

Entrepreneurial flexibility keeps business afloat during pandemic



Abiodun Soluade, two-year-old Princess-Amora Soluade and Jillian Soluade wear facemasks made by the family's company Soluade Couture LLC. The Laurel-based company makes stylish facemasks, in response to offering protection from COVID-19. Full-time entrepreneurs Abiodun and Jillian focused on specializing in men, women and children's custom clothing designs, until the pandemic hit. Mask making is their new venture. Giving back to the community is a part of what Abiodun and Jillian are doing to help healthcare workers, essential employees, and the elderly, but selling masks is also helping the entrepreneurs to stay afloat, since the social distancing limitations are underway in Maryland. (See article on page 6) Photo: Ademola Olumota

Community leaders, health officials lead local fight against COVID-19

By *Demetrius Dillard*

In the face of an ongoing public health crisis, and the subsequent concerns it has raised among various black communities, local leaders and health officials are actively addressing the disparities that adversely affect Baltimore City's most vulnerable residents.

As of the evening of May 6, 2020, there are 2,752 confirmed coronavirus cases in Baltimore, and the 21215 zip code (Northwest Baltimore) leads the city with 457 positive cases. Given that 21215 is the most populous zip code in Baltimore, the visibly high number is somewhat expected.

Recent data and studies have shown that black Americans comprise the largest number of coronavirus cases in the state, highlighting deep-rooted racial inequalities regarding healthcare, access to vital resources and environmental injustice.

Along with Mayor Bernard Young and other city leaders, Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, commissioner of the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD), has contributed largely in the fight against COVID-19 on a local scale.

"We have already seen nationally how it (the coronavirus) is disproportionately affecting African Americans, so we thought it was important to highlight what we know in terms of the disparities around COVID-19," Dzirasa said, referencing the health department's regularly updated dashboard.

According to the Baltimore City Health Department's (BCHD) COVID-19 Dashboard statistics, 1,529 black residents have contracted the coronavirus as opposed to 260 White residents, 23 Asian residents, 516 'unknown' and 260 'other.'

With black Baltimoreans tallying roughly 55.5 percent of coronavirus cases, and nearly 73 percent of deaths connected to the virus, leading health officials, political figures and community leaders have been faced with a unique set of challenges.

Dzirasa and her colleagues have also created a resource on BCHD's website that lists testing capacity throughout the city, which is critically important for un-



Dr. Letitia Dzirasa
Commissioner
Baltimore City Health Department
Courtesy Photo

derserved communities.

"I think it's important as we note the disparities among race - there are disparities among who has access to testing," Dzirasa said. "I think as a city, we're working to change that with the city-supported testing sites that we've established."

Besides healthcare access inequalities, Dzirasa mentioned social determinants as an attributable factor to the disproportionate effect the coronavirus has had on predominantly black neighborhoods. The social determinants of health, she said, speak to the conditions in which people grow, live, work and play. Correspondingly, these factors have a substantial effect on health outcomes. Because of residential segregation, black Americans tend to live in more densely populated areas, Dzirasa noted, which also plays a major role in the spread of the virus, among many other components.

"COVID-19 just highlights what we already know about the disparities that exist for African Americans," she said.

Likewise, Yolanda Jiggetts, the executive director of Park Heights Renaissance (PHR), has worked tirelessly with her staff to serve the needs of the com-

munity throughout this crisis.

PHR is a nonprofit specializing in housing services, providing educational needs and other related human services. Due to the pandemic, PHR has had to adjust its work model, but has managed to gather resources and support for its many clients.

"We're constantly in conversations with the city. We have conversations with the health commissioner (Dzirasa) and her team to help us understand how we can be better advocates for putting out factual information around COVID-19," Jiggetts said, also noting her team's outreach efforts to local businesses. "At least three times a week, we coordinate with LifeBridge (Health) which is one of our anchor institutions... so of course we're having these conversations on how best to address some of the safety needs in the community."

PHR has partnered with other community-based organizations to express the need for personal protective gear, face-masks and food distribution and access, Jiggetts said.

Access to testing is a key priority for Dzirasa and the BCHD. As it currently stands there are three testing sites: in Pimlico, Druid Hill Park and Clifton Park. She and her colleagues are also brainstorming ways to implement mobile testing.

Additionally, Dzirasa and her team have rolled out messaging specifically

targeted to the black community with guidance around social distancing and available resources.

"We actually have paper flyers that we work with volunteers and with our staff to distribute," Dzirasa said. "Additionally, we've hosted focus groups to try and understand, 'OK, how do we target our message toward the African Americans?' At one point we were concerned the message wasn't getting to young people, so adjusting our messaging as we see fit so that it really reaches who we're trying to reach."

Dzirasa has been on panels, radio interviews, webinars and attended an NAACP town hall forum to decisively address the Black community.

"I do think there's value in having a health commissioner that's African American. I think being much more relatable and saying 'I recognize what some of these challenges are, but we are hoping we can help you overcome them together.'"

A public-private partnership between BCHD, University of Maryland Medical System, Johns Hopkins Health System and CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield is constantly organizing strategies around tackling the coronavirus.

"We appreciate the partnership and what they bring to the table," added Dzirasa, "and look forward to growing and expanding the work that we're already doing."

