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Baltimore County resident stars in new Amazon film



Celeste O'Connor, 21, who grew up in Baltimore County, portrays "Paloma" in the film "Selah and the Spades." On April 17, 2020, Amazon Prime video began showing the film, which is written and directed by Tayarisha Poe. The film immerses viewers in a heightened depiction of teenage politics. Connor's film credits also include "Irreplaceable You" and the independent film "Wetlands." The talented actresses upcoming projects includes films with Universal Studios and Sony. (See article on page 6) Photos Courtesy of Amazon Studios

Santelises provides updates in latest CEO Conversation, city schools release grading plan

By *Demetrius Dillard*

Since Governor Larry Hogan and Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Karen B. Salmon announced the closure of public schools on March 12, 2020, in response to public health concerns, Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), like many other school systems throughout the United States have had to find alternative methods of facilitating academic instruction.

BCPS CEO Sonja Santelises hosted a community conversation on the evening of Thursday, April 16, 2020, to provide updates on distance learning platforms, meal disbursement and health plan, among several other topics of great concern to parents, students and members of the community. Because of restrictions on public gatherings, the conversation was held virtually and live-streamed through City Schools' Facebook page.

Santelises began the conversation by acknowledging the diligent work of BCPS faculty members and central office staff, discussing her commitment to making online resources equally available for all BCPS families, and announced the recent launch of the school system's outreach efforts.

"The courage and the flexibility, and the durability that you all have shown is actually what is inspiring not only me, but all of the adults who are working really hard to get you what you need because you really are demonstrating the kind of resilience that is necessary to navigate this," Santelises said as she addressed students in her opening remarks.

The school system is in the process of preparing and distributing 15,000 chromebooks, which was scheduled to begin April 20, with the priority given to high school upperclassmen, according to Santelises.

She also solicited ideas on how to virtually celebrate the class of 2020 and was joined by three panelists to help answer questions that were asked throughout the hour-long broadcast.

Janise Lane, executive director of teaching and learning, was the first panelist to deliver a presentation. She said she and her team have worked diligently



Sonja Santelises
CEO, Baltimore City Public Schools
Courtesy Photo

to create weekly family guides, which are tools that give guidance on available programming, expectations and scheduling.

Grade-specific learning packets based on content areas are also available to each family without digital access and can be retrieved at any one of the 18 meal distribution sites, Lane said, adding that she and her colleagues have recently released family tutorials on how to access some of City Schools' distance learning platforms, such as Google Classroom and Blackboard Collaborate, in addition to resources for Spanish-speaking students and parents.

Michael Rading, customer care director of the BCPS information technology office, highlighted the newly established technology support hotline and his commitment to ensuring maximum safety as resources, such as chromebooks or tablets, are distributed.

"We just want to recognize what a challenging and strange time this can be for everyone. We know that this situation is turning up a lot of anxiety and stress, and many other challenges for children and adults alike," said Sarah Warren, executive director of the Whole Child Services department. "Our work

has focused mainly on supporting the social and emotional well-being of our students, our families and our staff."

Warren went on to list a few resources that families can use each day of the typical school week for any social or emotional needs.

The Q&A session lasted the final 40 minutes of the CEO Conversation, and was moderated by Tina Hike-Hubbard, the school district's chief of communications and community engagement.

Hike-Hubbard began the Q&A with the recurring question, "Are schools going to remain closed?" Santelises responded by saying that the decision is in the hands of Governor Hogan and Superintendent Salmon, but that she and her team "are planning as if that is highly, highly probable" so that leadership will be prepared, should the directive be given.

Another question Hike-Hubbard accentuated was how work will be graded. At the time of the conversation, Santelises said the district was in the process of finalizing what the grading policy will be.

On Tuesday, April 21, 2020, BCPS announced its fourth-quarter grading plan, which offers a pass/incomplete grading format:

- City Schools will offer a Pass/Incomplete grading option for quarter 4 for students in Pre-K to 12.
- Graded work will include online learning opportunities, learning packets,

and lessons via television.

- Students may submit work assigned to them via our distance learning platforms. Students engaging with learning packets will not return paper copies. Instead, teachers will monitor and offer support to students via weekly check-in calls.

- "Pass" is issued to students who have been able to engage in distance learning, to include learning packets.

- "Incomplete" is issued to students whom the schools have not been successful in engaging through multiple avenues.

