



# THE BALTIMORE TIMES

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## Birdland Murals Series, Powered by PNC, Takes Flight In Baltimore



*(L-R:) Mac Campbell, Baltimore Convention Center, Executive Director; Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott; Laura Gamble, PNC Bank regional president Greater Maryland; Katey Truhn, Birdland mural artist; the Orioles Bird; Kerry R. Watson, Jr., Baltimore Orioles EVP, Public Affairs; and Gaia, renowned artist and Birdland Murals curator participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new mural as part of their ongoing Birdland Murals series on May 2, 2024. The Baltimore Orioles, in partnership with PNC Bank, unveiled the stunning mural as part of their ongoing Birdland Murals series. This latest addition to the collection graces the west side of the Baltimore Convention Center.*

*(See article on page 2) Photo courtesy: Baltimore Orioles*



# New Mural Celebrates Baltimore's Spirit

## Birdland Murals Series, Powered by PNC, Takes Flight In Baltimore

By **Karanja Gaçuça**

The Baltimore Orioles, in partnership with PNC Bank, unveiled a stunning new mural as part of their ongoing Birdland Murals series. This latest addition to the collection graces the west side of the Baltimore Convention Center, a prominent location that echoes the project's mission of celebrating Baltimore's vibrant culture, rich history, and the remarkable people who call it home.

"We are excited to unveil the next installment of the Birdland Murals powered by PNC," said Laura Gamble, PNC Regional President for Greater Maryland. "The mural series brings together the Baltimore community's two great loves: the arts and the Orioles. PNC is proud to sponsor this beautiful new mural in downtown Baltimore."

The mural's placement aligns perfectly with Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott's Downtown Rise initiative. As a major gathering space for visitors, the Baltimore Convention Center becomes a canvas for showcasing the city's artistic energy.

"I'm deeply grateful to the Orioles, PNC Bank, and all of our partners who have made this mural project possible," said Mayor Scott. "As we continue our work to revitalize downtown and showcase the best Baltimore has to offer, this mural will hold a special place in that effort. The Orioles' commitment to projects like this shows that they are not just a team in Baltimore, but a team of Baltimore. I am incredibly excited for everyone coming downtown for games — or any reason — to see this beautiful new mural and reflect on our city, our history, and the renaissance that we're building here."



*Mural created by Jessie Unterhalter and Katey Truhn Photo credit: Baltimore Orioles*

### **A Symbol of Baltimore's Future**

The Birdland Murals series is more than just an art project for the Orioles. It's a powerful symbol of Baltimore's growth and a testament to the enduring spirit of its residents.

"We are thrilled to continue to utilize our transformative relationship with PNC Bank to bring more vibrant art to Baltimore through the creation of this stunning mural," said Kerry R. Watson, Jr., Orioles Executive Vice President of Public Affairs.

"This campaign symbolizes our

shared commitment to enhancing the fabric of our community, fostering unity and inspiring positive growth."

### **PNC Bank: Investing in a Brighter Baltimore**

PNC Bank's commitment to Baltimore goes beyond murals. They recognize the transformative power of art and its ability to revitalize communities. Their ongoing partnership with the Birdland Murals series is just one example of how they are actively investing in Baltimore's future.

"This project is meant to be more than just a mural on a building, but a vision of hope, progress and a brighter future for all residents of Baltimore," Watson continued, highlighting PNC Bank's dedication to the city's well-being.

### **A Masterpiece by Baltimore's Own**

The Baltimore-based artistic duo known as Jessie and Katey have spent the past decade transforming public

See **BIRDLAND**, page 6

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Jayne Hopson  
Courtesy Photo

By Jayne Hopson

Researchers from Johns Hopkins Medicine have released a newsworthy study asserting that medical errors should be recognized as the third leading cause of death in the United States. The study, led by Dr. Martin Makary, a Johns Hopkins surgeon, sheds light on the severe underreporting of fatalities due to medical mistakes and suggests significant reforms in how death statistics are collected and recorded.

According to the study's findings, medical errors claim over 250,000 American lives annually. This staggering number places it just behind heart disease and cancer, each responsible for around 600,000 deaths, and well ahead of respiratory diseases, which account for approximately 150,000 deaths per year.

The analysis, published in the *BMJ*, formerly known as the *British Medical Journal*, calls into question the accuracy of national health priorities that currently overlook medical errors as a leading cause of death. Dr. Makary and his team argue that the way the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collects and codes death certificate data is fundamentally flawed.

The current system fails to capture critical errors such as diagnostic mistakes, poor judgments, and

## Johns Hopkins Study Points to Medical Errors as America's Third Leading Cause of Death

communication breakdowns that can be fatal. "You have this over-appreciation of diseases like cardiovascular disease, and a vast under-recognition of medical care as a cause of death," Dr. Makary stated, emphasizing how this discrepancy influences health priorities and research funding in the country.

The CDC counters this claim, with Bob Anderson, chief of the mortality statistics branch, pointing out that medical complications are noted on death certificates and that their coding does capture such instances.

However, the CDC's approach focuses solely on the "underlying cause of death"—the initial condition leading to medical treatment. Consequently, even if medical errors are listed on a death certificate, they are excluded from national mortality statistics, overshadowed by the primary medical condition, regardless of its fatality.

This method, according to Anderson, aligns with international standards, facilitating comparisons with global health data. He expressed that changing this system would require compelling reasons, underscoring the complexities involved in overhauling established protocols.

The Johns Hopkins team advocates for the addition of a specific question on death certificates to identify whether a preventable medical complication contributed to the death. This proposal aims to better quantify the true impact of medical errors, thereby increasing public awareness and research investment in this critical area of healthcare.

The suggestion, however, is met with skepticism regarding its feasibility. Anderson remarked on the discomfort doctors might feel in reporting a death



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as a medical error, arguing that simply adding a checkbox might not address the deeper issue of underreporting. Instead, he advocates for enhanced education for doctors on the importance of error reporting as a vital public health measure.

Being a better advocate to guard against medical errors is crucial, not only for your own health but also for the well-being of others who may be in a vulnerable position in a healthcare setting. Here are five effective ways to enhance your advocacy skills. These steps can significantly improve your ability to prevent medical errors and advocate effectively for yourself or others:

**Educate Yourself and Stay Informed:** Understanding common medical procedures, medications, and potential side effects can help you recognize when something might be amiss. Keep up with the latest healthcare information and standards. This knowledge helps you to ask informed questions and understand the answers.

**Keep Detailed Medical Records:** Maintain accurate and up-to-date personal health records, including a list of all medications (prescription and over-the-counter), allergies, past surgeries, and significant medical history. Having this information readily available can be crucial in emergencies and helps ensure continuity of care.

**Communicate Effectively with Healthcare Providers:** Establish open and respectful communication with doctors, nurses, and

other healthcare staff. Don't hesitate to discuss your concerns, ask for clarifications about treatments or medications, and mention any changes in symptoms or new symptoms. Effective communication can prevent misunderstandings and errors.

**Double-Check Prescriptions and Treatments:** Always verify new prescriptions, including the drug name, dosage, and the intended use—ask why it's being prescribed and its potential side effects. For treatments and procedures, understand what is to be done and why. If something doesn't seem right, don't hesitate to confirm or seek a second opinion.

**Advocate for Trusted Presence During Critical Care:** Whenever possible, have a trusted family member or friend accompany you during major medical appointments or stays in the hospital. A second set of eyes and ears can help catch errors, remember medical advice, and advocate on your behalf if you are unable to do so yourself.

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## Technology and You

### Identity Management Part 3: Online Health Management and Digital Legacy Planning

By Karen Clay  
Clay Technology and Multimedia, L.L.C.

Shortly after my father's 90th birthday, he asked me a question that forever changed my life: "Daughter, I've outlived most of my friends, my first-born son, and my devoted wife. I think it's time that I moved somewhere else so that I am not alone. Can I move in with you?" Of course, my answer was an excited and exuberant "YES!" Ultimately, between the delays of the contractor engaged to renovate the lower level of my house and the necessary inspections that needed to be completed, the amount of time we spent as housemates was only seven months. During those seven months and immediately following his transition, I learned two things: the importance of supporting elders to manage and protect information related to online health records and the necessity of digital legacy planning.

In 2009 as part of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, the federal government created an incentive program that encouraged hospitals and providers to adopt electronic health records systems (EHRs.) Since that time, digital health records have become widely available to consumers. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the role that technology plays in providing care, especially regarding the correct identification of patients across the health care spectrum. Despite this, many people are still reticent to access their EHRs online, partly due to data security and privacy concerns.

To address some of these concerns, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) maintains a

website (<https://www.healthit.gov/>) that provides information and offers a comprehensive guide on using digital tools to manage health information. Their resources explain how to use patient portals (secure online platforms linked to your doctor's office that allow you to view your health information and communicate with providers) and personal health records (PHRs) effectively. Some of the suggestions apply globally in terms of basic security practices such as using a strong password of 12 characters or more, using a third-party password manager, using multi-factor authentication, checking privacy settings to control who can access your data, and picking security questions to which only you know the answer. Additional suggestions include not sharing your health information with any organization that is not covered by HIPAA, over social media websites, in an online message board, health-related online communities or posting anything online that you don't want made public. Additionally, be informed regarding mobile apps you install on your phone. Research the mobile apps before you download and install any of them. Be sure to use known app websites or trusted sources and read the terms of service and the privacy notice of the mobile app to verify that the app will perform only the functions you approve.

Many of us have used technology for so long that we don't realize the extent of the digital footprint we leave when we transition or how that may impact the ability of our loved ones to settle our estate. Fortunately, I was my father's "tech" daughter, and I had a general idea about his online presence. Even so, digital legacy planning, which involves the management of our digital footprint including

deciding how digital assets and online identities should be handled after we have transitioned, is an often-overlooked aspect of online identity management.

This topic becomes increasingly important as our lives become more digitized and as we increasingly live our lives online. Considering how digital assets and online identities are handled after one's passing becomes crucial. This includes, among others, considerations about social media accounts, digital photographs, email accounts and correspondences, online banking, health, and other accounts. Setting up digital wills or designating digital executors can ensure that our digital footprint is managed according to our wishes, providing peace of mind and clarity for our loved ones.

If this sounds daunting, it certainly can be, so to guide you through the process of organizing and safeguarding your digital assets, here are some resources to help you learn more about digital legacy planning and to start a discussion about it with your family and friends. Through these sites you can discover information on social media templates, and guides on handling various digital platforms and devices at the end of life, insights and information for planning your online presence after death, managing online content posthumously, creating a comprehensive list of your digital assets, making decisions about them, appointing a digital executor, and more:

- Digital Legacy Association: <https://digitallegacyassociation.org/>
- The Digital Beyond: <https://www.thedigitalbeyond.com/>
- Death With Dignity: <https://deathwithdignity.org/resources/life-file-digital-estate-planning/>
- Cake: <https://www.joincake.com/blog/category/digital-afterlife/>



**Laura Gamble,**  
*PNC Regional President for Greater Maryland*  
 Photo courtesy: PNC

## Birdland

Continued from page 2

spaces across the country with their large-scale murals and installations. Their signature style is on full display in the Birdland Murals series' newest addition.

“The mural was created by Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) graduates, Jessie Unterhalter and Katey Truhn,” the Orioles announced. “The artists’ bold geometric mural depicts a visual interpretation of the energy and pride that is felt when the community comes together around a collective event. The vibrant colors and symmetrical composition celebrate the city’s spirit.”

Unterhalter and Truhn take pride in the way their work interacts with the public space and the viewers who

encounter it. Their murals are a captivating blend of color, bold geometric shapes, and underlying narratives inspired by the surrounding architecture and historical context. This dedication to storytelling through art has garnered them national recognition, with features in publications like Huffington Post, NPR, Complex, Art & Design, Washington Post, and The New York Times. Their work can also be found in public and private collections throughout the United States, including Union Craft Brewing in Baltimore, Appalachian State University in North Carolina, and Facebook Headquarters in Washington, DC.

### A Flourishing Initiative

The new mural joins a growing collection. Since its inception in

2019, the Birdland Murals series has blossomed into a collection of nine murals. Seven of these murals grace the walls around Oriole Park, the heart of Baltimore baseball fandom, while another brightens the Waverly community.

Fans eager to explore the complete Birdland Murals series can find more information and potentially plan a self-guided art tour through Baltimore’s vibrant neighborhoods on the Orioles’ website, <https://www.mlb.com/orioles/ballpark/birdland-murals>.

The Birdland Murals series serves as a permanent reminder of Baltimore’s artistic spirit, its unwavering sense of community, and its unwavering commitment to a brighter future. As Baltimore continues to rise, these murals will stand as a testament to the city’s creative energy and the enduring talent of its hometown artists.

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# Mother and Daughter CEOs Share An Unbreakable Bond

By Ursula V. Battle

Growing up, Ashley Rock-Wylie would watch her mother Debbie Rock administer compassion and love to children with HIV and AIDS. Rock's volunteer efforts would have a major impact on the career paths of both women.

Today, Rock is the founder and CEO of LIGHT Health & Wellness Comprehensive Services, Inc. (LIGHT), a non-profit that provides comprehensive support services to children, youth, and families whose lives have been impacted by health and societal issues such as HIV/AIDS and substance abuse.

Rock-Wylie RN, MS, MBA now owns and operates Above It All Mental Health Program, a program that provides therapy, therapeutic mentorship, substance use disorder treatment, and other services. She also owns Fleurs d'Ave Floral Boutique, which specializes in creative floral arrangements.

The businesses owned by the mother-daughter entrepreneurship duo "stems" from their desire to make the world a beautiful place for everyone to live – particularly children born with HIV/AIDS. Their desire to make a difference has "blossomed" into successful business ventures.

"I started volunteering at the University of Maryland working with children with AIDS," recalled Rock. "I would take Ashley with me. At the time, she wanted to go into forensics. I eventually started Baltimore's first pediatric HIV program serving children in a childcare setting."

LIGHT started as a single-day care program serving children and families impacted by HIV/AIDS and is recognized as a national model for its services and innovation. It has

since grown into a broad client base organization offering multiple services including mental health/trauma, counseling, prevention education, and risk reduction.

Rock-Wylie reflected on the impact her mother had on her career path.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in life," said Rock-Wylie. "As my mother said, I thought I wanted to go into forensics, but watching the work my mother did, drew me in. I started working with children who were HIV-positive. That's where I developed my passion and decided I was going to nursing school."

Rock-Wylie began her career as a youth services coordinator with HIV infected youth at LIGHT Health and Wellness. She later operationalized the University of Maryland's School of Medicine's HIV Primary Care Clinic known as the JACQUES Initiative and taught as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland School of Nursing. Her career also includes serving as Director of Regional Care Coordination at CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Rock-Wylie operates the Above It All Mental Health Program and Fleurs d'Ave Floral Boutique alongside her husband Brandon Wylie.

"I feel like I am walking in my purpose," said Rock-Wylie.

Both mother and daughter have advocated on behalf of vulnerable populations and received numerous honors and awards for their work in the community. Rock has forged major collaborations with various organizations including Baltimore Health Enterprise Zone, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, University of Maryland Medical Systems, and numerous community-based and AIDS service organizations.

Rock also found success in the music industry as a former disco singer with hits that included "Don't You Want My Love?"

Both choked up when they talked about their strong maternal bond.

"If someone is in trouble or needs help...it does not matter who they are...Ashley is there," said Rock. "I'm very, very honored to be her mother and I love her very, very much."

Rock-Wylie said, "I'm beyond grateful for the type of mother that I have...her unwavering support and telling me she loved me over and over again. It didn't go unnoticed."

The two shared these Mother's Day messages.

"In the world that we live in, figure out a way to forgive, communicate and tell each other that you love one another," said Rock. "If a person passes and you were angry with them and didn't make it right, it will haunt you for the rest of your life. Children, spend time with your parents. Moms spend time with your

children and let them know how much you love them."

Ashley Rock-Wylie added, "This sounds so much like a cliché, but give your mothers and your daughters their flowers while they can smell them."



**Mother-daughter CEOs. Debbie Rock is the founder and CEO of LIGHT Health & Wellness Comprehensive Services, while her daughter Ashley Rock-Wylie owns and operates Above It All Mental Health Program and Fleurs d'Ave Floral Boutique. Courtesy photo**

# To Mom With Love:

## Local Children Pay Tribute to Their Mothers

By Andrea Blackstone

### Sandra R. Simmons-Green



**Sandra Simmons-Green**  
Photo credit: Jeremy Simmons

**“Super Mom” and  
“The Queen of Making Things Happen”**  
Location: Baltimore City  
Profession: Retired Teacher

#### Mother of Jeremy DeWayne Simmons and Arthur Herbert-Alexander Green II

Sandra R. Simmons-Green retired from Baltimore City Schools after 40 years of teaching in several public-school systems. Her investment to nurture people includes taking care of family.

“My mother is a selfless and caring woman with a strong faith in God, amazing resilience and strength,” said Jeremy DeWayne Simmons.

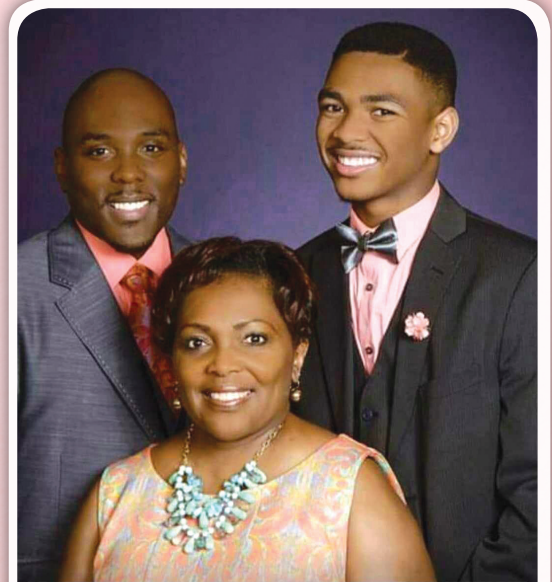
When Simmons-Green became a mother at eighteen years old, Simmons later lived with his grandmother.

“I was born in February, and in August, she left me with my grandmother to continue the plan of her attending the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond—some 45 minutes away. For four years, she came home on weekends and during the week while attending school she worked to assist in my care,” Simmons said.

He added, “So, from the beginning, she taught and modeled to me to not let life’s circumstances deter you from your dreams and that is her true strength.”

Simmons-Green opted to serve as a caregiver for her parents. Personal duties led her to her early retirement.

“This has shown me that you make the necessary sacrifices for those that you love and for those that took care of you when you weren’t able to care for yourself,” Simmons explained.



**(Left to right) Jeremy Simmons,  
Sandra Simmons-Green and Arthur Green II**  
Photo credit: Lifetouch

Green agreed that their mother is always there for her family.

“My mother is the queen of making things happen. If we want it done, or if we are celebrating an accomplishment, my mother does all that she can to go over the top for us. She is always there for us, be it a wake-up call or a shoulder to cry on. She is our greatest defender and cheerleader, and always has time for us,” Green said.

He is a vocal musician who also performs in musical theater. Green stated that his mother had done thoughtful things such as acquiring a subscription for him to Backstage.com to enable him to look for auditions. Simmons-Green taught him that love is unconditional. It doesn’t look for a return.

Green recalls important lessons that his mother taught him about fulfilling his purpose.

“My mother taught me to go into my purpose with a plan and faith. As much as you plan, you must have faith that it will all work out, no matter what. My purpose is to inspire and entertain and my mother has been giving me guidance as much as she could, and I am so grateful.”

Green added, “Everything you are is in me, and I thank you for everything that you have taught me, both the easy and hard way. I love you with all my heart. Happy Mothers’ Day!”



# Mother's Day Reflections

## Ciara Davis



*Ciara Davis*



*Ciara Davis with her children, Caelyn and Christian, during a vacation. Photos courtesy of Ciara Davis*

**“There’s never a boring moment around her.”**

**Location:** Baltimore County

**Profession:** Student and preschool teacher

**Mother of Caelyn, 11, and Christian, 15**

Ciara Davis is a caring mother who enthusiastically invests in her children with devotion and love. When mothers put in the work, children like Caelyn and Christian notice.

Caelyn describes Davis as kind, funny, honest and talented.

“She can cook, sing and paint! Plus, she’s really smart and never gives up even when things are hard,” Caelyn said.

Christian added that Davis encourages him no matter how the day starts.

“She always takes care of me. When I’m sick, she buys me food. She never misses any school events, and she always tells me she loves me every day.”

Christian is a teenager who benefits from Davis’ nurturing and perceptive spirit. He noted that Davis taught him to keep trying when he fails and to always finish whatever he starts.

“Happy Mother’s Day to the best mom!” he added.

Caelyn reminded, “I love you so much and I hope your Mother’s Day is great.”

## Dr. Tammira Lucas

**“A built-in-best friend”**

**Location:** Baltimore County

**Profession:** CEO of The Cube Cowork

**Mother of 13-year-old Ryann Lucas**

Ryann Lucas reminds us that a strong mother-and-daughter bond can be a beautiful testament.

“Without my mother, I would not have anyone to talk to about my school life, friends and relationship problems. Most importantly, I would not have my main support system,” said Ryann.

She remarked that her mother is innovative and quick-thinking.

Ryann added, “No matter what,

## Paula Scott

**“Resilient”**

**Location:** Annapolis, MD

**Profession:** DOD Contractor

**Mother of four**

Life has thrown a few curve balls at Paula Scott. Her resilient attitude has helped her to rise above difficulties. She still manages to put others first and advocate for others in their time of need. The devoted mother raised four children when she was in her twenties, and she became a grandmother before she reached 40 years old.

The little things count in Scott’s life. She loves family outings. Most of all, she enjoys spending time with her grandchildren. Her children described her as “one of the most kind and caring individuals you’ll ever meet.” They also said that Scott is the strongest woman they know.

“Mom is just one title, but she is so much more. She’s a sister, a friend, a grandmother, our prayer warrior and a survivor.”

“We just wanted to honor you and let you know how special you are to us and everyone around you! Happy Mother’s Day!” her children joyfully stated.

she can make up any idea then start to grow on that idea and make it 10 times better.”

Tammira’s daughter is grateful to have a mother who is active in her life. It is important to Ryann that her mother is her built-in best friend. She gives her daughter a boost with loving words and hands-on contributions that are beneficial to a young woman who wants to thrive.

“One of the ways my mom shows me love is by giving me so many resources so that I can be the best version of myself. Another way my mom shows me love is by telling me words of affirmation. This supports my thinking in so many ways and truly starts me off with a great day.”

“I would like to tell my mom that



*Paula Scott*

*Photo courtesy of Paula Scott’s family*

*Happy Mother’s Day*



*Ryann and Dr. Tammira Lucas*

*Photo credit: Todd Dorsey*

there are no words in the world to explain how much I love her and how grateful I am for her!” Ryann also said.

## Starting Over as a New Mother, Wife at 50

By Andrea Blackstone

Some single mothers may believe that love can never come again after a bad relationship. Catherine Tyson-Sewell proves this theory untrue. The optimistic go-getter found love again at 50 years old with a younger husband. She also embraced motherhood again twenty-four years after her single mother journey.

"I was married first at 20 years of age and then became a single mother six years after the marriage failed," said Tyson-Sewell, recounting her first parenting and marital story.

After experiencing "an unhappy marriage," and completing one term at a vocational school, Tyson-Sewell remembered her interrupted college plans.

She recalled, "I figured I better go to college and obtain a degree in order to make a decent life for myself and my kids."

Tyson-Sewell grew up in the Cayman Islands, New York and Miami, Florida. She created a support system that enabled her to attend college while parenting three children. After Tyson-Sewell became a single parent of three young children at 26 years old, she found herself on her own in the United States. Her mother had returned to the islands a few years earlier.

"Thankfully, when I moved into my apartment, it had a community of families, three of which were single mothers. We really helped each other out."

A pediatrician and two-parent home families were included in the group of women of Tyson-Sewell's network. Their community functioned as a close-knit village.

Despite supportive helpers, Tyson-Sewell still navigated through poverty and obstacles.

"Getting assistance from the state was also a problem because they don't approve you if you have something they deem [that] makes you ineligible, like a



**Catherine Tyson-Sewell earned her Master's of Social Work degree from Barry University in 2002.**

*Photo courtesy of Catherine Tyson-Sewell*



**(L-R:) Catherine Tyson-Sewell's children Richard Tyson; David Tyson; daughter Caitlin; Tyson-Sewell's husband Ramone; (front) Tyson-Sewell and their baby daughter, Cathalina during Tyson-Sewell's book launch in 2023.**

*Photo credit: Filtrip Visuals*

car," she recalled.

Tyson-Sewell stuck to her revised plan with a persistent attitude. She graduated from Miami Dade College with an associate degree in Psychology. She earned a bachelor's degree in social work from Florida Atlantic University and a Master's of Social Work from Barry University.

"Education was my ticket to success to finally being able to take care of myself and my children and not have to depend on child support or be at risk of ending up in a bad situation just for the financial stability," she added.

Tyson-Sewell penned "I'm Somebody's Mama" and "Single Mama: Powerful Not Pitiful." The books about single parenting evolved because she started to journal while raising her children and working as a social worker. Her "Prince Charming" had not found her three and a half years after she began dreaming about it. Tyson-Sewell decided to turn her journals into funny short stories where



she could now laugh at her tough experiences.

She added, "I started to share them with some of my colleagues who thought they were hilarious and quite poignant and thought that I should do a book with these entries."

"I'm Somebody's Mama" is composed of short recollections of things ranging from dating to serious topics. "Single Mama;

Powerful not Pitiful" includes Tyson-Sewell's inspiring journey and celebration of being a single mother. She also encourages those who are walking the road alone, reminding them that they can do it well.

The kind of love Tyson-Sewell wanted arrived when she was on the cusp of turning 50, after she successfully raised three adult children. Today, Tyson-Sewell is a radio personality, author, Director of Miss Global International Cayman Islands and Philippines, and a devoted mother and wife. Her next chapter included giving birth to a new

16-month-old baby who is being raised by Tyson-Sewell and her husband, Ramone Sewell.

"After fighting myself a bit because of the age difference [between my husband and me], I decided to relax and allow myself to be loved by

this incredible man who wanted to be my partner and my friend. We got engaged two years after meeting," she explained.

Tyson-Sewell's journey reminds single mothers that it is possible to return to school to obtain a vocation, skill or degree. Additionally, it is also possible to find love at any age.

"Being somebody's mama, you need a special person who respects that and who respects you as a mother to your children and who respects your children. Being in a relationship with someone who is not affected or concerned about your kids or you as a mom is not the right person or situation," Tyson-Sewell warned.

She recommends that single mothers should find a supportive church and make a list of their necessities and desires.

"Fill yourself daily with affirmations and love and compassion for yourself throughout this journey. Just be kind and gentle to you," she said.

Visit <https://www.instagram.com/realcatherinetyson/?hl=en> to find Tyson-Sewell on social media. Locate "Single Mama: Powerful Not Pitiful" via <https://www.amazon.com/Single-Mama-Powerful-Not-Pitiful-ebook/dp/B0BN983KGB>.

# Navigating Mother's Day After Losing Your Mother

By **Andrea Blackstone**

May 12 has become a popular day to send flowers to mothers, take them out to dinner or buy trinkets to acknowledge them. The holiday that honors mothers was founded by Anna Jarvis, a social activist and community organizer from the American Civil War era who founded it after her mother's death to honor her. Jarvis grew unhappy with commercial forces that evolved after she launched her movement.

Recollecting the true value of mothers can often be felt when the commercial aspect is removed, and their presence is absent. Mother's Day is every day when it comes to giving mothers daily appreciation for their sacrifices and love.

Kimberli Gross, a Baltimore native who now lives in Westminster, Maryland, knows how jarring it feels to lose a mother. Her personal journey through grief began in 2004 when her mother closed her eyes to this world.

"I was unprepared, both by naively believing she would live forever, and in being equipped to live after she was gone," said Gross.

Like Jarvis, Gross felt a passion rise inside of her because of losing her mother. She discovered that she wanted to help others navigate grief in healthy and constructive ways. Gross wanted to aid grieving people and embody the very sense of community that was absent in her own moment of need.

"I want to be the community I needed at that time," Gross explained.

Gross, who is the proud mother of three sons, an Air Force veteran who served during the 9/11 attack and compassionate woman with a heart to comfort others founded Celebrate Still, Inc. in 2022. Through the 501(c)(3)

nonprofit organization, Gross guides individuals through the journey of rediscovering a new normal after the profound experience of loss.

"At Celebrate Still, Inc., our mission is to help individuals find a new normal after experiencing loss. We are committed to normalizing grief, removing the stigma around therapy, and building a supportive community for those navigating through challenging times," said Gross.

She is deeply committed to normalizing grief, promoting the importance of therapy, and fostering a supportive community for those navigating challenging times.

Gross' Living Shattered workshop is presented within a faith-centric framework. The transformative grief support program is designed to guide individuals on a faith-fueled journey through the complexities of grief. Individuals participate in a collective journey to move toward a path of healing, hope, and the possibility of rebuilding a life anchored in faith. Scripture, practical discussions, and personal reflections are intertwined. The workshop can also be hosted at local churches or community centers.

Gross created the "Living Shattered" Journal in 2023. She regards it as a "compassionate companion" that is



**Kimberli Gross, founder of Celebrate Still, Inc.**  
*Photo credit: Aisha Butler Photography*

crafted to lead others on a faith-fueled journey through life's most challenging moments.

Celebrate Still, Inc. is guided by a set of core values that include empathy; normalization of the grieving process to help individuals feel more comfortable seeking support and understanding that their experiences are a natural part of the human condition; building a supportive community while fostering connections; the recognition of the courage it takes to face loss and the strength required to move forward; transparency to building trust within the nonprofit's community; well-being

and the active promotion of self-care; the integration of education to empower individuals on their grief journey; resilience and belief in hope.

Gross earned her bachelor's degree in organizational management. She later pursued a master's degree from Liberty University in Human Services Counseling, specializing in Crisis, Trauma, and Grief.

"I also realized there was such a heavy stigma around therapy," Gross said, reflecting on why she took action to help change this landscape.

She added that the conversation about grief is so important because death is a reality. Loved ones do not physically live forever. Additionally, unmanaged grief can lead to unhealthy actions.

Additionally, Gross' military service further shapes her ability to utilize an empathetic approach while she serves as an empathetic guide and beacon of hope.

A third Mother's Day Brunch hosted by Gross allows individuals who have lost their mothers to find a sense of community instead of grieving alone. They can gather to honor and remember their mothers in a supportive environment. The event will be held on Saturday, May 11, 2024 from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Diamondz Events & Catering LLC, located 9980-88 Liberty Road #9980 in Randallstown, Maryland. Enjoy heartwarming moments, dancing and the opportunity to meet other amazing people. Tickets must be purchased in advance through Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/celebrate-still-a-mothers-day-brunch-tickets-846506382377>.

Learn more about Gross, future events and Celebrate Still Inc. via <https://celebratestill.org>.

### Baltimore’s Hip Hop Initiation to the Gallery at The Avenue Bakery

By Wendy Saulters

On Saturday, May 11, 2024, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., The Avenue Bakery, located at 2229 Pennsylvania Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217, in collaboration with the Royal Theater & Community Heritage Corporation will present their annual Courtyard Concert Series – *Matinee at the Royal*. Hosted by Rosa “Rambling Rose” Pryor, this annual concert celebrates the rich musical history of African Americans and more intimately, the historical nostalgia of West Baltimore City.

Pennsylvania Avenue, where the Royal Theater stood, proudly hosted the most talented Black musicians and performers throughout the mid-sixties. Until it was demolished in 1971, the Royal Theatre walls held the jazz and blues stories of Louis Armstrong, Pearl Bailey, Duke Ellington, and many others. It is the retelling of these stories that drives this annual event. The “focus of our concert series is to mirror the atmosphere that was once the Avenue,” says James Hamlin.

Hamlin is the owner and founder of The Avenue Bakery, which doubles as a historical museum to the Royal Theater and Black musicians who made significant cultural impacts. The walls of the bakery are dedicated to articles of those whose existence opened doors of opportunity for Blacks to thrive. Beyond the kitchen of delicious fresh baked cakes is a gallery and a courtyard filled with murals capturing stories in moments. Historian and author of “On a Roll,” Hamlin docents the courtyard murals to Baltimoreans and trailblazers of Baltimore’s Hip Hop History.

Hip Hop, which recently celebrated 50 years as a recognized musical

genre, has deep roots in Baltimore City and storytelling. Baltimoreans listened attentively to the connection between Baltimore’s Hip Hop and Jazz history during a 2019 tour by Hamlin. The vision of the Avenue Bakery and its collection of murals is to keep Baltimore’s rich musical heritage and legacy alive. This is why “Matinee at the Royal” is the perfect event for the unveiling of a mural dedicated to the pioneers of Baltimore’s Hip Hop Legends affectionately dubbed the “AM Youth Legends.” The Avenue Bakery’s newest mural in honor of Hip Hop’s golden anniversary is another Baltimore Story.

Hip Hop was making its debut in the ‘80s and Baltimore teenagers entered the arena. The popular groups took to the airways and local venues. DJs, like the legendary Randy Dennis, Lee Michaels and radio pioneers like Dorothy E. Brunson gave them opportunities and these teens told their stories. Capturing their world, their concerns and their emotions on beats impacted a genre of music, a generation of Baltimoreans, and fueled a legacy of Baltimore Hip Hop music that continues today.

The Baltimore Hip Hop Historical Project (BHHHP) has been leading the charge to not only recognize the pioneers of Baltimore’s Hip Hop scene but to immortalize them as we have the blues and jazz musicians of the Royal Theater. The mural unveiling is only one venture for the organization’s founder, Tenyo Pearl, who was one of the teens hanging on every word and dancing to every beat of the Uno Girls, some of whom were her high school classmates.

“It’s truly remarkable that during the month of May, which is National



(Left-right) Terry McCoy aka “DJ Terry Tee”; Darryl Mims aka “DJ Junie Jam”; James Hamlin, owner of Avenue Bakery; Glynizz Rose aka “Sweet Cookie”; and Rod Holloman aka “DJ Kool Rod.” Photo courtesy of Tenyo Pearl

Share a Story Month, we are unveiling a historic Hip-Hop artistic montage in Baltimore. This project epitomizes our duty as citizens to preserve our city’s rich history. Hip-hop serves as a clarion call, a narrative woven into the fabric of Baltimore’s identity. Through the [BHHHP], we’re not just sharing the stories of Gen X; we’re bridging generations, from the Baby Boomers to Gen Z and beyond. This homage pays tribute to the legendary figures like Cab Calloway who shaped Hip-Hop, connecting us to our roots and inspiring future generations,” says Dr. Pearl about the collaboration with the Avenue Bakery. “It’s easy to see the similarities in the scattling of jazz and Hip Hop’s rhythmic poetry. It’s easy to connect the storytelling in blues to the storytelling in the

lyrics of Hip Hop. It’s easy to see the impact music has on our culture. By honoring our history, we honor ourselves, and shine light on our future.”

In 2019, Pennsylvania Avenue became the new Black Arts District. Hamlin says, “Having entertainment venues is important and a need.” Therefore, he dedicates his bakery and his courtyard to being a venue for entertainment on the Avenue.

Join the crowd for a free concert. Queen Songbird and her band will set the atmosphere and Black historical genius will give the ambiance. Designed by Cisco the Artist, BHHHP’s mural will be unveiled on Saturday, May 11, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. and the legend of Baltimore’s rich Black musical history will continue to be told.



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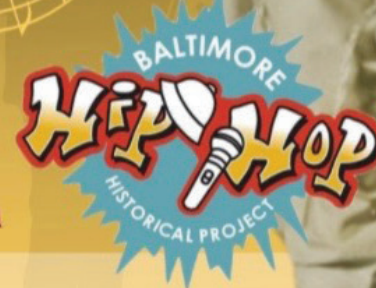
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# African-Centered Youth Rites of Passage Initiative Experience Supports Boys, Parents/Caregivers

By Andrea Blackstone

Merriam-Webster defines a rite of passage as “a ritual, event, or experience that marks or constitutes a major milestone or change in a person’s life.”

Indigenous African people utilize various rites of passage to mark various transitions or milestones that children, youth and adults encounter throughout their lifespan.

African American young people can often benefit from receiving support as they make transitions from one developmental stage to the next. The concept of rites of passage can also be incorporated into contemporary Black culture.

The Baltimore Rites of Passage Initiative (BROPI), a project co-led by Dr. David C. Miller and Sadiq Ali, builds on a culturally rooted experience that deepens understanding and connection with Mother Africa. Through BROPI, Miller and Ali work with other highly skilled Black men who want to make Black boys a priority.

“BROPI is not a mentoring program. It’s an intergenerational process where Black men come together to teach and coach boys about their history and culture,” said Miller.

Raised in West Baltimore, Miller earned his master’s degree in education and Ph.D. in Social Work. He and a team created the Dare to Be King Project, LLC. Books, curricular material and workshops that target boys of color are provided through it. Ali, founding executive director for the relaunched MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership affiliate for the Maryland/DC region - MENTOR Maryland|DC, earned an MBA in Business Administration. Both men who elevate achievement are Morgan State University alumni.



*Ibrahim Turay, Dominick Hand, Musa Forday, Leonard Kweku, Koli Tengella, Zeke Johnson, Dr. Kmt Shockley, Ras Tre Sabira, Elder Michael Campbell participate in a session on African spirituality.*

BROPI’s mission and program purpose ensures that Black men and boys are afforded opportunities to experience manhood and masculinity through healthy physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. It is housed under MENTOR Maryland|DC. Male participants ages 11-13 must reside in Baltimore City to participate in BROPI.

“This model is implemented by Black men who have completed a rigorous adult Rites of Passage process. BROPI is not a mentoring program but a model that uses an intergenerational approach of Black men to support the healthy development of Black male youth,” said Miller. “BROPI is two years old but is part of the original Baltimore Rites of Passage Collective, which was created over thirty years ago.”

BROPI is implemented by a ten-member Advisory Group that manages all critical decisions such as planning and logistics. These highly experienced men have worked substantially with Black men and boys in Baltimore.

Highlights of an upcoming BROPI summer cohort from June 23, 2024 – September 29, 2024 will partially feature



*A Pre-Rites of Passage Session Weekend Retreat Camp Lets in Annapolis, Maryland. Photos courtesy of Baltimore Rites of Passage Initiative (BROPI)*

African history and culture workshops; a half-day fishing trip; a three-day retreat camp that is held at Camp Lets in Edgewater, Maryland and life skill development are included. Boys are also afforded an opportunity to understand healthy manhood and masculinity while incorporating various topics, including navigation of encounters with the police, healthy social media use, examining the dangers of alcohol and drugs, and learning the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

Selected families must agree to participate in mandatory components.

“There is an application process, orientation and family interview. Families must agree to participate in four to five family engagement sessions focused on understanding Black male youth’s social and emotional development,” said Miller.

Men in Baltimore City who currently work with Black male youth are recruited to participate in BROPI’s Adult Rites of Passage process. Selectees are vetted and trained. They complete a six-month process and background checks.

“The men who complete our Adult Rites of Passage process are trained to implement our youth Rites of Passage model,” said Miller.

David Aaron Van “Ayodeji” Johnson is among youth rites of passage facilitators. He currently resides in West Baltimore.

“I joined BROPI and completed the adult Rites of Passage process to connect deeply to my culture, heritage, ancestors and community,” said Johnson.

He added, “I think this initiative will have a huge impact on changing the mindset of Black men and will help them positively identify with their true nature. It will, in turn, produce better fathers, husbands, sons, activists and leaders in our communities.”

Baltimore City residents are encouraged to attend one of BROPI’s upcoming informational sessions. Please visit <https://bit.ly/rites2024a> to learn about the session that is scheduled for Saturday, May 18, 2024 in Baltimore from 3 – 4:30 p.m. Another orientation session will be held virtually on Wednesday, May 22, 2024 from 7 – 8 p.m. See <https://bit.ly/rites2024b> for details. Visit <https://mentormddc.org/bropi/> for more information about BROPI. The application deadline is May 24, 2024. BROPI is funded by Baltimore Children & Youth Fund.

# Local Prospect Jordan Toles Attends Ravens Rookie Minicamp

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens 2024 NFL Draft class got a chance to make their first impressions last Saturday at rookie minicamp. While all of the attention was on high draft picks like cornerback Nate Wiggins and offensive tackle Roger Rosengarten, some lesser-known players were looking to make their mark as well.

One of those players is Morgan State defensive back Jordan Toles. Toles impressed head coach John Harbaugh when he worked out for the Ravens and earned an invite to the rookie minicamp.

“First of all, his tape is really good. He’s a very productive player. I just think he’s an instinctive player who’s got a high level of ability. We like those guys, especially those guys from around here. There are five really good programs in this area that we have a lot of respect for,” Harbaugh said.

Toles started his college career at LSU before transferring to Morgan State. He landed at LSU after a standout career at St. Francis Academy where he was a four-star recruit and the No. 4 ranked prospect coming out of Maryland.

Toles posted three interceptions and his 66 tackles were the second most on the team. He was voted to the first-team All MEAC and was a finalist for Aeneas Williams Award, given to the top defensive back at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in 2023. He was also invited to the Allstate HBCU Legacy Bowl which features the top 100 NFL draft eligible HBCU football players.

At 6-foot-1, 209 pounds, Toles showed potential during rookie minicamp.



**Jordan Toles**  
Photo courtesy of MorganStateBears.com

“He looked really good moving around. He’s a big, strong guy, and he moves well. He’s a defensive back. He looked really good the last two days,” Harbaugh said.

The Ravens have always prioritized good defense back play dating back to the days when they had Rod Woodson at safety and Chris McCallister excelling for their first Super Bowl-winning team in 2000. And of course, Hall of Fame safety Ed Reed and cornerback Jimmy Smith were major contributors to the 2012 Super Bowl team. It would be a dream of Toles’

to put on the jersey and play in the secondary as those greats.

Toles wasn’t the only local product at the rookie minicamp. Maryland safety Beau Braden, a former three-star recruit and Clarksville, Maryland native out of River Hill High School hopes to stick with the Ravens as well after rookie minicamp. The Ravens also signed Duke defensive tackle Ja’Mion Franklin as an undrafted free agent. Franklin graduated from North Caroline High School in Maryland in 2018.

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