

Pi Omega Chapter Recognized at 68th Second District Conference



First Row (L-R): J. Kendall Smalls, Second District First Vice District Representative; Sherman Charles, 35th Second District Representative; Milton Harrison, 34th Second District Representative Second Row (4th from left): Vice Basileus Ron Williams holding Pi Omega's Second District Large Social Action Large Chapter of the Year; Basileus C. Donald Bowser with his Second District Basileus of the Year Award; Eric Brown with his Second District Superior Service Award at the 68th Second District Conference April 28 - May 1, 2016 at the North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Bethesda, Maryland. (Story on page 8)

Photo Credit: Lamonte Tyler

VA Program Helps Stroke Sufferers Recover

By Stacy M. Brown

Recovering from a major stroke is no easy task. However, connecting with a rehabilitation facility can make that fight a lot less daunting.

When Baltimore Times columnist Phinnesse Demps called the VA Maryland Health Care System, he discovered a committed team and several programs that have helped him on his road to recovery.

"I'm glad that I found them, that was really important," said Demps, who suffered a life-threatening stroke in July 2015.

Demps' initial call was answered by Joan McMorris-Marrow, a recruiter for the VA Maryland Exercise and Robotics Center of Excellence (MERCE). The program designs and tests new rehab therapies to improve physical function, fitness, and cardiovascular health for Veterans and all Americans with neurological disability conditions.

"I explained the program to him and he was very impressed," said McMorris-Marrow who then forwarded Demps to Kate Smith, a study exercise coordinator.

"We asked about medical history and date of stroke to make sure he'd be eligible," Smith said. "I told him all about the study in terms of testing and details and exercise training program to give him a chance to ask questions and schedule an appointment. That's what we do with all of our patients."

The objective of the VA's MERCE program is to develop novel exercise and robotics therapies to improve lower and upper extremity motor function, cardiovascular fitness, and health for those

with stroke and other neurological disability conditions.

Demps says his motor skills, particularly his ability to walk, has vastly improved.

The MERCE program also performs mechanistic studies of brain plasticity, muscle biology, cardiovascular, and mental health. Still, the main objective of the program is to foster community outreach to improve the quality of life for stroke victims.

"We can accommodate most people," said Fred Ivey, the co-principal investigator for the lower extremity strength training. "They have to be willing to undergo a screening process and have an open mind because we have diverse types of intervention; and each has its own merit."

Alice Ryan, a co-principal with Ivey, says it's important that all stroke survivors realize that there's hope.

"No matter how far in the past you've had a stroke, we take people six months or even many years after," Ryan said. "There is always time and there is always some help for people to gain more independence. Our studies are to aid someone who had a stroke and to give them a better quality of life."

Currently, for Demps, rehab focuses on strengthening his lower extremity. "When I spoke with him, I could tell he was really going to be an asset to us because he has such a positive outlook on life," McMorris-Marrow said. "He told me that he went to the barbershop not far from where he works. He called a cab but the cab took so long so he walked and I thought that was awesome."



Phinnesse Demps suffered a major stroke in July 2015. Demps is a now participant in the VA Maryland Exercise and Robotics Center of Excellence (MERCE) program, which is open to all. He has returned to work. Photo by Dena Wane

Smith added that Demps remains motivated in his recovery.

"He always comes in with a smile on his face and pushes himself through the strength-training bouts which are challenging," she said, noting that his rehab consists of gym exercises for 30 minutes, three days each week.

"In short, Demps is a dream patient because he has the drive and attitude. This is much about socializing as anything and we shouldn't underestimate

the importance of socializing, being around people who have high expectations because a lot of time people don't challenge folks as much as they should," Ivey said. "If you have the right personality type, which most people do that we encounter, it can really light a fire in people psychologically that can change their outlook and can drive them."

It's also important to note that the program is open to all, not just veterans, according to Ivey.

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Guest Editorials/Commentary

Baltimore One Year Later, Still Needs Rebuilding

By Mark Coles

One year after the civil unrest that rocked the city of Baltimore to its foundations, there is one question that remains unanswered: What steps are being taken to address the root economic problems that were, and continue to be, the kindling that fuels the types of infernos that overtook the city last year?

Specifically, what steps are being taken by both city and state officials to facilitate the creation of jobs and economic opportunity for Baltimore's historically disadvantaged communities?

Where, for example, are the discussions about leveraging the proposed \$600 million Convention Center expansion (or the Sparrows Point development project, for that matter) with a formalized program of "local hire" provisions; apprenticeship-readiness programs; and formal skilled craft apprenticeship education—the kind of instruction that provides not just a "job," but the training and skill sets that lead to a life-long career?

Across the United States, forward-thinking civic leaders are adopting such innovative approaches to leverage both public and private construction dollars for the expressed purpose of lifting the most needy and most underserved citizens out from under the strains of poverty and public assistance.

