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What African-Americans Need to Know about ALS



The Brigance Brigade Foundation, a Maryland-based nonprofit is honoring Black History Month by recognizing ALS in the African American community. The Foundation has teamed up with the National Institutes of Health ALS Research Lab to expand research on the racial and ethnic differences across ALS cases. O.J. Brigance and his wife Chandra created the Brigance Brigade Foundation shortly after the former Baltimore football player was diagnosed with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) in 2007. (See article on page 10)

Courtesy Photo

Pastor Ruth Travis to retire from Ebenezer A.M.E.

By Ursula V. Battle

Retirement celebration will be held on Friday, March 3, 2017

The Reverend Dr. Ruth Travis is Sr. Pastor of Ebenezer African American Methodist (A.M.E.) Church located on 20 West Montgomery Street in South Baltimore. A longtime Baltimore City Public School educator, she is a nine-year breast cancer survivor. Dr. Travis is also a member of The Journey Continues (TJC), a breast cancer survivor group. The name of the group also seems very fitting to describe the next chapter in Pastor Travis' life. Dr. Travis is retiring after 30 years in ministry.

"I am not leaving ministry," said Dr. Travis, who is Ebenezer's first female Sr. Pastor. "I am only retiring from pastoring a ministry, to pursue another kind of ministry that deals with breast cancer survival. It is new chapter of ministry in my life. This decision did not come suddenly, but I have given much thought and prayer to the journey ahead and believe I am prepared under God's sovereign hand, to discover His good plan for my new season of ministry."

Dr. Travis has served as Sr. Pastor of Ebenezer A.M.E. since 2012. Ebenezer A.M.E. will celebrate its 181th Church Anniversary this year. According to church officials, Ebenezer A.M.E. boasts the third oldest A.M.E. congregation in the United States, with Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia, PA and Bethel A.M.E. Church in Baltimore City, respectively, having been founded before it in 1816.

"I will preach my last sermon as Pastor of Ebenezer A.M.E. on Sunday, April 2, 2017," said Dr. Travis. "It has been challenging, but God has always helped



The Rev. Dr. Ruth Travis, Sr. Pastor of Ebenezer African American Methodist (A.M.E.) in South Baltimore is retiring. She says she is looking forward to God's plans for her in ministry.
Photo by Ursula V. Battle

me to meet the challenge. My hope is that I was able to live a Christian life that people would want to emulate."

She added, "The core of the Gospel is helping somebody, doing ministry without a title, living the gospel, and sharing the Gospel. I want someone to live every sermon I preach. I would rather see someone live that sermon than hear that sermon preached."

A Retirement Celebration for Dr. Travis will be held on Friday, March 3, 2017 at St. John A.M.E. Church located on 810 N. Carrollton Avenue in Baltimore. The event will begin at 7 p.m. Bishop John R. Bryant will be preaching the message for the evening.

"I am so excited," said Dr. Travis. "Bishop Bryant is my father in ministry. It's going to look like a Bethel reunion."

Dr. Travis is a former basketball, vol-

leyball, and badminton coach on both the high school and college levels. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Physical Education from Morgan State University; Master's degree in Education from West Chester State University; Master of Theology degree from St. Mary's Seminary; and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary. The Augusta, GA native is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. In addition to Ebenezer A.M.E., she also served as Sr. Pastor of Evergreen A.M.E., where she also was the first female to hold that position.

"I have 30 years in the ministry and taught Physical Education for 30 years, which is a total of 60 years," said Dr. Travis with a smile. "Now that I am retiring, I plan to be very involved with TJC. The group consists of about 35 women who are breast cancer survivors. I have been going to bed and waking up with that passion."

Dr. Travis says her breast cancer was caught early, thanks to digital mammography, which allows a radiologist to capture and manipulate images so abnormalities can be seen more easily.

"Sometimes I get nervous, but God brought me through before, and He will do it again," said Dr. Travis. "When you have a life-threatening disease, you find yourself not stressing out over minor things. You also come to appreciate family more."

Referring to Jeremiah 29:11-13, Pastor Travis, 71, says she is avidly looking forward to God's plans for her.

"While I have never thought of age as a deciding factor and still don't, it simply feels to me like the right time for me to consider creating more time in my life for different kinds of ministries to which I am called," she said. "I also want to open a little pink café or house for breast cancer survivors. I will name it after my mother. While I am moving on, God is staying put."

Dr. Travis says her Retirement Celebration is free and open to the public. For more information about the event, call Marlene Baker Edwards at 410-585-5476.

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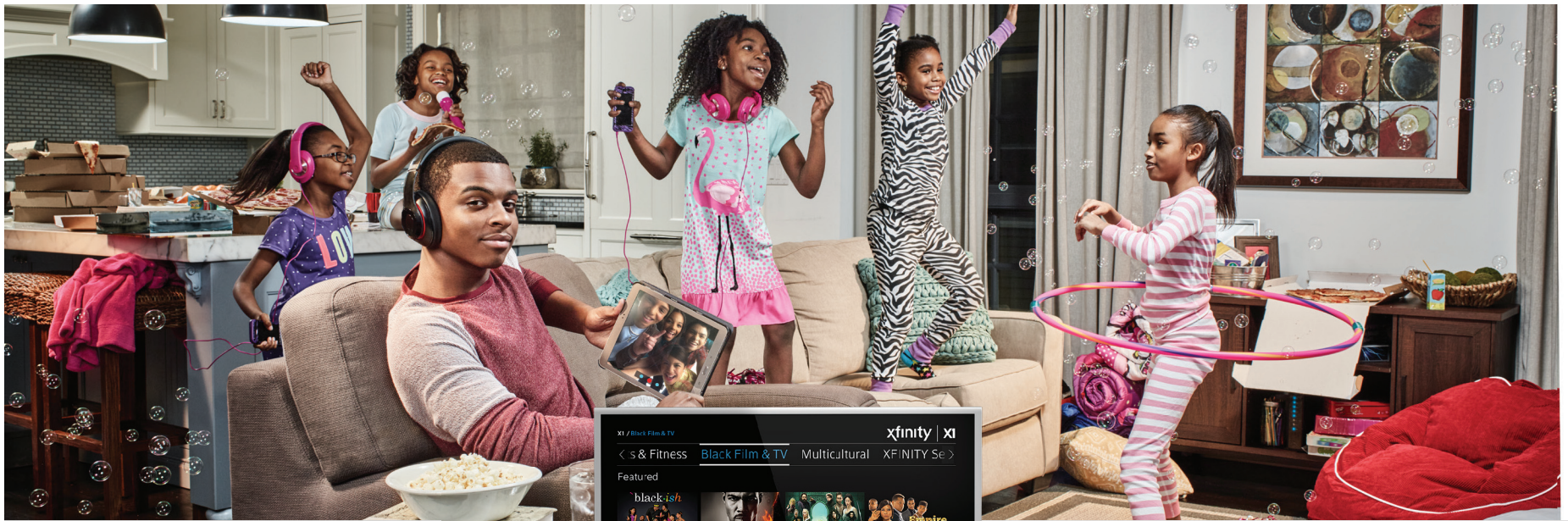
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Guest Editorials/Letters

