

Allstate Honors “Geek” from Glen Burnie



Glen Burnie native and business owner Ariell Johnson has created what she says is a “inclusive geek space” for residents and visitors of Philadelphia where she owns Amalgam Comics & Coffeeshouse—the first black-owned comic bookstore on the East Coast. When Allstate Insurance Company celebrated Black History last month, Johnson was selected to be a part of their annual digital, social and radio campaign, “Worth Telling.” The campaign spotlights three African-Americans whom the company says are making a positive difference on society and inspiring others. (See article on page 10)

Courtesy Photo

McDaniel College to host Natural Hair Conference

By Stacy M. Brown

They say it's a "curl thing." Two McDaniel College students, Kylah Chadwick and Khadijah Poston, have organized a natural hair curl conference at the school on Sunday, March 26, 2017.

Already popular for their YouTube channel called "CollegeSistahs TV," the duo founded "Curl Friends," a new student organization at McDaniel College to celebrate and spread awareness about natural hair.

"Khadijah and I are both major supporters of the natural hair movement. There is not a day that goes by where we don't have a conversation about our natural hair whether it's giving each other tips or having a conversation about the latest news about natural hair," Chadwick said. "Therefore, we felt that it was important to bring something new to our campus to support the other naturals that are out there like us. So, we started to plan this event, while sharing our vision with different people on campus, and it started to all come together."

Poston says the conference will address their notion that the recent natural hair movement that has swept the nation isn't just a coincidence.

"I just think over the past several decades, people have slowly started getting away from seeing straight hair as a necessity and a norm," Poston said. "We're just glad we can provide the tools and knowledge to the people at McDaniel who may not be as knowledgeable about black hair in general."

Sponsored by McDaniel's English Department and the Office of Student



McDaniel College students Kylah Chadwick (right) and Khadijah Poston (left), popular for their YouTube channel called "CollegeSistahs TV," founded "Curl Friends," a new student organization at McDaniel College to celebrate and spread awareness about natural hair.
Courtesy Photo/McDaniel College

Diversity and Inclusion, the conference will include natural hair discussions with popular YouTube bloggers; classes; and networking opportunities.

Natural hair swag bags with free natural product samples and a raffle will also help highlight the conference, which is scheduled from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Additionally, natural hair psychologist Afiya Mbilshaka, a professor at Howard University, has committed to attend the conference, the students said.

"I often see stories and articles about women with natural hair who have a difficult time in the workplace," Chadwick said. "Personally, I am fortunate not to

have had any negative experiences when it comes to my natural hair and my work. However, it is unfortunate that something like hair can have an effect on someone's work life."

Poston says that it wasn't until recently that she decided to go natural and she has been pleased with the response.

"Since I haven't necessarily been in the professional workforce yet myself, I haven't encountered too many negative experiences. I mostly just get compliments on my hair," she said, arguing against the thought that women who wear their hair natural are making a statement of some form.

"It shows how natural hair can be mul-

tidimensional. It's important to understand that deciding to wear your natural hair is a choice," Chadwick said.

"Now, whether natural hair is a statement or not is mainly predicated on the person you are talking to. Some people wear their hair natural because it is the hair that is growing out of their scalp so they wouldn't consider it a statement," she said. "Others wear their natural hair to show off the pride of their culture and would consider this a statement of black pride. Personally, I feel as though my natural hair is not a statement. It's the hair that God gave me. However at the same time, I am aware that to the world, my natural hair can be considered a statement because I am going against society."

"So, I walk this line of wanting to celebrate my natural hair and everything that comes along with it, and also wanting people to realize that me wearing my natural hair shouldn't be considered a big phenomenon, because this only perpetuates the belief that natural hair shouldn't be the norm," Chadwick continued.

Poston says she views those wearing their hair natural as their way of embracing the hair that God has given them.

"It's what naturally grows out of your head so, I don't think wearing your hair naturally is a statement. It's similar to someone wearing a weave or relaxed hair, those aren't statements, it's just what they like and what works for them," she said.

For more information about the conference or to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/its-a-curl-thing-mcdaniel-colleges-1st-natural-hair-conference-tickets-29408957985>.

Baltimore City Chamber of Commerce Launches Annual Scholarship Award Program

Proceeds from First Annual Scholarship Award Dinner to honor Charles R. Owens' eight years of service as Baltimore City Chamber of Commerce President Proceeds to benefit scholarship fund

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For Tickets: <http://bit.ly/2kFAXnC>

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Guest Editorials/Commentary

Stopping animal diseases before they reach humans

By Satesh Bidaisee and Calum Macpherson

It's hard to believe that medical researchers could underestimate the dangers of tuberculosis—the world's deadliest infection.

Yet according to a study published by *Lancet Infectious Diseases*, a medical journal, one form of the disease is a far bigger threat than previously thought—animal TB.

The illness, which can be acquired through contaminated food or close contact with animals, afflicts roughly 120,000 humans around the world. It's harder to treat than the conventional form of the disease, and is resistant to the main antibiotic used to treat TB.

Zoonotic diseases—illnesses spread between animals and humans—represent some of the most serious public-health threats the world faces. Battling them effectively will require a broader approach to human health, one that takes into account the relationship between human beings, animals, and the wider ecosystem.

Nearly three million people die annually of animal-borne diseases. These illnesses include everything from influenza and salmonella, to Ebola, malaria and Zika.

In an alarming number of cases, zoonotic illnesses have led to devastating epidemics. The 2014 Ebola outbreak, for instance, is believed to have started when a bat transmitted the illness to a young boy in Guinea. The disease soon spread throughout West Africa, with cases emerging as far away as the United States. Ultimately, more than 11,000 people died.

The mosquito-borne Zika virus has infected tens of thousands of people in 73 countries and territories, including: 3,800 people in the continental United States.

We haven't seen the last of these kinds of outbreaks. Scientists estimate that nearly 75 percent of newly emerging infectious diseases will originate in animals.

Addressing the risk posed by zoonotic diseases will require an approach to global health that sees humans, animals, and the environment as deeply interconnected. Known as "One Health," this holistic view calls for collaboration among experts in disciplines from veterinary medicine to public health and environmental science.

If researchers can understand the interconnected causes of zoonotic outbreaks, they'll be better equipped to prevent the next epidemic.

