



# THE BALTIMORE TIMES

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## AfroPoP Digital Shorts Series Feature 'Aunties' Who Farm Harriet Tubman's Ancestral Lands

*(From left) Donna Dear and Paulette Greene, who are affectionately known as "The Aunties" co-own Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms located in Preston, Maryland. The Aunties steward the farmlands to keep abolitionist Harriet Tubman's spirit alive through agriculture, education and heritage preservation. The land is where Harriet Tubman's parents and brothers lived. It was once owned by a plantation holder out of Dorchester County. "The Aunties" film premieres on Monday, February 17, 2025, by 2 p.m. on the Black Public Media YouTube Channel. (See article on page 9) Photo: Beverly Price*



# Retired WBAL-TV Reporter Tim Tooten Passes Away Beloved Longtime Journalist was 66

By Ursula V. Battle

This reporter can vividly recall traveling to Washington, DC to cover the Louis Farrakhan-led Million Man March. On this memorable day on October 16, 1995, I was blessed with the opportunity to sit next to WBAL-TV 11 reporter Dr. Tim Tooten who was also traveling to the nation's capital to cover the historic event. With his indelible wisdom and wit, sprinkled with humor, Dr. Tooten shared powerful insights about God, church, family, and life during the unforgettable ride.

On Saturday, February 8, 2025, the beloved 66-year-old veteran journalist who left an indelible mark on me and countless others, passed away at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital. A Celebration of Life Service will take place Saturday, February 15, 2025, 11 a.m. at Central Christian Assembly of God Church located at 7411 Rossville Blvd. in Baltimore.

For more than 35 years, the education reporter worked at WBAL delivering news regarding local school systems and other topics. News of his death reverberated throughout the region, prompting fond reflections of the journalist, author, professor, and pastor.

"You knew when Tim walked into the newsroom every day because it got louder, it got more energetic, and it certainly was a lot more fun," said Dan Joerres, President and General Manager of WBAL-TV, during an interview posted on the station's website.

Dr. Tooten brought a unique brand of reporting to viewers, which included wearing one of his many hats from schools throughout the state, as he delivered news regarding school closings and delays – oftentimes

braving frigid temperatures and snowstorms.

Outside of the newsroom, he also made his presence felt, regularly speaking at school programs and other engagements. On June 2, 2022, Dr. Tooten was the keynote speaker for the H.O.P.E. (Helping Our People Excel) Academy Fifth Grade Commencement Exercises. Operated by Huber Community Life Center, the school provides a quality, low-cost education in a Christian environment.

"In our search for a keynote speaker, we could not think of a more dynamic person with a heart

for children, family, and community to help us commemorate our celebration," said Dr. Gregory Branch, Vice President of HOPE Academy's Advisory Board. "His personal and professional achievements were so noteworthy."

He continued, "His civic and academic leadership and educational platform spoke volumes about his commitment to working with our country's youth. He thought that HOPE Academy's academic programming was impeccable."

During his speech to the graduates, Dr. Tooten cited Isaiah 40:3, recalling his childhood aspirations of one day becoming a broadcaster.

"I knew then there was a dream that I had," Dr. Tooten told the group. "Sometimes when you go for dreams, there are delays. Keep in mind, I was not popular, not that great in sports, and I had a speech impediment. So, on top of all of that, getting before a group and speaking was a challenge for me. We didn't have a speech therapist in my hometown...only had one doctor I think...but I would get in front of the mirror every day and say, 'Hello, this is Tim Tooten, and you've got the news

on.' Tell me God can't do anything."

Dr. Tooten was a native of Live Oak, Florida, where he began his broadcasting career as a high school disc jockey. He would go on to earn a Mass Communications degree from Florida State University, Master of Theology degree from Saint Mary's Seminary, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Virginia University of Lynchburg.

His career spanned more than 40 years at WBAL-TV 11 and other stations. He was also the recipient of an Emmy and numerous

other awards, including the National Edward R. Murrow Award for the documentary "Africa's Maryland."

Dr. Tooten retired from WBAL TV-11 in 2023 but continued to stay active in the realm of education and other endeavors, serving as the Media Training and Broadcast Performance professor at Loyola University of Maryland. He was the founder and Pastor of Harvest Christian Ministries in Baltimore County and served on the board of the Maryland Bible Society.

"Tim Tooten was a kind and genuine individual who was relatable and unpretentious," said veteran journalist Doni Glover, founder of Bmorenews.com, a Baltimore-based news outlet.



*Emmy-award winning journalist Dr. Tim Tooten passed away at the age of 66 on Saturday, February 8, 2025. He worked for WBAL-TV 11 for more than 35 years, retiring from the station in 2023. Courtesy photo*

"[He had the ability to connect with people and could balance being among powerful individuals without losing his common touch."

