

# The Annapolis Times

Vol. 37 No. 45

September 8 - 14, 2023

A Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore Publication

## Pop-Up Exhibition Celebrates Black Cyclists



*L-R: Leah Wells, Focus & Fabulous Events LLC; celebrity Artist Robert Hansen; multi-championship cyclist Rahsaan Bahati and Maryland Cycling Classics (MCC) Ambassador; Paris M Brown, Associate Publisher, The Baltimore Times; Joy Bramble, Publisher, The Baltimore Times; Ursula Spencer, Founder, Dope Nerds; Olympian Cyclists Nelson Beasley Vails and MCC Ambassador; Al Hutchinson, CEO, Visit Baltimore and Steven Brunner, President & Founder, KOM Sports Marketing. Photo Credit: Ian Harpool*



# Meet the Leader Mentoring Maryland's Young Business Owners

By Andrea Blackstone

American Business Women's Day is recognized on September 22. Dr. Marlene Jackson founded Biz Kidz Academy along with her daughter, Ashley Cole, in 2016. The dedicated pair opens doors to support business interest in young entrepreneurs.

"Biz Kidz Academy is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization developed to inspire kids and teens [ages 8-18] to become successful young entrepreneurs. Our goal is to motivate kids to creatively embrace their enterprising spirit, lead confidently, think critically and be financially responsible," Jackson said.

Born the youngest of seven in Chicago, Illinois, Jackson was inspired by Frances Barber. Her dedicated mother established a mission to make a difference in the lives of her children. Jackson continues a legacy of building up youth who find their way to the doors of Biz Kidz Academy.

"With the encouragement and motivation from family, I began encouraging kids and teens when I produced my first Chicago-based fashion show featuring children in back-to-school designs," Jackson said, while explaining the development of her ideas.

Barber's spirit touches Jackson and Cole's mentees through The Frances Barber Scholarship that is awarded in the loving memory of Barber.

Additionally, some of Maryland's younger entrepreneurs benefit from various workshop series, conferences, initiatives, programs and a competition through Biz Kidz Academy.

Jackson's efforts to spread messages about entrepreneurship led her to pen a forthcoming book, "Biz Kidz Academy... Activity Book for Young Entrepreneurs." It will be available to teachers, librarians, schools and other educational institutions throughout Maryland in the fall of 2023.



**Dr. Marlene Jackson,**  
*co-founder/CEO, Biz Kidz Academy*  
*Dr. Marlene Jackson*

In the interim, Biz Kidz Academy connects youth to community leaders, organizations, group representatives and other enthusiastic business-minded young peers. Professionals from business fields provide mentoring, one-on-one guidance and resources to participants who find their way to Jackson and Cole's Howard County, Maryland-based nonprofit.

"Initiated as Le' Chic Academy LLC, a girl mentoring program, Biz Kidz Academy evolved when it became evident that local girls and boys need a program that offers a creative entrepreneurial outlet that encourages their self-confidence and self-expression," Jackson said.

Biz Kidz participants also receive real-world business experience.

Jackson added, "Biz Kidz Academy is sponsoring its next annual young entrepreneur's shark tank competition, vendor exhibits, fashion show and award ceremony on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at the Holiday Inn, located at 7900 Washington Boulevard in Jessup, Maryland. The special event will be held from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m."

Additionally, young competitors will display their creative entries and sell their business products at a vendor table. Young designers display

their fashions during the event's fashion show.

Youth and teens ages 8-18 are invited to compete in the 2023 competition and fashion show. Prizes, award presentations, fashions, refreshments, live music, guest speakers, entertainment and vendors will be a part of the comprehensive offerings. Participants may qualify to win a \$500 scholarship, laptop, trophy, school and art supplies, business startup money, gift cards, award certificates and more perks.

Jackson explained that expenses are covered by a grant awarded by Youth Engagement Programming Grants (YEP) through the office of Howard County Government. This year, youth and teens must reside in Howard County, Maryland.

J'Pia Brickhouse Isbell, 21, one of Biz Kidz Academy's first scholarship winners, runs her business called Pi's Palace. The Ellicott City resident began participating in the Biz Kidz competitions and activities at the age of 14. Isbell attends the University of Maryland Global Campus. The entrepreneur will be participating in this year's event as Jackson's helper, since she is over 18 years old.

"I am preparing the dresses for the fashion show in addition to making a few new paintings available to sell," Isbell said.

She remarked that Biz Kidz Academy's competition taught her about topics such as managing a budget, and profit. Isbell also had a chance to utilize speaking skills. Developing her business takes work, dedication, research and most importantly discipline.

The young businesswoman continued to press forward despite experiencing times when she felt like giving up.

"What I like about entrepreneurship is that I did not have to handle it by myself. There were classes both online and through Biz Kidz Academy to help me learn and grow, including people my age, younger, and older to help each other when we hit rough spots," Isbell said.

Registration is now open at <https://bizkidz.co>. Submissions for the competition and event are due by September 30, 2023. There is no cost for qualified youth to participate. Future competitions will be open to students throughout Maryland.




