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Celebrating the Beautiful Messages of Christmas

By Peter Bramble

This week we will take some time to reflect on the rich messages that come with Christmas, messages that everyone, regardless of their religious or non-religious leanings, can and should embrace.

In recent years it has become fashionable to ridicule Christmas. Some, in this modern world, would like to cancel Christmas and its symbols. Some symbols have been viciously attacked. But we need to pause and reflect on the beautiful themes and messages that go with the Christmas season.

What are some of those themes that go with the celebration of Christmas? Among them are the following: peace on earth; goodwill to all men; joy to the world; light shining in the darkness; gift sharing and the incarnation of the God of goodness into a world of chaos and evil. Which of these concepts would our culture benefit from if they were cancelled? **And** which would enhance the culture if they were truly embraced and broadly practiced?

Let's do a brief analysis of each of the Christmas themes listed above.

"Peace on earth," a great theme of Christmas, is needed across the nations of the world more than ever. Wars and conflicts are everywhere as nations, tribes and factions continue to engage in conflicts and war over religion and territory. Would it not be wonderful if humans embraced the theme of peace on earth and set it as a universal goal? We think so.

"Goodwill to all mankind!" When I hear those words, especially when they

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Little Santa Gives Back to Kids in Need



Instead of only thinking of his own Christmas list, 4-year-old Cassidy Carey (front) is providing free toys to kids in need on Dec. 23, 2021 through Cassidy's Christmas Toy Drive. Cassidy lives in Hampton, Va. Money from his clothing business called C.A.S. Official has helped to sponsor various community events. Cassidy's mother, Sharqita Hicks (back), is passing along her legacy of assisting others to Cassidy at a young age. (See article on page 9) Photo: Andrea Blackstone

Being sued by a former landlord for property damages? Important steps you can take

By Phillip Westry

"I lost my job during the pandemic and was evicted. Now, my former landlord is trying to sue me saying I made damages to the property that I didn't do. What do I do?"

The pandemic has been tough on a lot of Marylanders. Many of us suffered a loss in income, got behind on our bills, fell ill to COVID-19, or lost a loved one to the virus. While our federal, state, and local governments worked to provide needed services, many of us have suffered severe economic losses still being felt today. This article addresses the needs of renters who were evicted during the pandemic and are being sued by a former landlord for damage to the rental property.

To take legal action against a former tenant, the landlord must file a complaint against the tenant. The landlord will have to complete a complaint form and pay the filing fee with the District Court. The complaint must be filed in the District Court where the property is located. The landlord will either hire a private process server, pay for service by Sheriff, or file by using certified mail. The court will then issue a summons.

If you doubt your former landlord's case, you should file the "Notice of Intention to Defend." This notice will be attached to your summons. You should complete the form with a brief description of your side of the case and return the notice to the District Court.

After returning your "Notice of Intention to Defend," consider these five questions:



Help is available for renters who were evicted during the pandemic and are being sued by a former landlord for damages to the rental property.

Photo Credit: Getty Images Pro, Canva

Did your landlord provide proof of the alleged damages? If you disagree with your former landlord's statements in the complaint or their attached evidence, start gathering your evidence to the contrary.

Do you disagree with the basis of your former landlord's case? It is essential to provide the District Court judge with proof (copies of checks, pictures, bank statements, etc.).

Does the security deposit you paid to the landlord when you moved into the property cover the alleged damage? Was the alleged damage to the property beyond ordinary wear and tear? Your landlord should not charge you for marks or scuffs on walls, filling small holes in walls from hanging pictures,

normal wear to carpeted areas, or the appearance of major appliances with normal use.

Do you believe your former landlord owes you money? If yes, file a counterclaim! You are required to file your counterclaim within 10 days of the filing deadline of the "Notice of Intention to Defend."

Negotiation and Mediation— If you owe the former landlord money, you should consider negotiating with them. Negotiating with someone that evicted

you can be challenging, but it is possible.

There are several benefits to negotiating. For example, you could reach an amicable agreement, save yourself money (attorney's fees, interest, etc.), avoid possible wage garnishment, and avoid potential damage to your credit.

Mediation is another option where a neutral third party works with you and the landlord to resolve the dispute.

Consider Getting Legal Assistance— This legal process can be overwhelming for many people. You may qualify for legal assistance from an organization like Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service. Please visit the website to learn more www.mvlslaw.org.

Phillip Westry is a staff attorney at the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service with the Baltimore Health Corps Program. MVLS focuses on housing, consumer, family, estate, tax, and criminal record relief issues for Marylanders. MVLS can be reached at www.mvlslaw.org or 410-547-6537 Mondays-Thursdays between 9am and 12pm.

Do you have a question you would like to see addressed in this column? Email ask@mvlslaw.org to submit your question to the Baltimore Times' legal tip column.

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Don't be afraid to ask for help during open enrollment

By Janet Trautwein

On November 1, 2021, open enrollment for coverage on the Affordable Care Act's exchanges began in most states. That may be a daunting prospect. A recent survey found that most Americans admit to feeling "completely lost when it comes to understanding health insurance."

Licensed agents and brokers can simplify the process of picking a plan. Better yet, their services are generally free for consumers. Their expert advice can be crucial to helping a consumer enroll in a plan that suits their needs and budget.

Generally speaking, people may only enroll in or change their insurance plans during the open enrollment period, which is typically in the fall. In many places, the window to enroll is just 45 days long.

The options can seem endless. Is my doctor in-network? Is the drug I take every day covered? How much deductible or cost sharing can I afford to take on?

People shopping on the exchanges may also need help figuring out what kinds of federal premium subsidies they qualify for. In 2020, 87 percent of those who purchased coverage through the online marketplaces received subsidies.

This year and next, thanks to March's American Rescue Plan Act, those subsidies are more generous and are available to all Americans, regardless of income. The law now dictates that no American must pay more than 8.5 percent of income in premiums for a benchmark plan. People, who make less than 400 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$106,000 for a family of four, typically pay even less as a share of income.