By partnering with businesses and industries, as well as working with local building trades unions and community organizations such as the National Urban League and YouthBuild, city leaders here in Baltimore could emulate a business model that has proven wildly successful in cities like Boston; New York; Cleveland; Detroit; Los Angeles; and Seattle, as well as more rural areas like Augusta, Georgia and Birmingham, Alabama.

Today across America, over 100 skilled craft "apprenticeship-readiness" programs are operating in joint fashion between trade unions, local government, private enterprise, and local community groups. Thanks to these programs, thousands of candidates from diverse backgrounds are gaining the type of knowledge that will not only prepare them for entry into a formal, skilled craft apprenticeship training program, but also give them the best chance for success.

An apprenticeship-readiness program for the Baltimore area is exactly what the city needs. But, it can only happen if civic leaders commit to leveraging future construction investments with this community-based business model in mind.

The grim alternative is to continue buying into the discredited notion that the city benefits when it invests its construction dollars in a "race to the bottom" approach predicated upon a low-wage, low-skill, easily exploited, out-of-town workforce. Baltimore can't afford for its participating contractors to persistently reject investing in skilled craft career training and education for city residents.

Baltimore has historically been defined by the strength and character of its neighborhoods and its people but last year's events demonstrated the frailty of that strength.

Absent any new approaches and forward thinking on the part of city and state leaders, that strength will continue to erode.

Mark Coles is the Executive Director of the Community Hub for Opportunities in Construction Employment (C.H.O.I.C.E.).

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Community Affairs

AACC Hosts Conference on Crime, Violence and Mental Illness

Arnold, Md.— Every day, the news carries another story about violence entering ordinary people's lives. Reports also show a divide between police and the community, concern for violent uprisings in response to that division, questions about the role played by drugs and mental health in that violence and queries of the part terrorism and terrorists play in violence — all countered by a desire by the public and government officials on how to resolve it.

To aid in understanding and countering these violent outbreaks and to help all become a part of the solution, Anne Arundel Community College has assembled experts who will focus on "Predicting, Preventing and Responding to Violence" in the second annual daylong conference on Crime, Violence and Mental Illness on June 2, on the Arnold campus, 101 College Parkway.

"There is a need to understand, as more agree that we will never effectively counter that which we do not fully un-

derstand," said Tyrone Powers, director of the Homeland Security and Criminal Justice Institute at AACC, one of the sponsors of the conference.

Criminal justice and homeland security professionals, along with mental health practitioners, are working to thwart the onset and impact of violence. This conference will explore predicting factors that lead to early detection of violent offenders, offer best practices in reducing violent crimes and provide intervention strategies from law enforcement, corrections, judiciary and homeland security agents.

Giving keynote addresses will be Michael Blow, retired deputy chief of police from Prince George's County, and Baltimore City Police Commissioner Kevin Davis.

Partners in sponsoring the conference are the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and AACC's School of Health Sciences. The \$95 cost includes two keynote speeches, all sessions, continental breakfast, lunch and afternoon reception.

For more information or to register, visit: <http://www.aacc.edu/conferences/mentalillness.cfm>.

Those Who Know Congress Best Are Shaking Their Heads

By Lee H. Hamilton

I had the good fortune last week to spend some time in Washington, D.C. with about a dozen former members of Congress. As you would expect, we got to talking about the current Congress. Very quickly it turned out that the same question was troubling all of us: Why is it held in such low public esteem?

We represented both parties and a variety of eras, and had a range of experience under our belts. But we all found ourselves chagrined by what we've been witnessing. You have to understand that most former members of Congress believe deeply in the value of the institution for American representative government. We might take opposite sides of particular policy debates, but on one point we all agree: we want the institution itself to succeed and thrive. These days, it's doing neither.

For starters, we were hard-pressed to come up with any real accomplishments for this Congress. It did pass a revision to No Child Left Behind, and a controversial expansion of cyber-surveillance

capabilities — which it slipped into a must-pass budget bill. It also took the entirely uncontroversial step of broadening sanctions on North Korea. But that's pretty much it.

In the country at large, people are fretting about control of our borders, stagnant wages, college expenses, the cost of health care, the opioid addiction crisis, the spread of ISIS, the strengthening effects of climate change. The adminis-

tration is trying to keep the Zika virus from gaining a foothold in this country, and congressional inaction has already caused Puerto Rico to default on one set of obligations, with a much bigger default looming — and doomed airline passengers to longer and longer waits as the TSA struggles. Yet on Capitol Hill, no one seems particularly concerned. Instead, its members left town to campaign.