**Dr. Marlene Jackson is interviewed by J'Pia Brickhouse Isbell, one of Biz Kidz Academy's first scholarship winners.**  
*Amir Isbell*



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## Light of Truth Center to Hold 24th Annual Fundraiser

By Ursula V. Battle

*This is Part I of a series of stories highlighting Light of Truth (LTC). Founded by Vaile Leonard, LTC provides residential therapeutic treatment for women recovering from addictions.*

National Recovery Month is a national observance held every September to promote and support new evidence-based treatment and recovery practices, highlight the dedication of service providers and communities who make recovery possible. During this special month, one local organization is celebrating 24 years of serving women seeking recovery and the recovery community.

Light of Truth Center (LTC) will hold its 24th Annual Fundraiser on Saturday, September 30, 2023, 7 p.m. at the One God One Thought Center for Better Living located at 3605 Coronado Road. Titled Recovery A Divine Gift, the event will feature Russell Thompkins, Jr. & The New Stylistics.

R&B and gospel keyboard artist Ollie Wright, musician Karter Jaymes, singer Carolyn Victorian, Spoken Word artist Rotica Lewis, and actress/singer Sandy Jenkins will also be performing. Paulette Lucas will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies for the event.

The Rev. Vaile Leonard is the founder of Light of Truth Center, Inc. (LTC). "This is a first for the Light of Truth Center," said Rev. Leonard. "This is the very first time we have endeavored to have a concert as a celebration of recovery and service to the recovery community. This is our way of changing the narrative, to celebrate recovery and to remind the community that we do recover."

She added, "There is so much talk about active addiction and overdose. Let's celebrate recovery! Let's invite



**The Rev. Vaile Leonard is the founder of Light of Truth Center, Inc. (LTC)**

*Courtesy of Light of Truth*

the community to be reminded we do recover and recovery is possible."

LTC has five buildings located in West Baltimore and East Baltimore – four are recovery residences and one is a testing and training site. According to Rev. Leonard, since opening its first building in February 2000, LTC has housed 324 women in recovery.

Women living in the homes work on a self-improvement plan while living as a family unit to support their own and each other's recovery process. The homes have been credited with helping dozens of women overcome drug addiction. LTC has also trained over 150 individuals and served approximately 2,250 women through its Recovering Hearts Annual Women's Conference.

"The journey to recovery is challenging," said Rev. Leonard. "However, it is even more challenging for women. Women are relational, and this truly makes things challenging for women. The stigma for women is incredible, so having an opportunity to be of service is heart-warming and fulfilling."

She continued, "Twenty-four years is truly significant because many said



**Ollie Wright, R&B and gospel keyboard artist**

*Courtesy of Light of Truth*



**Musician Karter Jaymes will also be performing.**

*Courtesy of Light of Truth*

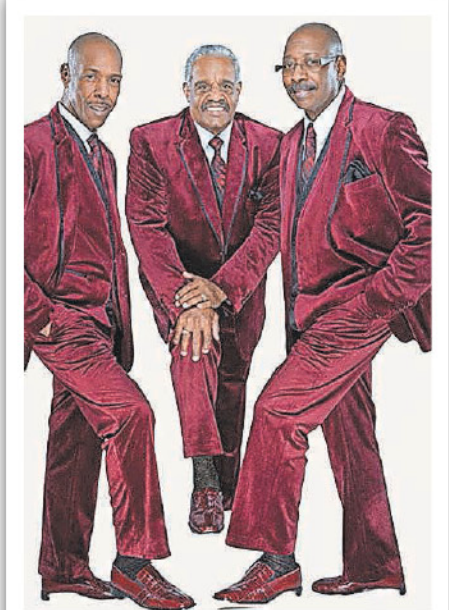
we could not create a predominantly volunteer organization that would be sustainable. The program is based on the challenges I had in seeking recovery."

A former heroin addict, Rev. Leonard has been clean for 31 years.

"I opened the Center because there is an overwhelming need to support women in recovery," she said. "Women are an underserved population in the recovery community. I wanted to create a safe, clean environment that is conducive to recovery. The program is based on my recovery journey and my challenge to recover."

Proceeds raised from the event will benefit LTC.

"LTC, like all other programs have been affected by COVID," said



**Russell Thompkins, Jr. & The New Stylistics are the featured entertainers for the event.**

*Courtesy of Light of Truth*

Rev. Leonard. "LTC has not been able to have one of our major fundraisers and other fundraising events. This is an event that will support LTC to get back on track and engage the community once again. The funds will be used to support operating funds and sending the woman to a woman's Twelve Step Convention to support the participants in their process of recovery."

Rev. Leonard is encouraging everyone to support the event.

"Everyone can expect a really good show," she said. "They can expect to be entertained by the best of the best and to be treated royally at the event."