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Maryland native Ricki Farley:

Triple Negative Breast Cancer Survivor, TRODELVY Advocate

By Ursula V. Battle

Ricki Farley had a thriving marketing agency in Atlanta, GA. The services of the successful Dartmouth College graduate were highly sought after by clients who included the likes of former U.S. President Barack Obama.

“I was your typical Superwoman of the world,” recalled Farley who was 55 at the time. “A black woman trying to take care of everyone. I was on four planes a week. I was the breadwinner for my family, and my baby daughter was in China. I put off my mammogram checkup until she came home from school.

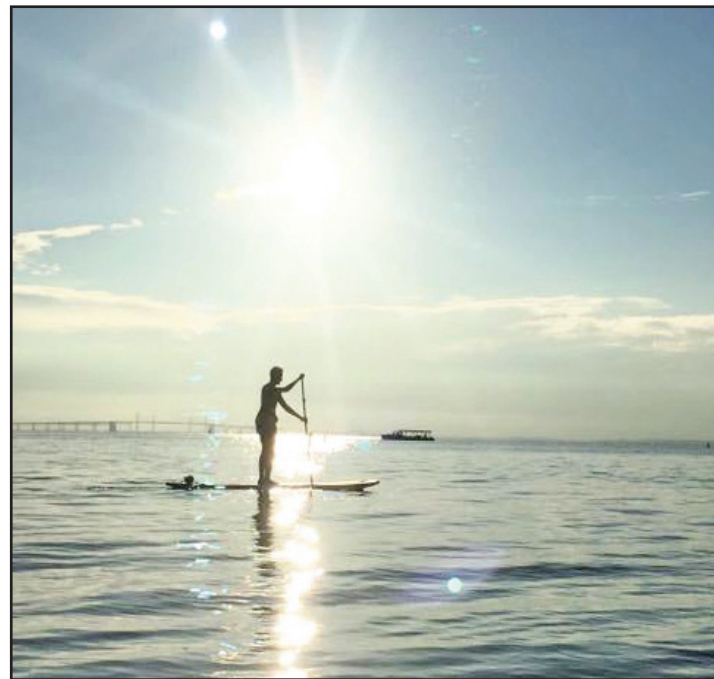
“Once she came home, I went to see my doctor. The doctor found a lump. It was the size of a peanut and under my nipple. Literally as I was walking out the doctor’s office, I was told to come back the next day for a mammogram. I did. They made me wait while they did additional films.”

Farley, who is now 63, says what came next would forever change her life.

“I was told I needed to get a biopsy,” said Farley who grew up in Silver Spring, MD. “I was going on a business trip and literally I was on the phone with my doctor. The doctor told me I had breast cancer. Not just breast cancer, but Triple Negative Breast Cancer. I was also told there was no good treatment and I would die. She gave me two years to live.”

According to the American Cancer Society, once a breast cancer diagnosis has been made using imaging tests and a biopsy, the cancer cells will be checked for certain features. If the cells do not have estrogen or progesterone receptors, and also do not make much of the HER2 protein, the cancer is considered to be Triple-Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC).

“I went home to the breast cancer world,” said Farley. “I had a double-mastectomy by choice, and radiation. The doctor said I was metastatic and that I should get my affairs in order. I told my doctor, ‘you, me, and God have to work this out.’ I also said, ‘I have to put my daughter through Dartmouth and I



(Left) Ricki Farley, 63, is a Triple Negative Breast Cancer survivor. She has become an advocate and is building a movement to address breast cancer in black women, with the goal of reducing the population’s mortality rate. (Right) Farley paddle boarding. She has removed the stress from her life and paddle boards as much as she can. Courtesy Photos

want to see her graduate.”

TNBC differs from other types of invasive breast cancer, in that it grows and spreads faster, has limited treatment options, and a worse prognosis.

“I went through chemo, and had implants,” said Farley. “I was making radio ads for Obama while on chemo. I couldn’t let it rain on my parade. I had too much work to do.”

What came next prompted Farley’s doctor to call the grandmother of two, ‘her miracle patient.’

“The cancer is gone, and we don’t know why,” said Farley. “I feel blessed everyday to be here. I remember saying, ‘God we made it. Now what?’ I made up my mind to be an advocate.”

Farley serves as the vice president of Strategic Partnerships and National Programs for Sisters Network Inc. She is building a movement to address breast cancer in black women, with the goal of reducing the population’s mortality rate. She serves on the Board of Trustees for the Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation where she spearheads the Marketing Committee and directs multicultural outreach. She also is an Ambassador for

TRODELVY, the first antibody-drug conjugate (ADC) approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of adult patients with metastatic TNBC who received at least two prior therapies for metastatic disease.

Farley calls other woman diagnosed with TNBC her “Breasties.”

“I know God left me here for this work. I tell my Breasties to ‘fight like a girl.’ Now, we have a new way to fight, which is an awesome blessing. TRODELVY is a tool in our once empty toolbox.”

Developed by Immunomedics, TRODELVY is for people whose cancer has spread and does not respond to other treatments. The FDA announced it fast-tracked its approval process to help these ‘at-risk’ patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TRODELVY combines three components: an antibody, to direct delivery of the cancer-killing therapy; a linker, which joins the antibody and anti-cancer drug; and an anti-cancer drug, which is most often a chemotherapy drug.