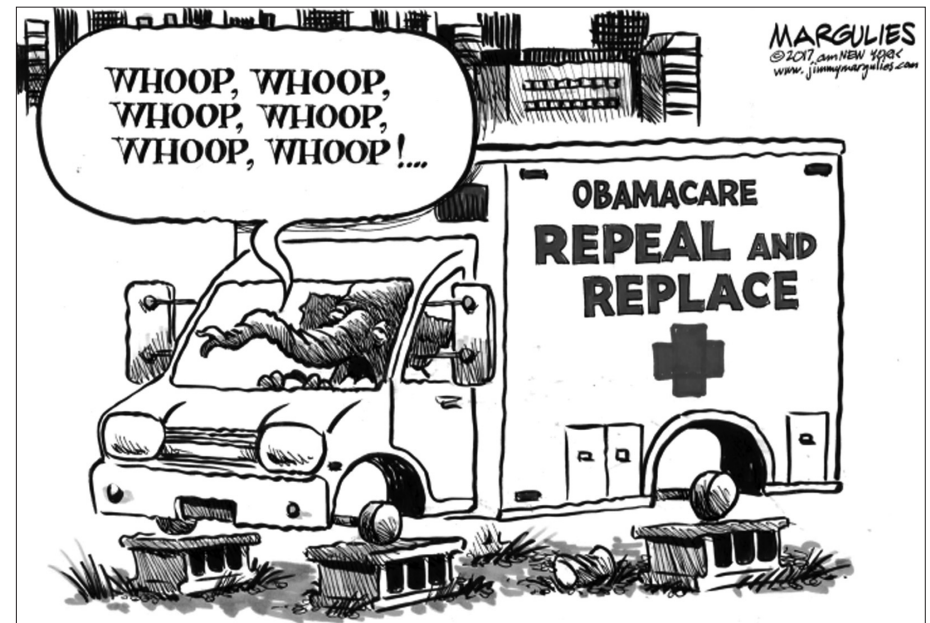
Fortunately, the One Health movement is gaining traction in the public health community. USAID, for instance, has spearheaded a One Health Workforce initiative, which partners with universities around the world to train future health professionals in this collaborative approach.

One Health is a guiding philosophy at St. George's University, where I teach. Our veterinary, medical, and public health students frequently collaborate on projects and coursework, like our recent effort to control the spread of rabies on the island of Grenada by providing vaccinations and hosting community clinics.

The rise of zoonotic diseases like Zika and animal TB shows just how interconnected animal health and human health is. To effectively combat zoonotic disease, the medical community must recognize those connections—and explore them fully.

Satesh Bidaisee is an Associate Professor of Public Health and Preventive Medicine and Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies at St. George's University, Grenada. Calum Macpherson is the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Director of Research at St. George's University in Grenada.

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Letters to the Editor:

Editor:

Re: Support Canton, Mississippi Workers

Recently, in Canton, Mississippi 5000 Nissan autoworkers and their supporters marched and rallied as part of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union drive at the Nissan's Canton plant. Organizers deemed it the March on Mississippi. Some 80 percent of the Nissan plant workers are black.

Nissan workers say the union-busting tactics such as spying on workers, worker surveillance, interrogating workers, and threatening to close the plant is part of Nissan's anti-union arsenal. To carry out these deeds according to plant workers, Nissan conducts individual meetings with them; queries them concerning the union; reviews their work history. Still others say that they do not get promoted. In some instances workers are terminated.

Workers say that Nissan runs the line disregarding worker safety and ergonomic health issues. The line refers to the automotive assembly line. Nissan workers say they want to be treated similar to the way Nissan wants their cars treated.

"When you do not have a union you don't have anybody going to bat for you," said one employee.

Nissan reportedly received from Mississippi State and local governments \$1.33 billion in tax breaks to build the plant

according to the UAW. The deal contains some of the same kinds of subsidies that Under Armour CEO received from the Baltimore City government.

Canton is only a stone's throw north of Jackson, Mississippi. In the civil rights movement, national attention focused on Canton when the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) lodged massive voter registration drives to gain basic democratic rights to vote.

Nissan claims it is has one of the highest paid workforce in the state but figures show it's below the auto industry average. About a quarter of these workers make \$12.75 as temporary workers and cannot be unionized.

The UAW drive needs to continue to garner support from all union members, civil rights, faith, and student groups in support of the plant's 5,000 employees. Attacks on Nissan workers, immigrant rights and the fight for \$15 an hour minimum wage here in Baltimore and nationally are part of our struggle. It is the same struggle as fighting to end joblessness, gentrification, poor schooling, and housing.

I say one struggle, one fight!

Dr. Kenneth Morgan

Urban Studies Asst. Professor
Coppin State University
Baltimore, Md.

Community Affairs

Hogan-Rutherford Administration Dedicates \$50 Million to combat heroin, opioid crisis

Annapolis— Governor Larry Hogan recently signed an executive order declaring a State of Emergency in response to the heroin, opioid, and fentanyl crisis ravaging communities in Maryland and across the country.

In January, Governor Hogan and Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford announced the administration's 2017 Heroin Prevention, Treatment, and Enforcement Initiative, a multi-pronged strategy to tackle the evolving threat of heroin and opioid addiction. The initiative includes three important pieces of legislation: the Prescriber Limits Act of 2017, the Distribution of Opioids Resulting in Death Act, and the Overdose Prevention Act, as well as important budgetary actions, including \$4 million in new funding to address the crisis.

This month, the Hogan-Rutherford administration also announced \$50 million in new funding to address the crisis, as well as the appointment of the governor's senior emergency management advisor Clay Stamp to lead the state's coordinated effort to combat the crisis.

"We need to treat this crisis the exact



"We need to treat this crisis the exact same way we would treat any other state emergency. With this continuing threat increasing at such an alarming rate, we must allow for rapid coordination with our state and local emergency teams."

—Governor Larry Hogan

same way we would treat any other state emergency. With this continuing threat increasing at such an alarming rate, we must allow for rapid coordination with our state and local emergency teams," said Governor Hogan.

The State of Emergency declaration is

a result of the initial findings of the Opioid Operational Command Center (OOCC) established by the administration in January to facilitate greater collaboration among state agencies, including health and human services, education, and public safety entities.

The OOCC's work made it clear that the state needed greater flexibility to activate emergency teams in jurisdictions across the state and engage local communities.

The governor's executive order authorizes emergency powers to state and local emergency management officials, enabling them to fast-track coordination among state and local agencies and community organizations, including private sector and nonprofit entities.

"The fact of the matter is that people all across Maryland, and across our country, are looking for answers when it comes to this heroin and opioid epidemic. Too many families know the devastation caused by this crisis and the death toll is climbing," said Lt. Governor Rutherford. "Ultimately, this is about saving lives, and it will take all of us working together in a collaborative, holistic approach to achieve that."

On the horizon is a supplemental budget of \$50 million in new funding over a five-year period to support Maryland's prevention, recovery, and enforcement efforts. Rather than locking us into inflexible spending through statute, the governor's plan will provide flexibility to public health and safety professionals in order to address this emergency.

Clay Stamp, Hogan's senior advisor for emergency management, has been tasked with overseeing this unfoldment of this legislation.

"As an emergency management professional, it gives me great honor to have been chosen to lead such an important effort, and to serve next to the many dedicated and highly capable people who are working to eliminate the impact this crisis is having on the people of Maryland," said Stamp.

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BossUp:

#EYECON, Baltimore's premiere Youth Entrepreneurship Conference

By Taiha Greenfield

The phrase "boss up" is often used to refer to challenging a peer to "step up their game" or to "rise" to the next level. This column will highlight youth and their businesses and will provide resources that will hopefully inspire youth to "boss up" and start, operate or grow a business.