VIP tickets are \$100.00 and include lite fare, preferred seating and a gift. General tickets are \$65.00. The doors open at 5:00 p.m. for VIP ticket holders and at 6:30 p.m. for general ticket holders. For more information visit [www.lightoftruthcenter.org](http://www.lightoftruthcenter.org)

*Coming Next Week: Vaile Leonard's Story.*



# Seniors seeking Substance Abuse Recovery: Breaking Six Unique Barriers to Wellness

By Jayne Hopson



Jayne Hopson  
*Courtesy Photo*

The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), which monitors the number of people admitted to addiction or mental health treatment centers, reports that substance abuse among older adults is increasing.

In 2020, 167,200 people aged fifty-five or older were admitted to addiction treatment, up from 109,412 in 2009. This represents a 53 percent increase.

Between 2009 and 2020, the share of older people out of all people seeking treatment, alcohol is the substance that older adults 55+ seek treatment for most often, followed by heroin.

These statistics are not limited to use of illicit drugs by older patients. The Clearinghouse finds the fastest growing addiction among seniors is the abuse and overuse of prescription drugs. "As many as 17 percent of adults aged sixty and over abuse prescription drugs. In 2015–2018, 15.1 percent of adults aged sixty and over used one or more prescription pain medications in the past 30 days."

Addiction does not discriminate

based on age. However, for seniors aged sixty-two and older, the journey towards recovery comes with a unique set of challenges. Recognizing these challenges and adopting interventions tailored for seniors can help ensure the path to recovery is more effective and sustainable.

## 1. Age-Specific Health Issues:

As we age, our bodies undergo natural changes, and we become more susceptible to a variety of health issues. Seniors struggling with addiction may also have pre-existing conditions like hypertension, diabetes, kidney or heart disease. Substance abuse can exacerbate these conditions and withdrawal symptoms might pose a greater risk.

**Recommendation:** This calls for a tried-and-true preventative care measure: self-advocacy. Patients (or their caretaker) should give all medical providers an accurate and complete history of prior and current substance abuse. This team approach will help providers develop an integrated care plan that ensures the recovery process is not just treating addiction but paying close attention to other underlying health issues. Note: Seniors typically take multiple medications for various health conditions. Regular medication reviews are essential. Healthcare providers should maintain a comprehensive list of all the medicines a senior is taking.

## 2. Mental Health and Cognitive Decline:

Some seniors might already be experiencing cognitive decline, memory issues, or even early stages of dementia. Substance abuse can further deteriorate cognitive function, making the recovery process more complex. For care providers and family members, it can become quite challenging to determine whether cognitive decline or substance abuse is responsible for problematic behaviors.

**Recommendation:** It is suggested that treatment and therapy sessions be tailored for patients who show signs of memory loss and shortened attention spans. Therapy sessions that are shorter but more frequent can be beneficial says National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). The Institute recommends the use of visual aids, repetitive exercises, and family involvement can aid in memory retention and understanding during therapy.

## 3. Limited Mobility and Access:

Many seniors have limited mobility, making it challenging for them to access treatment facilities or attend regular therapy sessions.

**Recommendation:** Telehealth services can bridge this gap. With advancements in technology, seniors can now participate in therapy sessions, support group meetings, and doctor consultations from the comfort of their homes. Caregivers and family members can also play a pivotal role in ensuring that seniors have the necessary resources and tools to participate in these virtual sessions.

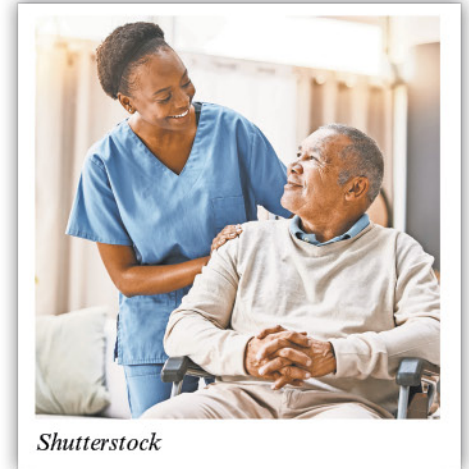
## 4. Social Isolation:

Seniors, especially those living alone or in care facilities, can feel isolated. This isolation can intensify feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety, making them more vulnerable to substance abuse as a coping mechanism.

**Recommendation:** Building a support system is crucial. Encourage seniors to join group therapy sessions or support groups where they can share their experiences and learn from others. Community centers should also offer programs that foster social interactions and connections among seniors.

## 5. Generational Attitudes towards Addiction:

Seniors from earlier generations might view addiction as a moral failing rather than a health issue. This perspective can



*Shutterstock*

make them more resistant to seeking help or admitting they have a problem.

**Recommendation:** Education and awareness campaigns targeted towards seniors can help change this perspective. Highlighting the stories of seniors who have successfully navigated their recovery journey can also serve as an inspiration and motivation for others.

## 6. Financial Constraints:

Many seniors live on a fixed income and might not have the financial resources to afford treatment, or the medications needed for recovery.