Come Together for Greater Financial Access and Equality

By Fred Mason

The African-American community of Baltimore has a proud tradition of making progress in the face of changing and challenging situations. This community contributed greatly to the renowned shipbuilding, steel, auto and textile industries on which the area thrived. Generations of determined people helped nurture icons like Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American Supreme Court justice; Frederick Douglass, the prominent abolitionist and statesman; and Billie Holiday, the famed jazz musician.

During Black History Month, we celebrate the survival and achievements of African-Americans while never losing sight of the ongoing efforts to achieve social justice and economic equality. In a world where wealth disparities continue to exist, we need to help improve the lives of those around us. And one of the steps in this process is ensuring equal access to financial services and technology.

Here in the Baltimore area, nearly 6 percent of families are unbanked and more than 21 percent are under-banked, according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). Collectively considered “financially underserved,” these families have no or only limited access to traditional financial services, such as a bank account. Instead, they often use check cashers, payday lenders and money orders to conduct even their most basic financial transactions— from cashing a paycheck to paying their electric bill. The FDIC also found that unbanked and underbanked rates were higher among minority households.

In 2015, only 32 percent of consumer transactions were completed using cash, showing the growing trend toward other forms of payment such as debit, credit and prepaid cards. While not a panacea for closing the vast wealth gap between the races, today’s electronic payment technology can help family’s access and use their money in a more convenient, efficient and less costly way. For instance, payroll cards allow workers to receive their wages directly on their card, much like banked workers have their paycheck deposited directly into a bank account.

This eliminates the time and money workers would otherwise spend to collect their paper paycheck and cash it at a check-cashing center. Workers can pay bills instantly online and use electronic and mobile tools to make a budget and track their spending. Payroll cards have the added benefit of saving money for employers of all sizes by allowing them to eliminate the cost of cutting paper checks.

As cards and other forms of electronic payment technology come into greater use, there is both the need and the opportunity to engage in efforts to help improve the financial health of the community by making the best use of what we have. That’s one of the reasons why I am a member of the African American Advisory Board for Master Your Card, a community empowerment program.

Let me explain why this education is so important. While the average person knows how to use their debit card at the register to pay for groceries, we find that many first-time card users assume they have to go to an ATM each time they have a transaction to make. Through Master Your Card, we teach financially underserved individuals how to use this technology to access their money in a convenient and secure way. For instance, I worked with the program and the A. Philip Randolph Institute to facilitate the development of a toolkit that provides young adults and seniors with information and tips on how they can join the digital economy and achieve greater financial security.

The African-American community has a rich history of coming together to make great strides and help to propel our country forward. By rising to the challenges facing the financially underserved and using the right tools, we can empower each other to achieve greater financial access and equality.

Fred Mason is president of the Maryland and District of Columbia AFL-CIO and a member of the Master Your Card African American Advisory Board.



Letters to the Editor:

Editor:

Re: Bill Cosby was right

As African-Americans slip further and further into economic and social chaos it has become abundantly clear that the current methods of fighting poverty have failed.

The nearly 4000 shootings in Chicago in 2016 of which 674 were fatal, the unemployment rate for African-Americans at nearly twice the national average and the poverty rate of 27 percent for African-Americans is ample proof that a change in direction is needed in fighting poverty.

For too long African-Americans have depended on the government and the established business community to provide us with jobs, education and sustenance. Because of this dependency we have the worst schools, the lowest paying jobs and unsafe neighborhoods.

The solution to the problem is clear, we must start to depend on ourselves and take responsibility for our actions—that's where Bill Cosby comes in.

Now, I know there is going to be some blowback because I said that Bill Cosby was right. After all, he has been vilified in the press but I believe in this case and probably in most cases the message is more important than the messenger.

No matter what you may think of Bill, his words in 2014 are as true today as they were when he spoke of the need for African-Americans to take responsibility for our actions.

In addition to Bill Cosby's recommendations, I want to add my own which includes the need for African-Americans to build a \$1 trillion investment fund to be used to build African American businesses that will create jobs and generate prosperity in the black community.

It is time for African-Americans to take action and save our communities.

Elie Parker
San Leandro, CA

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Dear President Trump: It's Time to Start Meeting with Real Black Republicans

By **Raynard Jackson**
NNPA Newswire Columnist

I don't know why I have become the repository for the frustrations among Black Republicans across the country, but I have. Hardly a day goes by when I don't get calls from Black Republicans who feel totally and thoroughly ignored not only by you and your fledgling administration, but also by the national party, as well.

I am a nationally syndicated newspaper columnist published in over 200 newspapers every week. Last year, I wrote several columns supporting you, when it wasn't cool to do so. Last December, I had to deconstruct the liberal attacks on Senator Jeff Sessions and your aide Steve Bannon.

I tell you this simply as a way of saying that because of the 25-plus years that I have served this party, I think I have earned the right to say what I am about to say to you in this column.

Let me be clear, Mr. President, I want absolutely nothing from you or your administration other than success.

Since the election, you have met with

far more black Democrats than you have black Republicans—it's not even close. In your defense, you have never been active in the Republican Party, thus you have no basis for knowing many black Republicans. You know many more black Democrats, simply because you hung out in liberal cities like New York and Los Angeles.

Even your top black staffer is a Democrat with absolutely no institutional

had Blacks serving on your own transition team, who were not invited to attend your event last week? How in the hell is that even possible?

Speaker Paul Ryan has a black chief of staff in his speaker's office; this is the first time in the history of the country this has happened, and he was not there. Your remarks, at a minimum, should have acknowledged this historic appointment by Ryan, after all, isn't that the whole pur-

Sr., two black Republicans that you should have on speed dial. You should also get to know John Sibley Butler, who is a major serial entrepreneur. You can find out more about this event at: www.bafbf.org.