With those kinds of subsidies available, it's unwise to go without health insurance. The risk of financial ruin at the hands of something like a catastrophic accident or unexpected cancer diagnosis is just too high.

Uninsured people are more likely than their insured counterparts to be hospitalized for "avoidable health problems" and experience general declines in overall health.

Agents and brokers are uniquely equipped to help people find plans that best suit their individual health needs—and their wallets. They're experts in the field—in order to keep their licenses, they must submit to rigorous state requirements and exams.

Many people already know the value of enlisting help. In 2020, agents and brokers assisted nearly half of exchange enrollees. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has credited these actors with "increasing the health of the risk pool and creating a more stable individual market."

Choosing a new insurance plan for the New Year may be intimidating. But consumers need not panic. Expert agents and brokers are eager to help.

Janet Trautwein is CEO of the National Association of Health Underwriters. To find a licensed health insurance agent or broker near you, visit www.agentfinder.org.

We love to hear from our readers!

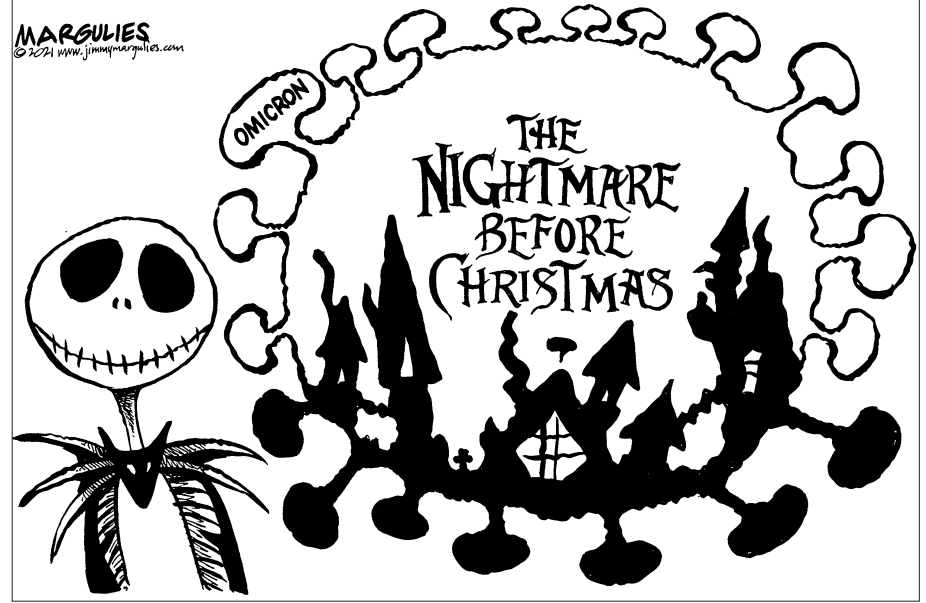
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Commentary

Alabama's Bryce Young first quarterback in team history to win the Heisman

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent

Bryce Young isn't even eligible for the 2022 NFL Draft, but his gridiron achievements certainly are pro-worthy. The Alabama quarterback became the fifth sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy, college football's most outstanding player award.

Young, 20, also becomes the first Crimson Tide quarterback to win the Heisman, and it marks the second consecutive year an Alabama player has won the award.

"I've always been labeled as someone who's not the prototype, being an African-American quarterback and being quote-unquote undersized and not being that prototype, I've always been ruled out and counted out," Young stated during his acceptance speech.

The six feet and 194-pound field general has thrown for more than 4,300 yards this season with a 68 percent completion rate.

During the 2021 season, Young has passed for 43 touchdowns with just four interceptions, and he enjoys a 175.5 passer rating.

"People a lot of times have told me that

I wasn't going to be able to make it," Young exclaimed. "And for me, it's always been about not really proving them wrong but proving to myself what I can accomplish. So, I've always pushed myself to work the hardest, and I try my best to do all I can to maximize all that I can do. And thanks to the people around me and through the grace of God, I've been able to make it here, and I'm truly grateful for that."

Young led the Crimson Tide to a 12-1 record, including an explosive 41-24 victory over then No. 1 ranked Georgia in the SEC Championship. He broke the single game passing record, 559 yards against No. 22 Arkansas, and shattered SEC Championship record for total offense and passing yards after going 26 of 44 for 421 yards and three touchdowns during his first year as a starter.

Bryce is the 8th African American quarterback to win the award.

"The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) profoundly congratulates Bryce Young, the African American star quarterback of the University of Alabama, for winning the Heisman Trophy," NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., said. "Young's outstanding achievement on the football field epitomizes the genius and excellent talent of African American athletes in all sports."

Stacey Abrams' Gubernatorial run provides jolt for the 2022 midterms

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire
Senior National Correspondent
@StacyBrownMedia

In an announcement that has provided a jolt to the 2022-midterm elections, Stacey Abrams said she's running for governor of the Peach State.

The race, which could mean a second dual between Abrams and Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, promises to catapult Democrats into the position of favorites.

A Democrat and noted voting rights advocate, Abrams lost to Kemp by just over one percentage point in a controversial 2018 battle.

Her activism helped Democrats claim the majority in the U.S. Senate when Georgia Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff defeated Republicans Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue in the January 2021 runoff election.

"I'm running because opportunity in our state shouldn't be determined by zip code, background, or access to power," Abrams declared. "That's the job of the



Stacey Abrams declared as a candidate for the 2022 Georgia Gubernatorial race in 2022
Courtesy Photo/NNPA

governor—to fight for one Georgia, our Georgia," Abrams exclaimed. "And now, it is time to get the job done."

Abrams's work since her 2018 loss to Kemp has received praise across the political spectrum. In 2019, she launched Fair Count and Fair Fight Action to encourage voter participation in elections and educate voters about elections and their voting rights. The PAC brings awareness to the public on election reform, advocates for election reform at all levels, and engages in other voter education programs and communications.

"Voter suppression, particularly of voters of color and young voters, is a

scourge our country faces in states across the nation," Abrams noted on her website.