**Recommendation:** Explore public and private assistance programs designed for seniors. Many communities offer subsidized or free treatment options for seniors. Non-profits and charitable organizations might also have programs specifically tailored for seniors in recovery.

Recovery is a challenging journey for anyone, irrespective of age. However, for seniors, the challenges can be greater due to age-related health issues, societal perceptions, and other unique obstacles. Recognizing these challenges and adopting a holistic approach can pave the way for a successful and sustainable recovery journey for seniors. It is essential to remember that it is never too late to seek help or begin the path to recovery, no matter one's age.



## Community Initiative in Baltimore Pays Youth to Read

By Andrea Blackstone

Baltimore youth who reside in the 21217 zip code are getting paid to read books through the Pages To Wages community initiative, compliments of Brian Sessions. Sessions gives back, one book reader at a time.

“I am the one who founded the community initiative, but we have a core group of volunteers who assist readers, mentor, have discussions with the participants about the contents of the books and [who] seek to advance the initiative,” Sessions said. “Pages To Wages is currently based at Upton Boxing [Rec] Center [located at] 1901 Pennsylvania Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland 21217. We are in the process of branching out to surrounding zip codes.”

Pages To Wages’ first session was underway on Monday, July 17, 2023. It serves Baltimoreans who are ages six to 20 years old. Sessions said that monetary rewards are provided to young people in urban and impoverished neighborhoods to promote literacy, learning, self-awareness, community and social responsibility.

Sessions added, “After signing up, participants come to the location of the Pages To Wages program in their zip code, pick a book on their reading level, and once the book is complete, whether at that session or another, they discuss the book with a Pages To Wages mentor and are paid. Mentors are present to assist participants with reading or teach them how to read if necessary and also aid in applying the knowledge gained to their present time and context.”

Sessions possesses an educational and professional background in business administration with a focus in entrepreneurship. The socially conscious Baltimorean grew up near 24th Street and Greenmount Avenue. He is also the founder and director of The ROC Enrichment Program. It seeks to impact the way education is consumed



**Front row (l-r) Paul Newson (mentor), Jonah Sessions (a reader), Noah Newson (a reader) and Spencer Sessions (a reader). Back row (l-r): Elijah Coit (a reader), Naqwaan Whitaker (a reader), Brian Sessions (founder of Pages To Wages/mentor), Lamontae Smith (a reader), Michael D. Gutrick (a reader), Javonta Taylor (a reader), Ashton Hill (a reader) and Brenda Allison (a mentor). Book readers read displayed books in program sessions.**

*Paul Newson*

by teaching education and social skills to K-12 students using common distractions found in classrooms, such as cellphones, music, food, movement and more, according to Sessions.

Young people and their parents are singing the praises of the Pages To Wages program.

Josiah Wilson, 15, is a ninth grader whose favorite genre of books are fantasy and mystery. He is a Pages To Wages program participant who mentioned that he now thinks about books beyond school.

“Now I’m learning more about culture. I have a better appreciation now,” Josiah said.

Angelia Wilson, 17, reads books by Black or African American authors and provides summaries to the Pages to Wages’ program head.

“I am paid based on the number of pages read. One of the recent books I read was “A Raisin in the Sun” and the first book I read was about the transatlantic slave trade called “Africa Is My

Home.” Currently, I have earned \$120 from Pages To Wages,” Angelia said.

Sade Newson, the mother of Pages To Wages’ participant Noah Newson, said that her husband discovered the program while he was at the Upton Boxing Center this summer.

She explained that in the past two years, Noah’s interest in books and his reading skills have grown exponentially, although he has been interested in books since he was a baby.

“The Pages To Wages program has offered Noah a nurturing space to further enhance his reading and comprehension skills. Also of importance, is the opportunity that Noah gets to enjoy reading books with his peers that promote self-esteem and educate on Black history and community stewardship,” Newson said. “Pages To Wages is empowering children and youth through education and financial enrichment opportunities. As long as my family has lived in the city, we have not come across a reading program like this that caters to children

and youth. I’m excited that this program is another resource for families in the 21217 area and beyond.”

Sessions stated that he personally allocates between \$500 to \$1,000 each month to buy equipment, books, food and fund payment for Pages To Wages’ participants. Sessions could use help.

“As the program is rapidly growing, I am soliciting monetary and book donations,” Sessions said.

Volunteers in the 21217 area and support provided by community activists who would be willing to host a Pages To Wages program site in their zip code are other wish list items.

Sessions started Pages To Wages because he feels that knowledge of self, history and navigating life in general is the foundation to achieving any goal.

He added, “Also, finding help to impact the community can be challenging, but as Fredrick Douglass once said, ‘It is better to build strong children than to repair broken men.’”

Visit [www.pagestowages.org](http://www.pagestowages.org), or email [info@pagestowages.org](mailto:info@pagestowages.org) to obtain more information about the program.



