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Happy Mother's Day!



Why bigger tax refunds aren't always better

By Glenn Powell

A big tax refund can be nice to receive, but it usually means less money in each paycheck. Instead, adjust your W-4 and put that money to work for you throughout the year.

Tax season is in full swing, and many Americans are eagerly awaiting their refunds. The United States Internal Revenue Service estimates that 83 percent of tax returns result in a refund, with the total refund amount topping \$271 billion. In 2015, the average refund was about \$3,100— not small change. While some look forward to the annual spring windfall and may have it spent before the check is in hand, that refund may not always be cause for celebration.

If you're getting a large refund check, that means you've essentially loaned money to the U.S. government throughout the year, and they're giving it back to you without interest.

There are pros and cons to receiving refunds but if you had that extra money in your paycheck, rather than funneled to the IRS, which is then returned at tax time, it could help you achieve some of your financial goals. Here's how:

•Pay down high-interest debt. Focus on credit cards with the highest interest rates first. Using some of that extra cash each month to pay off a balance with an 18 percent interest rate is like earning 18 percent on your investments, Powell said. You'll be helping yourself in the long run, and improving your credit score at the same time.

•Start or increase your emergency fund. A good rule of thumb is to put away enough cash to cover at least three to six months of living expenses in case of an emergency. If you've had to withdraw money from your emergency fund, use that extra money in your paycheck to start rebuilding it. This "stash" should be easy to access— in a money market account or savings account, for example— if you need it.

•Boost retirement savings. If you're focused on retirement or another long-term goal, put the money in your 401(k), retirement plan or a Roth IRA. If your employer offers a retirement plan and you're not participating in it or not contributing enough to receive a full company match, you're missing a great investment opportunity. There is no faster way to grow your money.

•Save for your child's education. If you have young children, starting or adding to a college savings plan— such as a 529 plan— makes sense, he said. The money can be used tax-free for tuition bills, and you could get a state income tax deduction for your contribution.

•Invest in yourself. Didn't think you had the funds to join a gym or save for a dream vacation? With a little extra going into your pay rather than being withheld, maybe you can.

•Give to others. If you have your financial bases covered, consider earmarking the extra funds for charitable contributions. You'll feel good and be rewarded come tax time.

How to Fix it? Update your W-4. If you're getting a few hundred dollars back in April, there is no need to rush to adjust your W-4— the form that tells your employer how much of your paycheck to withhold in taxes. However, if your refund is closer to \$1,000, \$2,000 or even higher, Powell says you might want to consider making some adjustments.

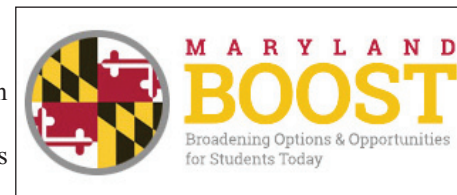
On the W-4, you can claim exemptions for dependents, having a non-working spouse or paying for child care, among other things. So, remember to change your W-4 after a life event, such as getting married or having a baby.

The more exemptions you have, the less earnings will be withheld from your paycheck in taxes. As a result, you may owe money come tax time. On the other hand, the fewer exemptions you claim, the more your employer will withhold from your paycheck. If your tax refund was rather large, you likely aren't taking enough exemptions.

Glenn Powell is a financial advisor with PNC Investments

BOOST Scholarship Program accepting applications for 2017-18 school year

Baltimore— The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) announced the opening of the application process for a scholarship program designed to help income eligible students attend non-public schools.



The Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Program, entering its second year, will provide nearly \$6 million in scholarships for students who are eligible for the free- or reduced-price lunch program. The BOOST program was the result of a bipartisan compromise during the 2016 session of the Maryland General Assembly, and received widespread support from legislators in both parties. "Our administration is committed to ensuring that every single child in Maryland has the chance to get a world-class education, regardless of what neighborhood they happen to grow up in," said Governor Larry Hogan. "This innovative program, forged through bipartisan cooperation, offers expanded options and opportunities for Maryland families and students."

More than 2,500 students received BOOST Scholarships for the 2016-17 school year. Scholarships ranged from \$1,000 to \$4,400 each, with the highest award amount going to students who had qualified for the Free Meal Program and attended a public school the previous year.

The BOOST program is available for students either already attending or hoping to attend a nonpublic participating school. Students must be enrolled in— or have applied to— a potential participating school before completing the BOOST application. All applications will be reviewed by MSDE to ensure completion and income eligibility. MSDE will compile a list of applicants that ranks eligible students by family income expressed as a percent of the most recent federal poverty levels. MSDE will then provide a count of eligible students by category to the BOOST Advisory Board. The categories reflect whether the student attended a public or private school the prior year and whether the student qualifies for Free Meals or Reduced Meals. The BOOST Advisory Board will determine how the scholarship funds are allocated among the categories.

Students who received a BOOST Scholarship in the 2016-2017 school year and who still meet the eligibility criteria must complete an application by the deadline— Thursday, June 15, 2017. The electronic application and a list of potential participating schools is available at <http://marylandpublicschools.org/Pages/boost/index.aspx>.

Correction:

In the photo that accompanied the front page story "The McKean Miracle" in the May 5, 2017 issue of The Baltimore Times, the seven-year-old boy David, was incorrectly described as Robin Ayale's son. He is not her son. The Baltimore Times is sorry for any inconvenience this error may have caused.

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Guest Editorials/Commentary

New Orleans begins removing racist Confederate monuments

By Lauren Victoria Burke, NNPA Newswire Contributor

Against a backdrop of death threats and under the cover of night, officials in New Orleans have begun to dismantle Confederate monuments honoring racists of the Civil War and Jim Crow eras of United States history.

Workers removing the first of four monuments wore bulletproof vests, helmets and hid their faces. By 5:45 a.m. on April 24, the monument was gone. Three more monuments are set to disappear, but the city is not announcing publicly which statues will be next and what date the removals will take place.

"The removal of these statues sends a clear and unequivocal message to the people of New Orleans and the nation: New Orleans celebrates our diversity, inclusion and tolerance," said New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu in a statement on April 24.

At a press conference the morning after the first monument, the Battle of Liberty Place Memorial, was removed, the Mayor stated that the other monuments would be removed, "sooner rather than later."

"Relocating these Confederate monuments is not about taking something away from someone else. This is not about politics, blame or retaliation. This is not a naïve quest to solve all our problems at once," the Mayor said. "This is about showing the whole world that we as a city and as a people are able to acknowledge, understand, reconcile—and most importantly—choose a better future. We can remember these divisive chapters in our history in a museum or other facility where they can be put in context—and that's where these statues belong."

The Liberty Place Monument celebrated an 1874 insurrection of a group of all-White, mostly Confederate veterans calling themselves the Crescent City White League. The group fought against the racially integrated New Orleans Metropolitan Police. The monument honored members of the Crescent City White League who died during the battle.

In 1932, a plaque was added to put an even finer point on the racist motivations behind the monument. The plaque in part read that the battle was fought to "overthrow of carpetbag government, ousting the usurpers" and that "the national election of November 1876 recognized white supremacy in the South and gave us our state."