“Triple Negative Breast Cancer is such

a horrible disease, but for black women, its about ten percent of breast cancers and we die so quickly. I am so proud to be a part of the TRODELVY family. I have met women in clinical trials, and they are living their best lives.”

Farley said she cut out the “cancers in her life.” She sold her house, let her business go, and moved back to Maryland.

“I believe my breast cancer was caused by stress. I had to learn I was creating the contention around me.”

Farley holds an MBA from Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, is the President Emeritus of the Black Alumni of Dartmouth Association, and writes regularly for BlackDoctor.org.

“I feel blessed to be alive and see my daughter graduate from college,” said Farley. “We as black women, wear this crazy cape we don’t take off. We put everyone before us and it’s killing us. I paddle board as much as I can, and I have a dance party every morning. You have to find an outlet everyday to give yourself peace.”

Guest Editorials/Letters

Shooting death in Georgia defined as ‘modern day lynching’

By Lauren Victoria Burke, NNPA Newswire Contributor

Months after the U.S. House passed a new lynching law, which has been held up by the Republican led U.S. Senate, and a day after investigative journalist Ida B. Wells was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize—a lynching story dated February 23, 2020 is in the news.

The shooting death of Ahmaud Arbery, 25, went viral on social media on May 6, months after his murder. The video shows Arbery jogging down a street in Brunswick, Georgia. It appears to demonstrate the involvement of three men—two on a pickup truck and another filming the scene from behind.

Arbery’s death took place on February 23, 2020 about three miles from where he lived. Arbery was an avid jogger and played football.

The two men on the pickup truck have been identified through numerous media reports as Greg McMichael, a retired investigator in the Brunswick District Attorney’s office, and his son Travis McMichael. They appear to follow Arbery from behind as he is jogging down a suburban street. Travis McMichael, the alleged shooter, is seen confronting Arbery and part of a struggle ensues in and outside of the camera’s range. The sound of shotgun fire is heard. Arbery is then seen on video collapsing after the sound of the gunshot in front of the truck.

Brunswick District Attorney Jackie Johnson recused herself because one of the men seen in the video of the fatal shooting pointing a gun at Arbery worked in the district attorney’s office.

During an exclusive interview on Roland Martin Unfiltered on May 7 with Arbery’s mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones confirmed there was no support of her from anyone in the small Georgia community after her son died. That is changing. Since the viral video has been widely seen everyone from LeBron James to former Vice President Biden and President Trump has commented on Arbery’s death.

“Initially I was told there was a burglary and a struggle over a firearm,” Cooper-Jones said on Roland Martin Unfiltered. She confirmed she has not watched the video of her son’s death but the description of it from others did not line up with what authorities told her after her son died. “I need to get these men indicted. They need to go to jail. Two months has been too long,” said Jones on Martin’s show answering a question from Dr. Gregg Carr, the Chairman of the African American Studies Department at Howard University.

Late on May 7, Greg and Travis McMichael were finally arrested. Many observers of the breaking news warned that the exotic charges and where any future court case is likely to take place matters.

The Congressional Black Caucus had demanded arrests the day before and released a statement that in part read, “the killing of Ahmaud Arbery shows us that the spirit of lynching is still alive and well in our nation and something that we cannot tolerate.”

“The scary thing for me is they thought the video would help his client. The culture is so backwards down there they actually thought that,” said Arbery family attorney Lee Merritt on Roland Martin Unfiltered. The case has widely been compared to the 2012 murder of Trayvon Martin in Florida by George Zimmerman.

“What happened to #AhmaudArbery is a ‘modern day lynching.’ This February, the House overwhelmingly passed the Emmett Till Antilynching Act, which would make lynching a federal crime,” wrote Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL).

South Carolina Republican U.S. Senator Tim Scott wrote, “Every.single.time. The excuses pour in – ‘he looked suspicious’... ‘we thought he was committing a crime’... The fact remains, #AhmaudArbery was hunted down from a pickup truck and murdered in cold blood. My heart breaks for his family, and justice must be served.”

Lauren Victoria Burke is an independent journalist for NNPA. She may be contacted at LBurke007@gmail.com and on twitter at [@LVJBurke](https://twitter.com/LVJBurke)



Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Re: *Restarting Meat And Poultry Processing Plants*

After I was discharged from the Navy and finished graduate school in the late 1960s, I started my corporate career as a manufacturing analyst/industrial engineer for a large food company that processed meat and poultry, and I know how close the workers are on the manufacturing lines. So it is no surprise to me these workers are contracting and spreading the coronavirus within their plants.

The plant has to undergo a complete cleaning with disinfectant prior to re-opening. The plant owners have to purchase and provide face masks, possibly goggles, medical aprons and other PPE to the workers to help them combat the virus.

Additionally, the workers at the processing tables where the meats and poultry are placed have to be spaced out about six feet apart. The same spacing applies to the conveyors used to transport the beef, pork and poultry to be processed.

The quantities of beef, pork and poultry on the tables will have to be reduced and the conveyors will have to be

slowed down so the reduced number of workers can keep up with the flow.

