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Business Owner and Partner Spread Cheer to Youth During Christmastime



Terressa Brown (“ Ms. T”) is an Annapolis, Maryland native who is chief executive officer of Ms. T’s Helping Hands LLC and Tots Of Fun. The entrepreneur provides childcare services and fun for toddlers through soft play experiences. Brown is giving back to children in Annapolis along with Sheretha Moore, executive director of an organization called Shelley’s House, by hosting the 1st Annual Merry Little Christmas Party on December 22, 2022, from 7- 8:30 p.m., located at Michael E. Busch Annapolis Library in Annapolis. Toys, food, and arts and crafts will be provided free of charge. Individuals who are interested in registering their children who are ages 12 and under for the party must sign up by December 18, 2022. Photo credit: Devon Haskins (See more on page 10)

Small Arkansas City Elects Youngest Black Mayor in U.S. History

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

At 18, Jaylen Smith recognizes the need for civic involvement.

He believes his small city of Earle, Arkansas, would benefit from improved public safety measures and less blight.

Smith will now have the chance to implement those improvements after becoming the youngest Black mayor in America.

He earned that distinction by defeating his friend, Nemi Matthews Sr., who works as the city's street superintendent.

"I'm your newly elected mayor, and it's time to build," Smith declared following his Dec. 6 election victory.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Earle is a small city of 2,164 residents just 28 miles west of Memphis, Tennessee.

According to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, Earle was named after English-born Josiah Francis Earle, who had land holdings in the area.

Earle had served in the Mexican War and with the Arkansas militia and regular Confederate cavalry during the Civil War.

Following the war, Earle became active in the Ku Klux Klan, and on one occasion in Memphis, he was rescued by Klansmen before he could be executed by hanging.

Earle died in 1884 and left his considerable holdings to his wife and four children. When the railroad through Earle was built in 1888, Earle's widow constructed a small depot to encourage trains to stop there; she named it for her late husband.

The most recent train depot was built in 1922 and was abandoned when passenger and freight stops were discontinued in the 1960s; the old depot now operates as the Crittenden County Museum.

Today, the city has an unemployment rate (5.8%) below the national average and enjoys recent job growth.

The cost of living in the predominantly Democratic city is nearly 27% lower than the national average, and the median home cost is \$68,400. Additionally, Earle Public Schools spend \$13,778 per student, about \$1,300 more than the average school expenditure in the United States.

"It's time to build a better chapter of Earle, Arkansas," Smith declared. He said he intends to improve public safety, tear down abandoned houses, and open a new grocery store.

"You're never too young to want to make a difference in your community," Smith asserted.



Jaylen Smith (Photo credit: NNPA.org)

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Guest Editorials/Commentary

Celine Dion, Kirstie Alley, Christmas, good news and bad

Dr. Glenn Mollette

Award winning actress Kirstie Alley was diagnosed with cancer shortly before her untimely death at the young age of 71. Grammy award winning Celine Dion has recently been diagnosed with a neurological disease called Stiff Person Syndrome. The disease attacks about one in a million and is a very debilitating disease. She is 54 years old.

Disease, death and bad news can attack anyone at any age and none of us are immune.

Good news came to Britney Griner who spent 10 months in a Russian prison for allegedly having hashish oil in her suitcase at a Moscow airport. She was recently released and is now back in the United States. The Bad news is that arms dealer Victor Bout who smuggled millions of weapons to the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa was released from prison in exchange for Griner's release.

Paul Whelan a former United States marine received bad news in that he is still being held in a Russian prison accused of spying. Russia is apparently holding onto him for another deal with the United States. It's tragic that he wasn't released with Griner.

Please stay out of Russia, North Korea, Iran and China. There are other places to avoid as well but there are plenty of nice places to visit.

My deceased wife was 37 when she received the bad news that she had multiple sclerosis. The diagnosis was very bad news and Karen died one day at a time for 12 years. The last four years of her life she could do nothing. She required 24-hour care. She became a person trapped inside a body. She died at the age of 49. The toll that such a disease took on our family and my young sons was severe. Such an illness changes the lives of the entire family. Everyone to some extent is involved in the caregiving and are changed by the emotional drain of sickness and death. However, no one suffers as much as the person struggling with the disease.

Such life struggles play havoc with holidays such as Christmas. Our family never had a normal Christmas for at least 12 years. However, it became our new normal.

Jesus is good news at Christmas. He was bad news to King Herod of Judea. Herod was a mental illness case who ordered the death of all male babies two years old and under in the vicinity of Bethlehem. He hoped to eliminate Jesus because wise men from the East had come to worship him.

We must pray for the families of Kirstie Alley, Celine Dion and Paul Whelan and many others. These families are suffering. Fame and fortune never provide a way of escaping bad news and the results of bad news. We should also pray for one another and rejoice with any good news that comes each other's way.

We are all sojourners in this life. The message of Christmas is a Savior is born, Christ the Lord, peace on earth and good will toward all.

May good news find its way to you this season of the year and may we all with God's grace be there for each other when the news is not so good.

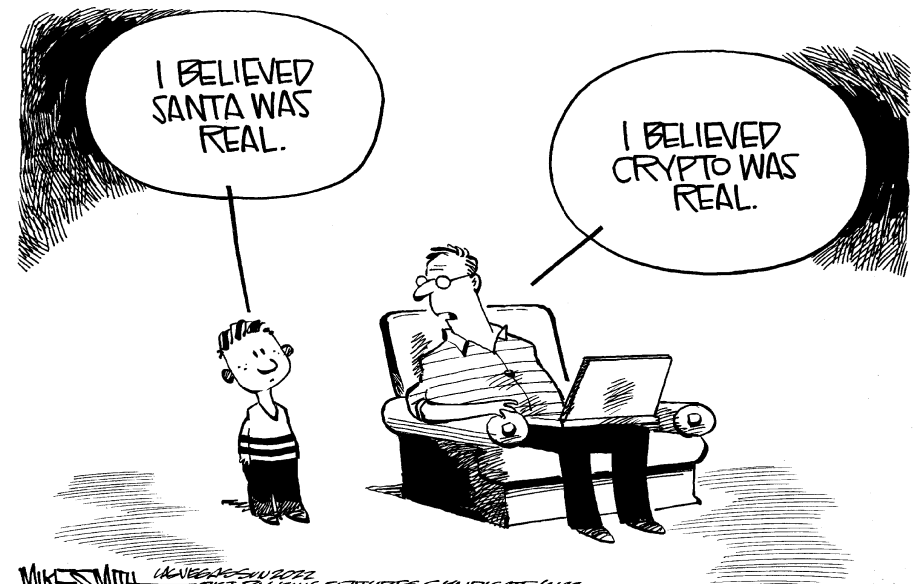
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Community Affairs