Worse, members show little interest in

and Secondary Education Act, the Water Quality Act, and setting up the Departments of Transportation and of Housing and Urban Development. Not every year was like that, but the contrast is inescapable. Among the group of people I was with last week — people who watch Congress closely — there was unanimity: this will go out as one of the least productive years in congressional history.

party and inclined to blame it for Capitol Hill's ailments. As an institution, it seems incapable of ridding itself of the bad habits it's gotten into: the reliance on omnibus bills and continuing resolutions; timidity in the face of presidential power; a marked reluctance to use the levers of congressional authority — especially control of the federal budget — to prod or check executive action. Yet none of us believe this is irreversible. We are all convinced that strong leadership in Congress could make an immense difference. In the past, effective legislators on both sides of the aisle — as committee chairs and as caucus leaders — have left behind them a legacy of great accomplishment. Democrat Emanuel Celler of New York and Republican William McCullough of Ohio joined forces to craft the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Democrat Wilbur Mills of Arkansas and Republican John Byrnes of Wisconsin together helped shape Medicare.

I won't waste your time with a list of consummate legislators who were able to get things done. The point is simple: it may be a different time and legislative environment from 50 years ago, but strong leadership can make Congress work. On that, my former colleagues and I, Republicans and Democrats, found ourselves in full agreement.

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar, IU School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice, IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

In the country at large, people are fretting about control of our borders, stagnant wages, college expenses, the cost of health care, the opioid addiction crisis, the spread of ISIS, the strengthening effects of climate change. The administration is trying to keep the Zika virus from gaining a foothold in this country, and congressional inaction has already caused Puerto Rico to default on one set of obligations, with a much bigger default looming — and doomed airline passengers to longer and longer waits as the TSA struggles. Yet on Capitol Hill, no one seems particularly concerned. Instead, its members left town to campaign.

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This may be unfair, but I can't help but think about my first year in Congress. We enacted 810 bills, including the passage of Medicare and Medicaid, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Elementary

making Congress more productive. Our little group all remembered times when we or our colleagues pushed reform efforts to make the institution work better — and were struck that current members aren't doing so. Most Americans belong to some group or another that's trying to accomplish change for the better and improve itself at the same time. Why would Congress be an outlier? But it is.

Some of the observations we shared last week are old hat. Congress is excessively partisan, with too many of its members highly distrustful of the other

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Comcast's Keesha Boyd Helps Provide New TV Experience for Blacks

By Stacy M. Brown

Keesha Boyd posted a photo of herself posing in front of her family's television on her company's website. She was just three-years-old when the photo was taken.

Boyd is grown up now and living a dream. Today, she is the executive director of multicultural products and consumer services at the cable giant, Comcast.

"I went from posing in front of the TV to having a job that literally impacts what people get to see on TV," she said.

One of her tasks is to define Comcast's African-American business strategy and find content that reflects the black community.

"My responsibility is for driving our overall business strategy for African-American consumers and to look for ways to enhance our offering in ways that better speak to this community and align with its consumption habits," Boyd said.

Comcast's research shows that African-American viewers are tech savvy media consumers and they watch more television than anyone.

"African-Americans are a very powerful viewing segment. Take the show 'Empire' as an example. When it premiered it broke all sorts of records week after week and it was because a large segment of the community was viewing the program," Boyd said. "Because of that and shows like 'Scandal' and 'How to get away with Murder' and 'Black-ish,' you're starting to see more African-Americans in lead roles on television, and consumption for these shows are at an all-time high."

While African-American viewers watch a variety of general market content there is a strong preference for television shows featuring black or multi-cultural casts, according to a 2013 Nielsen African-American Consumer report.

Season one of "Empire" broke viewing records on Xfinity platforms, topping the Xfinity On Demand Top 20 list. A record-breaking one million viewed the show On Demand in the first week and the season finale drew nearly one million views On Demand within the first three days, another record, according to Nielsen.



Keesha Boyd, executive director of multicultural products and consumer services for Comcast. Boyd is responsible for addressing Comcast's overall business strategy with regards to African American consumers and to look for ways to enhance the company's offering in ways that appeal to the black community.

Courtesy Photo/Comcast

Last month, Boyd's vision for giving black viewers a black-centric TV service—about 2,000 hours of curated TV shows and movies with black casts, directors and themes was launched on Comcast's Xfinity on-demand platform.

"There are times you want to watch general-market content, and then there are times that you want to browse or dig deeply into content that speaks to black identity," she said. "So we are making it easier to access that content."

Making it easier is the new X1 voice-controlled remote and the "Black Film & TV" destination Comcast has created on Xfinity. With one click, individuals can be taken to popular movie offerings that list shows from leading black actors and directors.

Comcast has curated TV shows like "Scandal," "Rosewood," and "Empire." Boyd is also working on a voice-command pattern where the user would only

have to speak terms like "films by black directors" or "shows with black leading actors," automatically taking them to those options.