Of course, this will reduce throughput of the processing plants and limit the volume of product available to the marketplace, but it could allow food-processing plants to operate while safeguarding the health of the workers.

Since the number of workers on any one shift will be reduced, it could be feasible to put on a second shift to help make up for the lost volume. A third shift might not be feasible because of machine maintenance, sanitation and cleaning requirements. A shortened third shift might be possible.

The economics of adding shifts will have to be looked at by ownership because of additional costs for shift differential pay, increased supervisory hours, and increased overhead costs, e.g. utility costs. If additional shifts are not feasible during the normal work-week, it might be feasible to put on weekend shifts.

I forward this information to wet peoples appetites with food for thought.

Donald Moskowitz

Londonderry NH

In America the Choice: Death, Coronavirus or the Economy

By Roger Caldwell
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Under the direction and management of President Donald Trump and his coronavirus pandemic task force, there has been mass death. With over 56,000 deaths, and over one million cases of the virus, there are still no masks, limited ventilators, limited gowns, limited test-kits and massive corruption.

Instead of President Trump's weekly briefing solidifying and bringing the country together to fight a common enemy, the nation is more divided and broken. President Trump's briefings have become a comedy show, where officials tell lies, there's no coordinated national plan, and made up facts. In the last week, the president has made a mockery of the country by suggesting that citizens could cure COVID-19 by injecting bleach, or tanning.

Here are Trump's strange remarks, "And then I see the disinfectant, where it

knocks out in a minute, one minute. Is there a way where we can do something like that, by injection? Almost a cleaning. So, it would be interesting to check that," Trump said.

As a result of President Trump's statements, major companies have put out statements to customers to not follow

magically disappear, and things will go back to normal.

America will not be just back in business, the virus is highly contagious, and there will probably be more than one wave. With the Republican governors opening their states, we can expect more carnage and death, because there is no

practiced or exemplified. Trump and the Republicans are only interested in making money and the healthcare system and economy is set up for the rich to keep winning.

There is something wrong with a healthcare system that is expecting Americans to die, and don't care if only less than two percent of the population have been tested. The Republican leaders only care about opening up the economy and getting as many people as they can off unemployment. The president never talks about death and families suffering, because "happy talk" makes Americans feel better.

The universe is speaking, and all our president can do is lie, lie and lie. "He never even pretended to be president of the whole country, but pitted us against one another along lines of race, sex, religion, citizenship, education, region, and— every day of his presidency— political party. His main tool of governance was to lie," says George Parker.

History is bound to repeat itself, and the second wave of a pandemic is usually the most fatal and deadly. America is at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, and very few Americans are thinking. It is very easy to lie, but covid-19 will force you to tell the truth.

"The fight to overcome the pandemic must be a fight to recover the health of our country and build anew. Under our current leadership nothing will change,"
— George Parker.

"The failure is national, and our president sees the coronavirus pandemic in personal and political terms. He is forcing Republican governors to open up the country with limited thought, no strategic plan, and everyone on their own. Trump sees the coronavirus pandemic as a 'temporary speed bump,' that will magically disappear, and things will go back to normal. America will not be just back in business, the virus is highly contagious, and there will probably be more than one wave. With the Republican governors opening their states, we can expect more carnage and death, because there is no drug or vaccine."

the president's instructions or advice. This strange behavior is bizarre, and the president's numbers are getting worse instead of better. After this debacle, many Americans are forced to ask the question, "Do we trust our president and the government?"

The failure is national, and our president sees the coronavirus pandemic in personal and political terms. He is forcing Republican governors to open up the country with limited thought, no strategic plan, and everyone on their own. Trump sees the coronavirus pandemic as a "temporary speed bump," that will

drug or vaccine.

"The virus should have united America against a common threat. With different leadership, it might have. Instead, even as it spread from blue to red, attitudes broke down along familiar partisan lines. The virus also should have been a great leveler. You don't have to be in the military or in debt to be a target— you just have to be human," said George Parker, reporter for The Atlantic.

However under the Trump and Republican regime, they have decided that compassion, integrity, and truth were character faults that should never be

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Entrepreneurial flexibility keeps business afloat during pandemic

By Andrea Blackstone

Purchasing a facemask is a new experience for many overwhelmed online shoppers, many of whom want to support brands made in the U.S.A. Buying from small businesses like Soluade Couture LLC (Soluade Couture) sends a message that buyers are actively rooting for local entrepreneurs to financially survive the pandemic.

The Prince George's County based company exemplifies the value of embracing entrepreneurial flexibility with a twist.

Not too long ago, the owners of the company— husband and wife team— Abiodun Soluade and Jillian Soluade— specialized in men, women and children's custom clothing designs. Abiodun, who works as the company's lead tailor, has been sewing for 20 years, a skill he learned in his homeland, Nigeria. Jillian serves as Soluade Couture's creative director.

Jillian noticed that many essential workers in post offices and grocery stores faced a shortage of disposable facemasks. Plus, she was told that in some cases workers were required to provide their own.