Scholarship for Enrolled, Maryland Community College Bound Students

The Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship offers “a Maryland high school graduate or GED recipient eligible for in-state tuition who is planning to enroll or is currently enrolled as a full-time (12 credits semester for credit-bearing courses) student at a Maryland community college” a chance to apply for a last dollar scholarship, according to Maryland.gov. An eligible student may receive up to \$5,000 for covering “any remaining tuition and mandatory fee expenses after Federal or state financial aid has been applied,” per additional details.

Applicants who are planning to enroll or are currently enrolled as a full-time student at a Maryland community college are also required to be in a credit-bearing vocational certificate/certificate/associate degree program, a sequence of credit or non-credit courses that leads to licensure of certification, or a registered apprenticeship program.

High school seniors are required to have earned an unweighted cumulative 2.3 GPA at the end of the first semester of their senior year in high school, or by the completion of their senior year in high school. However, individuals who are currently enrolled as community college students are

required to document that they earned a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.5 while previously or currently enrolled at a community college. GED applicants will be required to submit a copy of their examination.

Students must be within required adjusted gross income limits based on the 2021 tax year. The amounts are \$100,000 if the applicant is single or resides in a single parent household or \$150,000 if the applicant is married or resides in a two-parent household.

To apply for consideration, an applicant must submit either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) OR Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) by March 1, 2022. Find more information via

<https://mhcc.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/FinancialAid/ProgramDescriptions/programMDCommunityCollegePromiseScholarship.aspx>.

Visit <https://mhcc.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/FinancialAid/descriptions.aspx> to see a complete list of Maryland Higher Education Commission State Financial Aid Programs.

Sen. Warnock's Victory Is a Win for Georgia and America

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire
Senior National Correspondent
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By Ben Jealous

If you haven't watched Sen. Raphael Warnock's speech on the night of his reelection in Georgia on December 6, stop everything you're doing, and watch it now. Then tell your kids to watch it. And your neighbors.

What you'll see is 20 minutes that will leave you with a deep feeling of inspiration and gratitude, and a question: why was this so hard? How is it that Warnock was so clearly the best candidate and had to prove it four times, in the last two years?

Let's take the question first.

The surprise victories by Sen. Warnock and Sen. Jon Ossoff in 2021 were triumphs over systemic racism and a vicious misinformation and disinformation campaign by far-right forces. Immediately after they won, Georgia became ground zero for a state voter suppression



Ben Jealous
Courtesy Photo

effort that included harsh crackdowns on early and mail-in voting. The runoff system that Warnock and Republican Herschel Walker were forced into was itself a relic of 1960s white supremacy. It was created by a Georgia segregationist who hoped it would stop Black candidates from winning in a crowded field where white votes were split.

Meanwhile, Walker's entire campaign was a far-right ploy to split Black votes while giving white Republicans plausible deniability about their party's racism. Most Black voters saw right through it. But the GOP mustered enormous political firepower and financial resources for their scheme. That made the race close when it never should have been close.

It made Sen. Warnock's road, which was always going to be hard, even harder.

On the night of his reelection, Sen. Warnock addressed all of this with his usual dignity. He gave the credit to Georgians for electing the state's first Black and first Jewish senators at a time when the Far Right was trying to divide the country. He took on the conservative pundits claiming his victory was proof that there was no voter suppression in Georgia. Just because Georgia voters endured long lines in the rain doesn't mean there is no suppression, he said. It means Georgians refused to have their voices silenced.

The rest of his address showed that Georgia has reelected a senator who val-

ues social justice and still believes it can be achieved through representative democracy. Democracy, he said, is the political enactment of a spiritual idea: that each of us carries within us a divine spark. It is a political system that is rooted in the belief that each of us has value, that if we have value we have a voice, and that our voice is our vote. I'm paraphrasing here, and words on the page don't do justice to Sen. Warnock's oratory skills. Again, I hope you'll watch the speech.

Hearing these words at a time when democracy is doubted and under attack is a restorative experience. Hearing Sen. Warnock pledge to work in a bipartisan spirit on behalf of all Americans feels like coming home, to an America where

public servants used to believe that was possible. Hearing him say that he will fight for criminal justice reform because he believes we can have both justice and safety struck a personal chord with me. I believe that too, in my bones. My organization, People For the American Way, has dedicated itself to advancing that goal. There are so many solutions we can and should explore that will save lives.

This moment shows us something else, too, which is that a way forward to a better America now runs through the Deep South. Stacey Abrams's visionary work to organize voters made Georgia a swing state, and others can follow. Almost a decade ago, I worked on a study that showed that registering just 30 percent of unregistered voters of color could change the political landscape in heavily Black southern states. There are still plenty of challenges, but we're seeing that prediction come true.

I will close with one other phrase of Sen. Warnock's from his reelection speech, one that I think serves us well in all the work we do for social justice. This is America, he said, where we "always have a path to make our country greater." I know there are times when those paths seem impossible, and optimism seems more like naivete. We need more Raphael Warnocks in the world to tell us there is always a way. Right now, I'm deeply grateful that the one we do have will spend six more years in the U.S. Senate.

□ *Ben Jealous serves as president of People For the American Way and Professor of the Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. A New York Times best-selling author, his next book "Never Forget Our People Were Always Free" will be published by Harper Collins in January 2023.*

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The UofM School of Pharmacy and Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church **COMMITTED To Helping The Community**

This is Part 1 of a 2-Part Series highlighting the partnership between Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church where the Rev. Franklin Lance is Senior Pastor and the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy's PATIENTS Program headed by Dr. C. Daniel Mullins and the two entities' involvement in the COMMIT project.

