

‘The Littles’ and ‘The Bigs’



January was National Mentoring Month, and Comcast partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Chesapeake to celebrate the importance of mentoring with the students from Elmwood Elementary School through its Beyond School Walls (BSW) program. Launched in Baltimore in 2014, BSW helps at-risk children reach their fullest potential through one-to-one matches with Comcast employees. The students are called “Littles,” while the business professionals are called “Bigs.” The “Littles” and the “Bigs” are pictured here during a recent session at the Comcast office in White Marsh, Maryland. (See article on page 10) Courtesy Photo

Baltimore Could Lose Federal Funding as Sanctuary City

By Stacy M. Brown

Baltimore has long sought immigrants to help offset a slow decline in population and, reportedly, former Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake signed an executive order five years ago, telling city police not to ask people their immigration status.

Despite President Donald Trump signing an executive order to punish cities that shield illegal immigrants, Baltimore's current mayor, Catherine Pugh said the city will continue to welcome immigrants.

"We don't walk around asking people where they're from," Pugh said. "That's just not our policy. We don't do that. What we want is to help people become productive members of our community. We're a welcoming city. We want everybody here. We want to provide opportunities and jobs and careers for folks," she said.

However, Pugh's staff said Baltimore is not a sanctuary city, because it does not run its own jail and can't make decisions about whether to hold people charged with immigration crimes. Like more than 300 other cities, however, Baltimore is listed as a sanctuary city by the Center for Immigration Studies.

Trump's executive order on sanctuary cities that protect immigrants could cut federal funding for Baltimore public schools and the city departments that serve the homeless, domestic violence victims and those with HIV. It could also mean the loss of millions in block grants for urban and other redevelopment and



Mayor Catherine E. Pugh.
Courtesy Photo

programs that include senior nutrition, refugee resettlement and arts grants.

In 2015, the city announced \$10 million in federal grant funding for infrastructure improvements at the Port of Baltimore and the surrounding community. Down the I-95 corridor, District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser said she will not turn her back on the 70,000 or so immigrants – including 25,000 undocumented – who lives in the nation's capital. It's estimated that at least \$1 billion in federal grants that Washington, D.C. receives is vulnerable under the executive order.

"Anything that says the government wouldn't work with cities is worrisome," Bowser said.

"Being a sanctuary city keeps D.C. safer because it ensures that all residents can call law enforcement without fear," she said.

Like Bowser, several mayors across



Federal grants to the city could be in jeopardy because Baltimore officials say they will defy President Trump's order on sanctuary cities. In 2015, Baltimore City received a \$10 million federal grant for infrastructure improvements at the Port of Baltimore and the surrounding community. Courtesy Photo

the country have vowed to defy the executive order that would cut off federal funding to cities that offer some sort of protection to undocumented immigrants in their communities.

The Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for lower levels of legal and illegal immigration, compiled a list of cities, counties and states that they consider "Sanctuary Cities" — municipalities that shield undocumented immigrants. Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, Boston, Chicago and others are included and Trump has pledged to punish.

In New York, where as much as \$7 billion in federal funding is on the line, Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed that the action "won't change how we enforce the

law in New York City."

De Blasio said that the city has been able to dramatically reduce the crime rate in the nation's largest city, in part, because of relationships the police department has managed to build in immigrant communities. He told USA Today that if Trump follows through with the plan it would mean he's effectively cutting funding from the New York Police Department. An early analysis by NYC officials suggested that about \$156 million in federal funding for the NYPD could be impacted, USA Today reported.

"Here in New York City and in cities across the nation, this executive order could in fact undermine public safety and make our neighborhoods less safe," de Blasio said.

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The Baltimore Times

(USPS 5840) is published every Friday by *The Baltimore Times*, 2513 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. Subscriptions by mail \$60 per year. Standard bulk postage paid at Baltimore, MD 21233. Postmaster send address changes to:

The Baltimore Times
2513 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

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Guest Commentary

My Open Letter to “US”

By Tip “T.I.” Harris
(Founder, Grand Hustle)

As I write this letter, I can’t help but express my frustration and concern for “US.” I also can’t help, but question my contribution to the status of where we are. I understand that I, too, have been guilty of doing the very things that put US here. Even still, right now, the state of our community is more alarming than ever. And while I know that this letter may be misunderstood by many and unduly dissected, and misconstrued by most others, I still need to write and speak about these things that deeply concern me.

You see, all of US sometimes feel that one of the most difficult things in the world is to talk to US about US in an effort to help US. However, we cannot dismiss the fact that we can’t fix what we do not address. You see, we’ve somehow allowed ourselves to think it’s okay to neglect and abandon our responsibility to ourselves and to our community. Everything cannot be blamed on THE SYSTEM.

We can no longer afford to be entertained beyond the point of accountability. We can’t keep selling each other out and be willing to do anything to be seen, to be famous or to be rich. Our obsession with material things and lack of self-worth is evident in our need for an abundance of momentary luxuries and must-have amenities that have no true value, for real man. And I mean, we do it just to impress people that could care less if your children or your children’s children have anything left to show for your life after you gone. You see, somewhere along the way, we’ve allowed the pursuit of fame and things to blind us to the issues that prevent us from moving upward. So, we cannot continue to get caught up in having material abundance and yet be fundamentally and spiritually broke.

Every one of us must do something to contribute to transforming our community for the better. We have been under-

served, underprivileged and unfortunate for far too long. There are no more excuses. It’s not enough to have limited progress and allow our expectations and sense of purpose to evaporate. So, if that means we must sacrifice some nights at the club and give up buying the latest designer handbags and sneakers...well then damn, so be it. I can only hope that one day soon we’ll understand our true economic buying power by investing in our own communities and putting our money into businesses that keep our dollars in our community.

It is imperative for US to parent our children and educate them outside of the school systems, as the American education system was not designed to lift US out of oppression. If we know that the pipelines to prisons are multiplying, well we must ask ourselves, “what can we do to end it?” We must keep ourselves busy with finding ways to generate wealth for generations to come and work to pass down things to our children for them to pass down to their children. You see man, who wants to fight who on Instagram should not be as important as fighting for equality...and who’s f**king who should never be as important as creating a strategy to help break the cycle of economic oppression.