This observation gave her the idea to modify the company's product offerings to include facemasks. Jillian shared the idea with her husband who agreed to explore the option. Now, the company has been selling stylish facemasks in Maryland and beyond since late March. "As time went on, we realized that the whole epidemic was bigger than we thought, so we started taking part in [making masks]," Jillian said. "We [knew] a few people who worked in nursing homes [and] are on on-call duty, like RNs and CNAs (certified nursing assistants). We have donated masks to them because they work endlessly and tirelessly."

"We are all in this together, and we will get through this together," Governor Larry Hogan stated on his Twitter account in early April.

Along with maintaining the six feet social distancing requirement in order to slow the spread of coronavirus, the Cen-



Abiodun Soluade is the lead tailor who makes masks. The \$12-\$25 creations for men, women and children ages two to eight are eye-catching and unique. Photo: Ademola Olumota

ters for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines changed to recommend the use of cloth face coverings. Governor Hogan then mandated the use of face coverings or facemasks by executive order whenever individuals went to the grocery store, the pharmacy, on public transportation and other public places in the state.

Following that, it's easy to understand why Soluade Couture's business started picking up due to high demand. Jillian's mother, Jenn Jones who joined the company as their human resources professional and assistant tailor began to provide assistance when sales surged. The entrepreneurial team is currently working to fulfill a facemask donation request for a local nursing home and a contract for a charter school staff as they prepare for Teacher Appreciation Day this month. Giving back to the community is a part of what Abiodun and Jillian are doing, but selling masks also helps to fill in monetary gaps left by COVID-19.

"Due to the pandemic, our business has been impacted, since the mandated law of social distancing. We have been blessed to stay afloat making masks for

new and returning customers," Jillian said. "We are offering an ongoing discount for healthcare workers when they purchase online, using a discount code, and once they send in proof of ID."

Custom, pre-sewn orders, and unisex facemasks are offered.

Soluade Couture's developing niche seems to be fashionable, fun and versatile masks. Some are adorned with rhinestones or sequins. Ankara print masks are also popular with their customers. The company even sells a multi-colored facemask with a head wrap. Versatility appeals to customers with diverse tastes.

"I have a customer who said that she wanted to 'slay' and be safe," Jillian said, mentioning that she envisions that fashionable facemasks will continue to gain popularity.

Soluade Couture's three-layer, cotton masks are made with and without filters and can be hand washed and air-dried. The \$12-\$25 creations for men, women



Jillian Soluade stands by face masks sewn by her husband, Abiodun Soluade. She is wearing one of their company's stylist creations. Jillian has been actively encouraging others to wear face masks, through her social media presence. Photo: Ademola Olumota

and children ages two to eight are eye-catching and unique.

"When my husband makes custom clothes, he [goes] ahead and [makes] some to match— so I see this as a trendy thing, too," Jillian said. "I think this is going to be like a little fashion statement as well."

Abiodun added that having an opportunity to use his creative talents to help keep people safer has been rewarding. "Your gifts will make a way for you," Abiodun said. "Sometimes opportunity comes to you. You need to grab it." Visit <https://soluadecouture.us/collections/all> to view or order face masks online.

Y-LIT Helping to Brighten the Day Amidst COVID-19

Volunteers make a special delivery to Sinai's essential workers
By Ursula V. Battle

Sinai Hospital Trauma program manager, James Gannon was among the employees who recently stepped outside the facility to “pick-up” their Chick-fil-A lunch, which was being “specially delivered.” However, those bringing the lunches to the hospital weren’t food delivery workers.

These volunteers were members of Youth Leaders In Training (Y-LIT), an organization comprised of middle through high school youth, and young adults, who focus on community service, and mentorship.

“They are absolutely amazing,” said Gannon referring to the group. “They don’t realize how big a part they are playing by feeding us. To have this is immensely helpful.”

Y-LIT partnered with Chick-Fil-A’s Baltimore Inner Harbor location to donate 25 meals. According to organizers, lunch included Chick-fil-A sandwiches, salad, and cookies. Y-LIT added fruit, potato salad, chips and water to the meal.

“There is no one that does not like Chick-fil-A,” said Gannon with a smile as he stood in front of the hospital. “It’s nice to get away from the walls, get fresh air, and to see these young men and women who are actively out here. It raises your spirit.”

Y-LIT delivered the lunches to Gannon and other essential employees on Friday, May 8, 2020, in front of the hospital. Carmen Harris, 17, organized the event, which marked the launch of its Gratitude Campaign for Essential Workers.

“Today, we just came and delivered food and a special thanks to workers at Sinai,” said Carmen. “We wanted to show our gratitude to those risking their lives day in and day out. We just wanted to thank them. They are real superheroes saving our lives.”

The Gratitude Campaign aims to show appreciation for essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, while encouraging other youth and young adults to do the same.

“As a society, it’s a wake-up call,” said Carmen. “Some are self-indulged, and



Sinai Hospital’s essential workers recently received Chick-fil-A lunches. The lunches were delivered by Youth Leaders In Training (Y-LIT), and marked the launch of its Gratitude Campaign for Essential Workers. L-r: Carmen Harris, 17, Sinai Hospital Trauma Program Manager James Gannon, and Cari Harris. Photos: Ursula V. Battle

don’t think about what people don’t and do have. It’s an encouragement for youth. It helps us think about others as we go along with our daily lives.”