She said Georgia's 2018 elections

Abrams became the Democratic nominee for Governor of Georgia, winning more votes than any other Democrat in the state's history.

"A Democrat and noted voting rights advocate, Abrams lost to Kemp by just over one percentage point in a controversial 2018 battle. Her activism helped Democrats claim the majority in the U.S. Senate when Georgia Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff defeated Republicans Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue in the January 2021 runoff election."

"shone a bright light on the issue with elections that were rife with mismanagement, irregularities, unbelievably long lines and more, exposing both recent and also decades-long actions and inactions by the state to thwart the right to vote."

"Fair Fight Action was founded to organize collective efforts to expose, mitigate, and reverse voter suppression. We engage in voter mobilization and education activities and advocate for progressive issues," Abrams continued.

Fair Fight PAC has initiated programs to support voter protection programs at state parties around the country and is engaging in partnerships to support and elect pro-voting rights progressive leaders.

After serving for eleven years in the Georgia House of Representatives, seven as Democratic Leader, in 2018,

She broke the glass ceiling as the first Black woman to become the gubernatorial nominee for a major party in the United States and as the first Black woman and first Georgian to deliver a Response to the State of the Union.

"It's a very humbling experience to know that if I win this election, I would have achieved something that Black women as far back as Barbara Jordan and Shirley Chisholm has fought about, not necessarily the same job, but transforming how we think about leadership in America and physically claiming that mantle of leadership and holding it signals that anything is possible, and we can re-define what leadership looks like and who we can lift up," Abrams said in a 2018 interview with the Black Press of America.

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Mrs. Doris turns 100

By Dena Fisher

Mrs. Doris Hill, affectionately known as Mrs. Avalon, turns 100. She and her husband Ezra Hill were the owners of Avalon Shoe Store—a black-owned family store formerly located at Old Town Mall. They served the community for more than 50 years.

“It was one of the first stores to give Black people credit,” said Nia Redmond of the East Baltimore Historical Library. “It was the Black people’s credit card in my mind.”

Avalon Shoe Store operated on the premise that their customers deserved the very best, although they could not always afford it.

“We came up with credit so that you could have the very best that you could afford and pay weekly or monthly. It paid off, and it helped me raise my family and helped others have charge accounts and pay what they could,” said Mrs. Hill.

She tells the story of how teachers pitched in to buy her shoes so she could attend school as a child.

“I never thought then that here I am shoeless, and one day I would own a shoe store,” said Mrs. Hill. “I remembered what my teachers did for me.”

In the past, Mrs. Hill was the recipient of the Afro American Newspaper’s Unsung Heroine Award. She shared, with a humble smile, “they said it was impossible to count the number of pairs of shoes Mrs. Hill has given to the community.”

Today she is grateful that she has lived long enough to experience complete happiness. “All my life, all I have ever



Mrs. Doris Hill celebrated her 100th birthday on Friday, December 3, 2021. Today, she is grateful that she has lived long enough to experience complete happiness. Mrs. Hill and her husband Ezra Hill were the owners of Avalon Shoe Store, a black-owned family store, formerly located at Old Town Mall. They served the community for more than 50 years.

Photo Credit: Dena Fisher

wanted was to be me, to learn me. I am happy I know that now. For the first time in my life, I am doing what I want to do and how I want to do it.”

To those who want to learn the secrets of living a long life, she says: “Take care of yourself because age is not important. The mind— your thoughts, are more important. For me, everything must be positive. God hears everything we say, so we have to speak the truth.”

Mrs. Hill cautions us not to stress and, as the adage goes, “not to sweat the small stuff.”

“My husband and I never had an argument. I don’t argue,” she said. “I give you my point of view, and that’s the end of it. I never tell anyone what they should do. Instead, I say what I would do. For example, if it were me, I would do such and such. Then I tell them to pray about it and do whatever they think

is right.”

To those who have considered elders invisible, have underestimated them, or have counted them out, she confidently says, “I am a senior, but I am not senile. Trust what I say. I can still walk and chew gum at the same time.”

Happy Birthday Mrs. Doris Hill!

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UMMS, UM School of Medicine to eliminate race-based kidney function estimates

By Demetrius Dillard

The University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) and University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) recently announced an upcoming change to a long-existing clinical standard that is expected to have a considerable impact on thousands of Black Americans.

By late January, UMMS will transition to a new standard of evaluating kidney function, eliminating whether a patient is “African American or non-African American” as a factor in determining eligibility for kidney transplantation or treatment.

For many years, medical practitioners— nephrologists in particular— used a metric to estimate glomerular filtration rate (eGFR), which reflects how well someone’s kidneys filter waste. The equation also relies on levels of creatinine, a byproduct of muscle and protein metabolism, from the blood to accurately assess and identify kidney disease.

“In addition to age and gender, the calculation takes into account whether a patient is ‘African American or non-African American’ and assigns a multiplier based in part on a discredited notion that Black people tend to have more muscle mass than people of other races,” a UMMS statement said. “This higher value often overestimates the health of Black patients’ kidneys, pushing them above the threshold for diagnosis of advanced kidney disease, and therefore, leading to delayed referral for specialty care, or even disqualification for kidney transplant.”

This groundbreaking shift is measured to increase access to specialty care, including eligibility for kidney transplantation for thousands of Black people living with advanced kidney disease.

UMMS’ and UMSOM’s decision to end the use of the international clinical standard that factors a patient’s race into the diagnosis of chronic kidney disease was lauded by nephrologist Stephen Seliger, MD and Roderick King, MD.

The presumption that individuals of African ancestry had higher levels of



University of Maryland Medical System nephrologist and University of Maryland School of Medicine associate professor, Stephen L. Seliger

Courtesy Photo

skeletal muscle was not based on verifiable facts, Seliger highlighted. For more than a year, he and his colleagues within the medical system have discussed the method they used to report and estimate kidney function.

