fitness equipment and expert coaches to their customers' doors.

GYMGUYZ is considered tops in personal home training. The company provides convenient, customized, and creative workouts wherever an individual may live.

Founded in 2008, the mobile brand utilizes a fleet of franchise vans that bring more than 365 pieces of state-of-the-art fitness equipment and expert coaches to their customers' doors to drive accountability and provide tailored workouts.

Since it began franchising in 2014, the brand's growth has reportedly exploded 1,700 percent with nearly 200 locations internationally, including the United States, United Kingdom and Canada.

"The best way to maintain consistency is by having your GYMGUYZ personal trainer visit your home at a time that works for you to make sure you stay on track," Behrens said.

The most important thing is to stay active, even if it's just a 20-minute walk, according to Behrens.

"Find some type of activity that you enjoy or that you can do with a friend or



Founded in 2008, GYMGUYZ utilizes a fleet of franchise vans that bring more than 365 pieces of state-of-the-art fitness equipment and expert coaches to their customers' doors to drive accountability and provide tailored workouts. The company provides convenient, customized, and creative workouts wherever an individual may live. On their first visit, they offer a free assessment, including a questionnaire to find out their client's goals.

Courtesy Photo/GYMGUYZ

spouse. For example, group training is a great way to have fun and stay healthy with friends," he said.

Behrens started with GYMGUYZ in 2016 because of the high demand for personal home training.

"Being in the fitness industry for over 20 years, and a partner in a successful chain of health clubs in Philadelphia has allowed me to see how the industry has evolved. I love the concept of bringing trainers directly to clients," he said.

One of the advantages GYMGUYZ presents its clients is they don't have to wait in line like they may have to at conventional gyms. They also don't have to

wipe someone else's sweat off the equipment.

The certified personal trainers who work at GYMGUYZ are thoroughly vetted and travel in trademarked GYMGUYZ vehicles loaded with workout equipment and gear.

The trainers primarily focus on cardio and strength workouts. On their first visit, they offer a free assessment, including a questionnaire to find out their client's goals.

"The response so far is that our clients love that we deliver in-home personal trainers right to their door for customized one-on-one or group workouts

in the privacy of their home, backyard or anywhere they choose that's convenient for their schedule," Behrens said.

The biggest challenges for many who work out are consistency, making time and not knowing what to do to see tangible results, Behrens added.

He says holidays, especially Thanksgiving, can be challenging for those counting calories.

"We want people to enjoy Thanksgiving, so keep moving. As the saying goes, 'Use it or lose it.' You need to keep your body moving," he said.

For more information, visit: www.gymguyz.com.

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2019 Winner of Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence Announced

Baton Rouge, La. – Houston writer Bryan Washington's debut book, "Lot," a collection of short stories, has been named winner of the 2019 Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence.

The award will be presented to Washington on January 30, 2020 at the Man-ship Theatre at the Shaw Center for the Arts in downtown Baton Rouge. The ceremony is free and open to the public, although reservations are requested at gainesaward@braf.org.

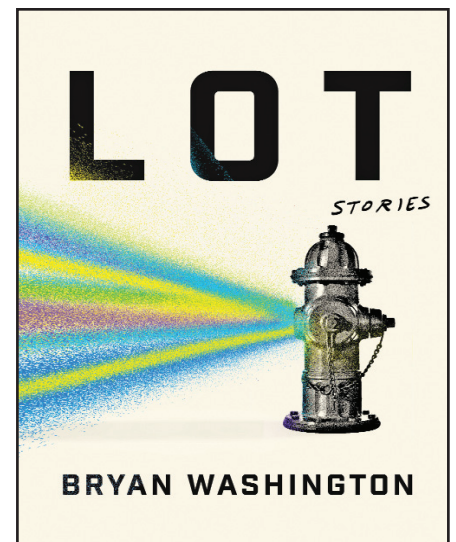
Now in its 13th year, the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence is a nationally acclaimed \$15,000 prize given annually by Baton Rouge Area Foundation donors to recognize outstanding work from promising African-American fiction writers, while honoring the late Louisiana native Ernest Gaines' extraordinary contribution to the literary world.