**(l-r) Ashton Hill, Brenda Allison, Javonta Taylor, Brian Sessions, Michael D. Gutrick, Elijah Coit and Lamontae Smith engage in a discussion around a table in late August while Sessions (center) answers a question that stemmed from a book that was read by a Pages To Wages program participant.**

*Paul Newson*





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# THE BALTIMORE TIMES CELEBRATES BLACK CYCLISTS DURING THE MARYLAND CYCLING CLASSICS WEEKEND

Host VIP Reception & Pop-Up Exhibition Using Technology for content and storytelling the history of Black cyclists

By Paris Brown

On Thursday, August 31, 2023, The Baltimore Times, in collaboration with the Greater Baltimore Committee, presented an event highlighting African American Cycling Achievement at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum. This event featured artist presentations, a Forum on Diversity in Cycling, and the chance to meet Black cycling legends: Nelson Vails, Rahsaan Bahati, and Cory Williams, founder of the professional cycling club L39ION of Los Angeles. L39ION participated in the Maryland Classics this year. Steve Brunner, founder of KOM Sports Marketing, served as the emcee, while John Kelly, chair, and sponsor of the Maryland Cycling Classic, along with Al Hutchinson, CEO of Visit Baltimore, provided welcoming remarks. Hosts for the event were Mark Anthony Thomas, CEO/President of the Greater Baltimore Committee, and Paris Brown, Associate Publisher for The Baltimore Times. The Baltimore Times introduced the virtual reality experience celebrating Black cyclists by Dope Nerds. The Baltimore Times along with MPT, WBAL, Global Cycling Network, Tour Track, VELO, and 98Rock, served as media partners.

The event included presentations and artist unveilings, including one from Robert Hansen, a Los Angeles-based artist, who was commissioned to create a piece featuring Major Taylor, including an augmented reality component that narrated Major Taylor's life; Lee Greene, a Bermuda-based artist, unveiled colorful portraits of Nelson Vails, Rahsaan Bahati, and Cory Williams. The unveilings were followed by a *Forum on Diversity in Cycling* led by Milton Sharp, board member of Black People Ride Bikes, and community partner for the Maryland Cycling Classics. Panelists

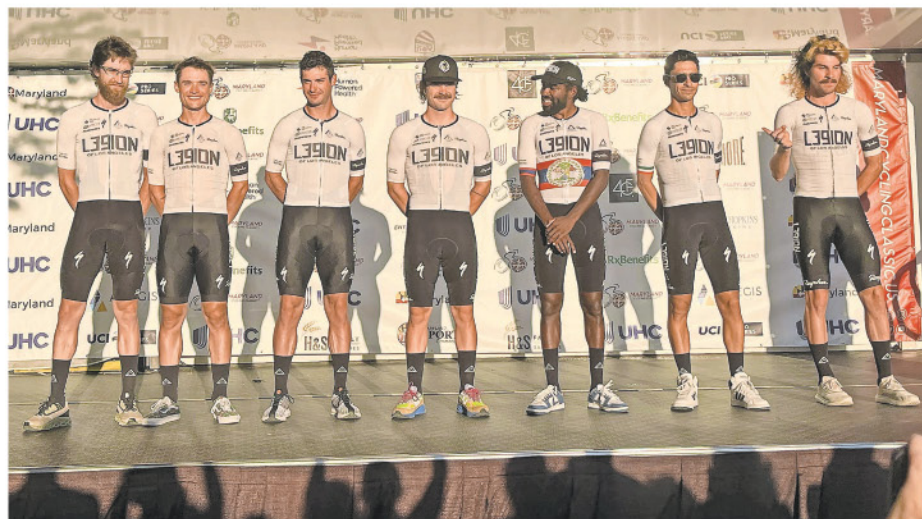
## Pedals of Resilience: A Journey to Triumph Celebrating Black Cyclists through Technology



(l-r) First Black Olympian Nelson Vails; Ursula Spencer, Founder, Dope Nerds, and partner in exhibition; Paris M Brown, Associate Publisher, The Baltimore Times; Joy Bramble, Publisher, The Baltimore Times; and celebrity artist Robert Hansen Focus and Fabulous Events LLC

included: Sheila Mahadevan, President & Founder of Melanin Base Mills; Suzy Sanchez, Sr. Manager of DEI and Community Programs at USA Cycling; and championship cyclists Nelson Vails, Rahsaan Bahati, and Cory Williams of L39ION of Los Angeles, who participated in the 2023 MCC.

Expanding its storytelling platform, The Baltimore Times also hosted a Pop-Up Exhibition titled "Pedals of Resilience: A Journey through Time, Grit, and Triumph." This exhibition highlighted the stories of Black cyclists as they navigated through resistance, broke barriers, and blazed trails. It paid tribute to cycling's origins when Baltimore hosted the first cycling championship and aimed to instill pride, appreciation, and inspiration among all visitors



L39ION of Los Angeles at the Opening Reception Team Introduction on September 2, 2023. L39ION, is a professional cycling team founded by cycling champions Cory and Justin Williams, advocates for diversity in cycling. The Baltimore Times

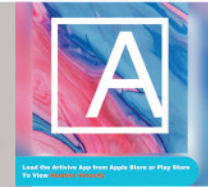


# THE BALTIMORE TIMES OFFICIAL MCC MEDIA PARTNER PARTNERED WITH BUSINESSES TO CREATE EXHIBITION

## Weekend Highlights



*Relative Velocity Commissioned art. Robert Hansen*



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while promoting a more inclusive cycling culture. The Baltimore Times Newspaper collaborated with Dope Nerds, the only Black-owned, female-owned VR solutions company in the United States, as well as celebrity artists Robert Hansen and business owner and founder Sharone Reid of Focus and Fabulous Events LLC to bring this exhibition to Baltimore's Inner Harbor Light Street Pavilion. The pop-up was open from September 1-3, 2023 during MCC weekend-long activities.

