

Website Helps Families Locate Free Summer Meals and Tutoring for Children



Families can turn to 211 Maryland—the state’s central connector to health and human services—to find summer foods sites in their area as many school districts are offering free breakfast and lunch meals for children. The free program is an extension of the services offered during the school year. (See article on page 7)

Courtesy Photo: Baltimore County Food and Nutrition Services

I haven't filed my taxes in several years, what should I do now?

By Janice Shih and Kelsey Creed

Believe it or not, this is a common problem. If it has happened to you, you should not panic, but rather, reach out for help. Here is a general guideline as to what you should do.

If you have not filed your taxes in several years, you should consider (1) whether you are required to file, and (2) if you are required, why you did not file.

The first step is determining whether you are required to file. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) classifies individuals into two groups: (1) those who *must* file and (2) those who *should* file. Those who are required to file meet a specific income and age requirement based on their filing status. For example, you are required to file a 2020 return if you are “single,” earned at least \$12,400, and are under the age of 65. It is a crime not to file a required tax return and you can be fined or prosecuted for failing to file.

You may not be required by law to file if you fall under this income threshold. However, even if you are not required to file, there may be some benefits. For example, you may fall in this category if you do not meet the income requirement but have had taxes withdrawn from your paycheck. Filing a return will allow you to receive those withheld taxes as a



Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS) has a Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic that can address tax issues. MVLS can be reached at 410-547-6537 Monday to Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and at: www.mvlslaw.org.

refund. Additional examples include if you qualify for healthcare, education, and child tax credits, or if you've received a 1099-B tax form.

By filing, you may also become eligible for certain tax credits, such as the Economic Income Payment (“EIP”), commonly referred to as the federal stimulus payment. If you have not filed your tax return in several years and did not receive your EIP, you should file a 2020 tax return to request a “Recovery

Rebate Credit” on your tax form. Seek aid from a reputable tax preparer in order to complete your return accurately.

If you are required to file, the next step is determining why you did not file. You may have avoided filing taxes altogether because the process is intimidating and cumbersome.

Perhaps you fear that you will be unable to afford tax payments to the IRS, so you further delay filing in hopes

the IRS does not become aware that you owe. If you believe that you owe taxes to the IRS from previous years that you had not filed, and are worried you are unable to pay, you should still file and seek assistance after filing.

While waiting to file until you can afford to pay seems logical, it is not the best approach to take. Waiting to pay a tax balance leads to penalties and interest on this balance, leading to an even higher amount due. Even if you can't afford the amount due when you file, you can seek assistance from a Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) to help you determine a solution. Sometimes you can negotiate a lower payment, or an installment plan to deal with the balance due. The most important thing is to not ignore it. It is always best to file even if you cannot afford to pay.

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Janice Shih is the director of the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS) and Kelsey Creed is a legal intern at MVLS.

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Western High School Foundation names 2021 Recipient of Lois and Irving Blum Social Justice Fellowship

Honoree Tayonna Johnson WHS '21 to Attend Howard University in Fall 2021

Baltimore— Western High School Foundation, established to preserve and strengthen the shining legacy and excellence of the nation's oldest all-girls public high school, announced Tayonna Johnson as the 2021 recipient of the Lois and Irving Blum Social Justice Fellowship at Western High School.

The scholarship program is funded by the Lois and Irving Blum Foundation through Carolyn "Patty" Blum (WHS 1967), Clinical Professor of Law, Emerita at Berkeley Law, University of California, who founded and directed the International Human Rights Law Clinic, and her family. The \$5,000 scholarship is awarded annually to a Western senior demonstrating social justice activism in the city or state.

"The Western High School Foundation's mission to preserve and strengthen Western's legacy dovetails perfectly with my family's plan to create social justice activism scholarships at



Tayonna Johnson is the recipient of the 2021 Lois and Irving Blum Social Justice Fellowship at Western High School. She was selected by the Blum selection committee for her talent, passion and community engagement.
Courtesy Photo/WHSF

the Baltimore high schools each family member attended. The scholarships

honor our parents' values and recognize the schools where we had grown intellectually and developed lifelong friendships," said Professor Blum.

In addition to family members, Blum's close family friend, Margaret "Peg" Cohen (WHS 1966), serves as a member of the selection committee for Western.