Gaines died November 5, 2019 at his home in Oscar, La., at the age of 86.

"Lot" is set in the city of Houston, particularly its East End. The narrator is a young man who often doesn't feel at home in his hometown and keenly watches others as they desperately struggle or thrive.

Washington's fiction and essays have appeared in the New York Times, The New Yorker, The Paris Review, Boston Review, and other publications. He earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Houston and a master's in creative writing from the University of New Orleans. He is a lecturer at Rice University.

A national panel of judges selects the book award winner. Judges for the 2019 contest are Edward P. Jones, Pulitzer Prize winner for his 2003 novel, "The Known World"; Anthony Grooms, a critically acclaimed author and creative writing professor at Kennesaw State University; renowned author Elizabeth Nunez, professor of English at Hunter College-City University of New York;



"Lot" is a collection of short stories set in various Houston communities, but primarily in the East End, where author Bryan Washington was raised.

Photo Credit: Don Farrall/
Getty Images

Francine Prose, author of more than 20 books, including "Blue Angel," a nominee for the 2000 National Book Award; and Patricia Towers, former features editor for O, The Oprah Magazine and a founding editor of Vanity Fair magazine.

Previous winners of the Ernest J. Gaines award include Jamel Brinkley for "A Lucky Man," Crystal Wilkinson for "Birds of Opulence," T. Geronimo Johnson for "Welcome to Braggsville," Attica Locke for "The Cutting Season," Stephanie Powell Watts for "We Are Taking Only What We Need" and Dinaw Mengestu for "How to Read the Air."

Literary legend Ernest Gaines was a native of Louisiana's Pointe Coupee Parish, which served as the backdrop in many of his novels. He received a National Medal of Arts (2013), a MacArthur Foundation's Genius Grant, and the National Humanities Medal among numerous other awards. He was a member of the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. His critically acclaimed novel "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" was adapted into a made-for-TV movie that won nine Emmy awards. His 1993 novel "A Lesson Before Dying" won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

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Volunteers team up with students to make a match for college success

By D'iara Washington

Morgan State University SCOM student

A national college readiness program has launched in Baltimore to help underserved students make the grade. iMentor hosted its first meet and greet for the students of the Academy for College and Career Exploration (ACCE) and their mentors November 13, 2019 at the ACCE.

Nearly 80 mentors and students showed up for the event to connect through games, goal setting and conversation.

"We're bringing in community members and professionals who have experienced the transition from high school to college or high school to adulthood and can invest in one student for a long time," said Director of Mentor Engagement Shakira Smiler. "I think this is a unique mentoring model that I haven't seen in other organizations. We get to bridge the gap between people who are passionate about supporting students but didn't know how they could."

iMentor is a national mentorship program that started in the South Bronx of New York City in 1999 by John Griffin, founder of Blue Ridge Capital and two colleagues Richard Buery and Matt Klein. So far, the program has paired over 33 thousand students with mentors nationwide.

iMentor opened in Baltimore in April. The organization officially launched services with ACCE and Baltimore Design School at the start of this school year. The program pairs high school juniors with a college graduate for three years in hopes of helping students graduate high school and prepare for college. iMentor said it expects 91 percent of their students will earn a college degree.

Amir Sydnor, a junior at ACCE high school from Northeast Baltimore, came to the event with classmates Antoine Anderson and Tyrah Corsey. The students were eager to meet their mentor and start building a relationship.

"I like that they match the people with what you like. I just feel like it's a good fit, you can make a lot of connections," said Sydnor.

iMentor said it is the opportunity to connect with positive people that makes the difference.

Sometimes there are not as many mentors at home to give students the extra push to continue especially if they may be dealing with tough circumstances.

"I want to go to college," said Corsey. "Everyone should have this opportunity. I have issues that I want to work on and I feel as though my mentor is going to help me through that."

After the program is over there are still opportunities for the relationship to continue. "After three years, students and their mentors are able to continue on formally through our Post-Secondary Program. A large group of mentors and mentees also stay in touch informally," said Smiler.

Mentor Sydney Short graduated from Baltimore City College and Johns Hopkins University. "Because of the mentorship I got at City, I very much wanted to give back to the next generation," said Short. "I have been watching the success of iMentor in other cities and wanted to do my part to see if this could work in Baltimore."