Last year, was my first time attending #EYECON, premier youth entrepreneurship conference held at Morgan State University annually. I just happened to be there to support my friend Ka'Mel Lauryn, another Morgan State University student.

I was amazed by what I saw. There were so many youth engaged and enjoying an event covering intense subject matter in a formal setting. Some youth think conference and believe that it will be nothing but random adults, who have "made something of themselves," giving advice on making sound career choices. I did not get that vibe from the youth in attendance at all. They came in with smiles and shirts beaming the term EN-TRE-PRE-NEUR in a pageantry of colors, young people (my age and younger) were there as vendors promoting and showing their own businesses and so much more. This event was bubbling with resources and information to help both the seasoned and aspiring young entrepreneurs. Even if one of the fun-filled, information workshops doesn't not capture youth's interest, sure thing, there are a variety of activities happening throughout the day to assure every in attendee leaves motivated to boss up. Yup, the workshops were fun and filled with useful information that could be a great resource for the future. The conference was so thorough that it showcased work from Baltimore's artist community. If you are between the ages of 10 to 18, you want to be included in this conference.

I would have to say that, if I could have gone to an event like this when I was younger, I would have at least been one step closer to finding out what I



wanted to do as a career. Think about it. The way the world can be seen is like a big canvas. Color strokes here and there. They can be red, blue, yellow, and then get even more extravagant. The strokes, the dots, the thin lines, or whatever can be your mark in the world. Whatever, we choose to do is our business. It's just whether we are running it or being run over. We need more organizations like #Eyecon that may help to prepare us for a global economy.

"Engaging Youth Entrepreneurs for Change," was created by Natasha Muhammad while she was a student at Morgan State University.

Now in its twelfth year, the objective for #EYECON is to provide youth with different ways to pursue entrepreneurship as a career option. The conference also shows youth how to create an entrepreneurial attitude to excel and remain competitive in the workforce. #EYECON is a play on the word "icon" and "EYE conference."

Youth are challenged to be the image and the symbol of excellence in entrepreneurship. Not only will youth receive skills around entrepreneurship and financial education, they will be introduced to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

STEM at #EYECON focuses on learning about 3-D printing, how to build



Engaging Youth Entrepreneurs for Change (#EYECON) was created by Natasha Muhammad while she was a student at Morgan State University. (Top left) Students on computers during the conference learning basic coding. (Top right) Founder of EYE for Change, Inc. Natasha Muhammad and her daughter Imani Muhammad. (Above) Made in Bmore, youth exhibitors.

Courtesy Photos/#EYECON

apps, and the science and math behind DJing. This year's #EYECON will focus on activities around robotics and led by youth. The workforce of the future will require young people to demonstrate skills and expertise when pursuing careers in STEM and entrepreneurship. The aim is to make sure the children understand the importance of STEM and pursue entrepreneurial endeavors in the field. #EYECON will take place on

Thursday, May 4, 2017 from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. at a Morgan State University. More information is available at: www.eyeforchange.org or at eyeforchange on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter or call 443-885-3663

Taiha Greenfield is an English and SWAN (Screen Writing and Animation) major at Morgan State University.

Roland Park Place chef's mission is to win cooking tournament

By Stacy M. Brown

Meet Shamarie James, the executive chef at Roland Park Place, a full-service, nonprofit continuing care retirement center in Baltimore, which offers independent living, residential care and comprehensive skilled nursing care to the city's senior community.

Over the past six years, officials at the nonprofit say James, a Kingston, Jamaica native, has helped transform its dining community. He has worked to boost morale around the kitchen, and the residents love him for his creative take on cuisine, especially the Jamaican dishes he creates and the daily specials.

James has the full support of residents, staff and management for his latest mission to win the Mason-Dixon Master Chef Tournament, scheduled to begin in June at Points South Latin Grill on Thames Street in Baltimore. The multi-week, single-elimination tournament is designed to showcase some of the DMV's finest executive chefs and restaurants.



Shamarie James is the executive chef at Roland Park Place, a full-service, continuing care retirement center in Baltimore City. James wants to win the Mason-Dixon Master Chef Tournament. The single-elimination tournament which is designed to showcase some of the DMV's finest executive chefs and restaurants is scheduled to take place in June. Courtesy Photo/Roland Park Place

Until then, James says he will continue

to focus on the 200 residents he cooks for at Roland Park Place, where he's cultivated an atmosphere of endless possibilities and satisfied tastebuds.

"Transforming the dining community at Roland Park Place was a joy for me. It gave me the chance to infuse my experience and culture in our everyday dishes by ways of using fresh seasoned ingredients and products," James said. "I also got to know my residents likes and dislikes through my meet and greets."

James up in St. Catherine Parish in Kingston and moved to Baltimore five years ago, after a short stay on Bald Head Island in North Carolina where he worked as a sous-chef.

"I started cooking at the age of seven, working in my great-grandmother's restaurant in Jamaica," said James, who went on to study at the Providence, Rhode Island and Denver campuses of Johnson & Wales University.

"I honed my culinary chops working as executive sous-chefs at a variety of country clubs and restaurants," he said. "I have a love for the dishes I grew up with. The residents love when I create them for the menu. My top dishes include ackee and saltfish which is my national dish, escovitch fish and curry chicken."

James believes a win as the Mason-Dixon Master Chef will take his career to the next level.

"I want to win this competition for many reasons. It would be a good look on my company, Roland Park Place, as we would be the only retirement community in the competition. It would also give me and my culinary staff exposure and help me advance my passion for cooking," he said.

With a schedule that's already busy, James said he doesn't mind the extra work.

"Most days, I'm helping mentor, getting the food ready and talking with residents. When we are short-staffed, I volunteer to work, including holidays," he said. "Some days it's easy, but other days it's a challenge, but I love what I do and would not have chosen any other career path. Making people happy and pleased through my dishes gives me true joy."

And, what happens after a long day? James says he makes time for his friends and family, and especially his four-year-old daughter for whom he is a role model. She also wants to be a chef.

"Being of a different race and having a different culture has always been a challenge for me, but it has never stopped me from going forward and it still won't," he said. "Hard work is the key. I know what it takes to be at the bottom trying to make a difference. But most of all, work hard and aspiring to be the best at what you do. The sky is the limit. Nothing is never too hard to do or accomplish. I did it and am still doing it."



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Could Ray Rice's past prevent Ravens from selecting Oklahoma running back?

By Turrón Davenport

The Ravens would like to add an explosive playmaker to their offense. While they are pleased with the down-to-down production of Terrence West and Kenneth Dixon, a home run threat in the backfield would be a welcome addition.

Oklahoma running back Joe Mixon can gain chunks of yards in a hurry. He averaged 6.8 yards per carry last season as well as 14.5 yards per reception.

Typically a player of Mixon's caliber warrants early round consideration. Unfortunately, Mixon has some extra baggage after a domestic violence incident was caught on video.