As Western's second Blum Scholar, Johnson plans to attend Howard University this fall.

Founded in 1867 with its motto of Excellence in Truth and Service, Howard University is nationally ranked #2 among the Top Historically Black Colleges and Universities by U.S. News & World Report.

Johnson, was selected by the Blum selection committee for her talent, passion and community engagement, said Professor Blum who noted, "It is truly uplifting to see the special girls who are graduating under Principal White's leadership." Principal White has been frequently honored for her leadership in education.

Even at her young age, Johnson is certain of her life direction: motivating youth through music. She was featured recently for the Healing City Baltimore Summit 2021 singing "Save Me," which is about her thinking process as she was getting through trauma. Johnson's frequent, consistent partnering with Healing City and Heart Smiles has given her the opportunity to help youth who struggle with issues unique to inner city life by setting a personal example of pursuing dreams.

In March 2021, Johnson was featured on PBS NewsHour focusing on her

work with Hip Hop Public Health's "Community Immunity" video to ensure its authentic reflection of Baltimore City. The video exposed common vaccine myths and misconceptions to help influence communities in making better decisions during the pandemic.

After college graduation, she plans to return to Baltimore to establish a building for inner city young artists where they can record their music and learn more about the music industry. Johnson said, "It's very important to help young people who have so much talent to reach their full potential. I want to be that person who can set an example for others; I want others to be able to say 'If Tayonna can do it, so can I!'" Johnson has been influenced by Western's motto "We have received light, let us give light."

Professor Blum's life has been a testament to the value of giving light, according to Carolyn O'Keefe (WHS 1974), president of the Western High School Foundation. "Patty sets a strong example of philanthropy for other Western alumnae and, importantly, for every citizen committed to social justice. After all, every day, Western works to advance gender and racial equity in real time, with immediate and long-term positive impact on young women."

Founded in 1844, Western High School is the oldest all-girls public school in the nation. Its notable alumnae include: Henrietta Szold; Etta and Claribel Cone; Judge Sarah T. Hughes; Astronomer Nancy Grace Roman; Dr. Nancy Grasmick; Anna Deavere Smith; and Maryland State Senator Jill Carter.



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Guest Editorials/Letters

The Black Press: Our Trusted Messenger

By Dr. John E. Warren

Publisher, *The San Diego Voice & Viewpoint*

Sometimes it's necessary to be reminded who we are and who our friends are. It's also important to remember from whence we have come. Such is the case this week with the Black Press. Our Black newspapers are now celebrating 194 years of being the keeper of the flame of liberty and the source of information in "our" struggle for freedom and equality.

With the advent of the recent pandemic and the visible disparity of Blacks dying at greater numbers than others, getting fewer vaccines, working the most high risk occupations and death at the hands of law enforcement, our need for a "trusted" source of information is greater than social media which has become an alternative for many. At the same time, the interest in reaching our communities has increased on all levels. The question has become "who is in touch with the Black community" as injustice, murder and social disparity continues to grow among Blacks. The NAACP and the Urban League gave the impression that they were in touch with the Black community. But the reality is neither organization has ever been in touch with the Black community without the Black Press. It is Black newspapers and not CNN, ABC, NBC or CBS that carries the articles and commentaries of these organizations to the Black community. Yet, neither of these ever mentioned the Black Press when taking both credit and dollars for outreach to the Black community.

The African American and Black communities of America should not be duped into believing that social media has become a substitute for the Black Press. The Black Press is now both print and electronic, it's a newswire service as provided by the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), providing coverage of both news here in America and around the world. It is the Black Press that has been the "Trusted Messenger" to our communities for 194 years and that says a lot. Our newspapers are the rear guard, the battleground against the efforts to re-segregate America and return "Jim Crow" racism.

As we celebrate Juneteenth, let us remember that we are not only free but capable of defending and determining our futures, if we get serious. Let's remember how we got here, on the backs of those like the Black Press who bought us thus far; let us not forget in the words of James Weldon Johnson: that "we have come over a way that with tears has been watered, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered." We are, still being slaughtered today by others as well as each other.

Let's remember who is truly telling our story and our obligation to keep and support that effort. Pick up a Black newspaper and get involved. You owe that and more to keeping the Juneteenth principle of freedom alive today.

Dr. John E. Warren is the Publisher of The San Diego Voice & Viewpoint

We love to hear from our readers!

