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Breaking Barriers: Benin's Women Cyclists Head to Baltimore's Maryland Cycling Classic

The 2025 Maryland Cycling Classic will make history on Saturday, September 6, 2025 as America's premier professional cycling race debuts both men's and women's competitions together for the first time on an exciting new 17.9-mile (28.8km) circuit course entirely in the City of Baltimore. The Benin National Team will make a historic appearance as the first African female team to compete in a major North American race.

(Left-right): Sèdo Charlotte Metoevi, the 2025 Benin U23 Women's National Road Champion and Hermionne Marie Paul Ahouissou, the 2025 Benin Women's Elite National Road Champion and Captain of the Maryland Cycling Classic team will also be competing in the World Championships in Rwanda in late September. (See pages 2, 6, and 7).

Photo credit: Thedie Aho



Pedaling Equality: How Benin's Women Are Changing the Face of African Cycling

By Kimberly Coats

Team Africa Rising (TAR) and the Benin Cycling Federation (FEBECY) united in 2019 during the African Continental Championships in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. Team Africa Rising, the founding entity of Rwanda's National Cycling Team, had recently transferred its successful operations in Rwanda to the Rwandan government and was aiming to expand into West Africa. TAR Founder Jock Boyer discussed with FEBECY President Romuald Hazoumè, and the spark was ignited.

Since late 2019, TAR and FEBECY have worked together to develop the country's cycling program, with TAR providing expertise through professional coaches and mechanics, and training local Beninese in all aspects of professional cycling. What impressed TAR from the start was the Benin President's progressive support for women in the sport. Culturally, this was uncommon in places where TAR operated, including Rwanda. The women of Benin received the same quality of equipment as the men, the same opportunities for international races, and equal pay. In May 2025, Benin hosted the GP Cotonou Femmes alongside the men's GP Cotonou, one of the few major races for African women on the continent.

Benin has a rich history of celebrating strong women. The ancient Kingdom of Dahomey (present-day Benin, West Africa) boasted an all-female military regiment from the 17th to the late 19th century. These women were known as the Amazons due to their resemblance to the warrior women of Greek mythology. Even today, women are afforded the opportunity to attend school, participate in sports, and are generally free from the cultural expectations of early marriage and large families.

Hermionne Ahouissou, team captain and 2025 women's elite national road

champion, was recently asked about feeling pressure to marry or consider marriage at 27.

"I don't feel pressured to get married. My family encourages me to excel in any sport I choose, including cycling, and they understand that cycling is my current focus. I have the freedom to do what I want, and I love cycling." Hermionne is also a former Benin National Speed and Endurance Rollerblade Champion from 2016 to 2019.

TAR increased its support in early 2021 after being sidelined from international travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Early on, Benin women showed up at the team house, asking to ride. The women ranged in age from Melvina, 15, riding her first 25km on Zwift in flip flops and barefoot, to Hermionne, the oldest, in her mid-20s. There was Charlotte, built for track riding despite no track nearby, to Benin's soon-to-be phenom, Georgette.

In 2024, Benin participated in the UCI World Road Championships in Zurich, Switzerland, with a junior boy, Hermionne, in the Women's Elite category, and Georgette, an 18-year-old junior. In a cruel twist of fate, the women's junior race, Georgette's race, was held under intermittent rain showers with temperatures in the 60s. Not ideal weather for African riders on their first trip to Europe and competing at the highest level they had ever faced. In the end, Georgette finished the race and became the first woman from Benin to complete a UCI Junior Worlds race. Benin cycling had found its Amazon!

This summer, Georgette, still a junior, raced with the UCI team in France as she



(Left to right): Benin cyclists Vanette, Raimatou, and Georgette. Raimatou will be participating in the Maryland Cycling Classic race on September 6, 2025.

Photo: Thedie Aho

prepared for the World Championships, which will be held for the first time on the African continent in Rwanda. The foundation Team Africa Rising started in 2007 in Rwanda, and the Rwandan team that grew and thrived under TAR's guidance led to this historic event in Rwanda this September. Georgette and three women from this year's Maryland Cycling Classic, Hermionne, Charlotte, and Raimatou, will be at that start line, representing strong African women, their country, and the dreams of millions of young girls who love to ride bikes.

