

The Annapolis Times

Vol. 29 No. 46 September 17 - 23 2021

A Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore Publication

Jacqui Cummings Leads 25th Street's Black Wall Street of Baltimore Business Walk, Sept. 25



Local entrepreneur Jacqui Cummings houses 29 Black-owned businesses in her properties on West 25th Street. Pictured are the owners of eleven of those businesses: Calm Body Daily; ArtXAlea; Dear Body; Princess Akeema Holistic Health Care; 25th Street Tag & Title; 1st Priority Cleaning; Baiser D Amour; Hair Personality's; Huey Brand; Republic of Great Men; and Blush Pro Beauty. Cummings (front row, third from right) is the owner of Executive Suites at Notre Maison and the founder of her nonprofit, Notre Maison Connects, designed to help 18 to 21-year-olds successfully transition into adulthood. (See article on page 9) Courtesy Photo

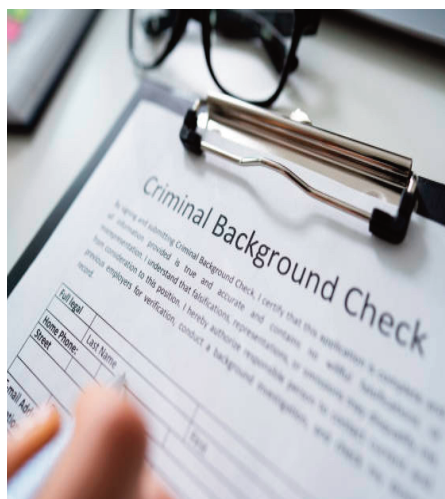
Ways to Expunge a Criminal Record to Pave the Way to Employment

By Christopher Sweeney

Question: “I lost my job during the pandemic and I’m trying to find work. But I keep getting turned away due to my criminal record. What are my options for clearing my record?”

Answer: If you have ever been arrested in Maryland, no matter how long ago, or how minor the offense, there is a good chance that you have a criminal record. And if you have ever applied for a job with a criminal record, you know how difficult and embarrassing the process can be. Being forced to answer for something you may have done years ago, even a crime you were never convicted of, is the last thing you want to do during a job interview. Thankfully, the procedure for expunging criminal records in Maryland is relatively simple.

Any arrest that results in criminal charges creates a public record in Maryland that can be easily accessed by anyone. That record is permanent even if the person charged was never convicted of a crime. Dropped charges (often called “nol pros,” short for the Latin phrase



As people continue to lose their jobs due to the pandemic, now is the time to assess your situation and seek assistance with clearing your criminal record. It could be the difference between gaining or losing the job you want.

Photo: Getty Images/iStock Photo.

nolle prosequi), dismissed charges, and acquittals are quite common in the criminal justice system. Other outcomes aside

from a conviction or guilty finding are placement on the stet docket (an indefinite postponement of your charges) or a probation before judgment (commonly offered in exchange for a guilty plea). If all the charges in a case result in one of these outcomes, the case is likely eligible for expungement.

Some convictions are eligible for expungement as well. Many misdemeanors such as theft, drug possession, or trespassing, and even some felonies like burglary, can be expunged under certain conditions. Expunging convictions can get complicated quickly because eligibility is dependent on a number of factors such as sentence length, applicable waiting periods, and the other convictions on your record. It would be in your best interest to consult an attorney if you want to expunge convictions.

Expungement is the best tool for minimizing your criminal record. An expunged case is completely hidden from public view and essentially treated as if it never happened. You may legally deny the existence of the case on a job application, and an employer who discovers the case may not take action against you for not disclosing it. Note that just this summer, a new law went into effect that hides dropped, dismissed, and not guilty cases from Maryland Judiciary Case Search, the main website for finding public court records. This is a major benefit for those hoping to minimize their record. But these cases are only hidden from the site, not expunged, and can be found through fingerprint checks or court record requests.

Other options exist for getting rid of criminal records. Shielding is a process similar to expungement, which hides certain convictions from public view. Convictions for a limited number of crimes

can be shielded. Those crimes are all misdemeanors and include disorderly conduct, failure to obey a reasonable lawful order, malicious destruction of property, and driving without a license, among others. Shielding, like expunging convictions, is relatively simply, but can get complicated quickly if you have multiple convictions. Consult an attorney to get the best advice on how to shield your record. Shielding permanently hides any record of the case from the public, but it can be accessed on special request by certain types of employers such as schools, hospitals, or law enforcement.