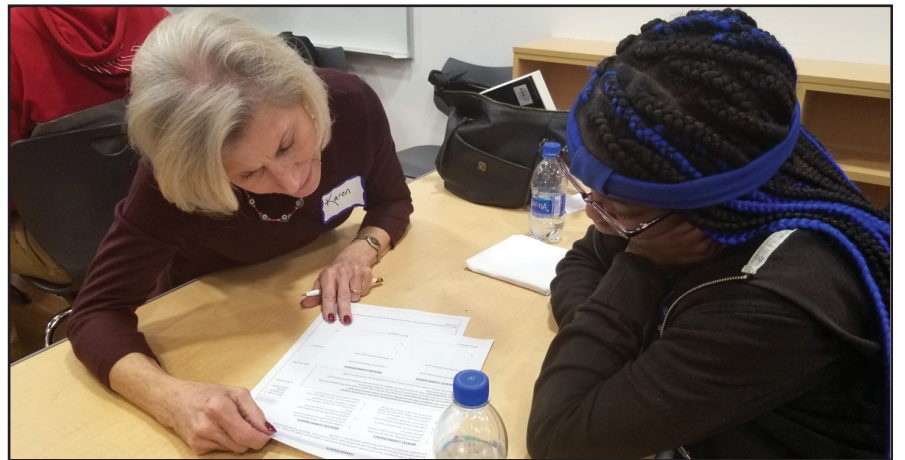
Mentors at the event expressed their gratitude to iMentor's diligent background checks.

"The vetting process itself is pretty thorough" said Short. "There's a whole application talking about our interests, and why you want to mentor. I really appreciate that, it shows that they care about the students success."

Mentors and students share ideas about getting started at the iMentor orientation November 13, 2019 at the Academy for College and Career Exploration.



Academy for College and Career Exploration (ACCE) students Antonie Anderson (left) Amir Sydnor (right) socialize before their mentors arrive at the iMentor orientation November 13, 2019 at ACCE school. Photos: D'iara Washington



Students and their mentors review their commitment to each other at the iMentor orientation at the Academy for College and Career Exploration.



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A LOT to be Thankful For

Vaile Leonard to Open Two New Houses for Women in Recovery

By Ursula V. Battle

Vaile Leonard walked into a bedroom of the rowhouse on 902 N. Wheeler Avenue. She took a trip back down Memory Lane.

“This used to be my bedroom as child,” she said as she looked around the room. “I am filled with emotion. Standing here in my room reminds me of the love my family had for me and their service. They’re the reason why I am driven towards service and so God-oriented.”

She added, “This house is called the Leonard Family Center. I named it after my parents. The Leonard Family Center honors them. It also represents all the things I learned growing up and all the things I learned during my experience in recovery. It’s a wonderful way of saying thank you. It is complete joy and gratitude. I am so grateful. It’s also another way of sharing a piece of me with the women we serve.”

The house at 902 N. Wheeler Avenue is one of two new residential locations operated by the Light of Truth Center, Inc. (LTC). On November 14, 2019, LTC held a private Open House there, along with one at another location at 933 W. Lafayette Avenue. The showing was for donors and other supporters, and included a tour along with light fare. A public Open House was held at both locations on Saturday, November 16, 2019.

LTC also operates homes at 224 N. Patterson Park Avenue and 1736 Payson Street.

“We work with women all the way through their recovery,” said Leonard. “Each home represents a step in that process. Recovery, transition, and restoration.”

Founded by Leonard, LTC provides residential therapeutic treatment for women recovering from addictions. Women living in the homes work on a self-improvement plan while living as a family unit to support their own and each other’s recovery process. The homes have been credited with helping dozens of women overcome drug addiction.

According to Leonard, the Wheeler and Lafayette Avenue locations will house

five women at a time. She said LTC will open their newest locations once they have received state approval. The Lafayette Avenue location is called the Sollins-McCarthy Center. Like its counterpart a few blocks away on Wheeler Avenue, the Sollins-McCarthy Center is also deeply rooted in Leonard’s family.