You see, if we don’t acknowledge and accept where we are failing, then we’ll never do the work that it takes to make it right for US. See, we are the benefactors of too much sacrifice and blood, sweat and tears to allow petty differences and trivial discrepancies to continue to separate and divide US, while we are being used, exploited and conquered. We should not live one more day ignoring the sh** that suffocates and strangles US keeping US imprisoned in our own communities. We cannot afford to not stick together and work together for the betterment of our community.

As we look to the future for US, there could not be a better time to assess where we go from here. And while there’s currently great turmoil, there is



T.I. says that we can no longer continue to get caught up in having material abundance and yet be fundamentally and spiritually broke. (Hustle Gang)

even greater opportunity for US to work together to transform our community.

Far too many of our children are fatherless, far too many of our mothers are standing in the prison waiting rooms and far too many of our young people feel hopeless. We must work to reshape the need for our children to want to live so fast even if it means dying so young. Now, I am not here to demonize or vilify, but to pledge my commitment to help US do what needs to be done. You see, if we continue to devalue ourselves we cannot realistically expect respect from others.

Now, how can I sit here in a place of privilege and say such things and make such suggestions, you ask? Well, I answer simply, because I know what it’s like. I know what it’s like to not know where you’re going or how to get there. I know what it’s like to have no one around you who can teach you how to be what you hope to become. I know what it’s like to be so distracted by your surroundings and in the moment that it’s seemingly impossible to not get caught up in ‘em. I know what it’s like

to feel so much smaller than the activities of your environment that you can’t see how not to succumb to ‘em. I know what it’s like to not be able to focus in class due to real life hunger pangs. I know what it’s like to be disruptive just to pass the time and take your mind off what’s lacking at home. I know what it’s like to be laughed at by your teacher when you tell them what you hope to be in life. I also know what it’s like to be told by your teacher that you’ll never amount to anything. I know what it’s like to feel hopeless and to feel like you’re not good enough just because of where you’re from. I know what it’s like to be profiled and to be abused by the police. I know what it’s like to be racially profiled, treated unjustly and abused by the police just because of how you look. But even more importantly than knowing all these things, I know what it’s like to overcome ‘em.

Now, I know it’s not easy...but all of US can do something.

Respectfully Yours,
Tip Harris
#USORELSE

What would Coretta Scott King do?

By **Barbara Reynolds**

In their own analysis, '60-era civil rights leaders used the term refer to a Zeitgeist, the spirit of the times, which operated from a divine dimension that summons leaders exactly when needed most. This is a perfect description of the timing of human rights activist Coretta Scott King. Her legacy is in a resurgence as people take a fresh look at those who successfully moved themselves and others forward through the heavy thicket of discrimination such as the leading ladies in the wonderful new film, *Hidden Figures*.

Coretta Scott King died on Jan. 30, 2006. Yet her legacy is very much alive as a coalition builder, a strategist and a moral voice that confronted detractors but insisted upon non-violent approaches, such as dialogue, protests and economic boycotts with the end goal of peaceful reconciliation.

A second look at King's legacy should focus on but go beyond her well known decades ordeal of successfully lobbying to make King's birthday a national holiday and building the Dr. Martin Luther King Center for Social Change in Atlanta.



Barbara Reynolds

Tourists from around the world visit this site, where her crypt and that of Dr. King are located near Ebenezer Baptist church where Dr. King preached and was funeralized.

Coretta King certainly came to mind as millions gathered in Washington and in sister cities around the world last week to mount an overwhelming rebuke to President Donald Trump's anti-human rights campaign and his denigration of women, minorities, immigrants and the physically challenged. Her name was scrawled on homemade signs scattered throughout.

It is appropriate that we remember her appeal to women and her global human rights efforts-- the capstone of King's 38 year mission as she shifted from civil rights to a more global inclusive human rights agenda after the assassination of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr in 1968. A familiar slogan of hers was: "Women, if the soul of the nation is to be saved, I believe that you must become its soul." Today, it rings louder than ever.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed her a nonvoting delegate to the

32nd General Assembly of the United Nations, where she advocated for more international focus on the human rights of women. That same year in Houston, she served as Commissioner on the International Women's Year Conference where she created quite a stir over her support for gay rights, an unpopular issue at the time.

In her memoir she tells how she opposed the various women's groups at the conference who were advocating a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. "I feel that gay and lesbian people have families and their families should have legal protection, whether by marriage or civil union. I believe unequivocally that discrimination because of sexual orientation is wrong and unacceptable in a democracy that protects the human rights of all its citizens," King wrote.

In the historic 1963 March on Washington--which catapulted Dr. King to fame--women, however, were not allowed to march with the leaders or give a major address. But without a doubt King, would have played a supportive role in the Women's march as did her daughter, Bernice King.

King was a spokeswoman for social justice causes, both large and small, writing a syndicated news column on issues from gun violence, to environmental racism, to apartheid in South Africa. She was rarely missing in action. "Sometimes you win, just by showing up," she said, often referring to her role as a ministry of presence.

King believed that it is citizen action that is crucial to the making of a president. She often said that President Ronald Reagan did not warm to the idea of a Dr. King holiday until the movement created a groundswell for it with 3 million signatures, marches, and years of

lobbying Congress. He signed it on Nov. 20, 1983.

In recent weeks, several black leaders have been publicly scoured for meeting with President Trump at various points in his transition to the White House. King, however, would have been knocking on his door, as she did with all the other presidents in her heyday. And she would not have been there for photo-ops or "selfies." As a seasoned coalition builder, she would have prepared a well-crafted agenda, which called upon Trump to govern as president of all Americans.

In past years, King's influence was mammoth in the shaping of the political landscape. She successfully campaigned to elect scores of liberals to political office, worked with President Jimmy Carter in the selection of federal judges and threw her weight against those who stood in the way of voting rights.

Typical of her role is how she confronted and helped block Alabama U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions who in 1985 was vying for a federal judgeship. Sessions, who Trump calls "brilliant," has been chosen for U.S. Attorney General seat. In a recently surfaced 10-page letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, King had called him "lacking in judgement and temperament who would irreparably harm the work the movement had done to seize a slice of democracy for disenfranchised blacks."

In the battle to stop Sessions and others who seemed primed to push back advances in human rights, Coretta Scott King would not have panicked. In her memoir, she said, "Struggle is a never-ending process and freedom is never really won. You earn it and win it in every generation."

And so it goes.