"This community wants choice just like any other. We don't just watch black content, we watch general market content as well," Boyd said. "When you look at what's being consumed in the black film and TV categories, it's collections like our comedy, documentary, faith and family. From a TV perspective, we see a lot of heavy consumption of shows with a full black cast because as a viewing community, you like to follow your favorite actors and actresses."

Comcast's Black TV & Film folder on Xfinity on Demand currently offers more than 2,000 hours of programming curated by its team of experts who said they're constantly adding and editing to provide the best of black entertainment with nearly 800 movies and more than 70 TV series.

The vast programming is probably enough to take Boyd back to when she was growing up.

As Boyd wrote, "Back in the day, my TV consumption consisted of 'Sesame Street,' 'The Muppet Show,' and the occasional 'School House Rock.'"

"But soon came the time when I started to become aware of what I looked like—brown skin and fluffy hair—and I started to see past the puppets and look at the people.

"The more aware I was of myself, the more I looked for 'me' on TV. I remember noticing how Gordon and Susan on 'Sesame Street' looked like they could be in my family," she said. "And I distinctly remember my eyes brightening up when I saw the little brown skinned cartoon boy in the 'School House Rock'.... He was brown like me. I noticed. And it was awesome."

A photograph of a man and a young boy hugging on a couch. The man is on the left, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, and the boy is on the right, wearing a grey and orange striped shirt. They are both looking down and smiling. The couch is a textured, light-colored fabric. In the top right corner, there is a red square with the text "WELLS FARGO" in yellow.

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Pi Omega Chapter Recognized at 68th Second District Conference

Bethesda, Md.— At the 68th Second District Conference, held at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Bethesda, Maryland from April 28 – May 1, 2016, Pi Omega Chapter, Graduate Chapter of Baltimore, received a chapter award and several members received individual recognition.

For the third consecutive year, Pi Omega Chapter was recognized as the Second District's Social Action Chapter of the Year (Large Chapter, 50+ Members), for 2014-2015. The Social Action Chapter of the Year is presented to the chapter that best implements the Fraternity's mandated programs and provides significant community based programs to the local area and beyond. Pi Omega competed with entries from throughout the Second District of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. The Second District of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity covers the states of New York; New Jersey; Pennsylvania; Delaware; and Maryland. Pi Omega has won this award at the district level four times.

C. Donald Bowser, Basileus (president) of Pi Omega Chapter, received the Graduate Chapter Basileus of the Year award. The District Representative presents this award to the chapter Basileus who did an outstanding job leading his chapter to meeting fraternity mandates and servicing the community. Bro. Bowser's leadership of the chapter activities during and after the riots following the death of Freddie Gray in April of 2015, and his oversight



Winners of the 2016 Second District Talent Hunt (left to right) First Place Vocal Classical, Katyrh Davenport; John Berkley, Pi Omega Chapter Talent Hunt Chairman; and First Place Visual Arts, Kaila Hammond. Photo by Diana Williams

of the energy retrofit of the Pi Omega Fraternity Center in West Baltimore were mentioned during the presentation. Bro. Bowser kept the chapter focused on working to assist the community, while also maintaining a high level of performance from the chapter members.

Eric M. Brown received the Second District Superior Service Award. The Superior Service Award is given to a Brother who has demonstrated outstanding contributions and sustained concern for the activities of his Chapter, his District and to the Fraternity.

Zanes E. Cypress, Jr., was the guest speaker for the Second District Life Membership Luncheon on Friday April 29, 2016. Bro. Cypress was recognized for his long time service as the Second

in the Competition. Davenport was awarded first place for her rendition of "Deep River." Kalia Hammond from The Baltimore School for the Arts, who represented Pi Omega in the Visual Arts Category was awarded first place for her series of drawings and paintings.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity is a historically black fraternal organization that provides and promotes programs of social, cultural and economic uplift to the communities we serve. For over a century, the organization has recruited, trained and deployed men of color for leadership roles in service to humanity.

Pi Omega is a graduate chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Pi Omega Chapter has been instrumental in sponsoring programs that foster achievement; scholarship; community action; and the search for talent. For over 90 years, Pi Omega has contributed to various organizations, programs and schools, which serve as valuable resources to the Baltimore community and continues to grow and serve the community in the name of manhood, scholarship, perseverance and uplift.

District Director of Public Relations, and his support of the Omega Psi Phi Life Membership Foundation.

The Second District Talent Hunt Competition was conducted at the Thomas S. Wootton High School in Rockville, Maryland. Katyrh Davenport, from Catonsville High School, represented Pi Omega in the Vocal Classical Category

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Fourth Annual African American Children's Book Fair

Dive into the world of kids' literature focused on African Americans and people of other ethnicities on Saturday, May 14 at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in downtown Baltimore. Enjoy author readings, illustration workshops, live performances, and craft activities. Purchase hard-to-find titles in the Book Village. Miss Black Maryland USA 2016, Ashlee Thomas, will be one of the celebrity readers.