By Ursula V. Battle

The University of Maryland School of Pharmacy's PATIENTS Program trains patients, stakeholders, and researchers to become co-developers of Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR). The innovative program is funded through a grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), that seeks to eliminate inequities faced by underserved populations. Housed in the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, The PATIENTS Program leverages innovative partnerships with patient communities and health care systems to ensure that patients, health care providers, and other partners are actively engaged in research.

Community partners include Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church. The longstanding partnership between the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy and Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church spans more than 10 years. Another innovative approach to help improve the wellbeing of people and communities has been born out of the longstanding partnership – COMMIT (COmmunity Mistrust and Measures of Institutional Trustworthiness).

The COMMIT project was the brainchild of the Rev. Franklin Lance, Senior Pastor of Mount Lebanon Baptist Church (MLBC), and was made possible through a \$1.2 million grant award from the NIH-National Institute on Minority Health & Health Disparity.

The project seeks to codesign a

sustainable model for trustworthy Community Engaged Research (CEnR) partnerships to address Social, Ethical, Behavioral Indications (SEBI) of COVID-19 testing. The project also created a Memorandum of Commitment (MOC) template for CEnR partnerships for COVID-19 testing to advance trust through trustworthiness, transparency, and respect.

C. Daniel Mullins, PhD, a professor in the Department of Practice, Sciences, and Health Outcomes Research (P-SHOR) at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy is the executive director of The PATIENTS Program.

"What I really like about the COMMIT project is that the origins of it really did come from Pastor Lance who's the Senior Pastor of Mount Lebanon," said Dr. Mullins. "A lot of this was sitting down and talking with Pastor Lance about the important issues and putting it down on paper."

Pastor Donald Wright of Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church works closely with University of School of Maryland on the COMMIT project. In addition to the Memorandum of Commitment, the project also created the opportunity for MLBC to work with retail pharmacy chain CVS Health for a pharmacy technician training program that will be run out of the church's basement.

"The PATIENTS program under my leadership has been working with Mount Lebanon Baptist Church for more than a decade," said Dr. Mullins who is also Director of the Community & Collaboration Core for the UMB Institute for Clinical and Translational Research. "While that's a very strong relationship, it fundamentally was hinging on two key individuals...Pastor Lance and myself. We felt it had to be about institutional partnerships and not about two leaders agreeing on things. It had

to be systemic across both institutions.

The best way to do that was to have a transparent process in which we could bring together members of Mount Lebanon Baptist Church, the surrounding community, and researchers with the PATIENTS program and researchers in the University of Maryland Baltimore."

He added, "We had to bring together everyone and say, 'We have this successful partnership, but what does that really mean? What is our commitment to the patients who are going to the University of Maryland Baltimore and what is our commitment to the church? What is the commitment from the church and to the patients that come in to UMB? What would it look like if we had that relationship down on paper when COVID-19 started? Could we have done a better job getting people educated about COVID and COVID testing? If you look at where we are, we could have done a better job with communicating not just about the condition and testing, but about the treatments and vaccines that emerged and information about things like wearing a mask and the spread of the disease."

The overall goals of the COMMIT project are to expand research to understand and address the social, ethical, and behavioral implications (SEBI) of COVID-19 testing interventions among underserved and vulnerable populations; move beyond descriptive health disparities research to focus on developing interventions



PATIENTS Program Executive Director Executive Director Dr. C. Daniel Mullins and Samuel Hopkins, COMMIT Community Advisory Board member take in information from the community. (Courtesy Photos)

and other actionable solutions in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders; and address multiple levels of influence (e.g., individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and policy levels) and lead to actionable solutions to address COVID-19 disparities.

"We wanted to use our long-term partnership with Mount Lebanon Baptist Church to better understand how we could be better prepared for pandemics like the COVID 19 pandemic," said Dr. Mullins. "It's about using the partnership between the PATIENTS program in Mount Lebanon as a successful model. If we had more successful models like this across the U.S., we would have done a better job with COVID-19. We've revealed that we could have been in a better position to help people sift through misinformation so that they know the truth."

Part 2: Coming Next Week: Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church talks about the COMMIT project.

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PIVOT Gives Incarcerated Women Better Footing Upon Release Receives \$900,000 in Funding from Democratic Lawmakers

By Ursula V. Battle

A workforce reentry and development program that focuses specifically on the reentry and employment needs of Black women is getting a major financial boost. U.S. Senators Chris Van Hollen and Ben Cardin and Congressmen Dutch Ruppersberger, John Sarbanes, and Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.) approved funding in the amount of \$900,000 for PIVOT. A nonprofit organization, PIVOT provides formerly incarcerated Black women with critical resources as they prepare to return to their communities.

“PIVOT has an impressive record of success in helping formerly incarcerated Black women get a fresh start,” said Senator Van Hollen. “With the \$900,000 federal grant we secured, PIVOT will be able to offer its holistic career training and workforce development program to help more women rejoin our communities. Investing in programs like these is crucial to giving returning citizens the support they need to get a second chance.”

PIVOT’s program is one of the only of its kind in Maryland, focusing specifically on the reentry and employment needs of Black women. The curriculum includes group learning and individual case management, as well as personal success coaching and career counseling. PIVOT partners with corrections, law enforcement, employers, and transitional housing organizations, among others, to assist with every possible need upon participants’ reentry.



***PIVOT Executive Director
Veronica Jackson.***



***U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen along with
PIVOT program staff and participants. (Courtesy photos)***

Participants in PIVOT’s programs have an employment placement rate of 70 percent and a recidivism rate of less than 5 percent.

“We provide supportive services, personal success coaching, and workforce development to any woman who has been impacted by the criminal justice system and is looking to get a new start,” said Veronica Jackson, executive director of PIVOT. “I was so happy when I received the email informing us we had received this funding. So much funding goes into male reentry programs, and oftentimes helping women in the judiciary system is overlooked. We’re often fighting for scraps just to help

these women and keep our program open.”

