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NBA Hall of Famer & CIAA icon Ben Wallace joins Choo Smith for youth clinic in East Baltimore



Local sports legend Choo Smith (2nd row, red shirt) collaborated with Harlem Wizard Arthur Lewis (seated, left) and City College basketball coach Omarr Smith (seated, right) for a youth basketball clinic featuring NBA Hall of Famer and CIAA legend Ben Wallace (back row, black cap) to speak to youth at Baltimore City College on February 25, 2022. Participants and leads from the Choo Smith Youth Empowerment basketball clinic assemble for a group photo. (See article on page 8)

Courtesy Photo/James Fields

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden will be a guest on March 16 Chesapeake Farm & Bay to Table

Belcamp, Md.— “Women’s History Month, a Culinary Journey” is the theme of the March 16, 2022, episode of “Chesapeake Farm & Bay to Table,” a virtual series produced by Harford County Public Library and Chef John Shields’ Our Common Table, that highlights Maryland farms, fisheries and local businesses. The program will be presented via Zoom from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Joining Chef John and Library CEO Mary Hastler in the kitchen will be Carla Hayden, the 14th Librarian of Congress, who is the first woman and the first African American to hold this post. During the March 16 episode they will explore early American recipes along with the women who created them. It’s going to be a taste of culinary history and a how-to history class featuring St. Mary’s County stuffed ham and much more.

“We are so honored to have Carla Hayden join us on this episode that celebrates Women’s History Month because Carla is an outstanding role model for women,” said Mary Hastler, CEO of Harford County Public Library. “In addition, the recipes we make that evening will give our viewers the opportunity to learn more about the incredible women who created them.”

To sign up to view “Women’s History Month, a Culinary Journey,” visit



The 14th Librarian of Congress, Carla Hayden, who is the first woman and the first African American to hold this post; and Harford County Public Library CEO Mary Hastler will be guests on the March 16, 2022, episode of Chesapeake Farm & Bay to Table with the theme “Women’s History Month, a Culinary Journey” in celebrating early American recipes and the women who created them.

Photo Credit: Shawn Miller

HCPLonline.org. Advanced registration, including a valid email address, is

requested. Once registered, participants will receive a confirmation email from

Zoom with a link to the program and a unique password to access the event.

The March 16 episode of “Chesapeake Farm & Bay to Table” is presented in partnership with Harford County Public Library, Our Common Table, Chef John Shields’ restaurant Gertrude’s Chesapeake Kitchen and 32nd Street Farmers Market.

The “Chesapeake Farm & Bay to Table” series provides a virtual excursion to Maryland farms, fisheries and local businesses where the focus is on the abundance and variety of fare that is grown in the region’s rich soil and caught off its shores in the Chesapeake Bay. For information about future programs, visit HCPLonline.org.

For more than 75 years, Harford County Public Library has provided its communities with access to ideas that inform, entertain and inspire. Last year the library interacted with its residents more than 12 million times— borrowing free materials, visiting branches and the website, using free WiFi, and attending classes and events. In 2021 Harford County Public Library was named a Four-Star Library by *Library Journal*. For more information, visit HCPLonline.org.

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Guest Editorials/Commentary

Autherine Lucy Foster, A Critical Figure in the Civil Rights Movement, Dies at 92

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent

Her desire for a second undergraduate degree was cut short after just three days when a mob of racists assaulted her with food, rocks, and other items when she attempted to enter the University of Alabama.

Autherine Lucy Foster, who earned a bachelor's degree in English from historically Black Miles College in 1952, and whose legal battle with the University of Alabama concluded two years after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, has died at 92.

A critical, but sometimes overlooked figure in the civil rights movement, Foster's case became the first to challenge the *Brown* ruling that allowed federal judges to implement the historic decision.

In 1992, Foster recalled her experience in a *New York Times* interview.

"It felt somewhat like you were not really a human being. But had it not been for some at the university, my life might not have been spared at all," Foster said. "I did expect to find isolation. I thought I could survive that. But I did not expect it to go as far as it did. There were students behind me saying, 'Let's kill her! Let's kill her!'"

Foster visited Tuscaloosa a week before her death, cutting the ribbon on the newly named College of Education building, where she took refuge from the racist mob. Previously known as Bibb Graves Hall, the university's building adopted a new name called Autherine Lucy Hall.