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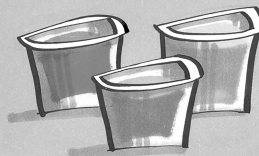
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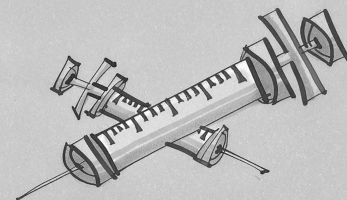
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VACCINATIONS



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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Re: *The United States Needs Allies*

President Biden is working on re-establishing and nurturing our relationships with our allies in the world.

We are recommitting the United States to backing our European allies against the influence and territorial ambitions of Russia; and NATO is the key organization positioned to block Russian moves in Europe, and it is needed to help combat Russia's cyber attacks on our infrastructure.

In the far east, China is significantly expanding its military and reach in the South China Sea. Our support of Taiwan, The Philippines, and Japan is critical to containing China's ambitions in the region. As a counter weight to China, we should probably encourage Japan to embark on a limited build up of its military forces, especially its Navy and missile capabilities. Additionally, we have to counter China's pilfering of

our intellectual property. South Korea needs ongoing support to deter North Korean threats.

In the Middle East Iran poses a threat to its neighbors and to U.S. interests in the region. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Jordan and other countries in the region need our backing to counter any Iranian moves. Israel is the only democratic country in the Middle East, and it is a high-tech and military bulwark standing in the way of Iran and the Islamic terrorist factions who want to destroy the Western world. Israel's survival is strategically important to the United States and the Western world.

We have to continue to support countries in South America and Central America to contain Cuba and Venezuela.

We are back as the leader of the free world.

Donald Moskowitz
Londonderry, NH

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

Please send your letter to: Letters to the Editor

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Making It Plain: What Black America needs to know about COVID-19 and vaccines

By Darryl Sellers

Barber and Hair Shop Talk – Breaking through the Myths Return to Summer Celebrations in Our Communities

President Joe Biden has declared June a national month of action as the United States pushes through what is hopefully the tail end of the more-than-one-year pandemic. The White House is launching an effort to team up with 1,000 Black-owned barbershops and beauty salons across the country to help the Biden Administration reach its goal of 70 percent of adult Americans receiving at least one shot of a coronavirus vaccine by July 4, 2021.

With the White House's latest effort in mind, the Black Coalition Against COVID (BCAC) recently hosted a conversational Q&A event called *Making It Plain, the Colors of COVID: Barbershop and Salon Talk – From Vaccine Hesitancy to Vaccine Confidence*. It was a two-hour

discussion featuring prominent members from the Black barbershop and salon community as well as minority healthcare professionals who hoped to build on the White House's Shots at the Shop initiative that has been successful in several barbershops across the country. This could be a new national

Dr. Cameron Webb of the White House COVID-19 Response Team said Black barbers are an essential part of the White House's effort in Black communities to build more vaccine confidence and chip away at vaccine hesitancy. He reminded us that Black barbers have been in the business of giving good information for a long time.

he's found an effective way to deal with the mistrust he hears in his barbershop.

"You have to meet them at their level," Brown said. "And then once you get down to where they are, then you can start to talk them out of their mistrust or their misinformation."

We're getting ready to fire up our grills for family barbecues and attend other outings. Co-host Omar Neal said having family conversations is key to returning to our summer celebrations. He made a lighthearted remark that sums up how many of us feel about returning to family get-togethers and other events we've sorely missed during the pandemic.

"If we can get the vaccine now, we can be ready for the 4th of July," Neal said. "Wouldn't it be wonderful that everyone that's eligible to get the vaccine has been vaccinated when they come to the family gathering so you can go around and hug everybody again?"

Well said, Omar Neal! Together, "We Can Do This!"

To see a replay of this BCAC Facebook Live event in its entirety, go to BlackDoctor.org. For a list of upcoming events, COVID-19 health and wellness information, and other events, go to BlackDoctor.org, the world's largest and most comprehensive online health resource specifically targeted at African Americans. For more information about COVID-19, health, and wellness, see Black Coalition Against COVID-19, a key health resource for African Americans.

Darryl Sellers is the Director of Public Relations Team for Creative Marketing Resources, a strategic marketing agency in Milwaukee and a partner of the BCAC.

