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Root Branch Media Group Presents “Root Branch Marketplace - Maryland Edition”



Captured through the lens of a behind-the-scenes monitor, this vibrant moment from Root Branch Media Group’s Root Branch Marketplace – Maryland Edition showcases the home shopping style energy powering this year’s Small Business Saturday celebration. Co-host Kenzie Burn stands alongside Kelli Redmond-Bagby of Mova Nature Juice as they prepare fresh, locally made products in a warm, home-kitchen studio that reflects the show’s signature “shop local, shop Maryland” spirit. The televised special—airing on Maryland Public Television and livestreamed on YouTube—spotlights entrepreneurs, innovators, and community changemakers from across the state, reinforcing Root Branch Media Group’s mission to elevate Maryland small businesses and inspire viewers to support homegrown brands.
(See the article on page 7)

Photo credit: Root Branch Media Group

Business Professional Brightens Holiday Season: Helps Seniors During Holidays Through Initiative, Free Care

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Pamgrace Gachenge, founder and CEO of DiscoverU Health, works as a corporate wellness broker. She leads the core operations and overall client experience of her company that was founded in 2018.

As a corporate wellness broker, Gachenge advises business owners and organizational leaders about how to use healthcare and wellness as strategic tools to strengthen their workforce. She helps employers design benefits that improve retention, productivity, and overall employee well-being.

"My work ensures businesses of all sizes can offer quality care options that support their teams and contribute to a healthy and thriving workplace," Gachenge added. "DiscoverU Health's mission is to reimagine the healthcare experience through 360-degree preventive health and chronic care support while removing barriers to access."

Seniors, families, caregivers, and employers who desire a more compassionate and accessible approach to healthcare are served through the company. Additionally, Gachenge, advises business owners and organizational leaders on integrating wellness and concierge healthcare into their business strategy.

DiscoverU Health's team includes nurses, CNAs, GNAs, CMTs, and administrative care staff who support families throughout Maryland. The company is based in Laurel, Maryland and serves surrounding Maryland counties, including Baltimore County and Baltimore City.

DiscoverU Health's Community Outreach Effort

Gachenge stated that the "Give the Gift of Care Campaign" is a new opportunity to acknowledge that the holidays can

bring both joy and hardship. This is the company's first year launching the initiative.

"Our goal is to bring comfort, connection, and meaningful support to seniors and caregivers across Maryland during the holiday season. Through this initiative, we aim to provide 500 free hours of care, serving an estimated 40 to 50 seniors and caregivers in collaboration with local churches, senior communities, housing programs, nonprofits, and business sponsors."

Gachenge added that seniors and caregivers experience loneliness, sadness, chronic health challenges, or financial strain during this season.

"This initiative allows us to step in with compassion, presence, and practical support," she said. "Recipients will receive a nurse (RN) evaluation and a personalized care plan created for their needs. Care will be delivered by our nurses, CNAs, GNAs, CMTs, and administrative care team."

Individuals will be served in Prince George's County; Montgomery County; Anne Arundel County; Howard County; Baltimore County; and Baltimore City in Maryland. Gachenge explained that collaboration with local churches, senior communities, housing programs, and business sponsors to bring care directly to those who need it is underway. Services will include companionship, meal prep, housekeeping, errands, and personal care.

"It is a community effort designed to say: 'We see you, we care about you, and you are not alone,'" said Gachenge.

Oscar Garcia-Villatoro, an HR intern, stated that care will be provided to those who need it during the holidays, but communities are also being brought together for the community funded cause.

"We're all working together to look out for one another and what's better than that during the holidays," Garcia-Villatoro asked.