Oh, and by the way, Mr. President, the very party you now lead has tried to steal this event from me and has even filed a lawsuit against me to pressure me to walk away from the event I created. How is that for celebrating Black History Month? But I digress.

Which is more important to you, Mr. President, having blacks on your staff for window dressing or having black staffers that know what the hell they are doing?

Far too often, Republicans hire blacks, who may be good, competent people, but are wrong for the job.

Like you, I'm a scrapper and a counter puncher. I grew up around the Spinks family of boxing fame in St. Louis, Mo.

In all honesty, Mr. President, you have no blacks around you who are fighters—absolutely none.

I am a graduate of Oral Roberts University and one of the things Oral would always tell me was, "Go into everyman's world and meet them at the point of their need."

When will you come into our world, Mr. President? A great place to start is by meeting with those I will be honoring this weekend.

Raynard Jackson is founder and chairman of Black Americans for a Better Future (BAFBBF), a federally registered 527 Super PAC established to get more blacks involved in the Republican Party. BAFBBF focuses on the Black entrepreneur. For more information about BAFBBF, visit www.bafbf.org.

"Your direct interactions with the black community, for the most part, have been unmitigated disasters, especially, your meeting last year at the black church in Detroit and last week's event at the White House."

knowledge of the Republican Party's relationship with the black community—past, present or future. So, their natural inclination is to reach out to all of their Democratic friends for invitations to meet with you and to participate with you in last week's Black History Month's event.

Your direct interactions with the black community, for the most part, have been unmitigated disasters, especially, your meeting last year at the black church in Detroit and last week's event at the White House. There are several major black churches in Detroit, led by black Republican pastors, that you could have attended, but your staff chose a church led by a left-leaning minister. Last week, you held a listening session at the White House in honor of Black History Month and you invited more black Democrats than black Republicans.

Mr. President, do you realize that you

pose behind Black History Month?

Mr. President, you have at least four blacks on the executive committee of the RNC who have little to no engagement with you or your staff. This is totally bewildering to me. They are in effect part of the board of directors of the national party and no one around you seems to value or seek their input. Don't you think they should have been invited to the White House last week?

This is what happens when you surround yourself with black Democrats; they have no idea who any of these people are. The only thing that your senior staffer is doing is marking "their" territory, ostentatiously making it clear that they are the gatekeeper to all things relative to the black community. That staffer is failing you, Mr. Trump.

This weekend at "The Black Republican Trailblazer Awards Luncheon" I will honor Maxine Blake and Gerald Boyd,

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Local nonprofit gets its 'game on' for city's first ever online giving tournament

By Vicky D'Agostino
Guest Contributor
Maryland New Directions

MND prepares to go head-to-head against 55 other local nonprofits

Maryland New Directions (MND) and Brackets for Good 2017 have teamed up for a March Madness fundraiser in Baltimore's first ever online tournament, which tips off on February 24, 2017.

MND is an award winning nonprofit employment training and job placement agency dedicated to assisting low-income individuals to become self-sustaining members of the community. Founded in 1973, nearly 140,000 clients have made significant life changes through MND.

In this bracket style online tournament, nonprofits must score enough points to advance to the next round. Donations translate into points— one point equals one dollar. MND will retain the donations raised throughout the six-round tournament. At the end of each round, the nonprofit with the most points in the individual match-up advances to the next round, the points are reset, and the fundraising continues until a champion is crowned. The Championship round commences March 31. The Baltimore tournament champion will also receive a grand prize donation of \$10,000.

"Our team is in game mode for the competition. We've drafted some local businesses to support our tournament and coordinated fundraising events for the six-week tournament. Everyone from volunteers to board members is being put through their paces in order to spread the word, plan and man special events, and connect with their supporters," said Barbara Reed, development manager for MND.

Serving low-income Baltimore residents for 44 years, MND offers, no-cost employment training and career counseling. The programs' holistic and motivating approach gets measurable results through continuous training, personalized coaching and on-going support, equipping clients with the skills and confidence to overcome their obstacles and succeed.



Four of Maryland New Direction's most recent graduates (January 2017) of the Maritime Transportation Distribution and Logistics (MTDL) training program. (Left to right) Latisha Alers; Dwayne Magruder; Sh'ian Velazquez; and Romello Little
Courtesy Photo/Maryland New Directions

MND's Career Focus Program offers job readiness training to Baltimore residents who are struggling with significant barriers to employment. In one-on-one appointments, clients are assisted with writing resumes, practice interviewing and receive career counseling. Workshops are offered to help clients think like an employer, identify skills, set goals, search for jobs online and more. A fully equipped 32-station computer lab is also available to enhance computer literacy and conduct job searches. Job-ready clients are often connected with MND partner employers who are seeking workers.

Specialized training, such as the Maritime Transportation Distribution & Logistics Training Program offers industry specific education and preparedness while partnering with employers at, and near, the Port of Baltimore to provide motivated jobseekers with a comprehensive program and long-term career opportunity. Program participants have the opportunity to tour the Port of Baltimore, receive assistance in applying for

their Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) card and obtain forklift certification and/or additional industry certifications as desired.

MND provides services to hundreds of Baltimore area residents annually, with 358 clients receiving services in fiscal year 2016. While some attend only individualized services, 298 (83 percent) completed training and 211 have already secured employment. The average annual starting wage for an MND graduate is \$12.25, forty percent higher than the minimum wage of \$8.75. Additionally, MND's ongoing supportive services with clients allows them to gauge an employment success and retention rate, currently reflecting an impressive 82.5 percent for clients maintaining employment for one year or longer.

"MND is very fiscally responsible. Our costs per participant is one of the lowest in the workforce development field," cited Grace Lee, executive director.

Local businesses are joining the 'team' to host events that support MND's Jump Shot for Jobs campaign. Such events

will include The Lord Baltimore Hotel's Happy Hour (Feb 28, 4-7 p.m.), On The Border Mexican Grill & Cantina's Give Back (March 7, 5-9 p.m.), and the Mt. Washington Tavern's Hang Time (March 9, 4-8 p.m.), with a portion of evenings' proceeds donated to score points in hopes to advance MND forward through the brackets.

The public is invited to join the "fundraising" for MND and help improve the economic future for our city and its residents.

"If you're interested in having a blast while supporting families and economic growth, we invite you to be part of our Jump Shots for Job Team. There are many ways to help raise awareness, become a partner and participate in the giving," said Reed.