He added, "Some reporters feel the need to put on a façade to fit in, but Tim Tooten remained authentic and kind in all of his encounters. He was the same person in all situations, making a significant impact on those around him. I never heard him preach, but to me, his life was a sermon."

Dr. Tooten is survived by his wife Charleen, three children and two grandsons.

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## Finding True Love

By Karen Clay

Clay Technology and Multimedia, L.L.C.

I find it quite fitting that today's newspaper release is on Valentine's Day, a day generally accepted as the one day we celebrate the loved ones in our lives. I think it is appropriate then, that I use this day to highlight the ways in which our search for romance, companionship, and hopefully everlasting love can leave a sour taste in our mouths and our wallets empty.

In the last few decades, platforms like Tinder, Match, BlackPeopleMeet and others have become virtual meeting grounds for establishing meaningful connections. Unfortunately, in this digital age, the search for love also carries significant risks—one of the most prominent being romance scams. These scams prey on vulnerable individuals seeking connection by exploiting emotions to manipulate them into sending money, sharing personal information, or even becoming unwitting accomplices in criminal activities. As online dating becomes more prevalent, so too do the dangers of digital deception.

### The Rise of Romance Scams

Romance scams have become one of the most devastating forms of cybercrime, costing victims billions of dollars each year. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), romance scams are among the top fraud categories reported, with 70K people reporting a romance scam and losses totaling over \$1.3 billion in 2022.

The perpetrators often pose as genuine love interests, using fake profiles and elaborate backstories to gain the victim's trust. They typically claim to be professionals working abroad, such as military personnel, doctors, or engineers on overseas contracts. They initiate relationships quickly, showering their

targets with affection through constant messages and phone calls. Once emotional bonds are established, the requests for money begin—often under the guise of an emergency, such as medical expenses, legal troubles, or travel costs to meet in person. Victims, believing in the authenticity of their relationships, frequently comply, sometimes sending tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars before realizing they've been deceived.

### The Vulnerability of Online Daters

Several factors make online daters particularly susceptible to scams. First, the anonymity of the internet allows scammers to create convincing personas without much scrutiny. Second, the emotional nature of romantic relationships can cloud judgment, making people more willing to overlook red flags.

Additionally, certain demographics are more vulnerable than others. Older adults, especially those who are widowed or divorced, are frequent targets due to their potential loneliness and financial stability. Younger users, particularly those unfamiliar with online scams, can also fall victim due to a lack of experience in identifying fraudulent behavior.

### Warning Signs of a Romance Scam

While online dating has led to countless genuine relationships, users should watch for signs of potential scams which include:

**1. Fake Photos:** Scammers often use stolen photos or stock images on their



*These days it pays to be diligent when dating online.*

*Graphic Design by Karen Clay*

profiles to capture your attention.

**2. Moving too fast:** Scammers often declare their love quickly, sometimes within days or weeks of first contact.

**3. Avoiding in-person meetings:** They always have an excuse for why they can't meet in real life, such as being stationed overseas or dealing with a sudden crisis.

**4. Inconsistent stories or poor grammar:** Many scammers operate from foreign countries and may struggle with English or provide conflicting details about their lives.

**5. Requests for money:** Any financial request, whether for a plane ticket, medical bill, or business investment, should raise suspicion.

### Protecting Yourself from Romance Scams

To stay safe in the world of online dating, take steps to verify the authenticity of potential partners.

1. Conduct a reverse image search of profile pictures to see if they appear elsewhere online.

2. Be cautious of overly flattering messages and expressions of love that come too soon.

3. Limit the personal details you share online, including on social media, as scammers can use this information to build trust.



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

4. Never send money or share financial information with someone you have not met in person.

5. Use dating platforms that offer identity verification features and report suspicious activity immediately.

If you suspect you or someone you know has fallen victim to a romance scam, report it. FTC ([ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov)/complaint), the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center ([ic3.gov](https://www.ic3.gov)), and the dating platform itself can all take action to investigate fraudulent activity.

While love remains a beautiful pursuit, it's essential to navigate modern romance with both an open heart and a cautious mind. By staying informed and vigilant, you can protect yourself from falling prey to scams and focus on building authentic, meaningful relationships.

This Valentine's Day, let's celebrate love while also safeguarding ourselves and those around us. After all, love should never come at the cost of financial ruin or heartbreak at the hands of a scammer!