PIVOT will also work in partnership with PREPARE, a parole preparation nonprofit that provides pre-release services and reentry planning as part of the parole process.

“One of the great things this funding will allow us to do is to support programming in prison and actually go behind the walls,” said Jackson. “This will allow us to start working with women before they even come home. So, this funding allows us to expand our space to begin a workforce and personal development in the prison. Another thing is that it will provide supportive services.”

She added, “Oftentimes, people don’t think about the transition for a woman once she comes home after incarceration. It costs money for her after she returns home. There’s food and housing. She often has a lot of responsibilities before she even gets

her release papers, especially when it comes to reunification. These monies will help us to support many families and women who are struggling to reclaim their lives because of financial barriers or other hindrances. This funding will also help us to maintain and sustain our staff so we can continue to keep the doors open.”

Jackson said she will now be able to hire additional staff and more.

“We can now support the women we serve in a more solid, financial way such as helping with a security deposit, the transportation she needs, the childcare she needs, or all of those things.”

Located at 1725 East Baltimore St. in Baltimore, PIVOT creates an ecosystem of opportunity including access to housing, transportation, mental health care, addiction treatment, family services, job training, job placement, and

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CIAA MEN'S & WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

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Business Owner and Partner Spread Cheer to Youth During Christmastime

By Andrea Blackstone

When Terressa Brown was growing up in Annapolis, Maryland, she loved children. Brown took care of her two little sisters. By the time she was 12 years old, an opportunity to babysit for pay planted a seed in Brown that blossomed into something bigger. Taking care of children became the Odenton resident's official business. She grew up to become Chief Executive Officer of Ms. T's Helping Hands LLC where children can play, learn, and grow together.

"I met a mom, and she needed help for her three children. And I said, 'sure,'" Brown said. "I used to work in Hospitality Management, and even when I was doing that, I was still babysitting after I got off at three o'clock. I was doing evenings and date nights, so when I started Ms. T's Helping Hands, it was literally just myself."

Brown offers a nanny placement agency for parents who want to place a nanny in their home.

"We have a one-time fee, and we do all the legwork to place a nanny," Brown said. "We also have a babysitting service. They [parents] just submit an application, tell us about their family, what they're looking for, and then we have a host of sitters, and we would send them out to their home."

Brown explained that services are provided in the comfort of clients' homes throughout the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia for date nights; after-school care; birthday party needs when extra hands are needed; and for reasons such as providing childcare during church services; company parties and holiday parties. Crafts and games are also brought on-site to entertain kids. Some parents also want babysitters to take their children to movies or to help kids with their schoolwork.

Fifteen childcare providers work in Brown's network. Some of them are teachers, women who work at daycare centers, and nannies. Each babysitter Brown uses is background checked and becomes CPR and first aid certified.

Not every parent has fared well when it comes to having suitable childcare during the pandemic. American Academy of Pediatrics published pediatric perspectives authored by Colleen Kelly, MD and Arvin Garg, MD, MPH. The article mentioned that school closures due to COVID-19 even resulted in older children needing supervision throughout the day. As a result, parents were "forced to consider childcare arrangements that may not best align with the needs of their family." High-quality childcare was nearly inaccessible for some families, according to the article.

Brown's business grew during the pandemic. One reason why Brown became very busy is because some parents needed assistance helping students with their educational needs while working themselves. Ms. T's Helping Hands LLC was able to step in. Her new venture called Tots Of Fun offers mobile soft play packages for children six and under. Items such as a moon bounce, soft blocks, and foam tile flooring are brought to customers.

Although Brown stays busy building her small business, she makes time to support children and families in the community. The entrepreneur is busy preparing to host the 1st Annual Merry Little Christmas Party on December 22, 2022, from 7- 8:30 p.m., located at



Terressa Brown, chief executive officer of Ms. T's Helping Hands LLC and Tots Of Fun
Photo credit: Devon Haskins

Michael E. Busch Annapolis Library. The address is 1410 West St. in Annapolis.

"We will have a Santa Claus who will come and take pictures with the children and pass out gifts to each child that is pre-registered," Brown said.

Pre-registering will help to ensure that enough toys will be available for children. Free food, arts & crafts and more will also be provided during the free event. Shelley's House—an organization that provides workshops, resources, and assistance to homeless and underserved youth—partnered with Brown. Sheretha Moore serves as the executive director.

Moore and Brown combined connections and resources to make the upcoming event possible. Toys for Tots is also participating to provide some toys for youth who attend the party that is geared toward children

who are ages 12 and under. Brown explained that she and Moore will be covering the cost of additional toys for guests if it is needed.

Brown also noted that Christmas is a hard time for some families who may be experiencing financial hardships or loss of a loved one. Bringing holiday cheer in her hometown makes her feel great.

"We just decided to do this as a way to give back," Brown said, referring to her partnership to brighten up the Christmas season for youth along with Moore.

Individuals who are interested in registering their children for the party by December 18, 2022, should email Ashley.msthelpinghands@gmail.com. A confirmation will be emailed. Learn more about Brown's businesses by visiting <https://mstshelpinghands.org/>.

Baltimore Nonprofit Helps Families, Community Children in Need

By Andrea Blackstone

Anyone can need a hand and find themselves in need of help if it takes an unexpected turn. Dominique Ruffin knows how valuable receiving assistance can be if a dire situation arises. In 2015, Ruffin was employed part time as a library media specialist at a school when her eldest daughter became ill because of sickle cell anemia disease. The mother found herself not working for two months while trying to assist her child with improving her health.

Since the school secretary was aware of the situation, Ruffin was given an application to fill out for her family to possibly be adopted for Christmas help. Rev. Deborah Shepperson Smith, founder, president and CEO of Angel Wings Ministries, Inc. stepped in to lend support. She is known for empowering the community members in need through her nonprofit.

“That’s how I know Miss Deborah and I’ve been one of her families ever since,” Ruffin said.

This year marks Ruffin’s first year that she does not need Christmas help since she became familiar with Angel Wings Ministries, Inc.