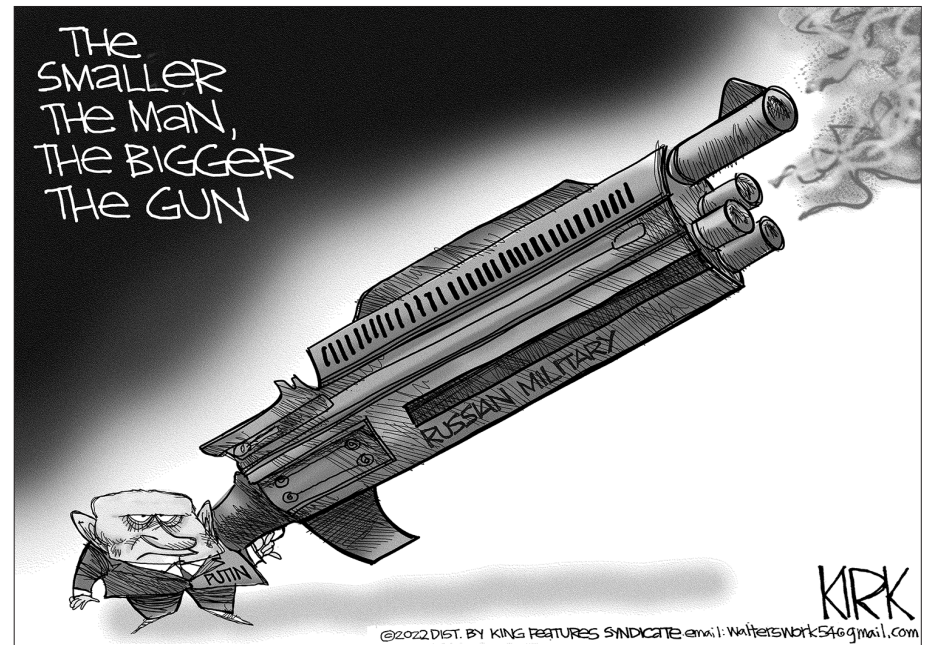
"My staff was proud to celebrate the courage and sacrifice of Dr. Autherine Lucy Foster by presenting her with a Congressional Record," Alabama Democratic Rep. Terri Sewell stated. "The naming of the University of Alabama's Autherine Lucy Hall will stand as a powerful reminder of her sacrifice in the name of justice and equity for all."

Foster "was the embodiment of courage," said Rep. Chris England, D-Tuscaloosa, who chairs the organization.

"As the first Black student to attend the University of Alabama, her trailblazing determination paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable higher education system in Alabama. Her life was a testament to the power of compassion and grace in the face of unyielding adversity. We are all made better by her example."

Many others tweeted and offered statements of condolences. Foster's family asked for privacy, but they did release a statement about the trailblazer.

"She was known, honored, and respected around the world after she broke the color barrier at the University of Alabama," her daughter Chrystal Foster said in a statement. "She passed away at home, surrounded by family. We are deeply saddened, yet we realize she left a proud legacy."



Community Affairs

Federal Funds available to serve free summer meals to children and teens

Baltimore— The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is seeking public and private non-profit organizations to serve as meal sites for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program that provides free, nutritious meals to children and teens in the summer months when school is not in session.

Organizations participating in the SFSP served over 16.6 million meals to Maryland children and teens at over 200 sites during the summer of 2021. MSDE continues to explore opportunities to expand access to the free summer meals program. Organizations that serve as summer meals sites, as well as promotional partner agencies, are integral to the program's success.

"The Summer Food Service Program is a critical resource for Maryland children and teens to combat food insecurity," said State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury. "The ongoing challenges brought about by the

COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact families and this program is vital to communities across the State."

The SFSP is a federally-funded, State-administered program. It reimburses organizations that sponsor meal sites for children in areas where at least 50% of households qualify for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program, or 50% of the children enrolled in a summer program qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Most organizations may be reimbursed for up to two meals or snacks per child per day. Camps and migrant programs may be reimbursed for up to three meals per child each day. All meals and snacks must meet federal nutrition standards.

The Program is open to children and teens age 18 and under, and to individuals over 18 who have a mental or physical disability and participate during the school year in a public or private non-profit school.

The deadline for applying to be a summer meal site is June 15, 2022. For more information about the SFSP, visit www.eatsmartmaryland.org. Interested organizations should contact the Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs at 410-767-0199.

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**Please send your letter to: Letters to the Editor
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**2530 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD. 21218
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It's time for hospitals to be transparent about their prices

By Sally C. Pipes

More than a year after the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services enacted a rule requiring hospitals to disclose prices for routine procedures, most still aren't complying.

That's according to a recent study from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.² As of December 2021, CMS had issued 335 warnings to hospitals for failing to follow the rule. Not one has been fined yet.

It's time for hospitals to comply with the rule— or pay a steep price.

Hospitals have long used opaque pricing schemes as an excuse to charge wildly different rates to different patients for the same service. In 2020, a study by the research firm Crowe found that the cost difference between the highest and lowest prices for common procedures varied an average of nearly 300 percent.

For example, suppose you're an expectant mother in the second or third

trimester living in Baltimore. You need a routine ultrasound— and can schedule it at either Good Samaritan Hospital or Franklin Square Medical Center. The two hospitals are about eight miles away from one another and are both operated by MedStar Health.

for charging more. But consumers and health plans can't evaluate those reasons without knowing the difference in prices in the first place.

Even the hospitals that are complying with the CMS rule aren't making it easy for people to access their pricing data.

“Even the hospitals that are complying with the CMS rule aren't making it easy for people to access their pricing data. People looking to comparison shop may need expertise in Microsoft Excel and a thorough understanding of medical jargon and tens of thousands of billing codes to parse pricing spreadsheets from different hospitals.”

According to data made public by the two hospitals, Good Samaritan charges \$100 more than its corporate cousin Franklin Square. That kind of information can be incredibly useful to a person covering the cost of the procedure out of pocket.

Or consider a middle-aged Boston man with employer-sponsored health insurance through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. An urgent but not life-threatening visit to the emergency room at Massachusetts General Hospital will run him \$946. If he'd headed to Boston Medical Center, the bill would be \$577.