“My mother, grandmother, great-great grandmother, and great aunt all lived in that house,” said Leonard who is a former heroin addict. “I can still feel them there. There is peace and tranquility in that house and in all of the houses. We want the women who come to Light of Truth to do better and be better. Staying in a nice place also gives women something to aspire towards. It makes them feel that owning a home can be a reality for them one day.”

Leonard reflected on why she decided to start LTC.

“I went into a house that women were living in squalor,” she said. “I had a spiritual encounter at that time. People tend to believe that people in recovery should be grateful to live wherever in whatever they get. Our houses are so much more than that. We make the women feel like family, and not like they are living in a facility.”

Ginny Roberts is president of the Light of Truth Center’s board of directors. The basement area of the Sollins-McCarthy Center is named the “Don and Ginny Roberts Library” in her and her husband’s honor.

“The houses are peaceful and cared for,” said Roberts. “The women are coming in from not-so-great circumstances. We want these houses to be much nicer than where they came from.”

Betty Scott is a Peer Housing specialist at LTC’s Payson Street location.

“A friend of mine who had over thirty years in recovery told me about Light of Truth,” said Scott. “I was going to stay for a week and then say I wasn’t interested. That was over two and a half years ago. I am still here. I love the organization and the love Vaile Leonard shows to each individual. She motivates everyone and brings out the best in people.”

For more information about LTC call (443) 414-7562 or visit www.lightoftruthcenter.org.



The door to recovery. Light of Truth Center, Inc. (LTC) founder Vaile Leonard stands at the door of the organization’s newest location at 902 N. Wheeler Avenue.

Photos: Ursula V. Battle



A moment of reflection for Vaile Leonard as she stands in her childhood bedroom.



The dining room area of the Sollins-McCarthy Center.



L-r: Amanda Owens, Abell Foundation; Ginny Robertson, President of the Light of Truth board of directors; (back row left to right) Elizabeth Perriello Rice, France Merrick Foundation; and Betty Scott, Peer Housing Specialist LTC. They are standing in front of the 933 W. Lafayette Avenue location.

Thirty-two children in Baltimore celebrate ‘forever’ families on National Adoption Day

Continued from page 1

we’re helping one child at a time have a better future, by starting with a stable family.”

The Bar Association holds the event each year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The purpose is to not only celebrate the finalization of adoptions that day, but to also raise awareness that more than 100,000 children nationally are in foster care waiting to find a family to call their own. According to the Baltimore City’s Department of Social Services there are nearly 1,700 children in the foster system in Baltimore.

Dawnyell Harris just finalized a three-year adoption process with her 4-year-old daughter Sage. “There are a few hiccups. The system is not perfect. But at the end of the day it’s about the kids,” said Harris. “All they want are love, hugs, kisses, and attention and that’s what we try to give them.”

Harris has adopted before. Her 14-year-old daughter Kristyana was once in foster care before Harris officially made her part of the family ten years ago. “It makes me feel like there’s humanity in this world because this world has been very negative lately,” said Kristyana Harris.

“This gives me a sense of hope that there are people that love other people, blood or not, and I think it’s just beautiful.” Harris said she plans to give the same love and support to her new little sister Sage.

Teri Alston, program manager for adoption and guardianship for the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, said adoptions do more than just benefit an individual family. Alston has been a social worker for 23 years, and has witnessed the unfortunate outcomes of children who grow up without families. “Our hope is with each family, they create and help develop a productive citizen who will give back to the city,” said Alston.

During the adoption ceremony, court judges called each family to stand before them to make the process official. Each child was welcomed to his or her “forever” family.

Joe and Lisa Jordan finalized the adoption of their daughter Kendall. Having both worked for the state, they saw the countless children who were lost to the system, and wanted to adopt as a way to give back. After nearly three years, the family was able to finalize the process. Kendall left the courthouse with a new last name and an official family.

“There are so many kids in need of love and attention, and it doesn’t have to come from your birth parent to get that,” Harris said.

Lanier said she knows, like all parents, there will be some growing pains, trying to raise a new family, but she said she has a lot of support from friends and her church family who have been “wonderful.”