Participating Maryland authors and illustrators include:

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12-year old Ali Da Costa Jerdine Nolen
Shadra Strickland
Carole Boston-Weatherford
Family Sekou Afrika
Tiffany Alexander
Rebecca Bishop
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A free children's book per family will be distributed while supplies last.

This free event goes from 12 p.m.-4 p.m.

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For more information visit lewismuseum.org. To RSVP please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/4th-annual-african-american-childrens-book-fair-registration>.

New Coppin State President Targets Enrollment

By Stacy M. Brown

Maria Thompson, Ph.D., acknowledges a poorly kept secret: Coppin State University has had its share of enrollment problems. Total enrollment was 3,133 with 2,684 undergrads enrolled out of 4,372 undergraduate applicants— 43 percent of applicants were admitted but just 16 percent of those actually enrolled, according to campustours.com.

However, that's not a trend specific to Coppin, it's a national problem and one that Thompson has prioritized at the Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

"Turning around the enrollment situation is the immediate goal," said Maria Thompson, who was named the first female president at Coppin last year. Unsurprisingly, she does have a concrete plan to accomplish her mission.

"There are two components. One is making sure that enough new students are attracted to your campus. The second is, once you have enrolled students, make sure that they attain to graduation," she said. "We've already devised a plan to address those two components of enrollment."

Thompson arrived at Coppin from the State University of New York at Oneonta where she served as provost and vice president of academic affairs. Prior to that, she worked for 13 years at Tennessee State University, another HBCU, where she developed a plan that expanded the school's externally funded projects program which helped to boost the budget to well over \$45 million.

Thompson oversaw institutional accreditation, curricular planning and the career development of more than 500 university educators at Oneonta, and she initiated the first academic master plan, which led to the restructuring of the division of academic affairs at the SUNY School.

She becomes the first female president at Coppin in its more than 115-year history.



Maria Thompson, Ph.D. is the first female president at Coppin State University in its 115-year history
Courtesy Photo/ CSU

"I'm having a great time and I'm enjoying working with the faculty, staff and students here. It's a really good community," Thompson said.

Her accomplishments are a reflection of her upbringing, hard work and the trailblazers who made her path possible, Thompson said, noting that she's an HBCU alum, as were her parents.

"I do realize that some of the accomplishments in my career were only made possible by our namesake, Fanny Jackson Coppin, who was a pioneer for women and African-Americans and so I read her writings often," Thompson said.

Born a slave in Washington, D.C. in 1837, Fanny Jackson Coppin eventually was bought out of slavery and attended Rhode Island State Normal School and then Oberlin College, becoming the first black individual chosen to be a pupil-teacher. She became a lifelong advocate of higher education for women.

"She made it possible for people like me to do what I've been able to and to accomplish what I have," Thompson said.

Thompson said it's unimaginable for her to head any school that's not an HBCU. "You have to give your whole life and believe with every fiber the cause of the HBCU," she said. "After seeing what HBCU's have done for African-Americans, I cannot imagine being a college president anywhere else."

Coppin State's history is steeped in graduating students who've gone on to become nurses, teachers and top-flight professionals in various fields. The university has 33 majors and 12 graduate degree programs with courses in science, engineering, mathematics, business, nursing and teaching.

When asked about a typical day, Thompson says there aren't any. "It can range from— like my day on [Wednesday]— I start with a breakfast meeting, the Mission Investors Conference, where I'm serving on a panel with other presidents in the city," she said. "By the end of the day, I'm in a meeting with one of the representatives from our accrediting body and I could easily on any day go into an academic department for a program, a pinning ceremony or an athlete banquet. I was in Annapolis just about every day to speak with legislators there about all of the wonderful things at Coppin State."

STEM education is also critical and Coppin recently opened a new Science and Technology Center that will enable access to cutting edge, high-performance sciences and technology education that allows for a wide range of teaching, learning and research activity.

"It's vitally important for Coppin to be involved in promoting STEM and STEM careers and there is no other science university in West Baltimore," she said. "Others specialize in more or less social sciences and we have too, but now we have the new center. There's also not enough African-American women in the STEM fields and it's important that we give our students in our community an opportunity to study in the STEM field."

Auditions To Be Held June 4, 2016

for Ursula V. Battle's "MY BIG PHAT GHETTO FABULE\$\$ WEDDING"

Baltimore— Have you ever dreamed of being in a Ghetto Wedding? Well here's your chance! Auditions will be held June 4, 2016 for Ursula V. Battle's My Big Phat Ghetto FABULE\$\$ Wedding in Turner Auditorium, located in the Johns Hopkins Hospital Ross Research Building, 720 Rutland Avenue in Baltimore from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., and are by appointment only.

Actors, singers, musicians, dancers and other performers between the ages of six and 80 are being sought. If you enjoy working behind the scenes, we are also looking for stage crew, and administrative (secretaries) volunteers.