Nomination and Application Instructions for Supportive Roles

Anyone wishing to nominate a senior or caregiver can email: hello@discoveruhealth.net with "Give the Gift of Care Nomination" in the subject line. Please include the individual's name and a brief explanation of why care is needed. The nomination deadline is December 5, 2025. Organizations or businesses interested in partnering with DiscoverU Health may email hello@discoveruhealth.net with Sponsor – "Give the Gift of Care" in the subject line. Include what he or she would like to contribute or more information about needs can be provided by DiscoverU Health after contact is initiated. CNAs, GNAs, CMTs, and nurses who would like to support this initiative or join our ongoing care team are actively being recruited. Caregivers may apply at <https://discoveruhealth.net/careers>.

Inspiration Behind The Gift of Care

Gachenge shared that her mother, Cecily Wambui Gachenge Gichobi, RN, BSN, transitioned on December 26, 2015, and this year marks ten years.

"She was a dedicated nurse who loved seniors deeply and treated them like family," said Gachenge. "One of the last things she asked me to do before she passed was to deliver Christmas gifts to her senior clients across Maryland. I completed those deliveries on Christmas Eve. A day after Christmas, she was gone."

Gachenge mentioned that the initiative was established in her mother's honor. It reflects the



Pamgrace Gachenge, founder and CEO of DiscoverU Health launched a community effort called "Give the Gift of Care Campaign" to provide 500 free hours of home care, serving an estimated 40 to 50 seniors and caregivers in specific Maryland locations in collaboration with local churches, senior communities, housing programs, nonprofits, and business sponsors. The initiative will bring relief to caregivers who need a short break or extra support and offer emotional comfort to seniors.

Photo: VsDavisPhotography/ Vernon S. Davis

compassion, joy, and generosity she carried throughout her life.

"Giving the Gift of Care allows me to continue the spirit of what she modeled for me, offering kindness and support to seniors and caregivers during a tender time of year."

Visit <https://discoveruhealth.net> to learn more about DiscoverU Health. Follow the company @discoveruhealth on Instagram via <https://www.instagram.com/discoveruhealth>.



GIVE BLACK 4 THE HOLIDAYS

A DIGITAL MARKETPLACE

The Baltimore Times and Times Community Services, Inc. have teamed up with other civic-minded corporations and organizations to promote Black Businesses during this year's holiday shopping and gift-giving season.

We would love to feature your Black-owned business for free! Just scan the code below to participate

Please join us in supporting Black Entrepreneurs and the jobs that they provide by GIVING BLACK 4 THE HOLIDAYS...



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Spotlight on Local Talent: Five O'Clock Co. Elevates Small Business Saturday

Submitted to The Baltimore Times

Five O'Clock Co., led by Baltimore entrepreneur Randy Lewis, is transforming Small Business Saturday at Harborplace into a powerful platform for local makers and creative entrepreneurs. This year, Randy is showcasing more than 30 Baltimore-based businesses—bringing together artisans, food and beverage brands, designers, and emerging creators to gain visibility in one of the city's most iconic locations.

Through his work with the Baltimore Development Corporation and Made In Baltimore, Randy has been able to combine innovation with hands-on leadership to build an accessible marketplace where small business owners can connect with new customers, grow their brands, and feel supported during one of the biggest shopping weekends of the year. His mission extends far beyond selling products; he is creating opportunities, strengthening Baltimore's entrepreneurial ecosystem, and uplifting the voices of creators across the city and beyond.



Made In Baltimore is ready for the holiday season with a full range of Christmas merchandise—all created by local artisans and Baltimore-based businesses. Their storefront is located in the Light Street Pavilion at the Baltimore Inner Harbor.



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Holiday Celebrations

A Motown Christmas Revue Lights Up Baltimore for the Holidays



MELODY A. BETTS

Catrina Brenae, Melody A. Betts, Nygel D. Robinson, and Quincy Vicks

Photo courtesy of Baltimore Center Stage

Submitted to The Baltimore Times

Baltimore is getting a soulful dose of holiday joy this season with *Santa Claus Is Comin': A Motown Christmas Revue* — a vibrant, music-filled celebration running November 26 through January 4. This high-energy production reimagines beloved holiday classics with the unmistakable groove and heart of Motown, creating a festive experience that feels both timeless and fresh.