“That assumption though, about differences in skeletal muscle, is not really ever supported by any good evidence. Even more so, it essentially made explicit the biological differences between the groups of people who describe themselves differently based on their ancestry,” said Dr. Seliger, who works with the University of Maryland Medical Center in downtown Baltimore. “Even though we recognize those differences can be very small and subtle in how people describe themselves in terms of their racial identity, is as much a factor of society and social factors as it is biology, physiology, genetics. And so it was that recognition that led to a reevaluation of this equation— to not have to require people to identify as any one specific race.”

UMMS’ decision was concurrent with a national effort led by the National



University of Maryland Medical System chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, Roderick King, MD.

Courtesy Photo

Kidney Foundation and the American Society of Nephrology, who formed a joint task force to review the use of race in eGFR calculations.

In September, the task force endorsed a new calculation without the race coefficient. Shortly thereafter, a committee of UMMS and UMSOM researchers, kidney specialists, clinical quality leaders and health equity experts then convened to closely review the new guidance and develop a rapid way to implement the new equation.

“The reason for making these changes, as I mentioned, is it’s the right thing to do from a standpoint of social justice and from the standpoint of correcting long-standing, race-based misperceptions,” said Dr. Seliger, who is also an associate professor at UMSOM. “Our intent to look at, investigate and correct [other] race-based assumptions that are present in medicine certainly is a longer-term goal, but this is a first step in that overall process.”

According to a UMMS statement, approximately 720,000 Black Americans might be treated earlier for

kidney disease if race didn’t factor into calculating kidney function. Locally, thousands could be impacted by this transition to race-free eGFR.

The National Kidney Foundation notes that of the one in three Americans who are at risk for kidney disease, Black Americans are almost four times as likely to experience kidney failure compared to their White counterparts.

“Even if it’s a Black doctor, there are ways that we assess certain diseases that inappropriately integrate race as a factor, and this particular one for GFR is one of many other race-based clinical policies or clinical assessments that we have in the field of medicine,” said King, the new chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer with UMMS. “Our plan, starting with GFR, is to dismantle all of these. We reviewed the literature, we are talking to our clinical colleagues at the medical school so this is a joint effort between the health system and the medical school to identify what these [race-based assessments are], and then remove them from how we clinically provide care to patients.”

Small Axe Peppers

Supporting Community Gardens with a ‘Hot’ Commodity

By Ursula V. Battle

Baltimore has a hot sauce named after it. The sauce is made from peppers grown from local community gardens and provides a unique double-spiced taste— first from the habanero peppers and then from the fresh ginger. This unique combination of flavors gives it a unique Caribbean-style flavor and is called “The Baltimore Habanero Ginger Hot Sauce.”

The sauce is among those sold by New York-based Small Axe Peppers. All peppers that get bottled-up are grown by community gardens across the country. According to Small Axe Peppers, anyone who buys a bottle of their hot sauce is directly supporting those community gardens and the gardeners who grow them.

The company offers flavors named after the city in which the peppers are grown, and includes The Bronx Green Market Hot Sauce, The Atlanta Georgia Peach House Sauce, The Detroit Ghost Pepper Hot Sauce, and The Texas Tamarindo Hot Sauce.

Daniel Fitzgerald is the COO of Small Axe Peppers. He said Chef Phojanakong who ran New York’s highly acclaimed Kuma Inn for over 10 years, is the creator of the flavorful hot sauces.

“We have hot sauces for every taste and for every palate, from mild to wild,” said Fitzgerald. “Chef Phojanakong is a savant of flavor. He’s an amazing purveyor of taste and culinary experiences in New York and is really very talented. He wanted to make hot sauce with just the right heat that captured the essence of a city. For example, we make The Oakland Hot Sauce out of the community gardens in Oakland that has raisins in it because California is famous for its California Raisins. It captures the essence of California.”

Fitzgerald runs Small Axe Peppers along with John A. Crotty, Todd Snyder, and Drew Doscher. He said the company’s economic sustainable model began in 2014 when the company donated serrano pepper seedlings to five



Daniel Fitzgerald, COO of Small Axe Peppers. Courtesy Photos

community gardens in The Bronx. The following year, with the support of Bronx Green-Up of the New York Botanical Garden, 20 additional gardens asked to participate. Together, they collectively grew nearly a ton of serrano peppers, sowing a new economic model for urban farming that continues to grow.

Today, Small Axe Peppers has expanded its model to 15 cities across America and purchases locally grown peppers from more than 75 community gardens. Fitzgerald shared how the company got into the business of selling hot sauce.

“We call peppers the magic fruit,” said Fitzgerald. “We were looking for a value-added product and ran through every option in our head including tomato sauce and salsa. The problem with those was that they’re very reductive. In order to make ten pounds of tomato sauce, you need to get one hundred pounds of tomatoes. That didn’t seem like a favorable economic model when you are using very little amounts of spaces to grow.

“Hot sauce seemed like a natural fit.

We could grow a pound of peppers and make ten pounds of hot sauce. A garden could grow one pound of peppers, which turns into ten bottles of hot sauce at the end of the season. There’s a real sense of pride that comes from that supply chain from the gardens to the shelf.”

The company has a commitment to purchase core products (at least 50 percent of expenses) from independent suppliers local to New York City and its surrounding area. He said the company also sends free seeds to community gardeners interested in being a part of their business model.

“We’re a small company,” said the 31-year-old. “The name of our company, Small Axe comes from an old proverb that talks about if you are a big tree, we



The Baltimore Habanero Ginger Hot Sauce.

are the small axe ready to cut you down. The idea is that a bunch of small people with small axes working together in unison can accomplish something much bigger than ourselves.”

The company recently introduced the Holiday Gift Set, which includes two hot sauces of choice from nearly a dozen flavors, a t-shirt featuring sauces from different cities and flavors and Serrano Pepper Seeds, which are the same ones used by the company’s garden partners.

Small Axe hot sauces are sold in Giant and Whole Foods markets. To learn more about becoming one of their community gardeners, or to purchase products online, visit <https://smallaxepeppers.com/>

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 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.