Bring a performance resume and a headshot if you have them. Be prepared to sing a song of your choice and to read from a script, which will be provided. Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch will be directing the production, which returns by Popular Demand and drew sell-out audiences December 2015. The presentation will be presented by Unified Voices of Johns Hopkins (UV) and Battle Stage Plays.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment call 410-955-8888.



Dr. Kimberly Brown of Amethyst Technologies is Making a Global Impact

By Ursula V. Battle

Dr. Kimberly Brown enjoyed solving puzzles in elementary school and became interested in science after going to a chemistry camp at Walbrook High School. Reflecting on her high school years, Dr. Brown recalled her love for math and science.

"I really enjoyed math, and I have always enjoyed solving problems, no matter what the area is," said Dr. Brown. "Because of my love of math, I decided to become a chemical engineer while attending Baltimore Polytechnic Institute."

Dr. Brown's natural affinity for solving problems, along with her drive, unwavering persistence, and hard work, have all added up to a highly-successful career and business. Dr. Brown is the president and CEO of Amethyst Technologies. Located at the Bwtech@UMBC Research and Technology Park, Amethyst Technologies provides quality program development and comprehensive compliance services and products to the biotechnology, pharmaceutical, health-care, food and beverage industries, as well as to the federal government.

Founded in 2006, the company's work includes providing technical assistance to fight Ebola, malaria, HIV, and other diseases. Amethyst Technologies has annual revenue of \$2 million, and a long list of impressive clients, which include Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, US Agency for International Development (USAID), Coca-Cola, US Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense, and numerous biotechnology companies.

"I started working in an organization and was the only engineer, so that created an opportunity for me to provide expertise," said Dr. Brown. She added, "Most of our clients are required to adhere to FDA regulations for drug manufacturing, research, or clinical trials. And, what we are selling is a different approach. Part of that comes from everyone in this company having a different background and forming a team to deliver services for FDA and ISO compliance."

She added, "There are no two people with the same degrees in this company. The key to our success is our team. We have engineers, physicists, technical writers, social scientists, scientists, and management personnel - the diversity in our group allows us as a small business



Dr. Kimberly Brown is the President and CEO of Amethyst Technologies. Courtesy Photo

to provide a variety of targeted quality assurance and compliance services to our clients."

Amethyst Technologies' core services include quality program development worldwide, custom quality management software, equipment calibration and validation, process optimization and validation, laboratory assessments and consulting services, and environmental monitoring system management.

"Our expertise has allowed us to provide support for different projects," said Dr. Brown. "That support includes developing thousands of standard operating procedures for labs, training in Liberia and Tanzania, stakeholder engagement to develop a cancer center in East Africa, assessing laboratories in East and West Africa for malaria and HIV programs, validating software developed by the US Army laboratories for training and management of clinical studies, and developing software to decrease the incidents of Malaria in US and Africa militaries."

She added, "We began by supporting Department of Defense laboratory programs in the US and Africa. Now we're continuing to explore opportunities overseas with additional agencies, and also have diversified into the commercial sector. We love the work that we do here at Amethyst Technologies. We are helping our clients to improve laboratory programs and compliance."

Dr. Brown explained how she started Amethyst Technologies.

"I began working for a small business called Cell Systems, Inc. when I was working on my doctorate degree," recalled Dr. Brown. "The position involved providing engineering services for Walter Reed's pilot bioproduction facility. I developed software for quality assurance programs for this vaccine production facility. It all came together using the skills I learned from my engineering studies, and my summer internships. I was able to make a difference for my employer."

She continued, "After working there for nine years, I talked to my boss and told him I was interested in starting my own business. He said 'great I am ready to retire'. I purchased the rights to the government contract, and Amethyst assumed the contract. It provided continuity for Walter Reed, and presented a wonderful opportunity for Amethyst Technologies."

The company's employees have grown from three to 15, and Amethyst may see that number reach as high as 40 before year's end.

"I focus on ensuring all our projects meet the needs of our clients," said Dr. Brown. "I also look for new opportunities. We are building four labs in West Africa, and started a new company that will provide water, pharmaceutical, and agricultural products testing."

Dr. Brown shared this advice for other aspiring entrepreneurs.

"Be focused, flexible, work hard, and be open to opportunity. My path changed tremendously when I started working for a small business. You have to be open and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves. I wanted to do research and work in a lab. I never imagined working in any other capacity. Working for a small business, provided me with a different pathway to do the things I loved."

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PRESS SERVICES

Glen Burnie expert hosts credit repair workshops

By Andrea Blackstone

Shauna Larmore, owner of SKN Credit Services, is a Glen Burnie resident who is on a mission to remind others about the benefits of having good credit. The credit repair specialist also advises clients how to improve it. Some excited clients post snippets of credit improvement testimonials on social media, while raving about results that Larmore helped them to achieve.