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# Morgan State University Forms Presidential Task Force to Address Decline in Black Male Enrollment

By Morgan State University

**BALTIMORE** — In response to the alarming decline in Black male enrollment at Morgan State University, Maryland's largest Historically Black Colleges or University (HBCU) and one of the nation's fastest-rising research institutions, University President David K. Wilson has announced the formation of the **Presidential Task Force on the State of Black Male Enrollment at Morgan**. This initiative will examine the underlying causes of declining enrollment and retention of Black males in higher education while developing actionable solutions to reverse the trend at Morgan and possibly across HBCUs nationwide.

The formation of the task force follows the recent **release of data** from the **American Institute for Boys and Men (AIBM)**, which highlights a **25% drop** in Black male enrollment at HBCUs since 2010, a rate exceeding the **22% decline** seen across all U.S. higher education institutions. While Morgan has continued to set **record-breaking total enrollment** figures, becoming the nation's third-largest HBCU last fall, its percentage of Black male students has decreased from **43% in 2015 to 37% in fall 2024**, mirroring national trends. This issue has become a critical concern for President Wilson and the campus community, including students who have personally shared their concerns with him.

"Morgan has long been a leader in providing access and opportunity for Black males seeking higher education," said **David K. Wilson**, president of Morgan State University. "The ongoing decline in Black male enrollment at HBCUs is a clarion call for action, and we will not stand idly by. This task

force will engage in rigorous research to understand the forces at play and develop evidence-based strategies to ensure that more Black men not only enroll at Morgan but thrive and complete their degrees."

Leading this initiative will be **Mark Barnes**, Ph.D., associate professor of History and Geography, and **Michael Sinclair**, Ph.D., associate professor of Social Work, who will co-chair the task force. The group will consist of an interdisciplinary coalition of faculty, researchers, staff and students dedicated to developing innovative solutions that enhance recruitment, engagement and retention efforts.

The task force's charge will include:

- Examining socioeconomic and cultural factors influencing Black male college enrollment;
- Identifying best practices and successful intervention models;
- Evaluating the student experience of Black males at Morgan to enhance support structures; and
- Providing a comprehensive set of recommendations to strengthen retention and graduation rates.

"This is a pivotal moment for higher education, and I am honored to serve in this capacity. Addressing the decline in Black male enrollment requires a thoughtful, cross-sectional analysis of the economic, social, and institutional factors at play—and the broader socioeconomic impact on Black families and communities," said **Dr. Sinclair**. "Our goal is not only to understand why these trends are occurring but to implement meaningful solutions that will empower Black men to see higher education as an attainable and rewarding path. I am proud to heed President Wilson's call to action and work alongside my colleagues to



*Morgan President David K. Wilson greets students on the first day of classes. Photo courtesy of Morgan State University*

ensure that Morgan remains a place where Black men thrive academically, professionally, and personally."

Nationally, the decline in Black male enrollment is particularly pronounced at **HBCUs (-25%)** compared with **predominantly white institutions (PWIs) (-22%)**, highlighting a unique challenge within the HBCU community. Researchers attribute the trend to a combination of economic pressures, shifting societal perceptions of college education and challenges in academic preparation and financial aid access.

Morgan State University remains committed to addressing this crisis head-on, reaffirming its legacy as a champion for educational access and achievement among Black men. The findings and recommendations from the **Presidential Task Force on the State of Black Male Enrollment at Morgan** will be shared with University leadership and potentially the broader higher education community to help inform best practices nationwide.

For more information on Morgan State University's presidential initiatives, visit: <https://www.morgan.edu/office-of-the-president/initiatives>.

## National Great Blacks in Wax Museum Highlights Black Labor and Legacy in Powerful Exhibits

By Ursula V. Battle

The 2025 Black History Month theme is “African Americans and Labor.” The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) notes that the theme sets out to highlight and celebrate the potent impact of this work. In recognition of this theme, The Baltimore Times will publish articles highlighting key individuals in labor who have wax figures in their likeness at the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum (NGBIW).

Established by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) continues to carry forth the work of Dr. Woodson, who has been dubbed “The Father of Black History.” Each year, ASALH designates a theme for Black History Month.

According to ASALH, this year’s theme – “African Americans and Labor,” focuses on the various and profound ways that work and working of all kinds – free and unfree, skilled, and unskilled, vocational, and voluntary – intersect with the collective experiences of Black people.

The organization explains that understanding Black labor and its impact in multivariate settings is integral to understanding Black people and their histories, lives, and cultures. ASALH also notes that Africans were brought to the Americas to be enslaved for their knowledge and to serve as a workforce.

Located at 1601-1603 E. North Avenue, the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum (NGBIW) houses a powerful exhibit called “The Slavery Era” featuring the “Middle Passage” and “The Horror of Captivity.” The life-sized replica of a slave ship provides an immersive and realistic experience of the Middle Passage voyage.