Bringing on a player tied to domestic violence could be a polarizing decision for the Ravens based on their previous experience with Ray Rice. Head Coach John Harbaugh was recently asked how the past could have an impact on their decision to select Mixon.

"We learned a lot in that whole process," Harbaugh said at the Combine last week. "As I've said in the past, that was not something I had very much understanding about at all and through that whole experience, I learned a lot. "A lot of people did, including the two people that were most involved in it. They're still very good friends. As an organization, I think that's moved us in a certain direction that Steve has talked



Oklahoma running back Joe Mixon eludes Auburn defensive end Carl Lawson on one of his carries during the Sugar Bowl on January 3, 2017.

Courtesy Photo/www.allstatesugarbowl.org

about. And I definitely respect that and agree with it."

There has been a high degree of public backlash to the Mixon incident. The NFL even passed a new rule that disqualified select prospects including Mixon from being able to attend the Scouting Combine.

Mixon met with four teams before his pro day. The Ravens weren't one of those teams, but that doesn't mean they won't meet with him in the future.

"Our job as a coach, or a scouting staff, is to turn over every stone, to find out everything we can about every sin-

gle guy," Harbaugh explained. "Whenever you make a personnel decision, probably in any part of life, you're making a prediction. It's a choice going forward."

Harbaugh has spoken before about not

being overly judgemental. He has also been a big advocate for giving people a second chance.

He deserves credit for diving beneath the surface and working to get an understanding of what makes the particular person tick. For Harbaugh, getting to know someone is a better way of evaluating as opposed to having past incidents dictate his opinion.

"What's someone has done in the past helps you predict the future to some degree," Harbaugh said. "You have to dig deeper than that. That's what we try to do character wise—we try to figure out who this person is going to be for the next four years, and if it's someone that fits our vision for what we want to be as an organization and football team.

"What's this person going to become? What are they going to fulfill? What are their dreams and aspirations? What do they hold to be valuable? What are their values? The past is a little bit of a determiner of that."

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Spirit of a Woman Conference Tackles Mind, Body and Pocketbook

By Stacy M. Brown

A one-day empowerment conference for women of African descent featuring a host of speakers, workshops and networking opportunities, is planned for Saturday, March 25, 2017 at the Radisson Hotel at Cross Keys in Baltimore. The fourth biennial, "Spirit of A Woman Conference," promises to tackle issues of the mind, body and the pocketbook, according to conference organizers.

"The goal is to empower women to improve their quality of life through intellectual, physical and financial enlightenment," said Francena Bean-Waters, the founder and co-chair of the conference. "Attendees [will] include an intergenerational group of professionals, business owners, educators, collegiate students, politicians, community and civic leaders, homemakers, coworkers, colleagues, friends and women from shelters.

Reverend Cecelia Williams Bryant, the dean of the International College of Intercession, is scheduled to be the



Francena Bean-Waters
Founder and co-chair
Spirit of a Woman Conference
Courtesy Photo

keynote speaker at the event which begins at 9 a.m. Presenters will include: educator and author, Dr. Hattie Washington; certified health coach Dr. Brenda T. Bradley; and author Deborah Owens.

Designed to empower women in their

efforts to achieve and maintain their full potential, to prepare the next generation, to strengthen the black community, and to support the Greater Baltimore Section of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and its operations, community service projects and programs, the conference pays homage to the legacies of Mary McLeod Bethune and Dorothy Height.

"Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune as founder of the NCNW was an educator, stateswoman, humanitarian, civil rights activist and philanthropist. Bethune also founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial School for Negro Girls which later became co-educational and renamed Bethune-Cookman College, now Bethune-Cookman University," Bean-Waters said. "NCNW was made-up of African American women's clubs and organizations to combat racial, class, and gender discrimination worldwide. Bethune was known as 'The First Lady of The Struggle' because of her commitment to better the lives of African Americans."

Height was an administrator, educator, and a civil rights and women's rights activist who focused primarily on improving the circumstances of and opportunities for African-American women and the conference embodies the legacy of Bethune and Height.

"[The conference] is dedicated to NCNW's commitment 'Four for the Future'; Education, Healthy Lifestyles,

Financial Literacy and Fostering Traditional Values," Bean-Waters said.

"Therefore, the Greater Baltimore Section of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. has been involved in advancing opportunities and quality of life for African-American women, their families, associate members and communities through advocacy, community services and personal development programs since 1943."

The event will include topics that reach out to women in the community, said Julia S. Winborne, the GBS-NCNW president.

For women of color, the importance of the event cannot be understated, according to Bean-Waters.

"We have to know our community and work individually and/or together to make changes. We have to make a difference in the community in both political and non-political actions through civic engagement/civic participation," Bean-Waters said. "We must sponsor and participate in community service projects, activities, events and programs such as: train professionals and non-professionals, build networking skills, volunteer, organize civic activities, after school programs and fairs, public speaking and distribute informational materials."

For more information about the conference or to register, visit: www.gbs-ncnw.com.

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Allstate Honors “Geek” from Glen Burnie

By Stacy M. Brown

She is known as the new hero of the Blerd community, turning a dream into a graphic adventure.

Glen Burnie native and business owner Ariell Johnson has created what she says is a “inclusive geek space” for residents and visitors of Philadelphia where she owns Amalgam Comics & Coffeehouse—the first black-owned comic bookstore on the East Coast.

“The idea for Amalgam came from the loss of a community space that I enjoyed in college. There was a coffee shop across the street from my local comic shop, and I would hang out in the coffee shop for hours after buying my books each week,” said Johnson, who notes she never forgets her Baltimore area roots. “When the shop closed its doors, I was at a loss for that type of communal space. That is when the idea hit me—I thought, ‘wouldn’t it be cool if there was a place where you could buy your comics and hang out and read them too.’ That’s how it all started.”

When Allstate Insurance Company celebrated Black History last month, Johnson was selected to be a part of their annual digital, social and radio campaign, “Worth Telling.”

The campaign spotlights three African-Americans whom the company says are making a positive difference on society and inspiring others.

“These individuals are creating career opportunities for the underserved through barbering, raising awareness about diversity and representation through comics, and providing tools that support the advancement of African-Americans through entrepreneurial opportunities,” said Georgina Flores, vice president of product and marketing at Allstate. “Allstate is committed to creating, supporting and sponsoring programs that empower the African-American community.”

Since opening the comic bookstore in 2015, Johnson has been drawn on the cover of MARVEL’s *Invincible Iron Man*, and she hopes to inspire other comic book creators to give all fans representation by drawing African-American



Ariell Johnson, owner of the first black-owned comic bookstore on the East Coast also appears on a variant cover of Marvel comic book’s Invincible Iron Man . Courtesy Photo

cans and women as the heroes and heroines of their stories.

“I was drawn on a variant cover of *Invincible Iron Man* #1 along with Tony Stark’s successor, Riri Williams back in November 2016. It was an awesome opportunity,” Johnson said.