Larmore will offer a series of empowering workshops to teach credit restoration and provide homeownership resources in cities near and far, through The Better Credit, Better Life Tour which kicks off on May 14, 2016 in Las Vegas, Nevada and will continue in Annapolis on June 11, 2016 at the Broadneck Community Library and at the Odenton Regional Library in Odenton on June 25, 2016.

“You have a completely different quality of life once you have good credit,” Larmore said, providing an example. “And just having good credit opens up doors as far as car payments. There could be two people with the same exact car, and one person is going to end up paying thousands more because of their poor credit, so their interest rate is through the roof because they got a bad loan.”

Larmore, who launched a full service credit repair business in 2014, often provides in-person consultations to local clients and phone consultations to clients across the country. Additionally, Larmore conducts informational workshops and offers a step-by-step, do-it-yourself credit repair guide that is sold through Amazon.

Operating SKN Credit Services is now Larmore’s full-time profession. She originally became interested in credit repair when she was in need of credit restoration to qualify to buy a home and noted the prices charged by some of the large companies. Larmore remarked that the prices of SKN Credit Services are much lower and personalized plans are also provided for clients, based on their goals.

An individual’s credit score is generated from information on a credit report. It may range from 300 to 850. Larmore



Shauna Larmore is a credit repair specialist and the owner of SKN Credit Services, a Maryland based business specializing in credit repair. The Better Credit, Better Life Tour stops in Annapolis on June 11, 2016 at the Broadneck Community Library and at the Odenton Regional Library in Odenton on June 25, 2016. The credit repair and homeownership workshop classes teach how to clean up your credit and one-on-one consultation.

Courtesy Photo

says that there is nothing that she can think of that a person with a 700 credit score with all three major credit bureaus—Experian, Equifax and TransUnion—will not qualify for.

“The 700 Club is where you can get all of you bigger stuff, business credit and things like that,” Larmore said.

Larmore says that that poor credit can be a barrier to obtaining employment.

“Your credit is even reviewed by some employers, and they use it as a way to measure how trustworthy you are. Many companies feel that you may have questionable morals if you aren’t paying your debts,” Larmore said. “Credit is how the world views you.”

The credit repair specialist who is certified in financial literacy identified two lesser known tips that relate to building better credit. Larmore explained that getting credit card balances below 30 percent greatly improves an individual’s credit score. However, closing all credit card accounts is not the way to repair credit. It can actually hurt an individual’s credit by deleting his or her credit history.

According to Larmore, very important factors in determining a person’s credit score include: age of accounts, credit utilization, payment history, amounts owed, length of credit history and new

credit. Larmore says it takes 30 to 45 days for her clients’ credit to improve when she works with them. She added

that credit repair can be time consuming and many people would rather pay to receive hands-on assistance.

“Also, many people don’t know where to start,” Larmore said. “I can give them the education and resources to fix it.”

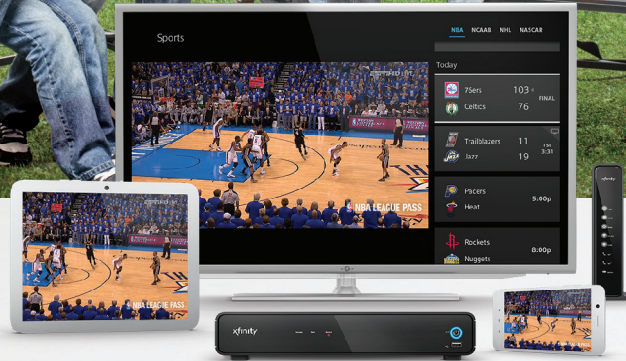
Tanika Johnson, an Annapolis resident, who is striving to become a homeowner says that her credit score is steadily rising as the result of working with Larmore for a few months.

“I feel that her guidance was absolutely helpful. She gave me a lot of advice and told me things that I didn’t know about credit and explained things that I didn’t understand about it before,” Johnson said. “She had a lot of knowledge of the “hows” and “whys” of what to do and what not to do.”

To obtain more information about SKN Credit Services or The Better Credit, Better Life Tour, visit <http://www.skncreditservice.com>.

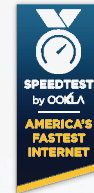
Online registration is now open through Eventbrite. The cost for workshops that will be held in Maryland is \$30.





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Women Share Stories Over Tea and Treats at Chesapeake Life Center's Remembering Mothers Gathering

(PASADENA, MD, MAY 11, 2016) — Around 20 women spent an evening sharing memories of the mothers and grandmothers they have lost at the annual Remembering Mothers Tea hosted on May 5 by Chesapeake Life Center, a program service of Hospice of the Chesapeake.

Led by grief counselors in the conference center of the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway in Pasadena, guests enjoyed tea, finger sandwiches and sweets while taking part in activities with others who have experienced similar loss.