Mass General may have good reason

People looking to comparison shop may need expertise in Microsoft Excel and a thorough understanding of medical jargon and tens of thousands of billing codes to parse pricing spreadsheets from different hospitals.

When the price transparency rule took effect, some hospitals began employing subversive coding on their websites to prevent search engines from recognizing price lists. CMS has since banned this practice.

This opacity does not fly in other sectors of our economy. And it shouldn't in the healthcare market, either.

Eliminating willful price obfuscation from hospitals could trim healthcare



costs substantially. A recent study from the RAND Corporation found that price transparency could reduce hospital spending by more than \$26 billion a year.

CMS has the enforcement authority it needs to hold hospitals accountable. Fines for noncompliance are capped at \$5,500 per day, a total of more than \$2 million a year.

If hospitals won't do right by their patients by being up front with them about their prices, then CMS should put that authority to use.

Sally C. Pipes is President, CEO, and Thomas W. Smith Fellow in Health Care Policy at the Pacific Research Institute. Her latest book is False Promise, False Promise: The Disastrous Reality of Medicare for All (Encounter 2020). Follow her on Twitter @sallypipes..

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New Beginnings in West Baltimore:

LifeBridge Health Celebrates Grace Medical Center's Transformation and Next Phase of Renovations



(Top left) Neil Meltzer, President & CEO of LifeBridge Health presents to Sister Mary Shimo, C.B.S. Assistant Leader, USA Sisters of Bon Secours the original artifact installed at the founding of Bon Secours (Top right) Maryland State Senator Antonio Hayes, 40th District and Rebecca Altman, Vice President & Chief Integration Officer, LifeBridge Health perform the ceremonial demolition activity (Bottom right) The original Bon Secours Hospital scheduled for demolition to make way for the new Grace Medical Center to be completed by fall 2023.

Photos by Paris Brown

Baltimore— Grace Medical Center, formerly Bon Secours Hospital, hosted a renovation celebration and demolition event on Monday, March 7, 2022, to mark the transition to the next phase of renovations for the West Baltimore medical facility and its campus.

During the event, a large artifact from the original hospital was presented to the Sisters of Bon Secours, followed by a ceremonial demolition and the unveiling of a rendering of a new 20,000 square foot outpatient behavioral health facility, which will have services for both adults and children.

Since the acquisition by LifeBridge

Health in November 2019, Grace Medical Center has been transformed with a full facility renovation, including a new state-of-the-art Emergency Department; operating rooms; primary and specialty care clinics; and more.

These renovations cleared the way for this next phase: the demolition of the original Bon Secours Hospital and connecting buildings in preparation of the construction of a new two-story outpatient behavioral health facility and green space, projected to be completed by the end of 2023.

These improvements to Grace Medical Center show LifeBridge Health's



ongoing commitment to creating a healthier West Baltimore and providing the community with quality and compassionate healthcare services. LifeBridge Health estimates an \$85 million investment for the full three-year

transformation project, including bringing in additional medical specialties such as pediatrics, gynecology and ophthalmology, which are now available to the people of West Baltimore.

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Changemaker N’Naserri Carew-Johnson inspired by her mother and Disney Dreamers Academy

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

When N’Naserri Carew-Johnson arrived at the Disney Dreamers Academy in 2016, she didn’t realize how much she’d put herself in a box.

Thanks to the foundation of entertainer and Disney Dreamers Academy Celebrity Ambassador Steve Harvey, Carew-Johnson realized that she could use her passions and ideas to accomplish her creative goals and so much more.

“Whether it’s the world, or other people’s ideas of what I should or could be, I, in the end, have the decision, and Disney Dreamers Academy changed my entire life,” Carew-Johnson told NNPA Newswire.

A double major in economics at Stanford University and a changemaker, Carew-Johnson has traveled the world helping entrepreneurs and creatives monetize and scale visibility through digital marketing and converting strategies.

While she credits Harvey’s foundation for learning about the academy, she’s inspired most by her mother, who left her Sierra Leone home at 16 and immigrated to America to chase her dreams.

“I realized that I could be a creative and that I could feed my passions, my soul, my purpose and still do other things,” Carew-Johnson remarked. “I was born in Atlanta, but my mother was born and raised in Sierra Leone and came here and went to Temple University. She went through a lot of adversity to get to where she’s at now. Because she is, I am, and she taught me how to dream.

“You must be one heck of a risk-taker to leave the only home you’ve known to come to a new country and a new space for the single purpose of finding you, knowing you, and achieving. That is



A double major in economics at Stanford University and a changemaker, N’Naserri Carew-Johnson has traveled the world helping entrepreneurs and creatives monetize and scale visibility through digital marketing and converting strategies. Thanks to the foundation of entertainer and Disney Dreamers Academy Celebrity Ambassador Steve Harvey, Carew-Johnson realized that she could use her passions and ideas to accomplish her creative goals and so much more.

Courtesy Photo/NNPA

something instilled in me as a child—where I came from and how far I’ve come, pushes and motivates me.”

Carew-Johnson insists that she intends to use her passion for acting, business, international travel, and global service to effect change in communities worldwide.

She declared that she’s as motivated to initiate the change she felt her community desperately needed.

Carew-Johnson already has used the Disney Dreamers Academy’s education and inspiration to launch the charities “Strength Over Society” and “Friends’ Birth Connection.”