According to The New York Times, "In 1993, the City Council voted to remove the obelisk, but instead the plaque was covered with a new one that read: 'In honor of those Americans on both sides who died in the Battle of Liberty Place' and called it 'a conflict of the past that should teach us lessons for the future.'"

The reactions on social media to the monument's removal were quite animated.

"It is more nuanced than that. One can support keeping the statues for accuracy...as a historical reminder of a shameful part of our history," wrote one commenter on Twitter.

Much social media discussion dealt with the issue of whether negative parts of American history should be commemorated.

"When are we gonna put up some Hitler statues, ya know, to remind us of those dark times in History?" another Twitter user stated.

Others debated the role of poor white southerners who participated in the Civil War.

"It was the North who refused to recognize blacks as people, resulting in the appalling 3/5 compromise. The South obviously wanted," wrote Erin Greer of Atlanta on Twitter. A Twitter user, who identified himself as Clayton Barnes, responded: "And the South just wanted to own them, treat them terribly, and work them like mules."

Lauren Victoria Burke is a political analyst who speaks on politics and African American leadership. She is also a frequent contributor to the NNPA Newswire and BlackPressUSA.com. Connect with Lauren by email at LBurke007@gmail.com and on Twitter at [@LVBurke](https://twitter.com/LVBurke).



Community Affairs

MTA offers best bargain in U.S transit for monthly pass purchasers

Baltimore—A monthly pass for public transit on the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) proves to be America's best bargain in urban travel, according to a new national survey.

In a ValuePenguin survey of 10 urban centers, the MDOT MTA's CharmCard® proved the best value at \$68 per month for unlimited rides on MDOT MTA transit services. Second on the list was Washington, D.C., at \$81 a month while the most expensive monthly passes are found in New York at \$121 a month and Los Angeles at \$122 a month.

"This survey confirms that MDOT MTA offers the best value for transit riders in the nation," said MDOT MTA Administrator and CEO Paul Comfort. "Taking public transportation is a convenient, cost-effective way to travel in Maryland connecting our riders to jobs, retail, healthcare and entertainment. It's gratifying to know that we're achieving our goal of providing safe, low-cost

transportation and doing that in a more cost-effective way than other transit systems across the country."

ValuePenguin is a New York-based market research firm. Cities included in this survey (in descending cost order) are: Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Boston; Philadelphia; San Francisco; Seattle; Chicago; Miami-Fort Lauderdale; New York City; and Los Angeles.

At \$68 a month, the MDOT MTA CharmCard® is a rechargeable smart fare card embedded with a computer chip that allows transit riders to keep track of the cash value and pass products on the card. It also provides unlimited rides on MDOT MTA Local Bus, Light Rail and Metro Subway for 31 consecutive days.

The CharmCard® is available at the MDOT MTA Transit Store, located on the 1st floor of 6 St. Paul Street in Baltimore, online and at participating CVS and Giant stores.

For a list of participating CVS and Giant stores, click here. After the card expires, new passes or value may be added to the card online, at select walk-in vendors or at ticket vending machines.

The “100 Day” Presidential Milestone is Meaningless:

What the next 100 days of the Trump administration should look like

By *Armstrong Williams*
NNPA Newswire Columnist

A few days ago, the Trump Administration passed the 100 day milestone, and I can't help but think, “So what?” Yes, there are many symbolic interpretations to be taken from this time-honored tradition but I challenge you: does it really matter? Is our republic so weak as to rely, so heavily on what a man can do in an arbitrary set of days? Our founders never envisioned this in the role of the Executive Branch. Their expectations for government more broadly were never so ambitious. They were going for progression, not perfection and for that reason, I'm hopeful for our nation. So the better question the President, his allies and the Congress should be asking is: What does Day 101 look like?

There are many challenges. The President must continue to shift and show the country that he is a leader who came to Washington to govern, and be president for all. That means taking care of the business of the nation— passing laws,

paying bills, diplomacy abroad; these are the pillars of the republic, and the ones we should be focusing on. I think Day 101 and the weeks beyond should be spent on three critical areas. If Trump can show progress there, he will send a strong message to the nation and the world that his is an administration that means business.

When it comes to economic growth, there are so many directions this mandate can take, but it begins with shoring

partners; negotiate a deal and then well— write a book about it. Every major tax bill has needed support from broad constituencies. This will be no different. Trump has the mind for this sort of maneuver. He should employ it.

The Trump Administration must show wisdom abroad. The next few months are critical for the United States on the world stage. A North Korean threat should be taken seriously. Desperate men do desperate things. Additionally,

President Trump also needs to build out his team. This task seems insignificant for a new president but the effect of its failure has reverberations felt throughout government. In his best-selling book “Good to Great,” business guru Jim Collins writes that a hallmark of successful organizations and leaders starts by getting “the right people on the bus.” The federal government is very large, with many executive slots that remain empty. I believe to my core that small, easy accomplishments can start occurring just by having like-minded personnel at the helm channeling Trump's agenda day in, day out. That's a task that Kushner and Priebus can take on collectively and show others in the White House complex that they can work together for a common good.

It all goes back to governing. The American electorate is ready for this change and because the government permeates every facet of our lives, they will start to see the change even in their daily activities. “Make America Great Again” is more than a slogan. It's a pursuit that can and must encompass even the smallest functions of government in order to live up to the weightiness of its words. That pursuit will continue well beyond any imaginary marker.

Armstrong Williams is the manager and sole owner of Howard Stirk Holdings I & II Broadcast Television Stations and Executive Editor of American CurrentSee online Magazine. Watch “Right Side Forum” every Saturday Live Newschannel 8 TV 28 in D.C. at 10:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. and repeats 6:30 pm EST. Follow Armstrong Williams on Twitter @arightside.

“There are many challenges. The president must continue to shift and show the country that he is a leader who came to Washington to govern, and be president for all. That means taking care of the business of the nation— passing laws, paying bills, diplomacy abroad; these are the pillars of the republic, and the ones we should be focusing on. I think Day 101 and the weeks beyond should be spent on three critical areas.”

up our ability as a nation to meet and pay our debts, restrain spending, and keep our debt-to-growth ratio in check. Items such as a continuing resolution, raising the debt ceiling, etc., may not be attractive in the eyes of the masses, but they are necessary for a nation where one federal department's budget is greater than the GDP of 100 foreign countries. And here the President can certainly lead. And more importantly, the summation of these successes leads to a major goal for Trump—fundamental tax reform. He should use the bully pulpit to make that a hallmark of his first four years. Think long game; don't pledge another bumbled blitzkrieg to jam through a measure of that magnitude. Take your time; involve bipartisan

the Middle East is never stable, Syria needs more than rhetoric, and the Taliban seems anxious to make a comeback as the world's leader in terrorism given the mass soldier shooting in Iraq just days ago. The president was smart to dispatch military assets off of Japan. These times call for the proper mix of diplomacy and show of force. I also believe Trump would be wise to employ his secretaries of state and defense. Use them— especially Secretary Tillerson and Nikki Haley— to be the interlocutors on behalf of the White House. They can serve as the proper channels to convey Trump's doctrine without involving the president himself. That only makes sense given so much uncertainty and fluidity around the globe.