“Currently, approximately 64 percent of adults in the United States have received at least one dose of a vaccine. However, vaccine hesitancy is still running rampant in Black communities where around 24 percent still have a wait-and-see mindset.”

model with barbershops and beauty salons offering vaccines as well as haircuts, shaves, and hairstyles.

June's Facebook Live town hall comes during a very delicate stage in the struggle to end this pandemic. Cofounder of the BCAC, Dr. Reed Tuckson, said Black Americans' relationships with their barbers and hair stylists are very vital to keeping our communities informed.

"One-by-one in the chair is the motto of many lifelong Black and Brown barbers and stylists," Dr. Tuckson said. "And that special relationship is one of the cornerstones of Black and Brown culture, a relationship that extends well beyond the latest hairstyle to engage the very lifeblood of our communities."

Currently, approximately 64 percent of adults in the United States have received at least one dose of a vaccine. However, vaccine hesitancy is still running rampant in Black communities where around 24 percent still have a wait-and-see mindset.

He added, "We believe if we give people the right information, they're going to make good decisions, good decisions for themselves, their family, and their community."

Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith echoed Dr. Webb's message as she spoke to her Black salon sisters.

"We love our time at the shop. We do a lot of talking," she said. "I'm hearing people in the shop talk about things like magnets and infertility and other things that we know are not true and debunked," she said. "We're all going to be in solidarity together. And let's be in solidarity to make sure that we're not letting the shop be a place where misinformation spreads."

Mike Brown, a barber and certified community health worker, offered another interesting perspective on how to dispel COVID-19 misinformation. He said some Black brothers and sisters are at the "hell no" wall when it comes to taking a COVID-19 vaccine. But he said

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Mailing Address

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Baltimore, MD 21218

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

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CIA Mission Possible

Classroom Transformation offers Baltimore Teachers \$25K in New Technology

By Stacy M. Brown

Imagine the incredible experience a teacher could provide to students with virtual reality headsets, digital microscopes, robotics equipment, and \$25,000 in new technology.

“It is a dream come true,” said Jennifer Tyrell, senior project manager for Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE), which is managing CIA Mission Possible-Classroom Transformation for K-12 students.

ORISE is a U.S. Department of Energy asset dedicated to enabling critical scientific, research, and health initiatives of the department and its laboratory system by providing world-class expertise in STEM workforce development, scientific and technical reviews, and the evaluation of radiation exposure environmental contamination.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is the sponsor of the new program. Teachers in Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Richmond, Virginia, can win \$25,000 to upgrade the technology in their classrooms.

The CIA Mission Possible-Classroom Transformation competition seeks to improve Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) education in public schools. The competition will award one STEAM teacher each in those cities with \$25,000 in new equipment to update their classrooms with the latest technology. Runners-up in each city will receive \$5,000 in new equipment.

“Most children today are digital natives, seemingly born with smartphones or tablets in hand,” Terrell



Courtesy Photo: Orise

continued. “Still, some schools do not have the budgets to keep pace with changing technology. Having \$25,000 worth of interactive technology would give a boost to any student trying to learn STEAM in today’s world.”

Interested teachers need to act fast. The deadline to apply is Friday, July 9, 2021. Terrell said winners would be notified by the end of July, and the technology will be purchased and installed in their classrooms for the start of the 2021-2022 school year.

To be eligible for the competition, teachers must:

- Teach a STEAM subject for 3rd through 10th grade.

- Work for a public school in Baltimore, Md., Washington, D.C., or Richmond, Va.

- Submit a three-to-four-minute video creatively illustrating the need and possible uses of technology in their classroom.

- Additional information, including the application and video submission portal, can be found here: <https://orise.orau.gov/cia-mission-possible/>.

The deadline to apply is Friday, July 9, 2021.

A panel of educators and ORISE staff will determine the winning classroom for each city. Entries will be judged on

how well they:

- Demonstrate or explain the need for technology.
- Demonstrate or explain the possible use of technology.
- Demonstrate overall creativity in the entry.
- Provide an explanation of the teaching philosophy and/or approach that will be used to expand the STEAM learning experience and encourage students to pursue careers in STEAM fields.