The first charity engages in community service projects and provides a safe space for young ones to discuss social issues, trauma, and other matters.

Her “Friends’ Birth Connection” links members with children in shelters and orphanages who share their birthdays and sends party supplies to help them celebrate.

Carew-Johnson said she first heard the term “changemaker” from entrepreneur Martice Sutton, who’s committed to women and girl’s empowerment, civic engagement, and economic development.

“I have so many passions, so many things I want to contribute to the world, but how do you explain that to people who feel like you should have one particular lane? So, the idea of being a change maker is the best way to describe me,” Carew-Johnson exclaimed. “Because of the Disney Dreamers Academy, I knew that I wanted to change music, change acting, and change how Black women perceive traveling around the world, and change access for Black youth around the world.”

“Dreams can become a reality when we possess a vision that is characterized by the willingness to work hard, a desire for excellence, and a belief in our right and our responsibility to be equal members of society.” —Janet Jackson

NBA Hall of Famer & CIAA icon Ben Wallace joins Choo Smith for youth clinic in East Baltimore

By Demetrius Dillard

An NBA icon made his way to Baltimore to join local sports figures who facilitated a youth sporting event concurrent with CIAA Basketball Tournament Week.

Ben Wallace, an NBA Hall of Famer and CIAA legend, accompanied former Harlem Globetrotter Charles “Choo” Smith, Coach Omarr Smith and Harlem Wizards guard Arthur “King Arthur” Lewis for a basketball clinic hosted by Choo Smith Youth Empowerment, Inc. (CSYE) at Baltimore City College on Feb. 25.

Most of the clinic leads had ties to the CIAA. Choo Smith, a City College graduate, competed for Bowie State’s basketball team before transferring to the University of the District of Columbia for the rest of his college basketball career. Likewise, Lewis and Omarr Smith starred on the Bowie State basketball team back when it captured the CIAA title in the early 2000s.

The free two-hour clinic, which lasted for about two hours, was a day of fun, basketball skill development and most importantly—learning. Most of the clinic participants—a few dozen aspiring basketball players aged 10 to 17—were from the Choo Smith Youth Empowerment Program.

A dynamic warmup was the first phase of the clinic, followed by a variety of drills that emphasized ball handling, footwork, defense, shooting and conditioning. About an hour into the clinic, the children saw a tall, stoic man walk through the gym doors. Wallace had arrived, and was prepared to offer some valuable insight he hoped the youth could put to good use.

When walking in front of the group to speak, Wallace passed his NBA championship ring around before saying a word. The children experienced first hand how it felt to hold one of the most coveted souvenirs in sports and what hard work and resilience leads to.

The significance of failure seemed to be a common theme throughout Wallace’s 30-minute unscripted address



(L-r) City College boys basketball coach Omarr Smith, former Harlem Globetrotter Choo Smith and former Harlem Wizard Arthur Lewis teamed up to host a youth basketball clinic on Feb. 25. Courtesy Photo/James Fields

to the listeners.

“Greatness is built on the back of failure,” he would often say. Coming from a family of 11 in rural Alabama, Wallace has had his share of failure. He gave a chronology of his journey, from playing only one year of high school basketball, on to Cuyahoga Community College (1992-94), then to Virginia Union (1994-96) to going undrafted in the 1996 NBA Draft.

While at Virginia Union, Wallace averaged 13.4 points and 10.0 rebounds per game, guiding the Panthers to a Division II Final Four appearance and a 28–3 record. In his final season at VUU, Wallace was named to the First-Team All CIAA and was selected as a First Team All-American.

“Playing in the CIAA was a great experience,” said Wallace, whose jersey was retired in 2016 by the Detroit Pistons.

“Playing in the CIAA kept us close as a team and kept providing more like a family atmosphere, so it was great.”

Choo Smith and Wallace competed

against each other in college, and fast forward some 25 or so years later, the two reunited to give back to local youth.

“Ben’s story is phenomenal... It was beautiful, the kids had fun and everything,” Smith said, hoping that the biggest takeaway from the youth’s clinic was “just knowing they can dream big and do anything they can put their minds to.”

Wallace encouraged children to embrace their journeys and take advantage of life’s opportunities. Despite being undersized for his position, he capitalized on the life-changing opportunity that was set before him.

“Understand, y’all are not playing this game not to be just playing this game,” he told the clinic participants. “You’re playing this game for a purpose.”

Wallace went from being told he’d never make it in the NBA because he was too small to be a center (most of whom tower around 7 feet) as opposed to Wallace’s 6-foot-7 stature to making NBA history and winning four Defensive Player of the Year awards in addition to other honors, including four NBA All-

Star game appearances.

He used failure, mistakes and doubtful attitudes that others had toward him as motivation to pursue his dream rather than become a product of his negative experiences.

When the Detroit Pistons defensive great was inducted in the 2021 Hall of Fame class last summer, he made history as the only undrafted player in NBA history to achieve that feat.

“Anything is possible. I try to encourage kids—if it ain’t basketball, you’re going to turn professional in something so you gotta be ready and prepared,” Wallace said.

“How well you take failure” was a major point of emphasis.

“Failure makes you great... It might not work out the way you want it the first time probably because it’s not meant to work like that. The second time, you come at it and try it a little different. The third time, you try it a little different. The fourth time - oh, now you got it. That’s what I want the kids to understand.”

