

# The Annapolis Times

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## CIAA Tournament Highlights



Members of the CIAA Host Organizing Committee Zack McDaniels Murphy, Falcon & Murphy and (CIAA Host Committee Co-Chair); Janet Currie, President, Bank of America Greater Maryland; Baltimore City's Deputy Mayor Ted Carter; Ricky Smith, CEO, BWI Airport; and the Bowie State University Bulldog Cheerleaders welcome CIAA Commissioner Jacquie McWilliams (center) upon her arrival at BWI Marshall Airport for the CIAA Tourney. (See pages 8-9) Photo: Jada Renae

# Finding a Reputable Tax Return Preparer

By Kali Krockover and Janice Shih

With so many resources at your fingertips, deciding whom to trust with your personal information can be overwhelming and confusing. Why is choosing a trustworthy tax return preparer so important? Your tax return preparer will have access to your legal name, date of birth, social security number, home address, and your banking address. This is a lot of private information! This information must be kept secure, which is why it is so important to select a reputable tax return preparer.

As the taxpayer, you are on the hook for anything that is filed on your tax return. When you sign a tax return, you are signing it under “penalty of perjury.” This is the same as when you “raise your hand and solemnly swear to tell the whole truth” in court. Even though your tax preparer may have prepared your return, YOU are held responsible, since you are providing the information to the return preparer. No need to worry, though! There are many great resources available to help you find reputable tax return preparers to guide you through this process.

**Check the preparer’s qualifications.** Maryland requires a tax return preparer to be certified by the Maryland State Board of Individual Tax Preparers unless they are an Attorney, CPA, or an IRS Enrolled Agent. You can check the Maryland Board of Individual Tax Preparers - Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (state.md.us) to search for registered tax preparers. Registered tax return preparers are required to have a current Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) issued by the IRS, and the preparer must put their PTIN on any tax returns they prepare.

**Availability.** New offices often open during tax season and end up disappearing when it ends that year. These are places to avoid! If the IRS has a question about your return, you want



**Tax return preparers will have access to your legal name, date of birth, social security number, home address, and your banking address. This private information must be kept secure, which is why it is so important to select a reputable tax return preparer.**

Photo Credit: Getty Images Pro

your preparer to be accessible year-round to help you answer these questions.

**Provide records and receipts.** A good preparer will ask to see your records and receipts.

**Ask about service fees.** Avoid preparers who base fees on the percentage of the refund.

**Tax preparers who do not sign the return.** Avoid anyone who won’t take responsibility for their work.

**Tax preparers who want you to sign a blank tax return.** Signing the return means that you are legally certifying its accuracy. You need to review it before you sign it. If it’s blank when you sign it, then the tax return preparer can enter incorrect information afterwards.

**Anyone who requests a portion or all, of your refund be deposited into their bank account for any reason.** Your refund should go straight to you.

**Tax preparer who promises refunds by a certain date.** The IRS states that there are no guarantees that refunds will be granted within a specific time. Tax preparers who claim that your return

will be processed by an exact date should not be trusted.

**Tax preparers who guarantee a refund before seeing your tax documents.** They can’t know this until they run the numbers. Be skeptical if they claim otherwise.

**Someone who calls you or emails you claiming to be an agent of the IRS.** The IRS will never reach out to you initially by phone or email. The IRS will mail you a letter. Also, the IRS never accepts payment by gift card.

Trustworthy resources, include:  
**The CASH Campaign of Maryland**

**(Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope)**— CASH is a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program. These programs are reputable because they are certified by the IRS to prepare tax returns for people who earn \$58,000 or less per household. They are also able to assist persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers. To contact CASH, call 410-528-8008 or visit their website at <https://cashmd.org/>.

**AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Assistance Program**— This program is certified by the IRS to help individuals prepare tax returns. There is no age limit or requirement to be a retired person to receive tax return preparation assistance. To contact AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Assistance, call 888-687-2277 or visit their website at [https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp\\_taxaide/](https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/).

For other tax controversy questions or issues, please call Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service at 410-547-6537 or visit [www.mvls.org](http://www.mvls.org).