Little Santa Gives Back to Kids in Need

By Andrea Blackstone

There is a new Santa in Hampton, Virginia. Cassidy Carey is the four-year-old do-gooder's name. With the help of his mother, Sharqita Hicks, Cassidy is on a mission to help as many kids in need as possible who could use toys for Christmas in the area through Cassidy's Christmas Toy Drive. Although some of his favorite pastimes are heading to the beach, and Sky Zone Trampoline Park, Cassidy is also a kind entrepreneur who is paying for free toys to give away. He has been raising money to buy them through his licensed business called C.A.S. Official. In 2020, Hicks started the clothing brand, which is an acronym for "Creating All Success" for her son. The business incorporates the importance of community giving.

With so many parents strapped for cash during the pandemic, many traditional programs offering Christmas toys for struggling families are overloaded with requests. Even the Marine Toys for Tots is facing challenges collecting ample toy donations this year.

Gunnery Sgt. Brian Baez is a U.S. Marine who has been gathering toys for children in need through the program. Per 6abc <https://6abc.com/toys-for-tots-donations-us-marines-marine-corps/11308644/>, he said that donations have not been as plentiful in New York.

"This time last year, we had double the donations coming in, so it's definitely been a struggle," Sgt. Baez said in a news interview.

As the countdown to Christmas ticks away, it is a prime time to remember that even the most effective organizations cannot realistically serve everyone. Independent community efforts around the U.S., such as Cassidy's Christmas Toy Drive, help to ease the burden of parents who find themselves unable to locate toy sponsors.

"Little Santa" in Hampton recognizes this reality. Cassidy said that helping in the community makes him feel happy. He explained that collecting money and buying stuff for other people is something that he does for others. He is



Cassidy Carey is a little Santa with a big heart. Helping others in the community makes him feel happy. The four-year-old is buying toys for children in Hampton who need them. His mother, Sharqita Hicks and his aunt, Chenelle Hicks assist with logistics for current efforts. They have also helped to support Cassidy's Thanksgiving and school supply giving events. Photo: Andrea Blackstone

buying toys and collecting unopened ones, too. His mother is providing support such as shopping advice, transportation, and organizing details to make Cassidy's giving day extremely special.

"Some of the things that Cassidy and myself have done as a team are working

together to make sales from his clothing company to collect funds and be able to buy essentials and other things for people in need. Originally, community giving was my idea, but as his mother, I give the credit to my son, simply because Cassidy asked to keep serving others. He's very intelligent and he's

only four," Hicks said. "I've been supporting Cassidy's Christmas Toy Drive by purchasing toys out of pocket to get this Christmas event going. Cassidy also helps sell his very own merchandise in order to collect funds to be able to purchase many different things. For example, C.A.S. Official sponsored a Thanksgiving Food Drive just last month."

Chenelle Hicks has donated funds for small business community events, and volunteered to help them with several, including the previous one. Chenelle Hicks is Sharqita Hicks' sister and Cassidy's aunt. She mentioned the impact of giving from the heart.

"We've had people tell us at the Thanksgiving Food Drive that other places they have been to were already out of items, so they were thankful for this drive," she said.

Sharqita Hicks is an ambitious working mother who planted the seed for Cassidy to spread holiday cheer with his family. The mother who was born and raised in Hampton is no stranger to lending a helping hand to others. Her sharing spirit developed in childhood. For this reason, she introduced Cassidy to giving back to the community.

"As a child, I've given so much out of the kindness of my heart. I remember I would buy school lunch for my peers who didn't have any money to eat during the time. I would even give away my own lunch to anyone who wasn't able to get a free meal," Hicks said.

Hicks wants others to know that all things are possible with faith, to achieve a goal. Despite Cassidy's young age, his acts of kindness can bring joy to other children. Cassidy's Christmas Toy Drive will be open to the public. Free toys will be distributed on Dec. 23, 2021 at 1706 Todds Lane in Hampton. Any donations will be accepted until Dec. 22. Financial donations can be made through CashApp via \$shahicks23. Unopened toys for individuals who are local to the Hampton area are wanted.

Visit Cassidy's social media pages @casofficialshopnco on Facebook and Instagram for details.

Rambling Rose



Rosa Pryor Trusty

Merry Christmas to All: Wishing you a safe and healthy holiday!

Well hello, my dear friends! It has been a couple of weeks or more since we talked. I have been a little under the weather with health issues with my lower spine and was unable to sit at the computer to talk to you, but with God's grace and your prayers I am truly much better today and looking forward to seeing many of you over the holidays. I noticed that not too many of you are having public celebrations, I guess everyone is trying to be careful due to COVID, which I understand, but it sure has put a damper on things.

Before I go any further, I want to talk about a young lady who has and is still making a difference in our city. I am talking about Lady Brion Gill, the executive director and founder of the Pennsylvania Avenue Black Arts & Entertainment District. She is an international spoken word artist, poetry coach, activist, organizer and educator with a personal mission to inspire, connect, mobilize and liberate.

Born and raised in Baltimore, Lady Brion embraced her creative writing and performing arts genius at a young age. She spent the last decade of her life performing on several continents as an independent artist freely sharing her perspective and reflections of life with diverse audiences.

Lady Brion is an arts professional who has taught creative writing courses at several elementary and middle schools, coached poetry teams in over 10 academic institutions via the "Lauder than A Bomb" poetry program; and supervised a team of over 15 teaching artists throughout the Baltimore-Metropolitan area. She currently holds the distinguished title of 2016 National Poetry Slam Champion. Lady Brion also has a Masters of Fine Arts degree in

Creative Writing and Publishing Design from the University of Baltimore. So ladies and gentlemen any place you may see her name, you must check her out and give her a hug and thank her for being a part of Baltimore's Community. Well done, Lady Brion, Well Done!

I noticed my friend Carlos Hutchins is not letting snow melt under his feet. CH Productions and co-host the Baltimore Black Boaters are having a Christmas Toy Drive on Saturday, December 18, 2022 with special performances by "The Rollex Band" at Not Just Crabs located at 8731 Liberty Road. For more details, call 301-296-2885.