To learn more about MND, visit: www.mdnewdirections.org or <https://www.facebook.com/MNDBaltimore/>. To donate and learn more about the Maryland New Directions 2017 Brackets for Good Tournament visit, <https://baltimore.bfg.org/city>.

'The Obama Years: The Power of Words' screened at Reginald F. Lewis Museum

By Ursula V. Battle

Former U.S. President Barack Obama was known as the nation's "Commander In Chief," but his extensive involvement in the creation of his speeches is deserving of another title "Writer In Chief." In celebration of Black History Month, Smithsonian Channel will air a documentary that will take viewers inside the defining moments of his political career through the prism of his most memorable speeches. The film, "The Obama Years: The Power of Words," provides a rare glimpse into the creation of the speeches delivered by the the gifted orator.

On February 9, 2017, Comcast, Smithsonian Channel and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture partnered to present a private screening of the film, which premieres on Monday, February 27, 2017 at 8 p.m.

Approximately 100 people attended the private screening, which took place at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History &



Comcast, Smithsonian Channel and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture partnered to present a private screening of "The Obama Years: The Power of Words" on February 9, 2017. (Left to right) Chris Hoelzl, Senior Vice President, Research & Development, Smithsonian Channel; Bernard "Jack" Young, Baltimore City Council President; Janice Janik, SVP Sales and Affiliate Marketing, Smithsonian Channel; E. Claire Jerry, Ph.D., Curator, Division of Political History, National Museum of American History; Kimberly R. Moffitt, Ph.D., Associate Professor, American Studies, University of Maryland Baltimore County; Donna Rattley Washington, Regional Vice President, Government & Community Affairs, Comcast; Wanda Q. Draper, executive director, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture; J. Howard Henderson, President & CEO, Greater Baltimore Urban League

Culture located on 830 E. Pratt Street in Baltimore. The event also included a Reception, Panel Discussion, and Q&A session.

"The screening was a tremendous success," said Brad Palazzo, director of External Affairs for Comcast's Beltway Region. "We were honored to do the private screening, and the film was well-received. Attendees learned about Barack Obama's speech writing capability and his ability to deliver them. They were enlightened to learn how involved he was in the writing of his speeches."

"The Obama Years: The Power of Words," is narrated by Jesse Williams, star of the hit series Grey's Anatomy. The program also features insights from eminent historians Doris Kearns Goodwin and Douglas Brinkley and key members of Obama's inner circle, including senior advisor Valerie Jarrett, Chief Strategist David Axelrod, and speechwriters Jon Favreau.

"He would edit and pull out paragraphs to make sure the words of his speeches were the words he wanted to deliver, said Palazzo. "He had speech-

writers, but was very involved in the process. The film is very impressive."

The panelists was comprised of the following individuals: E. Claire Jerry, Ph.D., Curator, Division of Political History, National Museum of American History; Kimberly R. Moffitt, Ph.D., Associate Professor, American Studies, University of Maryland Baltimore County; Chris Hoelzl, Senior Vice President, Research & Development, Smithsonian Channel; and Donna Rattley Washington, Regional Vice President of Government & Community Affairs, for Comcast.

"It was a nice panel discussion and timely, given the current political climate and a new president," said Palazzo. "People who attended the screening really enjoyed the interaction, and the two-way discussion with the panel."

He added, "Comcast is committed to the community and to diversity. We love to partner with others who share this vision. We were happy to partner with Smithsonian Channel to bring this wonderful content to the masses."

Five prospects to watch at NFL Combine

By *Turron Davenport*

Ozzie Newsome, John Harbaugh and Eric Decosta will make the annual trip to Indianapolis next week for the NFL Combine. Assistant coaches, including Bobby Engram and Chris Hewitt will also be on hand to evaluate talent for the Baltimore Ravens.

The 2017 NFL Draft is the opportunity for the Ravens to replace some of the key pieces lost to free agency and retirement. Steve Smith Sr. has officially moved on to the next chapter of his life. The veteran receiver will now serve as an analyst for NFL Network.

Zach Orr was forced to retire after a neck injury revealed a condition that could have caused paralysis and there is a good chance that standout defensive tackle Brandon Williams may receive a significant free agent offer to play elsewhere.

The Ravens brass is now charged with finding players that can fill the gaps and help the team get back to the playoffs after a two-year absence.

Baltimore has the No. 16 pick, which will give the team access to a difference maker. The Ravens have found plenty of success drafting players in the later rounds as well.

Here are five players to watch for the Ravens:

John Ross | 5-foot-11, 190 pounds | WR | Washington

The Ravens have possessed the need for speed over the last few years. It was



Alabama cornerback Marlon Humphrey at the National Championship game against Clemson in January 2017
Courtesy Photo/AL.com

a major factor in their selection of Breshad Perriman in 2015 and a big reason why they signed Mike Wallace last year. Ross has plenty of speed, which will be on display at the Combine. He has reportedly blazed a 4.30 time in the forty-yard dash already. Ross' speed combined with Joe Flacco's big arm would give the Ravens the ability to score from anywhere on the field.

Joe Williams | 5-foot-11, 205 pounds | RB | Utah

Williams is a home run threat at running back that instantly provides a jolt to

the team's speed. Selecting the senior running back gives the Ravens a player that has the grit to run the ball inside as well the acceleration to get outside and turn the corner on stretch plays. The senior running back has overcome a lot and developed a great deal of mental toughness as a result. If the Ravens interview Williams at the Combine, they will come away thoroughly impressed with how mature he is.

Montravious Adams | 6-foot-3, 308 pounds | DT | Auburn

Adams is an option for the Ravens if they lose Williams or fellow defensive tackle Lawrence Guy to free agency. The Auburn senior has violent hands and is a disruptive player in the middle of the defensive line.

Baltimore places heavy stock in players they see at the Senior Bowl. Adams was a standout during the week of practices. His athleticism and agility will show in the bag drills.

Haasan Reddick | 6-foot-1, 230 pounds | LB | Temple

Speaking of Senior Bowl perform-

ances, Reddick put on one of the best performances in Mobile. Having played defensive end at Temple, Reddick needed to show that he is able to drop back into coverage as part of his conversion to linebacker.

Reddick showed that he is more than capable of handling the change. He also dominated in pass rushing drills. The Ravens could select Reddick to fill the void left by Orr's retirement.

Marlon Humphrey | 6-foot-1, 200 pounds | CB | Alabama

A list of Ravens prospects is never complete without a player from Alabama on the card. Having played for Alabama, Ozzie Newsome always has his eyes on the talent that is coming out of Tuscaloosa.