L-r: Lisa Jordan, Kendall Jordan and Joe Jordan are now officially a family following Kendall's adoption during the National Adoption Day ceremony at The Clarence Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse November 23, 2019. Photos: Imany Dye



Hundreds attend a fun-filled reception for newly adopted children at The Clarence Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse.



L-r: Dawnyell Harris stands proudly with her daughters 4-year-old Sage and 14-year-old Kristyana. Sage officially became a member of the family during the National Adoption Day ceremony at The Clarence Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse November 23, 2019.

Tired of All The Fighting? Tips on Bridging The Political Divide

News & Experts—The 2020 U.S. presidential campaign is upon us, coming at a time when researchers and pundits deem the country polarized.

There is a lot of shouting on both sides of the political aisle and on television media panel discussions. While debate is healthy in a democracy, citizens and social observers worry that the political atmosphere has become so toxic that too many people with different party loyalties view each other as enemies.

That's the way the political powers want it, says Gary Collins, author of *The Simple Life Guide To Decluttering Your Life* (www.thesimplelifeflow.com).

"It's called political tribalism, picking one of the two main political parties and identifying only with that side's beliefs, thus making anyone belonging to the other side the enemy," Collins says. "Shutting yourself off from others' opinions can manifest itself into an idealistic form of hate.

"Keeping us pitted against each other means the politicians are winning and we're losing. When it comes to political affiliations and the strong beliefs that arise from them, I've seen many families torn apart, marriages ended, and friendships destroyed."

Collins has some ideas on how to detox from the super-charged political atmosphere and stay engaged with a more balanced approach:

•**Don't affiliate yourself with one political party.** "Politicians are smart and devious when it comes to remaining in power," Collins says. "By separating us and pitting us against each other, they have greater influence upon us while narrowing our possibilities as a country,

which often stem from reasonable discussion over varying viewpoints. What we should do is take all political parties' beliefs into account and vote for the best candidate, regardless of affiliation."

•**Don't depend on the big networks for news.** Collins thinks a conflict of interest exists in some large media organizations, which he believes leads to slanted news coverage. "The biggest news networks in this country are owned by massive corporations that are politically skewed and donate large sums of money to their preferred side's political campaigns," Collins says. "Today's news media is in bed with the politicians, so you're basically being given only the information they want you to have. The answer: get your news in small doses, 10 minutes or less a day, and from multiple sources."

•**Don't get your news from social media sources.** Collins says fake news is rampant on Facebook and cites statistics showing over 60 percent of U.S. adults get their news from social media. "It's been proven you can't believe



much of what you see on your news feed," he says. "And every head of a social media company has a political slant that runs right into their social media platform, big-time. That's bad for America, period."


•**Change the things you can— now.** Collins says people should turn down the noise of national media and polarizing political talk and, instead of being frustrated, take action in causes they believe in. "By keeping us divided, politicians and media also give us the

illusion and belief that we're powerless," Collins says. "But this couldn't be further from the truth. We need to reconnect and realize we're free. Instead of beating your head against the wall and getting all wound up by social media, talk radio, and the news, ignore them and go do something about the things you deeply care about."


"We have to learn anew how to communicate with each other," Collins says. "And we have to learn how to understand and listen to others' points of view."


Gary Collins is the author of "The Simple Life Guide To Decluttering Your Life." He has a varied background, having worked in military intelligence, served as a Special Agent for the U.S. State Department Diplomatic Security Service, worked for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and also worked for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. For more information, visit: www.thesimplelifeflow.com.


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Wednesday, Dec. 4; 1 p.m.
- **District Treasures**
Wednesday, Dec 11; 11 a.m.
- **Robert F. Smith Family History Center: The Cooking Gene: A Journey through African American Culinary History with Michael Twitty**
Saturday, Dec. 14; 12 p.m.
- **Cinema + Conversation: Burning Cane**
Sunday, December 15; 2:30 p.m.
- **Pop-Up Program: A Celebration of African Americans at NASA**
Wednesday, Dec. 18; 1 p.m.

Visit nmaahc.si.edu/events to learn more and register.