Another outing that will be great for the family is checking out the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) to see the commissioned painting by Baltimore-based artist Jerrell Gibbs of the official portrait of the "Beloved Late Congressman Elijah E. Cummings. It is breath-taking. It will be on view at the BMA from December 22, 2021 through January 9, 2022 before its permanent installation in the U.S. Capitol.

This year, I noticed that Christmas has expanded into a season all of its own. The day after Thanksgiving—the fourth Thursday in November is now known as "Black Friday." An important shopping day, it pushes some businesses into profitability, or in the black, and can account for a substantial proportion of annual profits, but this extended Christmas season is by far more than shopping. For many of us, it is a period of general goodwill and an occasion for charitable and volunteer work; such work that people like Pamela "Miss



Lady Brion Gill, executive director and founder of Pennsylvania Avenue Black Arts & Entertainment District is an international spoken word artist, poetry coach, activist, organizer, and educator whose personal mission is to inspire, connect, mobilize, and liberate. Courtesy Photo

Maybelle" Leak, Brian "Tee-Shirt" Hall, Carlos Hutchins, and others are doing for the less fortunate.

Last, but not least, I want to thank Carlos Hutchins for honoring me this past week at his fundraiser event. Thank you for giving me my flowers while I still can smell them. I thank you for your kind heart and always thinking of ways to make our community in Baltimore smile.

Well, my dear friends, I am out of space. Enjoy your holiday, be safe and stay healthy. 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.**

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Slimes and Basketball Exhibits at Eubie Blake Cultural Center

By Wendy Saulters

In an era where the attack on black boys and masculinity has resurfaced in an overtly violent way, artist Chrystal Seawood, makes the exploration of brotherhood and masculinity the focal point of her show at the Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center. On display until January 2, 2022, her large-scale interactive art installations, *Slimes* and *Leave It All on the Court*, invites viewers into the intimate spaces where brotherhood is defined, and masculinity can be vulnerable.

Inspired by its subject's Facebook posts, *Slimes* incorporates interviews with Fre' Angelo and Fabian, two young black men from Arkansas, who were former students of Seawood. In their recorded interviews, Fre' Angelo and Fabian recount their experiences of displacement, including: expulsion, incarceration and homelessness.

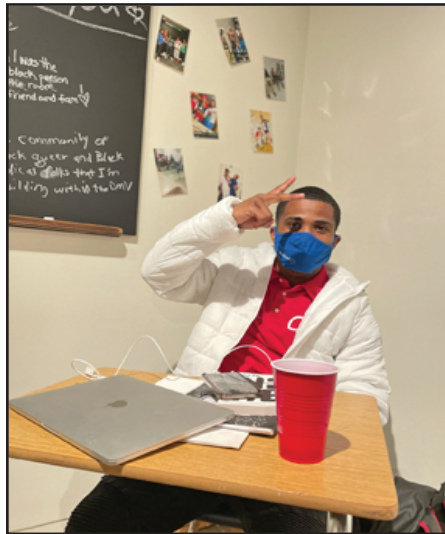
"I would want my kids to remember that I was a hustler and that I love them... and this is my side of the story," said Fabian, now a 21-year-old father and musician.

His side of the story includes displacement, incarceration and a teacher who never stopped seeing him as "gentle and grand." In *Slimes*, large-scale puzzle portraits of Fre' Angelo and Fabian playfully capture moments of brotherhood reflective of the safe spaces they created for themselves.

Seawood is charmed by the resilience of her "gentle and grand" former students. Her memories of Fre' Angelo in class role playing characters from MK Asante's, *Buck*, are just as vivid as her memories of visiting him in county jail where he spent most of his 10th grade year—without a conviction—because he couldn't afford bail.

"The installations journeys people through their [Fabian and Fre' Angelo] transient environments before finding a sense of home within each other," Seawood said.

Brotherhood and masculinity blend on the half-court of Seawood's second exhibit, *Leave It All on the Court*, which



(Clockwise from top left) Artist Chrystal Seawood is the creator of the exhibitions "Slime" and "Leave It All on the Court" on display at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center until January 2, 2022. (Top right) Courtview, part of the Leave It All on the Court exhibit (Bottom right) Hundreds of sneakers up close, also part of Leave It All on the Court. (Bottom middle) Fre' Angelo sitting at a desk, part of the interactive exhibit (Bottom left) Chrystal and Fre' Angelo by the large scale puzzle inspired by his Facebook post. Photo Credit: Chrystal Seawood/Slimes & Photo Credit: Stephen Cherry and Wendy Saulters/Leave It All on the Court

debuted in September this year at Huephoria in Columbia's Merriweather District. Excerpts of interviews play over a pick-up game— voices of different ages expressing the safety of the court as, "somewhere you feel there's peace." And, let's not forget the shoes— hundreds of sneakers— some tagged with QR codes connecting them to monumental moments in the lives of those who wore them. With this installation, Chrystal invites visitors into a sacred space with the intention to "complicate our ideas about masculinity

and who may lay claim to it."

Seawood currently teaches Humanities at Kingsman Academy Public Charter School in Washington D.C. She says that she is constantly inspired by the energy of her students. She validates them and their experiences by memorializing them in her artwork. When viewing her installations and listening to the life stories of her subjects, Seawood asks that we "keep our minds lit"— lit with the openness that the life stories of black boys and masculine-identifying persons is multi-dimensional.

Slimes and *Leave It All on the Court* are unique, thoughtful and all-inclusive exhibits passionate about celebrating the spaces of confusion, emotions, and intimacy not often highlighted. The exhibits blend moments of uncertainty with tender exuberance reminding visitors that like any other identity— masculinity and brotherhood include range.

The Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center is located at 847 North Howard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. For more information, visit: www.eubieblake.org.

Celebrating the Beautiful Messages of Christmas

Continued from page 1

are combined with 'peace on earth,' the Jewish wish of shalom comes immediately to mind. That concept as best understood contains a wish or blessing that the recipient receives all things good. This wish, as it were, is intended to cover the recipient from head to toe with all good and pleasant experiences. Who in their right mind can reject the offering of peace on earth with goodwill towards all?