The event traditionally held around

Mother's Day leads to moments that are equal parts laughter and tears as well as another step in their shared journey of healing.

Chesapeake Life Center, a program service of Hospice of the Chesapeake, serves hospice family members and the community with bereavement services

and activities aimed at enhancing the quality of life for those grieving the loss of a loved one. For more information on Chesapeake Life Center programs, call 410-987-2129 or visit www.chesapeake-lifecenter.org.



Coordinator of Children and Family Programs, Sarah Montgomery, LCSW-C reads aloud the memories Edith Henry-Delaney of Laurel wrote about time spent with her mother during the Remembering Mothers Gathering hosted by Chesapeake Life Center.

Courtesy Photos



Claire Spencer-Spears of Edgewater writes down a warm memory of time spent with her mother.



Marna Brickman of Annapolis listens to poetry during the event.



Sisters Paula Dunn of Linthicum Heights and Robin Hein of Pasadena share tea cups that once belonged to their mother.

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Don't Be Stumped by Landscaping this Spring! Get Started with a Free Tree from BGE

Baltimore— This Arbor Day, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE) is helping customers with their landscaping by providing free trees to customers through the Energy Saving Trees Program. Through a joint effort with the Arbor Day Foundation, BGE is providing free trees to customers to help them save energy and money.

When planted in the right place, trees can help reduce energy use through summer shading and slowing cold winter winds. Once trees are fully grown, they can lower energy costs by up to 20 percent, according to the Arbor Day Foundation. In addition, trees can increase property value, reduce your carbon footprint, improve air quality and more effectively catch storm water runoff.

Customers can reserve one tree on a first-come, first-served basis through the Arbor Day Foundation's interactive tool at www.arborday.org/bge. This tool helps customers identify the best tree for their property and also determine where to plant the tree to save energy and money. Once customers confirm their reservation, a 3-foot tall, lightly branched potted tree seedling will be shipped to their home within two to four weeks.

To ensure that these trees do not impact the safety and reliability of overhead and underground energy systems and the cus-

tomers they serve, BGE provides these "Right Tree, Right Place" guidelines:

*Do not plant trees on electric transmission or natural gas rights-of-way.

*Do not plant trees near natural gas pipelines (marked by yellow markers), underground electric lines (marked by white or red markers) or their rights-of-way.

*The Right Tree Right Place Guide lists acceptable trees for planting near utility equipment not located on rights-of-way or near pipelines and underground electric lines.

*If you wish to plant a tree not listed, make sure it is also suitable for planting near utility equipment.

*We do not recommend planting trees and shrubs directly below power lines. However, if you choose to do so, select trees and shrubs that will grow to a maximum height of 25 feet.

Plant the right tree in the right place.

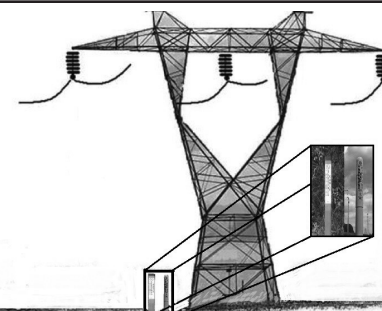
Plant taller trees away from overhead utility lines.

more than 25 ft.
Mature Tree Heights
25 ft. or less



Shrubs, small trees
— 20 ft. (6.1 m.) —
— mature tree height, or more —

Plant trees that will grow taller than 25 ft. (7.6 m.) at a distance away from utility lines that is equal to or more than the expected mature height of the tree.



Please contact BGE before planning any work within electric transmission or gas easements for planting or other projects.

Annapolis Flea Market Returns

Annapolis— Starting Saturday mornings on May 14, 2016, set your alarm clocks to get to the Annapolis Flea Market from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Saturday morning, now through the fall. The flea market will feature a wide variety of vendors at the intersection of West and Calvert Streets, next to Whitmore Park where there is a new tot lot for kids

With the Flea market being located in the Annapolis Arts District in downtown Annapolis it's sure to attract a diverse group of vendors including antique dealers, vintage clothing and decor, estate liquidators, artists, music instruments, closeouts and local residents doing spring cleaning. Selection will change weekly as new vendors arrive.

Flea Markets are all the rage today as people look to go green and re-use, recycle and up-cycle their flea market finds. Several popular TV shows today even give you great hints and how to find treasures at local flea markets and how to transform them into treasures of your own,

You can also join in the fun and be a vendor for a nominal fee, tent rentals can also be provided if you wish. So clean out your attic, basement and garage (or grandmas), and bring your bargains to the Fleas Market and become a vendor. You could make some great extra spending money. This is another great reason to visit Annapolis and the West Street Arts District corridor.

For more information about the Annapolis Flea Market, visit: www.annapolisflea.com.

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