Shepperson Smith—a semi-retired community leader who stays on the go helping others in need—is on a mission to support children, individuals and families from crisis to wholeness through the interfaith spiritually-based outreach program that is based in Baltimore. The nonprofit was incorporated in 2000 to serve families with children like Ruffin’s.

“I think of Ms. Smith, Ms. Deborah, she’s literally like an angel on Earth if I’m quite honest with you,” Ruffin said. “She’s assisted me in the past with Christmas for me and my two girls. She’s assisted me in the past with school supplies and uniforms. She also helps me out with cleaning products. She’s given me gas money. They’re truly doing the Lord’s work.”



Volunteers prepare Christmas gifts to be wrapped for families.

Photo credit: Angel Wings Ministries, Inc.

Paul D. Smith is Shepperson Smith’s husband and a board member of Angel Wings Ministries, Inc. Shepperson Smith said that her board is comprised of nine board members and three advisory board members.

“Basically, we serve families going through a crisis. We also do an annual back to school drive where we supply families with uniforms, and those schools that don’t have uniform requirements, we buy them basic clothing to attend school. We give out clothing and school supplies,” Shepperson Smith said.

Although the organization is Baltimore based, the founder explained that people in various locations have received help.

“We have sent things out of state for families, but basically, we serve the greater Baltimore community and some surrounding counties, so it depends on who referred the people to me. Also, when we do Secret Santa, the schools vary from year to year, but we usually serve about six schools, and then we have other referrals,” Shepperson Smith explained.

School social workers make recommendations to identify families

who need assistance.

Shepperson Smith noted that underclothes, undershirts, socks, pajamas, outerwear, an outfit and jackets are provided in addition to toys, during the Secret Santa distribution. Three or four other items such as books, puzzles, and games may also be provided.

But Shepperson Smith’s organization is accustomed to lending a hand to families who experience a variety of crisis situations. Another example involved a family that was recently evicted and lost their furniture. Shepperson Smith found out through an email that assistance was needed for them to start over in a new place.

“I was able to get them a sofa and loveseat. Tonight, they’re going to be picking up a bunk bed and mattress,” Shepperson Smith said.

Other families who find their way

to Angel Wings Ministries, Inc. may need emergency food. Some individuals have received help finding employment or filling up the gas tank of their car to transport their children to school or drive to work. When people are striving to improve and become self-sufficient, they may even need assistance to make ends meet because child support payments do not arrive.

Shepperson Smith mentioned that her church family at The One God One Thought Center for Better Living has been extremely supportive of her vision.

“I’ve always been a person that felt that we should help one another. So, if you come through your own crisis, or maybe not a crisis, your own hard time, you should be able to lift your brother or your sister up,” Shepperson Smith explained. “I believe that there’s power in numbers. Everybody might not individually be able to help someone, but

together everybody’s little bit makes a whole lot and can help.”

New jackets, gloves, and hats are currently needed. Gift cards from stores such as Forman Mills, Walmart or Target are useful for making purchases for children. Funds are also needed to purchase more outerwear for children who may wear bigger sizes. Grocery store gift cards ranging from \$30-\$50 are desired, too. Monetary donations can be sent via CashApp \$AngelWingsMin. Call 410-982-7647 to donate items,

sponsor a child or family of children. Visit <https://www.angelwingsministries.org> to learn more about Angel Wings Ministries, Inc.



Husband and wife, Paul Smith, and Rev. Deborah Shepperson Smith
Photo credit: Angel Wings Ministries, Inc.

Part Two

Diminishing Family Stress, Creating a Peaceful and Restful Holiday Season

By Andrea Blackstone

Protecting our health can involve protecting our peace. Visiting relatives may become unpleasant for people who have strained relationships with family members. While Christmas is supposed to be a joy-filled time of the year, family gatherings can turn sour if conflicts are left unresolved.

Joan Samuels-Dennis, RN, Ph.D.—an award-winning Canadian speaker and authority on trauma recovery, reconciliation, and forgiveness—has helped countless people heal from their past, transform their mental health, overcome challenges, and reclaim their lives. Samuels-Dennis is the author of “490: Forgive and Live fearlessly,” “Forgive: Master The Art of Letting Go, and “Becoming the Journey to Love.” She provided insight about how family relationships can be better managed during a holiday period.

Q: Can family be a trigger for holiday stress?

A: Yes, absolutely. As the preparations for the holidays gear up, so do our expectations. Families have expectations for what the holiday gathering will look like and the roles and responsibilities of each member. These create pressure points that can be hard to manage. Dynamics that seem to take our power, choice and control will always trigger us. Families, where healthy boundaries and non-violent communication have not been established, will always trigger one another.

Q: What are some considerations to weigh when a person is not comfortable with spending time with specific family members during the holidays?

A: Consider moving through a conscious forgiveness process.

Mindfully consider whether or not reconciliation is a possibility. Mindfully consider whether or not you will harm yourself by not showing up. Craft a statement that speaks to the type of holiday you deserve i.e., “I deserve a joy filled and peaceful Christmas with family and friends.” Create a visualization of the holiday you want to experience especially with the individual present and manifest it.

Q: How can people cope from the guilt of deciding to skip attending a holiday gathering or dinner?

A: If you follow the suggestion provided above, you will have no guilt or regret this Christmas, but if you choose not to attend the family gathering, guilt will only come if you choose to act in a way that goes against yourself. For example, you know that an explanation will need to be given, so give the explanation early and in a way that demonstrates sensitivity and gratitude. Don’t avoid it. As hard as it may be, be honest. Give others a chance to respond, and if they respond appropriately, be open to changing your mind. Expect nothing from those whom you inform. Allow them to react in all they need to without judgment. Allow yourself to do what you need without self-judgment. Celebrate your decision to not stress yourself out this holiday season.

Q: What is a big factor in mending broken family relationships?

A: Forgiveness. Forgiveness. I developed a psycho-therapeutic method called The Forgiveness Method and have helped hundreds of people overcome their

traumatic responses. Without a doubt, the only things that help us to mend a broken relationship is forgiveness of the person who wronged us, self-forgiveness, and a willingness to reconcile. Forgiveness is not meant to be an emotional process, rather it is intended to be a consciousness-raising process. Put another way, forgiveness helps us to become aware of who we are, how we love and want to be loved, what we fear and the events that inspired that fear.

