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Entries to Win a Car Now Accepted From Baltimoreans in Need



(L-R): Eric Randall, Kermit Fowlkes, Damond Horne, Stephen Green and Michael Foy are a part of a collective of business owners with extensive experience in automotive reconditioning industries who provide a helping hand to Baltimoreans in need of a car. Green, a resident of Baltimore County, founded the nonprofit Cars With Care along with Horne in 2016. A lucky winner will receive keys to a free car on Christmas morning. Entries are now being accepted from Baltimore residents in need. (See article on page 9.)
Photo Credit: Daylan Jones Photography

Tickets Available for GBIW Anniversary Brunch

The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum Turns 40!

By Ursula V. Battle

The late Dr. Elmer Martin and his wife Dr. Joanne Martin established The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum (GBIW) in 1983. Located at 1601-1603 E. North Avenue, the museum is committed solely to the study and preservation of African American history, and its presentation of life-size, life-like wax figures highlight historical and contemporary personalities of African ancestry.

The museum has drawn visitors from all over the globe with its immersive museum exhibits, which include “A Journey to Freedom,” whose wax figures include: Henry “Box” Brown, and W.E.B. DuBois; “The Underground Railroad,” featuring wax figures of Thomas Garrett and Harriet Tubman; and “The Slavery Era,” with its immersive “Middle Passage”; and “The Horror of Captivity.” GBIW is the first wax museum of African American history in the nation.

Throughout its storied history, the museum has never sugar-coated, or watered-down the injustices experienced by African Americans while simultaneously juxtaposing these stories with ones of triumph, achievement and success. For “40 Years and Counting: A Legacy of Telling the Story Uncompromisingly,” has been the GBIW’s mantra, and this will be the central theme of the museum’s 40-year anniversary celebration.

The 40th Anniversary Brunch will be held Saturday, December 9, 2023 from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the Residence Inn at Johns Hopkins, 800 N. Wolfe Street, Baltimore, MD 21205.

“We wanted to mark this milestone in our history, so we celebrated 20 years, and then 30 years, and now 40 years of our existence,” said museum co-founder Dr. Joanne Martin. “Our museum is forty years and counting, so

that means that every year is a part of our journey.”

She added, “We will continue to celebrate and mark the journey that we’ve been on and the work that we have tried to do in preserving the history of people of African descent. A legacy of telling our stories uncompromisingly is very much a part of who we are.”

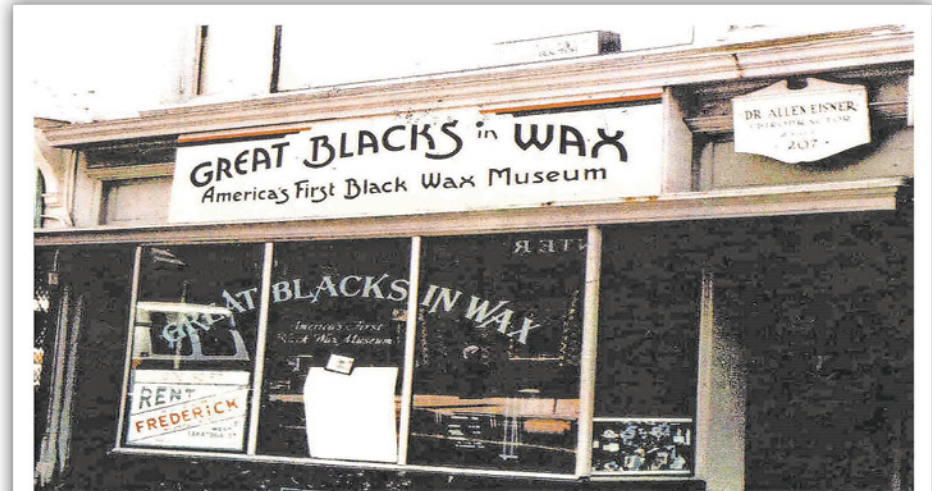
In addition to food and drinks, Dr. Martin said the brunch’s festivities will include music, spoken word artists, the presentation of awards to individuals who have supported GBIW throughout its history and the immeasurable contributions of her late husband Dr. Elmer Martin.

“The genius and creativity of Elmer will be on full display,” said Dr. Martin. “For me, that is an important part of this journey. I want people to see the way he used his artistry to create the museum and the stories we tell. So much of Dr. Elmer Martin represents who we are, and for me, it’s represented in every brick of the museum.”

A noted historian, educator, and researcher, Dr. Martin performs most of the museum’s curatorial duties and has laid the groundwork for both architectural and exhibition design for the expanded museum.

“The museum started as a traveling exhibit with four figures,” said Dr. Martin. “It eventually evolved into the museum. Early on, we had someone who wanted to take our idea and offered to build a museum and let us run it. But we told him that even though he had all the resources, he didn’t have the passion we had for telling our story. He agreed and essentially put us on what would be considered a layaway plan.”

She added, “We bought four wax figures, Mary McLeod Bethune, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner and John Brown. Shortly thereafter, we



Yesterday: The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum’s first location was a storefront on Saratoga Street. Courtesy photos/The National Great Blacks in Wax



Dr. Elmer Martin



Dr. Joanne Martin co-founded the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum with her late husband and co-founder Dr. Elmer Martin. Dr. Martin is holding a portrait depicting the couple given to her by her husband.

bought Harriet Tubman and Booker T. Washington. And so that was our humble beginnings.”

Dr. Elmer Martin passed away in 2001, while the couple was in Egypt. However, Mrs. Martin has continued to carry on his legacy.

“We seek to be faithful to the truth,” said Dr. Martin. “We want to be able to tell our story in a way that people who don’t know the story can learn about it and not have to deal with

MUSEUM

Continued on page 14



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All through 2023, we listened—to our clients, teammates and the many communities we serve. And truly hearing what they would like the power to do helped us strengthen our partnerships—and welcome new ones along the way. From couples just starting out to entrepreneurs looking to launch a business, together we accomplished a lot. We can't wait to see what 2024 has in store.

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Community Leader Refurbishes Shoes, Motivates Youth One Sole at a Time

By Andrea Blackstone

Eric Randall Jr., founder of a nonprofit called B-More Soleful Inc., has a passion to give old shoes new life.

“The nonprofit is based around collecting shoes and boots that people would typically throw out or give to Goodwill. Then, we take those old beat-up shoes, sanitize, clean and restore them back to wearable condition,” Randall said, adding that they are primarily distributed to children in need.

He added, “Currently, we service Keys Empowers nonprofit which is one of the official sponsors of the mayor’s office. They are connected to about three to four schools in the inner city and they help service thousands of kids in Baltimore.”

Every Wednesday, Randall teaches 10 students the history of sneakers. He also provides instructions about shoe and boot restoration.

Randall’s methods of collecting shoe donations prior to the pandemic included placing trash cans in numerous schools and businesses to enable donors to leave shoes for his cause. He picked them up to give “kicks” his special touch. Donations were stored in storage units.

“I also had old bookcases that served as a shoe rack in most of the schools where they could distribute [refurbished shoes] as they saw fit.”

These days, Randall stores shoe donations in his garage or basement, until he can afford a storage unit.

Additionally, some of Randall’s supporters who want to keep their shoes or boots, support his nonprofit by allowing him to give their boots and other shoes a second life through his paid footwear cleaning service. Payment is used to buy new shoes at a discount, in addition to purchasing supplies such as paint and shoestrings.

Randall, who is also an entrepreneur, husband and father, makes time to run his



Eric Randall Jr. restored and customized these shoes for a student because he earned straight A's in school. Courtesy photo

nonprofit and BE-Z Clothing Company.

The busy Baltimorean is open to making a positive impact in the community through collaborative efforts and teamwork. Randall wants to connect with volunteers; supporters who will share social media content; individuals who have space that can be used; people who want to make financial contributions; or in-kind donations such as shoestrings. An Amazon Wish List is available for donors who prefer to buy needed items directly. Tax write-off forms can be provided for business donors.

“My goal is to raise enough money to be able to pay my students [to help with shoe restoration] and to have a storage unit,” Randall said.

Jennifer A. Pope, a licensed clinical social worker, community partner and volunteer stated that B-More Soleful Inc. has supported communities and hundreds of children across Baltimore City who need shoes and other apparel.

“This organization provides support to children’s self-esteem and self-awareness. They also assist in creating a sense of community by encouraging the children who receive shoes to donate their old ones



(L-R:) Akio Evans, sneaker artist and Eric Randall Jr. (far right), founder of B-More Soleful Inc., visit Keys Empowers Development Program participants who received shoes through B-More Soleful Inc. at Matthew A. Henson in 2019 for the first time. Courtesy photo

to help someone as they receive help as well,” Pope explained.

“B-More Soleful believes when you look good, you feel good. This can have a direct effect on school behaviors and grades for many of our children,” Pope said. “They also provide education on taking care of the shoes you receive and how this translates into good hygiene and self-pride.”

B-More Soleful is based in Baltimore County. Randall started the nonprofit in 2017 because he noticed a young child who appeared to be between three- and five-years old walking in the snow in some slide-on Van shoes with a hole in them.

“I felt so bad. I said ‘If I were rich, I would just have bought her some new boots.’ I then felt like that was an excuse. I decided to leave my office for a month and just teach myself through YouTube videos how to restore [old pairs of] shoes and boots that I had at my apartment at the time,” Randall said.

Randall asked friends to donate their old shoes, too. Eventually, he returned to work and started a partnership with Dayspring at Harford Heights where he began helping youth.

B-More Soleful Inc. also offers a school program. The nonprofit gives shoes to students who improve behaviorally or earn a higher letter grade.

“Kids in our programs have shown a significant gain in grades and attitude, compared to those who haven’t,” Randall said.

Most of the time, B-More Soleful’s donations come from Randall’s social media contacts, friends and family. He wants the next generation to remember him and his movement.

“I want to be a hometown hero,” Randall said.

If you would like to support Randall’s cause, he can be reached through @bmoresolefulkicks or @ceobez on Instagram. His phone number is (443) 839-4777.

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Health and Stress Check

A Reminder that In-Home Caregivers Need Support and Self-Care

By Andrea Blackstone

National Family Caregivers Month (NFCM) in November recognizes and honors family caregivers across the country. It also raises awareness about caregiving issues nationwide. However, duty calls millions of Americans, regardless of the month.

According to the CDC, “The number of caregivers increased from 43.5 million in 2015 to about 53 million in 2020, or more than 1 in 5 Americans. By 2030, an estimated 73 million people in the United States will be 65 years or older. Many will require daily assistance from at least one caregiver to maintain quality of life, independence, and physical and social well-being.”

Dr. Janel Gordon is a triple board certified family, obesity and lifestyle medicine physician who mentioned that The National Institute of Aging and the CDC are two caregiving resources. Additionally, she provided insight into family givers who provide at-home care for loved ones.

Q: Would professional help typically be needed when someone cannot give care to a loved one alone anymore?

A: That’s oftentimes what ends up becoming the difficulty. Caregiving often falls on people in their middle age years, because they’re getting older, so the parents are getting older and their children are getting older as well. A lot of people grapple with feelings like “Oh, we were never supposed to put mom in a home, or we don’t want someone in mom’s home, or mom doesn’t.” But, if you need help, you need help because you don’t want to burn out, right? Then, families will employ the assistance of either home health aides or sitters who may not necessarily have a medical background, but they can come and

sit with the individual while the family goes and runs an errand and then comes back.

Q: What supportive services could be provided to help a caregiver who needs a break or support? Where’s a good place to start?

A: I always recommended individuals speak with the person who needs the assistance’s primary care physician. A lot of our offices are set up to allow placing referrals to social services, if there are any, or we can see if the patient would qualify for in-home skilled nursing. Most insurance companies, especially if you’re talking about Medicaid and Medicare, will offer some provision for that. Some families may have to end up coming out-of-pocket some. There could be co-pays and such that are required, but usually there’s going to be some coverage available. And of course, it also would depend on income level.

Q: Are there any resources available that caregivers can pursue that they might commonly miss because they just don’t know about it?

A: So, it would depend on the area where the person is located, but again, start with the primary care physician and then they could also look into what the local health department has available. Through a quick Google search, you can also find companies, because I know there are a lot of small businesses that are offering services like I mentioned, such as home health aides or sitters. Another option is, sometimes, there are family members who actually have a healthcare professional in the family. If that person ends up being employed with the company, they could also be there with the family member, but then feel like they’re not missing out on income because they had to be taken away from their regular job.



*Dr. Janel Gordon
Courtesy photo*

Q: Is there anything that a caregiver can consider to prevent burnout?

A: Make sure they’re taking care of themselves. So, as a lifestyle medicine certified physician, I’m always going to say ‘Are you drinking your water? Are you getting your sleep? When was the last time you did something for you?’ I say that just for my parents in general, but now if you’re saying you have a sick child, or a sick adult family member, [I ask] ‘When was the last time you actually took some time and did something for yourself?’ Did you get your nails done? When did you last just go for a walk in nature? Step away. Take a deep breath.’

If you’re alone, it may be difficult, but if there’s someone you can call who can calm you down in the moment, or who may even be able to say ‘Hey, you know I can come over and sit with both of you, or I can sit with them when you run to the restaurant and grab yourself something to eat and sit in the car. Go inside just for 30 minutes to get a break.’

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How Caregivers Can Alleviate Stress

Serving as a caregiver for a friend or loved one can be both rewarding and taxing at the same time. The senior housing authority A Place for Mom indicates that 41 million Americans offer unpaid caregiving services, and that number is expected to increase as the aging population grows in the coming decades.

Formal caregivers are paid care providers in a home or care setting. However, an informal caregiver is an unpaid individual that assists others with activities of daily living as well as medical tasks. Whether one is a formal or informal caregiver, researchers have long known that caregiving can adversely affect a caregiver's mental and physical health. The AARP Public Policy Institute says 17 percent of caregivers feel their health in general has gotten worse due to caregiving responsibilities. The National Alliance

for Caregiving and AARP also indicate older caregivers caring for persons age 65 and older report a higher degree of physical strain.

The fatigue that arises from caring for another individual is often referred to as caregiver burnout. Since caregiving takes place over several years, the impact can escalate over time. Caregiver stress is directly related to burnout. One of the first steps to take is recognizing the signs of caregiver burnout so that action can be taken to improve the situation.

The Mayo Clinic says signs of caregiver stress include: worrying all the time; feeling tired often; changes in sleep; gaining or losing weight; becoming easily irked or angry; losing interest in activities once enjoyed; feeling sad or depressed; experiencing frequent headaches, pains or other health problems; misusing drugs or

alcohol, including prescriptions; and missing your own medical appointments or other appointments.

Caregivers need to put themselves first at times in order to help avoid health complications that can come from the stress and demand of caregiving. Make use of these caregiver stress management tips, courtesy of the Mayo Clinic and Penn Medicine.

Ask for help. Figure out ways that others can help out and then be sure to let them know and accept anything that is provided.

Do the best you can. Every caregiver feels they are not doing enough at some point in time. Do whatever you can manage and know that it is adequate.

Set small goals. Categorize responsibilities into smaller, more manageable tasks. Make lists of what is most important and tackle those goals, moving on as needed.

Reach out to a support group. There are support groups for many different types of needs, including caregiver support. People who are experiencing the same highs and lows as you can offer advice or just be there to listen.

Find ways to rest and sleep. Many caregivers are sleep deprived. If sleeping has become an issue, discuss potential remedies with your own doctor.

Look into respite care help. Taking a break from caregiving can do wonders. Certain adult care centers and skilled nursing homes offer temporary respite care services for informal caregivers. A loved one can be dropped off for a night or two, giving you a rest. This also is an option if you want to go on vacation. Caregivers may feel burdened by stress. There are options available to manage it.



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For more information, scan the QR Code or visit [AARP.org/BlackCommunity](https://www.aarp.org/BlackCommunity)



Why World AIDS Day Should Not be Forgotten, Ignored

By Andrea Blackstone

World AIDS Day was founded in 1988 and is observed each year on December 1.

“People around the world unite to show support for people living with HIV and to remember those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses,” according to UNAIDS, a leading global effort to end AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) as a public health threat by 2030.

According to UNAIDS, since “first cases of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) were reported more than 35 years ago, 78 million people have become infected with HIV and 35 million have died from AIDS-related illnesses.”

AIDS is no longer regarded as a death sentence, but the disease should still be taken seriously. UNAIDS reported that “AIDS-related deaths have fallen by almost 70 per cent since their peak in 2004, and new HIV infections are at the lowest point since the 1980s.” However, a life was still lost to AIDS every minute in 2022.

UNAIDS also announced that this year’s World AIDS Day theme is “Let Communities Lead.” The leading global effort mentioned that community leadership; connecting people to treatment, services and support; grassroots activism; increased funding for local programs led by people living with HIV; prevention initiatives led by communities; and supporting people on the frontlines who battle against AIDS are components that will lead to end the public health threat.

Dr. Ankehah Trimble Johnson (Dr. “Kre Johnson”), a medical director and collaborating physician for the PrEP and HIV Clinic at the Living Well Clinic (a division of AIDS

Alabama), looks at the big picture when it comes to helping to combat HIV one prevention case at a time.

“In 2018, I helped start the Living Well PrEP Clinic to help the prevention of HIV by being a non-conventional place to start HIV prevention medications for people,” Dr. Johnson said. “Our clinic helps those who are insured, underinsured and non-insured. We only have after-work clinic hours to help improve access to care.”

The board-certified family medicine physician explained that a negative stigma about HIV discussion from past years has been passed down through many generations. It reportedly caused everyone to keep their status, and even education, to a minimum.

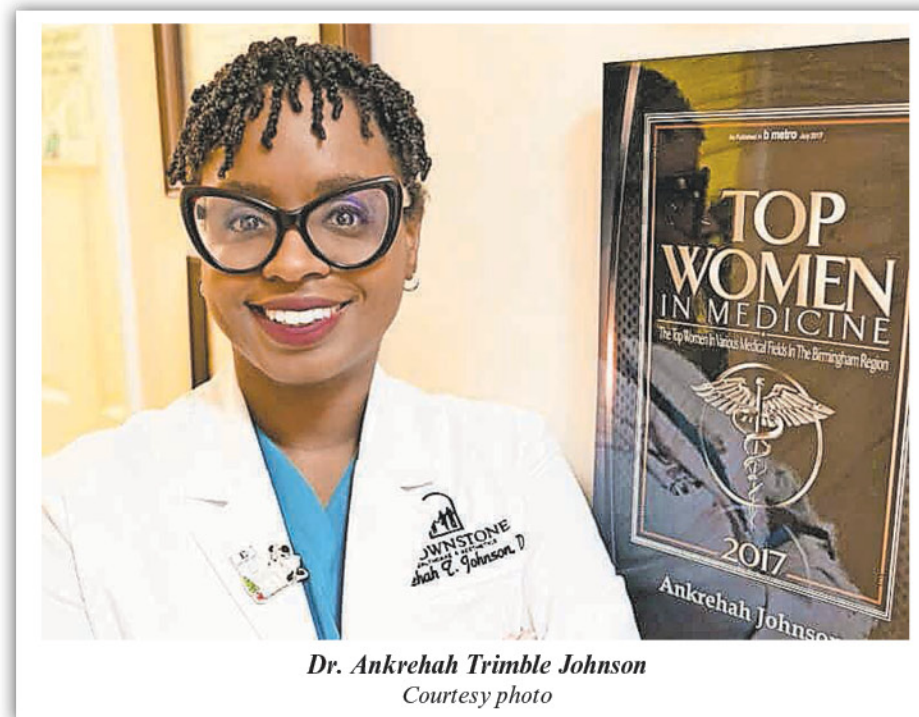
“There are about 1.3 million cases of HIV in the U.S. There are 39 million cases worldwide. Forty percent of cases in the U.S. are African Americans,” Dr. Johnson also explained.

She added, “HIV left untreated can progress to AIDS. There are certain infections and cancers, if acquired while living with HIV, that can meet the criteria for the progression from HIV to AIDS. These are called AIDS-defining illnesses. Also, people with AIDS have their number of CD4 cells fall to less than 200.”

Dr. Johnson noted that the CDC lists the AIDS epidemic as the 1980s-early 1990s. However, she warned that there is still no cure.

“The stigma is that HIV is a gay man’s disease. Anyone having unprotected sex with a partner who does not know their status is at risk for contracting HIV,” Dr. Johnson said, reminding that new cases are still being diagnosed.

She reminded that routine condom



Dr. Ankehah Trimble Johnson

Courtesy photo

use, HIV education and getting tested regularly so that sexually active individuals know their status remains important.

Dr. Johnson confirmed that youth who are less concerned about contracting HIV are more at risk and are vulnerable.

She explained, “In our clinic, we are seeing patients younger, it seems these days. It may be that we as a whole need more education on this topic. Sex education is no longer in a lot of schools and that may negatively impact the exposure to conversations about HIV education and prevention!”

On the other hand, the advancement of HIV medicine has allowed individuals who live with the disease to live longer, healthier lives.

“In the early years, people would be on a handful of medications. Now, most of my patients are on one pill,” Dr. Johnson said.

However, the doctor stated that no one should be lax or comfortable because there is no widespread cure. She further explained that even when researchers report that there have been cases of people who have been cured of HIV, such as “the Dusseldorf patient,” a cure has not yet been found for everyone.

“The focus is only a small group of people who have been cured under extreme circumstances, after a stem cell transplant, typically only performed in cancer patients who don’t have any other options,” Dr. Johnson said.

She noted that a stem cell transplant entails taking someone else’s stem cells and replacing them.

“There are no large-scale studies on this, so we are still quite ways away from the cure,” Dr. Johnson added.

Visit brownstonehealthcare.com to learn more about Dr. Johnson.

Entries to Win a Car Now Accepted From Baltimoreans in Need

By Andrea Blackstone

Malia McClain still recalls the day that she won a 2015 Nissan Altima. The Baltimore resident and nursing student reflected on the tough time she once had getting around, before she was picked to receive the gift from Cars With Care, Christmastime in 2022.

“At the time I was paying for Ubers and hacks to school, work and home. It was becoming costly and I was already struggling. So, the car took a financial burden off my shoulders. I wasn’t late for classes anymore. I wasn’t calling out of work because I couldn’t afford to go to school and work that day,” McClain said.

Since she has her own wheels now, the mother is able to take her children to and from school and activities. A year of car ownership is coming to a close. Her car remains in great condition.

She added, “I am in love with my car!”

McClain’s good fortune arose because a collective of Black-owned business owners with extensive experience in automotive reconditioning industries provided a helping hand. The reconditioning of cars that the nonprofit restores takes two or three weeks.

Stephen Green, a resident of Baltimore County, co-founded Cars With Care along with Damond Horne in 2016. Green handles logistics related to Cars With Care, including promotion and all exterior reconditioning and tasks such as paintless dent repair, scratch repair and bodywork. Horne handles logistics and all interior reconditioning, including leather, cloth, vinyl repair and/or interior and exterior detailing. Green’s Baltimore, Maryland-based business is called Paintless Dent Doctor. Horne’s Total Recon establishment is Laurel-based.

“We have donated seven vehicles since 2016. This year will make eight,” Green said. “To know that you’ve literally given

someone keys to a better quality of life is an honor and a privilege.”

Cars With Care’s team now consists of five members. Michael Foy, owner of CM Mobile Detail and founder of the Emilie Wall Foundation; Eric Randall, owner of BE-Z Clothing Company, KXX Financial Services and B-More Soleful Inc.; and Kermit Fowlkes, the owner of Focus Movers who is a committed philanthropist throughout Baltimore City, joined forces to help careless people achieve their dream of having needed transportation. Team members hail from Baltimore, with the exception of Horne who is from Washington, D.C.

Foy also handles exterior detailing and/or interior detailing. Randall and Fowlkes offer valuable assistance during the reconditioning process in various disciplines.

Green revealed why giving the gift of transportation is a priority for the group of do-gooders.

“It’s important to us because we have all experienced hardships growing up in Baltimore and [Washington] D.C. Now that we have the skill sets and resources, we consider it an honor to play a small but impactful role in giving Baltimoreans opportunity in the form of transportation,” Green said.

One vehicle will be given away this year, despite the added financial challenges that the pandemic generated.

Green added, “Even though we were hyper conscious of the trying times, our supporters stood tall and made sure that we had the funding to accomplish our goals. Also, since 2016 we have invested our own money as a team to make this possible and every cent we raise is used to purchase and recondition the vehicles we donate. Any surplus is given directly to the family to help with the cost of ownership and other vehicle related needs.”

Green explained that the nonprofit



The 2022 Christmas Day car giveaway included (L-R) Damond Horne, Stephen Green, Malia McClain (the car winner), Michael Foy, Eric Randall and Kermit Fowlkes. Daylan Jones Photography

generally starts accepting entries at the beginning of November and stops a week prior to the giveaway on December 25. Entries are currently being accepted via www.carswithcare.com/entries. All Cars With Care applicants must be from Baltimore City or County. Entrants must have proof of residency. Every vested business owner is involved in the process of reading story entries and the process of determining who will win a car. The winner is not disclosed until the vehicle is given away live on Christmas morning.

McClain had a final thought about her four-wheeled gift, compliments of Cars With Care.

“These men are a blessing and

everyone should be supporting them. You never know it could be someone you know or even yourself that they help,” she said.

A fundraising gala featuring Ruff Endz is being held on December 1, 2023 from 8 p.m.- 12 a.m. at The Cellar 2 located in Parkville, Maryland. Learn more via <http://carswithcare.com/fundraising-gala>. Monetary donations to support Cars With Care can be made by visiting www.carswithcare.com/donate or \$CarsWithCare for CashApp users. Follow this year’s Cars With Care journey on social media by following @carswithcare on all platforms.

Annual Legislative Black Caucus Weekend

Maryland Legislative Black Caucus: Building an Equitable Maryland Together

By Adrian Harpool

The Maryland Black Caucus Foundation hosted its 28th Annual Legislative Black Caucus Weekend November 17-18, 2023. Coalescing under the theme of “Building an Equitable Maryland Together,” the weekend included free workshops to engage citizens, elected officials, and business leaders on a Black policy agenda for moving Maryland forward.

“The Maryland Legislative Black Caucus works tirelessly to elevate the concerns of Black Marylanders in the halls of Annapolis. As we continue efforts to build a more equitable Maryland, our legislative weekend could not be more timely,” said Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, chair of the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland. “The Legislative Black Caucus Weekend offered an opportunity for leaders to come together and influence policies to bring Maryland closer to our nation’s promise of equal rights.”

Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller moderated “Business Over Breakfast,” a featured insight from Comptroller Brooke Lierman, Commerce Secretary Kevin Anderson, and Assistant Secretary for the Maryland Department of Transportation Tony Bridges. In addition, the weekend offered free virtual workshops on procurement opportunities, behavioral health, social determinants of health, role of HBCUs, equitable housing, the cannabis economy and environmental justice.

The Saturday evening Gala Dinner Experience honored members for their legislative service in Annapolis. Some of those recipients included Sen. Melony G. Griffith, Del. Darryl Barnes and Del. Antonio Bridges. In addition, Del. Stephanie Smith and Sen. Malcolm Augustine received the

Delegate and Senator of the Year awards, respectively. Governor Wes Moore was also in attendance.

The Black Caucus delivered much success for Marylanders’ last legislative session by pushing an aggressive agenda focused on building Black wealth, housing accessibility, affordable healthcare and education equity. Working with colleagues, stakeholders, and leaders across the state, the Caucus helped establish the nation’s first Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program and increased requirements for notice of rent increases. They also helped create the Commission of Public Health to improve the delivery of health services, and increased HBCU funding for students entering the teaching profession. But despite this success, the Caucus plans to keep pushing.

As referenced in a Baltimore Sun commentary, “Maryland is primed to set an example for state legislative bodies that struggle to center racial equity as a primary lens for approaching policy solutions. Our caucus, notably one of the country’s largest minority delegations, is composed of members who understand the impact of structural racism on Black families... We have a moral obligation to take the lead. To be clear, no other state-level Black Caucus is uniquely positioned for success like ours. Thanks to a political climate that includes capable municipal leaders, strong communication with our federal delegation, and a Governor and Speaker of the House who get it, our most aspirational policy agenda is entirely doable. And it would benefit national policymakers to take notice.”

In addition to the state officials who were honored, the following leaders were recognized at the Saturday evening gala: Tracy Arnold Nixon (The Arnold Place), Pete Smith (AACC



(L-R) Jules Dunham-Howie (Executive Director, MD Black Caucus Foundation), Dr. Zina C. Pierre (President, MD Black Caucus Foundation), Maryland Lt. Gov. Aruna Miller, MD Commerce Sec. Kevin Anderson, Del. Jheanelle Wilkins (Chair, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland) and Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman



(L-R) Del. Jheanelle Wilkins (Chair, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland), Peter Smith (Chair, Anne Arundel County Council) and Dr. Zina C. Pierre (President, MD Black Caucus Foundation)

& Toys For Tots Central Maryland), Adrian Harpool (Adrian Harpool Associates), Wayne Rogers (Northeast MAGLEV) and Darius Stanton (former MBCF president).

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland was created in 1970 as the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, and adopted its present name in 2002.

By drafting and sponsoring legislation to address constituent needs and by examining all bills that affect the Black populace, the Caucus acts as a legislative body on behalf of the Black community. The Caucus also presents a Black perspective to the Legislature and advocates public policies that promote Black progress.

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Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance

Hit Stage Play Musical Returns For Holiday Performances Dec. 16th-17th

BALTIMORE – By popular demand, the highly-acclaimed stage play, Ursula V. Battle’s “Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance,” returns for an encore performances in Baltimore and surrounding areas including: theatrical performances Saturday, December 16, 2023, (3 p.m.) and Sunday December 17, 2023 (4 p.m.) at the Redeemed Christian Church of God Mercy Court located at 29 Walker Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21212.

The presentation is part of the 2023-2024 Serenity House From Addiction to Deliverance Tour which also included shows at Restoration Temple Apostolic Center, Winfield Hall, The Forest Park Senior Center and The Chesapeake Arts Center. Written by Baltimore playwright and journalist Ursula V. Battle, the show is coming off hugely successful performances in venues spanning from Baltimore to Virginia. International Gospel/R&B Recording Artist Shirley Murdock (“As We Lay,” “I’m Better Than That”) performed in the show in 2021.

This upcoming performance also follows sell-out performances of “The Homegoing Service For A Man Named Jesus,” also written by Playwright Battle. Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance takes a riveting and thought-provoking look at the opioid epidemic. The production features national recording artist, Randy “Fruity” Roberts of The Choir Boyz, a real-life former drug dealer who turned his life around.

The production, which debuted in 2017, will also feature Pam Jackson of the internationally-renowned gospel female trio “SERENITY,” and powerhouse soloist Charisse-Caldwell-Bowen.

The piece is written by Playwright Battle, who is a writer for The



The production’s theatrical director Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch and the show’s writer, Playwright Ursula V. Battle. Courtesy photo

Baltimore Times and directed by Baltimore County Health Officer Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch. Dr. Branch’s interest in medicine dates back to his childhood, seeing a former neighbor struggle with addiction, who ultimately succumbs to an overdose. The production speaks to addiction across multiple platforms, including eating disorders and prescription drug abuse. “Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance” also touches on domestic violence, incest and child sex trafficking.

Through ministry, music, an unforgettable story, and dance, the production takes a heart-wrenching, yet heart-warming look at the devastating impact that addiction has on society – particularly on families that in some cases, spans generations. The production is also the impetus for Playwright Battle’s new breakout novel of the same name.

Ursula V. Battle’s “Serenity House” is rated PG-13 due to some strong content and profanity. Tickets are \$20 until 12/1/23; \$25 after 12/1/23 and \$30 at the door. For more information or to purchase tickets call (443) 531-4787, (443) 531-5839 or visit www.battlestageplays.com.



By Rosa Pryor

Hello everyone,

The top of the day to you. I sure hope that you feel better than I did this morning. Yes, I am a little under the weather today, so I won't be too long with my column, I just want to keep you up to date on what's going on. We went out to one of our favorite promoter's shows. I am talking about Hassan Rashee and "T-Shirt" Brian's event at the Winchester Amory. And let me tell you, it was out of sight! I must say it was pretty close to 2,000 folks there and I take my hat off to them both. It was well promoted, very well organized. Well done my friend! Well done! My Boo-Boo and I had a wonderful time. So much love to you both.

Okay folks, let me tell you about this conductor. For those of you who enjoy classical music and symphony orchestra music, I have a good feeling that you will enjoy this.

The national tour of the "Nutcracker, a magical Christmas Ballet, is coming to Baltimore and I thought some of you might be interested in it. Okay, check this out! The National tour of the "Nutcracker Magical Christmas Ballet is coming to Baltimore, the only East Coast show on the tour with a live orchestra. The tour graces the stage at the Hippodrome in Baltimore on December 18, 2023 and uniquely features a live orchestra led by conductor Michael Repper. Michael became the youngest North American conductor to win a Grammy Award in Best Orchestral Performance. He has an international reputation for engaging and exciting audiences of all spectrums

GRAMMY WINNING CONDUCTOR, MICHAEL REPPER IS COMING TO BALTIMORE

and for promoting new and diverse musical talents. So, check him out at the Hippodrome on December 18.

Oh, I forgot, "Happy Gobble Day" to you and the family, I hope it was everything you hoped it would be"! My Boo-Boo and I stayed home. We did not do anything special. I cooked turkey, duck, mashed potatoes, candied sweets, collard greens, string beans, stuffing and gravy.

Continuing with the holidays, and a great way to celebrate, is to give to others who have less than you do. One of my ways; Shorty and I go to events such as the giveaway of food and household things with Miss Maybelle, as she does every year; and Carlos Hutchins who does the same thing by having an "Annual Toy Drive," combined with a cabaret for grown folks! Hey look, I am serious, Carlos Hutchins' event is Sunday, December 10, 2023 starting at 4 p.m. at the Diamondz Events Center, 9980 Liberty Road. It is cabaret style, BYOB AND BYOF with an open bar until exhausted. It starts at 4 p.m. Listen to me now, you can't go unless you donate at least one new toy. Did you hear what I said? "A NEW TOY"! for deserving kids, whose parents have less than you do. There will be live entertainment by "The Slagz Band—a great band—you will like them. I do! For more information, call 443-963-5711. I will see you there!

Well, my dear friends, I have to go, but I will be back. In the meantime, I expect to hear from you. You can send all correspondences to: "Rambling Rose," 214 Conewood Road, Reisterstown, Maryland, 21136, or call me at my office 410-833-9474 any time. You can email me at rosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.



Janora Winkler, of the singing group, "J'KAR" is presenting a show called "Holiday Gift of Music" on Saturday, December 16 from 7-11 p.m. with a bus trip to the Centre at Halifax Community College in Weldon, North Carolina. For more information, call Janora Winkler at 443-955-8600.



Carlos Hutchins of CH Productions is doing it again. "Home for the Holidays Celebration and Toy Drive" is his annual fundraiser for underprivileged children. This year it will be held at Diamondz Events Center, 9980 Liberty Road, on Sunday, December 10 at 4 p.m. For more information, call 443-963-5711.



Michael Repper is currently the music director of the Ashland, the Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra and the Northern Neck Orchestra of Virginia. He will grace the stage during his tour of the "Nutcracker," a Magical Christmas Ballet at the Hippodrome in Baltimore on Sunday, December 18, 2023.

Angela Weiss



J'Kar, a female singing group, will be performing in the show "Holiday Gift of Music Sounds of Philly and Motown" along with Harold Melvin's Blue Notes, The Unifics and The Ebony's on Saturday, December 16, 2023 at the Centre Halifax Community College, 200 College Dr., Weldon North Carolina. For this bus trip and more information, call 443-955-8600.



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Tickets Available for GBIW Anniversary Brunch

MUSEUM

Continued from page 2

myth and misrepresentation. That is a very important part of what we do more than anything else. We want young people to embrace our history to the point that they want to preserve it for their children, their children's children, and other generations to come."

GBIW expansion efforts include a multi-million-dollar facility, which is being described as the cornerstone of a vibrant revitalization initiative in the East Baltimore corridor. Efforts include 25,000 square feet of new construction.

In March, the museum was presented with a check from Congressman Kweisi Mfume, Senator Ben Cardin and Senator Chris Van Hollen for more than \$2 million that was granted to the museum through the FY 23 federal Earmarks process.

"It's such a blessing to have reached this milestone," said Dr. Martin. "We are encouraging everyone to come out and celebrate 40 years of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum."



Today: The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum is currently located 1601-1603 E. North Avenue

Tickets to GBIW's 40th Anniversary Brunch are \$125. For tickets and more information, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/40-years-and-counting-a-legacy-of-telling-our-stories-uncompromisingly-tickets-739885887607?aff=oddttdcreator>



Tomorrow and Beyond: Rendering of a multi-million dollar facility spanning 1601- 1611 East North Avenue



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Ravens Safety Kyle Hamilton is Hitting Stride

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens had high hopes that the 2022 NFL Draft would play out the way it did. Notre Dame safety Kyle Hamilton was squarely in their cross hairs. Hamilton was universally viewed as the top defensive back prospect in the class.

Hamilton was available at pick No. 14 and the Ravens brass quickly submitted their selection. This season has proven to show the reason why Hamilton was a coveted player. The second-year player has three sacks, eight tackles for a loss, nine passes defended and two interceptions.

The Ravens are pleased with the results.

“I told you from the beginning, in my first presser in the beginning of the year, I told you that [Kyle Hamilton] was going to be a Pro-Bowl type of player,” Ravens secondary coach Chris Hewitt said. “He does everything; he covers, he blitzes [and] he tackles. There’s nothing that kid can’t do.”

Hamilton names Derwin James, Justin Simmons, Tyrann Mathieu and Kevin Byard as safeties he’s watched to pull nuggets from. He aspires to cement himself among the lists of top safeties.

“Yes, that’s definitely one of the goals – to get those accolades [and the] recognition – but at the same time, everybody goes at their own pace, and I’m not comparing myself to anybody. [I] just do what I do, and when I do it, [and] how I do it; I feel like I’m confident in that,” Hamilton said.

Hamilton is also a guy that can match up with tight ends. At 6-foot-4, 220 pounds, Hamilton has the size to go along with the athleticism that eliminates match-up problems most other defenses have.

Last season gave Hamilton an opportunity to break into the league and get familiar with what it takes



Kyle Hamilton

Winslow Townson/AP Images for Panini

to excel. It was a feeling out period. The comfort level that Hamilton established last season has allowed him to be an impact player now. Hamilton has become a leader on the defense.

“It’s the command of the entire defense [and] knowing how the pieces fit,” Hewitt said. “He knows where everybody is supposed to be. He knows where the linebackers and corners and where everybody is supposed to fit in the defense. So, he knows what leverages to play, and he’s able to unwind things where sometimes, things get a little crazy out there, and he’s able to unwind it and get everybody in good position.”

Given the high interception totals for safety Geno Stone who has six and the prowess of cornerback Marlon Humphrey along with Hamilton, many view the Ravens secondary as a top unit in the league. Add in linebackers Patrick Queen and Roquan Smith and the defensive front that features Justin Madubuike and you get one of the

league’s best defenses.

But Hamilton feels they can be even better.

“Somebody said we were No. 1 in the AFC,” Hamilton said. “I’m kind of thinking, like ... I feel like we haven’t even played our best football yet. We haven’t even hit our stride yet, because I feel like there is so much, as a team, that we can be more consistent with and more crisp, more concise as a defense [and] be more consistent on a weekly basis. So, I think it’s kind of a good thing. [From] my perspective – looking at it – we’re not even the best we can get right now.”

The arrow is clearly pointing up for the Ravens defense which is a good trend. It’s a return the past years when safety Ed Reed and middle linebacker Ray Lewis led the Ravens to glory. Now it’s Hamilton at safety with Smith a middle linebacker hoping to achieve the same results: a Super Bowl championship.

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Addenda #3

The Housing Authority of the City of Hagerstown, Maryland, 35 W. Baltimore Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740 will receive bids from qualified, responsible contractors until 10:00AM current time, Thursday, December 14, 2023, for the Potomac Towers Sliding Glass Door Replacements Project at 11 W. Baltimore Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740. Potomac Towers is a 14-story, high-rise building, housing 326 residential units. Anticipate award of contract to successful contractor by mid-January 2024. Construction period will be discussed once the contract is awarded. The actual construction start date will be established by mutual agreement between the owner and the contractor. Davis-Bacon wages for Washington County, Maryland and Liquidated Damages apply to this solicitation.

Electronic drawings and specifications are available upon request. Contact Dawn Bragunier, Modernization Coordinator, at telephone 301-733-6911 Ext. 168 or email: dbragunier@hagerstownha.com for bid documents.

Sean Griffith
Contract Officer

E.E.O.

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