*Kali Krockover is a legal intern at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS) and Janice Shih, Director of Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) at MVLS ([www.mvlslaw.org](http://www.mvlslaw.org)).*

**Do you have a question you would like to see addressed in this column? Email [ask@mvlslaw.org](mailto:ask@mvlslaw.org) to submit your question to the Baltimore Times’ legal tip column.**

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# Guest Editorials/Commentary

## The GOP Takes Aim at D.C. Statehood and Home Rule

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

Longtime Democratic District of Columbia Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes-Norton has condemned attacks on her city by Republicans who now want to strip the nation's capital of Home Rule.

"Representative Clyde literally wants the federal government to resume running D.C. as a colony," Rep. Norton said.

Republican Georgia Rep. Andrew Clyde, a member of the House Oversight Committee, counts among those leading a GOP contingent seeking to repeal the District of Columbia's Home Rule Act. Clyde and others have been critical of Mayor Muriel Bowser's administration, claiming that crime, homelessness, and open drug use are out of control in the nation's capital. The GOP lawmakers also cited Mayor Bowser's indoor vaccine mandate, which she has since rolled back.

"While I'm glad our intention of repealing D.C.'s Home Rule Act was heard loud and clear, the problems facing our nation's capital city extend far beyond medical tyranny," Rep. Clyde contended. "Make no mistake, this was not an empty threat; legislation is coming to restore Congress' Article I Section 8 Constitutional duty 'to exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District' and to properly manage D.C.'s affairs.

"In the near future, we will free Washington D.C. from the failed experiment of so-called 'Home Rule,' and we will return our nation's capital to the American people after the Democrats' almost 50-year reign of terror and failed leadership."

With the midterm elections in November, Republicans are positioned to retake the U.S. House and Senate, and killing any hopes of D.C. statehood.

"Rep. Clyde wants to take away the limited self-government the nearly 700,000 D.C. residents, a majority of whom are minorities, have had for the last 50 years and give absolute power over D.C. to Congress and, presumably, to congressionally or presidentially appointed administrators," Rep. Norton stated. "At a time when we are having unprecedented success on our D.C. statehood bill, we will continue to move forward, not go back. We will defeat his anti-democratic efforts."

President Richard Nixon signed the Home Rule Act into law, and the measure gives D.C. an elected chief executive (mayor) and legislature (Council).

Rep. Norton pointed out that, in signing the statement on Home Rule, Nixon wrote, "One of the major goals of this Administration is to place responsibility for local functions under local control and to provide local governments with the authority and resources they need to serve their communities effectively."

Nixon's statement continued: "The measure I sign today represents a significant step in achieving this goal in the city of Washington. It will give the people of the District of Columbia the right to elect their own city officials and to govern themselves in local affairs."

"As the Nation approaches the 200th anniversary of its founding, it is particularly appropriate to assure those persons who live in our Capital City rights and privileges which have long been enjoyed by most of their countrymen. But the measure I sign today does more than create machinery for the election of local officials. It also broadens and strengthens the structure of the city government to enable it to deal more effectively with its responsibilities."

D.C. remains deprived of voting representation in Congress and full self-government, which Rep. Norton called undemocratic.

"Statehood is the remedy," she declared. "Congress has the constitutional authority to grant D.C. statehood. D.C. has a larger population than two states, pays more federal taxes than 21 states, pays more federal taxes per capita than any state, has a larger budget than 12 states, has a larger gross domestic product than 17 states, has a triple-A bond rating, and federal funds constitute a smaller percentage of its budget than the percentage of total state revenue."



## Community Affairs

### MDSE announces Fiscal Year 2023 Prekindergarten Grant Opportunities

Baltimore— The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has announced two early learning grant initiatives that will expand the availability of high-quality full-day prekindergarten education to more Maryland children. Through the historic education reform law, Blueprint for Maryland's Future, both private and public providers have the opportunity to participate in the grant programs.

The \$26 million Prekindergarten Expansion Grants program is now available to both private childcare providers and Local Education Agencies, providing \$13,000 in funding to each eligible child. The goal of the grant program is to broaden availability and expand access to high-quality, full-day prekindergarten for three-year-old and four-year-old students from families with incomes at or below 300 percent Federal Poverty Level (FPL), defined as

\$79,500 for a family of four in 2022, as well as students with disabilities, homeless students, and children from homes in which English is not the primary spoken language.