Humphrey has NFL bloodlines. His father, Bobby was a running back for the Denver Broncos in the 1990s.

The athletic defensive back is going to excel in all of the drills at the Combine. His toughness on the field will be an attractive trait for the Ravens as they continue to add to their secondary.

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Six ways to help your child avoid gossiping

By Janice Brown

It's hard to avoid, but just about everywhere we go we are bombarded with gossip and rumors. On magazine covers, we can't help but see celebrity break-ups, hook-ups and arrests. On electronic media, we witness rumors and lies about anyone famous including our elected officials. From people we know, we hear the latest personal information about friends, family and even acquaintances. And of course, most of us are guilty of indulging in sharing gossip, too.

Sometimes, it just feels good to dish with a friend, and sometimes we feel justified by a real concern about, or frustration with, someone's behavior. But when chatter turns to divulging private information about someone else, the talk can be destructive. Gossip and rumors can be devastating to the person the rumors are about, the community and even to the person gossiping.

With all of the rumors and gossip swirling around us, how do we help children avoid participating in this

behavior especially when we might be guilty of gossiping ourselves? Here are several tips:

1. Remind children that talking about other people's private business can cause hurt feelings. When the rumors reach the person who the rumors are about (and they usually do), that person will most likely be very upset. This could end their friendship. Talk with children about how it might feel to have friends talking about their personal information. It can be helpful for children to understand how it would feel if this were to happen to them. Doing this can build empathy. By gossiping, children open themselves up to repercussions such as rumors being spread about them. The person who was gossiped about is often so angry and hurt that they start talking



about the people who hurt them. The cycle continues, and more people are hurt and angry.

2. Brainstorm some good techniques to use when gossip is being shared.

Come up with some direct approaches and some softer techniques. An example of a direct response is to let the person talking know that what they are saying will probably hurt the person the rumors are about and you would like to talk about something else. Other techniques include changing the subject or walking away from the chatter.

3. Explain that sometimes people gossip because they are angry or upset. Talk about what to do in this circumstance, such as talking directly to that friend instead of talking about him or her. If your child does not feel comfortable talking directly, suggest role-playing a conversation they might have. Even if your child ultimately decides not to talk to the friend about the issue, it is important that children vent their feelings and not hold them in.

4. Discuss safe people to confide in if your child is upset. Suggest if your child wants to talk to you about anything, including other people, he or she is always welcome to talk confidentially to you, their parent or guardian. (And do

keep the information confidential, as you promised.) Decide which other adults might be good choices to talk to: a trusted family member, a favorite teacher, or a specific member of the clergy, are a few examples.

5. Speak up when you hear children talking about others. Sometimes it's fine to be a "fly on the wall" and to listen and not engage with kids and their friends. But when kids know adults can hear them, and the adults don't do anything when kids say something inappropriate, they think what they said is okay.

6. Model good behavior by not talking about other people's private business, especially in front of children. Even when it appears that children are not paying attention to what we say, they see and hear more than we think. If you make the mistake of gossiping, take responsibility for it. Let your child know you made a mistake and your goal is to not gossip.

By utilizing these tips, you can give your children a better awareness of the negative effects of gossip, and some techniques to avoid it.

Janice Brown is the Santa Barbara, California-based author of *Rumorang*. Visit her online at: www.rumorangbook.com.



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What African-Americans Need to Know about ALS

By Stacy M. Brown

The Brigance Brigade Foundation, a Maryland-based nonprofit, has teamed up with the National Institutes of Health ALS Research Lab to expand research on the racial and ethnic differences across ALS cases.

Classified as an orphan disease occurring in a small portion of the population and commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord.

Officials at the ALS Association note the three words that describe ALS—amyotrophic, which refers to muscle and nourishment—when a muscle has no nourishment, it atrophies or wastes away. Further, "lateral" identifies the area in an individual's spinal cord where portions of the nerve cells that signal and control the muscles are located. As the area degenerates, it leads to scarring and hardening or "sclerosis," in the region.

Despite the over-sampling for minority populations with ALS, the percentage of African-American cases reported is not proportionate to the population.

"ALS is not spoken about in the African-American community because there are not a lot of African-Americans who are diagnosed with ALS," said O.J. Brigance, who spent a decade fighting the disease and as an activist on behalf of families with ALS.

The National ALS Registry gathered data from October 19, 2010 to December 31, 2011 and found that 12,187 individuals were living with ALS, which is more common among whites, males, non-Hispanics, and those aged 60 to 69.

The study revealed that white men and women were twice as likely to have ALS than black men and women; and males had a higher rate than females across all races with four in 100,000 ever being diagnosed with ALS.

"In 2007, one of the first symptoms I experienced was a loss of strength in my right arm. I was playing racquetball and noticed I didn't have the same power in my swing," Brigance said. "I also started having twitching in my muscles,



O.J. and Chanda Brigance recently visited the NIH to tour the Laboratory of Neurogenetics. Courtesy Photo

which I later learned were called fasciculation's. I didn't have any family history of ALS. I am what they call a sporadic case, which accounts for 95 percent of cases.

"There are also familial cases of ALS, which account for the remaining five percent of cases," Brigance said, noting that ALS is a disease that is diagnosed by process of elimination.

Brigance and his wife, Chanda, started the Brigance Brigade foundation in 2008 to help with the expenses not covered by insurance, but are critical to everyday quality of life.

While other organizations raise money for research, Brigance says they didn't notice any that focused on patient services.

"We were seeing these medical bills roll in and wondered how families pay for this. That was the impetus for us starting the Brigance Brigade," he said. "I am not saying raising money for research is not important. However, we also need to help those living with ALS right now."

ALS has been shown to have a genetic basis and finding genes that cause ALS will help scientists learn how to treat it, yet African-Americans don't often volunteer for genetic research studies, Brigance said.

Without African-American DNA in research studies, it's unclear how blacks contract ALS, a fact that has the potential to leave the community out of the equation when effective treatments for the diseases are developed, he said.

This also hinders scientists from learn-

ing everything about the disease regardless of ethnicity.

The NIH needs comprehensive information about DNA from all backgrounds to know more precisely how the disease works so the foundation and the NIH are seeking to increase in enrollment in research studies.

"I would tell anyone diagnosed that even though they have been diagnosed with ALS, it doesn't have to be a death sentence. Will there be changes and lifestyle adjustments? Yes, but living life is still possible," Brigance said.