The other big factor that influences the mending of broken relationships is the beliefs that we hold about ourselves. Oftentimes we think others are criticizing us, but it is we who are criticizing ourselves. Once we correct our false beliefs and step into a place of acceptance of self, we often find that the opinions and actions of the family are received in a whole new way.

Q: Can spending the holidays alone be a healthier option if a person feels stress from revisiting strained relationships in person?

A: Yes, absolutely, especially if our family is toxic and violent. But especially if your fears

are more associated with words, tones, and perceived judgment, it is best to do some self-development work and plan to connect with the people who want you to come home.

Learn more about Samuels-Dennis and her journal called “Forgive: Master the Art of Letting Go” via <https://theartoflettinggo.ca/>.



Dr. Joan Samuels-Dennis
(Courtesy photo)

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Chase Opens Innovative Branch in West Baltimore and Makes \$600,000 Commitment to Help Grow and Scale Local Small Businesses

New Mondawmin location features a community-inspired model with plans to help more minority, women and veteran consumers start and grow businesses

December 7, 2022 (Baltimore, MD)—JPMorgan Chase has marked the grand opening of a completely new branch experience at Mondawmin Mall in West Baltimore.

The Mondawmin Community Center branch is the first of its kind in Baltimore—an innovative, community-inspired model—and only one of 14 Community Centers in Chase’s 4,700 branch network nationwide. This format is part of the firm’s continued \$30 billion national effort to help advance racial equity and close the racial wealth gap.

The Mondawmin Community Center aims to help local consumers and businesses realize a better financial future through innovative tools, resources and programming. The location looks and feels different from a “typical” bank—it combines a modern design, spacious layout, and state-of-the-art banking technology, reflecting how customers engage with Chase today.

“Baltimore is a vibrant community with enormous opportunity,” said Jamie Dimon, Chairman and CEO, JPMorgan Chase & Co. “Business has a responsibility to help solve challenges facing the customers and the communities it serves. As JPMorgan Chase grows in Baltimore our firm will do its part to provide greater opportunity—especially for underrepresented and underserved populations. It’s important for our customers, employees, communities and our company to drive inclusive economic growth.”

Branch offerings include:

- Specialty financial health workshops on topics such as, budgeting, credit and homeownership hosted by experts for both individuals and groups
- Free one-on-one mentorship support to help local



Chase Mondawmin Community Center Branch Manager LaToya Cooper cuts the ribbon at the Mondawmin Community Center grand opening with (L-R) Joel Gamble, Chase Community Manager, Dr. Frank Lance, CEO Parks and People, Governor-Elect Wes Moore, Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan Chairman and CEO, and Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott. (Courtesy photo)

entrepreneurs grow, start or expand their small business

- A community “living room” area to serve as event space for partner non-profits
- Wi-Fi for community groups and residents to utilize for remote learning and work.

All Community Center services and programming are free and open to Chase customers and non-customers alike.

“Our approach to our branch expansion focus is rooted in the belief that we need to have a meaningful presence in the communities we serve in order to make a lasting impact,” said Racquel Oden, Head of Network Expansion, Chase. “For us, our expansion isn’t just about building branches; it’s about working together with our local team to identify the best ways to help more people and more businesses. The Mondawmin Community Center branch is a reflection of our commitment to the Baltimore community.”

The firm also intends to share what it learns from its business, data, policy and philanthropic efforts with business, government, and community leaders and help drive further investment in the region.

“JPMorgan Chase has been an incredible partner in our collective mission to promote equitable growth,

close the wealth gap and promote access to financial services across our city,” said Baltimore Mayor Brandon M. Scott. “I want to thank them for their belief in Baltimore and their continued commitment to economic mobility in historically redlined and underserved communities. This is a great example of the role private institutions play in Baltimore’s renaissance.”

Expanding Minority Small Business Growth

JPMorgan Chase announced the next beneficiary of its \$20 million five-year philanthropic commitment. The Harbor Bank of Maryland Community Development Corporation will receive \$600,000 to expand the Entrepreneurs of Color initiative through their Small Business Fund. The funding will allow The Harbor Bank of Maryland Community Development Corporation to provide strategic technical assistance, access to capital and financial services to small and diverse-owned businesses.

The Chase Business Banking Mentorship program is a three to six month advisory curriculum part of a broader, nationwide effort to help strengthen sustainable business growth. The program operates in 21 U.S. cities, including Baltimore, and is available to all minority, women and veteran entrepreneurs even if they don’t bank with Chase.

Increasing Access to Homeownership

As part of the Mondawmin branch’s customer offerings, Chase Home Lending is offering a \$5,000 homebuyer grant to help cover closing or down payment costs for qualified homebuyers purchasing a home in diverse and underserved communities across the nation. This benefit is currently available in 180 neighborhoods in Baltimore.

Additionally, Chase furthers its commitment to help veterans, servicemembers and their families achieve homeownership with a \$2,000 VA Purchase Closing Cost Benefit. Customers who complete a certified homebuyer education course can save an additional \$500 on a Chase DreamMaker mortgage.

Hiring Locally to Serve the Neighborhood

The Mondawmin branch features a strong team of local financial health experts who are focused on engaging and delivering real economic benefits and solutions. These include:

Community Manager, Joel Gamble, who was raised in West Baltimore—about a mile from Mondawmin Mall. Joel will engage the community to increase awareness of available financial health resources, and host interactive programs on topics such as goal setting, budget building and understanding credit.

Branch Manager, LaToya Cooper, a West Baltimore native and Loyola University graduate, will oversee all aspects of the branch including traditional banking services and local community engagement.

Senior Business Consultants, Hans Petite-Homme and Beth Heir will increase access to 1:1 business coaching, technical assistance and advice to hundreds of Baltimore entrepreneurs on everything from boosting creditworthiness to managing cash flow to effective marketing.

Here for the Holidays

This holiday season, Walgreens is here so you can show up healthy and hearty for your loved ones.