“Occasionally publishers will approach retail comic stores about having store exclusive variants for hot new titles or milestone issues. We were approached by Marvel about doing a variant and Randy Green, my Comic Book Jedi, was adamant about us doing it,” she said.

“The concept of the cover with myself and Riri sitting in Amalgam having a cup of coffee was all Randy’s idea. I had no idea we would get such a huge response for the book, but we did.

“Our supporters see it as a historical event, the fact that I am the first black woman to own a comic shop on the East Coast, and Riri is a young black woman taking up the iconic mantle of Iron Man,” she said.

Johnson, who holds a Bachelor’s of Business Administration, said she is inspired by her family, specifically the women.

“I have a large family and I’m really close to them. Growing up, so many of my social activities revolved around family and family events and my grandmother is a big reason why our family is so close,” she said.

Still, she says she was surprised by the Allstate honor.

“For me, I’m living in the reality of this thing that I have been dreaming about for over 12 years,” Johnson said. “It’s a personal accomplishment but I realize it’s also bigger than me. My mission with the store echoes what so many people have been feeling in the realm of ‘geekdom.’ People want to see themselves represented, they want characters they can identify with.”

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Lawyer promotes financial literacy through Baltimore CASH Campaign

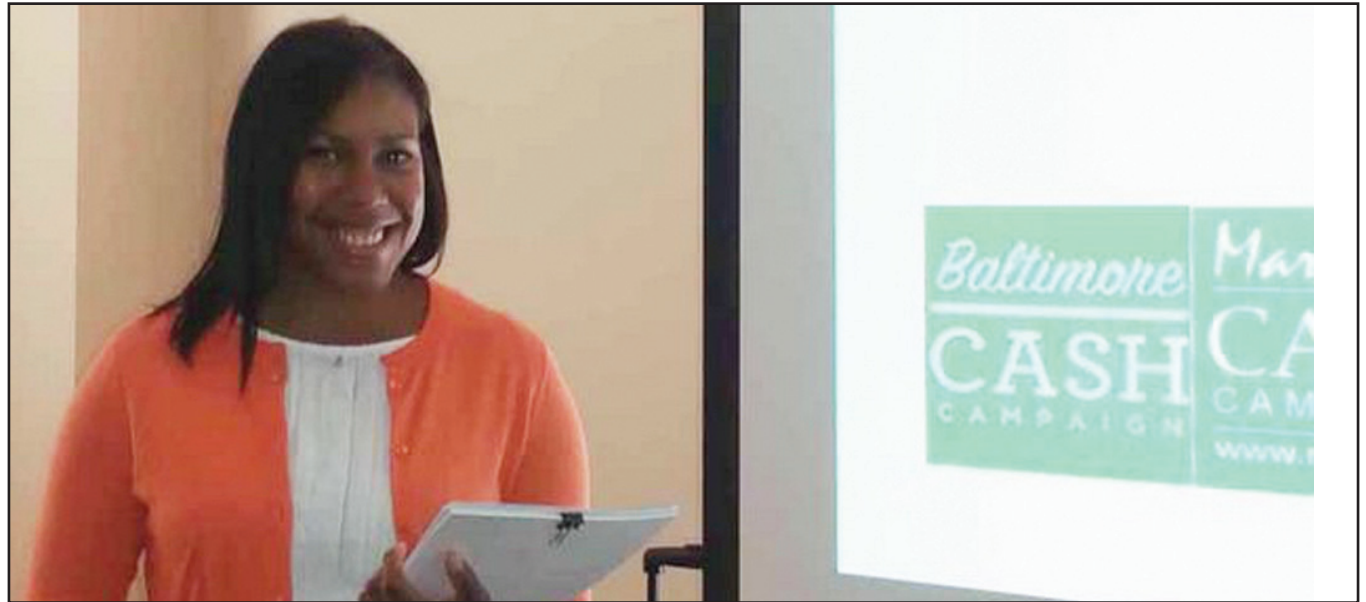
By Stacy M. Brown

Francesca Jean Baptiste started her career as a tax preparation volunteer while working toward a career in tax law. Though real life experiences helped shaped her course—Baptiste learned much from a father who is from the Dominican Republic and a mother from Panama but it was the fictional Claire Huxtable who ultimately convinced her to become a lawyer.

“I think, I first got the idea watching the ‘Cosby Show’ as a kid. Phylicia Rashad just radiated grace and intelligence,” Baptiste said of the show’s Claire Huxtable.

“She looked so smart with her suits and leather briefcases. I was like, ‘Ooohh she’s a lawyer.’ And, as I got older I got hooked on ‘Law & Order.’ The district attorneys were championing criminal justice, kicking butt in court and making it look so cool. Trust me it’s not that exciting but it just made me think that this is something I want to do. This is something I can do,” she said.

When Baptiste was offered a joint position with both the Baltimore CASH Campaign and Maryland CASH Campaign six years ago, she jumped at the opportunity.



Besides helping oversee Baltimore CASH’s free tax preparation services, Francesca Jean Baptiste has been involved with Money Power Day, Courtesy Photo

Besides helping oversee Baltimore CASH’s free tax preparation services, Baptiste has been involved with Money Power Day, particularly the Small Business Zone. The 12th annual Money Power Day, the region’s largest free financial fitness event that aims to help boost residents’ financial well-being, is scheduled for 9 a.m. on April 1 at Poly-Western High School in Baltimore.

More than 1,000 adults, teens and children are expected to attend the free event which helps kick off National Financial Education Month. For Baptiste, the event also provides a forum to give legal direction for some. She reminisced about when and why she first came to Maryland.

“I knew I wanted a job that was very different than the one I was leaving. I didn’t just want to work for another law firm,” she said. “I wanted to do something where I was helping to make a real difference in people’s lives. And that is what the CASH Campaign, through their various work and events like Money Power Day, are doing. They are providing people with the necessary tools and information to help them move towards financial stability in ways that are life changing.”

Free tax preparation for a family can help save as much as \$500 which can be used to catch up on bills, save for a rainy day or start a college fund, she continued.

Regularly trying to conceive ideas to better engage more entrepreneurs and aspiring small business owners at the annual event led Baptiste to start the, Pitch Your Side Hustle contest, to encourage individuals to propose an idea for a

chance to win \$200 at Money Power Day.

She says the contest has been successful and she credits her parents with her innovative approach.

“My parents were huge motivators in my life. Both immigrated to this country,” Baptiste said. “They worked really hard to get here and make a life for themselves. They instilled in both my sister and me the importance of getting a good education and hard work very early on. With those two things, anything was possible,” she said.

The importance of a financial education can’t be understated. The adage that “knowledge is power” holds especially true when it comes to finances, and knowing and understanding how credit and debt work is vital.

“We make our decisions based on the information we have and so when that information is limited or nonexistent we don’t make the best decisions. Financial education is all about empowering folks and arming them with the tools they need to make the best decisions for themselves and their families,” she said.

To learn more about the upcoming event or to register, visit www.money-powerday.org.