Other questions included how to apply for homeschool, teacher flexibility on how to facilitate Google Classrooms and Blackboard Collaborate, whether children had to make up missed time, summer vacation, computers available to elementary students, IEPs and refunds for class trips.

Depending on the subject matter each question was addressed by either Lane, Warren, Rading or Santelises. Rachel Pfeifer, executive director of the College and Career Readiness department; and Debra Brooks, Special Education department executive director; chimed in as well.

The next CEO Conversation is scheduled for Thursday, April 30, 2020 at 5 p.m.

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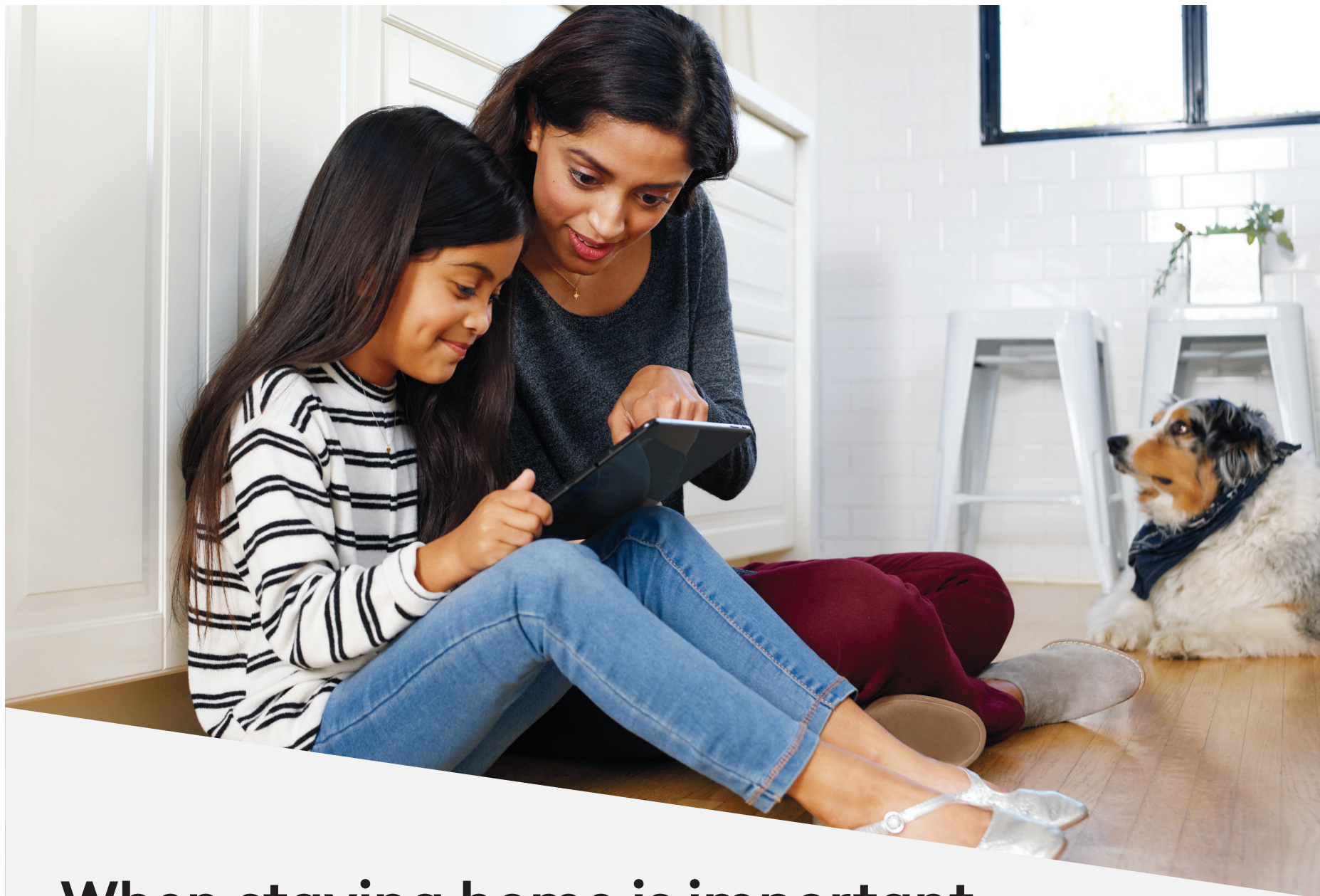
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Guest Editorials/Letters

Baltimore public housing residents face double jeopardy

By Dr. Ken Morgan

"You can tell whoever, the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) isn't worth a damn," said Reverend Annie Chambers, a long time advocate for tenants' rights who along with several others on the RAB, feels that Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) usurped the RAB's limited power.