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Local participant in JHU Innovation Lab wins \$25k prize

By Deborah Bailey

Shantell Roberts was awarded \$25,000 from Johns Hopkins University Innovation Labs to advance her concept to keep babies safe. Roberts' Portable Alternative Crib won the accolades of her peers and will soon be on its way into homes in Baltimore and surrounding counties.

Roberts' Portable Alternative Crib is based on a "baby box" concept, which originated in Finland in the 1930s. Today, it is a small, portable box issued by the government filled with newborn baby items and a mattress on the bottom to ensure each child in Finland gets an equal start. The Baby Box has become a rite of passage in Finnish culture. It is used as a crib for traveling mothers or for who don't own one.

"I in no way imagined that I would have been selected as the ultimate winner. It's still settling in," said Roberts.

In fact, Roberts had already settled on finding a way to distribute her Portable Alternative Crib to mothers across Baltimore when she entered the Johns Hopkins Social Innovation Lab, six months ago. She had the passion and the drive to save the lives of babies in Baltimore and beyond, but she just needed the opportunity.

In 2011, while Roberts was working at Morgan State University's Student Affairs Office nurturing the dreams of college students, she suffered a tragic loss. Her one-year-old daughter Tyler died from pneumonia. Although devastated, Roberts lived through the experience with the resolve to do what she could to ensure other mothers never go through the experience of losing an infant suddenly.

Roberts turned grief into determination and joined the Board of the Center for Infant Child Loss. But Roberts was not done yet.

A friend saw a listing for a job that she thought was perfect for Roberts with the B'more for Babies Healthy Babies Initiative. Roberts successfully interviewed and joined the staff of B'more for Healthy Babies as the Safe Sleep coordinator. Once again, Roberts wasn't done yet.



Shantell Roberts (holding check) with fellow Social Innovation Lab participants and Darius Graham, Lab Director (far right). Roberts was awarded \$25,000 from Johns Hopkins University Innovation Labs to advance her solution to keep babies safe. Her "Portable Alternative Crib" is based on a "baby box" concept, which originated in in Finland in the 1930s.

Courtesy Photo

Roberts attended a boot camp sponsored by the Social Innovation Lab in September 2016. She thought about the Baby Box presentation and decided to submit her application to the Hopkins Social Innovation Lab based on the Finnish box for babies that now captivated her. So, she decided to take a shot.

Roberts was invited back to give a presentation and was ultimately invited to transform her vision of ending Sudden Infant Death Syndrome by distributing Baby Boxes to every mother who needed one.

For the next six months, Roberts worked closely with a cohort of nine other social entrepreneurs from Hopkins and the Baltimore area and Lab Director, Darius Graham.

"Shantell's work [with] the Portable Alternative Crib is inspiring, and a great example of what we strive to do at the Social Innovation Lab— identify passionate people with personal and professional experience with a pressing social issue, and help them transform that passion and experience into a viable, impactful venture," Graham said.

After conducting interviews with individuals and participating in focus groups, Roberts decided to change the

name of the Baby Box to the Portable Alternative Crib and received the feedback and recourse she needed from the Innovation Lab to start "Touching Young Lives," the not-for profit organization that will benefit from sales of the Portable Alternative Crib. Roberts still wasn't done yet.

"The structure and accountability he (Darius Graham) gave me in the program was like no other. I had more structure in this program that I had in college," Roberts said laughing. "There are opportunities that I am almost sure I wouldn't have been afforded if I had not been part of the social innovation lab and that Darius prepared me to participate in."

One of the many opportunities Roberts recalled was attending the Unite for Sight Global Health and Innovation Conference, which was held at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut in April.

"I went to Yale to talk about my Portable Alternative Crib and to talk about safe sleep in Baltimore City," Roberts said, crediting the Social Innovation Lab for preparing and positioning her to take full advantage of the experience.

The unexpected gift Roberts received from the Hopkins Social Innovation Lab was the overwhelming affirmation of her peers. At this year's closing ceremony, Roberts discovered that she won the Social Innovation Lab's first ever peer-based prize of \$25,000 to start her venture.

Roberts' advice to other social entrepreneurs is to "start by starting."

"Do something every single day to get you one step closer to achieving your dream. Volunteer, look-up opportunities, go to events, send e-mails, ask questions. Just start by starting!"

Roberts isn't done yet. She is busy looking for an institution or an interested "angel" to make the Portable Alternative Crib available on a large scale here in Baltimore.

The Social Innovation Lab is a six-month program, which offers comprehensive support for individuals and teams in developing and scaling social enterprises culminating in a Pitch Day where participants may showcase their projects and rally community support. Since 2011, the lab has supported 62 ventures, raised more than \$13 million and hired more than 269 employees.

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New Ravens OLB Tim Williams motivated to excel in NFL

By Turron Davenport

The Baltimore Ravens have tried to address their pass rush over the last couple of years during the NFL Draft. Ravens General Manager Ozzie Newsome went back to his Alabama roots once again in 2017, this time to get a player that can get after the quarterback.

Former Alabama outside linebacker Tim Williams had 19.5 sacks over the last two years. Williams was selected by the Ravens in the third round— number 78 overall. His speed off the edge will earn him a position as a situational pass rusher for Baltimore.

Williams recently took part in rookie minicamp with the Ravens. He was anxious to get back on the field and play some ball.

"It felt great just to have my first NFL practice and just to compete— just to get back to football," Williams said after practice last week. "I have been waiting to get back out there and go after it and fly around. So, it was very refreshing. A lot of legendary players have been here, and a lot of work has been put in here also, so it just made me feel more comfortable."

Williams faced stiff competition during his days at Alabama and was guided by one of the best college coaches, Nick Saban. He wanted to show that he is able to absorb the coaching that the Ravens staff offers.

The motivation to put in the extra work runs deep for Williams. Unlike most prospects newly out of college, Williams has two daughters. While some may frown upon that, Williams feels it gives him a purpose.

"Just realizing the opportunity that I have," Williams explained. "I have two daughters; I have a six-year-old and I just had one born last month on March 16. I just have a lot of stuff going for me off the field to the point that I have to be a role model to those two girls, so that is really [something that motivates me]. I owe them everything. I do not want to be that type of father to give them an excuse."

As one of the top pass rushers in the nation, the expectation was for Williams



Alabama outside linebacker Tim Williams celebrates after making a play in the FCS playoffs in New Orleans on December 31, 2016. Williams was selected by the Ravens in the third round— number 78 overall in the 2017 NFL Draft.

Courtesy Photo/AL.com

to hear his name called earlier in the Draft. Although he is a bit undersized, Williams is a disruptive player that uses his speed to knife into backfields and take down quarterbacks in a flash.

Williams had to wait until the latter part of the third round to hear his name called. The wait may have been difficult for others, but for Williams, it paled in comparison to what he has been through in the past.

"It serves a lot of motivation for me. But growing up in Louisiana with [Hurricane] Katrina and everything, I am used to stuff not going my way," Williams said. "One day you can have a house, and the next day your house will be gone. All I needed was to get my foot in the door and to let somebody give me an opportunity. Like I said, I am very thankful and very blessed to be here, because at the same time, there a million other guys out there that did not get their name called. I am just taking it as a grain of salt."