Some people may have found employment despite their criminal record, and never given it a second thought. But there is no way to predict what your next job will be, and plenty of employers will deny someone with a criminal record, no matter who old or how minor. As people continue to lose their jobs due to the pandemic, now is the time to assess your situation and seek assistance with clearing your record. It could be the difference between gaining or losing the job you want.

Christopher Sweeney is a staff attorney at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service. He manages the Workforce Development Project, a partnership with job training programs in Baltimore City that removes barriers to employment for jobseekers returning from incarceration or from otherwise disadvantaged communities.

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The Baltimore Times

(USPS 5840) is published every Friday by *The Baltimore Times*, 2530 N. Charles Street, Suite 201, Baltimore, MD 21218. Subscriptions by mail \$60 per year. Standard bulk postage paid at Baltimore, MD 21233.

Postmaster send address changes to:
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Guest Editorials/Commentary

New Tower Targets Old Silos

Alison G. Brown, MPH, BSN, President, University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus

The “silo” metaphor is one of the most pervasive in health care. The parallels to vertical structures standing in isolation from one another are well-documented. Unfortunately, so are the many consequences to health and patient care – particularly for those managing multiple physical and mental health challenges.

If you, or a loved one, are among the roughly 30 percent of Marylanders who has been diagnosed with more than one, often-related health condition like diabetes, lung, heart or kidney disease, or sleep disorders, chances are you are bearing the burden of navigating a complicated health care system on your own. You know how frustrating it is to juggle appointments with doctors and other health care providers in different locations, sometimes miles or cities apart. In this outdated model, the lines of communication between clinicians are limited, and patients’ needs are addressed episodically rather than holistically.

So, the question, of course, is, “How do we make a shift to better address today’s reality for the growing number of people faced with multiple health challenges?” While the answer is complex, the solution is clear: create a hub of connected care, place the patient at the center and partner with each person achieve their best health. Sounds simple. But like any traditional structure, health care models have strong customs and culture behind them. A rhythm and comfort that makes bucking the status quo difficult. Too often, excellent clinicians do exactly the right things to treat the individual problems they were trained to treat, but they are a single module in a disconnected model that fails to serve a person’s collective needs.

But, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, we need to shed the old ways of doing business to meet the challenges of our times. For our doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals at the University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus, this is clearly the right time to come together to make collaborative, connected care accessible for all.

Today, we are celebrating the opening of a new 10-story outpatient tower designed to allow teams of leading academic physicians, nurse practitioners, therapists, social workers, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to join forces under one roof, streamlining the experience for patients. With this integrated approach linking all the experts involved in a patient’s care – from diagnosis, to a tailored treatment plan, to a host of wrap-around services and support – the improvements to health outcomes and patient experience can be dramatic.

Team-based academic medicine should not be reserved for only those people who can afford to assemble their own medical team. That’s why we never paused in our commitment to completing the outpatient tower, even during a pandemic. In fact, the last 18 months have underscored the growing need for more integrated health care to address the serious impacts of what the world now knows as “underlying conditions” and stark disparities.

There is a better way. Today, UMMC Midtown is charting a new course in health care – one that promises to improve the quality of health care we provide to the communities we serve, here in Baltimore City and from across the region, particularly the most vulnerable, at-risk people struggling with multiple, complex health issues. People want more efficient, effective and respectful care that will enable them to live their best lives – and keep them out of the hospital. We feel they deserve no less.



Open Letter

Dear Baltimore,

What can Baltimore do to change lives with \$641 million? That’s what I am asking as the city prepares to receive this exceptional investment from the federal government.

My main concern — outside of robust community engagement and a public accounting of the data and expenditures — is using the Council’s oversight to make sure this money from the American Rescue Plan is invested rather than simply being spent.

On the other side of this pandemic, we should be able to show our residents that this relief aid was a game-changer for our city. It is in a crisis when our values are tested the most. And in this crisis, we get to choose whether we will be guided by the data, driven by equity and propelled to put aside conventional solutions.

At Monday’s Council meeting, I will introduce legislation with support from a majority of my colleagues to call for quarterly oversight hearings, as well as monthly reports showing data analysis, equity assessments and spending statements. In the interest of transparency and accountability, I am also calling for annual reports that include key metrics to show whether the investment is effectively addressing Baltimore’s inequities and guarantee the community is involved in decision-making.

With this level of investment over such a short period of time, we can truly undo some of the deliberate damage in our city created by longstanding structural inequity. Let’s make it happen!

Baltimore, I love you.