Co-created by composer and performer **Nygel D. Robinson** and Producing Director **Ken-Matt Martin**, the revue brings together the smooth harmonies, bold choreography, and joyful nostalgia that defined Motown's golden era. The production pays tribute to icons like The Supremes, Stevie Wonder, and The Jackson 5 while celebrating Baltimore's own creative spirit.

“We wanted to create something that feels like joy — the kind that fills a room, brings families together, and reminds us what the holidays are all about,” says Robinson. “This show has heart, soul, and a whole lot of groove.”

Martin describes the show as a gift to the city. “*Santa Claus Is Comin'* is a love letter to Baltimore and music lovers. It's

about connection — across generations, through song, through rhythm, and through the power of gathering together to celebrate.”

Every performance is made even more special by the addition of a different Baltimore choir each evening, giving the show a rotating, community-centered soundtrack that reflects the city's rich musical traditions.

Baltimore Center Stage Artistic Director **Stevie Walker-Webb** says the production captures the essence of the city. “What I love most about this production is how it captures the spirit of Baltimore — the warmth, the music, the soul. It's not just a show; it's a holiday homecoming where three out of four of our cast members are from Baltimore. This show is full of laughter, love, and Motown magic.”

The cast features **Melody A. Betts**, **Catrina Brenae**, **Nygel D. Robinson**, and **Quincy Vicks**, supported by an accomplished creative team including co-directors Ken-Matt Martin and Victor Musoni, lighting designer Levi J. Wilkins, sound designers Jeremiah Davison and Eric Denson, and a dedicated stage management crew.

Two special themed evenings will

further energize the holiday run:

HBCU & Divine Nine Night — December 4, 2025

Hosted by MAGIC 95.9 FM's **Ryan Da Lion**, this event honors the history and cultural influence of HBCUs and Black Greek-letter organizations. Audience members are encouraged to wear their colors and celebrate fellowship, pride, and tradition.

Community Night — December 5, 2025

Guests can explore a festive holiday marketplace featuring local vendors, a resource fair with partners such as Port Discovery and Maryland Citizens for the Arts, and the Giving Tree — an opportunity to support youth programs and initiatives.

Full of joy, rhythm, and hometown pride, *Santa Claus Is Comin': A Motown Christmas Revue* is set to be one of Baltimore's most memorable holiday celebrations. Tickets are already selling quickly.

Show Information

Dates:

November 26, 2025 – January 4, 2026

Tickets: centerstage.org

Chef KB's Yummy Spot Builds Community

The Yummy Spot by Chef KB: Feeding Community, Connection, and Conversation

Submitted to The Baltimore Times

After more than 20 years on the road as a truck driver, **Kimbily Boyd** knew it was time for a change. The COVID shutdown gave her the space to pause, reflect, and choose a different path. “I was a trucker for over 20 years and decided to pivot during the COVID years,” she says. Following her lifelong passion for food, Kimbily enrolled in college in her 40s to sharpen her culinary skills. She graduated with both Culinary and Pastry degrees and, in 2023, launched her meal prep and private chef business, **The Yummy Spot by Chef KB**. Her business serves as the first step toward her larger goal of operating a food truck and eventually creating a space dedicated to community connection.

Kimbily's relationship with food began long before culinary school. Growing up, Sundays at her grandmother's house were a tradition. Neighbors dropped by for a plate, stayed to talk, and left feeling nourished in more ways than one. “I left feeling full in my stomach and also my heart and soul,” she says. Those early memories taught her that food is not just about taste; it is about belonging. Today, she brings that same feeling to every meal she prepares.

The Yummy Spot is envisioned as more than a dining experience. It is a space where people slow down, converse, and reconnect. Guests will be invited to place their phones in a basket on the table, keeping them in sight but out of reach, to encourage conversation. Each visit will feature a themed experience such as chat and chews, movie nights, or woosah evenings that incorporate yoga, sound bowls, and meditation. All gatherings will include family style meals designed to bring people together. “We have forgotten

what community does,” Kimbily says. “The long lasting connections made when you laugh and connect with your neighbors. Impeccable customer service, remembering your name, and becoming part of the family.”