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Bowie State names Aminta Breaux new president

Adelphi, Md.— The University System of Maryland (USM) Board of Regents has appointed Aminta Hawkins Breaux as president of Bowie State University (BSU), one of the USM's 12 institutions. Breaux has served as the vice president for advancement at Millersville University in Pennsylvania for nearly three years. She will join BSU as president on July 1, 2017.

"The Board of Regents is very pleased that Dr. Breaux has accepted the appointment as Bowie State's next president," said USM Board Chair James T. Brady. "She brings more than 35 years of a wide range of leadership experience, including in the areas of advancement and student affairs. Her higher education experiences also include academic affairs, strategic planning, enrollment management, capital planning, and budget management. She will serve the university, the USM, and the state well."

Since 2014, Breaux has served as vice president for advancement at Millersville University, a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Her areas of responsibility include development, external relations, and alumni engagement. Under her leadership, the university's endowment has grown from approximately \$30 million to \$40 million.

Prior to joining Millersville, Breaux was dean of students at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia from 2000 to 2008 and assistant provost of Drexel University in Philadelphia from 1998 to 2000. Earlier in her career, she held positions in student career services at Drexel and the University of Pennsylvania.

"Bowie State University is positioned to achieve even greater excellence in the years ahead," said USM Chancellor Robert L. Caret. "Dr. Breaux has the leadership experience, ability, and commitment to make that a reality. Throughout her career, she has excelled in nurturing productive relationships both on and off campus, with the goal of enhancing opportunities for students,



*Aminta Hawkins Breaux will join
Bowie State University as president
on July 1, 2017.
Courtesy Photo*

faculty, and staff. We very much look forward to her joining the University System of Maryland community."

Breaux earned her doctoral degree in counseling psychology from Temple University, master's degree in psychological services in education from the University of Pennsylvania, and bachelor's degree in psychology from Temple University.

Breaux will succeed Mickey L. Burnim, who has been BSU's president for nearly 11 years.

"I am deeply honored and delighted to be selected as the next president of Bowie State University and to have the opportunity to build on its rich history and legacy," said Breaux. "I look forward to working with the campus and greater community—students, faculty, staff, alumni, employers, and friends—to ensure continued success for BSU."

Bowie State University, with an enrollment of more than 5,600 undergraduate and graduate students, prides itself on providing real-world learning opportunities and challenging academic programs. It is located between Annapolis and Washington, DC. BSU offers 41 bachelor's and master's degree programs, two doctoral programs, and 14 graduate and advanced study certificates. Areas of focus include computer science, information technology, nursing, natural sciences, and education. To learn more about the university, visit: www.bowiestate.edu.

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Mother's Day without their Children, Part III

By Ursula V. Battle

This is part three of a three part series on A Mother's Cry. Founded by Millie Brown, "A Mother's Cry" is a foundation that supports mothers who have lost their children to violence.

On Mother's Day, May 14, a day to celebrate and pay homage to mothers, this group of women will find themselves missing the children they once shared this special time with over the years. The phone calls, the cards, the dinners or other tokens of love once received from the children they have lost – now a thing of the past. These are the mothers of A Mother's Child, a group of approximately 30 women who have lost their sons and daughters to violence.

"My son Joseph loved his music," said Denise Green. "He had a show on October 4, 2009, and was planning on having another show on November 13, 2009. But he was shot on November 3, 2009, and died the following day. I miss him so much."

Founded by Millie Brown, A Mother's Cry supports mothers who have lost their children to violence. Green is a member, and also volunteers with the group. She was among the mothers who recently gathered at a special dinner at Ciao Bella Restaurant on High Street in Little Italy. The mothers share a special connection – one linked together by the commonality of losing a child.

"It's a struggle," said Rhanda Dormeus whose daughter Korryn Gaines was shot to death on August 1, 2016 following a standoff with Baltimore County police. "Fortunately, Korryn chronicled little moments with her children. I don't know if she knew this would be her outcome, but from a mother's perspective, she prepared and always let them know she loved them."

She added, "I heard about A Mother's Cry about two months after she was killed. Miss Mille has taken not only myself, but other mothers who have the same experience under her wing. She hasn't lost a child, but her motherly instinct allows her to feel our pain. She tries to keep us motivated by doing wonderful things like this dinner gathering to celebrate mothers who are struggling

through these terrible times."

Dormeus said her daughter left behind two children – a 15 month-old and a five-year-old.

"Some of the mothers in this group recently lost children, and others lost children years ago, but the pain is still so fresh," said Dormeus. "It's almost like it was yesterday. Miss Millie does everything she can to make us

understand she is there for us and feels our pain. I am so grateful for her. She doesn't have to do it, but she does. That's the purest thing about her. She could be doing so many other things, but she chooses to fight for mothers who cry like myself, which I do quite frequently."

She added, "It hasn't been a year for me since I lost Korryn, so the wounds are quite fresh. The mothers who are here got together, shared our stories, and cried with one another. People say they know how you feel, but you never know until you experience it."

Brown's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In March, she was presented with a "Black History Hero Award" for her outstanding contributions to the community by The Cordish Companies' Live! Casino & Hotel and the Md. Washington Minority Companies Association (MWMCA).

"If I can say anything to stop someone from taking a child's life, I would tell them, 'don't do it,'" said Brown who saw the aftermath of violence as an Operating Room Associate at Johns Hopkins Hospital. "It's time for it to stop. I am dealing with mothers everyday who have lost their kids. The ones who are killing have no value at all for human life. There is a better way. We have to create something for them to do to get their frustrations out, because too many young lives are being lost."



Former Ravens middle linebacker Ray Lewis, a supporter of A Mother's Cry, holds a painting of him created by artist William Brown, shown on the right.

Courtesy Photo



Millie Brown, Founder of A Mother's Cry, Angel Howard, a member of the group, and Rob Wallace of Power52, Inc. Photo: Ursula V. Battle



William's Brown's work includes this painting. The parents of some of these famous individuals also faced the loss of their child. Courtesy Photo

Brown's son William Brown is an artist. He creates a special gift for the mothers.

"I do portraits for the mothers of their children," said Brown. "It is very emotional, and it is very sad. The mothers talk to me about their child, give me a picture of them, and I go from there. I try to visualize their child and incorporate my vision into the painting. I normally do acrylic paintings for them, and my mother presents it to them through A Mother's Cry."

He added, "The mothers see the effort and work I have put into the painting. For me, their action is overwhelming. It is a joyful feeling to bring a smile to their face. I know my art can't bring their child back, but they are happy at that moment."

His mother longs for the day when the purpose for her son creating such paintings will end.

"My mother had it hard," said Brown. "But our teachers taught us, gave to us, and beat us. Folks pitched in to straighten us out. We need to get back to doing what we used to do in our schools and communities, and that's going the extra mile. Things have got to change because so many of our young people are being taken away. If we can stop these kids from being killed, we can stop these mothers from crying."

For more information on A Mother's Cry, call (443) 303-6289 or send an email to brownmillie98@gmail.com.