Walgreens specially trained pharmacists have safely administered over 100 million COVID-19 vaccines in the past three years. Through online scheduling or within the Walgreens app offering same-day appointments, Walgreens makes it easy to stay up-to-date on recommended vaccines, like the updated COVID-19 booster and flu shot. Plus, COVID-19 treatments are now more accessible if you or a loved one becomes ill. As you plan your holiday festivities, consider the answers to these 5 questions:

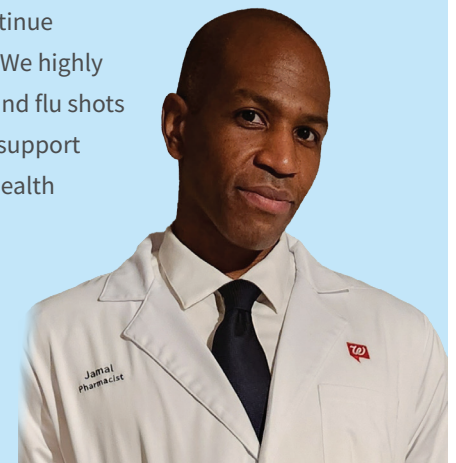
- 1 How long does it take for the COVID-19 vaccine to be effective?**
It typically takes two weeks, so there's still enough time to prepare for your festivities! Free COVID-19 vaccines and updated boosters are available at Walgreens via same-day appointments. Getting your primary series or updated COVID-19 booster helps you stay protected against COVID-19 variants.
- 2 Why is it necessary to have both a COVID-19 and flu vaccine?**
With both COVID-19 and flu circulating, with the highest flu activity reported in more than a decade, staying up to date with vaccines is critical to providing protection and helping to prevent illness, medical visits and hospitalizations for you and your family.
- 3 Is it safe to receive both the COVID-19 shot or booster and annual flu shot at the same time?**
Yes. Studies conducted by the CDC throughout the pandemic indicate that it is safe to get both a flu vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine at the same visit. Talk to your pharmacist to determine which vaccines suit your health needs.
- 4 What else can I do to prevent a super spreader at my holiday gathering?**
For further protection, your local Walgreens offers a variety of masks, hand sanitizers and COVID-19 testing options, including at-home COVID-19 tests available at no cost to you!
- 5 COVID-19 treatments were once hard to come by. What is Walgreens doing to make once limited COVID-19 treatments more accessible?**
Walgreens now offers free prescription delivery of Paxlovid, a COVID-19 oral antiviral therapy, directly to the doorsteps of those in need, with the help of delivery partners DoorDash and Uber Health for same day delivery.

MEET THE PHARMACIST

Jamal Downer, PharmD

Pharmacy Manager, New York, NY

“No matter your reason why, Walgreens pharmacists want to help you stay up to date on your vaccinations so you can continue showing up for the people you love. We highly recommend getting your COVID-19 and flu shots as soon as possible. We continue to support your general wellbeing and overall health beyond vaccinations as well. If you or a loved one becomes ill, contact your local pharmacist who can provide testing and prescribe the appropriate treatment options.”



Schedule your appointment by scanning this QR code or visiting: [walgreens.com/findcare/schedule-vaccine](https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/schedule-vaccine)

Vaccines are either covered by insurance or government assistance. Vaccines are subject to availability. State-, age- and health-related restrictions may apply.

PIVOT Receives \$900,000 in Funding from Democratic Lawmakers

community connections. PIVOT brings together employers, service providers, government agencies, nonprofits, faith-based groups and community members at large to help change perceptions and reduce the stigma of incarceration that follows women for a lifetime.

PIVOT conducts an eight-week program followed by six months of intensive personal success coaching (case management) and ongoing alumni support. Jackson said PIVOT applied for the grant and that the monies will soon be dispersed.

“From the depths of my heart and all of the women, I am so grateful for this funding,” she said. “I’m so grateful that the lawmakers were courageous enough to be the champions and say, ‘let’s take this money and fund a program in Baltimore City that is working with women’. What many people don’t understand is working with a woman not only changes the trajectory of that woman’s life, but it changes the trajectory of that woman’s family and the generations to come.”

She added, “Our main goal is to help that woman and her family heal and move forward. If she and her family can heal and move forward, she’s able to heal the generations coming behind her. I am just so grateful that the lawmakers championed and advocated for this funding so that we can continue to do the amazing work that we set out to do.”

For more information about PIVOT, visit <https://www.pivotprogram.org/>

Are you having trouble obtaining or updating your birth certificate? Here’s what you need to know.

By Chris Sweeney

There are many reasons why someone may need to request a new birth certificate. You may have lost yours or maybe you need a new certificate to reflect a name change. Perhaps you discovered a misspelling or other error on your birth certificate. Though dealing with state agencies may seem tedious or intimidating, the good news is that Maryland has a procedure for addressing each of these scenarios.

If you’ve lost your birth certificate and want a new copy, you can contact the Vital Statistics Administration at 410-764-3038 or by visiting <https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Pages/Home.aspx> On this site, you can book an in-person appointment or place an online order. You also can obtain the proper form to mail a request.

To obtain a new birth certificate, you must submit certain required documents. A valid, government-issued photo ID such as a driver’s license, passport or state photo ID showing your current address will be sufficient. If you do not have a valid photo ID, you must submit two of the following documents: a current utility bill, car registration, rental agreement, pay stub, tax return, bank statement or letter from a government agency requesting your vital records.

If you wish to correct or update your birth certificate, there are different processes depending on your reason for doing so. Those seeking to correct mistakes such as misspellings or omissions can submit a form by mail. This form is an affidavit where you will attest to the truth of the information you provide, and you must have the document notarized. Persons seven years of age or older who seek to correct their birth certificate must provide two documents from the long list found on the form. Documents



Courtesy photo

can include a voter registration card, doctor’s office records, marriage certificates and more.

Those seeking to change the sex designation on their birth certificate have their own process to go through. A form can be mailed to the Vital Statistics Administration along with the required documents. The person making this request also must present proof that one of the following is true: a health care practitioner certifies that the applicant has undergone gender-affirming treatment, a health care practitioner certifies that the applicant is intersex, or a court has issued an order for a gender change. You will need to provide a certified copy of the court order.