Carmen attends Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Maryland and will be entering her senior year.

“I feel really good,” she said. “I have been manifesting this since 2016. I wanted to give back to the community to someone risking their life for me. It’s great to be here today and see them face-to-face. I feel so grateful to be out here today standing in front of Sinai.”

Founded in 2017, Y-LIT is a 501c3 private nonprofit organization with chapters in Maryland and Washington D.C. The group has recently expanded to Ohio, California and Hawaii.

Carmen said as part of the Gratitude Campaign, they have also made, donated and delivered masks to postal workers. They also gave the postal workers Krispy Kreme donuts. The group also posts information on social media about essential workers once a day.

“I would not be able to do this without my team,” she said. “I thank my mom, sisters, aunts, and uncles.”

LaTara Harris is Carmen’s mother. Harris said that while they received donations from Chick-fil-A, and two restaurants will soon be supporting their efforts, much of the expenses are out-of-pocket.

“The reason for this is that we decided there is such a need,” said Harris. “I want to thank Chick-fil-A and the trauma team here at Sinai for showing up everyday. We want to support in any way we can. I hope we inspire others to do similar things in the community. We can always do something to help. We thank those on the front lines.”

Harris’ daughter Cari Harris, who is Carmen’s older sister also helped.

“I feel honored,” said the 23-year-old. “Right now, it’s easy to fall into being relaxed. It means the world to me to do this. It shows me the difference we can make.”

“The funnest part was writing the press release for the event. I enjoyed planning

that aspect of business and understanding the role the media plays in business. I learned a lot. I want to be in business, maybe as a strategic planner. But after writing the press release, now I am thinking about Communications.”

For more information or to support Y-LIT, visit www.ylit.org.



Carmen Harris, 17, organized the event.

Rambling Rose

**COVID-19 Cancellations
of 2020 Jazz & Music Festivals**



Rosa Pryor Trusty

Hello everyone. I hope if you are reading my column now that you are safe and healthy from this nasty Coronavirus. Those of you who have lost someone to COVID-19 please except my condolences to you and your family. I know everything is such a mess right now but please continue to follow the rules: wear your mask and stay at least six feet from people in public places. "The Fat Lady Is Not Singing Yet!"

There are so many of our jazz and music festivals and annual shows have canceled because of this COVID-19 Pandemic. I will inform you about a few. With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to evolve unpredictably and in accordance with state guidance on large gatherings we have been stripped of our fun time in the live music world.

It's disappointing news from the state of Rhode Island. The Newport Folk and Jazz Festival that was set to take place at Fort Adams this summer has been canceled. All ticket holders for the festival have the option to receive a full refund if desired. The Newport Jazz and Folk Festivals were created by George Wein (now 94 years old) in 1994 and 1959 respectively. These Festivals are two of the largest running music festivals in history!

The 2020 Hampton Jazz Festival known for bringing the best of jazz, blues, soul and R&B to Hampton Roads has been canceled due to the Coronavirus pandemic and has been rescheduled for June 2021. Refunds will be issued automatically to anyone who purchased their tickets online through Ticketmaster. Refunds for tickets purchased at the box office can be obtained by returning the purchased tickets once the office opens up to the public.

The 28th Annual Capital Jazz Fest, originally scheduled for June 5-7, 2020 at the Merriweather Post Pavillion in Columbia, Maryland has been postponed. This is one of my favorite festivals. Each year in early June, tens of thousands of music lovers from throughout the country flock to the suburbs of Washington, D.C. to attend "the jazz festival with soul." Started in 1993, The Capital Jazz Fest, a multi-day, multi-stage outdoor music festival, which attracts music lovers nationwide, is more than just a concert—it's an event! It's a place to people-watch, eat, drink, shop, mingle, relax, soak in the rays, make new friends, and of course hear some of the coolest jazz and soul music on the planet. In-between musical sets, enjoy fine art and crafts at the Festival Marketplace, culinary treats at the food court, and meet & greet the artists. Hopefully next year we all can be there.

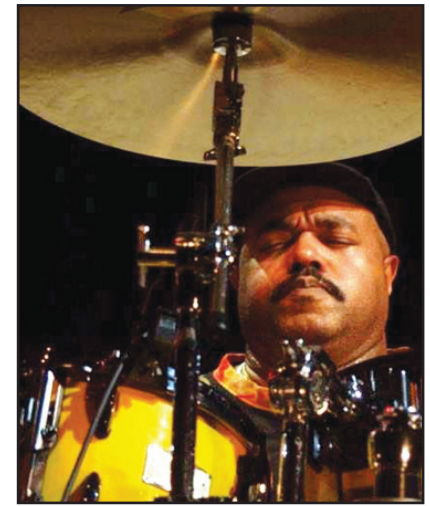
The 2020 French Quarter Festival and Satchmo Summerfest have also been officially canceled. Satchmo Summerfest, a celebration of the legacy of New Orleans native Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, is generally the first week of August at the Old U.S. Mint. The free French Quarter Festival, which draws hundreds of thousands of attendees every year with a program consisting almost entirely of south Louisiana musicians. We try not to ever miss the New Orleans Festivals, my "Boo Boo" and I go every year for these festivals to cover the exciting events for my column, "Rambling Rose." We love New Orleans! The city is always full of life, fun and happy people. The 2021 dates for the festivals are scheduled April 8-11 for French Quarter Festival and July 30-August 1 for Satchmo SummerFest. The



Shirley Duncan, Baltimore's Hand Dance Queen celebrates her 70th birthday this week. She feels very blessed and says thank you for all the good wishes. "Happy Birthday

French Quarter Festival followed the same path as the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the Essence Festival of Culture and the Buku Music + Art Project.