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National Museum of African American History and Culture
1400 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington D.C. 20560

IRS urges families, teens to make online safety a priority



Washington, D.C.— The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) urges families and teens to stay vigilant in protecting personal information while connected to the Internet. Although the IRS is making huge strides in fighting identity theft and thwarting fraudulent tax returns, help is needed.

During National Work and Family Month, IRS is asking parents and families to be mindful of all the pitfalls that can be found by sharing devices at home, shopping online and through navigating various social media platforms. Often, those who are less experienced can put themselves and others at risk by leaving an unnecessary trail of personal information for fraudsters.

The IRS has joined with representatives of the software industry, tax preparation firms, payroll and tax financial product processors and state tax administrators to combat identity theft refund fraud to protect the nation's taxpayers. This group, the Security Summit, has found methods to help reduce fraudulent tax returns entering tax-processing systems.

Here are a few common-sense suggestions that can make a difference for children, teens and those who are less experienced:

•**Remind them why security is important.** People of all ages should not reveal too much information about themselves. Keeping data secure and only providing what is necessary mini-

mizes online exposure to scammers and criminals. Birthdates, addresses, age and especially Social Security numbers are among things that should not be shared freely.

•**Always use security software with firewall and anti-virus protections.** Make sure the security software is always turned on and can automatically update. Encrypt sensitive files such as tax records stored on computers. Use strong, unique passwords for each account. Be sure all family members have comprehensive protection especially if devices are being shared.

•**Teach them to recognize and avoid scams.** Phishing emails, threatening phone calls and texts from thieves posing as IRS or from legitimate organizations pose risks. Do not click on links or download attachments from unknown or suspicious emails.

•**Protect personal data.** Don't routinely carry a Social Security card. Keep it at home. Be sure any financial records are secure. Advise children and teens to shop at reputable online retailers. Treat personal information like cash; don't leave it lying around.

•**Teach them about public Wi-Fi networks.** Connection to Wi-Fi in a mall or coffee shop is convenient but it may not be safe. Hackers and cybercriminals can easily intercept personal information. Always use a virtual private network when connecting to public Wi-Fi.

Rambling Rose

*Positive Things about Positive
People in the entertainment lane*



Rosa Pryor Trusty

Hello everyone! How are you? Oh, I am well thank you for asking. Well, this week I want to talk to you about a couple of things I think are important to you and the community as far as life in the local entertainment world.

First, I want to say, you just missed my birthday on Wednesday, November 27th. I am 75 years old— thank you! I feel like 35 years old— I'm telling a lie! There is no way in the hell this body feels like 35 years old. But I still feel truly blessed to have made it this far and still able to do my thing which I truly enjoy.

Terry Johnson, Baltimore's own and member of the internationally known "Flamingos" vocal group. Terry Johnson grew up on Whatcoat Street in Sandtown, West Baltimore. According to Milton Dugger, "Terry was in the audience at the Royal Theatre when he saw a sort of "halo" appear around this group while they were performing on stage on Christmas. Terry took it as a sign that he should join this group, and as fate had it," says Dugger, "within a year he was a member."

Terry Johnson became the vocal arranger and guitarist for the Flamingos, writing songs and arranging vocal parts. His best known vocal arrangement is the groups hit song, "I Only Have Eyes for You" from the group's 1959 album "Flamingo Serenade." Johnson is a member of the "Rock & Roll Hall of Fame". He is now 80 years old and sounds like he's 18, and I can witness that because I saw him perform on stage last year. I was pleasantly surprised and you will be too if you join me and Milton Dugger as we celebrate our birthday, that's right I said our birthday, my birthday is Wednesday, November 27th and Milton Dugger's is November 30th. So

let's get together and hang out and bring your own bottle of whatever, bring your picnic basket of food and your friends to St. Mary's Hall, 5500 York Road on Saturday, November 30. For more information, call Milton at 410-938-8411 and we will see you there.