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Unique workshops aim to help young black males in Annapolis

By Andrea Blackstone

Deonte Ward, 27, is an Annapolis resident who acknowledges the importance of helping young black men on a positive path.

Ward, an electrician and entrepreneur founded B.L.A.C.K. (Becoming Leaders Acquiring Critical Knowledge) to take action to combat challenges that many black males face by filling voids in the community with innovative direction.

Youth who would like to learn from role models, to change the direction of their lives or learn some basic life skills, now have a new place to turn.

“I pretty much organize everything, and then I reach out to a group of friends who are all entrepreneurs,” Ward said. “I just want to see young black men succeed.”

He began offering a free opportunity for African-American males, ages 11-21, to acquire additional skills and training in a workshop environment last month.

Teenage males and young men are invited to participate in the second workshop at the Pip

Moyer Community Center located at 273 Hilltop Lane in Annapolis from 9 a. m. to noon on Saturday, March 18, 2017.

Ward initially addressed topics such as anger management and trust building in the first workshop and will include credit, banking and financial planning and retirement topics in future workshops. Skill-building and hands-on trades will also be offered.

“I will teach them how to paint, how to lay tile and then I will teach them a third skill— financial literacy,” Ward said.

Ward says that he will continue to share things that he has learned on his journey. Mobilizing others seems to be one of his skills. Ward explained that he reaches out to friends who are entrepreneurs and participants of Black Wall



(Left) Young men learn about apprenticeships and self-sufficiency during a workshop at the new program called B.L.A.C.K. (Becoming Leaders Acquiring Critical Knowledge) founded by Annapolis native Deonte Ward. The 27-year-old is actively taking steps to make a difference in the community by making a positive impact in the lives of young, black men. (Right) Tnaejah Watts of Annapolis learns how to paint at the first B.L.A.C.K. program event.



Street Annapolis LLC (BWSA) to help with B.L.A.C.K. Ward has brought BWSA to life in Annapolis, while bringing young, black entrepreneurs together.

His latest efforts to address specific needs of young men and boys are partially funded through BWSA. Ward aspires to offer a variety of topics. His commitment to help youth continues to unfold.

The Annapolis native is no stranger to volunteering and encouraging young Annapolitans. Ward founded a prior incentive youth program in 2007 called KNECTED (Keeping Energy Centered Together Endless Dreams) Kids. By getting good grades, young people would earn a trip to someplace special.

Ward still works with elementary and middle school students in Annapolis

who live in Newtowne 20, a public housing community. He helps them determine possible career choices and focus on things necessary to help them to become successful.

Ward believes that his positive attitude and the words of encouragement he received from John Downs III when he was growing up in Newtowne 20 enabled him to do well in school and to ultimately graduate.

Because of the help that he received from Downs, he was inspired to pay it forward, and considers it his mission to help young people.

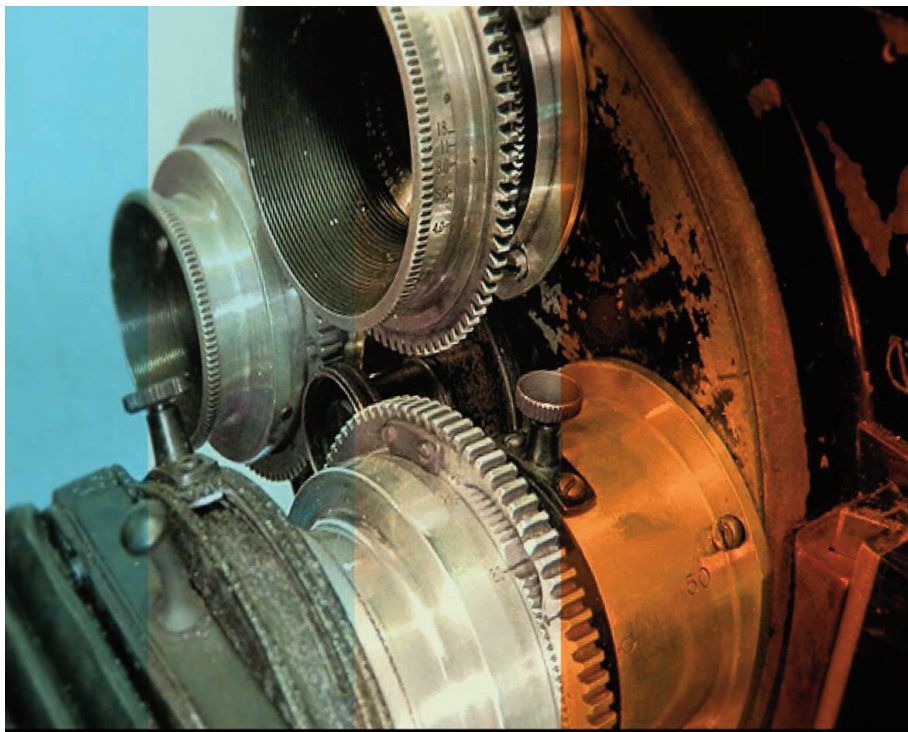
Even before establishing the new program, Ward was a mentor to 17-year-old Tnaejah Watts who attends Annapolis High School.

Watts, who lives in the same commu-

nity as Ward remarked that the entrepreneur began mentoring him when he was younger and he is grateful for the opportunities to learn simple yet important jewels which have already left an big impression on him.

“It really motivated me a lot about a lot of things. He (Ward) taught me how to tie a tie. It’s a lot of [things like] that he teaches me,” said Watts when talking about the reason that other boys and young men should participate in B.L.A.C.K. “You can learn a lot of different stuff in this world.”

An additional free workshop will be held on Saturday, March 25, 2017. To register or for more information, email: blackwallstreetannapolis@gmail.com or call: 443-851-1920.



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New community effort to collect and donate used sporting goods

Annapolis— Annapolis Mayor Michael Pantelides is proud to showcase a local family and their plan to supply children the sporting equipment they need, but otherwise could not afford. Thanks to the Armstrong family, equipment will be collected and donated as part of the Armstrong Pass, Pick and Play Initiative.

“The lessons I learned from playing sports as a child have guided me throughout my professional life,” said Mayor Pantelides. “In an era of ever-tightening budgets, supporting grass-roots efforts that exemplify how Annapolis area families care for each other is fiscally responsible and emotionally rewarding.”

Conceived by the Armstrong family, the initiative is being supported by the City of Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department (ARPD), and Leadership Anne Arundel Flagship 2017.

“Sports equipment is expensive,” said 14-year-old Elizabeth Armstrong. “My brother and I have always been active in sports, and our family didn’t see a lot of good options for donating equipment we have outgrown to kids who could really use it. And when we thought about all the sporting goods our friends’ families have, we began to realize that if we put in the effort, we might really make a difference.”

Pass, Pick and Play is accepting equipment in good working condition for the following sports: Baseball; Softball; Basketball; hockey/skating; Soccer; Lacrosse; field hockey; Volleyball; Golf; and Tennis. Cleats for all sports are also needed. Please note that equipment that cannot be accepted includes weights, bicycles, bicycle helmets, sneakers, and broken or damaged items.