In service,

Nick J. Mosby

Baltimore City Council President

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Drug price “negotiations” are a danger to America’s seniors

By Saul Anuzis

Democrats just passed a budget plan that would give federal bureaucrats the ability to “negotiate” drug prices directly with manufacturers.

To the uninitiated, that sounds attractive. After all, who wouldn’t want to pay less for medicines?

But in reality, the negotiations aren’t going to lead to lower prices at the pharmacy. They’re going to instead mean less access to lifesaving medicines today and fewer new medicines tomorrow.

The word “negotiation” is a euphemism, of course. When Big Government bigfoots its way into a market to tell a private business what it can charge for its products, that’s a price control.

The lawmakers touting negotiations hope to achieve their goal by repealing the “noninterference” clause that’s embedded in the law governing



Medicare’s drug benefit. This language bars the Secretary of Health and Human Services from interfering in the private price negotiations for Medicare Part D plans. The rule has served America well, keeping government at bay for the 18 years (and counting) of Part D’s existence.

“the Secretary would be unable to negotiate prices across the broad range of covered Part D drugs that are more favorable than those [already] obtained” absent the ability to put “pressure on drug manufacturers.”

Indeed, the noninterference clause has remained a key component of Medicare

Will those restrictions be through a national “formulary” that only covers older, less expensive medicines? Or through the philosophically toxic device of QALYs — quality-adjusted life-years — by which younger, healthier patients are deemed more worthy of treatment than older, sicker ones?

The strongest argument against drug-price controls is the asphyxiating effect the policy would have on innovation. Companies must have a chance of a return on investment. Reduced revenues that result from reduced prices will mean greatly reduced investment into new treatments and cures.

These tradeoffs are the dirty secret of “negotiations.”

Another dirty secret is, of course, that these “negotiations” would be a scam. The \$500 billion “savings” that the Democrats claim will result from negotiation will be used to pay for billions in spending on the Green New Deal and other initiatives entirely unrelated to the medical needs of our seniors.

The real debate isn’t between those who are for or against “negotiation.” It’s one between those who would protect a law that safeguards access and choice for seniors and those with disabilities, versus those who would put it all at risk for cheap political points.

Saul Anuzis is President of 60 Plus, the American Association of Senior Citizens. This piece originally ran in InsideSources.

The strongest argument against drug-price controls is the asphyxiating effect the policy would have on innovation. Companies must have a chance of a return on investment

Part D plans are currently administered by private insurers that already extract steep discounts and rebates from drug manufacturers.

Government negotiators are unlikely to fare as well — unless they restrict access to medicines. As the Congressional Budget Office has noted,

because lawmakers have recognized that the tradeoffs are too high. Negotiations would only work if patients’ access to drugs is diminished. Prices will only be driven lower if the provision of new medicines is restricted. Certain drugs just won’t be available to seniors any longer.

The Baltimore Times

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Ravens Ty'Son Williams makes most of opportunity

The Baltimore Ravens have been forced to take a next man up to the next man approach at running back after injuries have ravaged their group. First second-year back J.K. Dobbins suffered a torn ACL during the preseason. Then Gus Edwards fell victim to the same injury during practice leading up to the season opener. Fellow running back Justice Hill tore his Achilles around the same time.

As a result, 2020 undrafted free agent running back Ty'Son Williams out of BYU has been thrust into a starting role in the Ravens backfield. Williams also played at North Carolina and South Carolina in addition to BYU before ending up as a practice squad running back last year with Baltimore.

Williams got his first start last Sunday against the Las Vegas Raiders and delivered a nine-carry, 65-yard performance. Williams found the end zone on a 35-yard run that was the Ravens' first touchdown of the season. "The offensive line created a huge



Ravens Ty'Son Williams
Photo: Getty Images

hole, so I just did my part of hitting it, made a couple guys miss and took it the house," Williams said of his touchdown run. Williams also caught three passes from

Lamar Jackson for 29 yards. His performance showed that he's capable of being called upon to handle the load for the Ravens.

Baltimore also signed veteran backs Le'Veon Bell and Latavious Murray before heading to Las Vegas to play the Raiders. Murray carried the ball 10 times but only picked up 28 yards. Like Williams, Murray found the the zone.

Still, Ravens coach John Harbaugh feels good about his new starting running back.

"He jumped out right away last year in the practices. You guys saw him in the public scrimmage we had last year," Harbaugh said. "Really, all throughout the year, he just got better and better. He was practicing every day, and he developed. So, what he is now is what he's worked to become, and now he goes from here. We'll see what he does. I think he's going to do really well."

Williams is looking towards the next game despite the success.