MSDE also released applications for private providers who seek to participate in the Maryland State Prekindergarten Program, a new Blueprint for Maryland's Future initiative. This program provides State and local funding to private providers who enroll three-year-old and four-year-old students from families with incomes at or below 300 percent FPL in full-day prekindergarten. Total funding for the Maryland State Prekindergarten Program is \$10,094 per student in FY 2023 and increases each year thereafter.

The Grant Information Guide, Frequently Asked Questions, and other information about the two grants programs, including customer service support sessions, can be found on the MSDE website: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/maryland-prek-grant-programs>.

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## Black History — Critical and Factual, Not Theory

By Congressman James E. Clyburn  
(D-SC), House Majority Whip

Focus on the history-making contributions of Blacks in America began when Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History successfully lobbied for the creation of Negro History Week in 1926. They chose a week in February that could embrace the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Civil Rights activities on college campuses in the 1960s agitated for expanding the week to the entire month of February. President Gerald Ford formalized Black History Month in 1976, and every President since has followed suit.

Black history has taken on new meaning in this polarized political era. Education Week reports that since January 2021, 14 Republican-led states (Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Utah, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Montana, and Idaho) have imposed bans or restrictions on teaching about racial issues, and

similar legislation is currently pending in another 23 states. These states claim to be protecting primary and secondary school students from being taught critical race theory or “things that make white children uncomfortable.”

Theory is part of the higher education experience; not the K-12 curriculum. While no one will deny the significant

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***This Black History Month, we must raise our voices  
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Our history is what it is and no amount of  
whitewashing or book banning will change it.***

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accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriett Tubman to our nation’s history; telling their stories has nothing to do with “critical race theory.” Their contributions and those of many others are some critical race facts that are missing from most of our textbooks and many of our discussions.

For example, I often tell the story of Thomas Edison and Lewis Latimer. Thomas Edison’s invention of the incandescent light bulb is found in all our history books, and we are all comfortable with his story. What is not found in all our history books is the critical fact that he could not keep his bulb from overheating and burning out. It was not until Edison collaborated with Lewis Latimer, the son of escaped slaves, that he got his bulb to work. Latimer had invented a long lasting, carbon filament. The fact that it was Latimer’s invention that made the light bulb functional seems to be uncomfortable for some to read in our history books.

There are many other similar facts. Thomas Savery, a white man, is known as the inventor of the steam engine; one of the most important inventions during the Industrial Revolution. However, the steam engine was very inefficient because it had to be constantly shut down for lubrication, a very dangerous and time-consuming task. A critical and

Morgan’s hometown of Cleveland.

However, due to their race, white men were credited with the rescue.

Morgan also met resistance when trying to sell the gas masks. He hired a white actor to pose as the inventor, while he disguised himself by wearing the hood during presentations. Despite these challenges, Morgan went on to invent the three-position traffic light and sold the patent to General Electric for \$40,000.

What all these inventors have in common is that these critical facts about Black Americans have been overlooked and forgotten by history. In fact, when the Lemelson-MIT Invention Index was released in 2012, of the 1,000 young people between 16 and 25 were asked who was the greatest inventor of all time, 52 percent said Thomas Edison. There were no Black inventors on the list, which illustrates how we are failing our students by perpetrating false equivalences like critical race theory verses critical race facts.

This Black History Month, we must raise our voices and fight against the false, politically motivated, narrative about schools teaching critical race theory. Our history is what it is and no amount of whitewashing or book banning will change it. But with enlightened leadership, we can learn its lessons.

Dr. Woodson wrote of his Negro History Week creation that, “If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.”

There are so many African Americans in all walks of life who have been trailblazers. If we don’t tell their stories and teach future generations of their contributions, our history is erased. And that is a critical fact.

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# New collaborative seeks to investment in media organizations as critical civic infrastructure

By Stacy M. Brown

David Morgan, Founder & President of the Multicultural Media & Correspondents Association (MMCA), and Linda Miller, the manager of the Donald Reynolds Journalism Institute (RJI), have each declared that a robust, resilient, and diverse media ecosystem count as essential to a community's well being.

The duo said making financing available for multicultural and local news publishers is as important as affordable housing, reliable transportation, and access to capital.