(See pages 6 and 7 to read about the Benin women cyclists participating in the Maryland Cycling Classic on September 6, 2025).

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Are Passwords Passé? The Growing Trend Toward the Use of Passkeys

By Karen Clay

Clay Technology and Multimedia, L.L.C.

For millennia, we have used passwords to gain access to protected information and activities. The Roman military used “watchwords” to manage access through secured zones, ensuring that only those with the correct phrases could pass, thereby effectively distinguishing friend from foe. During the 14th – 17th centuries, the rise of knowledge in cryptology (the study of secure communications and codes) laid down the fundamental concepts of cryptography (the construction of algorithms and protocols to secure information), which led to the transformation of secure communication. During the 19th century, wax seals were used to establish authenticity and provide assurance of identity, much like a fingerprint. In the 1940s, paratroopers used clicking devices called “crickets” as an alternative to a password system. By the 1960s, we had transitioned to digital passwords with the development of the Compatible Time-Sharing System (CTSS) by Fernando Corbató at MIT. This innovation introduced password-protected user accounts, allowing multiple users to share system resources securely.

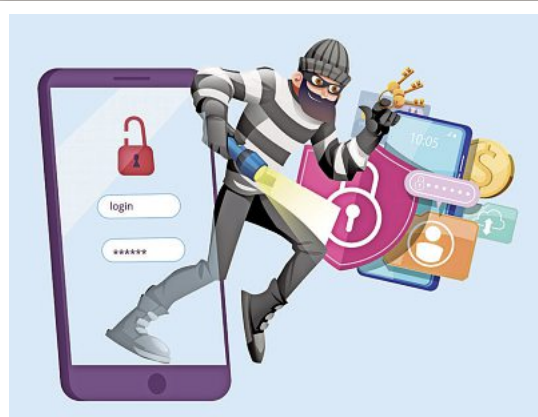
At first, these simple passwords seemed to do the trick to secure everything. We created one password and used it everywhere. As computers and networks became central to business and personal life, passwords grew from a niche tool into a daily necessity. Banks, schools, workplaces, and governments require passwords to validate identity and control access. Over time, the sheer volume of accounts exploded, leaving many people juggling dozens, if not hundreds, of unique credentials. As a result, most of us defaulted to reusing simple passwords across accounts. Soon, passwords were

getting hacked, and breaches multiplied.

Hackers quickly learned to exploit our tendencies toward convenience. Short, predictable, or recycled passwords became prime targets for brute-force attacks, phishing schemes, and credential stuffing. Even password managers, while helpful, rely on a single master password—creating a single point of failure. We needed something more substantial, simpler, and more resistant to common attack strategies. This demand laid the foundation for what would become a new era of authentication technology.

Two-factor authentication (2FA) and multi-factor authentication (MFA) emerged as stopgaps to the limitations of passwords. These layered defenses required something more than “what you know” (a password) and added “what you have” (a device, token, or code) or “what you are” (a biometric identifier such as a fingerprint). While they significantly reduced the success of cyberattacks, 2FA and MFA still relied on passwords as the starting point. Codes sent via text or authenticator apps, while more secure, could still be intercepted or phished. Security improved, but complexity and user frustration remained barriers to broad adoption.

Enter passkeys, a groundbreaking evolution in digital authentication. Unlike traditional passwords, passkeys are cryptographic keys stored on your device and protected by biometrics or a PIN. They eliminate the need to memorize or type complex strings of characters, instead allowing you to unlock accounts with a fingerprint, facial recognition, or a local device PIN. Because no password



The move toward passkeys and password-free ecosystems may increase the efficiency of tech security. Graphic Design by Karen Clay

is ever transmitted or stored, passkeys are inherently resistant to phishing, brute-force attacks, and credential stuffing, making them far more secure and easier to handle.

That said, passkeys are not without limitations. Their usefulness depends on widespread adoption, and while many of the largest technology providers support them, not every website or platform is ready to make the transition. They also tie identity to a device, which means that losing or damaging a phone or laptop can complicate access without proper backup and recovery mechanisms in place. For users outside of major cloud ecosystems, syncing passkeys across devices may feel restrictive. For those less familiar with new technology, the learning curve can be steep. Even with these hurdles, however, the balance of convenience and protection makes passkeys an increasingly attractive alternative to the frustrations of traditional password-based security.