"It felt good," Williams said. "We played well, but we still have a few things to clean up. I'm just ready to get back to work and hopefully get this first win coming up."

MDH launches grassroots community canvassing program to engage unvaccinated Marylanders

\$3 million community-based grant program funds door-to-door outreach to encourage COVID-19 vaccinations, testing and to provide health education in at-risk neighborhoods

Baltimore— The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) announced the launch of the Community COVID-19 Vaccination Project, a community-based, door-to-door canvassing effort to directly engage Marylanders living in areas with low vaccination rates. Canvassing will begin in mid-September and will continue through June 2022.

"We have made tremendous progress in vaccinating Marylanders against COVID-19, yet we understand that some unvaccinated residents still need more information," said MDH Secretary Dennis R. Schrader. "By going door-to-

door and sharing information, we can help more Marylanders make an informed decision about getting vaccinated as we continue our efforts to ensure there is no arm left behind."

Funded through a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cooperative agreement, the Community COVID-19 Vaccination Project supports broad-based vaccine distribution to ensure greater vaccine equity and access to those disproportionately affected by COVID-19. MDH's Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (MHHD) has awarded \$2 million to 20 community-based organizations to provide hard-to-reach Marylanders with enhanced access to vaccines, testing and health education resources.

Canvassers will conduct door-to-door visits in areas identified through ZIP code analysis as having low vaccination

uptake and will provide information on local vaccination locations and testing. MDH conducted training with participating community organizations, including lessons on COVID-related medical terminology and translation, cultural competency and personal safety.

"We're urging everyone in these most vulnerable communities to do their part to stop the spread of COVID-19 by getting vaccinated," said MHHD Deputy Director Dr. Mark Martin. "These door-

to-door efforts are important in generating awareness, addressing vaccine hesitancy through education and saving lives."

For more information about COVID-19 in Maryland visit covidLINK.maryland.gov.

For the most recent Maryland COVID-19 data, visit coronavirus.maryland.gov.

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SOLSIS CEO Joyce “JoJo” Arias

Helping Women of Color “Make-Up” More of the Cosmetics Marketplace

By Ursula V. Battle

Reflecting on her childhood, Joyce “JoJo” Arias recalled her love for make-up. “From a very young age, I’ve always been obsessed with makeup,” said Arias. “My biggest inspiration was my mom, and I was always in her makeup. We would try on every single color. Fast forwarding to after I graduated from college and earning my Master’s degree, I really, really wanted to create my own business. My friends and I would go out, and they were always asking me about makeup. I was the go-to person for make-up.”

She added, “They wanted to know things like what they should buy and encouraged me to start my own business. I particularly liked lipstick, thought about it, and decided I needed to learn how to make make-up. I went into a rabbit hole and did my research. Once I researched the industry and our buying power, it really fueled me.”

Arias is the is the C.E.O and founder of SOLSIS Beauty. The company sells Vegan & cruelty free cosmetics aimed at empowering women by making them feel more physically attractive while building their confidence and overall sense of well-being through make-up and cosmetics.

“Doing the research angered me because in a sense, I realized that Hispanic, Latino, and African American women hold so much purchasing power in the beauty and cosmetics industry,” said Arias. “It was really upsetting realizing there were not a lot of us who were owners in this industry. So, I made it a point to start a beauty line focusing on the things I wanted to see represented in the beauty industry.”

She added, “I posted my lipstick on social media, and have a big presence there. I asked people would they buy my lipstick. They said, ‘yes.’ I got so much feedback. That’s how I started.”

SOLSIS products include lipstick; matte liquid lipstick; lip gloss; highlighter; lip liner; lipstick kits; and highlighter sets. The company is growing a



Joyce “JoJo” Arias is the C.E.O and Founder of SOLSIS Beauty.

Courtesy Photos

Baltimore-based, Latinx-owned beauty brand that started with their signature red shade called “Mamacita.”

“SOLSIS is basically like a Soul Sister, and I combined the two,” said Arias, whose parents are from El Salvador. I’m a firm believer in connecting community.”

The 30-year-old entrepreneur said the company also gives back to underserved communities through its support of non-profits and disaster aid.

“The reaction to our products has been great,” she said. “Honestly, I always tell people I would be happy if two people bought my products. I’m an over-achiever, but at the same time a very realistic person. People tell their friends about the products, and they tell their friends. A lot of our business has come through word of mouth.”

Arias talked about the company offering Vegan & cruelty free cosmetics.