That's why they've announced a new partnership that targets the needs of local publishers.

As part of RJI's Inclusive Media and Economies Project, RJI, MMCA, and Dynasty Consulting have teamed up to help publishers of color tap into community development, revitalization, and reinvestment funds.

They have pledged that the organizations use those investments to test new revenue strategies and build more sustainable business models.

RJI will provide seed money and administrative support to the partnership, and MMCA and Dynasty will develop the engagement strategies and facilitate pilot projects with individual publishers.

"Multicultural media have long played a critical role in the civic, social and economic health of communities," Morgan noted. "They are connectors and convenors. They create jobs. They are trusted sources of relevant, actionable, and often life-saving information for the very populations that community-centered financing was created to serve."

He added that by connecting the dots between community media and



**David Morgan, Founder & President  
Multicultural Media & Correspondents  
Association**

community development, the groups hope to create an entirely new funding source for media outlets serving communities of color, positioning them to advance a more inclusive narrative of the economy—and to compete in that economy.

Miller said the institution many often turn to for funding critical community infrastructure, like banks, community development finance institutions, and government agencies, largely ignore community media as an essential building block.

"Back in April 2020, I was really thinking and having conversations about the need to come out of Covid with a more equitable economy and a more equitable media," Miller remarked. "I wanted to explore the intersection of those two things, and it came down to the question of if robust, diverse media ecosystem is so important and essential to a healthy economy, then why isn't BIPOC media and community media, in particular, a bigger part of the conversation having to do with economic development and community



**Linda Miller,  
Manager  
Donald Reynolds Journalism Institute**

development strategies?"

She said she considered what it would take to make a change.

"It's clear that there's a blind spot where people who work in the community development space and where they are coming from and really not viewing and funding community media as part of the overall community development strategy," Miller continued. "When I connected with David Morgan, we had a meeting of the minds, and we knew that we had to change that system and address that blind spot."

The duo pointed to an October 2019 report that found that of the \$1.1 billion journalism grants in the United States between 2013 and 2017, only 8.1 percent went to journalism efforts specifically designed to serve populations that included racial and ethnic groups, women and girls, and LGBTQ+ communities.

Morgan called an investment in community media an economic development strategy a force multiplier.

"More diverse media ownership gives communities power and resources to

control their own narrative, and part of that narrative is the transformational impact that community development and revitalization can have on closing the racial wealth gap — and boosting the economy overall," he said.

Officials said the partnership expands the reach and impact of RJI's "Inclusive Media and Economies" project.

It integrates it into MMCA's ongoing efforts to increase BIPOC media ownership through advocacy, coalition building, galvanizing public, private and philanthropic resources, and its BIPOC Media Incubator.

"BIPOC media is facing a dire situation on the revenue side and audience engagement because of the drying of advertising, their business model isn't working well, and most are underwater, and all will need a business transformation that will take them from where they are to being sustainable in the future," said Morgan, pointing out that future sustainability is critical.

"That will take a level of intentionality and the alignment of resources and strategy that the average media company can't take on by themselves," Morgan asserted. "But, because they are vital, we felt the need for a dedicated infrastructure system in which to take them through that process, and that is what our business incubator is all about."

"Just having a system isn't enough. We know that there's a need for new revenue sources from investing to building infrastructure and a sustainable revenue base to replace advertising. Once, we reached out to public and private entities and said, 'you are trying to invest in our community, and you haven't tapped into one of the strongest potential partners.' As a result, we've had very little push back."



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Through this effort, our team in Greater Maryland recently presented Maryland Food Bank with a check for \$115,000. This contribution is in addition to our long-standing philanthropic support to help fight hunger and food insecurity across the country. We are proud to be able to help our community as we work together to move forward.



*Janet*

Janet Currie  
President, Bank of America Greater Maryland

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# CIAA Tournament Highlights



CIAA Commissioner Jacquie McWilliams expresses her enthusiasm about Baltimore hosting the CIAA Tournament upon arrival at the BWI Airport.