Also present was City College Athletic Director Rolynda Contee, also a CIAA alumna.

“This clinic was a good thing; it’s a great opportunity for the school itself to feature an HBCU [legend], to represent City, our student-athletes and other athletes that came to the school,” said Contee, a former member of the Virginia State women’s basketball team that went on to clinch the CIAA championship in 2002.

“I just hope that they just understand that he also started from the bottom, speaking of Ben Wallace.”

The day concluded with slices of pizza and autographed posters from Wallace who also took pictures with the youngsters and their parents.

Later that night, his Virginia Union Panthers defeated Winston-Salem State in the semifinal round of the CIAA men’s basketball tournament. He was briefly seen on the sidelines of the court at Royal Farms Arena.

Local nonprofit 'I4031' targets to raise health & wellness outcomes for local disadvantaged communities

By *Demetrius Dillard*

Alexandra Francois, a local fitness enthusiast and public health ambassador, has launched a nonprofit that has potential of becoming highly influential in the Baltimore area.

I4031 Health & Wellness Assembly, Inc. is a Baltimore-based nonprofit organization designed with the objective of making health and wellness more obtainable primarily for low-income communities. The company's priority goal will be facilitated through providing low-cost comprehensive services that instill and foster a healthy lifestyle.

After being drawn to the culture of Baltimore and what the city has to offer, Francois relocated here from North Carolina in 2017 to follow her pursuits. With an extensive background in exercise physiology and sports performance, Francois was seemingly destined to impact the health and wellness industry.

Moving to Baltimore City was an eye-opening experience in regards to the prominent health disparities and other health inequities that negatively affect the Black community, said the HBCU graduate. Francois earned a bachelor's degree in exercise physiology from Winston-Salem State University and a master's degree in exercise science from Liberty University.

"After my undergrad, my passion for health and wellness grew even more and my passion more so for helping the African American community understand and getting the knowledge behind health and wellness was priority to me," Francois said.

"I knew I wanted to have my own gym, but it wasn't until moving to Baltimore City that I knew that I would be doing it for more of a purpose in the sense of growing and building the community."

"I4031" is somewhat of an acronym for Isaiah 40:31, a biblical verse that says, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall



Alexandra Francois, local public health advocate and fitness enthusiast, is the CEO and president of I4031 Health & Wellness Assembly.

Courtesy Photo/Alexandra Francois

mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." The frequently quoted scripture is the nonprofit's namesake and serves as a framework for I4031's mission.

"The message, the mission, not only is it to serve these African American and minority communities, but to also allow people to understand what it means to soar, what it means to grow in strength," said Francois, a native of Long Island, New York, who grew up in North Carolina.

"We can be everything and more that we are called to be when we choose to just trust the process, when we choose to go through what's needed and then be developed through it. Through I4031, we'll be providing resources to develop

not just our workers but every single person that walks through our door."

The nonprofit, officially founded in January 2021, will offer a variety of treatments, classes and services, including nutrition, mental well-being, group exercise, personal training, chronic and disease prevention.

I4031 aims to "improve and help maintain optimal well-being" and will also offer youth programs, older adult classes and an adult basketball league. "My heart bursts with joy," Francois said. "I'm so excited because I love helping people, especially in health and wellness, being able to provide resources for people who never thought they would ever be able to receive it." Before starting her own ventures, Francois worked with Under Armour

before working with the YMCA as a director of fitness operations. Francois also runs [Faithfully Fit Training, LLC](#), a health and wellness service specializing in one-on-one personal training, online fitness coaching and nutritional guidance.

Similar to Faithfully Fit Training, I4031 is in its beginning stages and Francois sees the nonprofit reaching national acclaim one day and plans to open a brick-and-mortar facility in the near future.

"I'm truly excited about the vision that God gave me and I'm curious to see what He's going to do with it because I do believe it's going to be much bigger than even the vision He put in my head for it," she said.

"Our vision as an organization is to be able to impact every African-American community across the nation and ultimately just be international across the world... I'm not going to lie, having a vision like that can be very scary and I am a little nervous. However, I'm very, very excited. I'm ready to impact people's lives, I'm ready to be able to grow a team to serve in every capacity."

Francois' deep-rooted passion for health, fitness and wellness is what drives her ambition for wanting to see and experience a better Baltimore. After several years of contemplation, thought and planning, she is elated to have established a platform that will provide vital resources for communities to prosper.

"The vision of having this health and wellness hub because I think it's needed in Baltimore City," Francois said.

"I know there's been a lot of attempts, but this one is just different." I4031 will hold a 5K Power Walk & Run marathon fundraising [event](#) on March 26 at Druid Hill Park.

Black Philanthropy Circle Launched in Baltimore, Announces Inaugural Grantmaking Cycle

Baltimore— The Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF) is proud to announce the launch of the Black Philanthropy Circle. The Black Philanthropy Circle is a nonprofit 501(c)3 donor-advised fund focused on charitable giving to nonprofits that directly support Black people and communities in the Baltimore metropolitan area. The Circle began its first grantmaking cycle.

Founded by a group of more than 30 Black business and civic leaders, the Black Philanthropy Circle was established to cultivate an inclusive philanthropic community, to build the capacity of Baltimore's Black nonprofits, and to impact Greater Baltimore's Black community at large.