“I am big on helping our earth in any and every way,” she said. “I’m very conscientious of that along with the products we use, especially when it comes to people with sensitive skin. It’s always interesting to buy something and read the ingredients and find out there are things in them you didn’t know. I wanted our ingredients to be eco-



SOLSIS accessories include jewelry pieces from around the world.

friendly, and to make people aware that there are alternatives to products with animal-derived products or ingredients.”

She added, “That’s why I really wanted to have this type of beauty brand. It’s all about being kinder to ourselves, to our skin, and to the earth.”

SOLSIS also sells handmade accessories.

“The jewelry is under the SOLSIS umbrella,” said Arias. “I carry collections from different parts of the world. In two weeks, I will be offering a collection curated from my family’s country of El Salvador. I also have pieces from Ghana. My best friend lived there. A percentage of the proceeds always goes back to that community. It goes back to the concept of empowering people and letting them know their money and life goes a long way, and to be more conscious of the brands they buy and supporting causes that are important to them.”

Arias was raised in Montgomery County and moved to Baltimore for college, where she has remained. She is also a lifestyle blogger and the co-host of *Talk that Talk Uncensored*, a podcast aimed to provide a safe space for listeners that want to gain new perspectives on life and culture. The business owner shared this advice for aspiring entrepre-



The Mamacita Lip Kit.

neurs who are looking to “make-up” their minds about starting their own ventures.

“Don’t let perfection hold you back,” she said. “What changed for me was basically going from idea to actually making it happen. I had to keep reminding myself it’s progress over perfection. Work hard and keep moving forward. Just go for it.”

To purchase products or for more information about SOLSIS Beauty visit www.solsisbeauty.com/.

Jacqui Cummings Leads 25th Street's Black Wall Street of Baltimore Business Walk, Sept. 25

By Doni Glover

Jacqui Cummings, a serial entrepreneur who set up shop on W. 25th Street 19 years ago, is very serious about Black business. Within her Charles Village properties are housed some 29 Black-owned businesses. As a matter of fact, one could call her neck of the woods "Baltimore's Black Wall Street."

On that note, Cummings and her partners have scheduled their 3rd annual event celebrating these businesses. "The Black Wall Street of Baltimore Business Walk" is scheduled for Saturday, September 25, 2021 from 12 noon to 7 pm on 25th Street in between Howard and St. Paul.

Not only a business owner, Cummings also has a heart for young people and consequently formed her own non-profit, Notre Maison Connects, to better serve them. The purpose is to work with youth 18-21 in their "Greater Youth Initiative".

Cummings said, "We teach financial literacy, computer literacy, resume writing, career readiness and other critical skills to empower and better prepare youth for employment."

She added, "We pay for drivers' education and CPR/ First Aid Certification. We take youth fishing, hiking and out of their communities. We also take them with us to revive childcare centers abroad. We completed two centers in St. Thomas, VI before COVID."

In an effort to raise funds to support the Greater Youth Initiative, Notre Maison Connects created the Charles Village Business Walk (CVBW) in 2019 as an annual fundraising event. The idea was to have a "Big Sidewalk Sale" and invite other business owners to sell products in this rapidly growing business community.

Under the CVBW title, the misconception was that only businesses in Charles Village were able to participate and vend at the events, which was not true.



**Jacqui Cummings, founder/CEO
,Notre Maison Connects, Inc**

"We worked hard to make it clear that all businesses were welcomed and invited to participate in the events," said Cummings.

For their second annual event, 20 more business owners participated.

Ultimately, Cummings said, "We decided to host the event biannually and change the name in 2021 to The Black Wall Street of Baltimore Business Walk hosting a variety of businesses that provide various products and services."

Touched by the story of the Tulsa Race Massacre in 1921, Cummings wants to turn into inspiration.

"What happened in the Greenwood District of Tulsa, also known as one of the three Black Wall Streets, was absolutely horrific. Even though it was not the first or last of such brutal crimes against our people and their businesses, it had become the symbol of strength for many Black-owned businesses around the world. I am inspired and encouraged by our ancestors' audacity to be great!"

The two other Black Wall Streets are in Durham, North Carolina and Richmond, Virginia's Jackson Ward Historic District.

"Remembering Tulsa's legacy is all about preserving the magnificent history of the rise of our great people who, yet again, had been cast down, deprived and thought hopeless. It's a reminder that we can rise from the ashes even when they

burn us down to the ground. We want business owners, attendees, passerbys, dreamers, children and everyone to know that we will continue to rise. We need to acknowledge and support Black-owned businesses. At the same time, Black-owned businesses need to provide quality services, products and customer service. We have everything we need in our community to be great, and if not, we need to create it to keep our spending power in our community."