Mayor Brandon Scott welcomes the CIAA Tournament during the Men's and Women's Tip Off Awards earlier this week. Courtesy Photo: CIAA



Annette Fisher, Chief, Marketing and Air Service Development, Maryland Aviation Administration and Paris M Brown, Associate Publisher, The Baltimore Times greet CIAA Commissioner Jacquie McWilliams at BWI Marshall Airport. Photo: Jada Renae



Baltimore City's Deputy Mayor Ted Carter shares remarks at the Welcome Reception for Commissioner McWilliams at BWI Marshall Airport.

Photo: Jada Renae



The first All-Female Black Broadcast Team in history called the game last night at the CIAA Basketball Tournament Bowie State University vs. Elizabeth City State University. Photo: Indie Soul Management





**Harry Stinson, Athletic Director, Lincoln University; Dr. Aminta H. Breaux, President, Bowie State University; CIAA Women's Defensive Player of the Year Sireann Pitts, Elizabeth City State; and CIAA Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams**  
 Courtesy Photo: CIAA



**Harry Stinson, Athletic Director, Lincoln University; Dr. Aminta H. Breaux, President, Bowie State University; CIAA Men's Defensive Player of the Year: Navar Elmore, Livingstone; and CIAA Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams**  
 Courtesy Photo: CIAA



**Radio Personality and CIAA Tournament Ambassador "POET" Taylor poses with Bowie State University Mascots, Butch the "Bulldog" and Goldie.**  
 Photo: Portia Reid



**Photos Below (Left and Right): Highlights of the CIAA Bowie State University vs. Elizabeth City State University game. Final Score 60 – 52, Bowie State.**  
 Photo Credit: CIAA

# GoDaddy's National Social Impact Program Expands to Charm City

Baltimore— GoDaddy's global community and philanthropic program, Empower by GoDaddy, is launching in Baltimore in partnership with Impact Hub Baltimore. With no cost to selected participants, *Empower Baltimore* (<https://empowerbaltimore.com/home>) will provide support to local microbusinesses by improving their web presence and digital reach through programming, mentorship, and networks.

Throughout the year, Impact Hub Baltimore will host five cohorts (each with a different application deadline) for six-week in-person learning intensives focused on web and digital presence.

The Empower Baltimore program also includes a free GoDaddy domain and website products for program participants and access to GoDaddy experts for additional support. To determine acceptance, applicants will go through a Community Review process conducted by members of the Program Committee. For those not admitted to the cohort, GoDaddy will offer self-guided courses to allow business leaders to learn at their own pace using an online platform and virtual support. While the first cohort deadline has closed, applications are being accepted for all cohorts here:

<https://empowerbaltimore.com/home>  
 "GoDaddy chose Baltimore because of how many small and microbusinesses are located here. With more than 150,000 microbusinesses in and around Baltimore, we have three times the national average, which is a reflection of the strength of our entrepreneur



*Empower by GoDaddy, is launching in Baltimore in partnership with Impact Hub Baltimore. While the first cohort deadline has already closed, applications are being accepted for all cohorts at: <https://empowerbaltimore.com/home>. (Pictured) Baltimore residents, innovators, entrepreneurs and community members connect at Impact Hub programs and events.*

Photo credit: Shan Wallace

community," said Michelle Geiss, Impact Hub Baltimore's executive director and co-founder. "Local businesses are essential to this city. They are the anchors to our communities. I'm excited that a national tech company like GoDaddy, sees value here and is willing to commit to helping these leaders build their online businesses. They are instrumental to Baltimore's economic growth, and this program will help open new doors and enable greater opportunities to reach new targets."

Empower by GoDaddy is the lead

partner and sponsor of Empower Baltimore in partnership with Impact Hub Baltimore. For over four years, GoDaddy has partnered with leading nonprofits to provide community-based programs and virtual learning experiences and GoDaddy volunteers globally to empower more than 4,500 entrepreneurs in 40-plus cities. Empower by GoDaddy programs focus on boosting the skills and knowledge of entrepreneurs through customized training, GoDaddy tech support, and coaches so they can bolster their small

business' digital presence and gain other critical business skills. Empower by GoDaddy is a program of GoDaddy for Good, which uses corporate donations, partnerships, advocacy, and volunteerism to enrich the communities in which we work, live, and play.