If history has taught us anything, it is that security is constantly evolving in response to threats. Passkeys represent the next logical step, but they may not be the final answer. We are already



Karen Clay,
Clay Technology and Multimedia
Courtesy, Karen Clay

seeing hints of what could come next: password-free ecosystems where every device, account, and system recognizes us through a combination of biometrics, behavior patterns, and secure cryptographic exchanges. Artificial intelligence may soon be integrated into authentication systems, learning to distinguish legitimate users from impostors by analyzing keystroke rhythms, device usage patterns, and even subtle biometric signals.

The future of security is likely to be invisible to us but impenetrable to attackers. We may soon live in a world where access is granted by simply being who we are—our identity authenticated passively and securely across all of our digital interactions. In the meantime, being able to adapt to the ever-evolving protocols for securing your information is a wise skill to develop.

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CollegeBound Foundation's Off to College Game Night: Fun, Networking, Essential Support for Baltimore's Future Leaders

By Melisa Hypolite

The CollegeBound Foundation's Off to College Game Night brought together Baltimore's brightest college-bound students and the professionals who champion their success — and it all started with a game of basketball, a deck of cards, and a heart for giving.

Now in its seventh year, Game Night is more than just an evening of fun. It's a community-driven event where local leaders, donors, and advocates come together to ensure Baltimore City graduates leave for college with more than dreams — they leave with the essentials they need to thrive.

The CollegeBound Foundation reaches approximately 800 middle school students, over 4,000 high school students, and more than 1,000 college students each year. The Foundation advises 50% of Baltimore City Schools' seniors and 25% of graduates attending a four-year college on Pell Grants. Its College Completion Program (CCP) has achieved a 71% graduation rate from Maryland four-year colleges — the same as the statewide public four-year college graduation rate across all income levels. All CCP scholars are Baltimore City Schools graduates and recipients of the Pell Grant. By comparison, Baltimore City's six-year graduation rate for African American students starting at four-year colleges hovers between 23% and 28%, according to the 2014 BERC College Fact Book.

During Game Night, students rotated between board games, card games, and basketball matches while connecting with Baltimore professionals who offered guidance, encouragement, and networking opportunities. The highlight for many students was the Off to College Dorm Essentials Store. Thanks to

generous donations from local community members, online supporters, and Game Night attendees, the “store” was stocked with toiletries, bedding, towels, school supplies, and gift cards. Each student received “CBF Bucks” to “shop” for the items they most needed — an intentional approach that allowed them to make personal choices rather than receive pre-packed items.

Contributions flowed in from all directions, including local drop-offs at the CollegeBound office, Amazon Wish List shipments, cash donations used to purchase essentials, and entry donations from professionals attending Game Night. Students also received special prizes throughout the night courtesy of Under Armour.

Game Night began in 2018 as a simple Off to College Care Package Drive initiated by this writer, Melisa Hypolite, the Director of Strategic Partnerships at the CollegeBound Foundation. I recognized that many Baltimore City students were leaving for college without having all the essentials they needed for their dorm room. What started with friends and family quickly grew when Councilman James Torrence and Alicia Wilson, VP of Civic Engagement and Opportunity at The Johns Hopkins University, joined the effort, helping transform it into a networking event that blends fun, mentorship, and tangible support.



CollegeBound Foundation College Completion Program scholars, CollegeBound Foundation Alumni Association members, staff, and guests.

Photo: CollegeBound Foundation

CollegeBound aims to expand Game Night in 2026 through larger corporate partnerships and a wider selection of items in the Dorm Essentials Store. With the continued support of Baltimore's community, the event can grow to serve even more students preparing for this pivotal next chapter in their lives.