"Joy to the world," is certainly one of the most prevalent themes of the Christmas holidays. Just think if we can bring "joy" to the many people who are sad, lonely or suffering across the world. At Christmas time we can proactively work to bring "joy" into the lives of others. Who can really work to cancel a festival with such a message? Only the real grinch!

"Light shining in the darkness," is another theme that is so appropriate for this time of the year when the darkness of night is actually longer than the light of the day. Remember that the winter solstice which falls on December 21, four days before Christmas, is the shortest day, with the longest night. All the lighting that goes with Christmas from Christmas trees to other lighted decorations, remind us that there is hope in the midst of darkness. The night, where we stumble in the darkness will be pierced by the light of the world. The light dispels the darkness and all the evils that come with it.

"Gift-giving" comes with the season also. People sometimes demean the season of "gift giving" on the grounds that it fosters commercialism and materialism. Those who make this argument against sharing gifts at this time of the year seem to forget that the Christmas story is not complete until the wise men of the East arrive, bearing gifts. One beautiful hymn says: "sacred gifts with mystic meaning." In some parts of the Christian world, Epiphany, January 6, the 12th day of Christmas, is celebrated highly as the day when the Three Wise Men, Kings of the East, arrived with their gifts of gold (money,) frankincense and myrrh. So, sharing

gifts, with meaning, is a very important part of the season.

But while these themes of "peace on earth," "goodwill towards all humankind," "joy to the world," "light shining in the darkness," and "gift sharing" are key themes of Christmas. The one theme least understood and celebrated is the fact of the "incarnation."

Most people do not realize that in Christian thinking, Christmas is celebrated as The Feast of the Incarnation. What does that mean? Well, the essence of Christmas with all its loveable themes resides in the concept of the Incarnation. The simplest way for explaining the carnation is to understand that God, who according to Christian belief, resides in his heavenly home, decided to become Man for a season to show humans how they ought to live.

The story goes something like this: God, the Father of all things good, made man and commanded him to be good, resisting all things evil. Man, over time showed an inability to lead the life of God, which is essentially the life of being good. Man thought it was just too difficult to do good all the time. Man thought that the good God in his high heaven could preach this "being good stuff," but he did not really understand how hard it is for man here on earth to model his goodness. So, the God of Christianity decided to incarnate himself in human form, by becoming a man himself, so that he could show us humans how to live by the code of goodness: love, peace, goodwill, mercy and forgiveness et al.

According to the Bible, "when the time was right, God sent his son" to do a demonstration that would prove that, though difficult, humans can live a good and moral life. The Feast of the Incarnation, known popularly as Christmas, in commemorative of the time when God, the father of all things good, decided to incarnate in human form—God becoming man for a season, to show us how to lead good lives, lives that will bring peace and goodwill to all humankind. What a thought!

Think about this for a moment. God, in the English language is closely connected to all that is good. All things good: peace, love, forgiveness, longsuffering, truth, patience et al. All things good are associated with the God. And all things evil, are associated with the (d)evil. Got it yet? So, the God of goodness, love and mercy, choses to become human (incarnating himself in human flesh) to show us how we ought to live.

And that is the entire meaning of Christmas. That is why its themes are universally good for humanity, even for atheists who should want good and goodness to be incarnated into the human race.

And so, We wish you all a Happy, Merry Christmas and a Bright and Prosperous New Year!

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Ravens find emergency hero in Tyler Huntley

By Tyler Hamilton

Baltimore Ravens backup quarterback Tyler Huntley was called upon to step up for the team once again in the game against the Cleveland Browns. Lamar Jackson went down due an ankle injury causing Huntley to be thrust into action.

Huntley was ready to play when his number was called. He completed 26 of his 38 pass attempts for 270 yards and a touchdown.

“Every week I feel like you’ve got to be one play away— Lamar [Jackson], he’s a tough soldier, so you know what I’m saying, I’m thinking he’s going to play regardless. He could be breaking out in a sweat and I feel like he’s going to play. But today it just was different circumstances that I happened to play,” Huntley said.

The Ravens fell short against the Browns, losing the game by a score of 24-22. However, Huntley once again showed that he is capable of leading Baltimore’s offense in pinch.

Ravens head coach John Harbaugh wouldn’t have expected anything less.

“Right from day one when he came in as an undrafted free agent, and it was not too big for him then,” Harbaugh said. “It was never too big in practice, never too big in a preseason game, and



The Ravens fell short against the Browns, losing the game by a score of 24-22 on Sunday, December 12, 2021 but backup quarterback Tyler Huntley once again showed that he is capable of leading Baltimore’s offense in pinch. Quarterback Lamar Jackson had to leave the game because of an ankle injury.

Photo Credit: Jason Miller/Getty Images

he came out here on the big stage, and it wasn’t too big for him here, either.”

Jackson left the stadium in a walking boot on Sunday. Tests revealed that he has an ankle sprain. Fortunately for Baltimore, it’s not a high ankle sprain, which means there is a chance that Jackson will suit up for the next game against the Green Bay Packers.

If for any reason Jackson can’t go for the Ravens, the team knows they have a viable option in Huntley.

“The plans are right now, in my mind, for Lamar [Jackson] to be out there,” Harbaugh said. “So, we’ll see where it goes this week. If he can go, he’ll go. If not, Tyler [Huntley] will be the quarterback. So, that’s where we’re at.”