"Partnering on-the-ground locally with organizations like Impact Hub Baltimore allows us to meet entrepreneurs directly where they are, no matter their circumstance or zip code, and provide them with customizable programs that uniquely fit their journey to entrepreneurship," said Stacy Cline, GoDaddy corporate sustainability senior director. "It's through events like The Medicine Show that we are able to double down on our commitment to empowering entrepreneurs everywhere, and uplift the local voices that are shaping next generation thinking, innovation, and passion."

Baltimore has a robust entrepreneurial landscape with business support organizations increasing their collaboration efforts. Impact Hub Baltimore is coordinating efforts with a Program Committee to help review applications, make direct referrals, and support program design, outreach, and events. The Program Committee includes representatives from entrepreneurial support organizations (ESOs), neighborhood groups, public sector agencies, technical assistance providers, lenders, and university partners. To view the Committee, visit: <https://empowerbaltimore.com/ab-out-us>



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# Ursula V. Battle's 'Serenity House' to be performed March 19 & 20

**Production looks at opioid epidemic and a catalyst for new best-selling book**

Baltimore— By popular demand, the highly acclaimed stage play, Ursula V. Battle's "Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance" returns for encore performances.

The three shows will take place Saturday, March 19, 2022 (12 p.m. & 5 p.m.) and Sunday, March 20, 2022 (4 p.m.) at The Redeemed Christian Church of God Mercy Court located at 529 Walker Avenue in Baltimore where the pastor is the Rev. John Itapke. The shows are being presented by The Redeemed Christian Church of God Mercy Court and Battle Stage Plays.

The shows will serve as send-off performances as playwright and journalist Ursula V. Battle prepares to take the powerful production "on the road" to Arlington, Va. The encore performances will also mark a special time in the history of The Redeemed Christian Church of God Mercy Court as the church celebrates its new location.

Directed by Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch, the stage play takes a riveting and thought-provoking look at the opioid epidemic, which has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic. The production will feature National Recording Artist Randy "Fruity" Roberts of The Choir Boyz, Malvilyn Statham of the legendary Clara Ward Singers, internationally-renowned gospel female trio "SERENITY," and songstress powerhouse Charisse-Caldwell-Bowen. The return engagement will also feature dynamic vocalist Travina Jefferson and performers Tanya Brown-Iyesi, Nathaniel Fields, Davalas Henry,

Leonard Stepney, Jr. and Dawn Taylor. The piece is written by Playwright Battle, who is a writer for The Baltimore Times, and is directed by Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch, Health Officer for Baltimore County. Dr. Branch's interest in Medicine dates back to his childhood, seeing a former neighbor struggle with addiction, who ultimately succumbs to an overdose. The production speaks to addiction across multiple platforms, including eating disorders and prescription drug abuse.

"Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance" also touches on domestic violence, incest, and child sex trafficking.

Roberts, a real-life former drug dealer who turned his life around, portrays "James Franklin" in the production, and will perform *Watch Me Work* from his hit CD *This Is My Story This is My Song* featuring "Kingdom." *SERENITY, Caldwell-Bowen and Jefferson* will perform several gospel favorites throughout the production. Howard "Buddy" Lakins, Jr. is the Musical Director for the powerful show, which will also include original music composed by the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University student Allen Branch.

The production's storyline centers around the journey six men and women— who are three months in recovery, take after arriving at the imaginary United in Victory Tabernacle on the Hill Freewill Catholic Baptist and Episcopal Church of God in Christ's newly opened "Serenity House."

Through ministry, music, an unforgettable story, and dance, the production takes a heart-wrenching, yet



**(Left) (Left to right) Stage director Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch and Playwright Ursula V. Battle (Right) The production features songstress powerhouse Charisse-Caldwell-Bowen. Courtesy Photos**

heart-warming look at the devastating impact that addiction has on society— particularly on families that in some cases, spans generations. The production also highlights the supernatural power of God to help us overcome, and the transformative power of forgiveness.

The production is also the impetus for Playwright Battle's new novel, *Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance*, which is also drawing rave reviews, and features her original poem *I Rose Above It All*. The book's Foreword is written by Dr. Branch.

The performances are dedicated to the late poet Maya Angelou and "Cynthia," a woman who overdosed in front of the building where auditions for the production were held, but was revived by the NARCAN nasal spray.