Donations are being accepted through March 19, 2017. Families can clean out their basements, attics, and garages and bring their sporting goods to one of the several local drop-off locations below:

- “Pip” Moyer Recreation Center at Truxtun Park (PMRC) at 273 Hilltop Lane, Annapolis, MD 21403

- Annapolis City Hall at 160 Duke of Gloucester, Annapolis



- Calvary United Methodist Church at 301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

- The Key School at 534 Hillsmere Blvd., Annapolis

- Historic London Town and Gardens at 839 Londontown Road, Edgewater,

This equipment will be made available, at no cost to families in need, during a day long celebration on April 1, 2017 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the “Pip” Moyer Recreation Center in Annapolis.

Local community members can participate in a variety of ways:

- **Spreading the Word**— Share information about Pass, Pick and Play via email and social media to spread the word to your team, parents, coaches and community members.

- **Collecting Sporting Goods**— Any community member can lead his or her own “mini-drive” by encouraging offices, teams, scouting groups, religious organizations, neighborhood associations, schools or other organizations to collect sporting goods and bring them to a donation site.

- **Volunteering**— Local teams/organizations/families can help with the sorting and organizing process, which will take place throughout the collection period, as well as during the distribution event on April 1. Students can earn service learning/community service hours through participating in the program as ARPD staff will validate volunteer time.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Annapolis Recreation and Parks Athletic Supervisor Katy Owings at: kaowings@annapolis.gov or Kimberly Elek at: kim@mcreynoldselek.com.

Rambling Rose

Forest Park Senior Center Thrives



Rosa Pryor Trusty

Hello my dear friends, how are you enjoying this beautiful weather? I think it is absolutely fantastic! I did not have to bring out the snow shovel this winter. We are truly blessed to live in this part of the United States.

This week, I want to talk about the Forest Park Senior Center located at 4801 Liberty Heights Ave. It has become an extremely popular venue with city residents. Anyone who wants to have a social or family event in the city whether its wedding, wedding reception, cabaret, birthday party, retirement party, repast, baby shower, bridal shower, crab feast, bull roast, or concert, you can have it at the Forest Park Senior Center.

Opened in October 1979, the center is a comprehensive multi-purpose facility serving as a major vehicle for reaching out to the community and to older adults.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Daniel C. Worthy, who stands on the shoulders of the other executive directors before him, the center has soared to new heights. Through Rev. Worthy's hard work and unselfish dedication, the center has become one of the premier senior service facilities in the City of Baltimore. Other than a perfect place to rent for events, other activities have expanded on a daily basis such as: an eating together program, three Bridge Clubs; two Pinochle Clubs; instructors for Line dancing, ballroom dancing; Zumba classes; health promotions and screening activities; senior aerobics; computer training sessions bible study; a travel club; bingo; two martial arts classes and much more.

The center is also the home to ten churches and operates a couple commercial kitchens, stages for entertainment, ramp for handicap up and downstairs halls. So, my dear friends, if you notice

that all the up-coming events are being held at the Forest Park Center in the next couple of weeks, this is why.

Mark your calendar for the Jazz Expressways Foundation Breakfast Show on Saturday, March 11 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Forest Park Senior Center for an all-you-can eat breakfast/brunch buffet, BYOB with free set-ups, vendors, book signings and live entertainment provided by Greg Hatza's Band. Honey child, this will be an event you won't forget! For tickets information, call me at 410-833-9474.

After the Jazz Expressways Foundation Breakfast, you do not have to leave or move your car; you can stay right at the Forest Park Senior Center for Miss Maybelle's 10th Annual Full Figured Fashion Show also on Saturday, March 11 at Forest Park Senior Center starting at 4 p.m. All you have to do is go to the bathroom and freshen-up, right there at the Center. Miss Maybelle's event is always entertaining and fun because Mrs. Maybelle, comedian always MC's her own show. For ticket information, call 443-226-8895.

Next weekend also at the Forest Park Senior Center, Sean E. Merryman Promotions & the Baltimore Homeless Union, Inc. present a comedy show and dinner featuring Larry Lancaster and Keith Smith. Mrs. Maybelle will host the event on Saturday, March 18 at 4 p.m. For more information, call 410-215-8893.

Well, my dear friends, I am out of space and I have to go and pack. My Boo-Boo and I are leaving for a long overdue vacation. Always remember, if you need me just call me at 410-833-9474 or best to email me at rosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.



Larry Lancaster, comedian, actor and model was voted Baltimore's Funniest Comedian in 2010; has opened for Dick Gregory, Robert Townsend, Cedric the Entertainer, Eddie Griffin, Kevin Hart and Bruce Bruce just to name a few will headline the Sean E. Merryman Promotions & The Baltimore Homeless Union Comedy Show and Dinner on Saturday, March 18, 4 p.m. at the Forest Park Senior Center. For ticket information, call 410-215-8893.



Mrs. Maybelle, Baltimore's renowned comedian and host of her own Maybelle's & Company "Full Figured Fashion Show" will present her 11th "Full Figured Fashion Show on Saturday, March 11 4 p.m. at the Forest Park Senior Center 4801 Liberty Heights Avenue. For ticket information, call 443-226-8895.



Greg Hatza ORGANzation will perform at the Jazz Expressways Foundation Jazz Breakfast Show on Saturday, March 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Forest Park Senior Center 4801 Liberty Heights Avenue, for more information call 410-833-9474.

Farring Elementary School Celebrates Read Across America Day

By Deborah Bailey

Volunteers from Women United and the United Way of Central Maryland donned Cat in the Hat apparel at 17 schools across central Maryland to celebrate Read Across America Day, also Dr. Seuss's birthday with students on March 2, 2017.

At Maree G. Farring Elementary School, one of the participating schools in Read Across America Day, Baltimore City Police Department officers Tam-mica Washington and Maria Velez read to an eager class of first graders who then made their own Dr. Seuss hats and joined in the fun.

"This is one of the most enjoyable aspects of serving the community," said Officer Velez as she read aloud to the class.

Members of the Baltimore City Police Department joined 150 volunteer readers from Morgan Stanley and other area companies, government agencies and non-profit organizations across the region to reinforce the joy of reading with elementary school students.

Diego Culluicodor, a first grader student at Farring Elementary, said he loves reading aloud and especially enjoyed seeing the United Way guests dressed in costume.

"Today was fun and I liked making my own hat," Diego said while putting the finishing touches on his custom made Cat in the Hat replica.

The United Way of Central Maryland maintains a permanent presence at Maree G. Fanning through a new pilot program to identify at risk students before they fall through the cracks, according to Danielle Hogan Associate VP Marketing and Communications, United Way of Central Maryland.

"United Way volunteers are placed in the school to identify at-risk children early in their school experience and help put them on the track to success," Hogan said.

The program is also being piloted at Sandy Plains Elementary School in Dundalk, Maryland.