"I'm not saying living with ALS is easy by any stretch of the imagination. Quite the opposite, it will test every fiber of your being.

"However, I also believe that those who walk this journey with ALS have a certain intestinal fortitude and fight to accomplish whatever they put their minds to. Life has a way of preparing us for every trial through previous life experiences."

For more information or to contribute, visit www.brigancebrigade.org/

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Katherine Johnson goes from 'Hidden Figure' to Public Treasure

At 98, Katherine Johnson insists she has lived an ordinary life. However to others, she has proven to be nothing short of extraordinary.

Johnson is the recipient of the 2015 National Medal of Freedom and last year, was named to People magazine's list of 25 Women Changing the World.

Now, a movie based on her brilliant 33-year career at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), has opened the eyes of millions to this legendary hidden figure.

Based on the book, the movie *Hidden Figures* is the story of Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn and Mary Jackson, who were among the first African-American women to work for NASA during the space race in the 1950s and 1960s.

Their jobs were segregated in computer divisions that undermined their abilities and capabilities of achievement, but their intelligence and poise shined through anyway.

"I miss working," Johnson said. "I'd go back now."

After leaving her teaching job in 1953, Johnson began working for NASA and was able to calculate the trajectory for numerous space missions, including the space flight of Alan Shephard, the first African American in space, and the trajectory for the famed 1968 Apollo 11 flight to the Moon.

"I'd do them over if I had to. I'd do anything for anyone," she said.

At an early age, Johnson developed enviable math skills so much so that even NASA officials wrote a story about her titled, "The Girl Who Loved to Count."

"I counted everything. I counted the steps to the road, the steps up to church, the number of dishes and silverware I washed ... anything that could be counted, I did," Johnson said. "I entered college, I was 15. I was going to be a math teacher because that was it. You could be a math teacher or a nurse but I was told I would make a good research mathematician and they had me take all of the courses in the catalogue."

When Astronaut John Glenn went to the moon, Johnson said her *Hidden Figures* crew acted as the computer for the



Former NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson is seen after President Barack Obama presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2015, during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House in Washington. Photo Credit: NASA/Bill Ingalls

mission. She said calculating everything involved in the flight was like a geometry problem.

"I felt most proud of the success of the Apollo mission. We had to determine so much. Where you were, where the moon would be and how fast the astronauts were going," Johnson said. "We were really concerned but the astronaut had to do it just as we laid it out. I was looking at the television and hoping that we were right."

Born in 1918 in West Virginia, Johnson was a research mathematician, who by her own admission, was simply fascinated by numbers, according to her biography posted by NASA.

By the age of 10, Johnson was a high school freshman, an amazing feat in an era when school for African-Americans normally stopped at eighth grade. Her father was determined that Johnson would have a chance to meet her potential.

An achiever at the highest level, Johnson graduated from high school at 14 and from college at 18.

By 1953, the growing demands of early space research meant there were openings for African-American computers at Langley Research Center's Guidance and Navigation Department, and Johnson found the perfect place to put her extraordinary mathematical skills to work.

Glenn requested that she personally recheck the calculations made by the new electronic computers before his flight aboard *Friendship 7*— the mission where he became the first American to orbit the Earth. She continued to work at NASA until 1986.

Her calculations proved as critical to the success of the Apollo Moon landing program and the start of the Space Shuttle program, as they did to those first steps on the country's journey into space, according to NASA.

Still, Johnson said the book, the Academy Award nominated movie, and her celebrated work with NASA aren't her greatest accomplishments.

"I'm 98. Just staying alive is the greatest accomplishment," she said.

When accepting People Magazine's honor, she offered sage advice to others.

"Find out what your dream is and work at it because if you like what you're doing, you will do well," Johnson said.

"He drove the family 120 miles to Institute, West Virginia, where I could continue my education through high school," she said.



Katherine Johnson sits at her desk with a globe, or "Celestial Training Device." Courtesy Photo /NASA

Union Baptist Church Celebrates Red Dress Sunday

By Brenda Bowe Johnson

The Historic Union Baptist Church celebrated "National Wear Red Day" at their 11:00 am worship service. Union Baptist Church's participation in Go Red for Women is in recognition of the fact that one out of three deaths among women result from heart disease and stroke. Through the participation of the entire church in National Red Dress Day, educational materials and tactics to increase knowledge of this crippling disease as well as an awareness of preventive measures to be taken to improve cardiovascular health was stressed.

Red Dress Sunday was sponsored by The Leona Carpenter Women's Sunday School Class. Mrs. Carpenter, 95, taught the class for more than 25 years. She retired about six years ago. Red Dress Sunday was also celebrated in memory of Carolyn Hardnett Robinson, former chair of the Red Dress Sunday committee nearly 10 years before her death in 2015. Carolyn was a faithful member of the Women's Sunday School Class.

In addition, the affair was also held in honor of Antoinette Thornton Edmonds, a member of the Women's Sunday School Class. Unfortunately she died last week. These ladies were of unimaginable strength.

The women wore red dresses and the men wore red jackets, ties, handkerchiefs, etc. and the youth wore red also. The minister, Rev. Dr. Alvin Hathaway, wore a white robe with red stripes.

"National Wear Red Day is important to me not only because of the importance it holds with Union Baptist and Carolyn Hardnett Robinson and Angie Edmonds, but [me] personally. It holds a place in my heart because my mother and father had heart challenges, which led to their death. I was extremely moved to see the women and men support such an important day," said church member Shirley Basfield-Dunlap.

Following the service the congregation had a photo session by forming the human heart shape. Every church member was presented with a bag containing heart-healthy snacks and information from St. Agnes Hospital on Women's Health and Their Hearts. Each woman was presented with a red bracelet that states:

"UBC Wears Red for Women." The band will be a reminder of the historic church's support on taking action to continue to fight the battle against women's and particularly African American women's heart disease.

Assisting with the success of this worthy event was publicist, Shirley Basfield-Dunlap, St. Agnes Liaison, Anthony Robinson (husband of Carolyn), photographer, David McDaniels and Minister, Rev. Dr. Alvin C. Hathaway, Jr.



Heart shaped photo in recognition of the fact that heart disease affects as many women as men.

Jack & Jill of America Arundel Bay Area Chapter inspires kids to read

Gambrills, Md.— Arundel Bay Area Chapter members of Jack & Jill of America partnered with local organizations to install a reading room in the child care center at Sarah's House, a supportive housing program offering emergency and transitional housing for homeless families in Anne Arundel County.