Ursula V. Battle's "Serenity House" is rated PG-13 due to some strong content and profanity. Show times are as follows: Saturday, March 19, 2022 (12

p.m. & 5 p.m.) and Sunday, March 20, 2022 (4 p.m.) Tickets are limited. Early Bird General Seating tickets are available for \$25 until Saturday, March 5, 2022. After March 5, 2022 tickets are \$30 and more at the door.

A limited number of VIP tickets are available for \$50 (\$60 at the door) and includes Preferred Seating and a copy of Playwright Battle's new book, *Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance*. Battle Stage Plays is also looking for sponsors to cover the cost of tickets for individuals in recovery.

For additional information, or to purchase tickets call (443) 531-4787. You can also visit [www.battlestageplays.com](http://www.battlestageplays.com). You can also call 410-900-9111 or visit [www.mercycourt.org](http://www.mercycourt.org)

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# Ravens name Adrian Dixon as new Head Certified Athletic Trainer

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens added Adrian Dixon as their new head certified athletic trainer on Tuesday, February 22, 2022.

“We are excited to announce the addition of Adrian Dixon as our new Head Certified Athletic Trainer,” Ravens General Manager Eric DeCosta stated in a team press release. “Over the course of the last month, after meeting with multiple qualified candidates, it became quite evident that Adrian possessed all the traits and skills necessary to help us become the best player wellness program in the National Football League. We were very impressed by Adrian’s servant leadership, his passion for the challenge, and his vision for our training room. Adrian will work closely with Dr. Andy Tucker, our Chief Medical Officer, and lead a talented and respected staff of trainers including Ron Medlin, Kevin Domboski and Mike Blankenship, among others. Adrian will start tomorrow and lead us at the Combine next week in Indianapolis.”

Dixon held various roles with the Tennessee Titans from 2012 to 2021. Most recently, Dixon served as the Titans’ director of physical therapy and sports

rehabilitation. The Titans set an NFL record last season by having 91 different players on the roster on game day.

The Ravens dealt with a variety of injuries that hampered their playoff hopes last season. The team lost running backs JK Dobbins, Gus Edwards and Justice Hill before their first game of the season in addition to All-Pro cornerback Marcus Peters.

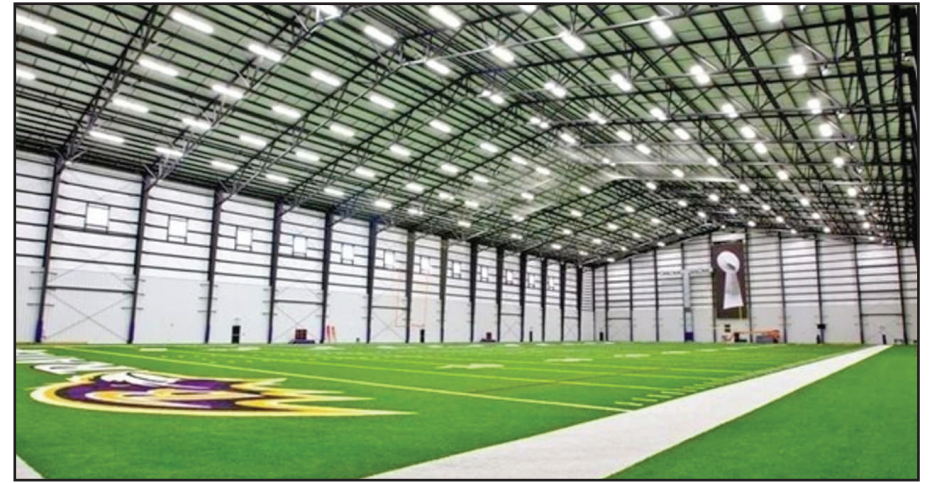
In total, Baltimore placed 18 players on injured reserve last season. Ravens head coach John Harbaugh admitted that injuries were at a high last season and vowed to keep it from repeating.

“We have to turn over every stone. We have to look at every possible avenue to do the best we can to make sure this doesn’t happen again,” Harbaugh said in January.

Hiring Dixon is a step in the right direction.

Dixon originally served as the Titans rehabilitation coordinator and assistant athletic trainer when he joined the team in 2016. He designed and managed the rehabilitation and treatment programs for injured players, also overseeing their progression back onto the field.