*Dr. Joanne Martin holds a photo of Dr. Elmer Martin, her late husband and cofounder of NGBIW. Elmer’s vision for the museum was to tell the story of African Americans in all its raw reality. Photo: Ursula V. Battle*

The museum was established in 1983 by Dr. Joanne Martin and her late husband, Dr. Elmer Martin.

“The slave ship exhibit aims to make visitors feel like participants rather than observers,” said Dr. Martin. “The exhibit includes a mirror that reflects the visitors’ faces, emphasizing the human impact of slavery. The replica tells the story of all the crowdedness and misery aboard the slave ships. Elmer’s vision for the museum was to tell the story of African Americans in all its raw reality and emphasize the museum’s continued dedication to telling the story of African Americans without compromise.”

The slave ship replica touts a life-size re-creation of the dark belly of a 19th-century slave ship and shows figures in the dank ship’s hold.

“Our labor built this country,” said Dr. Martin. “Africa was reached into to get that labor force that was going to be in chains to work for free and build a nation. The founders, as they are called in this nation, were a part of building a plantation economy, and the plantation economy was labor-driven. This country began to evolve into an industrialized



*Cash Crop is an exhibit at NGBIW that features sculptures of human figures cast in concrete and bound in chains. Photo: Ursula V. Battle*

nation that’s still very labor intensive, but the plantation economy required a labor force that those people relied on and were gaining wealth.”

NGBIW also features “Cash Crop,” an installation by renowned artist and creator Stephen Hayes. The exhibition features 15 life-size sculptures of human figures cast in concrete and bound in chains and metal of the Atlanta slave trade. The exhibition opened last February, and according to Dr. Martin, it has been extended through July 2025. Hayes noted that the exhibit represents the 15 million African people forcefully brought to the Americas between 1540 and 1850.

Dr. Martin said that future plans at NGBIW includes expanding “The Slavery Era” exhibit to cover more of the slave trade story. She also discussed the importance of this year’s Black History Month theme.

“It’s important to recognize the historical and ongoing impact of Black labor,” she said. “There is a need for



*The Boys Quarters of NGBIW’s immersive slave ship replica.*

*Courtesy photo*



*NGBIW’s replica of a slave ship replica provides an immersive and realistic experience of the Middle Passage voyage. Courtesy photo*

continued education and awareness about Black labor and how it helped to shape our nation.”

To learn more about this year’s Black History Month theme visit <https://asalh.org/black-history-themes/> and for more information about NGBIW, visit <https://www.greatblacksinwax.org/>

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## Educator Creates Documentary to Honor Parents' Legacy, Ensure Historical Chapter is Remembered

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Tyronda Boone created the documentary, “Generational Wealth-Triumphs and Tribulations” in 2023 with a purpose in mind.

“I created this documentary to honor my parents’ legacy (Luther and Lula Boone), ensuring their stories are not forgotten, but instead serve as a beacon of inspiration for generations to come. My father, a sharecropper, and my mother, a tenant farmer, endured immense hardship, yet their resilience, work ethic, and determination laid the foundation for the opportunities you and others have today,” the educator stated.

Tyronda is also a mother and financial literacy activist who explained that she sought to shed light on a chapter of history that shaped the financial and social landscape of many families. Their struggles reflect the broader story of perseverance in the face of systemic barriers and their triumphs.

### Luther Boone

Luther Boone, 76, was reared in the “Jim Crow South” at a time when social and political rights were limited. Legalized racial segregation impacted Luther’s childhood experiences growing up in Como, North Carolina.

“There were nine children in my family—four boys and five girls,” he said.

The sharecropping system allowed a tenant to use a landowner’s land in exchange for a share of produced crops. Luther’s first job was sharecropping, working on land for the landowner. He began picking cotton when he was about four or five years old.

“After the third grade, school was secondary,” Luther recalled. “When the crops started, we were in the field from May to December. After that year, we went to school from parts of December up until May.”

Luther stated how a sharecropper cheated his father out of everything he made.

“We had to pay for the food on credit, and the store owner charged as much as they wanted to charge for the food,” Luther recalled.

“It was just like a new type of slavery. Jim Crow was just a modernized slavery.”

“You didn’t work your way out of sharecropping. You figured your way out of sharecropping,” he also explained.

Luther graduated from high school in 1967. He was determined to pursue a fresh start and entered the Air Force in 1968. Luther eventually became a civil engineering welder, and a military and federal government retiree.

The wise elder who persevered stated that fear is what holds people back.

“You’ve got to free your mind,” Luther stated.

### Lula Boone

Lula, 81, and Luther have been a married team for 48 years. The Prince George’s County, Maryland-based entrepreneur was born in Kathleen, Georgia. She recalls a time when cotton and peanuts were important cash crops for tenant farmers.