Child care is among an array of services offered to residents at the facility.

In addition to building a culturally diverse reading corner, ABA members painted the space, replaced office furniture, and with support from the Target Corporation refinined the flooring with colorful, kid-friendly rugs. The space was decorated to provide a cozy environment for children to gather and read.

Earlier this month, the space was dedicated to Harriett E. Smith, the beloved director of child care for 10 years who passed away suddenly in November 2016.

"It is a delight for Sarah's House Child Care to have received such a useful and beautiful donation," A. Tucker, Sarah's House school age liaison declared.

The President of the ABA Chapter, L.T. Harden reported, "children's literacy is a national focus of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Literacy is inextricably tied to



Members of the Arundel Bay Area Chapter of Jack & Jill of America partnered with local organizations to install a reading room in the child care center at Sarah's House, a supportive housing program offering emergency and transitional housing for homeless families in Anne Arundel County. Courtesy Photo

children's success in life. As a Jack and Jill of America Chapter, we are elated that we can help support children's liter-

acy in our community. We thank everyone who helped make the reading corner a reality. We hope the reading corner

will be in existence for years to come."

The ABA chapter was formed in October 1990 and its mission has not changed. Since its inception, the ABA Chapter (formerly known as the Greater Glen Burnie Chapter) has been involved with community initiatives. This past year Chapter children and members volunteered at a shelter, donated books to reading program, made sandwiches for the homeless, caroled for senior citizens and made weekend food backpacks for needy children.

Jack and Jill of America, Inc., is a membership organization of mothers with children ages 2-19, dedicated to nurturing future African-American leaders by strengthening children through leadership development, volunteer service, philanthropic giving and civic duty. The organization aims to seek for all children the same advantages which Chapter members desire for their own children and support all national, regional and local legislation aimed at bettering the conditions of all children.

The ABA Chapter looks forward to continued involvement and support of children in the Anne Arundel County community.



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Rambling Rose

*Concluding Black History Month with
“positive stories about positive people”*



Rosa Pryor Trusty

Hello my dear friends: The wonderful the weather is fit for a wonderful month of the year! Black History Month is one of my favorite months of the year. It encouraged me over 16 years ago to publish my book, *African American Entertainment in Baltimore*, to preserve the legacy of everyday people in Baltimore—especially Pennsylvania Avenue; a book of positive stories about positive people in pictures. It was and still is a success.

I so enjoy writing about the entertainment community of entertainment; it has given me lots of stories to tell. Well, my dear friends we are not finished yet. To close out Black History Month, I want to tell you about James Hamlin and his family, who built a bakery from the ground up called the Avenue Bakery, located in the heart of Pennsylvania Avenue on the corner of Baker Street. Now six years later, the Avenue Bakery is the first stop on The Pennsylvania Avenue National Heritage Tour, which continues to attract a robust, eclectic, growing following statewide and regionally of all races and ages. Distinguished for its

tasty offering of original Poppay’s Rolls, heirloom-inspired baked goods. The tour is a museum-quality experience featuring a gallery stroll of archive footage and framed photos that bring the golden era of Pennsylvania Avenue to life under one roof. So my friends, not only does this black-owned bakery have a gallery of famous African American locals on the walls, but the owner is the baker behind the best out-of-site homemade rolls made right on the premises. They melt in your mouth and would make your mother smile.

Adding to the legacy, James Hamlin invites you all to the unveiling of the photomontage featuring the life and impact of Thurgood Marshal, created by Stuart Hudgins on Friday, Feb. 24, 11 a.m., at the Avenue Bakery. The montage highlights his life and legacy. We will see you there.

The Harlem Gardens Apartments, located at 1700 Edmondson Ave. in Baltimore is having a Black History Celebration with music by Sister Drummers; griot Angela Dobson, and yours truly will be there for a book signing on



Rev. Dr. Ruth J. Travis is celebrating 30 years in the Pastoral Ministry and Preaching for 35 years at a “Retirement Celebration on Friday, March 3 at St. John AME Church, 810 N. Carrollton Avenue in Baltimore at 7 p.m. The Pastor is Rev. Dr. Peggy E. Wall. For more information, contact Marlene Baker Edwards 410-585-5476.



The Avenue Bakery Family and The Royal Theater & Community Heritage Corporation is proud to announce the installation of with the unveiling of the photomontage featuring the life and impact of “Thurgood Marshall” created by Stuart Hudgins in the grounds of the Avenue Bakery located at 2229 Pennsylvania Avenue in Baltimore on Friday, February 24 11 a.m. All are invited.



Guys hanging out at the American Legion Federal Post No.19 located 1502 Madison Avenue. Post No. 19 is one of the oldest American Legion Posts in Baltimore, Maryland. It has live entertainment weekly featuring the top local musicians. It is known as a fun and safe place to enjoy socializing and the kitchen serves the best foods.

Friday, Feb. 24 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Black History Month ends with a jazz concert featuring Dr. Phill Butts Sunset Jazz Quartet with vocalist Denyse Pearson and Reggie Jackson on Sat., Feb. 25, from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Caton Castle Lounge, 20 S. Caton Ave. Cash bar and the kitchen is open serving some dynamite soul food. For more information, call 443-859-0124.

Well, my dear friends, enjoy this beautiful weather, and be kind to each other. I got to go; I am out of space. I will see you somewhere, somehow. Remember, if you need me, call me at 410-833-9474 or email me atrosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I’M MUSICALLY YOURS.

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Innovative new toolkit designed to help reduce teen and unplanned pregnancy

Washington, D.C.— For many in the African-American community, the black church has historically been a place where tough community issues are addressed, and that is why The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (The National Campaign), Values Partnerships (VPI), and prominent faith leaders nationwide have teamed up to provide important resources to black clergy focused on early and unintended pregnancy.

Newly developed resources available at www.TheNationalCampaign.org/blackchurch, include: free videos, fact sheets, tips, and other information to help church leaders learn about these issues and bring them to their congregations in meaningful ways.

“The Black church has always been a powerful force for good and is uniquely situated to provide information, support, and guidance on relationships, sex, contraception, and childbearing,” said Ginny Ehrlich, CEO, The National Campaign. “As a national organization committed to serving all women, we

welcome this partnership with VPI and black clergy leaders nationwide.”