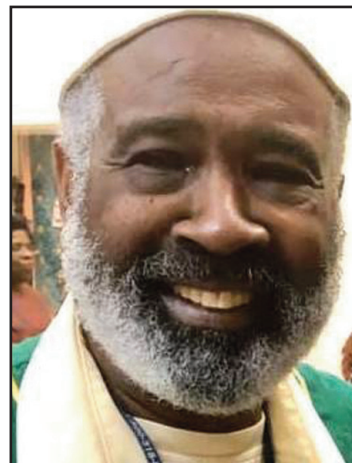
The Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society has been host to one of Baltimore's premier jazz concert series for 28 years. They have a rich history of bringing the world's finest jazz artists to the region for memorable performances in an intimate setting. Continuing its more than quarter-century tradition of bringing award-winning jazz musicians to the city. They will launch their 2019-2020 season with a concert by the Steve Davis Correlations Sextet on Sunday, December 1, 2019 at 5 p.m. at the Baltimore Museum of Art, 10 Art Museum Drive in Baltimore.

Look, I know many of my readers love themselves some good lay-back jazz, me I can do without the "Straight ahead" jazz, it just puts me to sleep, but I love me some Be-bop jazz, like Jimmy McGriff or some Swing Jazz or the "Bluezzie jazz". When I hear a musician play some of that kind of jazz, you have to drag me out of the room. Anyway, Steve Davis Sextet consists of trombone ace and leading recording artist Davis, who brings a multi-generational band of top-tier musicians to perform with him such as Joshua Bruneau on trumpet/flugelhorn; Wayne Escoffery on tenor sax; Dezron Douglas on bass; Jonathan Barer on drums; and Xavier Davis on piano. For more information, call 410-385-5888.

Look out ladies and gentlemen; I am out of space, terrible situation!! But remember if you need me, call me at 410-833-9474 or email me at:



Happy Birthday to my dear friend Milton Dugger who will be celebrating his birthday at his "Annual Entertainment Event and Cabaret on Saturday, November 30, 2019 at St Mary's Hall, 5500 York Road, 6-11 p.m. It is Cabaret Style; BYOB & BYOF with lots of live entertainment, dancing and fun. For more information, call 410-218-3572.



Derrick Amin (Ali), renowned pianist, 69 years old host a weekly gathering of local musicians, writers, and performing artists every Tuesday from 5-8 p.m. at the Randallstown Community Center 3505 Resource Drive in Randallstown. It is free and open to the public. Call 410-696-8974.

rosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME!" NOVEMBER 27TH. Send all correspondence to 214 Conewood Avenue, Reisterstown, Maryland 21136.



Terry Johnson who grew up on Whatcoat Street in Sandtown/Winchester in Baltimore is a member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame with the Flamingos will be performing with them at Milton Dugger's Birthday Party on Saturday, November 30th. For more information, call 410-938-8411.



Baxter "Peanut" Rudolph Jones, well known in his circle as well as the brother of the late "Liddy" Jones passed away quietly in his sleep from a massive heart-attack on November 18, 2019. The viewing will be held at Howell Funeral Home located at 4600 Liberty Heights on Sunday, December 1, 2019 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Funeral Services takes place at Gospel Tabernacle Baptist Church located at 3100 Walbrook Avenue on Monday, December 2, 2019 with the wake is 10 a.m. and the funeral at 10:30 a.m.



PACK A TROLLEY benefitting Comfort Cases

This pre-holiday event is sponsored by Royal Sonesta Harbor Court and ZBest

Join us for the third annual *PACK A TROLLEY* event to benefit Comfort Cases, helping kids in foster care. A trolley, donated by ZBest Worldwide Transportation, will be parked in front of Royal Sonesta Harbor Court Baltimore with volunteers there to help "pack the trolley!"

FRIDAY | DECEMBER 6, 2019
7:30AM - 6:00PM

Drop-off will be in front of Royal Sonesta Harbor Court's Formula Espresso Café located at 550 Light Street, Baltimore.

Comfort Cases provides youth in foster care with new backpacks filled with essential and comfort items.
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ABOUT COMFORT CASES

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Holiday concert with singalongs and a big screen!

Baltimore— This year's Tiffany Series holiday concert on Sunday, December 8, 2019 at 3 p.m. at Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church located at 1320 Park Avenue, in the Bolton Hill section of Baltimore is going to be a ton of fun!