"We're currently looking to expand into Baltimore County Schools in the fall," Hogan added.



Farring Elementary School students make their own "Cat In the Hat" attire during National Reading Day with United Way of Central Maryland volunteers. Photos: Deborah Bailey



Farring Elementary School students make their own "Cat In the Hat" attire during National Reading Day with United Way of Central Maryland volunteers.



Farring Elementary School students make their own "Cat In the Hat" attire during National Reading Day with United Way of Central Maryland volunteers.

The United Way of Maryland is affiliated with more than 30 schools across Central Maryland operating Family Stability Programs based on a nationally successful evidence-based model for vulnerable families.

Women United is a dynamic group of

more than 1,400 local women who have come together to lead the charge, inspire change and move the needle on the issues that are important to them in their community.

For more information about The

United Way of Central Maryland's Family Stability or the new pilot early intervention program for elementary schools, call: 410-547-8000 or visit: www.umcm.org.

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Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center Opens

Dorchester County, Maryland — The public is invited to the grand opening of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center March 11 and 12, 2017. The National Park Service and the Maryland Park Service have teamed up to provide special family-friendly Grand Opening events and activities at the site and a first look at the new visitor center. It is located at: 4068 Golden Hill Road, Church Creek, Maryland. All events are free.

The Visitor Center is the premier feature of the national and state park and includes state-of-the-art, green elements such as bio-retention ponds, rain barrels, and vegetative roofs. It houses an exhibit hall, museum store, information desk, research library, and restrooms.

The exhibit features information about Harriet Tubman's role as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and her work as a freedom fighter, humanitarian, leader and liberator.

Events for the grand opening will include programs with Harriet Tubman Re-enactor Millicent Sparks; Harriet Haikus & Creative Writing Workshops with National Park Service Centennial Poet Laureate Dr. Sonia Sanchez; Historian Tony Cohen of the Menare Foundation leading simulated Underground Railroad journeys around the legacy garden that reveal escape secrets used by Tubman and other freedom seekers.

Park Rangers will provide talks on topics such as why Araminta Ross changed her name to Harriet Tubman, what skills made her a successful Underground Railroad conductor and the importance



The Grand Opening of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center will be held on Saturday, March 11 and Sunday, March 12, 2017. The center is located at 4068 Golden Hill Road in Church Creek, Maryland. All events are free and open to the public.

Photo Credit: Dorchester County Tourism

of community to enslaved people.

Children's activities will be offered from noon to 4 p.m. both days including "Games Enslaved Children Played," about the significance and history of games that enslaved children played and create their own piece of art to remember the park's inaugural weekend. Junior

Ranger activities are also available. Participants get a souvenir hat while supplies last.

On Sunday, Tubman biographer, Dr. Kate Clifford Larson, the visitor center's historical consultant, will present a talk and book signing for *Bound for the Promised Land: Portrait of an American Hero*. In addition, architect Chris Elcock, of GWWO, Inc., Architects, will present a talk about the hidden symbolism in the Visitor Center building and surrounding landscape.

"The story of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad is one that captivates people of all ages and backgrounds," said Josie Fernandez, acting superintendent, Harriet Tubman Under-

ground Railroad National Historical Park.

"Harriet Tubman is a true Maryland treasure and who remains relevant to this very day," said Maryland Park Service Manager Dana Paterra. "Her path to freedom was wrought with peril but she persevered and overcame many struggles to become an American icon."

For visitors coming to the site through Cambridge, Maryland, free parking and a shuttle system is available at 410 Academy Street. From Route 50 take Maryland Avenue to Academy Street and follow signs for "Shuttle Parking." The shuttle operates from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 11 only. The City of Cambridge is running these free shuttles to the Visitor Center.

Hate doing your own taxes?

Then you're in luck! You may qualify for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program at Anne Arundel Community College.

In the program, IRS-certified volunteers—faculty, alums and current students—provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals, generally residents with \$54,000 or less of annual income.

The program runs from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays and 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays until Wednesday, April 12, 2017 in the Careers Building Room 326 at 101 College Parkway, Arnold.

"Our goal is to do 100 returns successfully, e-filed and accepted," said Reb Beatty, site coordinator, assistant professor in business administration at the college and an active CPA.

To schedule an appointment, call 410-777-2390 or email: hcharrington@aacc.edu.

Send your community calendar events for Annapolis area to: kreevie@btimes.com

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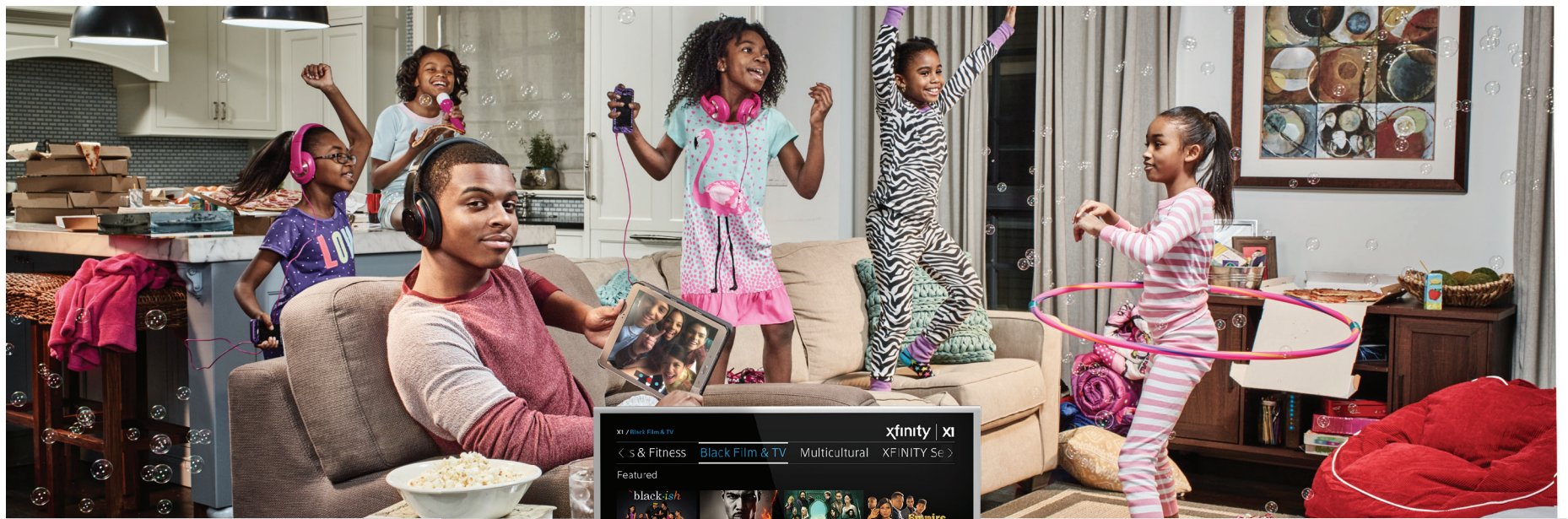
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