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Website Helps Families Locate Free Summer Meals and Tutoring for Children

By Stacy M. Brown

As schools close for the summer, Maryland officials say they recognize that many children and families face difficult financial times and may be wondering where they can turn for free healthy meal options to keep their kids nourished throughout the summer months.

According to the Center for American Progress, the urgency to act in Maryland is high, given that 10 percent of households are food insecure.

Officials say families can turn to 211 Maryland—the state’s central connector to health and human services—to find summer foods sites in their area as many school districts are offering free breakfast and lunch meals for children. The free program is an extension of the services offered during the school year.

“Families can begin receiving free meals now at one of the participating sites, which can be found on the Maryland Meals Site,” stated Quinton Askew, president, and CEO of 211 Maryland.

Locations of the free meals site can be found at www.211md.org. Individuals can type in their address or zip codes to find the nearest place.

“Summer meal sites can change every year, so it’s best to check the database

No One Should Go Hungry.

If you struggle with basic needs like food, clothing and shelter, call 2-1-1 for help.




Courtesy Photo

each year for the latest information,” Askew remarked. “Or, check with your local school district to find the organizations providing free summer meals for children.”

In addition to free meals, 211md.org features information and resources for

families who might need summer programs for their children, including: summer camps and tutoring programs, Askew noted.

“There are several organizations throughout the state, including in Baltimore City, that offer free educational

tutoring services for children,” he said. “Whether they need to keep up with reading, writing, and math, or need extra assistance because of the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has caused.”

Individuals can also search the 211 Maryland resource database of service providers to identify a tutoring program in specific areas quickly.

“Summer food programs are critical to families and children who need to extend their school’s free meal program through the summer months,” Askew asserted.

“There are families who may have experienced a trigger moment during the pandemic, like the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, or challenges with making ends meet day-to-day.

“The free Summer Food Service Program can help alleviate the stress associated with feeding your family and ensuring they continue to have access to nutritious meals.”

For more information, visit www.211md.org.

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⁴Based on customer experience reviews shared online at www.thehartford.com/aarp as of February 2021.

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Morgan State introduces ‘Morgan Completes You,’ a new degree-attainment initiative

MSU's Board of Regents approves the addition of 18 new interdisciplinary degree programs, a proactive effort to bridge graduation gap for nearly 37 million Americans with "some college" experience and "no degree"

Baltimore— By way of unanimous vote at the Morgan State University Board of Regents' spring quarterly meeting, Board members approved a proposal for the establishment of a novel degree-completion program and academic initiative branded “Morgan Completes You” (MCY).

Focused exclusively on adult learners with previously earned college course credits, MCY seeks to bridge the graduation gap for some 37 million Americans who have “stopped out” of college before receiving their degrees.

The MCY initiative will provide an obtainable pathway to degree attainment and potential career advancement for many of these individuals. MCY is designed to offer greater flexibility, opportunity and accessibility for non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students with “some-college-no degree” (SCND), by coupling their accumulated course work and work experience with a customized academic regimen leading to an interdisciplinary degree in the area of their career aspiration.

As a part of this effort, pending approval from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), Morgan will be adding 18 new and unique interdisciplinary degrees to its current offering of academic programs forming the foundation of the MCY program. The academic programs will be available at the undergraduate and graduate level, including eight bachelors, five master's, and five doctoral programs.

“Ensuring the doors of higher education are opened as wide as possible to as many as possible is more than a commitment, it is the bedrock of who we are as an institution and Morgan Completes You presents a navigable path to degree completion for so many adult learners who are negotiating real life in the real world,” said David K.



The “Morgan Completes You” initiative will provide an obtainable pathway to degree attainment and potential career advancement for many individuals who have “stopped out” of college before receiving their degrees. The program is designed to offer greater flexibility, opportunity and accessibility for non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students with some college experience and no degree.

Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

Wilson, president of Morgan. “With these new interdisciplinary degree programs, specialized and adapted to meet the unique needs of today’s modern adult learner, Morgan reaffirms its commitment as a leader in developing unique and innovative programs that produce highly proficient graduates ready to contribute within the modern, global workforce.”

According to the Lumina Foundation, the growing population of “stop outs”— people with “some college, no degree”— has reached nearly 37 million people in the U.S., an increase of 22 percent over the past five years. Within this segment, 10 percent or approximately 3.5 million are considered “potential completers” as they carry the equivalent of at least two years’ worth of full-time college enrollment during the past decade and have a high potential to earn a credential if they re-enroll.