Mother's Day reflections: Georgine Edgerton's legacy of service

Legacy of helping others lives on through those she touched

By Ursula V. Battle

"My mother had blue hair and everyone else's mother's hair was black. She was always different, but her spirit was young. It was youthful exuberance about her. I want to carry that same fervor for life." – Garcia Williams, daughter of the late Georgine Edgerton

Mia Singleton, 52, fondly recalled the day her mother had taken her to Reisterstown Road Plaza to purchase platform shoes for her junior high school graduation. Sitting on the porch patiently awaiting their return was Georgine Edgerton, whom she affectionately calls "Aunee."

"I was excited because platform shoes had just come out," recalled Singleton with a laugh. "I convinced my mother to get me a pair from Jerry Miller's, and when we got home, Aunee asked to see the shoes. She took one look at them, had me and my mother to get back in the car, and rode with us to Reisterstown Plaza to return the shoes. She then took us to Hess Shoes to get flat patent leather shoes. I kept telling her they were hurting my feet, and she said, 'no they don't.'"

She added, "I came to realize that what she was telling me was that 'you are a sixth-grader. You don't have to rush to be grown. You have plenty of time for that.' Aunee was creating clear boundaries for me as a child, and I will never forget that."

Singleton's story is one of many fond stories shared about Edgerton, who was also known as "The Mayor of Walbrook Junction," because of her community activism in the area.

"Before you can become a good mother, you have to be a good person," said Singleton. "We have always felt so able and capable and that there was nothing we could not do. Aunee instilled that in us. She had such a positive outlook on life and was confident. She knew who she was, and whose she was. She had an amazing impact on my life."

Edgerton passed away on March 15 at 91. She was the mother of four biological children – Joseph "Danny" Edgerton,



Georgine Edgerton, who passed away in March at the age of 91, was the biological mother of four, and a mother to many. She had a special passion for helping the community.

Claudette Swain, Garcia Williams, and Dr. Brenda J. Conley, who affectionately call her "Muh." But the woman who instilled pride in her community, and was known for making youngsters pick up trash to help keep the neighborhood clean, was a mother to many.

"Muh had a natural way of giving and doing things that needed to be done," said Williams. "She taught us so much about love and the true meaning of unconditional love. Her love extended beyond her family, and to her God-given family, which was the community."

According to family members, Edgerton became president of the Mount Holly Improvement Association in 1977 – a position she would hold for 30 years. Her many other roles included having served as a member of the Cahill Recreation Center Council, and a member of the school improvement team at Walbrook High School.

"Community service was never an option for us," said Williams, who is a marketing consultant for a non-profit agency. "It was a way of life. Our life of service was one that we modeled after our mother. Her commitment was making the



Georgine Edgerton, shown with her four children Garcia Williams, Dr. Brenda J. Conley, Joseph "Danny" Edgerton, and Claudette Swain. Courtesy Photos

community a better place. It was a driving force for her. She worked with many former mayors. She was very vocal in expressing her views, and very much focused on the issues at hand."

Swain reflected back on the life of her mother, who refused gifts for her 75th birthday celebration.

"She didn't want anything for herself," said Swain, who is a retired longtime city school educator. "All of her gifts went to College Bound scholarships. Many people contributed to College Bound scholarships in her honor, and still continue to contribute in her memory. She loved Douglass High School's Class of 1945, and was an active member of the Alumni Association. She was a true Baltimorean and an Ambassador for Baltimore."

"My mother never traveled outside of Baltimore, but her message of love and commitment for all mankind went all across the world. She played host mother to students from other countries, and encouraged her friends to become host mothers."

Dr. Conley added, "She knew everyone's birthday in the family. Everyone looked forward to hearing from her. If nobody else remembered your birthday, she did."

Edgerton talked about his mother's community activism

"She participated in the March on Washington," he said. She was very active in rallies and events. She also had us out there volunteering at polling places and handing out campaign literature. We were always encouraged to participate in activism. She wouldn't let us be complacent about anything."

Mona Benson who now resides in Charleston, S.C., is Edgerton's great-niece.

"She taught us to respect and treat older people with dignity," said Benson. "She hosted pancake breakfasts for seniors. If we were on the bus, and a senior needed a place to sit, we would naturally get up. There's no way we would disrespect our elders or talk back. Those lessons were engrained in us, and they came from Aunee. She was stern, but we knew she loved us. I am thankful to God for allowing her to be in my life during a very impressionable time."

"You don't have to be a biological mother to be a good mother. It's about filling the gap and helping with a need. I feel blessed and want to thank her. We have a torch, and that torch is to continue to do what we need to do to inspire others and maintain her legacy. That's the best gift we can give her on Mother's Day."

High Blood Pressure:

Facts to know and myths to forget

By Wallace Johnson, MD, FASH, Hypertension Specialist, University of Maryland Medical Center and Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine

May 17 is World Hypertension Day, an opportunity to promote public awareness of hypertension, or high blood pressure, and to encourage citizens to learn how to control this silent killer. As part of the CHECK IT, B'MORE initiative, there will be many opportunities for people to get their blood pressure checked and take the first step to improving their heart health, including:

- With the American Heart Association, the University of Maryland Medical Center will offer screening in a mobile van from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street in Baltimore.

- At the University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus Community Health Education Center (CHEC), 821 N. Eutaw Street, Ste. 106, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- For more locations, see CHECK IT B-MORE, at <http://umm.gd/2pie0a1>

This is an issue of particular importance for the African-American community:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), when compared with white individuals, African-Americans ages 18-49 are twice as likely to die from heart disease, and African-Americans ages 35-64 are 50 percent more likely to have high blood pressure.

Your heart pumps blood to provide energy and oxygen, and, with every beat, pushes against the sides of blood vessels. The strength of that pushing is called blood pressure. Blood pressure measurements help gauge the health of your heart and blood vessels. If your blood pressure is too high, you may be at risk for stroke, kidney disease, heart attack or other problems.

Individuals can make changes to lower their blood pressure by taking steps such as eating a well-balanced, low-salt diet; exercising regularly; maintaining a healthy weight; quitting smoking; limiting alcohol and taking medications properly.

See how you score on these facts and myths about high blood pressure— doctors call it hypertension.

Hypertension is common in the USA: **Fact or Myth?**

- Answer: **Fact**— About 75-80 million adults (1 in 3) in the US have high blood pressure, unfortunately, one out of every five Americans with hypertension is NOT aware they have it.

In some people, salt or sodium can increase blood pressure. You can keep your dietary sodium low by not using regular salt and simply substituting kosher or sea salt when cooking.

Fact or Myth?

- Answer: **Myth**— About 75 percent of the dietary sodium we consume is hidden in processed foods like tomato sauce, soups, condiments and canned foods. It is important to read labels and watch for foods with large amounts of sodium. So-called salt alternatives like kosher or sea salt are the same as table salt— 40 percent sodium—and count the same as regular table salt toward your daily sodium or salt consumption.