The Circle builds on a deep tradition of charitable giving in the Black community. According to a report from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, African Americans donate 25 percent more of their income per year than white Americans.

"Baltimore has a rich history of Black philanthropy by individual men and women. The power of the Black Philanthropy Circle is the pooling of our funds together to support Black-led nonprofits and those that impact the Black community," said Alicia Wilson, Esq., a founder of the Black Philanthropy Circle and vice president for economic development at the Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins Health System.

Most of the founding members contributed \$10,000 or more to launch the fund, which distinguishes the group from other giving circles where the typical starting contribution is around \$2,500.



Most of the founding members contributed \$10,000 or more to launch the Black Philanthropy Circle, which distinguishes the group from other giving circles where the typical starting contribution is around \$2,500. For its first grantmaking cycle, the Circle plans to award \$25,000 grants to nonprofits that are Black-led or based in Black communities in the Greater Baltimore area.

Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

"The Black Philanthropy Circle is an undeniable example that Black success and wealth thrive in Baltimore," said Shanaysha Sauls, president and CEO of the Baltimore Community Foundation. "We at BCF are proud to partner with this incredible community of changemakers, who are dedicating their time and collective resources to pave the way for a stronger, more equitable Baltimore."

For its first grantmaking cycle, the Circle plans to award \$25,000 grants to nonprofits that are Black-led or based in Black communities in the Greater

Baltimore area. Grant decisions will be made by spring 2022.

The Circle will give priority to organizations with the following areas of focus:

- Arts & culture;
- Economic welfare (job placement, workforce training, etc.);
- Education, recreation and youth;
- Community organizing (non-political) and community service;
- Environment;
- Human services;
- Health and wellness

"Supporting organizations with such

areas of focus will have a significant impact on the betterment of Black communities in the Baltimore metropolitan area," said Savonne Ferguson, Esq., a founder of the Black Philanthropy Circle and senior vice president, chief compliance officer (mutual funds) and associate general counsel at Neuberger Berman. "This support is critical to strengthening and moving Baltimore forward."

More than \$550,000 has already been raised in support of the Black Philanthropy Circle's mission. The Circle plans to use its launch year to continue growing the fund and its membership base.

"The most thrilling part of the Black Philanthropy Circle is the sheer diversity within the group. It is a powerful convergence of an older generation of Black philanthropists with a new generation of Black philanthropists who desire to use their resources, power, and influence to positively impact a community that has given so much to them," continued Wilson. "A significant segment of the Founding Black Philanthropy Circle are in their late 30s and early 40s and are first generation, in a number of respects. Simply put, the Black Philanthropy Circle represents the greatest ideal of Black Baltimore — that we are better when we give, support, and care for one another."

For more information about the Black Philanthropy Circle, visit bcf.org/fund/bpcirc/. For nonprofits interested in applying for a grant from the Black Philanthropy Circle, visit bcf.org/black-philanthropy-circle/.



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Public voting begins for The Art of Racing, an art competition hosted by 1/ST and MICA

Baltimore— Artists in Maryland are putting the finishing touches on their artworks that will be on display at www.preakness.com/the-art-of-racing as public voting begins for *The Art of Racing*. In its inaugural year, the art competition celebrates the second jewel of the Triple Crown and its impact on Baltimore. People are encouraged to vote on their favorite pieces of artwork that depict the unique elements of Thoroughbred horse racing and the Preakness Stakes.

The gallery, which includes 129 total works, represents artists who have been inspired by the beauty of Thoroughbred horse racing on and off the track.

Descriptions and inspirations in the words of the artists are also available for public view at www.preakness.com/the-art-of-racing.

The Art of Racing represents 1/ST and the Maryland Jockey Club's partnership with the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). Many of the submissions were produced by students in eight of MICA's art and design classes. Their disciplines range from photography to collage, and *The Art of Racing* call for entries was integrated in their curricula.

After the public voting concludes on March 20, 2022, the top 10 vote getters will advance to the finalist category.

The winning piece will then be selected by an esteemed panel of judges representing the artistic, business, philanthropic and political communities that support Park Heights's indispensable role as the home of Preakness 147.

Their selection will be reproduced on a curated collection of Preakness merchandise, the proceeds of which will be used to support the activities of Park Heights Renaissance, a non-profit organization that provides employment opportunities and pursues affordable housing for members of the Park Heights community.

The Baltimore Pilot Program Diverts 911 Calls to Mental Health Counselors

By Ngozi Alia

In May last year, Baltimore City Mayor Brandon M. Scott announced a new pilot program with different agencies and local partners to divert appropriate 911 calls to mental health counselors and clinicians at no cost to Baltimore residents.

“The Baltimore department is not comprised of substance abuse, mental health or trauma counselors, and neither is our fire department. Yet, our 911 call center receives 13,000 emergency calls annually related to behavioral health matters. The 911 Diversion Pilot aims to get the right outcome for callers whenever they dial 911,” Mayor Scott said.