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Ravens should draft Senior Bowl prospect Haason Reddick to replace Zach Orr

By Turron Davenport

Losing Zach Orr will be a tough task for the Baltimore Ravens to overcome. Orr retired recently after suffering a congenital neck/spine condition that ended his season.

"It wasn't a quick decision. It definitely was not easy," Orr said during his retirement press conference. "As a football player, we definitely know the risks that are at hand, but if you love the game and you are a fan of the game and you love it, then you are going to play. That is what makes this sport great."

The 2016 season was his first as a starter. He played inside linebacker alongside C.J. Mosely. While Mosely was selected to the Pro Bowl, Orr was named second-team All-Pro. He posted 132 tackles, five passes breakups, three interceptions, and a forced fumble. So now that Orr is not in the future plans, how can the Ravens go about replacing the outstanding linebacker? One of the best options was on display last week during the Senior Bowl.

Temple linebacker Haasan Reddick made his presence known in Mobile during Senior Bowl week. Reddick converted from defensive end to inside linebacker and made the transition smoothly.

He was at his best when rushing the passer, especially during pass protection drills. Reddick also showed the ability to run with bigger receivers and tight ends. The Ravens will need a playmaker at weakside linebacker which should fall right in line with what Orr was able to accomplish.

There are some who feel the former



Temple linebacker Haason Reddick attempts to tackle Toledo tight end Michael Roberts during a north team practice at the Reese's Senior Bowl.

Courtesy Photo/ SeniorBowl.com

Temple player could be selected in the first round. The Ravens hold the No.16 overall pick which may be a bit high for selecting Reddick. However, he would be a value pick if he is on the board when Baltimore picks in the second round (No.48 overall).

Reddick came to Temple as a running back/safety and converted to defensive end after playing mostly on special teams as a freshman and sophomore. Special teams is a path by which most Ravens defensive players take to a starting role.

Orr is a prime example of how a lot of

the players have to cut their teeth on special teams prior to taking over a starting position on the defense.

The Ravens like to draft tough players that love football. Ozzie Newsome, Eric DeCosta and John Harbaugh have already seen how tough 2017 third-round pick Tayvon Young was when he came to Baltimore from Temple.

Like Young, Reddick wore a single digit number in college. Temple awards single digits to the toughest players on the team as voted on by the players.

As for the physical comparisons, Reddick stands at 6-foot-1, 230 pounds while Orr is 6-foot-0, 225 pounds. The two players are very similar. Reddick generated a buzz while at the Senior Bowl.

The Ravens have drafted 27 players that have played in the Senior Bowl since 2010. That is more than any other team in the league. It would be no coincidence if that number increases in 2017, with Reddick being one of their early selections.

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Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women 'step' into national spotlight

By Stacy M. Brown

In 2008, filmmaker Brenda Brown Rever, in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools, blazed the trail to transform secondary school education in the city.

Having worked closely with district leadership to form the first all-girls middle and high school in Baltimore, Rever planned and diligently rounded up a circle of friends, supporters and champions of the city to create a school that would focus on leadership, college preparation, strong academics and best practices for girls and young women--over the course of a little more than one year.

By 2009, the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women (BLSYW), then housed in a temporary facility, opened its doors to its first and founding class of 120, sixth grade students.

The first graduating class, which graduated only six months ago, boasts of



In a scene from the documentary film "Step," members of a dance team practice at the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women.

Courtesy Photo/ Naysa Reames

SAT scores more than 200 points above the Baltimore City average and every student earned college acceptances. And, as if things couldn't get any better for

the young institution of learning, Fox Searchlight Pictures has paid more than \$4 million at the Sundance Film Festival for world rights to STEP, a documentary about a step dance team at the school.

According to the website, Deadline, the documentary "drew bidders like few focus (films) do."

Fox Searchlight bought both distribution and remake rights for the Amanda Lipitz-directed film.

A major focus in the film is the school's mandate to send every student to college, despite the barriers that their home lives and community might present.

With the help of financial backing from the Baltimore Ravens, STEP follows three seniors and their Lethal Ladies step dance team as they navigate a nerve-wracking college application process and the trials and tribulations of the tenacious young women, as well as their mothers, an unstoppable college counselor, and a no-nonsense step coach.

"We hope that the heroes of STEP will inspire girls everywhere to do what they have done, which is to prove that nothing is impossible when you surround yourself with a group of powerful women," Lipitz said in a press release.

STEP also offers viewers a rare and personal glimpse into the dreams and lives of a set of students and families

who founded the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Woman to cultivate future leaders in the city and beyond.

The Lethal Ladies step dance program is one of several vehicles students choose to find and channel their passion, power and purpose.

"STEP is not just a film. It has become a labor of love for our entire community," school officials and film producers said in a statement.

"Every person who came into contact with our students and school community in the making of this documentary became a friend of the school – fully committed to our girls, to our mission and to portraying a journey of laughs, tears, stumbles, hard knocks and kinship, and all to a contagious beat that is authentically young and haunting and universal," the statement said.

The film reveals up-close what can happen when young women have the independence, discipline and safety net to lead, be challenged and create a legacy for others.

Every day at BLSYW, the focus is on students and alumnae, and on nurturing a learning community of high expectations and support for every BLSYW girl as she creates the steps she will take toward her future, officials said.

Of the class of 2016, 98 percent graduated and received a high school diploma and each graduate earned acceptance to John Hopkins, NYU, the University of Maryland, Hampton University, Coppin State, Potomac State and Rosemont College, officials said.

Also, each student in this year's class participated in pre-college summer programs as rising seniors.

"These outcomes only partially convey the journey of an enduring commitment to our students, a steadfast fidelity to mission and our resilience as we grew from an idea and a school of one grade to a full college preparatory middle and high school with an annual commencement," Dr. Shanaysha M. Sauls, the school's CEO said in a statement.

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Tax season is back, Cash Campaign is back

By Deborah Bailey

Rev. Dr. Alvin C. Hathaway, Pastor of Union Baptist Church in Baltimore recently hosted a press conference to celebrate the Baltimore Cash Campaign's 16 years of providing free tax preparation for low and moderate income Baltimoreans.

Congressmen Elijah Cummings and John Sarbanes, Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot, Mayor Pugh's Chief of staff Tisha Edwards, and City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young joined Baltimore CASH Campaign's Sara Johnson to celebrate Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Awareness Day. The celebration was put on last week to kick off the tax filing season and to remind thousands of working Marylanders to use the EITC, and other tax credits for which they may be eligible as well as free tax resources.