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AECOM REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR PLANNING, ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION RELATED SERVICES

AECOM is a provider of Engineering Services and is requesting information from subcontractors of qualified Minority and Women’s Business Enterprise businesses. The following types of services are requested for projects that are undertaken solely by the Newark and Millsboro, Delaware offices of AECOM through our transportation and water business lines. The projects are projected for planning, design and construction during the next two years in the States of Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and includes projects related to work generated by state, county and municipal agencies in these specific areas:

- Water and Wastewater Treatment Design
- Water Distribution Design
- Wastewater Collection and Conveyance Design
- Roadway Design
- Geotechnical and Field Testing Services
- Construction Review Services
- Erosion and Sediment Control Inspections
- Elevated Water Tower Painting Inspections
- Road Paving Inspections
- Water and Sewer Pipe Inspections
- Surveying Services
- Civil and Structural Engineering Services
- Electrical and Mechanical Services
- Architectural Services
- Preparation of Preliminary Engineering Reports and Environmental Reports

Additional information for specific projects can be obtained by contacting Donna Bolender, AECOM, Sabre Building, Suite 300, 4051 Ogletown Road, Newark, Delaware 19713, donna.bolender@aecom.com. Qualifications will be due by January 7, 2022.

These projects are, in part, funded by Revolving Loan Funds and other Federal and State funding sources. All subcontractors will be required to follow all pertinent guidelines as related to specific funding sources.

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Allied Universal Hiring 200+ Security Professionals in Baltimore

Allied Universal, a leading security and facility services company in North America, is seeking to hire 200 plus security professionals in Baltimore. The company is holding an open house hiring event Monday, December 20, 2021 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the company’s regional offices at 36 South Charles Street, Suite #2300 in Baltimore City. In addition to in-person interviews, Allied Universal’s virtual interview process allows applicants to complete the company’s online application from the comfort of their home through highly advanced video interviewing technology. Applicants can apply online for the hiring event at <https://jobs.aus.com/>.

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CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION

NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **SANITARY CONTRACT NO. 1027-Rehabilitation and Improvements to**

Sanitary Sewers at Various Locations in Baltimore City will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M. on **January 12, 2022**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3rd floor (410) 396-4041 as of **December 17, 2021** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **100.00**. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture (“JV”), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **B02552 – Sewer Construction**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$10,000,000.01 to \$15,000,000.00**.

A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted via Conference Call. Vendor can call 443-984-1696 PASSCODE: 3129527# on December 27, 2021 at 10:00 AM.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at:
https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dp-w-construction-projects-notice-letting_For_further_inquiries_about_purchasing_bid_documents,_please_contact_the_assigned_Contract_Administrator_Cynthia.Harry@baltimorecity.gov_and_dp-wbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov

Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:

*Sewer cleaning and closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspection;

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*Open cut point repairs of sanitary sewers;
*Cured-in-place pipe (CIPP) lining of sanitary sewers;
*Excavate and replace segments of sanitary sewer via point repairs;
*Manhole repair and rehabilitation work;
*Sewer house connection (SHC) repair and rehabilitation work;
*New manhole and cleanout installation work

The MBE goal is **11%**
The WBE goal is **5%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Jason W. Mitchell
Director, Department of Public Works

CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION

NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1292-Small Water Main Replacements and Rehabilitation at Various Locations – Belair Road Area** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M. on **January 19, 2022**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3rd floor (410) 396-4041 as of **December 17, 2021** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **100.00**. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture (“JV”), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **B02551 – Water Mains**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$5,000,000.01 to \$10,000,000.00**.

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A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted via Microsoft Team Meeting. Vendor can call +1 667-228-6519 Phone Conference ID: 579712380# on December 29, 2021 at 1:00 PM.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at:
https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dp-w-construction-projects-notice-letting_For_further_inquiries_about_purchasing_bid_documents,_please_contact_the_assigned_Contract_Administrator_Torron.Coleman@baltimorecity.gov_and_dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov
Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:

Cleaning and cement-mortar lining of existing 20-inch diameter water mains, small diameter water main replacements and relocations, abandonment and/or removal of existing water mains and replacement/installation of various sized valves, fittings, and appurtenances, replacement/installation of fire hydrants, renewal and replacement of existing water services, sidewalk restoration, curb and gutter, and roadway paving, as required.

The MBE goal is **16%**
The WBE goal is **7%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Jason W. Mitchell
Director, Department of Public Works

CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **F.A.P. NO. NHPP-3065(15)E, S.H.A NO. BC420017, BALTIMORE CITY CONTRACT NO. TR11317 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BOULEVARD AT HOWARD STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M. **February 9, 2022**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. As of **Friday, December 17, 2021**, the Contract Documents may be examined, without charge by contacting Brenda Simmons at brenda.simmons@baltimorecity.gov or (443) 865-4423 where a copy of the bid

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book labelled “not for bidding purposes” can be electronically emailed to you. Anyone who desire to purchase a bid book in person may do so by appointment only for a non-refundable cost of **\$100.00** at the Department of Transportation located at 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. Anyone who desire to purchase by mail, please enclosed a check or money order made payable to the Director of Finance along with your Federal Express account number to the above address. Payments will not be refunded. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact the Committee at 4 South Frederick Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture (“JV”), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **A2602 – BITUMINOUS CONCRETE PAVING, D02620 – CURBS, GUTTER, AND SIDEWALKS**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$3,000,000.01 to \$4,000,000.00**. A “Pre-Bidding Information Meeting” will be conducted via Microsoft Teams on **Friday, January 7, 2021** at 10:00 a.m. hosted by the Department of Transportation. **By no later than Wednesday, January 5, 2021**, all bidders must email your contact information to include your name, company name, phone number and email address to Michael.Wilmore@baltimorecity.gov to receive an invite to the Microsoft Team (video conference meeting). “The BCDOT in accordance with Title VI of the Civil rights Act of 1964 (78Stat. 252, 42 U.S.C. 2000d TO 2000d-4) and the Regulations, hereby notifies all bidders that it will affirmatively ensure that any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, disadvantage or minority business enterprises will be afforded full and fair opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in consideration for an award.” Principal Items of work for this project is Superpave Asphalt 12.5mm for Surface, PG64-S22 Level-2 – 1600 TON; 10 in. Conventionally Reinforced Portland Cement Concrete Pavement Mix No. 9 – 1400 SY and 5 in. Concrete Sidewalk 23000 SF. The DBE goal is 25%. APPROVED: Bill Henry, Comptroller

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\$1

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