Organist Michael Britt will perform a medley of popular holiday songs including "Sleigh Ride" by Leroy Anderson; "Suzy Snowflake" by Sid Tepper and Roy Bennett; "Greensleeves" arranged by Richard Purvis; and "Tocatta on March of the Kings" by Pierre Cochereau. And then, we'll all get to sing our favorite holiday songs, surrounded by Tiffany stained glass windows and the beautiful sounds of the church's famous 1931 Skinner organ.

In addition, Michael Britt's organ playing will be video-streamed onto a Big Screen in the front of the church, so you'll be able to see his hands play all those ranks of keys and his feet dance on the pedals— a treat for all ages!

Tickets are \$20 and are available on-line at: browndowntown.org/current-season, and also at the door. Children and students get FREE admission. Free parking in the school lot on the 100 block of Mosher Street and shuttle service to the church will be available.

Organist Michael Britt is much in demand as a silent movie accompanist as well as a classical recitalist. He is Brown Memorial's Minister of Music, and has given recitals at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris and at New York City's Riverside Church. Organist at Beth El Congregation, he is also the House Organist for the Weinberg Center for the Arts in Frederick.

For more information, call 410-523-1542 or email: TiffanySeries.Brown-Memorial@gmail.com.

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Narconon New Life Retreat would like to remind families to stay educated on the signs and dangers of drug abuse. Methamphetamines and opioids are on the rise in both rural and city areas. Learn the signs and protect your loved ones from drug abuse and addiction. The amount of deaths caused by Methamphetamines has almost tripled since 2014. To learn more, visit: <https://www.narcononnewliferetreat.org/blog/the-other-drug-epidemic.html>. Narconon provides free drug education materials covering a wide range of topics. Call today for your free drug education materials at: 1-800-431-1754.

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Social Security Administration launches new online reporting form for imposter scam calls

Baltimore, Md.— Andrew Saul, Commissioner of Social Security, and Gail S. Ennis, the Inspector General for the Social Security Administration, announced the launch of a dedicated online form at <https://oig.ssa.gov> to receive reports from the public of Social Security-related scams. These scams—in which fraudulent callers mislead victims into making cash or gift card payments to avoid arrest for purported Social Security number problems—skyrocketed over the past year to become the #1 type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission and the Social Security Administration.

To combat these scams, Social Security and the OIG will use the new online form to capture data that will be analyzed for trends and commonalities. The OIG will use the data to identify investigative leads, which could help identify criminal entities or individuals participating in or facilitating the scams. Ultimately, these efforts are expected to disrupt the scammers, help reduce this type of fraud, and reduce the number of victims.

“We are taking action to raise awareness and prevent scammers from harming Americans,” Commissioner Saul said. “I am deeply troubled that our country has not been able to stop these crooks from deceiving some of the most vulnerable members of our society.”

Commissioner Saul and Inspector General Ennis encourage the public to use the new online form to report Social Security

phone scams including robocalls and live callers, as well as email, text, and in-person scams. The form allows people to create a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN), so if OIG contacts a person about their report, they will know the call is legitimate.

“Awareness is our best hope to thwart the scammers,” said Inspector General Ennis. “Tell your friends and family about them and report them to us when you receive them, but most importantly, just hang up and ignore the calls.”

Social Security employees do occasionally contact people—generally those who have ongoing business with the agency—by telephone for business purposes. However, Social Security employees will never threaten a person, or promise a Social Security benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for information or money. In those cases, the call is fraudulent and people should just hang up.

Generally, the agency mainly calls people who have recently applied for a Social Security benefit, someone who is already receiving payments and requires an update to their record, or a person who has requested a phone call from the agency. If a person is not in one of these situations, they normally would not receive a call from the agency.

Social Security will not:

- Tell you that your Social Security number has been suspended.
- Contact you to demand an immediate



payment.

- Ask you for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Require a specific means of debt repayment, like a prepaid debit card, a retail gift card, or cash.
- Demand that you pay a Social Security debt without the ability to appeal the amount you owe.
- Promise a Social Security benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for

information or money.

If there is a problem with a person's Social Security number or record, in most cases Social Security will mail a letter. If a person needs to submit payments to Social Security, the agency will send a letter with instructions and payment options. People should never provide information or payment over the phone or Internet unless they are certain of who is receiving it.

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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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