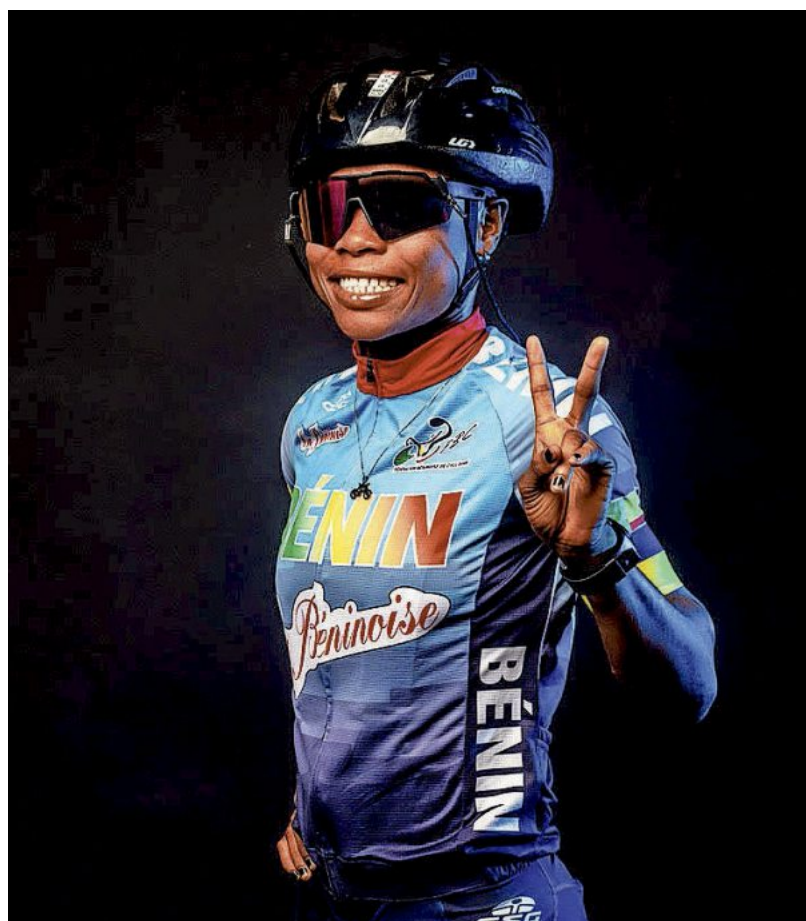
Donations of dorm essentials, gift cards, and funds are always welcome — and your support goes directly into the hands of students working hard to change their futures. To learn more about donating, mentoring, or participating in next year's Off to College Game Night, contact Melisa Hypolite at mhypolite@collegeboundfoundation.org.

This year's event was proof of what happens when a city believes in its young people: they leave for college not only with sheets, towels, and gift cards — but also with a stronger network, a sense of belonging, and the knowledge that Baltimore is cheering them on every step of the way.

Meet the Women Cyclists from Benin

Breaking Barriers: Benin's Women Cyclists Head to Baltimore's Maryland Cycling Classic

From the legacy of Dahomey's warrior women to the world stage, Benin's rising cyclists join the Maryland Cycling Classic—representing resilience, equality, and the dreams of young girls across Africa.