According to the Ravens press release, Dixon’s additional NFL



The Baltimore Ravens training facility located in Owings Mills, Maryland.

Photo Credit: BaltimoreRavens.com

experience includes serving as an assistant athletic trainer for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2014-15) and as an athletic training intern with the Houston Texans (2013), Buccaneers (2007) and Chicago Bears (2005).

In 2015, Dixon was named to the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society’s Research Committee. He was also a member of the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society “Athletic Training Staff of the Year” while with the Texans in 2013.

Dixon earned a Doctorate Degree in Physical Therapy from Florida A&M University in 2013. He also holds a Master of Science Degree with Emphasis in Sports Administration, plus two Bachelor of Science Degrees in Exercise Science and Athletic Training/Sports Medicine, from Florida State University.

Dixon is a dual-credentialed clinician in physical therapy and athletic training. Additionally, he is a certified strength and conditioning specialist.

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# Three cybersecurity tips to protect yourself and your devices from privacy threats

By Tom Kelly

Kingston News Service— On September 13, 2021, Apple suddenly released an unprecedented, emergency security update after researchers at Citizen Lab discovered that an Israeli spyware group was able to infect Apple products via a critical cybersecurity vulnerability. Before the emergency patch, cybercriminals could use what's called a "Zero-Day exploit" to put malware on Apple products without ever being detected.

Apple had to work non-stop to patch the vulnerability before cybercriminals around the world caught wind of the exploit. But while this particular cybersecurity crisis may have been narrowly averted, it's far from an isolated incident. This year alone saw a massive [surge in ransomware attacks](#), malware and more.

These attacks don't just target businesses and industries; they target individuals too. We all use our phones, social media websites, smartphone apps and other digital services to live our daily lives and share our sensitive information. Today, the security of that information is at risk.

The fact is that cybercrime has been on the rise [since the start of the pandemic](#). As more and more people rely on digital products and services to do their banking, shopping, investing, working, dating and socializing, almost no one and nothing is immune to the growing threat posed by the world's cybercriminals.

But ordinary people can and should take charge of their own cybersecurity and protect the privacy of their data.

Using digital technology doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your safety, security and privacy. But you can't rely on the companies behind the products you use to do all the work for you. Cybercriminals are working around the clock to hack your devices and steal your data; taking careful and proactive steps to protect yourself is key.

It may not be possible to prevent the next zero-day exploit, but you can keep yourself from falling victim to any of the



countless cyberattacks launched every day. Here are my three cybersecurity tips:

## 1. Use Two-Factor Authentication and Other Security Protocols—

Cybercriminals are dedicated, hard-working and, in many cases, well funded. They are always trying to find new ways to hack your devices and online accounts.

There's a lot that companies can do to make their products and services more secure. But [95 percent](#) of cybersecurity breaches are due to human error. If you want to be as secure as possible, you have to take steps on your own to protect yourself.

For most people, that means using things like two-factor authentication or creating unique and difficult-to-guess passwords for their accounts. Some of these security protocols may seem burdensome; but they are simple steps that can have a huge impact.

## 2. Beware of Suspicious Links and Emails—

It's easy to focus on the big cyber incidents involving state-of-the-art technology. As scary and significant as these incidents can be, they are far from the most common type of cybercrime.

Most often, cybercriminals rely on a tactic known as social engineering. That means cybercriminals try to manipulate

malware. So keep an eye out for suspicious emails; if it doesn't feel or look right, be careful!

## 3. Take Control of Your Data—

An emerging threat to everyone's cybersecurity is the Internet itself. So many of the websites and services we use, especially things like our social media platforms, collect massive amounts of information about us. Hackers can easily scrape data from these websites or intercept information and steal personal data.

So much of the Internet runs on a business model that is hostile to user privacy. Taking back control of your data can help protect your identity, whether that means limiting the data you give to apps and websites or even just making informed decisions by reading website privacy policies.

Don't take a lack of privacy for granted. Instead, take ownership of your privacy in whatever way you can.

*Tom Kelly is president and CEO of [IDX](#), a Portland, Oregon-based provider of identity protection and privacy services such as [IDX Privacy](#). He is a Silicon Valley serial entrepreneur and an expert in cybersecurity technologies.*

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