“Where I grew up, it was a little different from my husband’s upbringing, because I didn’t know anything about sharecropping,” Lula explained. “We did tenant farming.”

Tenant farmers worked on land owned by someone else. They owned the crops, paid rent to their landlord, owned their equipment and supplies and generally retained more control over their labor than sharecroppers.



*(L-r): Luther Boone and his daughter, Tyronda Boone.*

*Photos: Tyronda Boone*

Lula’s father, Virgil Lee Lawson, said that whatever property he lived on would be shared the way his grandfather did. When the land they lived on was purchased, Lula’s grandfather refused to agree to sharecropping, according to her father.

“My granddaddy would pack everything they had on a mule and wagon and ride all night until they found somebody who would not require them to sharecrop,” Lula added.

Lula recalls an experience that demonstrated the social climate during the Jim Crow Era. Before her mother left for work one morning, she gave Lula and her two sisters change to buy items from a “rolling store,” which was a truck stocked with goods for sale. While they were waiting outdoors a procession appeared and passed by them.

“We didn’t know at the time, but it was the Klu Klux Klan. We just sat there and looked at them,” she recalled. “It was years later before we told mom and found out what it was. That was a sight I never forgot.”

Lula was the second person in her immediate family to attend college. Plus, she had another dream.

“I always knew that I wanted to own my own business,” Lula added.

The business owner has been running Boone Family Day Care for over 38 years.



*Lula Boone (left) and Luther Boone (right) with their granddaughter, Zoey (center).*

Tyronda explained that her documentary featuring her parents is not just about remembering the past.

“It’s about using those lessons to inspire the future. It serves as a call to action, encouraging children and families to embrace financial literacy, break generational cycles of poverty, and take control of their economic destinies.”

“Through their [my parents’] story, I show that no matter where one starts in life, with knowledge, determination, and opportunity, they can carve out a brighter future,” Tyronda added.

Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INrAn26PGiA> to watch “Generational Wealth-Triumphs and Tribulations.”



## **AfroPoP Digital Shorts Series Feature 'Aunties' Who Farm Harriet Tubman's Ancestral Lands**

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Donna Dear and Paulette Greene, who are affectionately known as “The Aunties” co-own Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms located in Preston, Maryland. Their 111-acre plot of land on the Eastern Shore of Maryland is a welcoming place full of Black History, row crops, fruits, vegetables, forests, wetlands and so much more.

The married couple's fascinating journey is intertwined in stewarding farmlands and working to keep abolitionist Harriet Tubman's spirit alive through agriculture, education and heritage preservation.

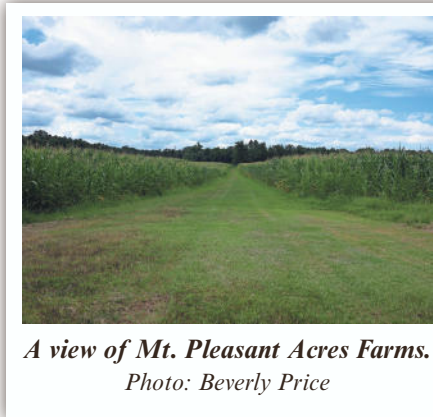
“The land that we live on is about 2,000 plus acres of land that is not all ours. There are many private owners on this land, but this is the land where Harriet Tubman's parents and brothers lived. It was owned by a plantation holder out of Dorchester County. Harriet came from Dorchester County,” said Greene.

Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms has been said to be a stop on the Underground Railroad. The land is a part of a former plantation where Dear and Greene's many “nieces” and “nephews” come to spend time with the Black farmers on the historic property.

Dear, a former military officer, and Greene, an educator, purchased the farm in 1994. It is adjacent to land developed by Greene's great-grandparents.

“The Aunties,” a short environmental documentary about Dear and Green's work, is a part of Black Public Media's “AfroPoP Digital Shorts” series. “AfroPoP Digital Shorts” is an offshoot of BPM's award-winning documentary and narrative series.

The film about Dear and Greene premieres on Monday,



*A view of Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms.  
Photo: Beverly Price*

February 17, 2025, by 2 p.m. on Black Public Media's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@BlackPublicMedia/>. It will be available to view for at least two months.

The filmmakers and Philadelphia residents, Charlyn Griffith-Oro and Jeannine Kayembe-Oro have reportedly led various tours to Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms. Black city dwellers connect with the rural land while visiting a site of food production.

Dear and Greene also shared that schools, community organizations and individuals find out about their farm and pay visits to them. Last year, hundreds of visitors made their way to Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms during a Juneteenth celebration. Another one will be held this year.