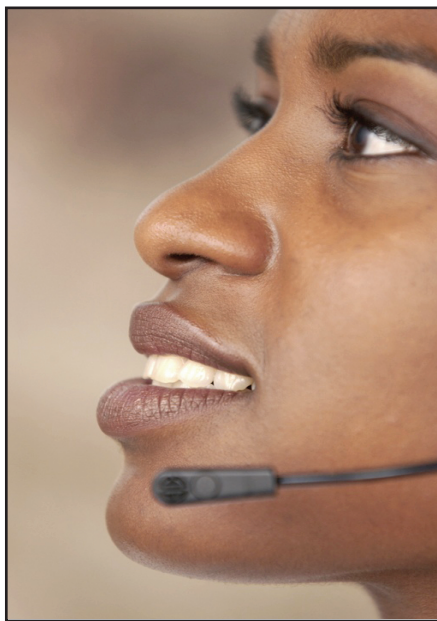
Mayor Scott emphasized that the pilot program is “intentionally starting small” and not related to defunding the police.

During the Pilot Program, the 911 specialists will assess callers through the Priority Dispatch Medical protocols. If the 911 specialist deems it appropriate, the caller will be connected to a trained clinician at the Here2Help hotline, which is operated by Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc. (BCRI).

“The Here2Help hotline operates 24/7, 365 days a year. Call operators can offer on the spot counseling, connections to behavioral health resources, and can send trained experts to help people wherever they are,” said Crista Taylor, president of Behavioral System Baltimore.

Once the call is transferred, the clinician will work with the caller. Then, depending on the clinician’s assessment, a mobile crisis team may be dispatched.

Mobile crisis teams are staffed by a registered nurse and a licensed mental



health clinician, according to Edgar Wiggins, founding executive director of BCRI.

The protocol will be under constant evaluation, and changes and adaptations will be made as deemed necessary.

During this pilot, there will be daily quality assurance meetings to evaluate the responses to all calls that are diverted to ensure the pilot’s success led by the medical director. A data fellow from the Office of Performance and Innovation will continually track the pilot’s outcomes. Organizations and individuals who make up the Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee (CPIG) will also be assisting the pilot program and will make recommendations.

The city plans to expand the pilot program beyond behavioral responses such as peer support, housing opportunities, and community-based youth diversion.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, please feel free to contact the Here2Help hotline at 410-433-5175. For more information on Here2Help visit, <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/fin-d-help/here2help-hotline/>.

Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County Appoints New Director of Marketing and Communications

Annapolis— After a nationwide search, Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (VAAAC) has appointment of Dan Cook as its Director of Marketing and Communications. He began his new position on March 9, 2022.

VAAAC Executive Director Kristen Pironis says she’s delighted to welcome Cook to the VAAAC team.

“Dan’s impressive track record in tourism marketing makes him the perfect fit for Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County as the hospitality and tourism industry continues on its road to full economic recovery. He’ll play a major role as we seek to identify and promote new tourism products, increase visitor spend, and enhance the visitor experience,” said Pironis.

Cook brings more than 20 years of destination retail, tourism, and placemaking experience to his new position. He served most recently as Acting Director of Tourism for the Prince William County Office of Tourism (d/b/a/ Visit Prince William, VA). During his six-year tenure and in his acting role, Cook oversaw the marketing, administration, public relations, sports tourism, grant writing, and sales tourism programs within the County’s Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department. He led the Office of Tourism through Destination International’s accreditation process and was named Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Employee of the Year by the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, and Travel Association.



Dan Cook
Director of Marketing & Communications
Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County
Courtesy Photo/VAAAC

“It is an absolute honor to join the talented team at Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County and to serve the community and stakeholders to help drive tourism recovery in Annapolis and throughout Anne Arundel County,” said Cook. “Throughout the interview process, I was impressed with the professionalism of the staff and the abundant tourism product throughout the region. I’m anxious to roll up my sleeves and get to work.”

The Chicago native got his first taste of Annapolis in 2006 when he moved to Montgomery County and began marketing the Annapolis Harbour Center.

“I have always loved Annapolis. Days in Annapolis were always the fun days. I am happy to be back working for a place that I love,” said Cook.

He, his wife Jessica, and family plan to relocate to the Anne Arundel County area within the next year.

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Ravens brass show interest in offensive line at Combine

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens will take another shot at addressing the offensive line this season. They signed free agent offensive tackle Alejandro Villanueva to a two-year, \$14 million deal last year. Unfortunately that hasn't worked out and Villanueva is unlikely to be back.

The Ravens are more likely to take another shot at taking care of the offensive line. This time it will likely come by way of the draft. Fortunately for Baltimore, this year is a good time to be in need of offensive line help.

"This is an interesting Draft class. Offensive line, I think is very, very strong this year. We've had a chance to meet with some guys already. I'm impressed with the players that we've met with," Ravens executive vice president and general manager Eric DeCosta.

"If you look at this draft class, you're going to have, in my opinion, some really outstanding offensive linemen, for sure."

The Ravens will have needs at center, right tackle and possibly at guard. They've shown interest in centers Tyler Linderbaum from Iowa and Cole Strange from Tennessee Chattanooga. Strange was someone that drew attention



The Ravens have needs at center, right tackle, and possibly at guard. They've shown interest in centers Tyler Linderbaum (pictured) from Iowa and Cole Strange from Tennessee Chattanooga. Strange was someone that drew attention from the Ravens at the Senior Bowl in Mobile.

Photo Credit: Robert Alam/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

from the Ravens at the Senior Bowl in Mobile.