The exhibit featured a Virtual Reality Cycling Education Experience, allowing participants to race alongside prominent Black cyclists like Marshall "Major" Taylor (the world's fastest man), Olympian Cyclist Nelson Beasley Vails, multi-national championship cyclist Rahsaan Bahati, and professional cyclists and diversity advocates Cory and Justin Williams. Participants embarked on a journey through the history of cycling in Baltimore, where championship cycling began, and learned about the prominent Black cyclists during their ride along Baltimore city streets, culminating at the Pratt Street finish line. The Augmented Reality (AR) Experience merged art and technology to showcase the many faces and experiences of the life of Black cyclist Marshall "Major" Taylor, considered the world's fastest man over one hundred years ago. By loading the ARTIVIVE app, participants were able to hear the story of this cycling legend. The Baltimore Times commissioned celebrity artist Robert Hansen to create this custom piece.



*The Baltimore Times, yards from the finish line.*

*The Baltimore Times*



## Lidl-Trek's Mattias Skjelmose Wins

### Maryland Cycling Classic Presented by United Healthcare in Solo Victory

Neilson Powless of EF Education-EasyPost Sprints to Second Followed by Hugo Houle of Israel-Premier Tech

**BALTIMORE, Md. – September 3, 2023** - After a day characterized by near three digit temperatures, Team Lidl-Trek's Mattias Skjelmose of Denmark crossed the finish line solo in downtown Baltimore to take a tough victory at the second edition of the Maryland Cycling Classic presented by UnitedHealthcare, America's biggest cycling race Sunday.

"I was racing in my home country of Denmark just the other week and it was 23 degrees (celsius, 73 degrees F) and today it was almost 38 degrees, 100 degrees F)," said Skjelmose, who earlier in the year won both the Tour of Switzerland and most recently a stage of the Tour of Denmark. "I think a lot of guys didn't want to sprint. Everyone was expecting a race like last year where the break at the beginning went home, but it didn't [happen]. A smaller group went, and we caught them back with some big attacks. Toms (Skujins) was really smart. He realized what EF was doing 31 miles (50 km) before they did it. We were in a perfect position when they set a really good tempo. In the end it was full gas."

Mattias credited the win to the combination of the heat and the course. "I think the course is really nice. I think the heat was also a big factor. The combination with the heat and the flat...made for a really nice race. If only one of them was there, it wouldn't have really been a super hard race, but in combination it made for a perfect race.

"It wasn't exactly the plan," Mattias continued, alluding to the fact that they were setting up Latvian Toms Skujins for a possible win. "But we wanted to win. We knew we could use the numbers; we're one of the



*Team Lidl-Trek's Mattias Skjelmose of Denmark crossed the finish line solo in downtown Baltimore to take a tough victory at the second edition of the Maryland Cycling Classic presented by UnitedHealthcare*

strongest teams here. Both me and Toms were feeling really good. In my opinion, we rode a perfect race. Of course, it's really sad with Toms' puncture, but we rode a really good race."

Skujins buried himself in his effort but following a dramatic reshuffle his teammate Skjelmose took over the lead. Skjelmose had clearly rested enough to take control, although his lead amounted to only a handful of seconds. Powless, who finished third during the inaugural edition of the race in 2022, was showing some fatigue as he desperately hung on to the wheels of the five leaders. With four miles (6.4 km) to go Skjelmose, the Danish road race champion, built a 1:45 lead up the road and confidently cruised to victory over the final lap of the race. Behind

Skjelmose, Powless and Houle sprinted across the line to claim second and third place respectively.

"I knew it was most likely going to be a race for second because everybody knows how good Mattias (Skjelmose) is so I tried to do everything I could to get the best result possible. This year I did the sprint much better. I won the sprint for second place...unfortunately it wasn't for the win, but I think it was the best result I could have expected," said Powless.

As the riders entered downtown Baltimore, the powerful sextet of Chris Harper (JAY), Hugo Houle (IPT), Skjelmose, Neilson Powless (EFE), Skujins and Lucas Hamilton (JAY) found themselves with nearly a minute separating themselves from the rest of the race. With other riders in hot pursuit, the leaders did what they

could to cooperate with one another to maintain their lead - taking turns pulling at the front to hold on to the tense 40-second edge they had on the chase. But with 18 miles (29 K M) to go, Skujins decided to play his cards early and go with a solo attack. The Latvian rider was able to keep seven seconds between him and his former fellow escapees.