While the Black dollar once circulated multiple times before leaving the community, today it leaves the community almost immediately.

"We are strong, resilient and growing! We want people to walk away more empowered and informed - taking a bit of history with them while contributing to history in the making," said Cummings.

She added, "Our area is already riddled with small, one-way streets. The main and largest street that connects the East and the West is 25th Street. Hence, we consider 25th Street the Black Wall Street of Baltimore and its purpose is to uplift, set examples and to encourage unity in our community. I purchased my first commercial property at 18 W. 25th Street in April 2002. Since then, I have witnessed businesses come and go.

However, within the last few years, there has been a resurgence of Black entrepreneurship in our area. Not only are there more Black-owned businesses, there are also more Blacks acquiring and purchasing properties in our community. There are several Black business owners with multiple properties, including myself. I currently own 4 commercial properties hosting 29 Black-owned businesses on one block. I tell them...they can't leave unless they are buying and I'm willing to assist them along their journey."

**Donald Morton "Doni" Glover, CEO
DMGlobal Marketing & Public Relations, LLC**

Author, *Unapologetically Black: Doni Glover Autobiography* (2015)

6PM

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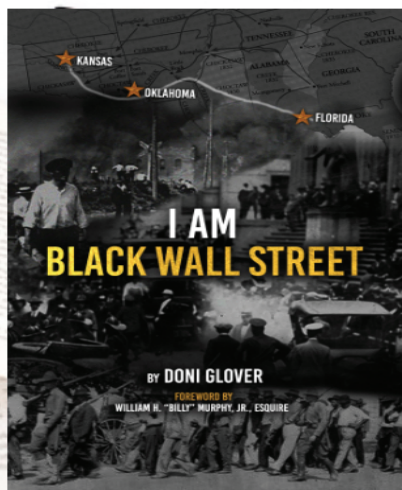
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PNC Foundation Commits \$600,000 to CFUF and Coppin State University

By Stacy M. Brown

Coppin State University Interim Dean Sadie R. Gregory did nothing to mask her enthusiasm about the school's mission to serve the greater Baltimore community. She did not attempt to hide the sheer joy about the \$300,000 commitment made by The PNC Foundation to help Coppin State University's new College of Business's mission of positioning a unique suite of community-facing programs.

"I'm so excited about this," Dr. Gregory exclaimed. "Part of our mission has always been to serve the community, and now we're stepping up. We have an incredible structure under renovation for our new home for the College of Business that includes an Entrepreneurship Center, a Community Financial Center, and a Partners in Education Center."

Dr. Gregory and the Coppin State Community weren't alone in experiencing a boost from The PNC Foundation, which also committed \$300,000 to the Center for Urban Families (CFUF).

The financial commitments are spread over three years. They are a part of the financial institutions' broader pledge to provide more than \$1 billion to help end systemic racism and support African Americans' economic empowerment and low-income communities.

"PNC has been consistent, and to make such a commitment is a recognition of what Baltimore needs," stated Joseph Jones, the founder, president, and CEO of the CFUF. "We are living in unprecedented times that are challenging our collective ability to fight systemic racism against a backdrop of a global pandemic and acute political strife.

"The battle against system racism is being waged on several fronts, including in communities of color that rarely receive significant corporate investment. The Center for Urban Families is honored to be a recipient of a major investment from PNC in support of our efforts to promote social justice and dismantle poverty in West Baltimore."

Over the three years, funding will support CFUF's family stability programs in low-income communities throughout Baltimore, with the primary focus on their education programming.



Sadie R. Gregory, Coppin State University Interim Dean.

Courtesy Photos

STRIVE Baltimore, a four-week job readiness-training program, and Back to Business, a three-day job readiness refresher training, are among the programs benefitting.

The funds also help Baltimore BOOST, a partnership with Baltimore City Community College that provides low-income individuals with targeted training and education and job placement retention support.

Additionally, funds are earmarked for the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project; a three-week training integrated into STRIVE Baltimore to assist non-custodial fathers with increasing and building their fatherhood knowledge and skills.

It further assists the Homebuying Assistance Program that connects participants to homeownership counseling, inclusive of financial education. It provides financial assistance to pay for closing costs and, or down payment assistance.

A new "Partners in Education" program at Coppin State will offer direct services for children in BCPSS classrooms within the West Baltimore community.

Dr. Gregory noted that the college is passionate about addressing gaps beyond K-12 in the entrepreneurship ecosystem and creating and providing access to small business resources that support community innovation in the nontraditional sector.