Even Internal Revenue Services (IRS) Commissioner John Kosakoff made an appearance to appeal to more Marylanders to use the EITC.

"The Earned Income Tax Credit is an extremely important anti-poverty tax credit that helps millions of people every year. But many people Maryland and across the country, overlook this credit and the support it can provide to them and their families," Kosakoff said.

For 16 years, the Baltimore CASH Campaign (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) is in its 16th year of providing free tax preparation services in Baltimore City and County. Highly trained IRS certified volunteers will prepare and electronically file taxes for eligible taxpayers free of charge. This year the Baltimore CASH campaign operates 15 sites in Baltimore City (Central, South, East, North and West Baltimore) as well as two additional sites in Baltimore County (Towson and Catonsville).

April Bradley, a former client of the Baltimore CASH Campaign, stole the show when she explained to the audience how free tax service was just the starting point for how the Baltimore CASH Campaign can help families like hers. The Baltimore CASH campaign supported Bradley in establishing a new



Congressman Elijah Cummings, April Bradley, Baltimore CASH Campaign customer and Sara Johnson, Director, Baltimore CASH Campaign. Photo: Deborah Bailey

way of life – complete with a new home purchased with savings accumulated through the support of the Baltimore CASH Campaign's CASH Coach Program.

"It [accumulating savings] changed my life. I could focus on things I had never focused on before. With all the savings, I kept, in November of 2016, I became a homeowner," Bradley proclaimed as the audience loudly applauded her determination.

Congressman Elijah Cummings affirmed the transformation the Baltimore City CASH program can make in the lives of average, every day Americans like Bradley.

"I'll bet you April has told at least 30 or 40 people about this program," Cummings said, congratulating Bradley on her success.

"What the CASH campaign has done for April has changed the trajectory of her destiny. Because it has volunteers who care. What it does is increase the expectations of people's lives."

The Baltimore CASH Campaign's CASH COACH Program matches individuals and couples with a financial coach to help them reach their personal

goals. April worked with her coach to save money bit by bit until she cashed in her "bonds" for a down payment on a house.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a program that provides tax relief for American workers with low-paying jobs. To claim the EITC, individuals must have earned income in 2016. Generally, this means actual wages, salaries, tips or self-employment income. Other earned income sources include long-term disability benefits (below the minimum retirement age) and union strike benefits. Unemployment benefits such as al-

imony, child support, interest/dividends, and social security benefits do not count as earned income. Non-taxable combat pay may be classified either way. Potential recipients must have a valid Social Security number, be a U.S. citizen or resident alien, and cannot be claimed as a qualifying child of another taxpayer. For additional information on the Baltimore CASH campaign, and free tax preparation sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County visit www.baltimore-cashcampaign.org, Email: info@baltimorecashcampaign.org or call 443-692-9487.

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NNPA Receives \$1.5 Million Gates Grant for Education Campaign

By Stacy M. Brown

When civil rights icon Dr. Benjamin Chavis was named president and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), he remained true to form, touting the Black Press as the uncensored, objective and unflinching media voice.

On that sun-soaked day in June 2014 in Portland, Oregon, Chavis proclaimed his eagerness to deliver “trusted, sustainable and innovative relationships for the NNPA.”

It didn’t take long.

Under Chavis’ leadership, the organization has increased its visibility and has continued to carve out a name as a trusted and respected news source. Now, the NNPA, a network of 211 Black-owned media companies, has received a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support a three-year, multi-media public awareness campaign focusing on the unique opportunities and challenges of the recently enacted Every Student Succeeds Act – or ESSA.

“The NNPA is pleased to partner with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to raise public awareness throughout the United States about the ESSA,” Chavis said. “Bridging the academic achievement gap in education K-12 in particular for African-American students and others from disadvantaged communities is of critical importance over the next several years.”

Chavis noted that, in 2017, the Black Press in America will celebrate 190 years in publishing and there’s no more important issue than the education of students from communities who cry out for the highest quality education.

“The ESSA law was established to help increase the effectiveness of public education in every state,” said Chavis. “Our task is to inform, inspire, and encourage



Dr. Benjamin Chavis, the president and CEO of the NNPA, says that by raising awareness of ESSA policies, the NNPA seeks to empower parents to advocate for these policies for their students and communities.

parents, students, teachers, and administrators to fulfill the intent and objectives of ESSA with special focus on those students and communities that have been marginalized and underserved by the education system across the nation.”

Under the ESSA, states will adhere to more flexible federal regulations that provide for improved elementary and secondary education in the nation’s public schools.

The law also ensures that every child, regardless of race, income, background, or where they live have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. ESSA, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) and replaces No Child Left Behind, received bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015.

The regulations are administered by the U.S. Department of Education and will go into effect later this month, on January 30.

With the Gates Foundation grant, NNPA will engage its 211-member publications in more than 70 markets across the country in a campaign designed to heighten public awareness of ESSA, and to focus on efforts and policies aimed at closing the achievement gaps for students of color and low-income students, Chavis said.

By raising awareness of ESSA policies, the Washington, D.C.-headquartered NNPA seeks to

empower parents to advocate for these policies for their students and communities, he said.

Additionally, for opinion leaders, this is a tremendous opportunity to support policies and issues that will make a difference in closing the achievement gap, Chavis said.

“The ESSA grant is critical to improving education for minorities,” said Dr. Elizabeth V. Primas, the project manager for the NNPA/ESSA grant and director of Literacy and Acceleration at the Friendship Public Charter Schools. Primas has a lifelong history of achievement in teaching and leadership within D.C. public schools.

“Despite past laws, many minorities have been left behind,” said Primas. “NNPA will be instrumental in ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of the components in the ESSA law that will increase the number of students that are college ready.”

Specifically, the NNPA will research state efforts to ensure success for all students, gather feedback while conducting forums, and maintain multiple platforms to keep the community informed, she said.

“For the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to give the grant to NNPA to fund a 36-month multi-media public awareness campaign focused on the unique benefits and challenges of ESSA to the African-American community, means that the Gates Foundation understands and appreciates the value, reach, and influence of NNPA,” Primas said.