A \$10 fee – payable by check or money order to the State of Maryland – must be paid for every copy of a birth certificate you request.

Finally, if your birth certificate contains a more unusual error not

mentioned here, such as an incorrect parent’s name, you may need to obtain a court order by filing a lawsuit known as a Complaint for Writ of Mandamus. This is a legal action that must be filed in the Circuit Court for the city or county where you live. In the filing, you must detail your reasons for wanting to change your birth certificate and ask the court for an order granting your request.

Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service can help you obtain a court order granting a name change, gender change or other birth certificate correction. Visit us at mvlslaw.org or call 443-547-6537 between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

Chris Sweeney is the Workforce Development Manager at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service. He can be reached at csweeney@mvlslaw.org.

Ravens QB Anthony Brown is Next Up



Anthony Brown Photo credit: Getty Images

By Tyler Hamilton

The path to the playoffs has been a rough and tough one for the Baltimore Ravens. Injuries have taken their toll, especially at quarterback. Just last week, the talk was of backup quarterback Tyler Huntley taking over for the Ravens after starter Lamar Jackson went down with a knee injury. Huntley suffered a concussion in Sunday's 16-14 win over the Pittsburgh Steelers opening up a path for Anthony Brown to make his NFL debut.

Brown, an undrafted rookie from Oregon came on in relief for Huntley with the ball on Baltimore's one-yard line.

"Honestly, [I was thinking] it was an opportunity for a 99-yard drive," Brown said.

Brown completed a three-yard pass

to Demarcus Robinson, but the Ravens didn't get much else on that drive before punting.

"When you might least expect it, there's your opportunity, and he stepped into it heroically," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said.

"That's kind of how he is. His personality is that. He's kind of calm, cool and collected," Harbaugh said. "[He's] very much a student of the game; [he] works very hard at it in terms of preparing himself."

Harbaugh mentioned how he spoke with Brown in his office when the two first met during his top 30 visit before the NFL Draft last April. The stoic approach that Brown took to that first meeting is the same one the rookie took to the field last Sunday.

Harbaugh called Brown a real serious dude that has a business

approach. The visit stood out for Harbaugh because of a quote that Brown left the coach with.

Added Harbaugh, "I think he said something and made a quote that his dad gave him; 'If you stay ready, you don't have to get ready,' right? What an awesome lesson to learn from your dad."

"I've been hearing it all my life from my father, 'Stay ready so you don't have to get ready.' This was just a testament to that. Then on top of it – like I said – just following the plan, following the process and making sure I was ready for whenever this moment came," Brown said.

Brown only completed three out of his five pass attempts for 16 yards, but he did what he had to do to keep the Ravens from losing.

Tight end Mark Andrews complimented Brown for how he took command of the huddle from the moment he stepped in for Huntley. That takes a lot of confidence for a rookie.

The confidence that Brown had comes from the preparation he worked to carry out over three seasons.

"They had a plan as soon as I got here to make sure that I would be prepared within any situation," Brown said. "It was unbelievable; they said they had a plan for me, and low and behold, here we are in Pittsburgh, and we got it done."

Brown and the Ravens got it done against the Steelers. Their next opponent will be when they travel to Cleveland to face the Browns on Saturday at home.

Legal Notice

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. W.C. 1288-Small Water Main Replacement and Rehabilitation in Beechfield, Yale Heights Neighborhoods and Vicinity** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M. on **January 18, 2023**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from 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 9, 2022** 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 pre-qualified 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 **\$10,000,000.01 to \$15,000,000.00**.

A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. Vendor can call 1 667-228-6519 Phone Conference ID: 580 970 839# on **December 14, 2022 at 1:00 PM**. Last date for contractor questions (to be submitted only via Cynthia.Harry@baltimorecity.gov and Muhammad.Tak@baltimorecity.gov) is December 21, 2022, by 4:30 PM. Question submitted after the deadline will not be responded to and contractors will be required to submit their bids based on the available information.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting> For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator Cynthia.Harry@baltimorecity.gov

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

Replacement, cleaning and cement-mortar lining of 4-inch thru 16-inch water mains, replacement of valves, fittings and appurtenances; Replacement of existing galvanized water service lines with new copper pipes, replacement of small residential meter settings and meter vaults, roadway paving, sidewalk restoration, curb and gutter replacement, erosion and sediment control, and maintenance of traffic as required.

This project includes U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Loan Funding.

The MBE goal is **16%**

The WBE goal is **7%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Jason W. Mitchell
Director
Department of Public Works

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call:
410-366-3900
email: legals@btimes.com

Legal Notice

CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES
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 **GS 21802 – Baltimore Convention Center Elevator Replacement**, will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204, City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M. on **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023**. Board of Estimates employees will be stationed at the Security Unit Counter just inside the Holliday Street entrance to City Hall from 10:45 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. every Wednesday to receive Bids.

Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. The bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. Bid opening proceedings can be also viewed live at <https://www.charmtvbaltimore.com/live-stream> at 12:00 noon. Bid tabulation sheets detailing the bids received will be publicly posted to the Comptroller's website by COB on the date of bid opening.

The Contract Documents may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **\$50.00** by contacting Azza Rizkallah at azza.rizkallah@baltimorecity.gov as of **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 09, 2022**.

Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.

All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be pre-qualified by the City of Baltimore Boards and Commissions. Interested contractors should call 410 396-6883 or contact the Office of Boards and Commissions at 4 South Frederick Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a Joint Venture ("JV"), then in that event, the documents that establish the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **G90012 – INSTALLATION OF ELEVATORS**

The Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$500,000.01 to \$1,000,000.00** A "Pre-Bidding information" session will be conducted at the site: **1 W. Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21201 on TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.**

Principal Items of work for this project are:

Installation of Elevators

Electrical

The MBE goal is **5%**

The WBE goal is **3%**

CONTRACT NO. GS 21802

APPROVED:
Erika McClammy
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Berke Attila
Director, Department of
General Services



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