Powless added, "I could feel the support (of fans) the whole way around the circuit, even out in the countryside, it was just incredible to hear my name screamed from the side of the road. It was awesome to be able to interact with the American fans because I don't get to do that at any other point in the year. I was really proud to have the opportunity here and feel that love the whole way around the course."



# Thank You!

Presented by:

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**THANK YOU** Maryland Cycling Classics and the Sports & Entertainment Corporation of Maryland for understanding the power of collaboration with a local community newsroom!

**THANK YOU** to our partners, Black-owned and operated and locally owned small businesses that contributed to the success of this exhibition. You redefined how technology and working towards a shared vision can serve to educate and inspire!

**THANK YOU** to The Baltimore Times team for all that you do on all of our platforms (print and digital) to support positive narratives about African Americans and the citizens of Baltimore city and the surrounding areas.

**THANK YOU** to our Founder and Publisher, Joy Bramble, who trusts and allows the team to move forward with the vision and purpose for which The Baltimore Times was founded 38 years ago, to tell "Positive Stories about Positive People" and to improve the quality of life for the Baltimore community and surrounding areas.

**THANK YOU** to the Baltimore community! **THANK YOU** for your 38 years of support and celebrating our nation's Black-owned cyclists with us!

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## Bestselling Book Promotes Applying for Scholarships, Going to College for Free

By Andrea Blackstone

Student loan debt remains a pain point for Americans who owe for heading to college.

“The outstanding federal loan balance is \$1.644 trillion and accounts for 92.6 percent of all student loan debt,” according to EducationData.org. “43.6 million borrowers have federal student loan debt.”

Sydnie Chandler Monet’ Collins, 18, is a teen CEO of Perfect Timing Podcast. The Howard University freshman is among co-authors of a book called “You Can Go To College For FREE!” Collins shared her perspective as a high school senior applying for and winning scholarships.

“You Can Go To College For FREE!” is a storytelling, information-filled and immersive reading experience that guides you to graduate from higher education without debt trailing behind you. My chapter, Standing Up and Stepping Out, focuses on my journey of navigating scholarship applications as a scholar student, philanthropist, motivational speaker, young entrepreneur and teenager,” Collins said.

Collins also added that she and fellow co-authors offer general advice about what scholarships to look for while focusing on a holistic approach to advising parents and students about the college process.

“The incredible authors share their unique experiences and exposure in affording a college education, how it impacted them, what they learned from it and more,” Collins said.

The Strategic Communications major stated that she was blessed with scholarships and grants that she received from Howard University.

“I have been able to dock the



**Sydnie Chandler Monet’ Collins, teen CEO, college freshman and co-author, holds copies of “You Can Go To College for FREE!”**

*Yvette Collins*

remaining \$22k to \$9k by earning \$13k in outside scholarships! This did not occur by chance or luck, but by the organizations who awarded me for my achievements and contributions that reflect my dedication, determination to make positive changes for a more fantastic future for my generation and beyond, and staying faithful to God and trusting the path He has put me on,” Collins added.

Collins also mentioned that she continues to apply advice that Dr. Rhea Watson, the “Scholarship Doctor” and founder of Scholarship Solutions, shared with her.

“Our book shot to number one in two categories on Amazon: College and University Financial Aid and College Guides. Since its publication date, we have continuously been a bestseller,” Watson said.

The “Scholarship Doctor” stated that she helps students of all ages to attend college for free. The Las Vegas,

Nevada resident noted that her largest scholarship winner earned 2.5 million in scholarships.

Watson, an international speaker and bestselling author, said that she is the creator and author of “You Can Go To College For FREE!”

“I also recruited the contributing authors in order to have the 13 different voices all sharing how people of all ages can go to college for FREE. Moreover, I am the author of the introduction and the first chapter of the book, “FREE MONEY! Five Easy Ways You Can Go to College for FREE!” I also authored the scholarship, sample scholarship application and essay question/writings sections,” Watson said.

Watson revealed that she helped a then two-year-old, now eight-year-old child win over \$65,000 in scholarships, grants and prizes. He is a contributing author in “You Can Go To College For FREE!”

Watson added, “Overall, I have helped students to win over \$200 million dollars in scholarships and grants.”

She stated that community organizations give scholarships to students, in addition to professionals who help students to attend college for free. Winners must maintain their scholarships after enrolling in school.

Collins pointed out an important aspect of attaining success. The teen CEO learned to prioritize her mental health. Collins added that a new season of the podcast will kick off while she balances her new schedule as a college student.

She offered advice about how families can fund college without student loans.

“My approach is to never fear failure but be terrified of regret. We all have

to start somewhere, so by getting this book, you fill the gap with the lessons learned by the contributing authors. I am committed to empowering and equipping my peers with the tools they need to compete with other scholars while ‘Standing Up and Stepping Out,’” Collins said. “I wanted to go to a college that accepted me and was made for me and Howard has been just that and more.”

Order “You Can Go To College For FREE!” via Collins’ book over form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSffaZay84ShBsEI6JU5zFrQ0Ode7oOCHwYIIKupVzswlACHQ/viewform> or follow Collins’ Perfect Timing Podcast [https://www.instagram.com/\\_perfecttimingpodcast/](https://www.instagram.com/_perfecttimingpodcast/) to learn more about her endeavors. Book purchases made using Collins’ link will go directly toward her college fund.

Learn more about Watson by visiting [myscholarshipsolutions.com](https://myscholarshipsolutions.com).



**Dr. Rhea Watson (left) and Sydnie Chandler Monet’ Collins collaborated with other authors in Watson’s book, “You Can Go to College for FREE!”**

*Pastor Orrick Quick*



## Impact Awards Recognizing Individuals & Organizations that Uplift the Baltimore Community

BALTIMORE  
**MET.GALA**  
2023 INSPIRATION THE ELEMENTS

By Paris Brown

The 2nd Annual Baltimore MET GALA, held at the M&T Bank Exchange on Eutaw Street, was a celebration and intersection of Baltimore's creative talent and industries. All things that reflect Black excellence in fashion, art, culture, music and culinary talents were on display at this year's affair. Not just a celebration of culture, this event also served to benefit the Park Heights Renaissance. This organization provides support services and programs to eradicate disparities in health and wellness, financial competency and economic empowerment.

The MET Gala also celebrated individual achievement. This year's Community Impact Awards, which recognizes those individuals and organizations that lift Baltimore's image and mission to be the best city in America, were awarded to: The Honorable Kweisi Mfume (D-7th); Reverend Dr. Alvin C. Hathaway, Sr, Executive Director; Beloved Community Services Corporation (BCSC); F.T. Burden, Springboard Community Services Corporation; and Yolanda Jiggetts, CEO, Park Heights Renaissance, Inc. and The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Darin Atwater, Soulful Symphony's Artistic Director and Conductor.

LaRian Finney and Derrick Chase are the executive producers of this spectacular affair.

Photo Credit: Phelan Marc  
Baltimore MET Gala Photo Gallery





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## Sports

# Optimism Abounds as Ravens Start 2023 Season

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens will kick off the 2023 season on Sunday, September 10, 2023 by hosting the Houston Texans at M&T Bank Stadium. Expectations are high in Baltimore after going 10-7 last year and making it to the Wild Card round of the playoffs, despite not having quarterback Lamar Jackson for the final five games.

Now, Jackson is fresh off a new five-year, \$260 million contract. Worries of him possibly leaving to play for another team have been replaced with excitement about new offensive coordinator Todd Monken's scheme. Jackson has even gotten to have input on plays being added to the playbook.

"Coach listens to me. It made me feel good," Jackson said. "I was just on social media, and I saw a couple of routes, and I sent it to Coach Tee [Martin] and he was like, 'I'm going to relay the message to Coach [Todd] Monken,' and Coach Monken liked the play, so he put it in practice. I feel like it will be good for us."

The additions of Odell Beckham Jr., Nelson Agholor and Zay Flowers have the wide receiver room looking much improved.

"The leadership of the veteran players – Nelson [Agholor] and Odell [Beckham Jr.] – has really been superb," general manager Eric DeCosta said. "And the younger guys have really brought their game every single day."

"And it's encouraging for us to see them every single day. [The] guys are stepping up and making contested catches and making big, explosive plays. The attitude and the energy is very, very good."

Another reason for optimism is tight end Mark Andrews' return to practice after missing some time last



Lamar Jackson  
Jessica Rapfogel-USA TODAY Sports

month. Ravens head coach John Harbaugh said he's "not pushing the panic button." Andrews had been the Ravens leading pass catcher in each of the last three seasons.

The defense will be good as well. The addition of Jadeveon Clowney brings a veteran presence to a young group of outside linebackers. DeCosta hopes to get similar production from Clowney to previous seasons when they added veterans Jason Pierre-Paul and Justin Houston.

Inside linebacker Roquan Smith was acquired at the trade deadline last season and had a very productive second half of the season. Smith now has a full offseason under his belt and signed a five-year, \$100 million contract during the offseason. He'll continue to lead the Ravens defense

as the play caller and engine that drives the unit.

Baltimore will however be without cornerback Marlon Humphrey as he recovers from foot surgery. He's expected to miss the first couple of games including next week when the Ravens travel to Cincinnati to face the division rivals Bengals.

In the meantime, Baltimore signed veteran cornerback Ronald Darby to a one-year deal to rebuild their depth. The pieces are in place for an exciting season. It all starts on Sunday.

"The home opener is always exciting especially when it's 'the' [season] opener," Harbaugh said. "We love having our fans. We can't wait to see our fans in [M&T Bank] Stadium. I know they're going to be loud."



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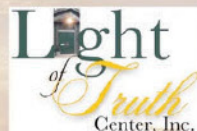
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