NNPA Chairperson and Washington Informer Publisher Denise Rolark Barnes said she is proud that NNPA will be counted on to get the word out about ESSA to the NNPA’s 20 million newspaper readers and those who Follow and Like the Black Press USA on social media.

“We look forward to inciting interest and action around ESSA and making it a household name throughout the community,” Rolark Barnes said, noting Obama’s words when he signed the bill into law.

Obama said: “With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal – that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will.”

In a statement, Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and Congressman Bobby Scott (D-Va.), ranking member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, said passing ESSA was a “critical step in our work to make sure all children have access to a high-quality public education, no matter where they live, how they learn, or how much money their parents make.”

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'The Littles' and 'The Bigs'

Mentoring program presented by Comcast/Big Brothers Big Sisters

By Ursula V. Battle

Every other Thursday during the school year, there is a special “showing” at the Comcast office in White Marsh, Maryland. Known as the “Littles” and the “Bigs”, these “stars” are students from Elmwood Elementary School in Baltimore County and Comcast employees. The students get a special “sneak preview” of the corporate world, participate in games and other activities, and eat pizza.

“I really like coming here,” said 11-year-old Ronald Adams. “We get to play games and eat. I also learn about money, adding numbers, reading, and how to start a business. One day, I would like to open up a restaurant. I also learned that if you want to open your own business, you have to work hard and have enough money to buy the things you will need.”

Marcus James, a senior analyst in billing systems for Comcast, mentored Adams at a recent session and added, “The biggest benefit is that this program allows me to make a difference in my own way. The things my parents instilled in me, I can present to these kids. That’s very gratifying, and I love doing it.”

The effort is part of Comcast’s workplace mentoring program – Beyond School Walls (BSW). Launched in Baltimore in 2014, BSW helps at-risk children reach their fullest potential through one-to-one matches with Comcast employees. The program introduces children to jobs at an early age, allowing them to experience what it means to work for a corporation and the educational requirements needed to achieve professional success.

January was National Mentoring Month, and Comcast partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Chesapeake to celebrate the importance of mentoring with the students from Elmwood Elementary School.

National Mentoring Month is a campaign held each January to promote youth mentoring in the United States. It was inaugurated in 2002, and is spearheaded by the Harvard School of Public



Ronald, one of the program’s “Littles”, Brad Palazzo, Director of External Affairs for Comcast’s Beltway Region and a “Big” with the program, and Kiandre, another one of the “Littles,” during a recent session at the Comcast White Marsh office.

Photo: Ursula V. Battle

Health, MENTOR, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The campaign celebrates mentoring and the positive impact it can have on young lives.

“I have been doing this for three years,” said James who regularly mentors 11-year-old program participant Jaden Smith. “Initially an email went out from Comcast asking people to mentor, which was something I was interested in doing anyway. I am really glad that I did.”

According to Comcast officials, during the past two years the program has grown drastically, with local Comcast employees serving as mentors to 14 students from Elmwood Elementary School. Data shows that BSW “Littles” have better grades, are less likely to skip school and are more likely to graduate. Comcast says it runs the nation’s largest workplace mentoring program in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

Brad Palazzo is Director of External Affairs for Comcast’s Beltway Region. He also serves as one of the programs’ “Bigs” and played an integral part in launching the BSW program locally.



Marcus James and Jaden Smith at a Ravens game.

Courtesy Photo

Poly Student Selected as Regeneron Science Talent Search Scholar

‘Microgripper’ may one day be used in microsurgery

By Ursula V. Battle

Amy Zhang, a senior at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute and a member of the Ingenuity Project, was selected as a national scholar in the 2017 Regeneron Science Talent Search (Regeneron STS) Ingenuity Student Class of 2017. Amy’s research involved the modification of a cell-sized mechanical tool called a “microgripper”.

Regeneron is a company founded with the goal of transforming lives through science, and is committed to supporting the development of highly engaged, well-trained and innovative young thinkers. Regeneron prioritizes the need to support young scientists who are generating ideas and solutions to address global challenges.

“A microgripper is a really small tool that is able to encapsulate a single cell,” explained Amy.

Amy investigated potential propulsion designs for the microgripper, which could aid in the capture and retrieval of a single cell. According to Baltimore Polytechnic officials, Amy’s work could be used in microsurgery and medical research to understand the fundamental characteristics of cells.

“I got accepted into Yale University, and I want to become a chemical engineer,” said Amy. “This is the same field my research was in. My research ultimately helped me to decide what career path I wanted to take.”

The title of Amy’s project was “Self-Folding Motile Encapsulating Microdevices for Use in Single-Cell Analysis.” Amy did her work at the Johns Hopkins University Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering and was mentored by Professor David Gracias and graduate student Qianru Jin.

The announcement of 300 high school seniors named as scholars in the Regeneron Science Talent Search 2017, was made on January 4, 2017. The competition is a program of the Society for Science & The Public.



Amy Zhang, a senior at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute was selected as a national scholar in the 2017 Regeneron Science Talent Search. Courtesy Photos

Amy and the other scholars received a \$2,000 award with an additional \$2,000 going to his or her school. Scholars were selected from more than 1,700 applicants hailing from 182 high schools in 36 states and three American and international high schools overseas.

The Regeneron Science Talent Search (Regeneron STS) is the nation’s most prestigious pre-college science competition. Alumni of Regeneron STS have made extraordinary contributions to science and hold more than 100 of the world’s most coveted science and math honors, including the Nobel Prize and National Medal of Science.

Annually, students entering the Regeneron STS compete for more than \$3.1 million in awards. From the select pool of scholars, 40 finalists have been invited to Washington, D.C. March 9-15, 2017 to participate in final judging, display their work to the public, meet with notable scientists, and compete for the

top award of \$250,000.

“It was really unexpected,” said Amy. “But it was a very rigorous process, and I worked really hard. I tried as hard as I could to do my best, and having the fruit of my labor recognized was really gratifying. I am very happy right now, and just would like to focus on the journey.”

The 40 finalists will undergo a rigorous judging process to determine the top 10 winners. They will also have the opportunity to meet with national leaders and share their projects with the public at the National Geographic Society.

While Amy was not selected as one of the 40 finalists, she certainly has a bright future in front of her. Lisa Fridman is the Dean of Research for the Ingenuity Project, and also teaches Senior Research Seminar at Polytechnic High School.