Her meal prep services are intentionally personal. Every client starts with three questions:

1. What are your goals?
2. Any dietary restrictions, such as low sugar, high protein, or low salt?
3. Any preferences about foods by color, texture, or how they touch?

“I accommodate those needs,” she says. “Some people do not like food touching. Some avoid yellow foods or do not like the texture of mushrooms. I create meals they can enjoy, comfortably.”

A current menu highlight is her **Fall Quinoa Salad**, featuring kale, red onion, chicken breast, cranberries, and pepitas. The dressing is typically a lemon and honey vinaigrette, but for diabetic clients, she substitutes a homemade date syrup,

offering sweetness without causing rapid blood sugar spikes.

In 2025, The Yummy Spot was awarded **\$10,000 in grant funding** through the Greater Baltimore Urban League's Restaurant Accelerator Program, a recognition of her business model and her commitment to community.

Looking ahead, Kimbily plans to franchise the concept once it is fine tuned. “I see The Yummy Spot providing a place for the community to get together in a safe environment. Break bread, laugh, and love.”

Her hope is simple: “I hope people feel like family when they taste my food. Maybe one dish reminds them of something they ate growing up, or they discover a new favorite while enjoying a great time among others.”

To contact Owner Kimbily Boyd for catering, meal prep, or private chef services, send an email to: chefkbtyts@gmail.com



GBUL Restaurant Accelerator Program Cohort and staff



Kimbily Boyd, owner of The Yummy Spot by Chef KB, proudly holds her graduation regalia after completing her Culinary and Pastry degrees. This moment marked her transition from more than 20 years in trucking to launching her culinary career and business. Photo courtesy of Chef KB

This feature is part of a collaboration between The Baltimore Times and the Greater Baltimore Urban League. Over the next few months, The Baltimore Times will spotlight businesses that participated in GBUL's Restaurant Accelerator Program (RAP), sponsored by the Pepsi Foundation. Through the program, eight businesses were awarded a total of \$80,000 in grant funding and received free business coaching to strengthen their operations and community impact. For more information about RAP, visit GBUL.org.

Root Branch Media Group Presents "Root Branch Marketplace – Maryland Edition"

Baltimore, MD — Root Branch Media Group proudly announces season three of "Root Branch Marketplace - Maryland Edition," premiering on Small Business Saturday, November 29, 2025.

Set to air on Maryland Public Television (MPT) (date and time TBA - check local listing) and via live-stream on the Root Branch Media Group's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I70afW-gfFk>) on Saturday, November 29, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. (EST), This inspiring television special continues its mission of uplifting Maryland's small business community while highlighting the entrepreneurial spirit that fuels the state's economic growth.

Now in its third season, the Root Branch Marketplace Small Business Saturday celebration is an ongoing commitment to strengthening Maryland's economy by championing the small businesses that power it.

Created in Fall 2023, the IMDb-accredited Root Branch Media Group original television production was designed to spotlight a curated selection of Baltimore-based entrepreneurs through a vibrant, "home-shopping" style livestream format. Now expanded beyond a Baltimore-focused lens, the show highlights businesses and innovators from across the entire state while continuing to showcase the popular "Buy Baltimore by Baltimore Corner," featuring local influencers and thought leaders who advocate for supporting homegrown brands.

To its success, participating businesses have used their Marketplace media content to boost visibility and traffic on their websites, storefronts, in their annual reports, and as compelling tools to secure funding to fuel their growth. With the support of Maryland civic leaders and

community advocates, Root Branch Marketplace not only elevates local businesses but also educates them on how to scale and increase their impact statewide by doing business with the state across county lines.

This year's production features an expanded format of 30 dynamic segments, spotlighting 20 standout small businesses, four innovative small business accelerator programs, five influencer voices, and a mix of county and city government civic leaders - representing seven counties plus our state's capital in Annapolis with our State Comptroller Brooke Lierman.