In 1968, public housing residents met with Robert Embry, then Housing Commissioner to demand that tenants participate in the decision making of the HABC.

Paulette Carroll, a resident of Lexington Terrace and a member of RAB, aptly said to Housing Authority of Baltimore City RAB, "We don't work for you. You work for us."

These few tenant advocates now convene dutifully and regularly on the RAB. Still, they say that their issues continue to fall on HABC officialdom deaf ears. Mold, mildew, wall, ceilings in disrepair broken appliances and general maintenance complaints continue to surface.

"HABC has not been responsive," said Crystal Branch, one of the proactive tenant representatives.

Disallowing food on HABC property brought to needy, older and disabled tenants sparked the latest controversy the Baltimore Brew reported.

"Food is required to pass health department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention safety and health protocols to be distributed on HABC property," HABC spokeswoman Ingrid Antonio.

"There's nothing in my lease that says you can't give your neighbor food," Chambers told The Brew. "I have distributed clothes. We help people with their rent. I help people with all kinds of problems here in Douglass Homes."

Amid the COVID-19 virus, public housing tenants do not fare well. Phillip McHarris, a housing advocate, working on his dissertation at Yale, said in a recent Essence article.

"Many residents are poor and working-class and may not be able to buy enough groceries and supplies to weather the outbreak without assistance," McHarris said. "Outbreaks in these buildings are likely to spread rapidly given high levels of density and the fact that high traffic areas are rarely maintained adequately.

"Poverty and building safety have long created a state of emergency, a result of negligence and mismanagement by city, state and the federal government."

Karen Walker, a tenant and coalition advocate said about the Bolton House with its mold and mildew, "This place is a killer."

Later, on a Black Agenda Report podcast, McHarris said, "Folks are already in a housing crisis. Public housing is overcrowded, neglected and disinvested." Activist RAB members agreed with his views.

Reverend Chambers, along with local organizer Brandon Walker continue to spearhead a growing local independent low-income housing coalition accountable only to its rank and file residents and their supporters.

Ken is a former Coordinator and Asst. Professor of the Urban Studies Program at Coppin State University. He can be reached at kmorgan2408@comcast.net.

A SHORT LIST OF OUR VALUABLE NATIONAL RESOURCES:



Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Re: *Vindictive and Corrosive President*

Trump fires officials who criticize or disagree with him. He fired the intelligence community inspector general who informed Congress about the whistleblower's Ukraine interference incident. Trump fired others who testified during the impeachment proceedings. He would like to ignore Dr. Fauci, the leading infectious disease expert.

Trump's latest vindictive attack was against Michigan's Governor Whitmer. She was critical of poor federal preparations and the small quantities of personal protective equipment (PPE) sent to Michigan.

Trump responded by saying "We don't like to see complaints." He told Mike Pence, "Don't call ...the woman in Michigan. It doesn't make any difference what happens."

Trump singled out the female governor of Michigan for retribution because of her comments. Whitmer said medical supply vendors were told not to send PPE to Michigan.

Trump wants to lift the distancing guidelines by May 1, but the DHHS says this will cause another spike in cases and 100,000 deaths. Governors must make decisions to lift distancing guidelines.

Trump is a corrosive President who lied about the availability of PPE to the states. He blamed the WHO for not warning us about the coronavirus, but in November our intelligence agencies warned Trump of the impending outbreak.

Donald Moskowitz
Londonderry, NH

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The Political and Healthcare System is Broken and Corrupt in America

By Roger Caldwell, NNPA Newswire Contributor

“History is bound to repeat itself. Look at what went wrong in 1918 (Spanish Flu). Then do the opposite,” says the History Channel.

President Woodrow Wilson was the American President in 1918, when 675,000 Americans died as a result of the Spanish Flu and over 20 to 50 million people died around the world. This pandemic happened 100 years ago, and a lack of leadership from the federal government helped the flu spread like wildfire.

President Woodrow Wilson took no decisive measures with a coordinated federal plan and gaps were filled at the state and local level. There was a general lack of preparedness and the public health infrastructure was inadequate with no leadership and organization. Public officials lied, made up facts and 25 percent of the military personnel who

had the flu, infected the citizens around the country.