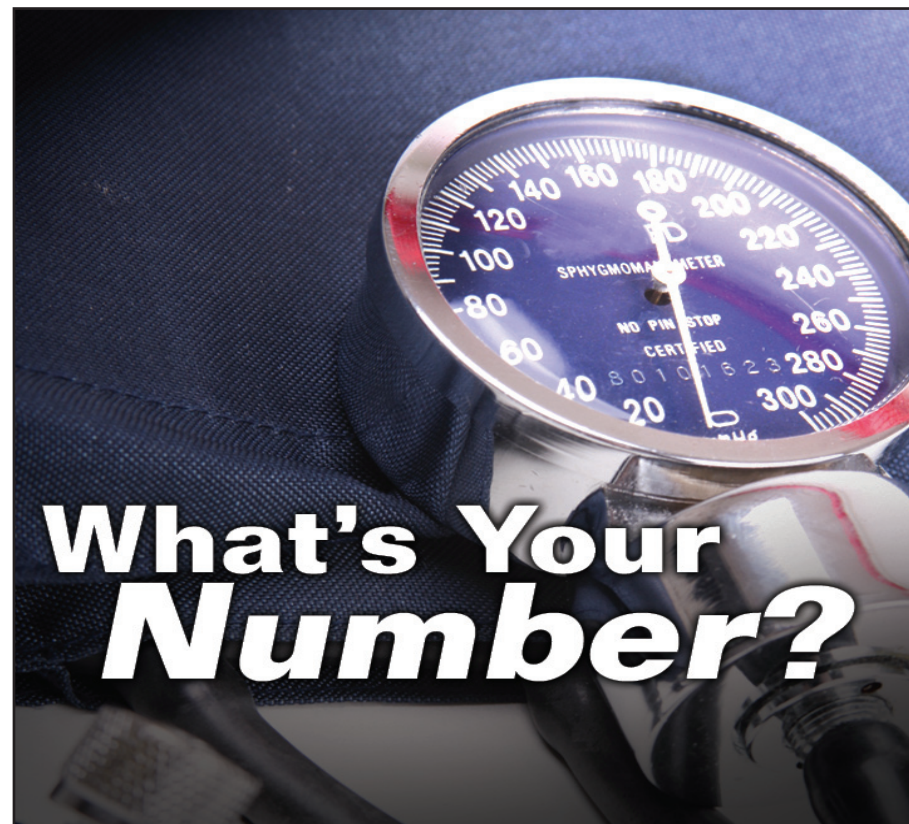
Most people know when their blood pressure is high because they have headaches, sweating and feel “hyper.”

Fact or Myth?

- Answer: **Myth**— Hypertension is called “the silent killer” because so many people who have high blood pressure have no symptoms when their pressure is high. You may not be aware that your high blood pressure could be damaging your heart, kidneys, brain or other organs. Know your numbers and let your doctor determine when you need to be treated.

Some people have high blood pressure readings at home but not in their doctor’s office. **Fact or Myth?**

- Answer: **Fact**— Many doctors recommend home monitoring since blood pressure can fluctuate. “Masked hypertension” is a situation where the doctor repeatedly gets normal blood pressure readings but home monitoring reveals high readings. It was recently estimated that millions of Americans have masked hypertension, so ask your doctor



about how to do home blood pressure monitoring.

Drinking four to five glasses of red wine a day is good for your heart and lowers your blood pressure.

Fact or Myth?

- Answer: **Myth**— Heavy and regular use of alcohol can raise blood pressure dramatically. It can also lead to heart failure, stroke and irregular heartbeats. If you drink, limit your consumption to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women. Remember, drink size matters. In general, one drink equals a 12-ounce beer, a four-ounce glass of wine, 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor or one ounce of hard liquor (100 proof).

If my blood pressure has been “normal” based on what I read on the Internet and I may be having medication side effects, I should stop taking my medication. **Fact or Myth?**

- Answer: **Myth**— Never make a medication decision solely based on information on the Internet without first talking to your doctor. Generally, most

experts will state that a consistent blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or more should be evaluated by a doctor. Stopping any medication without advice from your doctor is never a good idea.

Patients with little or no health insurance cannot control their high blood pressure because of the high price of medications. **Fact or Myth?**

- Answer: **Myth**— Nearly all patients will get some benefit from increasing their activity level and converting to a lower sodium diet. Reducing the average amount of salt or sodium that people eat from 3,400 milligrams (mg) to 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day—the level recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010—may reduce cases of high blood pressure by 11 million. Many drugs are now available in a less costly generic (non-brand name) form especially if you ask your pharmacist or doctor.

References: CDC: High Blood Pressure facts and the American Heart Association: Common High Blood Pressure Myths



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Auto dealers compete to save the bay, help students

By Stacy M. Brown

Anyone buying a new vehicle in the next few months just might help the Chesapeake Bay, students and teachers in K-12 education, and conservation and restoration programs in Maryland.

Auto dealers from Baltimore, and around Maryland, have entered a friendly competition to see who sends the most customers off their lots with "Treasure the Chesapeake Bay" license plates.

"Bay plates help to restore and improve our treasured Chesapeake Bay and local waterways," said Bill Wheatley-Heckman, of O'Donnell Honda in Ellicott City. "With the planned defunding of environmental programs at the federal level, programs like this are so valuable."

The new contest kicked off April 1, the official start of the spring car season among environmentally friendly automobile dealerships.

The contest winners are determined by the dealerships who send the most customers off their lots with the Treasure the Chesapeake Bay plates, sell the highest percentage of cars with Bay plates, and those who are most improved over previous years during the months of April, May, and June 2017.

Already, 138 automobile dealerships, named Dealers for the Bay, have signed up to participate in the contest, and friendly rivalries among neighboring dealerships and dealerships within car families have begun.

"What a fun way for our member dealers to show their support for the Bay and our communities' rivers and streams during this busy car shopping season," said John O'Donnell, President and CEO of the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association, many members of which have already signed up to



Auto dealers from Baltimore and around Maryland have entered a friendly competition to see who will send the most customers away from their lots between April and June 2017 with "Treasure the Chesapeake Bay" license plates. Funds generated from the sale of the Bay Plates are distributed by the Chesapeake Bay Trust through grants that pay for natural resource, K-12 education, conservation and restoration programs.

Courtesy Photo/Chesapeake Bay

be Dealers for the Bay.

"Our dealerships love a friendly rivalry, and with this contest they can compete with each other, show their customers they care about our natural resources, and do good at the same time," O'Donnell said in a news release.

Funds generated from the sale of the Bay Plate are distributed by a nonprofit organization, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, through grants that fund natural resources, K-12 education, conservation, and restoration programs.

Schools, students, teachers, community associations and other organizations tap into this funding to carry out projects across the state, in every county from

the mountains to the coast.

"The Trust is so thankful to our Dealers for the Bay and to the hundreds of thousands of Marylanders who already have Bay Plates" said Jana Davis, executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Trust. "These dealerships, through their promotion of the Bay Plate, are helping get kids outside on field trips through their schools, trees planted with local civic associations, and gardens planted across our communities, all of which helps the Bay and its rivers and streams."

A Bay Plate costs the car-buyer \$20, and he or she is then eligible to join the Plate Perks program in which they get

discounts generally worth more than \$20 per year and preferred parking at businesses across the state.

Dealerships who sell at least 20 Bay Plates this spring will be able to get 10 more children out on field trips and six more trees planted in local communities, according to a news release.

If all 138 dealerships can do it, 1,380 more students will be educated and over 700 more trees can be planted.

"With proposed reductions in federal funding for the Bay, Bay Plates become an even more important source of support," Davis said.

Winning dealerships in each category will be announced in September 2017.