Oh well, I know I should be trying to put a smile on your face and talking about something positive, but this were the cards I was dealt. So in the meantime, stay strong, safe and healthy. And remember, if you need me, call me at 410-833-9474 or email me at rosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.



Happy Birthday to Baltimore's own, Dennis Chambers, now world renowned drummer, percussionist, and my musician son. I pray that you have many more.



A good friend for many years, Bootsie Barnes, well-known saxophonist who was loved and played with many of our local musicians in the Baltimore/Washington, DC area, but was from Philly died April 22, 2020 from COVID-19.

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DJ Fluker signs with Ravens, reunites with college teammate Mark Ingram

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens finished last season with an NFL-best 206-yard rushing average per game. The trio of Mark Ingram, Lamar Jackson, and Gus Edwards did most of the running but the offensive line led by guard Marshal Yanda was an equally important part.

Yanda retired after the season, leaving a void at right guard. Veteran offensive lineman DJ Fluker was released by the Seattle Seahawks soon after the draft. He made it no secret that he wanted to become a member of the Baltimore Ravens.

"The Ravens were like, 'Hey if they're going to let you go we'll pick you up.' It was perfect timing," Fluker told Ben Baller on the Behind the Baller podcast.

Soon afterward, his desire came to fruition. The Ravens officially announced that Fluker was signed to a one-year contract on Monday, May 11, 2020.

Fluker will compete with second-year guard Ben Powers and 2020 third-round pick Tyre Phillips for the starting spot replacing Yanda. Fluker started 14 games for the Seahawks last season.

At 6-foot-5, 342 pounds, Fluker is known as a bulldozing lineman perfect



The Baltimore Ravens signed former Seattle Seahawks DJ Fluker to a one-year contract. He will compete with Ben Powers and Tyre Phillips for the starting spot to replace Marshal Yanda.
Photo Credit: Ted S. Warren/AP

for a power scheme like the Ravens utilize. The player to team match is obvious.

It goes beyond scheme. Fluker was a standout at Alabama where he was a teammate of Ravens running back Mark Ingram in 2009 and 2010. Ingram was selected by the New Orleans Saints with

the 28th pick in the 2011 NFL Draft.

"Ingram was one of the guys that would talk trash to you. He knew he was the man when he stepped into the backfield. His dad played in the NFL, so he had it embedded in him that he was destined to be great. I knew he was going to the league because of his mentality and how he worked," Fluker told Baller.

As a freshman, he was a candidate to replace current Ravens offensive lineman Andre Smith who was the No. 6 overall pick by the Cincinnati Bengals in the 2009 NFL Draft. Two years later, Fluker was selected by the San Diego Chargers with the 11th pick in 2013.

The Chargers originally slotted Fluker to play right tackle where he started all 16 games as a rookie and was named to the All-Rookie team. He moved to right guard in 2015.

The Chargers released Fluker in 2017. Four days later he signed a one-year \$3 million deal with the New York Giants. Fluker started six games at right guard before a toe injury in Week 11 caused him to be placed on injured reserve.

Fluker moved on to the Seahawks the following season where he started nine games at right guard. He signed a two-year, \$9 million extension with Seattle in 2019 but was released one year into the deal despite starting 14 games. One of his starts was in a 30-16 loss to the Ravens.

Now Fluker is reunited with Ingram in Ravens offensive coordinator Greg Roman's scheme. Fluker is one of six Ravens who played at Alabama.

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How to take fear out of the workplace

By Rich Armstrong and Steve Baker

News & Experts— Fear. Uncertainty. A growing sense of panic every time the president delivers a national address about the far-reaching effects of the coronavirus.

Chatter around the workplace these days is filled with questions like: Will I get sick? Will I have a job tomorrow? Can I afford to pay my rent?

What can you do when you're facing fear in the workplace? The good news is that you can turn to four key principles: transparency; financial discipline; trust; and respect for people, and a forward-focused approach. If you want to take fear out of the workplace, consider the following steps:

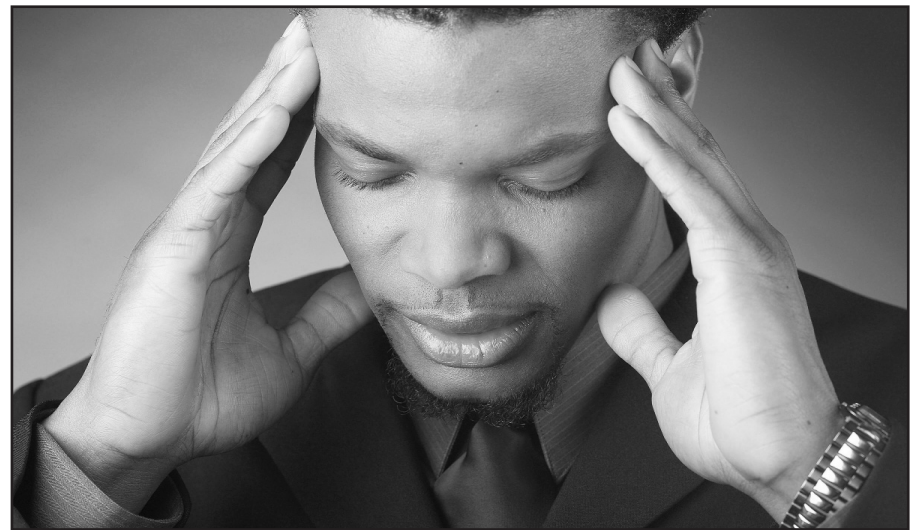
Embrace transparency. "Open-book management" is the idea that everyone inside your organization will be taught to understand the numbers that drive its success. Many growing business owners can be reluctant to share the truth about the financials inside their business. But they don't realize the kind of risks they take on by doing so. They take on the burden of keeping the business alive— solo. In many cases, CEOs and owners are forced to shut the doors of the business to the shock of their associates, who are then left to wonder if they could have done something to contribute to a different outcome.

That's why it's amazing what happens when you have the courage to share the news — good and bad — with your people. Treat them like adults. Get their attention directed toward what they can do to help — versus panicking. Plus, the more eyes you have on a problem, the more ideas you'll have to solve it. It's an automatic check-and-balance on the security of your business.

Discuss your cash position. It's been frustrating over the past few years as we've watched startup companies under the guidance of universities, incubators, and even investors embrace the idea that the only way they could grow was to take on debt. Some of you may find yourselves in an over-leveraged position, but that can also be an opportunity to engage your workforce and tell them the truth about the situation. If you do find yourself in trouble, ask your associates for ideas about how they can contribute to cutting costs— and increasing cash flow to the point where you can actually cover your debt obligations. You'll be amazed at what can happen when you teach your people the rules of the game.

Protect jobs. Attracting talent and retaining it can be tough. We don't have a future without people. In the not-too-distant past, executives sometimes became idols when downsizing jobs became the new mantra, laying off people at a time they needed those jobs the most. Something similar could happen today. Difficult times can convince companies to resort to layoffs to survive. But it is wise to think differently. Whoever has the most talented workforce will dominate their markets as soon as 2021. The time to get your organization ready for the next upturn is today— not when it's already arrived. By then, it may be too late.

Get ready for the upturn. As bad and as uncertain as things look today, here's a secret: it's actually harder to get a company ready to take advantage of an upturn than it is to prepare for a downturn. Downturns can actually be opportunities to fix things inside your business that you can't afford to invest the time and resources in when the economy is booming. While it might seem counter-



intuitive, the current down market comes as a kind of short-term relief.

It's giving us a chance to catch up— to make investments in our people and facilities— and to prepare ourselves to capitalize on the economic uptick that we expect to hit in late-2020, early-2021. By then, our workforce should be more stable and productive— and ready to take full advantage of the available opportunities. They have every incentive to do so, because, as owners of the business, they have a true stake in the outcome.

We know how painful things are today. But there's no reason you can't also dare to be successful. And learning how to build a culture based on transparency, financial discipline, trust and respect for people, and a forward-focused outlook,

is a great place to start removing the fear that's pervading your workplace.

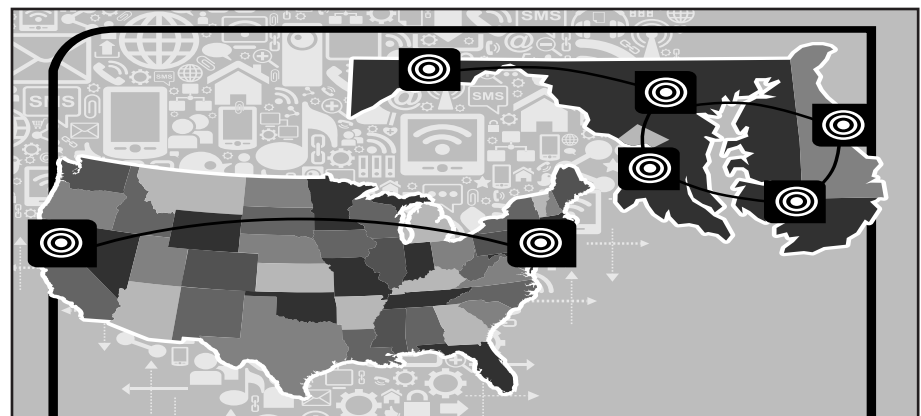
Rich Armstrong is the president of The Great Game of Business Inc., and co-author, with Steve Baker, of "Get in the Game: How To Create Rapid Financial Results And Lasting Cultural Change." This book is the how-to application of Jack Stack's 1992 bestseller, The Great Game of Business. Armstrong and Baker co-authored the update of Stack's book in The Great Game of Business – 20th Anniversary Edition. Armstrong has nearly 30 years of experience in improving business performance and employee engagement through the practice of open-book management and employee ownership. For more information, visit: www.greatgame.com.



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