The flu started in March 1918 and the second wave came in the fall, when the majority of Americans died. This mysterious strain of the flu happened during the end of World War I and moving lots of men and materials in crowded conditions contributed to the spread of the

shutdown in every state and the president must place large-scale orders for masks, protective equipment, critical hospital equipment, ventilators and community leaders educating their constituents. This is not a time for “happy talk.” The Coronavirus Task Force must enforce the quarantine with military forces and local police.

spread testing and a national database of cases to prevent the spread of the virus. With over 500,000 thousand Americans infected with the virus, and the most citizens to die in any country — over 20,000 — the political and healthcare system is broken. Instead of the pandemic slowing down, it is speeding up and rapidly growing.

In the African American community, the coronavirus is exposing systemic racism with frightening numbers. In Chicago, the black population is 29 percent but 70 percent of the people dying from the virus are black. In Louisiana, the black population is 32 percent but 70 percent of the people dying from the virus are black. In other cities, like Washington, DC, Baltimore, Detroit and Dallas, there are alarming numbers that indicate health disparities are killing more blacks.

No one will save blacks but us. However, black leaders must sound the alarm. When America gets a cold, African American get pneumonia. There is a failure of leadership with President Donald Trump and his Vice President Mike Pence managing and running the Coronavirus Task Force. They have done a terrible job, lying to Americans, with a general lack of preparedness. There is glaring incompetency in Trump’s handling of the crisis, and the failure of testing has spread the virus. As our president continues to fabricate the truth at every daily briefing, don’t believe anything President Trump promises.

“In order for the 2020 pandemic to end in America, the entire country must be shutdown in every state and the president must place large-scale orders for masks, protective equipment, critical hospital equipment, ventilators and community leaders educating their constituents.”

virus. America and nations around the globe refused to lockdown their countries and the flu spread rapidly.

“The chaotic culture of the Trump White House contributed to the crisis. A lack of planning and a failure to execute, combined with the president’s focus on the news cycle and his preference for following his gut rather than the data cost time and perhaps lives,” said Eric Lipton of the NY Times. The 1918 pandemic lasted one year and there were three different waves where the majority of people died.

In order for the 2020 pandemic to end in America, the entire country must be

China started its lockdown on January 23, 2020 and by the beginning of March, the country was starting to open back up. They were able to get infected cases to low levels, and the United States must follow the same course of action. The population practiced social distancing and the government was able to test on a wide scale.

At this point, America’s testing process has failed, with testing of less than one percent of the population completed. There is no vaccine and more healthcare workers are getting infected with the virus with no time off. Before the country can be opened, there must be wide-

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'Selah and the Spades' on Amazon

Baltimore County resident stars in new Amazon film

By Ursuls V. Battle

In the closed world of an elite Pennsylvania boarding school called "Haldwell," the student body is run by five factions. Seventeen-year-old "Selah Summers" (Lovie Simone) runs the most dominant group, the Spades. The group supplies students with coveted, illegal alcohol and pills.

Tensions between the factions escalate, and when Selah's best friend and right hand "Maxxie" (Jharrel Jerome) becomes distracted by a new love, Selah takes on a protégée, enamored sophomore "Paloma" (Celeste O'Connor), to whom she imparts her wisdom on ruling the school. But with graduation looming and Paloma proving an impressively quick study, Selah's fears turn sinister as she grapples with losing the control by which she defines herself.

This is the enticing and intriguing storyline of the film "Selah and the Spades." On April 17, 2020, Amazon Prime video began showing the film exclusively.

The film's Celeste O'Connor is a native of Maryland.

"Selah and the Spades helped me professionally and personally," said the 21-year-old O'Connor. "Paloma is a new girl, in a new social situation. She keeps her head down and is not looking for anything. Then she gets swept up into a world of factions because Selah chooses her. It was really fun and interesting to play Paloma. At the time of the filming, I was a freshman in college and trying to figure out where I fit in. It was cool to translate my experience to a character going through something similar. For me, this movie was very informative of my personal life and my personal growth and development. Developing Paloma helped me develop myself."

Selah and the Spades is written and directed by Tayarisha Poe. In her feature debut, Poe who is African American, immerses viewers in a heightened depiction of teenage politics. O'Connor talked about working with Poe and the cast.