The overwhelming data supports that the number of potential degree earners who, if provided with an attainable path forward, would return to college and

obtain a degree as a means to increase marketability, boost earning potential, improve standard-of-living and solidify job security. Re-enrollment and reengagement of students with SCND and potential completers are vital to sustaining a 21st century talent pipeline for local, national and global workforce opportunities and competitiveness.

In today’s market, employers want graduates grounded in theory, experienced and equipped with problem-solving skills. The proposed academic degree programs that will be introduced under the MCY program are designed to produce graduates who are knowledgeable and committed to service and leadership. The proposed program curriculum, is also developed to link students’ employment experiences with past academic preparation and create a customized course trajectory that marries with their professional aspirations to maximize post-degree career achievement for graduates.

An advertisement for a 1-minute quiz about prediabetes risk. The background is a green field with a yellow and white wavy border at the bottom. On the left, there is a photo of an older woman with short white hair and a young girl with dark hair, both smiling and laughing together. The text is in white and red. At the bottom left is the Maryland Department of Health logo, which features a stylized 'M' with a cross and a plus sign, and the text 'Maryland DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'.

Take 1 minute to know your risk for prediabetes.

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Take a 1-minute quiz.
Know Your Risk for Prediabetes

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Ravens Marlon Humphrey set to be next team leader

By Tyler Hamilton

Defense has always been the primary team identity for the Baltimore Ravens. This is a franchise that started with middle linebacker Ray Lewis as one of the team captains in their early years after moving from Cleveland and changing their name from the Browns to the Ravens.

Lewis is widely considered as the greatest Ravens' player of all time. But others such as Terrell Suggs, Ed Reed and Haloti Ngata have made a huge impact as well. The 2021 Ravens carry on the defense first mindset and have a new leader emerging as a presence on the team.

Fifth-year cornerback Marlon Humphrey signed a five-year, \$97 million contract extension with the Ravens last year. Humphrey continued his reign as the top corner for the Ravens as he took on the opposing team's top wide receiver on a weekly basis.

Humphrey embraces the opportunity to be one of the current Ravens' leaders. However, he wouldn't go as far as to place himself on the mantle with greats like Lewis and Reed.

"Any time you're compared to the Ray Lewis' and the Ed Reed's, it's definitely always an honor. I know those guys got some 'Defensive Player of the Year'



Last year, cornerback Marlon Humphrey signed a five-year, \$97 million contract extension with the Ravens. He is looking to become more of a vocal leader for the whole defense this year.

Photo Credit: BaltimoreRavens.com

[awards], so I probably need to get one of those in order to really try to be one of those cornerstone pieces. But definitely, it's always an honor to be compared to those guys. This organization is defense, defense, defense, and with those defenses, you've got a lot of guys that you think of when you think of those great defenses," Humphrey said after the Ravens final minicamp practice this week.

Even though he is only turning 25-years-old next month, Humphrey is one of the veteran players in the defensive backs room. He is spending a lot of time with defensive backs coach Chris Hewitt developing his game and getting more comfortable in the defense. Hard work and understanding of what he is being asked to do is cultivating more confidence in himself.

Humphrey is however looking to

become more of a vocal leader for the whole defense this year. The confidence and comfort that he is developing will only help him evolve into the role he is ready to take on.

"I've definitely gotten more comfortable here, so that's just allowed me to be more myself," Humphrey said during the Ravens final minicamp practice. "The biggest thing [is], when I come out today, I'm like, 'Man, I've got to get myself going today,' and the way I do that is to be vocal. And hopefully, a lot of times, it's kind of a ripple effect; you're yelling, you're getting going—trying to get going—and you don't know what that does for the next man. So, that's the biggest thing.

"It's just kind of the way you want to move. You want to be loud, you want to get going, you want to make sure everybody knows everybody. And so, that's been the biggest thing for me. Just being comfortable, I've been able to be more vocal and knowing the defense and different things, so it kind of all went hand in hand."

As the Ravens break for the offseason, Humphrey set his goal to improve technique wise so he can continue to ascend as a player. Humphrey hopes the ascension will help the Ravens win their third championship. Then maybe he can be considered a Ravens great like the defensive players that came before him.