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BossUp:

Learning outside the classroom at YEA



Thirteen Baltimore City and Baltimore County youth participated in a Youth Entrepreneurship Academy at Morgan State during Spring Break. Tammira Lucas (second from left, with co-founder, The Cube Cowork and Omar Muhammad, director, EDAC).
Courtesy Photo

By Tammira Lucas

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 provides resources that will hopefully inspire youth to “boss up” and start, operate or grow a business.

Thirteen Baltimore City and Baltimore County youth decided that learning about entrepreneurship, the stock market and 3D printing was more valuable than vacationing on a beach for Spring Break.

The Entrepreneurial Development and Assistance Center (EDAC) at Morgan State University and The Cube Cowork partnered to provide a five-day Youth Entrepreneur Academy (YEA) for youth ages 10-14 over the Baltimore City and Baltimore County designated spring break.

Both organizers felt it was important to change the trajectory of what youth can do during time away from school. Most public schools don't include curriculum that provides students with an opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship. Having an opportunity like YEA allows youth to explore other career options.

For founders of The Cube Cowork, it was important to not just teach the concept of entrepreneurship, but to teach the mindset of entrepreneurship to our youth. Each day during the YEA, the partici-

pants engaged in several hands-on activities around entrepreneurship, learned how to trade stocks in a simulated stock market game on www.investopedia.com and learned to create products on a 3D printer. At the end of the academy, the participant with the best portfolio won a cash prize of \$100. Several of the youth had already come to the experience with entrepreneurship in mind. From having a Youtube channel, to writing to designing clothes, the resources from the five days will help them grow their idea into a business.

“Most of the participating youth had never been exposed to the stock market or 3D printing, and after learning how they can purchase and trade stock to build wealth and make their own products, they were fully engaged in learning more about it beyond the five days,” said Omar Muhammad, director of EDAC.

From marketing strategies to actually launching an online store, the youth learned every aspect of a business. The success of the program was not only because of the organizers but also because of the other partners and volunteers like Maryland InvestEd and local entrepreneurs who came to speak with the youth.

This is not just a onetime opportunity, but both organizers plan to continue to provide similar opportunities throughout the year.

First African American JLB President Ends Historic Term on High Note

Baltimore— Cylia E. Lowe-Smith, Esq. recently finished her 2015-2016 term as president of the Junior League of Baltimore, making her the first African American woman in the 104 year history of the Junior League of Baltimore (JLB) to serve in that capacity.

Lowe joined the JLB in 2008 and found the Junior League's approach to leadership development for women very unique. She remembers being asked as a part of her new member class "Where do you see yourself in the League in five to 10 years?" I asked the Chair 'Do you REALLY want to know this answer?' and she said 'YES! We do! If you want to be president one day; we want to make sure you are as prepared as possible. We already know it will be a hard job but we want to give you everything you need in terms of trainings, experiences and mentors to feel ready to take it on!'

"I really liked that," recalled Lowe. "So I checked off the box for president in 5-10 years, and eight years later here I am! The Junior League gave me everything it promised and I will forever be grateful for that. The Junior League provides a safe place for women to learn and grow as leaders. The membership structure is set up in such a way that young women are Actives and they are the ones who are the members that serve on the board of directors, chair committees, create service projects and do most of the work of the League. The expectation is that you are 'learning on the job,' which is very different from many other organizations that expect you to step up only when you are 110 percent ready. That is not to say there were not significant challenges along the way, but I truly valued that unique opportunity; it increased my creativity, self-confidence and taught me that it was ok to ask for help. I know whatever other leadership opportunities I am blessed to experience in the years to come; the League played a significant role in preparing me for them."

In fact, Lowe-Smith was recently elected as the vice president of the 95-year-old Epsilon Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.,



Cylia Lowe-Smith, Esq. (middle) with her parents Cynthia Minniffee Lowe (left) and Dr. Herbert Lowe (right) at the Junior League of Baltimore Annual Dinner and Awards. The Minniffee-Lowe Diversity & Inclusion Fund was established in their honor that evening to support diversity and inclusion programs at the JLB. Lowe-Smith was the first African American woman in the 104 year history of the Junior League of Baltimore (JLB) to serve as president. Courtesy Photo

(AKA) located in Baltimore city. The Epsilon Omega chapter was the first graduate chapter of AKA established in the North Atlantic Region, which spans from Maine to Washington, D.C. In that role, Lowe-Smith is responsible for the chapter's implementation of the International Programs of Service. With a chapter membership of almost 300 strong, that is a tall order to say the least, but her experience as the JLB President laid a strong foundation for her work in the community now.

During her term as JLB president, Lowe said she wanted to "...focus on leadership development and expanding the Junior League's outreach to the city in order to fine-tune the organization's community service efforts." This included hearing from key stakeholders in the Baltimore community and beyond to ascertain how the JLB can best serve the

community today. Guest speakers included: Marilyn Mosby, Baltimore City State's Attorney; Stephanie Rawlings Blake, former Baltimore City Mayor; Heather Harvison, founder, Sisters Circle; Bob Paff, communications expert and author; Janine le Sueur, Association of Junior League's International Senior Staff/ Director of Programs; and Vicki Clark, renowned leadership development trainer.

In addition to hosting speakers for her own League, Lowe was highly sought after as a guest speaker throughout the country as well discussing the value of diversity and inclusion in membership organizations.

When asked what was next, Lowe-Smith says that although she applied for an International Junior League Board position, she was not slated (selected by the Nominating Committee to run). So

as far as Junior League is concerned, she is enjoying being a Sustainer and Past President. She was recently tapped to serve as the Workshops Chairman for the 86th AKA North Atlantic Regional Conference held in Baltimore in April. In that role she is charged with organizing and coordinating over 20 leadership development workshops for the more than 5,000 registered attendees.

"While I was disappointed that I was not selected to serve at the next level of the Junior League, I am a newlywed, actively engaged in the community, working full time as an attorney, and managing my own small business, so my hands are full, and I truly believe the saying: God makes no mistakes!" said Lowe-Smith.

For more information about Cylia Lowe-Smith, visit her website: www.CyliaLowe.com

Music from Baltimore's Shire featured in Fox's hit TV

By Stacy M. Brown

Baltimore native Talia "Shire" Burgess is among the talented team of songwriters for Fox Network's "Shots Fired." The soundtrack for the hit drama series, featuring Sanaa Lathan, Stephen James, Mack Wilds and Academy Award winners Richard Dreyfuss and Helen Hunt, has received rave reviews for its unique sounds and ability to reach several generations of music lovers.

According to Hype magazine, the project has already received award buzz from music industry insiders.

Of the seven original songs created for the show's first season, Shire's name appears in the credits under five cuts, including "Speak to my Heart," "Losing Control," "Called Home," and "Broke Down," and "Where Do We Go from Here," the title track, with BJ The Chicago Kid.