Created and executive produced by the visionary "Media Mogul" Dr. Vonnya Pettigrew, Root Branch Marketplace, underscores the foundational role small businesses play in strengthening Maryland's economy and building vibrant communities. Dr. Pettigrew returns as host alongside co-hosts Kenzie Burn, Troi Beckett, and Catonya Lester, with influencer guest hosts Marsha Jews, Chris Riehl and Simone Phillips, bringing added energy to the celebration.

A Platform for Innovation and Collaboration

This special edition is a representation of seven of the twenty-four counties that make up the state of Maryland, featuring:

- **20 Local Small Businesses like:** Angel Park Boutique, B-LUXE, Cory McCray, Detail Wizards, DMV Computer Man, Emmanuella's Cuisine, Hiatus Cheesecake, KatWalk Boutique, Kevin Shird, Kimberly Services, LLC, LaGrande Caviar, Lux Cleaning, Miss



Root Branch Press Coffee and Words For Boards by Kim Strassner

Corporate America, Mova Nature Juice, MS Scents, Natasha's Just Brittle/ B'More Made With Pride, Rent A Tour, Root Branch Press Coffee, Serengeti Building Group (SBG) and Words with Boards sharing their stories, products, and community impact.

- **4 Small Business Accelerator Partnerships** - Greater Baltimore Urban League (GBUL) Tershea "Shea" Rice, Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) Mark Anthony Thomas, Innovation Works & Ignite Capital A. Jay Nwachu, and Hello Harford County Jodi Marschhauser.

- **5 Media Influencers**, including entertainment mogul Sean Banks and media personality Marsha Jews, comedian Larry Lancaster, food blogger Simone Philips, and MMA champion A.T. McCowin.

- **9 Government and Civic Leaders:** Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman, Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy, Baltimore City Council President Zeke Cohen, Baltimore County Councilman Julian Jones, Baltimore



RBMG Host Dr. Vonnya Pettigrew with Marc Anthony Thomas Greater Baltimore Committee

County Delegate N. Scott Phillips, Anne Arundel County Delegate Mike Rogers, Howard County Executive Calvin Call, and Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich.

- **7 Counties:** Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Harford County, Howard County, Montgomery County and Prince Georges County.

- **Special Guest Appearance and Message** from Jennifer Grondahl, SVP of Communications, Baltimore Orioles.

Desperate Housewives of The Bible: The Old, The Bold & The Beautiful!

*Gospel Production Returns by Popular Demand Dec. 6th & Dec. 7th
Featuring Actress/Gospel Singer D'Atra Hicks*

Baltimore, MD—The highly successful Gospel stage play production Ursula V. Battle's "Desperate Housewives of The Bible: The Old, The Bold, & The Beautiful," returns by popular demand! The show will be performed on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025 and Sun., Dec. 7, 2025 at Fresh Start Church & Family Center, 120 N. Langley Rd., Glen Burnie, Maryland. Bishop Craig Coates is the pastor.

The show's headliner D'Atra Hicks is back for the return engagement! The actress/singer has performed in several Tyler Perry plays including "Madea's Family Reunion," and "What's Done in the Dark." Hicks is also known for starring in the Broadway production "Mama I Want To Sing" and her appearances on "Divorce Court."

The play is based around a groundbreaking, Bible-based, talk show opera titled "Desperate Housewives of The Bible: The Old, The Bold and The Beautiful!" The modern-day Biblical depiction features some of the most well-known women of The Old Testament! The show's August premiere in Baltimore drew sold-out audiences and rave reviews.

Letricia Loftin Founder and Executive Director of Little Miss Black | Miss Black Teen USofA Pageant, stars in the production as the show's over-the-top, extra.com, fashionista "Wendy Wiggins." These *desperate housewives* have all come on the show to tell Wendy their side of the story during a Black-tie Reunion that brings these ladies back together for the first time since their *sinful* departures!