“This is going to be the second one on June 19,” Greene said.

A soul festival that was advertised online was also held last year. Many attendees did not know “The Aunties” personally before taking the trip to the property.

Greene further stated that young people are often excited to visit their farm full of history, run by two Black women. It is a chance for people from different walks of life and places to



*(l-r) Donna Dear and Paulette Greene at work on their farm.  
Photo: DiAnté Jenkins*

meet each other and interact. Some Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms visitors camp out.

Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms serves as a hub where individuals can interact hands-on. Dear and Greene also honor the ancestors by growing food there.

“You don't live to eat; you eat to live,” Greene stated. “When we grow food, we have people coming who want to know how to grow. They work with us. Many of them are volunteers. They want to use the practices that we use in order to learn how to grow food naturally.”

Some “nieces” and “nephews” who have trained with their “Aunties” through mentorship have evolved and now make food products.

“One of the most rewarding things about the “nieces” and “nephews” that come to us is that we embrace them. What we mentor them about; they also are mentoring us. It's reciprocal. It's not a one-way street. We collectively learn from each other,” said Dear.

Both Dear and Greene are passionate proponents of organic food production, showcasing Black history, and facilitating the relationship between African Americans and land while taking steps towards real climate justice. While “The Aunties” uplift Black culture from a historical lens during Black History Month, it is an ideal time to pause to discover lesser-explored facets of Black life, from growing food to exploring land.

“The bottom line is Black history is our history, and we have a responsibility to keep it moving in a manner that depicts us as being the people we are,” said Greene.

Watch a trailer for “The Aunties” via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WFBNM6wl4o>. Learn more about “The Aunties” by visiting <https://www.theaunties.farm>. Mt. Pleasant Acres Farms' hours are by appointment only. Contact Dear and Greene to inquire about in-person experiences. You may also send an email through the website.

# Karen Kennedy, Infinite Legacy Leader Joins Donate Life Maryland Board

By Andrea Blackstone

Organ, eye and tissue donation is a topic that can touch almost anyone at some point in their lives, either directly or indirectly.

“There is a critical need for organ donations as more than 100,000 people in the United States are currently waiting for an organ transplant. When someone makes the legal decision to be a donor they provide hope to those waiting,” said Karen Kennedy.

Patients who are on the waiting list for an organ transplant hold onto hope that a donor will come their way. Some donors choose to become organ donors on their own. Others may become inspired after learning more facts about the process, or because they want to pay tribute to someone who touched their lives.

Kennedy, a Lutherville-Timonium, Maryland resident, will help raise awareness about organ, eye and tissue donation as a (DLM) board member. She was elected to serve in this capacity in January 2025. DLM handles registrations for organ, eye, and tissue donors in Maryland.

Kennedy is no stranger to the organ donation field.

“I serve on the leadership team at Infinite Legacy, the nonprofit organ procurement organization (OPO) that facilitates organ, eye and tissue donation in Maryland and the Metro DC area. In my role, I have had the privilege of partnering with Donate Life Maryland on many initiatives to advocate for organ donation in our communities,” said Kennedy.

Kennedy stated that she is passionate about DLM’s work because she sees what a difference their work makes in the lives of others.

“Professionally, I see examples every

day of how an individual’s decision to be an organ and tissue donor results in lifesaving and life-enhancing gifts to those in need. Personally, I am a member of both a donor and a recipient family and am so thankful to Donate Life Maryland for all that they do,” Kennedy revealed.

People of all ages need organ, eye or tissue donations. According to Donate Life America, “In 2023, more than 1,900 children received lifesaving transplants, matched from nearly 900 pediatric organ donors. Currently, there are more than 2,100 children on the national transplant waiting list. More than 500 children waiting for a donor organ are between 1 and 5 years old.”

Additionally, information provided by Donate Life Maryland states that “anyone can be an organ donor regardless of age, race or medical history. There’s no defined cutoff age for donating organs. The decision to use your organs is based on strict medical criteria, not age.”

Kennedy remains passionate about her life’s work and it shows. She is proud to have worked at Infinity Legacy for more than 30 years, in diverse roles, including clinical leadership, policy development, training and partner relationships.

“I currently serve as Vice President of External Affairs and Education, where I have a particular focus on legislative advocacy at the local and national level, as well as external partner relationships with Donate Life Maryland, transplant centers, funeral homes and Offices of the Chief Medical Examiner,” Kennedy stated.

Before joining Infinite Legacy, Kennedy worked as a critical care nurse in a trauma unit. At that time, she was able to see firsthand how



*Karen Kennedy, Vice President, External Affairs and Education, Infinite Legacy Photos: Infinite Legacy*

organ donation helps those in need of a lifesaving gift and witness the hope and comfort that donation can bring to families facing the loss of their loved one.

She added, “It inspired me to seek a position with Infinite Legacy to continue to utilize my skills in new ways.”

While Kennedy begins a new journey as a DLM board member, she remains mindful of a few key points that she would like more people to understand about organ, eye and tissue donation.

“One person can save and heal more than 75 lives through organ and tissue donation. Registering to be a donor is an important and rewarding way to pass on the gift of life,” Kennedy asserted.

She candidly added, “We recognize people have questions about donation, and that there are several myths and misconceptions that exist about the process. Both Donate Life Maryland



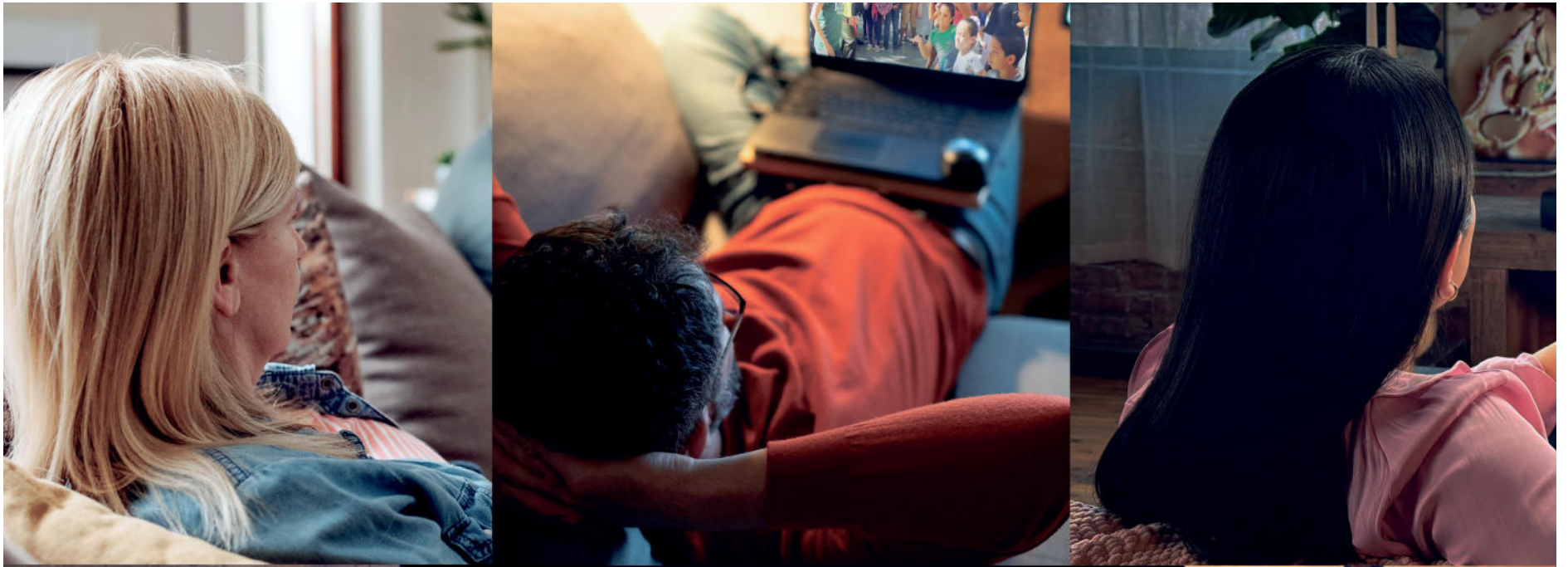
*(l-r) Jecoliah Daniels, Director, Communications & Marketing, Infinite Legacy; Lisa Spicknall, Executive Director, Donate Life Maryland; Karen Kennedy, Vice President, External Affairs and Education, Infinite Legacy; and Kenny Boyd, Vice President and Chief Business Development Officer, Infinite Legacy; Donate Life Maryland Advocacy Day, March, 2024.*

and Infinite Legacy are passionate about educating our communities with the facts and dispelling misconceptions.”

Kennedy mentioned that the impact that others can make to continue their legacy through giving someone else the gift of life can be extraordinary.

“Knowing that one day your altruistic gift could make a tremendous difference for someone creates a strong sense of pride. We work closely with donor families to honor and celebrate the life and legacy of their loved ones,” Kennedy explained.

Visit [www.donatelifemaryland.org](http://www.donatelifemaryland.org) to learn more about registering to become an organ, eye and tissue donor.



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# Ravens Lamar Jackson Robbed of MVP

By Tyler Hamilton

The Super Bowl has come and gone. The NFL announcement of the Most Valuable Player Award winner went with it. Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson was the favorite to win his third consecutive MVP award.

But he was robbed.

The award ended up going to Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen. Don't get me wrong, Allen posted impressive numbers throughout the season:

Completions: 307 of 483

Passing Yards: 3,731

Passing Touchdowns: 28

Interceptions: 6

Rushing Yards: 531

Rushing Touchdowns: 12

Allen led the Bills to the No.2 seed in the AFC and as we all know, they ended the Ravens season in the divisional round of the playoffs at Highmark Stadium in Buffalo. An argument can be made that Allen's supporting cast was inferior to that of Jackson's in Baltimore.

However, the supporting cast was never a detriment to past MVPs such as Joe Montana. Why was it for Jackson?

Sure, running back Derrick Henry was a key part of the Ravens success. Henry finished just short of 2,000 rushing yards (1,921) and 16 touchdowns. Jackson benefited from that no doubt. But Henry also benefited from Jackson because he always required a defender to focus on the quarterback making it truly 11 on 1q football.

"Lamar [Jackson] is what makes this team go, and he's the reason why we still had a chance, so I'd tell him the same thing; hold his head high. He's a Hall of Fame player, had a great season," Henry said.



*Lamar Jackson and Bills quarterback Josh Allen*

*Photo: USA TODAY Sports Images*

Jackson's 2024 season was one of the best statistical outputs ever by a quarterback:

- First QB ever to throw for 4,000+ yards and rush for 900+ yards
- First QB ever to have 40+ pass TD and fewer than 5 INT
- 119.6 passer rating, 4th best in NFL history

The MVP race was extremely close. Allen narrowly beat Jackson for the prize. Here's how the voting played out:

Josh Allen (Buffalo Bills) – 383 points (27 first-place votes)

Lamar Jackson (Baltimore Ravens) – 362 points (23 first-place votes)

Saquon Barkley (Philadelphia Eagles) – 120 points

Joe Burrow (Cincinnati Bengals) – 82 points

Jared Goff (Detroit Lions) – 47 points

Patrick Mahomes (Kansas City Chiefs) – 31 points

Jayden Daniels (Washington Commanders) – 8 points

Justin Herbert (Los Angeles Chargers) – 6 points

Ja'Marr Chase (Cincinnati Bengals) – 6 points

Sam Darnold (Minnesota Vikings) – 3 points

Baker Mayfield (Tampa Bay Buccaneers) – 2 points

Jackson was good enough to be first-team All Pro at quarterback, ahead of Allen, but somehow wasn't impactful enough to be named MVP.



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# CANNABIS PARDONS: WHAT TO KNOW



Maryland Governor Wes Moore has issued a pardon for all misdemeanor cannabis possession convictions, as well as convictions for cannabis paraphernalia possession. This factsheet addresses common questions for those who may benefit from these pardons. This is not legal advice. Please consult an attorney about your specific situation. To get free legal help visit: <http://www.mvlslaw.org/FREE-LEGAL-HELP>

## WHAT IS A PARDON

01

A pardon is an act by the governor to absolve a person from guilt for a crime. A person who is pardoned cannot be subject to any legal penalties that might be imposed for the pardoned crime. Certain rights may be restored, such as the right to obtain certain professional licenses. A pardon does not overturn your guilty verdict, nor does it expunge the case. A background check will still show a pardoned case unless the case is expunged.

## IS MY CASE PARDONED & WILL I BE NOTIFIED?

02

Governor Moore's pardon applies if you were either found guilty or received a probation before judgment for misdemeanor cannabis possession of less than 1.5 ounces, or for misdemeanor possession of paraphernalia or possession with intent to use paraphernalia, provided that the only other charge in the case was cannabis possession. However, you will not be directly notified if your case has been pardoned.

## IS MY CASE EXPUNGED?

03

Not necessarily. A pardon does not automatically expunge a case. However, most cannabis only possession cases have been partially expunged as of July 1, 2024, due to laws enacted after legalization. Note that only digital records, not court papers or fingerprints, have been automatically expunged. Paraphernalia or intent to use convictions noted above are not automatically expunged.

## WHAT STEPS SHOULD I TAKE?

04

If you have cannabis charges, whether or not you think they were pardoned, you should still file for expungement of your case. This is the best way to make sure that the case is fully removed from background checks.

## YOUR PARDON AND BACKGROUND CHECKS:

05

If an employer requests a background check through the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), the cannabis pardon likely won't show up until mid-2025. Unfortunately, many employers use a private background check service, and the records maintained by these services are not regularly updated.

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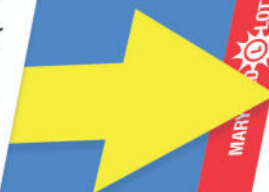
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