The interest in offensive linemen continued at the Combine.

strong, [a] run blocker. [He] has a chance to be an outstanding pro. Another guy [is] Charles Cross – offensive tackle. Again, just [an] outstanding athlete. [He] looks like a power forward out there in pass protection. [He's], again, a guy I think that's very, very gifted."

"[Tyler] Linderbaum at Iowa— a center. We've had very good luck with Iowa players over the years. Marshal Yanda, to me, [will be] a Hall of Famer someday. When we look at a guy like Tyler Linderbaum, we see a lot of the same qualities: tough, gritty, very, very athletic, very intelligent and smart. [He's] the type of guy that can really be the centerpiece of your offensive line. So, teams picking in the Top 15, I think they have a chance to get themselves a really good offensive lineman."

Baltimore has the 14th overall pick so it's likely they'll get to pick from the upper echelon of offensive lineman. As DeCosta said, there's depth. A player like Strange should be available in the fourth or fifth round.

With Lamar Jackson set to command a big deal in the near future, it's critical for the Ravens to protect their investment. One way they can do that is by addressing the offensive line.

"You've got a guy like Evan Neal, who we met with last night," DeCosta said. "Extremely impressive— what he did at Alabama. [He's] imposing, physical,

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6208-0721

University of Maryland Medical System and Johns Hopkins Medicine Partnering to Deliver More Than \$4 Million Worth of Medical Supplies To Ukraine

Baltimore— The University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) and Johns Hopkins Medicine (JHM) are making a coordinated donation of medical supplies worth more than \$4 million to support the people of Ukraine in the aftermath of Russia's military invasion.

The donation will help ensure that doctors, nurses, medics and other clinicians can continue to deliver emergency medical care to both civilian and military personnel impacted by the ongoing violence.

Donated supplies include: Airway aspirators, medical air compressors, beds, oxygen concentrators, positive pressure ventilators, face masks and shields, respirator kits, gowns, gloves and syringes. These essential supplies will help emergency providers address some of the most urgent medical needs that have arisen from the violent attacks against military and civilian targets in Ukraine. UMMS and JHM have partnered with Project C.U.R.E. to coordinate the logistics and the delivery of donated medical supplies within Ukraine. UMMS worked with Project C.U.R.E. last May when the System donated more than \$4.6 million worth of medical supplies to countries in Southeast Asia for COVID-19 relief.

“Right now, medical supplies most urgently needed are items that will allow medics and other caregivers to address a growing numbers of battlefield injuries among both military and civilian casualties, including children and other innocent bystanders. We are doing everything we can to respond to that need and plan to send additional supplies in the future,” said Mohan Suntha, MD, MBA, President and CEO of UMMS. “The people of Ukraine have demonstrated incredible bravery in the face of this terrible, unprovoked violence and they deserve the support from organizations like ours that are committed to the health and safety of all people.”

“To have worked for the last two years to protect and preserve lives during a



The donation will help ensure that doctors, nurses, medics and other clinicians can continue to deliver emergency medical care to both civilian and military personnel impacted by the ongoing violence. Courtesy Photos/UMMS

global pandemic only to watch this descent into a war that is costing innocent people their lives is heartbreaking,” said Kevin W. Sowers, M.S.N., R.N., F.A.A.N., president of the Johns Hopkins Health System and executive vice president of Johns Hopkins Medicine. “At the core of who we are is a group of people who seek to honor and safeguard each human life. These medical supplies are not meant

just to preserve and protect physical bodies but also serve to honor the human spirit of all Ukrainians who are fighting so valiantly to protect their loved ones and their country.”

Additionally, from now until further notice, buildings on each UMMS campus and the Johns Hopkins Hospital dome on Orleans Street will be lit in blue and yellow colors to honor Ukraine and the resolve of the Ukrainian people.

Data from two CDC reports show COVID-19 vaccine boosters remain safe and continue to be highly effective against severe disease over time

Washington, D.C.— In the first study, CDC reviewed data from two of its vaccine safety monitoring systems, v-safe and the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). They found that people 18 years and older who received the same mRNA vaccine brand for all their vaccinations experienced fewer adverse reactions following the booster dose, than they did after their second dose of mRNA vaccine. Ninety two percent of reports to VAERS were not considered serious, and headache, fever, and muscle pain were among the most commonly reported reactions. V-safe data found medical care was rarely received after a booster dose.

A second study reveals that a third dose of mRNA vaccine continues to offer high levels of protection against severe disease, even months after administration, underscoring the importance of staying up to date when eligible after receiving a primary series. CDC examined data on 93,000 hospitalizations and 241,000 emergency department and urgent care visits across 10 states during the Delta and Omicron waves. In the study, about 10 percent of people were boosted and over 50 percent of people hospitalized were over 65 years old. During Omicron, vaccine effectiveness against hospitalization was 91 percent during the first two months after a third dose and remained high, at 78 percent, four or more months after a third dose.

Boosters are safe and effective, and CDC continues to recommend everyone five and older remain up to date with recommended COVID-19 vaccinations, to ensure optimal protection against hospitalizations and severe outcomes. For most people, that means getting a booster dose five months after receiving an mRNA vaccine or two months after receiving Johnson and Johnson's Janssen vaccine. CDC is continuing to closely monitor the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines to help inform public health efforts.

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