Hicks portrays "Leah Jacob," who comprises part of a high-stakes, drama-filled love triangle with her sister "Rachel Jacob," played by gospel singer Kay Jefferson. The musical production also features actresses Dravon James ("The Wire") as "Lady



D'Atra Hicks shown performing in the August production, returns for the encore performances. The actress/singer has also performed in several Tyler Perry stage plays and starred in Mama I Want To Sing.



Dravon James whose credits include "The Wire" portrays 'Jezebel'.

Photos by Brian Stephenson

Jezebel;" R&B singer Randy "Fruity" Roberts ("Watch Me Work") who portrays "Bishop Ahab" and actress Tanya Brown-Iyesi as "Hagar Hawkins." FSC's music department will perform as the show's musical group PRAISE!

The production is written and produced by playwright, Baltimore Times Staff Writer, and Baltimore native Ursula V. Battle ("The Teachers' Lounge"; "DisChord in The Choir"; "Pitch Please!"; "Serenity House: From Addiction to Deliverance", and "The Homegoing Service For A Man Named Jesus"). The show's Theatrical Director is New York native Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch ("Steel Magnolias," "Dischord in The Choir"; "Pitch Please!", "The Teachers' Lounge", and "The Wiz"). Renowned musician Howard "Buddy" Lakins is the Musical Director.

Performance information:
Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025, 2 p.m. - General Seating \$30; \$50 VIP Seating (Preferred Seating, Photo Ops with Headliner and Playwright, and Autographed Showbill). Sunday, Dec. 7, 2025, 4 p.m. - General Seating \$30; \$50 VIP Seating. There is also a Dinner Theater Show Experience option being offered for the Sunday, Dec. 7, 2025. The buffet dinner will be served from 2 pm to 3:30 pm. The performance starts promptly at 4 p.m.

The event is inclusive of vendors, and door prizes. Free parking is available. Please Note: Rated PG-13! This show brings the



D'Atra Hicks (Leah), Letricia Loftin (Wendy Wiggins) and Travina Harrison (Rachel).



Karen Simmons Bethea (Stella Potiphar) and Letricia Loftin.

drama, the laughs, and a few grown-up truths! It is not suitable for children ages 13 and under. Parental discretion advised!

For more information or to purchase tickets visit <https://freshstartchurchinc.subspla.sh/r2pz939> or call FSC at (410) 766-0217 or Battle Stage Plays at (443) 531-4787.

NOVEMBER 29, 2025
10AM - 3PM

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Why Not Us? — A Baltimore Story of Love and Caregiving

Baltimore has always been a place where stories breathe—where generations pour truth into rowhomes, church pews, corner bars, and quiet kitchen tables. Two local authors, known collectively as Naomi + Rivers, have captured that spirit in their new novel, *Why Not Us?*—a moving story of love, caregiving, and the ways we build family beyond blood.

The wife writing team—both retired U.S. military veterans—were inspired by personal experiences when several family members and friends faced cancer diagnoses. Each journey was different, yet, shared a familiar thread: caregiving can be both a powerful expression of love and an emotional burden.

“We wanted to honor a narrative that often goes unseen—especially in LGBTQIA+ stories,” the authors shared. “Chosen family matters. Sometimes the people who show up for you aren’t related to you at all.”

In *Why Not Us?*, readers meet Jasmine, whose best friend Leslie is diagnosed with cancer. Jasmine steps into the chaos of hospital visits, treatment schedules, and caring for Leslie’s nine-year-old daughter, Portia. Meanwhile, Jasmine’s partner T struggles to cope as their relationship is overshadowed by the emotional toll of caregiving.

The novel examines a question many readers will recognize:

A Veteran Partnership—On and Off the Page

Naomi and Rivers both served in the U.S. military—Naomi as an Army logistics officer and Rivers as a Navy Civil Engineer Corps officer. The discipline, adaptability, and teamwork they developed during service shape how they write together and how their characters navigate life’s hardest moments.