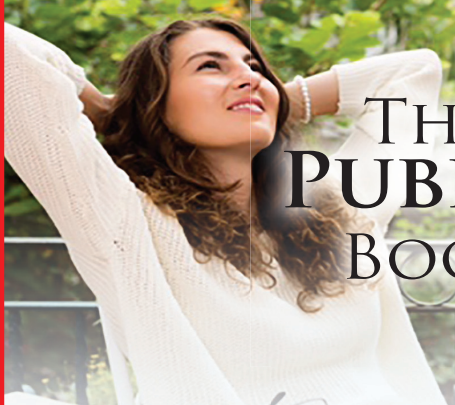
Although the teen birth rate for young black women in the United States has declined 49 percent in the past decade and 73 percent since peaking in 1991, it is still the case that roughly four in 10 black girls get pregnant before the age of 20. Among black women of all ages, 64 percent of pregnancies are described by women themselves as unplanned.

Research shows that having an unplanned pregnancy as a teenager or in one’s young adulthood has a huge impact on a woman, her partner, her family, and her community.


“The black church and teen and unplanned pregnancy project from VPI and The National Campaign comes at a critically important time,” said Joshua DuBois, Founder/CEO, Values Partnerships. “The African-American church has been at the forefront of social change for generations and this is a moment where the church can rally around teen and unplanned pregnancy and make real progress on behalf of



The fact sheets, tips and videos available were developed in response to a The National Campaign Black Clergy Convening in 2015. For more information, visit: www.TheNationalCampaign.org/blackchurch. Photo Credit: ClipArt.com



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teens, women, and entire families.”

Among those who lent their expertise to this project and appear in the videos are Rev. W. Antoni Sinkfield and First Lady Kristy Sinkfield of Payne Chapel AME Church in Nashville, Tenn.; Rev. Que English of the Bronx Christian Fellowship Church in New York City; Dr. Yvonne Bennett of Hallelujah Christian Fellowship Ministries in Union, NJ; Rev. Kip Bernard Banks, Sr. of East Washington Heights Baptist Church in Washington, DC; Bishop Darren Ferguson of Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Arverne (Far Rockaway), NY; Rev. Derrick Harkins of the Union Theological Seminary in New York City; and Rev. Tony Lee of Community of Hope AME Church in Hillcrest Heights, MD.

“Stop being afraid or ashamed or whatever it is about dealing with the realities of human beings, being sexual beings. Have that conversation and create safe ground in the life of the church,” was the advice from Rev. Antoni Sinkfield of Payne Chapel AME Church in

Nashville, Tennessee, for his colleagues.

“When our kids come to church, they just want someone to love and care about them. And out of that love and care emerges conversations about things that are important to them,” First Lady Sinkfield continued.

“Teenage and unplanned pregnancy is definitely an issue that impacts our communities,” said Rev. Lee of Community of Hope AME Church of Hillcrest Heights, Maryland. “The church needs to deal with the issues of the day and issues that impact people. The church should be a place where people can come not just for the answers to their problems but to be able to talk through the challenges of their lives.”

The videos address topics such as what churches can do and what scripture says. The fact sheets, tips and videos available at www.TheNationalCampaign.org/blackchurch were developed in response to a The National Campaign Black Clergy Convening in 2015.

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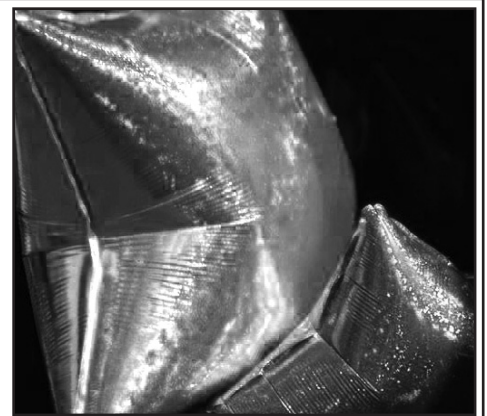
Customers reminded to keep foil balloons away from power lines

*Metallic balloons can lead to power
outages if not disposed of properly*

Baltimore— While you may want to
celebrate with balloons, don't lose sight
of foil balloons, also known as Mylar
balloons, that can lead to outages when
they come into contact with power lines.
Untethered balloons cause thousands of
unnecessary electric service interruptions
for BGE customers each year.

These balloons have been known to
float for days and can end up having a
negative impact on the environment.
When foil-coated balloons contact a
power line or other electric equipment,
their metallic properties can cause a
surge of electricity that can impede
equipment. These types of outages are
preventable.

BGE encourages customers to help
reduce foil balloon-related power out-
ages and ensure safety by keeping the
following tips in mind:



- Keep balloons tethered at all times
and attached to weights.
- Properly dispose of Mylar balloons
by puncturing the balloon to release he-
lium that otherwise could cause the bal-
loon to float away.
- NEVER touch a power line. Do not
attempt to retrieve any object entangled
in an overhead power line. For assis-
tance, call BGE at 1-800-685-0123.
- Always assume power lines are live
and keep yourself, your belongings and
anything you are carrying at least 10
feet away from power lines.

SECU's New \$40,000 Scholarship Program

Linthicum— As part of the continued support and partnership with the University
System of Maryland, SECU, Maryland's largest credit union has announced the launch
of the inaugural SECU - University System of Maryland Scholarship Program.

Under the new program, a total of \$40,000 in scholarship dollars, to fund individ-
ual scholarships ranging from \$2,000-\$5,000 each, will be available to SECU
members who are enrolled or accepted into a University System of Maryland insti-
tution for the fall 2017 semester.

"The new SECU-University System of Maryland Scholarship Program supports
and advances the strong relationship that already exists between our two organiza-
tions, and provides SECU members with financial support for their continuing edu-
cation while exposing new members to the advantages of credit union
membership," says Carmen David Mirabile, Vice President of Marketing at SECU.

To be eligible for the new scholarships, applicants need to be an existing SECU
member or may apply for SECU membership as part of this program. The program
is open to all graduating high school seniors, current USM students, and students
transferring to any of USM's 12 institutions for the fall 2017 semester.

Applicants will be required to submit a 500-750 word essay or a two-minute video
that discusses how they believe financial education will impact their future finan-
cial goals. Essays and videos must be submitted to SECU by April 30, 2017.

SECU will award scholarships based on essay or video content, grammar and
spelling, creativity, originality, and writing or production style. Essays and videos
will be judged by a pre-selected committee, with scholarship winners notified in
May 2017.

For more information about the new SECU/University System of Maryland
Scholarship Program, visit secumd.org/scholarships.

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