“Amy’s work is exceptional,” said Fridman. “I read her first draft. She spent countless hours working and clarifying her words to make sure they were understandable. The competition has specific formatting, and she went above and beyond to make sure it was perfect. I was not surprised they recognized her. Hard work does pay off. From the beginning, she was very passionate about this field. It’s all about hard work and passion, and Amy has both.”

She added, “Professor David Gracias and Qianru Jin were also very instrumental. They helped to support Amy’s data collection, helped to define her research and supported her in the lab. They have done an excellent job in mentoring.”



Amy’s research involved the modification of a cell-sized mechanical tool called a microgripper.



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Valentine's Comedy to be performed at the Randallstown Community Ctr. Feb. 11
New Life Fellowship to present 'For Better or Worse'

Just in time for Valentine's Day! New Life Fellowship Worship Center will be presenting a Valentine's Dinner Theater fundraiser. The event will feature dinner catered by Charm City Caterers, and the original stage play Ursula V. Battle's "For Better or Worse." The production is being presented by the Drama Ministry of New Life Fellowship Worship Center, and will be performed Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017 (2 p.m. & 6 p.m.) at the Randallstown Community Center, 3505 Resource Drive in Randallstown, MD. The Rev. Edward Ferguson is the church's pastor.

The production is written by Playwright Ursula V. Battle, who is also a Baltimore Times staff writer. The play is being directed by Tracey Stephenson. This hilarious, yet biblically-themed production centers around what happens when two feuding mothers "Sister ToPhaze"/"Sister Two-Faced" (Dr. Tammi Rogers) and "Sister Sudie Snooty" (Karen Simmons-Betha) place a



The production is written by Playwright Ursula V. Battle.

friendly bet to see whether or not their children "Clayton" (Marcus Coleman) and "Theresa" (Brandi Dyer) will walk down the aisle on Valentine's Day.

Playwright Battle's other productions



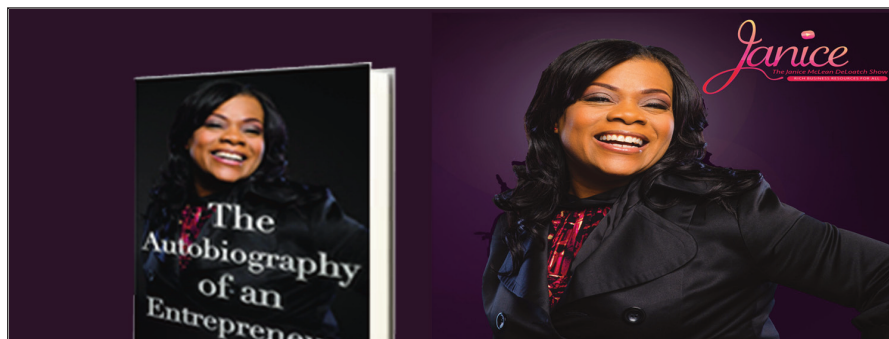
*Karen Simmons and Kim Chase are in the production
 Courtesy Photos*

include The Teachers' Lounge, My Big Phat Ghetto FABULESS Wedding, DisChord in The Choir, and The Crown of Glory & The Agony of Deceit.

Tickets are \$40. All proceeds benefit the New Life Fellowship Worship Center Building Fund. New Life is located at 4727 Old Court Road in Pikesville. Tickets are limited and must be purchased in advance. Tickets will not be sold at the door of the Randallstown Community Center. Call (443) 531-4787 or (443) 468-6031 for more information.



Tanya Brown will portray busybody "Gossipin' Gertrude."



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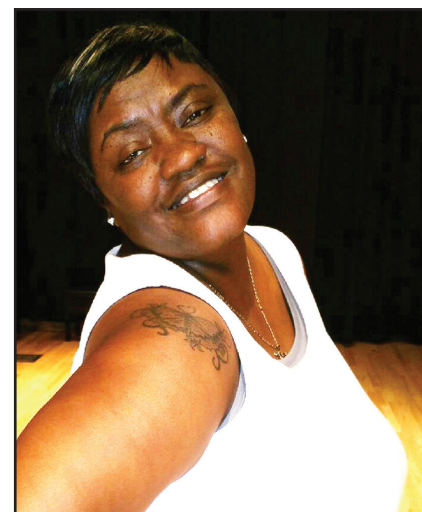
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Pamela Hill, who is also known as "Miss Maybelle" is "Sister Loveless" in the production.



Dr. Tammi Rogers will portray "Sister ToPhaze", and is also called "Sister Two-Faced".

Remembering the First Black Othello

By Stacy M. Brown

When the United Kingdom celebrated its annual Black History Month in October, it remembered Ira Frederick Aldridge, an 18th century actor who was the first African American to achieve success on the international stage.

This year, as Coventry City of Trust bids for the United Kingdom's City of Culture recognition, Aldridge's legacy has once again been thrust into the spotlight. Today, as America observes Black History Month, Aldridge counts as an African-American legend whose life and career proved to be astonishing.

Born to free black, the Rev. Daniel and Lurona Aldridge in New York on July 24, 1807 and later traversing Baltimore, Aldridge became to first Black actor to star as William Shakespeare's Othello in London.

In the book, *The Shakespeare Mashup*, Ben Arogundade writes about the difficulties and triumphs of Aldridge. He said 18th century London was the epicenter of Britain's pro-slavery lobby, and the press conducted a hateful campaign of blatant racism against Aldridge.

In one of his two "Othello" performances at the Covent Garden theatre in 1833, most objected to actress Ellen Tree as Desdemona, being "pawed about on the stage by a Black man."

The local newspaper had been just as scathing eight years prior, when it commented that, "Owing to the shape of his lips it is utterly impossible for him to pronounce English."

A series of eleven performances at the Surrey Theatre were accompanied by a press report describing Aldridge as an "unseemly n-word."

Still, Aldridge excelled and went on to become manager at the Coventry Theatre.

"It's an astonishing story. But the fact that at the age of only 20, Ira - young, gifted and black - was handed Coventry's Theatre to run, is truly remarkable. He presented plays that attacked slavery and at the same time he raised the standards of a run-down company in crisis," Professor Tony Howard, a researcher on Aldridge at the University of Warwick in

England, said in a blog post that explored the relationship between politics and Shakespeare in modern Britain.