L-r: Celeste O'Connor (Paloma), Lovie Simone (Selah Summers), and Jharrel Jerome (Maxxie).

Photos Courtesy of Amazon Studios



Selah and the Spades debuted on Amazon Prime on April 17, 2020

"Not only is this an incredible movie and story, but working on this film also gave me the opportunity to make long and really important friendships with Tayarisha and the cast," said O'Connor who grew up in Baltimore County.

"That continues to be very important to me. The experience of being on the set with other young artists of color was very impactful for me. I grew up with mostly whites, and going on-set with so many strong, creative black women who knew exactly what they wanted was really transformative. It really helped me."

O'Connor's film credits include "Irreplaceable You" and the independent film "Wetlands."

"I actually got into acting accidentally," said O'Connor. "Acting hasn't been a lifelong dream, but the more I do it, the more passionate I become about it. I get to dive into a character, create their emotions, and tell their whole, cool story. Portraying Paloma really allowed me to delve deep into a character and really think about their emotions. This movie really launched me into my passion for acting. I said, 'this is what I want to do.'"

O'Connor shared what it was like to watch herself in the film.

"It was weird," she said. "It was such an informative time-period in my life. To see it all put together and acting throughout the movie was weird, but cool. I felt it was a beautiful story and I got to tell it."

O'Connor said future projects include films with Universal Studios and Sony.

"This movie is very important to me. Hopefully, it will also be important to other people who see it - especially my fellow Baltimoreans. The movie shows black kids are human-beings and make the same mistakes as everyone else."

She added, "Baltimore is so often portrayed as a city with so many problems. Hopefully, with this platform, other black actors can uplift and show just how multifaceted we truly are. We are multi-faceted, and there are many young actors and actresses doing what we can to support the cities we come from. I want to use this platform to uplift Baltimore and the people in my community."

For more information about Selah and the Spades, visit www.amazon.com

'Streetlight Harmonies' takes viewers on sweet trip to American music's innocent youth

By Nadine Matthews @deeniemedia

Way before they were crying in the club, folks were "Crying In The Chapel." The Orioles' 1953 hit came at the advent of doo-wop, a musical genre created in Black neighborhoods on America's East coast at the height of the Cold War Era. Created by the first generation of children of the Great Migration, doo-wop was a youth-generated genre as well.

With childhoods shaped by city culture, these adolescents grew up mere miles from the best that fashion, theater, and music had to offer. That same promise of glamour and romance marked doo-wop music. In addition, hits from music groups of the 1940s like The Ink Spots such as "My Prayer" certainly made an impression on teens looking to express their own feelings about love, and become stars themselves.

Director Brent Wilson's new eighty-three minute documentary "Streetlight Harmonies," now available on Amazon Video and DVD, is a sweet trip down memory lane to an innocent time in American music, marked by the starry-eyed stylings of teen groups like Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, The Drifters, The Platters, and many more. Full of archival footage of musical performances of the biggest hits of the day like "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" and "Earth Angel" is both a lyrical walk down memory lane and a melodious history lesson on the foundations of popular music.

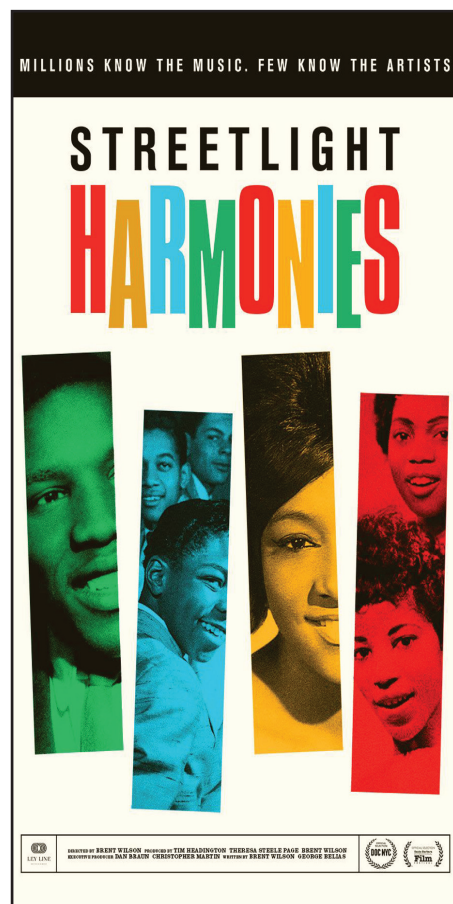
Sammy Strain (Little Anthony and the Imperials), Barbara Jean English (The Clickettes), Lala Brooks (The Crystals), Ron Dante (lead voice for cartoon band The Archies) and others provide commentary on their experiences in shaping a genre that had a profound role in shaping both Rock and Roll and Rhythm and Blues. Both would eclipse doo-wop and reach worldwide popularity. En Vogue's Terry Ellis and Cindy Herron, NYSNC's Lance Bass, and Brian McKnight also appear, and discuss how their own music was influenced by doo-wop.