Specifically, the school supports entrepreneurial activity, which Dr. Gregory



Joseph Jones, founder, president, and CEO, Center for Urban Families.

said offers the best opportunities for underserved communities to change their trajectory for many generations to come.

According to Dr. Gregory, an immediate response to the post-pandemic uncertainty in West Baltimore will offer more opportunities for research required to implement effective evidence-based program models focusing on supporting dis-

tressed communities affected by the coronavirus and their transition to community normalization.

"Our shared pillars: education, entrepreneurship, and economic development will support addressing the wealth gap in West Baltimore," Dr. Gregory stated. "This relationship will strengthen our efforts to deliver entrepreneurship training and financial education to the community. In addition, we see opportunities for student service-learning and evidence-based research, supporting the mission of Coppin State University."

As a Main Street bank, PNC remains dedicated to enriching the lives of all people as officials continue seeking to create a more inclusive economy, said Laura Gamble, PNC regional president for Greater Maryland.

"PNC has a history of investing in our communities and the people who live in these communities to help them become self-sufficient," Gamble stated. "Now, through these two initiatives, we are also going to make a positive impact through employee volunteerism."

A green-themed graphic for the Light of Truth Center, Inc. 22nd Annual Gala. It features a large white triangle in the center. Text includes: "Light of Truth Center, Inc." at the top left; "SAVE THE DATE! JOIN OUR 22ND ANNUAL GALA EVENT!" in the middle; "LIGHT KEEPERS: A VISION OF SERVICE" in large letters below that; "HOSTED BY: ALICIA DAY ON ZOOM" and "REGISTER: bit.ly/LTC22ndGala" at the bottom; and "ENTERTAINMENT! | 50/50 RAFFLE! | FELLOWSHIP! | FUN!" at the very bottom. A circular badge in the top right corner says "FRIDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 7PM".



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By Nikki Abraham

Many that underestimate the importance of having good people in your life may be surprised to learn how great friendships can affect your overall quality of life. Life can be tough but even tougher without a positive support group in your corner. Confidence boosters, emotional support, and stress relievers are just a few benefits of an overall quality friendship.

With age, I began to recognize the importance of having healthy friendships. I've learned the hard way that not all relationships are conducive to your life. In this realm, quality is way more important than quantity. As you evolve in life you begin to attract people that align with who you are in this very moment. If at any point in your life you feel as though you and an old friend don't connect the way you used to, it may be time to make a change. It's completely okay



Nikki Abraham
Nucleus Team Member,
Positively Caviar, Inc.
Courtesy Photo

to learn to love people from a distance if you feel they aren't serving the best version of you.

Accountability is one of the key highlights that I appreciate in my friendship. I have a habit of sharing my ideas with

Friendships: Quality over Quantity

my close group of friends strictly because I know they love to follow up to help me stay on track. Accountability shows up differently in all relationships but recognizing the desires and needs of a friend so that you're able to check in and provide feedback in an empathetic and non-judgmental way is the perfect recipe. True friends help each other reach their goals.

Great friendships can have a significant impact on your life and overall well-being. I've learned from experience that a solid friendship can directly affect your mental health and happiness. When you're around positive people and have healthy relationships feelings of loneliness and depression will dissipate while feelings of belonging and purpose will increase.

Strong relationships are mutually beneficial. You can add value to someone's life by teaching them new things, introducing them to new people, etc. Relationships should be both give and take. Its all about leaving someone better than who they were before you came into

their life and being surrounded by people who motivate you to live a more prosperous life. Always make a conscious effort to have people in your corner who inspire your journey, no matter how different it may be from theirs.

Making new friends is not easy but over time I've learned that this is something you must be intentional about. At a younger age, it may be cool to be popular and surrounded by a large group of friends but as you mature, that mindset quickly fades into the desire to be surrounded by an intimate group of quality people. "You are the sum of your five closest friends," is one of my favorite quotes. Look around your circle and ask yourself, "Do I spend time with substantial people that inspire me to live a bountiful life?"

Quality friends are hard to come by so when you find them don't take it for granted. Always be intentional about your relationships. Continue to pour into those around you and open your heart to accept all the things that a beautiful friendship has to offer.

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³Based on customer experience reviews shared online at www.thehartford.com/aarp as of February 2021.

006131

New Masking Requirement Effective Immediately for All Maryland Public

Maryland State Board of Education and Department of Education gains approval on masking requirement to help keep schools open and safe; School indoor masking requirement aligned with CDC recommendations

BALTIMORE, MD (September 14, 2021) – In support of continuing efforts to keep students and school staff safe and ensure schools remain open for in-person learning during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Maryland State Board of Education, together with the Maryland State Department of Education, today received approval of a statewide masking requirement for all public schools.