"I learned about 'Shots Fired' through my manager, Charles King, who kept a great business relationship with music supervisor Jabari Ali of Paragon Film



Baltimore native Talia "Shire" Burgess is among the talented team of songwriters for Fox Network's "Shots Fired." Of the seven original songs created for the show's first season, Shire's name appears in the credits for five cuts, including "Where Do We Go from Here," the title track, with BJ The Chicago Kid and Shire. Courtesy Photo

Black Writers' Guild of Maryland celebrates 20th Anniversary at the Forum in Baltimore on June 4

Baltimore— The Black Writers' Guild will host a Gala celebrating its 20th Anniversary on Sunday, June 4, 2017 at the Forum located at 4210 Primrose Avenue in Baltimore.

The Gala is a celebration of the Guild's history and accomplishments in the Maryland area. Founder, noted historian and author, Louis S. Diggs, will be honored. The keynote speaker will be award-winning columnist and associate editor for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Tony Norman. Attendees will enjoy dinner, dancing, networking, and a silent auction.

Tickets for the "20th Anniversary Gala" are now available at \$75 per person online at www.blackwritersguild.org.

"Our Gala is going to be an event which will long be remembered," said chairperson and Guild treasurer, Brenda McClellan. "Our gala committee has been working for months to make this event a success. The longevity of the Guild and the tireless contributions of those who came before us are certainly worthy to celebrate!"

"The Guild's rich history has had positive impact on the writing lives of our members and supporters," said Jim Wright, president of the Guild. "I am humbled and excited to be a part of this historic event. I am proud of our accomplishments and the assistance we have provided over the years to countless writers in our region."

For more information about the "20th Anniversary Gala," visit: www.blackwritersguild.org, call 443-671-7743 or email bwg@blackwritersguild.org for full details.

Music who worked on previous projects with [show creators] Reggie and Gina Prince Bythewood," Shiré said.

As an artist, the energy resonates at an all-time high working on "Shots Fired," said Shiré, who grew up splitting her time in East and West Baltimore.

The show, a 10-part series, exposes the depths of police shootings in a racially charged North Carolina town. Show producers have said the music is integral to the storyline with a blend of hip-hop, blues, gospel, R&B and alternative sounds.

Most of Shiré's family still live in the city and she says she is proud of her hometown.

Her first break came after completing a year at Morgan State University, when she signed a recording contract with Def Jam Records. Shiré began her professional career as a member of the short-lived girl group, LovHer, which was the first female group to ever sign with Def Jam.

The group's "How's It Gonna Be" landed on the Rush Hour 2 soundtrack,

was certified Gold and the single reached as high as No. 60 on the Billboard Top 100 R&B Charts.

Shiré later enjoyed a guest acting appearance on the television series "Soul Food," before performing on BET, MTV, TRL, Soul Train, BET Black College Tour and the Lady of Soul Awards.

In 2014 Shiré released the anthem song to the BET original movie, Gun Hill, starring Larenz Tate.

"I started my journey in the entertainment business by being involved in cultural arts programs that helped underprivileged kids like myself as early as elementary school," Shiré said.

"Those programs helped plant the first seeds that pushed me to develop my gifts. By my late teenage years, I became the lead singer of SisQo from DruHill's girl group called 'LovHer.'

"My next deal was as a solo artist under Steve Rifkind under SRC/Universal Motown. Unfortunately, after years of sitting on the label that deal had ended but I still chose not to give up," she said.

Shiré says she never stopped recording and writing, all of which has paid off with her recent success and inclusion on the "Shots Fired" team.

Shiré says she also found inspiration from her mother, Karen Doreen Jackson, who died of congestive heart failure in June 2012 at the age of 53. She says the death came as a complete shock and has showed her how quickly life can pass by.

"My mother watched me through the years of my journey, questioning why I wasn't going outside of my comfort zone to make it happen," Shiré said. She mentioned to my sister why haven't I gone back to Los Angeles to pursue my dreams. I promised myself within a year after her passing that I would leave Baltimore to pursue my dreams."

"I drove to Los Angeles on June 1, 2013 and, like my mom said, it happened for me."

"Shots Fired" airs on Fox at 8 p.m. on Wednesdays.

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OFFICE OF BOARDS & COMMISSIONS
ARCHITECTURAL & ENGINEERING AWARDS COMMISSION MEETING
May 17 – 2:45 P.M.

A meeting of the Architectural & Engineering Awards Commission will be held on Wednesday, May 17, 2017 at 2:45 P.M. in Room 215 City Hall (Board of Estimates Chambers).

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in the meeting, please contact Kumasi Vines at (410) 396-6883. The following projects will be considered for award during the meeting:

1. PROJECT #1196R – INSPECTION AND ANALYSIS OF BALTIMORE CITY WASTEWATER COLLECTION
2. PROJECT #1254 – ON-CALL ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING SERVICES

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New dedicated BaltimoreLink bus lanes coming to Downtown Baltimore

*BaltimoreLink Bus Lanes To Deliver
More Efficient Transit Service*

Baltimore— In an effort to transform public transportation in Baltimore, the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) and the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) are rolling out the next phase of dedicated bus lanes in parts of the city beginning the week of May 15, 2017. These dedicated bus lanes are a key element of the Hogan Administration's BaltimoreLink plan to transform transit in the Baltimore region.

"These dedicated bus lanes will help our system's reliability by allowing our buses to move faster through the downtown area," said MTA Administrator and CEO Paul Comfort. "These new lanes will complement the existing bus-only lanes on Pratt and Lombard streets and allow us to continue to deliver on our promise of transforming transit in Baltimore."

Working between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m., crews expect to paint each street beginning on or around the following dates:

- Week of May 15 – Baltimore Street (from Arch to Gay streets);
- June 5 – Fayette Street (from President to Arch streets);
- June 28 – Gay Street (from Baltimore to Forrest streets);
- July 17 – Guilford Avenue (from Pleasant to Fayette streets);
- July 17 – Hillen Street (from Forrest to Front streets);
- July 31 – Lombard Street (from Howard to Penn streets and from President Street to Market Place);

- August 14 – Pratt Street (from Greene to Howard streets);
- August 21 – Charles Street (from Madison to Oliver streets); and
- September 25 – St. Paul/Light Street (from Monument to Redwood streets).

Dedicated bus lanes will be painted red to make them clearer to the public. In areas with a solid red marking, only buses, bicycles, emergency vehicles and school buses can travel. All vehicles can enter areas with dashed paint in order to make a right turn at the next intersection. In some areas, the dedicated bus lanes are for peak periods only and will not be marked with red paint, but simply with signage and markings on the pavement. Each dedicated bus lane will serve at least 18 buses an hour in the peak periods and will move the same number of people as the adjacent travel lane.

"Roadways for dedicated bus lanes were evaluated based on traffic volumes, the number of buses operating on each street, and the proportion of people being moved by transit versus private vehicles," said BCDOT Acting Director Frank Murphy. "By separating transit vehicles from mixed traffic, we've committed to making transit a more viable transportation option in Baltimore."

During September and October of 2016, the MTA Police Force, Baltimore Police Department and Baltimore City Transportation Enforcement Officers undertook a large, two-month public education campaign to inform the public about dedicated bus lanes in Baltimore. There was a grace period during this time where the public was issued warnings for driving in a dedicated bus lane. Anyone who violates state law and drives in dedicated bus lanes will receive a \$90 fine and one point on their driver's license. Baltimore City Transportation Enforcement Officers, the Baltimore Police Department and MTA Police are handling enforcement.

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