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BGE customers need to stay vigilant against new utility scammer activities

Baltimore— As Maryland residents continue to be economically challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, BGE reminds customers to be on alert for potential scams targeting utility customers. While scams occur all year long, the company has seen an increase in reports of scammers attempting to use the current health crisis to trick our customers.

Since January, BGE has received over 3,200 scam complaints with customers reportedly losing close to \$59,000 to utility scammers and imposters. This is a dramatic increase compared to the same time last year when the company received 2,600 scam complaints and customers reported losing over \$38,000 to utility scammers. Unfortunately, this increase comes at a time when more customers are vulnerable to falling for these scams. Our contact center has received 258,143 calls related to billing and collections matters since January, a 17.3 percent increase in call volume compared to the same period a year ago.

“It is extremely important that our customers stay vigilant because these scammers are constantly changing their tactics,” said Chima Chijioke, vice president of customer operations for BGE. “It is so disappointing that these scammers continue to use this time of financial uncertainty to try and deceive our customers. We also want to remind customers that disconnection is a last resort, and we want to help anyone who may be behind in their utility bill. Any customer who is experiencing a hardship or difficulty paying their bill should call BGE immediately at 1-800-685-0123.”

Currently, the most prevalent scam calls are robo-calls asking customers to pay immediately to avoid



Since January this year, BGE has received over 3,200 scam complaints with customers reportedly losing close to \$59,000 to utility scammers and imposters and, while scams occur all year long, the company has seen an increase in reports of scammers attempting to use the current health crisis to trick our customers.

Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

disconnection. Also, a number of customers have reported receiving text messages with payment demands that are followed by a QR code to be used for payment at a cryptocurrency machine. As a reminder, BGE will never send a single notification to a customer within one hour of a service interruption and will never ask customers to make payments with a pre-paid debit card, gift card, or any form of cryptocurrency.

BGE also continues to see calls where scammers claim, “Your meter needs to be switched out immediately or your power will be turned off.” These claims are followed by a demand for immediate payment that includes Cashapp, Bitcoin, Zelle or Green Dot payment methods. Also, some scammers are continuing to

use caller ID “spoofing” to replicate BGE and Exelon phone numbers. Often in these cases, a recorded message that customers typically hear has been duplicated by scammers, so when customers call the number provided by the scammer, it sounds like an actual business—but it is not.

Customers can easily check their current bill information online at BGE My Account, by downloading BGE’s Mobile App, or by calling 1-833-209-5245 to check on their account balance. Additionally, BGE is working with customers who may be currently in arrears with their utility bill. Those customers should contact the company immediately at 800-685-0123.

Here are some tips and red flags that

customers should look out for to prevent them from becoming victims of utility scammers.

Five Quick Tips:

*BGE will never ask a customer with a past due balance to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection.

*Customers will never receive a single phone call claiming they have one hour before they are disconnected unless they pay immediately. If a customer has a past due balance, they will receive multiple notifications requesting payment.

*BGE will never ask customers for information BGE already has, including choice ID numbers, social security numbers or any other personal information.

*BGE will not call customers to offer a discount or rebate.

Trust your instincts. If a call does not seem like it is from BGE, customers should hang up and call BGE immediately at 1-800-685-0123.

Always Remember:

*Never provide your social security number or personal information to anyone initiating contact with you claiming to be a utility representative or requesting that you send money to another person or entity other than your local utility provider.

*Always ask to see a company photo ID before allowing any utility worker into your home or business.

*Do not give payment in any form - cash, check, or credit - to anyone coming to your door without calling BGE first at 1-800-685-0123.

Any customer who believes he or she has been a target of a scam should contact local police and BGE immediately at 800-685-0123 to report the situation.

Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation and Education

Narconon reminds families that abuse of heroin and opioid drugs has become a national health crisis. Learn to recognize the signs of heroin abuse and get your loved ones help if they are at risk. Visit www.narcononnewliferetreat.org/blog/naloxone-availability.html to learn about the overdose reversing drug known as naloxone and find out its availability in your state. Narconon can help you take steps to overcome addiction in your family. Call 1- 800-431-1754 today for free screenings or referrals.

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By partnering with organizations here in Greater Maryland, we're continuing to align our resources to help drive sustainable progress locally. Our investments and partnerships will help address critical issues and long-term gaps including:

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- *expanding affordable housing options for more people*
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