Following public testimony on September 14, 2021, the Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR) Committee approved the emergency regulation, which will be in effect for 180 days.

The emergency regulation requires any person inside a public school facility to wear a face covering, with certain exemptions in place. Aligned with all available health guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maryland Department of Health, the new regulation is necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Maryland public schools, prevent school closures, and limit the number of students required to quarantine out of the classroom.

“Our foremost priority as a Board is always the safety of everyone in our school buildings - we take the health and

safety of students and school staff in every part of our State very seriously,” said Board President Clarence C. Crawford. “Circumstances require the need for a universal, statewide approach to masking in schools to keep our school communities safe and give every one of Maryland’s students the opportunity to learn in-person with as few interruptions as possible.”



Photo by Myriam Zilles on Unsplash

“Masking inside schools helps protect our students, teachers and school staff as we continue to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic,” said State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury. “It is critical that all school systems follow this emergency law, and immediately implement face covering requirements as one of several layered public health strategies to keep schools open and safe.”

Currently, nearly all, 22 of 24, local school systems require face coverings inside schools; local systems may establish and implement further masking policies and procedures in addition to the minimum requirements outlined in the emergency regulation. The new regulation will be enforced immediately.

Volunteers Needed at Local Anne Arundel County Public Schools

AACPS is currently recruiting in person Midday Volunteers (unpaid) and Midday Monitors (paid) to oversee elementary aged students during the midday block. The two-hour block of time includes lunch, recess, quiet time and pullout/independent time. Volunteers and Monitors will be assigned to a specific classroom and will remain with the same group of students. They may assist two days per week (Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday) or all four days. Required fingerprint-supported background checks will be provided free of charge. For more information on these opportunities, please contact Shelley Davenport by email at smdavenport@AACPS.org.

Recruiting Adult Literacy and Math Tutors

The Anne Arundel County Literacy Council is currently recruiting volunteers for their free adult tutoring programs. Do you have a passion for reading, writing, math, or ESL and want to make a positive difference in a person's life and our community? The Anne Arundel County Literacy Council is training new volunteers at a tutor training session on Saturday, September 25 from 9 am until 3 pm at in Severna Park. Once trained, you will be matched with a student who can meet at a convenient day and time for you. Tutoring happens at all 16 county libraries and in any public location in Anne Arundel County. Please email Jane Seiss at jane@aacounty.org or call the office at 410-269-4419 for more information.

Volunteers Needed

Anne Arundel County Food Bank

Anne Arundel County Food Bank is recruiting the following volunteer positions:

Hunger Action Month Outreach Volunteers to put up posters around Anne Arundel County and promote Hunger Action Month! Please review the available locations and sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f4da4a62da1f9c34-hunger>. You will be provided with a stack of posters and a tracking sheet to list the businesses you put flyers in. Volunteers are needed today through August 31 for poster distribution.

Drivers and Helpers to operate a commercial vehicle to deliver and pick-up food. This work is critical to combating hunger throughout the county. Volunteer drivers typically help one to two days a week and the Anne Arundel County Food Bank will work around your schedule.

Find out more by contacting Deneta at deneta@aafoodbank.org or calling 410-923-4255. Find more information and the volunteer application here: www.aafoodbank.org/volunteer.

Send your community calendar events to: kreevie@btimes.com

Senator Van Hollen Now Accepting Service Academy Applications for Class of 2026

Washington— U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) announced that his office is now accepting applications from students across Maryland for nominations to the Uniformed Service Academies in the Class of 2026.

All applications and supporting materials must be received electronically by 5 p.m. on September 30, 2021. More information, including the online application, can be found at <https://www.vanhollen.senate.gov/constituent-services/academy-nominations>.

“Attending one of our nation’s renowned service academies is an excellent opportunity for young Marylanders. I hope that students across our state who are interested in serving our nation consider this exciting path,” said Senator Van Hollen.

Senator Van Hollen’s office welcomes applications from all interested candidates and seeks an applicant pool that reflects the diversity of the State of Maryland. The office strongly encourages applications from those with backgrounds and identities underrepresented among officers in the Armed Services. The Senator’s office is working to expand outreach to these applicants through direct engagement with local schools, including information sessions for educators and students.

Qualified applicants will participate in a virtual interview with members of Senator Van Hollen’s Service Academy Advisory Board in November 2021.

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