At 15, Aldridge was associating with professional black actors who encouraged him to join the prestigious African Grove Theatre, an all-black theatre troupe founded by William Henry Brown and James Hewlett in 1821. He apprenticed under Hewlett, the first African-American Shakespearean actor, according to Blackfacts.org.

Though Aldridge was gainfully employed as an actor in the 1820s, he felt that the United States was not a hospitable place for theatrical performers.

Many whites resented the claim to cultural equality that they saw in black performances of Shakespeare and other white-authored texts. Realizing this, Aldridge emigrated to Europe in 1824 as the valet for British-American actor James William Wallack.

He eventually moved to Glasgow, Scotland and began studies at the University of Glasgow, where he worked to enhance his voice and dramatic skills in theatre.

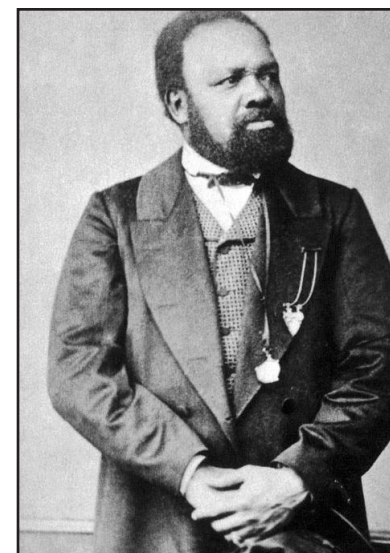
Aldridge made his debut in London in 1825 as Othello at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden. Throughout the mid-1820s to 1860, Aldridge slowly forged a remarkable career.

According to Blackfacts.org, he performed in London, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Bath, and Bristol in "King Lear," "Othello," "Macbeth," and "The Merchant of Venice" and also freely adapted classical plays, changing characters, eliminating scenes and installing new ones, even from other plays.

In 1852 he embarked on a series of continental tours that intermittently would last until the end of his life. Some of the honors he received include the Prussian Gold Medal for Arts and Sciences from King Frederick, the Golden Cross of Leopold from the Czar of Russia, and the Maltese Cross from Berne, Switzerland.



*Ira Aldridge, playing the part of Aaron in Shakespeare's play, Titus Andronicus. Date: 1805 - 1867
Courtesy of BBC*



Ira Aldridge, Courtesy of Alchetron

Aldridge, who had been married twice, died on Aug. 7, 1867 while on tour in Lodz, Poland. He left behind several children, including a daughter named Luranah who would go on to become a well-known actress and opera singer. Aldridge was 60.

"The story of Ira Aldridge is incredibly moving and is one of which Coventry

should be extremely proud," Laura McMillan, the manager of the Coventry City of Culture Trust, said in a statement.

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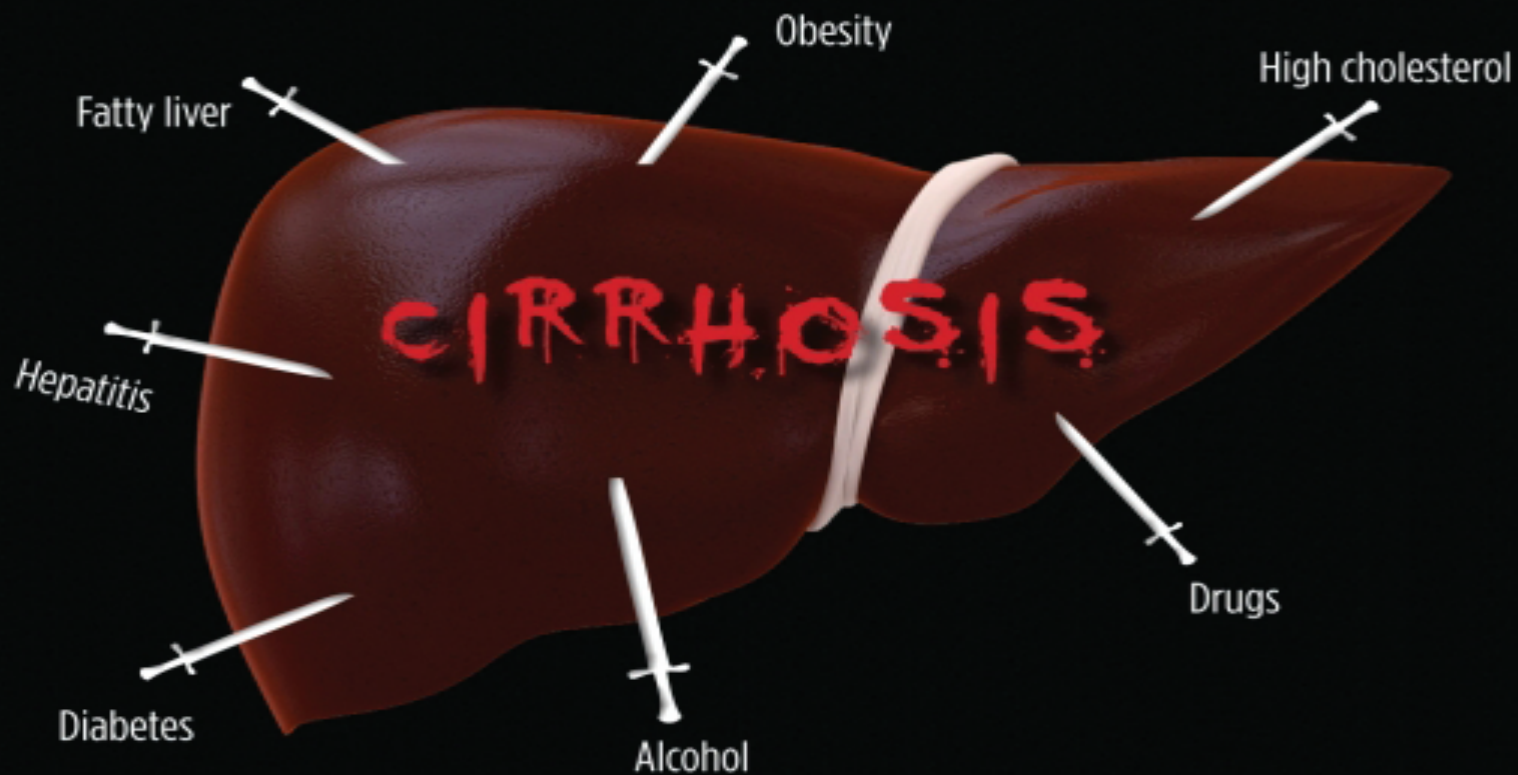
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Colgate-Palmolive and Black Girls CODE aim to create a brighter future for young African American girls during Black History Month