Their debut novel, “THIS: A Simple,

Complex Love Story,” was written over the course of 20 years, chapter by chapter, while they were deployed in different parts of the world. Writing became a tether—a way to stay connected.

For their second novel, they refined their process. Naomi drafts consistently several days a week; Rivers serves as the internal developmental editor, adding depth, rhythm, and emotional sharpness to the story.

“Communication, kindness, and patience—that’s what keeps our partnership strong,” they said. “It’s also what keeps Jasmine and T going.”

Baltimore as Character, Not Just Setting

The City of Baltimore is the heartbeat of “*Why Not Us?*”.

Naomi grew up here, and Rivers brings an architectural eye to the details—patterns in neighborhoods, the colors and textures of the city, the sounds that announce where you are without needing a street sign.

“Baltimore is a character in this book,” they said. “We wanted to show the Baltimore that doesn’t make the national headlines—the Baltimore full of pride, history, and resilience.”

Readers will recognize real neighborhoods—from the quiet beauty of Ashburton to the charming streets of Mt.



Naomi Rivers writing Duo
ArtphotoFashion Photography

Washington—and the everyday places where Baltimoreans live, work, worship, and fall in love

Caregiving as Love Language

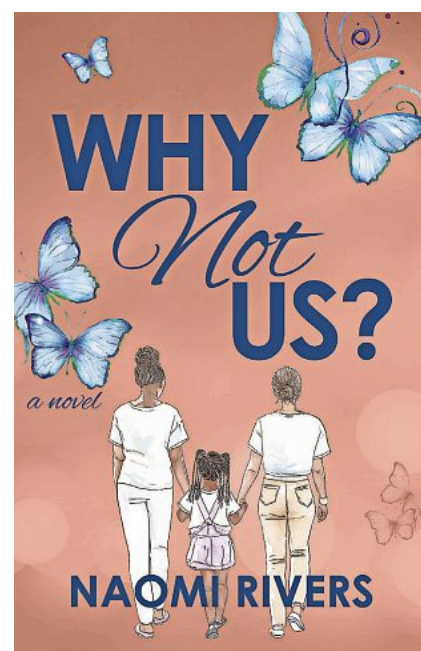
At its core, *Why Not Us?* explores caregiving—the emotional labor that often falls to women and daughters, sometimes unexpectedly.

The book highlights both the beauty and strain of caregiving: the deep connection formed through sacrifice, and the emotional toll when caring for one person means you have less to give another.

“Providing care connects us as humans,” the authors said. “It challenges us, reshapes us, and reveals what love really looks like.”

A Message of Hope

With a compelling mix of romance, heartbreak, and second chances, Naomi + Rivers want readers to walk away with one feeling:



Hope

“We want readers to celebrate their chosen family—the people who show up, no matter what.”

About the Authors

Naomi + Rivers write lesbian romance and women’s fiction. They live on the East Coast with their two rescue dogs. Their work appears in *I Heart SapphFic’s Favorite Scenes from Favorite Authors* and *From a Black Perspective: The Homeland* (Rainbow Room Publishing).

Why Not Us? – Now Available

Purchase the book online:

- Amazon
- Barnes & Noble
- Bookshop.org
- Books2Read (all other options)

Demetrias “Dewey” E. Waters: A Young Hero Gone Too Soon but Not Forgotten

By Andrea Blackstone

One Friday afternoon, Kathleen Baldwin recounted memories about her willful, yet, comedic grandson, Demetrias “Dewey” E. Waters. He was born on November 26, 2005. His life ended on April 20, 2024, due to a car accident.

“He suffered from a catastrophic head injury and was declared brain dead two days after the accident,” said Baldwin, a Towson resident.

Waters was raised by his grandparents, who were his legal guardians, along with two of his siblings. Edward Baldwin, Kathleen’s husband, also received the crushing news that their grandson had been driving on the inner loop of the beltway with three friends in the car, when their excursion went terribly wrong. He was driving at a very high rate of speed and attempted to avoid the 795 exit that he did not want to take.