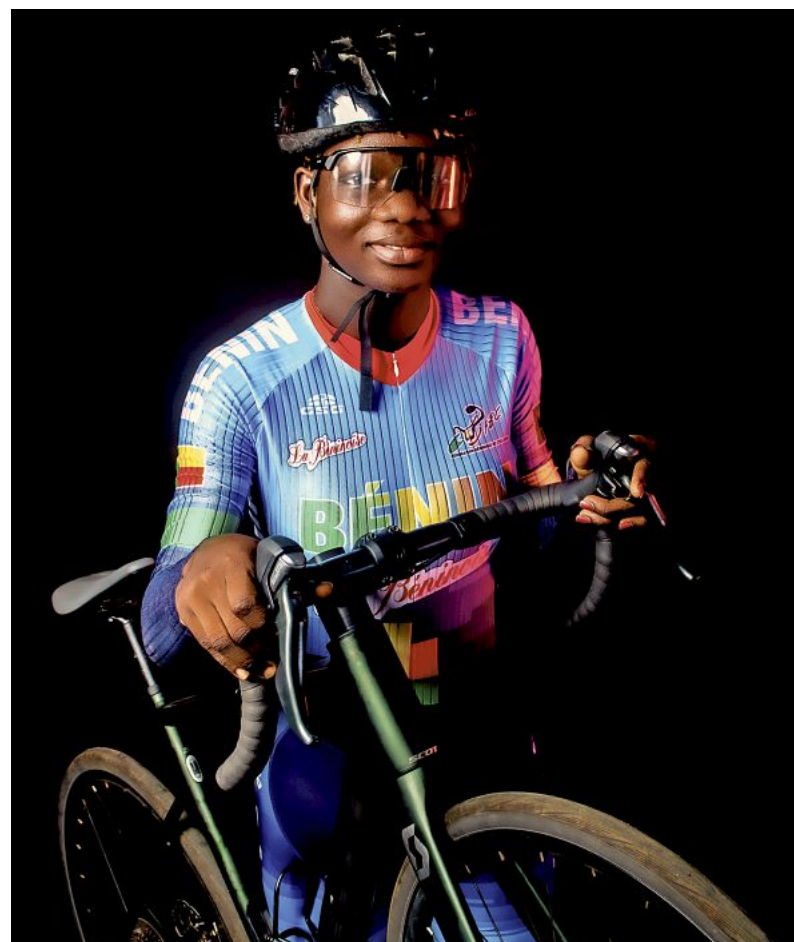
Raimatou Kpovihouede

Raimatou Kpovihouede

At just 24 years old, Raimatou Kpovihouede is one of Benin's rising cycling talents. A former runner, she discovered cycling three and a half years ago and has quickly carved out her place in the sport. She rides for the Saffi Club Team as well as the Benin National Team, where she's proud to represent her country under a federation she praises for its seriousness, discipline, and commitment to the sport.

Raimatou's progression has taken her to international competition, including a spot on the roster for the prestigious Maryland Cycling Classic. For her, cycling is more than competition; it's a way to better understand herself and explore her own potential.

Passionate about encouraging more women to take up the sport, Raimatou shares this message: "There's a lot of opportunity in cycling to improve health, even if you never race."



Charlotte Metoevi

Photos by Thedie Aho

Charlotte Metoevi

At just 20 years old, Charlotte Metoevi is already the U23 National Road Cycling Champion of Benin. A rider for Zoom Zoom Club, she has been competing in cycling for three years and continues to stand out as one of the country's brightest young talents.

Metoevi is eager to line up at the Maryland Cycling Classic, calling it "a great opportunity to learn from the best in the world and to show Benin women what level we're at compared to the professional women."

Proud to represent her nation, Charlotte also carries a message of empowerment: "I want to tell African women to believe in themselves. They're incredible people."

Meet the Women Cyclists from Benin



Estelle Agossounon

Photos by Thedie Aho

Estelle Agossounon

At 19 years old, Estelle Agossounon is the youngest member of Benin's squad at the Maryland Cycling Classic. Racing for the Saffi Club, she has been dedicated to cycling since the age of 15. Her commitment was clear even as a student—during her school lunch breaks in Porto Novo, she would head to the team house, change quickly, train on Zwift for an hour, and return to class. That persistence has shaped her into one of Benin's most promising young riders.

The Maryland Cycling Classic marks the biggest race of her career so far, and she's eager for the experience. Agossounon also carries a message of inspiration for women across Africa: *"I would like to tell African women they have the ability to follow in our footsteps. The race in Maryland will enable us to ride with other women from many different countries."*



Hermionne Ahouissou

Hermionne Ahouissou

At 27, Hermionne Ahouissou leads as the Captain of the Benin National Women's Cycling Team. She rides for Turbo Cycling Club in Cotonou and has been competing in cycling for three years, following a successful career as a Rollerblade Speed and Endurance Champion from 2016 to 2019.

Her passion for cycling began when a friend introduced her to the sport, and from her very first rides, she remembers how welcoming—and serious—the Benin Cycling Federation was in nurturing her growth and promoting cycling development nationally.

As a trailblazer in Benin, Hermionne believes there's great potential for women to excel in the sport, with fewer female racers opening unique opportunities. She is committed to encouraging women to persist in pursuing their dreams, just as she has done.

Proud to represent her country on the international stage, the Maryland Cycling Classic is a milestone moment in her leadership journey for Team Benin.