With African American women making up only 2% of the Science and Engineering workforce, #CodeAFuture partnership campaign looks to inspire girls of color to pursue STEM careers
NEW YORK, Jan. 23, 2017

/PRNewswire/ -- To honor Black History Month, Colgate-Palmolive will partner with Black Girls CODE on a campaign focused on helping more young girls of color learn computer programming. According to the National Science Foundation, women today fill close to half of all jobs in the U.S. economy, yet hold less than 25% of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) jobs. Even more strikingly, African American women make up only 2% of the country's science and engineering workforce. [1]

This initiative will include an online campaign encouraging consumers to share stories, with the goal of inspiring the newest generation of young women interested in technology. In addition, Colgate and Black Girls CODE will host a series of hackathons for girls from 12 to 17 in New York City and the Bay Area.

The Black Girls CODE mission is to educate girls of color, ages 7 to 17, in digital media and computer programming skills as well as building lifelong proficiency in problem-solving and abstract thinking.

Colgate's #CodeAFuture campaign will encourage consumers to share an inspiring video via social media using the hashtag #CodeAFuture.

"At Colgate, we believe that everyone deserves a future they can smile about," said Carla Kelly, General Manager, U.S. Multicultural Marketing, Colgate-Palmolive. "This partnership with Black Girls CODE helps us to provide healthier and brighter futures for young girls as they gain access to the technology, ultimately transforming their lives and their communities."

From January 13 through February 28,

2017, Colgate-Palmolive will donate \$1.00 (USD) to Black Girls CODE for every share or "Like" of inspiring videos featuring Black Girls CODE participants across social platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with #CodeAFuture. [2]

Black Girls CODE has a mission — teach 1 million girls of color to code by 2040. Through the partnership with Colgate, donations raised by online participation in this campaign will directly benefit budding coders by providing scholarships and funds to help young girls participate in Black Girls CODE programs, including hackathon workshops.

"We are so pleased to partner with Colgate during Black History Month," said Kimberly Bryant, founder of Black Girls CODE. "Our mission is to create a movement that changes the game for young girls. We want to create a community of girls who will be empowered and to become catalysts for transformation in their communities."

For more information on Colgate's #CodeAFuture campaign, visit www.blackgirlscod.com/colgate.

References

- National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics: "Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 2015 Special Report" NSF 15-311, Arlington, VA*
- No purchase required. Purchase will not increase donation amount. Between January 13 and February 18, Colgate-Palmolive Company will donate \$1.00 to Black Girls CODE for every video "like" and/or "share" across social media channels and Black Girls Code's website for a maximum donation of \$20,000.*

Volunteer Opportunities Available

Crayon Initiative

The Crayon Initiative needs you to donate your unwanted crayons and they will recycle them into new ones. Then they will donate them back to schools, hospitals, arts programs and other organizations invested in our children. Suzy Provine and the Glen Burnie Civitan Club are starting this initiative in Anne Arundel County. Let her know if you are interested in a drop box. The Glen Burnie Civitans are volunteers who help families, children and individuals with developmental disabilities in and around Anne Arundel County, MD. Contact Suzy Provine at suzy@provine.com or 410-733-3767. Also see <http://thecrayoninitiative.org/>

Annapolis Language Bank

Volunteers with a second language capability extend a warm welcome to area visitors who might have difficulty communicating in English. Volunteers also are called upon by Public Safety officials, health organizations, hospitals, the Red Cross, State, County and the City of Annapolis, and other organizations. Volunteers are listed in the Language Bank by language in alphabetical order. If you or someone you know has a second language capability and is not currently listed as a Language Bank volunteer, we would urge a telephone call to the Office of Public Information, City of Annapolis, (410) 263-1183 or E-mail: info@annapolis.gov. See website at: <http://www.annapolis.gov/residents/language-bank>.

Anne Arundel County Literacy Council

Change a life through literacy by becoming a Literacy Tutor! Tutor Training sessions are being offered from 9:00 AM–4:00 PM, Sat., Feb. 25 AND Sat., Mar. 4, 2017 at Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church in Severna Park and will include both Basic Literacy and English Language Learner instruction. We have a class size limit of 35. Enrollees MUST preregister and attend both sessions. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in attending this training, please email Lisa Vernon at director@aaclc.org, or call 410-269-4419 as soon as possible to reserve a seat. See website: www.icanread.org.

AFS-USA

Helping to bring the people of the world together is exciting, interesting, and rewarding work. For more than 60 years AFS (formerly American Field Service) Volunteers have been building bridges of intercultural understanding and changing the way the world works through a variety of volunteer opportunities. AFS-USA is looking for volunteers on an ongoing basis to engage in local activities for exchange students from all over the world. Volunteers participate in many ways from helping at student orientation events, planning weekend activities, promoting AFS study abroad programs to local schools and even becoming host families for our students. For more information, contact Jennie Schmalzle at jschmalzle@afs.org or 800-876-2376. See website: www.afsusa.org.

Happy Helpers for the Homeless, Saturdays and Sundays

This nonprofit organization provides food, toiletries, and clothing to the hungry and homeless. Volunteers, as young as 6, are needed Saturdays (11:30am-2:30pm) and Sundays (1:00-4:00pm) to assist in distributing items and bag lunches in downtown Baltimore and Glen Burnie. Ongoing donations needed: men's socks, toiletry items, men's clothing, blankets, shoes in very good condition, sturdy napkins/paper towels, mustard, juice boxes, fold-over sandwich bags, lunch meat and fresh fruit. Ongoing through winter is coats, blankets, and gloves drive. Volunteers can meet in Glen Burnie to caravan up to Baltimore. There is also a critical need for cash donations to help pay rent for space used by Happy Helpers. Contact Bobbi Coffman at 443-433-2416 or email happyhelpersforthehomeless1@yahoo.com for more information about volunteering on all projects and events. Register for Sat. or Sun. meal preparation and delivery at www.aacvc.org/OpportunityCalendar. Also, see Happy Helpers web site at <http://www.happyhelpersforthehomeless.com/>.

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