A high-flying television appearance by Frankie Lymon and The Teenagers was



Little Anthony of hit-making doo-wop group Little Anthony and The Imperials in doc "Streetlight Harmonies."

Photos:: Ley Line Entertainment



Poster from doo-wop documentary "Streetlight Harmonies"

life-altering for Strain. The variety show "Frankie Laine Time," had erected a prop cement wall for their act. The Brooklyn raised ninth-grade drop-out and self-described "juvenile delinquent" recalls an interview with The Baltimore Times, "When I saw Frankie Lymon jump over that wall, I was amazed. It just opened up a whole new world for me being a teenager at the time." He instantly got a sense of purpose. "I just knew that I was going to sing!" he says. Strain ended up being a member of several popular groups including The Fantastics and The O'Jays.

Streetlight Harmonies explains Italian-Americans, who often lived in neighborhoods adjacent to the growing Black neighborhoods on America's East Coast, figured prominently in many of the white doo wop acts.

Ron Dante had one of early pop's biggest hits with "Sugar Sugar." A Staten Island native, he started out as a guitarist and doo-wop singer who used the unique landscape of the city to hone his craft as an adolescent. "The Staten Island Ferry Terminal," he recalls, "was where I rehearsed with my group. Late at night, it would be open and it was a great area."

An extremely successful music producer for many decades, Dante cites doo-wop's significant impact on the music that

came after it. "It's the basis of most background harmonies that have been on record since the '50s from these wonderful groups that developed it on street corners, subways and terminals—wherever there was some nice echo. It's totally influential and exists, to this day."

As much as the music provides a literal mellifluous trip back in time, Streetlight Harmonies also reminds us that doo-wop was also the soundtrack of an epically fraught era in American history. Doo wop's heydey from the mid-fifties to early sixties paralleled the height of the fight for civil rights. The groups being both young and mostly from the Northeast, weren't familiar with overt structural racial discrimination until they went on tour. Remembers Strain, "We saw that things were different in other parts of the country. It was a culture shock. I did gigs where white people were on one side of a rope they put up, Blacks on the other. The groups had to literally sing facing the wall. Eventually, they started commingling. The rope was dropped. We had a lot to do with that."

Full of music, memories, Streetlight Harmonies is a charming reminder of a gentler time for many and a pleasant introduction to pop music's beginnings made all the better by commentary of those who were actually there.

Druid Heights Community Development Corp fights back on Calloway house demolition

By Stacy M. Brown

It was at the 2200 block of Druid Hill Avenue that the legendary Cab Calloway developed the personality of "Sportin' Life," from Porgy and Bess with his gang of friends.

The style, outlook, musical performance traits learned on the streets of Druid Hill Avenue, would later impact dozens of great singers such as James Brown, Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley, and Mick Jagger.

"The male singer with a strong bravado, who combines a passionate 'reporting on current events' with music, dance, singing and an emphasis on dancing to such a degree that audiences lose control, really started with Cab Calloway in the 20s." his grandson Peter Brooks, stated in a news release.

But, just who is Peter Brooks, and where did he come from?

That's what members of the Druid Heights Community Development Corporation (DHCDC), a nonprofit organization, want to know.

In a virtual meeting held this week, the DHCDC whose overall goal is to accelerate the revitalization of the neighborhood with self-empowerment, employment and economic opportunities all while creating a stable and safe community environment, said Brooks has perpetuated false narratives about the planned demolition of the dilapidated home Calloway lived in nearly 100 years ago.

They argue that the home is not Michael Jackson's Neverland or Elvis Presley's Graceland but forever unkempt and uncared for, it must be demolished along with other properties, so plans to beautify the neighborhood can continue. Among the multi-million dollar and



The efforts of the The Druid Heights Community Development Corporation to demolish legendary Cab Calloway's house located in the 2200 block of Druid Hill Avenue for revitalization of the neighborhood have been stymied by a costly legal battle. Among the multi-million dollar, much-needed makeover of the neighborhood is a park honoring Calloway. Courtesy Photo/DHCDC

seemingly much-needed makeover of the community, is a park honoring Calloway.