“The car flipped. He was ejected because he was not wearing his seatbelt and he flew into another oncoming car,” Waters’ grandmother explained.

Other passengers who had also been ejected from the vehicle sustained non-life-threatening injuries. Eighteen-year-old Waters was the most critically injured. Before the accident, he had been working at an organic grocery store, searching for another job.

“He was really struggling. COVID really seemed to have had quite an effect on him, but he had definite goals,” said Kathleen. “His plan was to enroll at CCBC (Community College of Baltimore County) to get his GED. He had to wait until he was 18 to be able to do that.”

He was very athletic and was on a soccer team for years. In a turn of events, state policemen showed up at the Baldwin’s door. Waters was identified after a picture was shown to his grandmother. He was still alive at the



(L-r) Emily Megnin holding Marshall Baldwin; Dan Baldwin with David Baldwin (on his shoulders; Molly Baldwin-Abbott with Paige Abbott in front; Kevin Abbott holding Ada Abbott; A’moni Waters (in front of Kevin); Raymond Waters, grandparents Edward and Kathy Baldwin, Emily Baldwin (Dewey, A’moni and Raymond’s mother) and Demetrias (“Dewey”) E. Waters. Photos courtesy of the Baldwin Family

Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems in Shock Trauma. Waters was already in neurosurgery when his family arrived. A doctor and a nurse from the trauma resuscitation unit spoke to his grandmother.

“It was pretty obvious that his head injury was catastrophic,” Kathleen explained.

Waters’ surgery did not have the outcome everyone had hoped it would. Approximately 22 hours after the accident, his brain was herniating, which led to complete brain death.

Kathleen added, “We had to wait another 24 hours for that to be confirmed with testing that there was no longer circulation to his brain, but as soon as they confirmed it, that’s when we turned and they had the discussion [about organ donation]. His mother was included. We sat down with neuro-trauma ICU staff and discussed options.”

Waters’ family decided that organ donation was an option. Infinite Legacy—the nonprofit organ procurement organization (OPO) that facilitates organ, eye and tissue donation in Maryland and the Metro DC area was contacted. Then,

Kathleen and her family discovered a surprise. “They found him [“Dewey”] in the database. He had checked off the box for organ donation when he got his license. The day he got his license, he was filling out the forms, and asked my husband, his grandfather, what does this organ donation box mean? My husband explained it to him. And Dewey said, ‘Well, what should I do? Should I check it?’ And my husband said to him, ‘I can’t make that decision for you. You have to make that decision all on your own.’”

Although the family was distraught over Waters, they knew that several of his organs would be able to be donated to other people.

“That’s the only thing that brings you any source of comfort,” said Kathleen.

She added, “One recipient received the pancreas, and a kidney, which means that person probably had diabetes. That would be a cure for their diabetes. They called me and told me his heart went to a 21-year-old boy. Someone received his liver. The last individual received the other kidney.”

Baldwin advises people who have not checked the box to donate their organs



L-r: Demetrias (“Dewey”) E. Waters, Emily Baldwin holding Raymond Waters, and A’moni Waters. Demetrias was the driver in a car accident in 2024. He suffered from a catastrophic head injury and was declared brain dead two days after the accident. The young hero’s kidneys, pancreas, heart and liver were donated to organ recipients in need.

to become more educated about it and read stories written by people who have received transplants.

Sixteen-year-old A’moni Waters, the Baldwins’ granddaughter and Demetrias Waters’ sister, reflected on her brother and the impact he made to give the gift of life to other individuals in need.

“Whenever I was struggling with anything, my brother always knew what to do,” A’moni stated. “He could make the worst days feel a little easier without even trying.”

Although losing her big brother has been the hardest thing she has ever endured, knowing that he saved and helped others brings her a kind of peace that she did not expect.

A’moni added, “It feels like Dewey is still out there doing good.”

Please visit Donate Life Maryland via <https://www.donatelifemaryland.org> to learn more about organ, eye and tissue donation.



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