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The Weekly Challenger

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY

VOL. 53 NO. 04

OCTOBER 14 - OCTOBER 27, 2021

50¢

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Entrepreneur Sara Fludd

POP Goes the Waffle opens new storefront

BY KARIN DAVIS-THOMPSON
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG – Sara Fludd said she has always loved waffles – it was a special breakfast treat for her family. So, after several attempts at starting a business without the success she'd hoped for, she decided to turn to what she loved, and Pop Goes the Waffle was born.

"There were a lot of early [business] attempts," Fludd shared. "I tried it all - yard signs, custom candy bars, dessert catering, I even had a coffee company."

Even though none of those worked the way she thought they would, the entrepreneurial bug just wouldn't leave. And, with her daughter getting ready to head to college, she and her husband began to think about the next

See **POP**, page 7



Dr. Goliath J. Davis

The secret is out

BY GOLIATH J. DAVIS, III, PH.D.
Contributor

ST. PETERSBURG – Well, just when I thought it was over, the whispers regarding the Miracle at Lakewood Elementary are bubbling once again. The school of thought that posits the "miracle" was not a miracle at all, but a curious series of questionable actions instead has once again reared its head.

The secret ingredients that produced the miracle are about as unbelievable as the miracle itself. The three ingredients are known to all. However, what is unknown is whether they each have mystical power or some combination of the three in the appropriate proportion does the trick.

Snacks, Mickey D's, and the Colonel are purportedly the three food sources capable of moving a school grade from the bottom of the heap to the top of the mountain. It was established long ago, Skittles, McDonald's Happy Meals, and Kentucky Fried Chicken are pleasing to the palate. How-

See **LAKEWOOD**, page 3



DeWayne Anderson

USFSP: 'We're here for all students'

ST. PETERSBURG – As the new assistant program director for the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) at USF's St. Petersburg campus, DeWayne Anderson wants students to have the same college experience he did, where he felt welcomed and supported.

Anderson credits his mentor, who worked in the multicultural affairs office at his university, for helping him find a career in higher education.

"He was always around, always prevalent, and he looked like me. He was a Black man, too. So, I looked up to him and mimicked what he did; I essentially wanted to be like him," said Anderson.

As an undergraduate student, Anderson attended Clarion University in Clarion, Pa.,

See **USFSP**, page 9



L, R - Julius Davis, CEO, Volt Air Consulting Engineers, Harry Howard, Howard & Associates Architects, James Graham, Sankofa project manager, HORUS Construction

Deuces not left out of the St. Pete renaissance

BY FRANK DROUZAS
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG – The City of St. Petersburg and the Sankofa Group hosted a meeting on Oct. 5, unveiling the design for the Sankofa on The Deuces project across from the Manhattan Casino. The community attended to provide feedback, thoughts, and guidance on the preliminary plans for this much-anticipated revitalization effort.

"The purpose of this evening is for you to imagine and give your thoughts on what you'd like to see," said LaShante Keys of the Urban Collective to those on hand in the historic Manhattan Casino and to the virtual audience. "To listen, to learn, and to

See **DEUCES**, page 2



Mayoral candidates Ken Welch and Robert Blackmon

Art takes center stage at the latest mayoral forum

BY MARK PARKER
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — In a city known for its love of the arts, it is only fitting to hear the candidates address issues as they relate to the arts culture in St. Petersburg.

On Tuesday night, Ken Welch and Robert Blackmon took part in the Mayors Forum on the Arts. The forum was presented by the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance (SPAA) along with community partners the Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions (ISPS) and The Palladium – which hosted the event.

Kimberly Jackson, executive director of ISPS and a board member of the SPAA moderated the event. Local artists and community members submitted questions, and the night began with the candidates explaining what role the arts play in their lives.

Blackmon started by saying that art is a part of St. Pete's culture and called it omnipresent in

See **MAYOR**, page 3



Blue Feliu will receive the Latino Leaders award at the Hispanic Heritage Celebration on Sunday, Oct. 17.

Feliu to receive Latino Leader award

BY J.A. JONES
Staff Writer

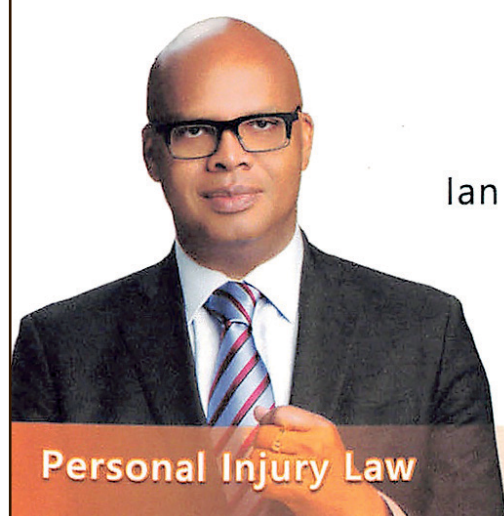
ST. PETERSBURG - Blue Feliu has been sharing the artistry, inspiration, and beauty of the Latinx culture in the Tampa Bay community for more than 36 years. The veteran dancer, actress, costumer, and community activist has touched the lives of school children, artists-in-training, dance students, and aspiring film legends on both sides of the Bay.

This weekend, Feliu's work to expose audiences to the variety of Hispanic culture through dance, music, and more will be recognized as she receives a 2021 TOP Florida Latino Lideres award at this weekend's Hispanic Heritage Celebration in Tampa at Centro Asturiano, 1913 N. Nebraska Ave. in Tampa.

Modest about her accomplishments, when asked why she was receiving the award, Feliu

See **AWARD**, page 8

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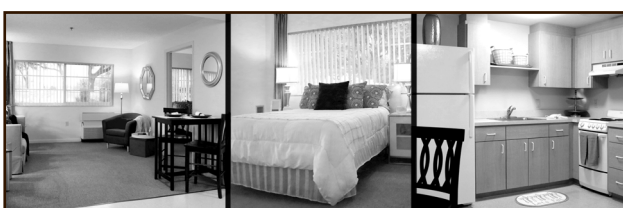
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**WE ENCOURAGE LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR**



Goodwill-Suncoast operates five apartment communities that offer affordable living options for seniors and people with disabilities. Each provides rent subsidies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on a scale that is based on expenses and income.*

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Freedom Village III

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Heritage Oaks of Ocala (1 bedroom pictured)

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Please note: the waiting lists for 1 bedroom apartments at Freedom Village I, II and III are currently closed due to excessive wait times.

* Subsidy available to reduce rent to 30% of income.

Freedom Village I, II, III and Heritage Oaks of Palm Harbor: gross income limits are \$25,850 for 1 person or \$29,550 for 2 people. Heritage Oaks of Ocala: gross income limits are \$19,500 for 1 person or \$22,250 for 2 people.



**PLEASE SUPPORT
OUR ADVERSISERS**

Deuces not left out of the St. Pete renaissance

DEUCES, from front page

see the design concepts brought together by this all-star design team.”

Deputy Mayor Dr. Kanika Tomalin said that she and Mayor Rick Kriseman have always been determined to revitalize the 22nd Street corridor, but it couldn't be done overnight.

Tomalin said the “magic” of historic 22nd Street transcends any specific period in St. Pete's history. She noted the renaissance and resurgence that's underway in St. Pete will not be complete unless the same transformation and thriving atmosphere takes place on 22nd Street and “around every community that's a part of our St. Petersburg home.”

“We've been socialized to celebrate at harvest, but we know that the time to really focus is when you plant the seeds,” she said. “And we're at a moment of harvest right now on 22nd Street, but we know that the seeds were planted generations ago by giants and visionaries.”

This Sankofa project is comprised of homeownership, entrepreneurship, anchor institutions, and incubators, she explained, which is all part of the city's Deuces Rising

vision that focuses on the revitalization of the historic corridor.

Colorful design boards positioned around the Manhattan displayed the early concepts and plans of the project's layout. James Jackson, City of St. Petersburg project manager, explained the site plans include both residential and commercial buildings. The residential portion on 22nd Street consists of 24 townhomes, with two-bedroom, two and a half baths (about 1400-square-foot space) and a three-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath option (about 1700-square foot space).

The two commercial buildings on Fairfield Avenue South will total 30,000 square feet of two-story space. The overall vision is contemporary, Jackson stated.

Albert Lee, CEO of the Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation, underscored the opportunity to be an active part of the corridor's resurgence. He referenced the trip he took with 26 others from St. Pete to Durham, N.C., to visit their Black Wall Street, which inspired the Sankofa project vision.

Lee noted the similarity between St. Pete and

Durham — whose Black business community also suffered when a newly developed interstate cut through the neighborhood — and lauded the resilient nature of those residents who aimed to reinvigorate their Black community.

“They had invested very heavily in redeveloping their community,” he pointed out.

Rev. Louis Murphy said this project would bring back a certain “vibrancy” to the community, complete with commerce, live entertainment, affordable housing, and business incubators.

“It's just an exciting time to get our people together!” he enthused.

Harry Howard of Howard & Associates Architects is excited at the prospect of a re-energized 22nd Street that will re-establish the energy of the Deuces decades ago.

“Along 22nd Street, the Deuces is going to be restored to what we remember as when we were growing up back in the '60s,” he said, adding that there are many opportunities for growth, whether by homeownership or business. “You can start a small business that you can grow — the

space is there where you can start with maybe 750-square feet, and as you keep growing, you can develop it into 1,500-square feet.”

County Commissioner Rene Flowers, who grew up in Jordan Park, said she also remembers the vibrancy that 22nd Street once had.

“All along the corridor, there were business owned by African Americans,” she said. “So, bringing back the vision of Sankofa, redistributing that wealth back into our community, providing a way by which minority, small and women-owned businesses can open in their community and prosper in their community, I think is critical to the growth of our economy.”

Sen. Darryl Rouson grew up only blocks from the Deuces and fondly recalled the many shops, food stores, and offices along the corridor.

“I used to get my hair cut down here at Harold's Barbershop,” he said. “So, it's good to see this redevelopment, this reinvigoration, this investment in this community, which is so necessary.”



The Deuces Rising vision is comprised of a welcoming gateway, housing that is affordable, new parks, and an infusion of resources that encourage private businesses to thrive. The photo above was taking at the unveiling of the Sankofa on The Deuces project at the Manhattan Casino last Tuesday, Oct. 5.

Photo provided by All Photos Considered.

Where is the Jordan portrait?

BY PIA WINTERS JORDAN
DAN
Contributor

ST. PETERSBURG — The portrait of the man for whom Jordan Park is named, Elder Jordan Sr., is missing. At least, its current location is a mystery to members of his family.

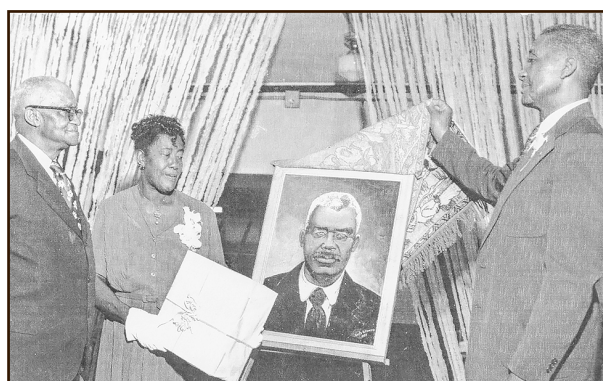
His grandson, Rev. Dr. Basha Jordan, Jr., and I, his granddaughter-in-law, saw it on display in a library several years ago, but attempts to find it in the library system have been unsuccessful.

It is believed the portrait was unveiled at a ceremony in St. Petersburg decades ago. Another picture of him was published in the “Black America Series: St. Petersburg, Florida” by Sandra W. Rooks in 2003.

His middle name is unknown, but this former enslaved man's first name was Elder, not a title as some might think.

Reportedly, Jordan Sr. came to St. Pete in the early 1900s and became an entrepreneur — owning real estate, a beach, nightclub, and bus line.

He and his wife, Mary Frances Jordan, raised six children. Their



Has anyone seen this portrait of Elder Jordan Sr., one of St. Pete's founding fathers? His son, Elder Jordan, Jr., is shown here on the right.

daughter, Anita, died when she was a child. Their five sons included Elder, Jr., McKinley, Columbus, Harry and Basha Sr., who helped their father build his legacy in Florida.

Basha Jordan, both senior and junior, both became pastors in the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church. The younger Basha Jordan, Jr. moved to his father's hometown in 2015 after founding a non-denominational ministry to focus on helping those who suffer from addiction to alcohol and drugs.

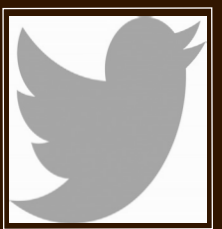
It is believed Rev. Basha Jordan, Jr. is the only relative of Elder Jordan, Sr., now living in St. Petersburg.

The junior Elder Jordan's photo — a man wearing a hat with his hand on a fence — has mistakenly been exhibited at a downtown museum and in the media as the senior Jordan. Basha Jordan, Jr. said that picture is of his uncle Elder Jordan, Jr. and not his grandfather.

Email prophet-basha@aol.com if you have the answer to the mystery.

Pia Jordan is a former broadcast journalist and retired associate professor of multimedia journalism at Morgan State University in Baltimore.

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All news items, advertising copy and related art submitted for publication on Thursday must be received no later than 4 p.m. Monday.

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THE BLACK PRESS

believes that America can best lead the world from racial antagonism when it accords to every man, regardless of race, creed or color, his human and legal rights. Hating no man, fearing no man... the Black Press strives to help every man in the firm belief that all men are hurt as long as anyone is held back.



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WE ENCOURAGE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Art takes center stage at the latest mayoral forum

MAYOR, from front page

the city's continued growth. He added that art is also influential in the lives of children and recalled how his fifth-grade play was the last time he was on stage at the Palladium. He then noted that preserving the city's architecture is important – a theme he would repeat throughout the night – while also expanding the entire art scene.

"It's what's made our city grow; it's what's put us on the map as an international destination for tourism," said Blackmon. "But just as quick as we've grown, we can fall off if we don't protect our arts scene, help to embrace it, encourage it, and fund it..."

Welch said he took art personally and grew up learning to play the drums in the Gas Plant district. He added that he still plays guitar in church, and more than learning to play an instrument, it has helped him forge relationships that are "still with me to this day." He said that art is an essential part of an education foundation, and it is also what has made St. Petersburg great.

"St. Pete's renaissance didn't happen because of baseball, and I love baseball," said Welch. "It happened because of the arts and the organic growth of the arts in St. Petersburg that has moved west."

Jackson brought up the Carter G. Woodson Museum's recent "Reverberations" exhibit at the James Museum when asking the candidates how they would help to bring more works by nationally recognized Black artists to the city.

Blackmon said it starts with a collaborative approach and praised the Woodson museum's service to the community "in a limited footprint." He said that he has vocally and publicly supported the museum during his time on city council.

"Black history is St. Pete's history," said Blackmon. "We need to make sure we preserve that culture."

Blackmon wants to see all the museums in the city come together to help one another and said if someone comes to town to visit one museum, the chances are they will see two or three. He believes that collective strength is what will "keep and bring those big exhibits to town."

Welch said it has to be intentional and a priority, and it is past time for the Woodson museum to be supported intentionally. He said off the top of his head, he can recall more than a quarter-billion dollars worth of arts and sports projects that



Kimberly Jackson, executive director, Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions

were supported during his time as county commissioner, either through programs like Penny for Pinellas or the bed tax, which was proposed as a solution many times throughout the night by Welch.

"If we can do all that, we can support the Woodson," he said. "Especially at this time in our history, when 35 years later we are talking about intentional equity for the Gas Plant and the Trop site."

Welch said the city gave \$1 million worth of land to the Woodson Museum, but the price tag for the new facility is over \$20 million. He also said the city gave \$6 million to the American Arts and Crafts Museum and \$20 million to the Dali Museum.

"I think equity and the economy require that we move forward with that project," he said.

Blackmon, as with many issues, would like to see a public-private partnership with the Woodson Museum. In addition to artists having a showcase at the museum, he suggested having a retail aspect. He adds that he is very supportive of the museum and its expansion but said the money is not there.

"We need private dollars," he said. "We need more governmental dollars; Senator Rouson has been fighting on the state level for it, but it's not enough. If anyone cares about bringing Black history to our city, please get more engaged in the process because there is a huge shortfall right now, and we need to prioritize it."

Jackson asked the candidates how they would prioritize the arts in relation to other pressing needs in the city, such as infrastructure and housing. Blackmon answered by stating that the arts are "not a dollar for dol-

lar return."

He said the arts are a multiple of what the city invests in it because they increase property values, which increases the tax roll and enables the city to put more money into other programs. Blackmon then segued by saying that rising property values are not always good and named neighborhoods like Roser Park and Kenwood that were once fairly affordable before the art renaissance.

"We need to make sure the historic residents of our city are protected and provided for," stated Blackmon. "Which is why I'd like to give out grants to make sure that some of our artists are minority artists. Some of our artists that we protect and represent are artists from St. Petersburg."

Welch began his answer by challenging the arts community to "see this through." He said that talk is meaningless without funding, and without resources, nothing will change, noting that the city needs a recurring funding source for the arts, and the best source is the county bed tax.

"It is more immune to recession than any other source of revenue," said Welch. "In fact, the bed tax this year is the highest it's ever been."

Welch said he will go and make his case to the Tourism Development Council to secure more bed tax funding, "like other counties in Florida have done."

"I think we can be successful and finally have that recurring source of funding to fund what we've been talking about for more than a decade," said Welch. "It's time to get it done."

The Municipal General Election is Nov. 2.



ECKERD COLLEGE

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Specialist wanted at Eckerd College

Position Summary

Assists in the development and implementation of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) efforts through the framework of Inclusive Excellence in support of student access, retention and success. Develops and implements effective programs and initiatives for students designed to enhance DEIB. Ensures that activities and programs align to support the College's values and goals related to Inclusive Excellence and DEIB.

Partners with campus departments and units to expand existing programs that will improve the culture of diversity on campus.

Under the supervision of the Executive Director of Inclusive Excellence, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Specialist is responsible for establishing, implementing and assessing programs and services in support of its mission.

Essential Functions (other non-essential duties may be assigned)

Work collaboratively with faculty, staff and students to promote environments of belonging within the Eckerd community.

Create opportunities to engage students in diversity and inclusion programming.

Assist with DEIB related training for faculty, staff and students to ensure that members of the community have the knowledge, tools, resources and support they need to be conscious thought partners in the creation of an equitable college culture.

Develop and oversee a train-the-trainer program to support and sustain DEIB efforts in the offices of Admission and Student Life.

Provide guidance and leadership to Eckerd College Organization of Students, RAs, and Peer Mentors to implement engaging and informative student-organized programs and activities around DEIB.

Foster opportunities for campus dialogue about current events related to racial, ethnic, gender and sexual orientation diversity.

Partner with the Office of Service-Learning to develop cultural literacy training for students, staff, and faculty involved in service-learning.

Assist in the selection and delivery of College Program Series events related to DEIB issues.

Assist multicultural and student organizations and other campus groups representing DEIB in honoring heritage months and culturally significant events.

Applications must be completed and submitted by October 21, 2021.

Inquiries may be sent to Beverly Warren,

Executive Director of Inclusive Excellence, warrenba@eckerd.edu.

Submit a cover letter, resume, and contact information for three references, via <https://eckerd.hirecentric.com/jobs/>.

The secret is out

LAKEWOOD, from front page

ever, who knew they were capable of positively impacting learning and achievement?

A high percentage of Lakewood Elementary students are on free and reduced lunch. We have known for some time that nutritious meals play an essential role in a child's attention span and ability to learn. However, if the "school of thought" positions are accurate, the three secret ingredients were utilized for other reasons.

According to the prevailing lore, they were deployed to occupy student time while others involved themselves with lessons and testing.

Many continue to wonder just what Dr. Wobbly and Director Stephanie Wooford, Lakewood Elementary's previous principal, were doing at the school. Personally, my position remains unchanged. If, in fact, we have solved the problem, why not replicate and sustain the effort.

Are not all our scholars precious and deserving of an opportunity to fully participate in the American Dream by virtue of a quality education? Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are long-standing



American ideals. Regrettably, the hypocrisy embedded in their quest is far too real for people of color and others who lack economic affluence.

Retired educators across the state who have read *The Weekly Challenger* articles on the Miracle at Lakewood Elementary have also expressed their disbelief while commending the teachers at Lakewood and questioning why other schools in the Transformation Zone have been abandoned. Any reasonable person would assume that a cure as powerful as the one touted at Lakewood would be administered to all others experiencing the same problems. Yet, I am still waiting for the district to unveil its implementation plan for replicating the miracle at Fairmont Park, Campbell Park, Maximo, Melrose, and the north county Transformation Zone schools.

Should we insist that

the new school budgets allot funds for sufficient quantities of snacks, Mickey D's and the Colonel for schools in the Transformation Zone, along with an evaluation model to measure their effectiveness? Or should we employ an evaluation design now to assess whether the scholars who consumed the foods or the adults engaged in other learning and testing activities made the difference?

My mantra remains the same. Replicate and sustain the miracle. I also offer one caveat based on feedback from others who follow this story. When are civil rights organizations and others with oversight going to demand the same? After all, we are obliged to pay it forward given the sacrifices others made by their advocacy and actions to ensure our success.

Replicate and sustain for the benefit of all our scholars.

PICK OF THE WEEK!
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DOG DAYS

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Nutrition insecurity triples in south St. Pete

BY WENDY WESLEY
Contributor

ST. PETERSBURG — Data from the latest census show areas of USDA-designated “low income, low access,” or food deserts have more than tripled in south St. Petersburg. This is evidenced by seven adjacent census tract areas in 2020 compared with two non-adjacent tracts in 2015.

This news comes as no surprise to food activists like me, who work in local healthcare. We see the toll that nutrition insecurity takes on a community through worsening chronic diseases such as heart failure and diabetes that are best managed when food is abundant, af-

fordable, healthy, and fresh.

Their devastating effects are exacerbated on gas station diets.

With this new data, and a community clamoring for interventions, we collectively scratch our heads and ask, “What’s taking so long?”

When the Walmart at Tangerine Plaza closed in Feb. of 2017, I anticipated “low income, low access” areas would increase. I did not expect those census tract areas to TRIPLE. This shows us the profound ripple effects of one grocery store on a community.

The largest retail space of the city-owned Tangerine Plaza, once the site of full-service grocers Sweet-

bay and Walmart, has sat empty for more than four years. This spans a mayoral term and the term of District 6 incumbent Gina Driscoll.

Tangerine Plaza is located within the city’s South Community Redevelopment Area, which was created to promote housing, neighborhoods and businesses. It comprises 7.4 square miles and is one of the largest in Florida. The plaza sits within a 42-block area of south St. Petersburg with no full-service grocery store.

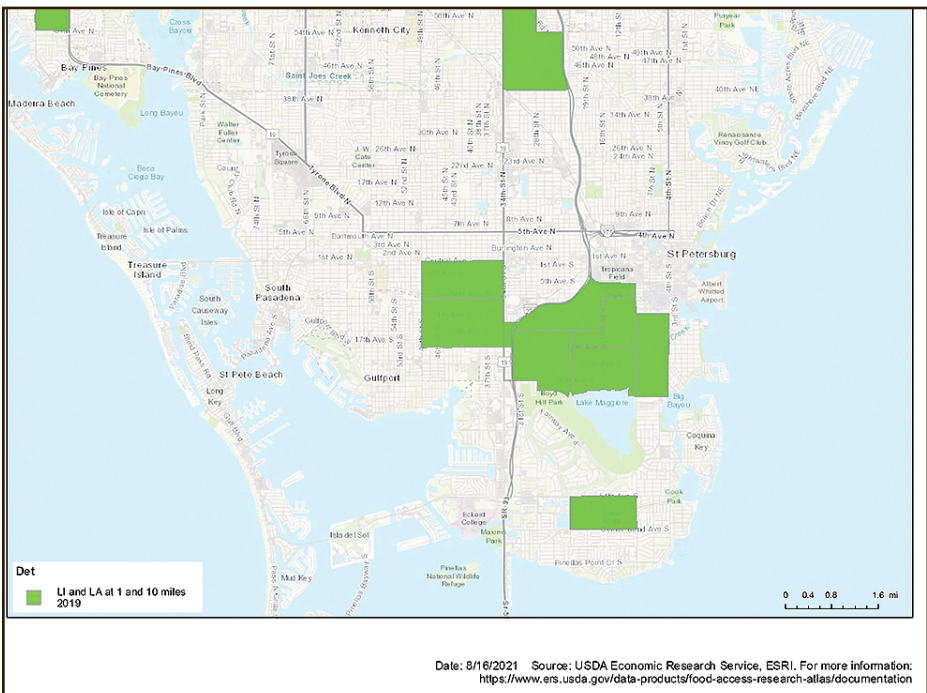
The city reports that a developer with a grocery store tenant will occupy the space sometime this year or early 2022. Alan



Wendy Wesley, licensed and registered dietitian



St. Pete’s food desert, located in a predominately Black area, has more than tripled in the last six years. Tangerine Plaza has set empty since Feb. of 2017 when Walmart left residents without a full-service grocery store.



Delise of the city’s economic development department stated that a lease would be executed this past March.

Our elected officials, including our mayor and the city council representative who serves the area, have had four years to solve this problem. This is not four years with a stubborn property owner who will not budge, but four years of no movement on a property the CITY OWNS.

Pre-pandemic data shows that 12.5 percent of Pinellas households are food insecure, creating a budget shortfall of more than \$73 million. