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Park Heights: A New Chapter in Baltimore's Economic Revitalization



Mayor Brandon Scott announced the designation of Park Heights as the city's newest Baltimore Main Streets District on Monday, May 13, 2024. The Baltimore Main Streets program follows Main Street America's four-point model of economic vitality, design, promotion and organization. This designation of the Main Street District was the first in the last nine years. A \$100,000 check presentation was made to Park Heights Renaissance Main Street at the event. (Photo left to right): Yolanda Jiggetts, CEO, Park Heights Renaissance, Inc; Mayor Brandon Scott; and Baltimore City Council Vice President Sharon Green Middleton. (See article on page 5) Photo: J.J. McQueen

Memorial Day: A Time to Remember the Fallen, Support the Grieving

By Andrea Blackstone

There is no such thing as a “happy Memorial Day.” The American holiday is a time to remember and honor individuals who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the U.S. military. Three individuals who have military community ties offered Memorial Day perspectives.

Dr. Courtney Barber

Dr. Courtney Barber, a psychologist and licensed marriage and family therapist, is The 2024 Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year and The 2024 Armed Forces Insurance Space Force Spouse of the Year. She has been recognized for outstanding mental health advocacy and leadership within the military spousal community.

Dr. Barber reminds us that Memorial Day weekend is more than a few days off or a chance to catch store sales.

“For the civilian community, I always preach to remember that Memorial Day is meant to honor and remember those that provided the luxuries that we have, the freedom that we have, the protection that we have as a nation,” she said.

Dr. Barber pointed out that Gold Star children are left behind when parents lose their lives while serving in the military.

“They are no longer there for the rest of that child’s life,” she reminded.

Dr. Barber also noted that Memorial Day includes remembering those who served and lost their lives to suicide.

She suggested posting about Memorial Day on social media to thank those who have given their lives and thank their family members who are now without their loved ones.

“The more that we humble ourselves



Dr. Courtney Barber
Photo: Ralph McCoy

and express a message of gratitude that day, or remembrance, even if you’re not the one that lost that person, people who have lost loved ones see that. I think even doing that offers a source of comfort that we’re kind of in this together,” she said.

Noel C. Osborne, Sr.

Noel C. Osborne Sr., a United States Army retiree, works for the Department of Defense (DOD) and encounters individuals who have lost loved ones who served in the U.S. military on a routine basis. He spends Memorial Day with his fraternity as a Prince Hall Mason to honor those who paved the way for our liberty and freedom.

“As the Grand Master for my fraternity, one thing that we do is to donate Memorial Day flowers for soldiers’ graves. Throughout veteran cemeteries, we place flowers on soldiers’ graves throughout the country. This simple act can bring comfort to families who have lost loved ones while serving our country. It also sends a message to inform the respective families that their loved ones are not forgotten, and their efforts are



Noel C. Osborne, Sr.
Photo courtesy of Noel C. Osborne, Sr.

genuinely appreciated.”

He added that ways to honor and remember those who died while serving in the U.S. military include visitation to memorials, monuments, military cemeteries and by supporting local veterans’ associations which routinely organize remembrance activities.

Osborne reminds us that Memorial Day’s overarching purpose is to render honor to service members who died while performing military service to the nation. Veterans Day thanks and honors all those who have served honorably in the military and covers both the living and deceased service members.

Icia Ragsdale

Icia Ragsdale, a mental health therapist, has served the entire Baltimore area for over a decade. She was previously married to a disabled veteran for 17 years. Ragsdale has worked with several family members of veterans who have lost their loved ones to death, substance abuse and mental health issues.

“Honoring and remembering those who died while serving in the military requires more than just



Icia Ragsdale
Photo: Michael Vega

words; it necessitates a shift in how we educate our children to view their nation. While many countries instill a sense of pride, honor, and respect for their country and its servicemen, America’s complex history has led to marginalization, degradation, and even hatred towards certain minorities by their own country. This has fostered a culture that devalues both the nation and the sacrifices made by its protectors. To overcome this obstacle, we need to create a space for compassion training that goes beyond mere words and focuses on real experiences,” said Ragsdale.

She also stated that military service members who have lost a comrade should give themselves permission to process their emotions and acknowledge their loss.

“The pressure and weight of military life require resilience and mental fortitude, often opposing the idea of feelings and vulnerability. Many veterans have noted that the responsibility of loyalty to country and duty can be difficult for civilians to understand, especially when it conflicts with personal emotions.”

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PRESENTS

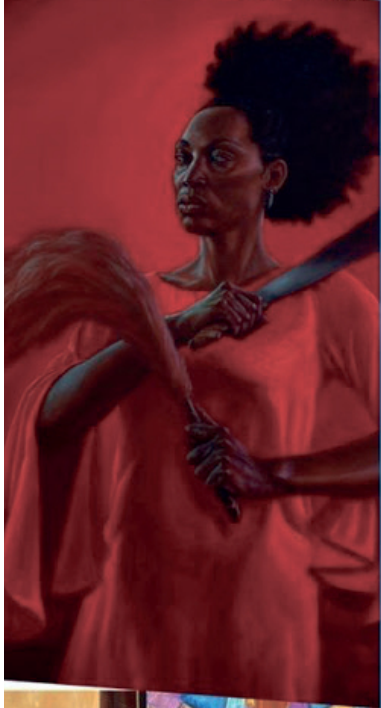
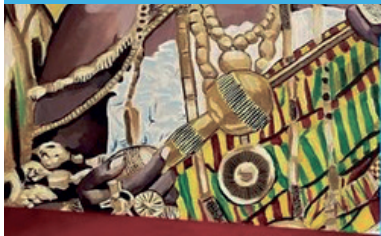
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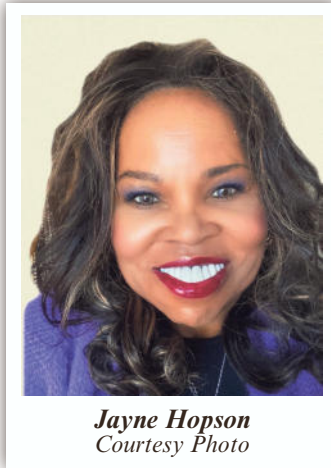
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Environmental Hazards Lurk in Unexpected Places



Jayne Hopson
Courtesy Photo

By Jayne Hopson

Environmental hazards can be found nearly everywhere. There may be smog in the air we breathe, pathogens in our drinking water, foods grown in contaminated soil, dangerous manufacturing waste dumped in the waterways children use for recreational swimming, lead paint chips on the walls of older homes, and mercury contamination in imported, dollar store trinkets.

Known and unknown environmental hazards have the potential to pose a grave, yet preventable threat to public health. On most matters, opinions among researchers vary greatly. For example, some scientists believe global warming will raise sea levels and destroy entire ecosystems, others think not. Their opinions on most subjects can vary greatly.

However, two conclusions appear to generate little debate among researchers. First, minority communities are at an increased risk for death and injury from known environmental hazards. Secondly, many of these hazards are manmade, meaning prevention can be the most effective way to eliminate sickness and disease.

A stunning estimation from the United Nation's Global Environment

Outlook report states “up to 90% of the world's major environmental problems are caused by human activities.” That is a bold, and perhaps exaggerated observation. Yet, other national and international health organizations offer equally worrisome statistics, providing empirical proof that environmental hazards can impact millions of lives.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that some “12.6 million deaths a year are associated with environmental pollution. Of these, an estimated 6.5 million deaths (11.6% of all global deaths) are associated with air pollution, from household and outdoor sources.”

The National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH), a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) agency, is straightforward in its stated mandate to eliminate racial health disparities. Their mission statement says, “We are especially committed to safeguarding the health of people who are at increased/higher risk—such as people from racial and ethnic minority groups, people with lower socioeconomic status, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities— from environmental hazards.”

The growing body of scientific data about the impact of environmental health threats is hard to ignore. The WHO estimates that worldwide in the last decade as many as one in eight deaths were due to air pollution. The organization has data indicating “24% of global deaths (and 28% of deaths among children under five) are due to modifiable environmental factors.”

Modifiable factors are behaviors and circumstances that can be changed to prevent death and illness. Ischemic heart disease (strokes), chronic respiratory diseases, and cancers as diseases the WHO says can be triggered by environmental hazards. It

acknowledges the fact “people in low- and middle-income communities bear the greatest disease burden.”

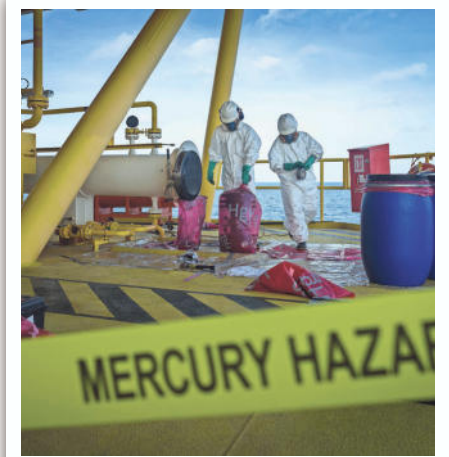
There are many common products that may expose people to dangerous levels of heavy metals such as mercury. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) describes mercury “as a naturally occurring metal that is found in the earth's crust and is used in a variety of industrial and consumer products, including thermometers, dental fillings, and fluorescent light bulbs. It is a potent neurotoxin, which means it can harm the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and nerves.”

The EPA says mercury is particularly dangerous because, “it can accumulate in the environment and in the bodies of living organisms, including humans. Once mercury enters the environment, it can be transformed into methylmercury, a highly toxic form that can accumulate in fish and shellfish.

When humans consume contaminated fish or shellfish, they can be exposed to methylmercury, which can lead to a range of health problems, including damage to the nervous system, developmental problems in children, and cardiovascular effects.”

A commonly used medical device offers an ironic exposure to mercury's toxicity. Blood pressure meters are traditionally associated with promoting good health, but many of these devices contain mercury. Although this risk of mercury poisoning is well known, hospitals continue to use mercury sphygmomanometers, because health providers consider these devices to be more accurate than mercury-free blood pressure measurement tools, reports the EPA.

When purchasing over a counter blood pressure meter, the EPA recommends asking the pharmacist if



Shutterstock

the device is mercury free.

The EPA warns mercury exposure can also occur in workplaces where mercury is used in industrial processes, such as gold mining, and in the production of certain products, such as batteries and fluorescent light bulbs. “Workers who are exposed to high levels of mercury can experience neurological symptoms such as tremors, memory loss, and mood changes.”

According to the CDC other sources of exposure to mercury may include antiques (made before the mercury's risks were widely recognized), some dollar store jewelry imported from Mexico, broken fluorescent light bulbs, and older model electric appliances including chest freezers, space heaters, clothes dryers, clothes irons and washing machines may contain mercury switches that turn the device on or off.

Jayne Hopson is a 2024 Commonwealth Health Care Performance Fellow. The special series “Illiteracy: Black America's Public Health Enemy #1” is funded by Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ) and supported by The Commonwealth Fund.

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Community

Park Heights: A New Chapter in Baltimore's Economic Revitalization

In the neighborhood where he grew up, Mayor Brandon M. Scott, along with Baltimore City Council Vice President Sharon Green Middleton were both visibly proud and delighted to announce Park Heights as Baltimore City's ninth Main Street District. Other state and city officials attended the event on Monday, May 13, 2024.

A Main Street designation is important, but this one is particularly notable for a number of reasons. First and most obvious, is the fact that Park Heights is home to Scott. "This is where I grew up, on these very streets, on this very block," he declared as he unveiled the new Main Street map. "Good luck dealing with my dad and my uncles," he quipped as he walked off to take pictures with local community members and business owners.

Secondly, this designation marks a pivotal moment in the city's ongoing efforts to stimulate economic growth and community development, in West Baltimore, and specifically in this otherwise long-neglected part of West Baltimore.

This designation of the Main Street District was the first in the last nine years, pointing to the importance of the occasion.

A Celebration of Success and Potential

Park Heights, a 1500-acre neighborhood in Northwest Baltimore, is home to 30,000 residents. "This designation as a Baltimore Main Street District is the culmination of work that has been ongoing for years, but that has been championed by this mayor," Middleton pointed out.

See **PARK HEIGHTS**, page 13



(L-R): Yolanda Jiggetts, CEO, Park Heights Renaissance, Inc; CharylN Nater, Director of the Baltimore Main Streets and Mayor Brandon Scott

Photos: J.J. McQueen



Mayor Scott unveils the new Main Street map.

Have You Been Fleeced?

By Karen Clay

Clay Technology and Multimedia, L.L.C.

I remember a time when cell phones were only used for making calls. As time progressed, cell phones became smartphones with the capability to accomplish so much more than reaching out to “touch” someone. These days, with the addition of mobile apps that take advantage of cameras, texting capabilities and video chats, our phones have transformed into powerful tools for everything from managing finances to playing games. With this convenience, however, comes a new threat; a sneaky type of scam known as fleeceware.

So, what is Fleeceware?

The term “fleeceware” was coined by Sophos, a security software and hardware company and refers to mobile apps (both Android and iOS) that charge exorbitant subscription fees for services that are typically available for free or at a much lower cost, and that may already be installed on your phone. Unlike traditional malware, fleeceware does not necessarily harm your device or steal your data. Instead, they exploit you through deceptive marketing and subscription practices. These apps often offer a “free trial” period, after which they automatically charge exorbitant fees without providing adequate notice to you or easy ways to cancel the subscription. They are primarily found in legitimate app stores, including Google Play Store and Apple’s App Store. They disguise themselves as useful tools or entertaining apps, such as photo editors, horoscope apps, or fortune-telling apps. Once installed, they lure you into signing up for a free trial, which very quickly converts into a costly subscription.

How to Spot Fleeceware

Identifying fleeceware can be challenging since these apps are often designed to appear legitimate, however, there are several red flags that can help you spot them:

High Subscription Fees: Fleeceware apps often charge exorbitant fees for their services. Be wary of apps that ask for a high subscription fee, especially if similar services are available for free or at a lower cost.

Short Free Trial

Periods: Many fleeceware apps offer a very short free trial period, sometimes only a few days. This is designed to catch you off guard and quickly transition you into a paid subscription.

Overly Positive Reviews: Be cautious if an app has an overwhelming number of positive reviews that seem generic or suspicious. Some fleeceware apps use fake reviews to boost their ratings.

Limited Functionality During Trial: Fleeceware apps often offer limited functionality during the free trial, prompting you to subscribe to access the full features. If an app seems to be withholding basic functions, it could be fleeceware.

Difficulty Cancelling Subscription: One of the hallmarks of fleeceware is the difficulty in canceling the subscription. If an app makes it hard to find the cancellation option or requires multiple steps to unsubscribe, it’s likely a fleeceware.



*Karen Clay,
Clay Technology and Multimedia
Courtesy, Karen Clay*



Avoid getting fleeced when installing apps on your smartphone. Graphic Design by Karen Clay

How to Recover from Fleeceware

If you think you’ve fallen victim to a fleeceware app, there are steps you can take to mitigate the damage and prevent further charges:

Cancel the Subscription: The first step is to cancel the subscription immediately. On Android, go to the Google Play Store, tap on your profile picture, select “Payments & subscriptions,” and then “Subscriptions.” Locate the fleeceware app and cancel the subscription. On iOS, open the Settings app, tap your name, select “Subscriptions,” find the fleeceware app, and cancel it.

Request a Refund: Navigate to the respective app store’s support page, explain your situation, and request a refund.

Report the App: Report the fleeceware app to the app store. On Google Play Store, you can report an app by visiting the app’s page, scrolling down to the bottom, and selecting

“Flag as inappropriate.” You can report a problem directly through your purchase history on the App Store.

Review Your Payment Methods: Check your credit card or bank statements for any unauthorized charges. If you find any, contact your bank or credit card company to dispute the charges and potentially block future transactions from the fleeceware app.

Install a Trusted Security App: Consider installing a reputable mobile security app. These apps can help detect and block malicious applications, including fleeceware. (Some carriers may even offer this as part of your package.) Fleeceware is a deceptive and costly threat in the world of mobile apps. Although Google and Apple have changed or tightened their policies to address fleeceware apps, being vigilant and aware of the signs, you can protect yourself from falling victim to these predatory practices.

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“Unspoken: It’s Okay, Not to Be Okay”

Black Men Open Up, Candidly Discuss Mental Health in New Book

By Andrea Blackstone

Mental Health Month in May will end soon, but increased trauma support and improved recognition of Black men’s mental health needs should continue throughout the year.

“Trauma has been identified as a major public health and medical issue, and Black males ages 18 and older are at a noticeably high risk for trauma exposure,” according to the CDC.

“Black Males, Trauma, and Mental Health Service Use: A Systematic Review,” an abstract that was shared by the National Library of Medicine, stated that “Black male trauma survivors were significantly less likely to be utilizing mental health services than other sex-ethnic groups.”

Black men are not unfeeling supermen. They need to heal, too.

Pamela Coleman, a resident of Virginia, underscores this reality. She self-published “Unspoken: It’s Okay, Not to Be Okay” this month while providing a platform for 26 African American males to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences with mental health. The book is intended to be read by African American males and individuals who want to read it and share valuable information with a loved one.

“Mental health for men is a difficult subject. It is a harder subject when it comes to the African American male. Throughout history, the African American male has been groomed to not show emotion. They are not supposed to ask for help. They have been raised to shoulder the burden of the family and be head of household,” said Coleman.

Coleman mentioned the diverse work backgrounds of the male writers. They include a schoolteacher; assistant principal; TikTok influencers; men who



Pamela Coleman
Photo courtesy of Pamela Coleman

work in corporate America; authors and physical trainers.

The visionary explained that a portion of the stories the men share in the book were personal reflections. Others provided written advice or poetry to young men of color.

Coleman, who is a mental abuse survivor, knows first-hand what it is like to desire help and not know how to ask for it, or where to go to find it. She has hosted two men’s mental awareness seminars in Virginia and Illinois. Her goal is to hold a men’s seminar in every state. Coleman added that mental health is a year-round discussion.

Yonder, a Florida-based writer who originally hails from Washington, DC, participated in the anthology.

“I wrote a poem and some thoughts that were close to my heart. It was time to release them from my soul,” said Yonder.

He added, “I don’t feel Black men feel safe to discuss mental health. In the past, currently, and in the future, those needs have been suppressed because of labeling. Once you reveal



Stan Harrison
Photo courtesy of Stan Harrison

that you have a mental issue, society as a whole looks at you and treats you differently.”

Yonder remarked that participating in the project gave him hope that someday soon, we can have the freedom to address this issue.

According to Yonder, women can read the book and gain insight into what is going on in a man’s mind to help and love him. He also wants men to realize that seeking help from others is permissible, as well as praying, and sharing their feelings.

“I feel that being a contributor to this great piece of work, it will be invaluable to many souls. It [The anthology] will save them from suicide and abandonment of the family,” Yonder also stated.

Stan Harrison, another contributor to “Unspoken: It’s Okay, Not to Be Okay,” works in the insurance and financial industry.

The Floridian penned a mental health story about two brothers and a friend while showing how growing up Black men have specific needs such as affirmation and the need for



Yonder
Photo: Freddi T. Lane

community involvement.

“Everyone should read this book, particularly those who have any dealings with Black men,” said Harrison.

He advised others to read the book to determine if a story or article applies to their lives or someone they know.

“Learn from what you read and recognize some of the triggers, so that you are better equipped to help [a Black man],” Harrison said.

He advises that Black men should not fear approaching the mental health topic.

“Hiding is not the answer. Find someone to talk with and be honest about whatever is going on. There are countless programs that can assist. Sometimes, just having someone to talk with is the best therapy. In addition, I would suggest bringing your friendships and loved ones closer by discussing these matters with them,” said Harrison.

Visit <https://a.co/d/cWvJHQS> to learn more about “Unspoken: It’s Okay, Not to Be Okay!”

African American Family with Seven Living Generations Strives to Hold Guinness World Records Title

By Andrea Blackstone

This Older Americans Month, “Powered by Connection” serves as the theme to recognize the impact that meaningful relationships and social connections have on the health and well-being of older Americans. It shines a light on how connectedness combats loneliness and isolation.

Alma Crawford Williams, who recently turned 103 years old, exemplifies the value of family connection.

“Meca [Lewis], that’s my granddaughter,” Williams said to 90-year-old Leola Dickerson Shockley, the second oldest person in their family.

The centenarian continued, “She [Meca] better come on and get out of here.”

Williams resides with Lewis. Williams was eager to head home after a long day at her birthday party in Greenville, North Carolina. Seven generations of their family who are scattered around various states attended Williams’ memorable celebration.

Lewis’ grandmother served on the church usher board and sang in the choir until she was unable. Williams visited the sick and shut-in when she could. Today, Williams remains an active member of Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Williams has served as a foster grandparent. She was once employed at a tobacco warehouse where tobacco products were made. Her story provides insight into American life in previous eras.

Brandi Nichole Wallace shared a wish on behalf of older Americans.

“I would like to see them being taken care of more by their own



Alma Crawford Williams

family members and not being put into nursing homes,” the Salisbury, Maryland resident said.

She added, “It was important to celebrate my Aunt Alma’s birthday because she is a living testimony of 103 years of life.”

The personal history of older Americans can easily slip through a family’s fingertips. On the other hand, the Aycock/Crawford family is determined to uphold the legacy of their family tree’s branches. They want the Guinness Book of World Records to recognize them for having seven generations of living family members. According to the family, as far as records have shown, an African American family has never reached a Guinness World Record of this nature. The Aycock/Crawford family compiled census records and birth certificates in their pursuit of holding a world record.

Natonya Walker, a resident of Montgomery, Alabama was raised in Salisbury, Maryland.

“I am Aunt Alma’s great-great niece,” the family historian explained.

“In a dynamic turn of events at my grandmother’s ninetieth celebration in March, I began family census research. Within four days, I discovered that we



Alma Crawford Williams (center) celebrates her 103rd birthday with family members.

Photos courtesy of the family

were not just the already discovered six generations, but rather seven. We immediately sent an application to Guinness to be documented as the first recorded African American family to have seven living generations.”

Walker divulged why she would like the Guinness Book of World Records to recognize her family for having seven generations of living family members.

“Historically, the worldwide average for living generations is four to five. In African American families, less than one percent make it to six. Our family represents seven. We have proven that in a nation that used our people for cattle work, and we should have been extinct, we are indeed phenoms. Guinness is a worldwide entity that can further solidify our existence and provide proof that the African American is, was, and will always be an “American.” We are the skeletal base of this country and deserve sufficient recognition.”

She also said that a new category is needed. There is very little documentation in Guinness about Black culture.

Terri Terrell Boyd, PhD., Williams’ granddaughter who resides in Fuquay Varina, North Carolina, made a point about knowing ancestral history, even

beyond the value of creating a greater sense of self-identity within the African American community.

“It is essential for all Americans, not just African Americans, to know and understand African American history, and it shows how the struggles throughout the generations helped to shape and define this country.”

The family’s quest to achieve a milestone with the Guinness Book of World Records comes with expenses.

Walker further noted, “So far, over \$8,000 has been raised from private unnamed investors towards the \$20,000 goal established by Guinness to be received and admitted.”

The public can help the Aycock/Crawford family by spreading their news; signing their petition to gain global recognition; encouraging the Guinness Book of World Records to add a category; or by donating to help them achieve their record-breaking goal.

“We, our family, and our culture deserve the earned accolades. The Aycock/Crawford family are a first: Seven Living Generations of an African American Family,” said Walker.

Visit <https://chng.it/6g5NPq4pJP> to sign the petition and www.generise7.com to learn more about the family.

Part II Stop, Look and Listen! Strengthen Adolescent Mental Health at Home

By Andrea Blackstone

Rikki Clark McCoy, CEO and founder of Flourishing Minds, runs a private practice providing holistic therapy and wellness coaching services. She previously discussed how social media affects adolescents academically, socially or developmentally. This time, McCoy discussed how parents and adults play an essential role in helping children and teens develop skills that are critical to their wellbeing. She provided insight about how parents and adults can empower young people to invest in their mental health development.

“Encourage children and teens to express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns openly without fear of judgment. Create a supportive and non-judgmental environment where they feel comfortable discussing their mental health,” said McCoy.

Parents should promote trust and understanding with their children. One way of achieving this is by actively listening to them without judgment.

“This means giving their full attention, showing empathy, and validating their feelings and experiences. When children feel heard and understood by their parents, it strengthens the parent-child bond and fosters a sense of trust and openness. It also encourages children to confide in their parents, seek guidance when needed, and communicate openly about their thoughts, feelings and concerns,” McCoy stated.

Include the importance of self-care, stress management and remind children to seek help when it is needed.

McCoy added, “Provide age-appropriate information about common mental health issues and resources [that are] available for support.”

Adults can also model healthy coping strategies for managing stress and emotions, while serving as role models. They should show children and teens how to practice self-care, set boundaries, and seek support from trusted individuals when they face challenges.

Another step that adults can take is to help children and teens develop self-awareness by encouraging them to identify and understand their emotions, triggers and coping mechanisms.

“Teach them to recognize signs of stress, anxiety, or depression and empower them to take proactive steps to manage their mental health,” said McCoy.

Adults should emphasize the importance of practicing healthy lifestyle habits, including regular exercise, balanced nutrition, getting adequate sleep and the utilization of relaxation techniques to promote healthy habits. While children and teens are educated about mental health, they can also be coached to prioritize activities that promote well-being and reduce stress. Additionally, problem-solving skills can be taught to enable children and teens to navigate challenges and setbacks effectively.

“Teach them how to break down problems into manageable steps, brainstorm solutions, and evaluate the consequences of their actions,” McCoy further stated. It is also beneficial for adults to teach children and teens to set realistic goals and expectations for themselves. They should understand that it is okay to make mistakes. Failure is a natural part of the learning process.

“Emphasize progress over perfection and celebrate their efforts and achievements,” McCoy advised.

Adults should also create a supportive and nurturing environment at home and in other settings where children and teens feel valued, accepted and supported. Positive relationships with family members, peers, and other trusted adults who can provide guidance and encouragement are beneficial. However, professional help should be sought when needed. Through therapy, families can strengthen their bond, resolve conflicts, and cultivate a healthier and more harmonious family dynamic. “Be proactive in seeking professional help if you notice signs of mental health issues in children or teens, such as persistent sadness, anxiety, changes in behavior, or difficulty coping with everyday activities. Consult with mental health professionals who can provide assessment, treatment, and support tailored to their needs,” said McCoy.

“For a young person with symptoms of a mental disorder, the earlier treatment is started, the more effective it can be. Early treatment can help prevent more severe, lasting problems as a child grows up,” the National Institute of Health reminded. Encourage children and teens to develop resilience and self-efficacy by facing challenges, overcoming obstacles, and learning from setbacks. Help them build confidence in their abilities to cope with adversity and thrive in the face of challenges.

Do not forget that laughter and stress relief play crucial roles in maintaining

better mental health. Laughter is a natural mood booster. It can lift spirits and improve an overall outlook on life.

“Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, which are neurotransmitters that promote feelings of happiness and well-being. It also decreases the production of stress hormones like cortisol, helping to alleviate feelings of stress and anxiety in children and teens,” McCoy reminded.

Visit www.flourishingmindsllc.com and follow @therapywithrikki to learn more about McCoy.



Rikki Clark McCoy,
CEO and founder of *Flourishing Minds*
Photo: JLavii Photography

Chase Brought 'The Experience' to D.C. Business Owners on May 8

By **Karanja Gaçuça**

On May 8, 2024, Chase for Business hosted a successful day-long event titled “The Experience: D.C.” at Dock5 at Union Market District. This complimentary expo provided local business owners with valuable learning and networking opportunities to help them grow their businesses.

The nation’s capital, best known for its historic monuments, museums, and galleries, is also a thriving marketplace for ideas and innovation, making it a popular destination for entrepreneurs. In fact, the D.C. metro area is one of the top 10 best startup ecosystems in the United States with over 1,000 startups and enterprises.

To support these local business owners as they start, run, and grow their businesses, Chase for Business invited D.C.-area business owners to attend a complimentary, all-day expo packed with learning and networking opportunities. The event took place at Dock5 at Union Market District (1309 5th Street, NE) from 2-7:30 p.m. Attendees heard directly from leading business experts and were able to network with other entrepreneurs.

Participants had the opportunity to sign up for personalized marketing workshops with industry experts, network with fellow business owners at The Chase for Business Octagon and hear from local experts and market leaders in insightful talk and panel discussions. Additionally, attendees had the opportunity to snap a professional headshot and stop by the local Chase for Business Marketplace with giveaways from a number of businesses including, Brix Fitness, a personal fitness training business, and Mahogany Books, a bookstore that carries books about and by people of the African diaspora.



Jamie Dimon gives fireside chat
Photo: JPM

“Washington D.C. is home to some of the most creative and inventive business owners in the country,” said Ben Walter, CEO of Chase for Business.

The Experience: D.C. was the second of three signature events held in major small business markets across the U.S. in 2024. Other cities were Atlanta on May 1 and Philadelphia on May 14. These signature events were intended to bring Chase’s national business resources to select cities in a way that was convenient for business owners, allowing them to learn helpful tips and gain access to the resources they needed for growing their businesses.

“D.C.’s growing business community is the perfect representation of what happens when you mix passion with opportunity,” said Kristina Sicard, Senior Business Consultant at Chase.

The Baltimore Times got a chance to speak with local business owners Ramunda Young of Mahogany Books and Robert Glover of Brix Fitness. Both of them were asked about their experiences with Chase Business.

“I benefited from the services of Chase Business even before I was a client at Chase,” said Young. She reinforced Sicard’s assertions that “You don’t have to be a Chase client to use



(Left): Ben Walter, Chase Small Business CEO and Jamie Dimon, Chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase, Jamie Dimon Photo: Karanja Gaçuça

our business services.” Sicard went on to add: “We build and maintain personal relationships with the clients we serve to offer not just personalized services but also personalized loan products best suited to each individual business owner.”

Glover offered his experience working with Sicard confirming that “she directed me to a personalized business loan, which was much better suited to my personal circumstances.”

Chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase, Jamie Dimon and Chase Small Business CEO, Ben Walter were both asked whether JPMorgan Chase is doing anything to find innovative ways to better ensure that deserving businesses are funded given the very blunt tool that is credit scores. Walter asserted that “Chase offers a personalized tool for demonstrating individual financial responsibility including rent payments.”

Dimon commented on innovation around Blockchain and small businesses. He asserted that “we need to separate Blockchain from cryptocurrencies. Blockchain as a

technology has been around over 12 years, and is extremely useful technology that we must harness.” When questioned about bitcoin ETFs, Dimon said “I’m not a fan, but we don’t dictate to our clients and some do want to buy the bitcoin ETFs.”

To a question about the political attacks on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion frameworks both Dimon and Walter pointed out that those attacks would have no effect on Chase Bank’s efforts on diversity.

Dimon went on to add, “I’m a full-blooded, free enterprise American, without a single ‘woke’ bone in my body. However, the new DEI rules and laws will have no effect on our business model. Diversity is good for our business.”

For more information, visit www.chase.com/business.

Karanja Gaçuça is a political commentator, geo-political analyst and journalist covering politics, economics and finance and international geopolitics. A former Wall Street analyst, he’s also a tech founder and owner of enkaare LLC, a tech startup.

Baltimore County Department of Health is Stroke Smart!

Teams with Community Partners to Highlight B.E. F.A.S.T. Stroke Awareness Efforts

TOWSON, MD – On Wednesday, May 15, 2024, Interim Health Officer and Acting Health and Human Services Director Della J. Leister and community hospital partners shared information on efforts to make Baltimore County a Stroke Smart County. The event took place at the Drumcastle Government Building on York Road and drew a capacity crowd.

Leister was joined by community hospital partners from Greater Baltimore Medical Center, MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center, MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, Northwest Hospital, and University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center. EMTs, Baltimore County Police, and other partners also attended the event which recognized Stroke as a national, state and local public health issue affecting 1 in 6 individuals.

“Every 40 seconds, someone has a stroke, and every three minutes and 14 seconds, someone dies as a result of stroke,” said Interim Health Officer Leister. “Getting timely, efficient treatment immediately can save lives and can make a positive difference in the quality of life after a stroke incident.” Leister went on to share that her 30-year-old niece suffered a stroke. “Thankfully, she was with a friend who knew the signs and was able to get immediate medical attention for her – and that made all the difference.”

A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when something blocks blood supply to part of the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. In either case, parts of the brain become damaged or die. A stroke can cause lasting brain damage, long-term disability, or even death.

“We do want to help,” said Dr.



Dr. Sharon Baucom-Myers, Physician1, Chronic Disease Prevention Program, Bureau of Community Health, talks about the agency's proactive efforts and how stroke disproportionately affects Black women.

Sharon Baucom-Myers Physician1, Chronic Disease Prevention Program, Bureau of Community Health. “We want everyone to learn prevention, and believe that being familiar with the B.E. F.A.S.T. acronym will save lives and contribute to positive post-stroke outcomes.”

The Department’s Chronic Disease Prevention Program staff shared information about their aggressive B.E. F.A.S.T. education and outreach program. This effort focuses on informing residents about the signs of a stroke and life-saving actions to take. The acronym **B.E. F.A.S.T.** encourages residents to watch for signs that include difficulty with **B**alance, **E**yes, **F**ace, **A**rm, **S**peech, and to react **T**imely in getting medical attention. HHS is utilizing an aggressive marketing



Lauren Emshwiller, Stroke Coordinator, MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital; Karen Gonzalez, Stroke Coordinator, UM St. Joseph Medical Center; Ariel Winters, Stroke Coordinator, Franklin Square Hospital; Della J. Leister, Baltimore County Interim Health Officer and Acting Health and Human Services Director; Kris Bachenberg, Stroke Program Nurse Manager, Greater Baltimore Medical Center; and Craig Carmichael, President, Northwest Hospital. Courtesy photos

campaign to get this information out, including transit ads, radio spots, bus shelters, placemats, mobile advertising and placing flyers and posters in public facilities across the county.

The effort also includes marketing targeting Black women and other groups disproportionately affected by stroke. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is a main risk factor for stroke. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), almost 3 in 5 African American women are diagnosed with high blood pressure.

The CDC notes that stroke is a leading cause of death among African American women, who are more likely to die from a stroke than non-Hispanic White women or Hispanic women in

the United States. African American people have the highest rate of death due to stroke among all racial and ethnic groups.

County Executive John Olszewski issued a Proclamation designating Baltimore County as a Stroke Smart County. Each community partner received a copy of the Proclamation recognizing their commitment to this initiative.

Started in 1924, the Baltimore County Department of Health is celebrating its centennial this year, and is hosting a series of Community-focused engagement events to highlight available programs and services as well as to provide listening posts for community concerns.

Park Heights

Continued from page 5

Scott added, “Today’s designation of Park Heights as the next Baltimore Main Street is a reflection of the incredible success that has been built in the neighborhood and the limitless potential it has.”

This announcement is not just a recognition of the work that has already been done; it’s a promise of continued progress that benefits all Park Heights residents. As a product of the neighborhood, Scott’s pride in those working tirelessly to make Park Heights the best version of itself is palpable. This initiative adds another feather to Scott’s legacy of fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development in Baltimore.

The Impact on the Community

The Baltimore Main Streets program follows Main Street America’s four-point model of economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. It’s a city-wide effort to revitalize neighborhood economies and support business and community development. The program provides customized support and public funding to attract new businesses and jobs in designated districts.

Park Heights Renaissance, Inc. (PHR), a key partner in this initiative, plans to implement the Main Streets approach in a way that is inclusive, equitable, and impactful. PHR CEO Yolanda Jiggetts stated, “PHR is excited to work hand in hand with business partners, residents, and stakeholders... We look forward to strengthening collaboration and garnering new resources to support a **BOLD NEW HEIGHTS!**”

Middleton, a staunch advocate for community development, sees this as a significant step towards achieving equitable growth in Baltimore. Her commitment to the community is reflected in her support for this initiative, further solidifying her



legacy as a leader dedicated to uplifting Baltimore’s neighborhoods.

The Road Ahead

The designation is expected to leverage additional investments in the Park Heights community, expanding on the investment and development already occurring in the neighborhood. Park Heights has recently seen significant projects taking root, including affordable housing units, a new library branch, and public school overhauls. The \$400 million redevelopment of Pimlico Race Track is another testament to the neighborhood’s bright economic future.

The upcoming addition of nearly 1,000 residential units forecasts a bright economic future for Park Heights’ commercial areas and opens the door to numerous partnership opportunities. As CharylN Nater, Director of the Baltimore Main Streets program, said, “The foundation of a strong community lies in working together. As we embark on this new journey, we are

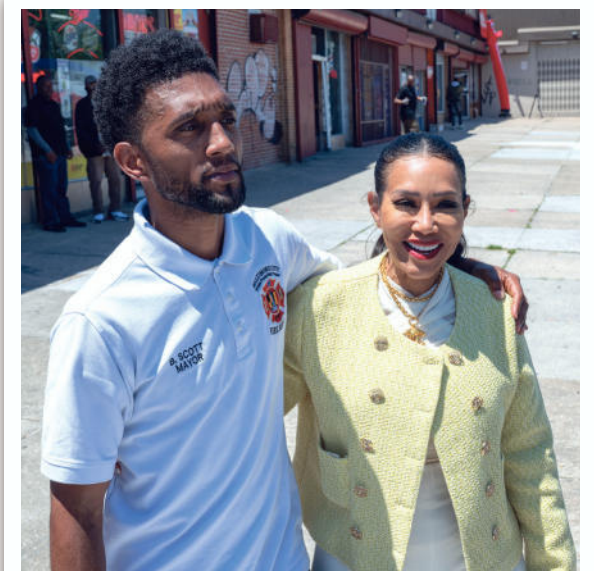
forging partnerships that will benefit generations to come.”

The designation of Park Heights as a Baltimore Main Street district is a significant milestone in Baltimore’s and Park Heights’ journey towards economic revitalization.

“This unveiling is a commitment to restoring Park Heights as a thriving, economically sustainable community,” Scott stated.

Dana Henson, a local developer, added that while she’s a businesswoman, “My commitment is first and foremost to the community.”

As Park Heights embarks on this new chapter, the neighborhood stands as a beacon of hope and potential, ready to write its success story.



Mayor Brandon Scott and Dana Henson, a local developer. Photos: J.J. McQueen

Karanja Gaçuca is a political commentator, geo-political analyst and journalist covering politics, economics & finance, and international geopolitics. A former Wall Street analyst, he’s also a tech founder and owner of Enkaare LLC, an online tech recruitment platform startup.

Ravens Sign Former Player Qadry Ismail's Son Qadir

By Tyler Hamilton

There will be a familiar name on one of the Baltimore Ravens jerseys when the group takes the field for minicamp. That familiar name is Ismael, as in Qadir Ismail, whose father Qadry “The Missile” Ismail played for the Ravens from 1999 – 2001.

Ismail was signed to the Ravens 90-man roster after joining the team as an undrafted free agent tryout player during rookie minicamp. At 6-foot-6, he figures to at least pose a threat on jump ball passes and could impress during minicamp.

Ismail went to John Carroll School in Bel Air. He played football and basketball in addition to running track & field. Football was his best sport as he was named a first team all-county and first-team all-league performer. Qadir accumulated 2,000 passing yards, 500 rushing yards, and 25 touchdowns.

He spent his first four seasons at Villanova University. As a freshman in 2018, he played in three games, including one start at quarterback. Ismail completed 11-of-29 passes for 180 yards and one touchdown. But he moved to wide receiver and played in nine games in 2021. He caught 11 passes for 181 yards on the season.

Ismail went on to Sanford as a graduate player and appeared in three games and caught three passes for 21 yards. Now he's looking to follow in his father's footsteps.

Qadry's best years came in Baltimore where he had 1,000-yard receiving seasons in two or the three years he spent with the Ravens. Although he didn't finish with 1,000 receiving



Qadir Ismail Photo: Charles Mitchell/Icon Sports Wire

yards in 2000, Qadry was also a key member

Qadry played 10 seasons for 5 teams, including the Vikings and Ravens. He had 353 catches for 5,137 yards and scored 33 touchdowns, along with 191 kick returns for 4,135 yards.

After retiring from the NFL, Qadry began a career in broadcasting, spending time with Comcast Sports Net, BET Black College Football, and ESPN before becoming part of the Ravens' broadcast team.

Imagine the excitement Qadry would have calling the games if his son Qadir makes the team. The Ravens currently have 12 wide receivers on the roster so the competition will be fierce for Qadir.

Playing wide receiver runs in the Ismael family. Qadir has two uncles who played the position as well. Sulaiman “The Bomb” Ismail is a former professional American football player. He played collegiately as a walk-on at the University of Texas-El Paso in 1995. On February 14, 2001,

he signed a three-year contract with the Arena Football League's New York Dragons, but was waived soon after.

Raghib Ramadian “Rocket” Ismail (born November 18, 1969) is an American former professional football player who was a wide receiver. He played college football for the Notre Dame Fighting Irish before moving on to both the Canadian Football League (CFL) from 1991–92 and the National Football League (NFL) from 1993–2001.

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CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION
NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposal for the **TR-23004R, INSPIRE SCHOOLS SIDEWALK RECONSTRUCTION**, will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204, City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until **JUNE 5, 2024, at 11:00 A.M.** Board of Estimates employees will be stationed at the Security Unit Counter just inside the Holliday Street entrance to City Hall from 10:45 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. every Wednesday to receive Bids. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. The bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. As of **MAY 17, 2024**, the Contract Documents may be examined, without charge by contacting Brenda Simmons at brenda.simmons@baltimorecity.gov or (443) 865-4423 to arrange for a copy of the bid book labeled “**NOT FOR BIDDING PURPOSES**” to be emailed to you. Anyone who desires to purchase a bid book to be used for bidding purposes must do so in person and by contacting Brenda Simmons at the email address or phone number above. The non-refundable cost is **SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$75.00)** to be paid at the Department of Transportation 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 made payable to the Director of Finance. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors’ Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact the Committee at 4 S. Frederick Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture (“JV”), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Categories required for bidding on this project is **D02620 (Curbs, Gutters & Sidewalk)**. Cost Qualification Range for this project will be from **\$800,000.00 to \$1,000,000.00.** A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams on **May 29, 2024**, at 10:00 a.m. hosted by the Department of Transportation. All Bidders must email your contact information to include your name, company name, phone number and email address to michael.donovan@baltimorecity.gov to receive an invite to the Microsoft Team (video conference meeting). Principle Items of work for this project are: **5” Concrete Sidewalk – 96,300 SF; 7” Plain Cement Concrete Pavement Mix #6 – 4,300 SF.** The MBE Goal is **30%**; The WBE Goal is **15%**. APPROVED: Celeste Amato, Board of Estimates

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NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposal for the **TR-23014, STRUCTURAL REPAIRS ON BRIDGE CITYWIDE JOC 1**, will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204, City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until **JUNE 5, 2024, at 11:00 A.M.** Board of Estimates employees will be stationed at the Security Unit Counter just inside the Holliday Street entrance to City Hall from 10:45 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. every Wednesday to receive Bids. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. The bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. As of **MAY 17, 2024**, the Contract Documents may be examined, without charge by contacting Brenda Simmons at brenda.simmons@baltimorecity.gov or (443) 865-4423 to arrange for a copy of the bid book labeled “**NOT FOR BIDDING PURPOSES**” to be emailed to you. Anyone who desires to purchase a bid book to be used for bidding purposes must do so in person and by contacting Brenda Simmons at the email address or phone number above. The non-refundable cost is **SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$75.00)** to be paid at the Department of Transportation 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 made payable to the Director of Finance. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors’ Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact the Committee at 4 S. Frederick Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture (“JV”), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Categories required for bidding on this project is **C03300 (Concrete Construction) and C05100 (Structural Steel Erection)**. Cost Qualification Range for this project will be from **\$1,500,000.00 to \$2,000,000.00.** A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams on **May 29, 2024**, at 11:00 a.m. hosted by the Department of Transportation. All Bidders must email your contact information to include your name, company name, phone number and email address to scott.weaver@baltimorecity.gov to receive an invite to the Microsoft Team (video conference meeting). Principle Items of work for this project are **Maintenance of Traffic – LS; Materials for Preservation and Minor Rehabilitation – LS; Equipment for Preservation and Minor Rehabilitation - LS.** The MBE Goal is **20%**; The WBE Goal is **6%**. APPROVED: Celeste Amato, Board of Estimates

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