Education Tips to Help Students of All Ages Reach for the Stars This School Year

By Andrea Blackstone

Parents can set the tone for academic success, regardless of their students' age.

"Encourage your child to set goals, track their progress, and embrace learning, not just for the grade, but for the power it gives them to shape their own future," Kimberly Morrow Brock said, while offering advice to parents of high schoolers.

Setting the tone for academic success is helpful during the early years, middle school, and high school phases of education. Educators Morrow Brock, Shirley Smith, and Douglass Johnson provide tips on academic youth empowerment.

The Primary Years

Shirley Smith possesses 30 years in the early childhood education field with a concentration in social, emotional learning and special education. She explained that student success in the primary years is dependent upon each student's practice of self-regulation. They should strengthen their fine motor skills and be permitted to continue creative thought and movement. Smith further stated that parents should instill a joy of reading in their children and allow students to practice how to handle feelings of upset and how to face conflict. The education expert suggests creating a visual (pictorial) routine for challenging times of the day, such as getting ready to leave for school or preparing for bedtime.

"These routines calm an anxious brain and give it information about what is to come," said Smith.

She explained that the best time to seek tutoring services for a student is when the parent or the child notices that homework is causing frustration or anxious tendencies.

"Continue the support until your student seems confident in the skills they are acquiring," Smith added.



Shirley Smith, Executive Director of a preschool in Annandale, Virginia has been involved in the early childhood education field for 30 years. Photo courtesy of Shirley Smith

The Middle School Years

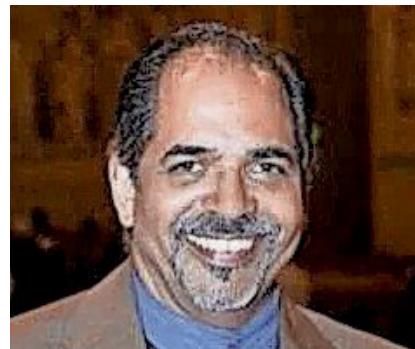
Douglass Johnson, a retired Catholic School teacher with over thirty years of experience in the Catholic School System, mentioned that consistency is a key to academic student success. Parents should remain actively involved in their children's school life. Johnson recommends always keeping your doors open for transparent communication while maintaining high expectations for students.

He added that the best time to seek tutoring is at the beginning of the school year. A stigma attached to receiving tutoring services should not exist.

"A tutor for a middle school student should be viewed as an academic achievement mentor. This mentor is provided not just for homework assistance, but to assist in the students' academic development toward their high goals for the year and beyond," Johnson reasoned.

High School: The Final Stop

Kimberly Morrow Brock, a high school history teacher and high school principal for nearly three decades, retired from the public school system in 2021. She is the author of "8 Pearls of Wisdom: A Parenting



Douglass Johnson, a retired Catholic School teacher with over 30 years of experience in the Los Angeles Catholic School System. Photo courtesy of Douglass Johnson

Guide, Empowering Children is the Way to Go!"

Morrow Brock mentioned that in her book, the portion entitled "Pearl #1: It's Never Too Early to Plan for the Future," explains that parents are their child's first teacher and lifelong advocate. Morrow Brock shared three practical tips to guide your child through high school:

- **Stay involved, but avoid becoming overbearing.** Your presence matters.

Ask about your child's school day, attend meetings, and know their friends and teachers. Don't wait for problems; be proactive.

- **Create a culture of accountability at home.** Set clear expectations for grades, attendance, and behavior from the outset. A clear structure that includes study time, chores, and downtime will help your teen balance responsibility with freedom.

- **Encourage self-advocacy and problem-solving.** Teach your child how to ask for help, communicate respectfully with teachers, and take ownership of their learning. High school is not just an academic experience; it's a training ground for adulthood.



Kimberly Morrow Brock, an author, retired high school history teacher and high school principal with nearly three decades of experience in her field. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Brock

Discipline is an aspect of a student's record that connects to future opportunities.

"Parents and students should understand that discipline is more than avoiding trouble; it's about building character. A clean discipline record reflects emotional maturity, decision-making, and respect for authority. Colleges, employers, and scholarship committees notice patterns, not just grades. As I say in 'Pearl #7: Be Your Child's Hero,' we want our children to be proud of their story. Help them write one that reflects integrity and responsibility," Morrow Brock stated.

Seek out tutoring services before a student's grades fall, not after they do.

"Prevention is always better than intervention. If your student is showing signs of struggle, don't wait. Ask questions, review progress reports, and get support early," Morrow Brock advised.

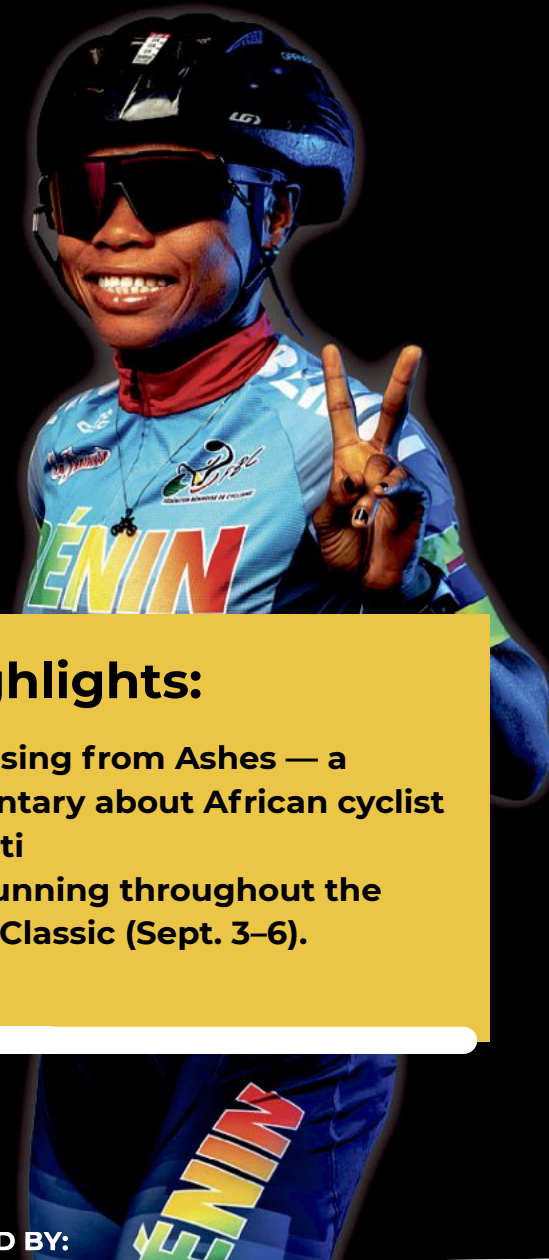
Grades are more than just numbers to high school students. They are a reflection of effort, discipline, and commitment.

"Every test, every homework assignment, and every report card counts. Your transcript is your academic passport—it will open or close doors," Morrow Brock reasoned.

Celebrate History, Culture & Empowerment

The Baltimore Times, Creatively Black Baltimore
& the Maryland Cycling Classics Welcome the
Benin Women's National Cycling Team

Join us for a kick-off historic celebration
honoring the Benin Women's National Cycling
Team — the first African women's national team
to compete in a U.S. professional road race.



SPECIAL EVENT

Creatively Black Baltimore Activation Highlights:

- Benin Women Cyclist Debut in Dear Black Girl Exhibition — portraits and testimonials from Benin cyclists, connecting athletic achievement to empowerment.
- Launch of the Benin Art Exhibit Collaboration
- Film Screening: Rising from Ashes — a powerful documentary about African cyclist Adrien Niyondshuti
- All activities are running throughout the Maryland Cycling Classic (Sept. 3–6).

FREE and OPEN to the public
Special Hours for Maryland Cycling Classics

Thursday, September 4, 2025, 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Friday, September 5, 2025, 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Saturday, September 6, 2025, 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Sunday, September 7, 2025, 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm

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THE BALTIMORE TIMES

CREATIVELY
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Rambling Rose



By Rosa Pryor

Hello, my dear friends and fans. Well, it looks like our summer vacation is just about over. But we are going out with a bang! We have many more places to take you and a lot more things I want you to explore.

One of the events I suggest you check out is the return of the 9th Annual Love Groove Festival, which will be held at Robert C. Marshall Park, located at 1211 Pennsylvania Avenue, on Saturday, September 13, from 12 noon to 8 p.m. There will be live music, local art, dancing, yoga, shopping, family activities such as a 1.5-mile community run, a bike ride and party, yoga session and so much more. There will be something for everyone, including over 60 vendor and nonprofit tents, a pop-up art gallery, live painting, and a petting zoo. This free family event was founded by John Tyler, a young entrepreneur, Emmy-award winning film composer and visionary. I will see you there.

I will conclude by reminding you to check out the Hook & Reel Dine-in Experience. They offer their famous Seafood Boil, of course.. All boils come with potatoes and corn on the cob, but you also can add sausage, broccoli, hard-boiled eggs, rice, mushrooms and noodles. Other options offered are shrimp, scallops, crabs, clams, mussels, lobster tail, and crawfish. If you are a seafood lover, then this is the place to check out.

Well, my dear friends, I am out of space, and I have to go. But remember if you want to talk to me, just give me a call at 410-833-9474, if I'm not in, just leave a message, or you can email me at

9th Annual Love Groove Festival Comes to Robert C. Marshall Park September 13



The UniverSoul Circus was a total HIT! Security Square Mall will never be the same. Dancers, included performers from five continents. The circus act combines with theater, live music ranging from R&B, Latin, jazz, pop, hip-hop, gospel and so much more. One of my favorites was the Caribbean stilt-walkers breathing fire. The acts were for toddlers to senior citizens to enjoy. The circus will be here until September 1, 2025, for two shows, at 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. Check it out! They are at Security Square Mall, 6901 Security Blvd. in Woodlawn.



Love Groove Festival is back. It's music, art, dancing, yoga, family activities and a lot more for John Tyler's 9th Annual Love Groove Festival that will take place on Saturday, September 13 from 12 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Robert C. Marshall Park, 1211 Pennsylvania Avenue.



The Royal Theater & Community Heritage Corporation will present "Matinee @ The Royal," the last show for the season on Saturday, September 6, from 4-7 p.m., featuring "Dee & Signature Live" from DC. Rosa "Rambling Rose" Pryor is the Mistress of Ceremony and booking agent. The location is at the Avenue Bakery, 2229 Pennsylvania Avenue. It is free, BYOB, food on sale, and bring your folding chairs.



The manager of Hook & Reel Seafood Restaurant, Nancy Baxter, was our outstanding hostess. She served my guests and me with a smile. It was my first time there, but it won't be the last time. The food was superb, cooked to perfection and served hot. Their specialty and their signature is their Seafood Boil.

rosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.

Legal Notice

Legal Notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NOTICE TO ARCHITECTS & ENGINEERS

REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Baltimore City Department of Transportation has certified the need to utilize the services of architects or engineers for Project #1389R2, West Baltimore United, a federally funded planning/feasibility study for the 1.4-mile, US-40 expressway corridor in West Baltimore.

Specific details about this Project and information for Firms interested in being considered for work on this Project can be found on the eMaryland Marketplace Advantage website at <https://emma.maryland.gov> solicitation No. BPM052757

BCDOT will have a pre-submittal meeting on September 10th, 2025, at 3 pm. Applicants can attend this meeting virtually at the following Microsoft Teams link:

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 265 266 434 209 6

Passcode: Ff3kP6W9

Dial in by phone

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You may qualify for
a tax deduction.

- Support Veteran Nonprofits.
- Free Pickup & Towing.
- Top Tax Deduction.

What kinds of vehicles can I donate?

Veteran Car Donations accepts most cars, trucks, boats, RVs, and motorcycles. We can pick up your vehicle, running or not.

It gets better: your car donation can be picked up within 24 hours, and in some cases even the same day.



How Your Vehicle Donation Helps Veterans

Your vehicle donation directly helps us to provide our nation's heroes with much needed programs and services, such as:

- Essential Medical Care and Mental Health Services
- Mentoring, Job Skills Training, and Employment Assistance
- Food, Emergency Shelter, and Housing for Homeless Veterans
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