"Do we even know that Peter Brooks, who just happened upon the scene all of a sudden, is a relative of Cab Calloway?" Anthony Pressley, executive director of DHCDC said in the virtual meeting.

The DHCDC also pointed to an October 2019 letter written by Cabella Calloway Langsam, Calloway's youngest daughter and president of the Cab Calloway Foundation, who supported the nonprofit's efforts to revitalize the community and creating a park to honor her late father.

"The redevelopment of the area by the community-minded DHCDC would both honor Cab Calloway and benefit the community with vital green space," Langsam wrote.

Jacqueline Cornish, a DHCDC executive board chair, said the mission of DHCDC is to cause, encourage, and promote community self-empowerment through the development of economic, educational, employment, and affordable housing opportunities.

She said Brooks' late emergence is causing a costly legal battle that shouldn't be necessary.

"We've been planning this for close to five years. What happened after Peter

Brooks came into the community? He was on board but somewhere along the line, he changed his mind," Cornish said. "Today, we find ourselves being overwhelmed, and nobody has asked the community or the organization how this came about. It's just been negativity coming from the other side. So, we wanted people to hear our side and hopefully get some fair reporting on this issue."

Pressley added that Brooks "popped up out of nowhere, offering his support and then changed his mind."

"He's a media expert, taught at Coppin State, and we don't necessarily have the ability to go up against this guy because he knows how to get publicity," Pressley said. "They are parading as preservationists but they're community antagonists. We have been working on this for more than five years and we have put over \$750,000 into stabilizing the block, and the community has been excited about the green space we put in. There's fencing around the building right now, and we have people ready to do the work."

Further, Cornish added that the former Calloway house has never been declared a historic site and, although special consideration has been given, the lack of designation should allow for crews to demolish and build something more palatable for residents.

"Under no circumstances do we want anyone to think we don't love and respect our black icons. We honor them," Cornish said. "If you go through the community, you will find sites where the organization has initiated recognition. For people to come into this community, who have never put a finger into helping, and all of a sudden you want to say 'no.' You are not the final arbiter as to what this community needs."

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UMB Hires Local Vendors to Provide Food for Essential Workers

By Stacy M. Brown

The dedicated essential employees at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB); police and public safety; vet services; parking and transportation; custodial services; facilities and operations; payroll; procurement; and others have worked diligently and fearlessly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among the many sacrifices, the essential workers have made by reporting to work each day is leaving their families at home, understanding that there is always a chance they could return with a deadly virus.

Plus, with the closure of restaurants and food venues, there is nowhere for these vital workers to eat during work hours. To remove one of the daily worries, UMB has launched a “Food for Our Front Lines” program to provide free lunches for employees who must remain on campus to perform essential operations and keep the university's assets safe for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The University of Maryland, Baltimore launched “Food for Our Front Lines” program to provide free lunches for employees who perform essential operations and keep the university's assets safe for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly \$39,000 has been raised which will provide 3,000 lunches.

Courtesy Photo/UMB

“The essential employees here on campus are the backbone of the University of Maryland, Baltimore,” said Denise

Meyer, UMB’s associate director of environmental services who helped organize the food delivery. “Those essential staff members have been very excited and appreciative. One member of my department in the Environmental Services Group shed a tear.

“She was so thankful because she wasn't sure how she was going to juggle picking up her son from daycare, getting to the grocery store, and packing lunches every day. The need is truly there, and it is greatly appreciated.”

All of the lunches are catered by local businesses in the West Baltimore area. Because of community partnerships fostered by UMB’s Office of Community Engagement, the university identified six local restaurants to order from: Culinary Architecture, Neopol Savory Smokery, Ruben’s Mexican, Taco Town, and Zella’s Pizzeria.

“We already have a merchant access program and our goal is how do we spend the university’s money as hyper-local as possible so if there is a meeting on campus that needs breakfast or lunch delivered, we already had strong vendors that we work with,” said Ashley Valis, UMB’s executive director of community engagement. “So, when COVID happened, we started checking in with

some of these merchants and found that everything they had going on was canceled. There were no meetings to cater to, and they were really struggling. They went one minute from having \$1,000 in orders, to the next minute having zero dollars.”

Through the university’s president’s office, the foundation board, and others, money was immediately raised—including \$10,000 in the first 48 hours—for the food delivery program.

“This program adds a lot of value to the university and the community,” said Madison Hass, the economic inclusion coordinator who connected UMB with the local restaurants that are participating in the program. “The office of community engagement’s purpose is to connect Southwest Baltimore to the resources of the university. One way that my role makes it happen is by leveraging UMB dollars and bringing it back into the community rather than spending it outside of the community.”

Each boxed lunch costs about \$12.50 and includes a sandwich or salad, chips and a cookie or dessert bar, according to a UMB news release.

To keep this program going through the pandemic, UMB put out a call for donations on April 1 to pay the local businesses for their services. So far, the program has received over 100 donations, including one generous donation of \$10,000 from the new UMB Foundation (UMBF) board member Pete Buzy and his wife Eileen.

Those donations, coupled with the money provided by UMBF, brings the total funding for the program to nearly \$39,000, which will provide upwards of 3,000 lunches to UMB’s essential employees.

“We plan to give out lunches for as long as we have funding to do it, so the donations really count,” said Meyer, who helped to organize the Food for Our Front Lines program. “The more donations we get, the more often we can provide lunches throughout this pandemic.”

In addition to monetary donations, some local restaurants provided food free of charge. Jersey Mike’s is donating over 100 sandwiches to the Food for Our Front Lines program.

“We’re all in this together,” Hass said.

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ON A POSITIVE NOTE

Send us an email at btimes@btimes.com with the subject line #OnAPositiveNote. Tell us in 200 words or less (or send a 2 minute video) sharing how you have been creative in overcoming the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has caused.



#OnAPositiveNote

Ravens Nick Boyle makes donation to Maryland Food Bank

By Tyler Hamilton

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact the world around us, people are losing their source of income. A simple trip to the grocery store can be a struggle for people who used to do so without any worries. Baltimore Ravens tight end Nick Boyle doesn't have to worry about not being able to go to the store but that didn't stop him from thinking about those who are less fortunate. He and his wife Kristina recently made a donation that will provide 75,000 meals for those in need.

"We've had a lot of time on our hands and we've been watching a lot of the news. You see everything going on today with people in need of food and not being able to work to have money to buy food. I imagine putting myself in that position of needing food and not being able to have it," Nick said via the Ravens website. "Fortunately, I am not in that position but just thinking about that made me sick to my stomach. I wanted to reach out and help those people. Little kids, families, older people, anyone who needs to have a meal should be able to have a meal without having to worry."

The Boyles made a donation to the Maryland Food Bank, which has distribution centers throughout the state, one of which is in Baltimore. They have



Baltimore Ravens tight end Nick Boyle and his wife Kristina's donation to the Maryland Food will provide 75,000 meals to people in need through out the state during the Covid-19 pandemic. Courtesy Photo/BaltimoreRavens.com

provided meals for the less fortunate in Maryland before the Covid-19 pandemic and have become a primary source for those impacted since the quarantine.

Kristina says their family has previously volunteered at the Transformation Center in the Brooklyn area of Baltimore. They donated to the Maryland Food Bank knowing that it will help those at the Transformation Center and others beyond their reach.

Kristina is a nurse but isn't working on the front lines because she has been on maternity leave since the birth of their four-month-old son, Broc. However, she has stayed in touch with some of her coworkers. They have told her about the working conditions and the long hours they have to work.

Even though she isn't at work, Kristina

can't help but think of some of the people she interacted with when she was working. That's a part of what drove them to make their generous donation.

"I'm actually a pediatric nurse and I was working in a school setting up until maternity leave. I know a lot of the kids there. They depend on schools for a hot meal. It just breaks my heart knowing that with schools being closed they are not getting that hot meal. That's something I wanted to help out with," Kristina said.

The Ravens as a whole have always made a conscious effort to connect to the Baltimore area and support the city. This recent good deed is the latest example.

Nick praised his teammates and the Ravens organization for their community outreach efforts. He feels it's important to help the people who come out to the games and cheer for the Ravens.

"It's extremely important and we've done a really good job of that. There's more that we can do, but I think the work that we've done shows that we truly care about those people on our community. Those are the people that support us, wanting us to do great. For us to support them— it's huge."

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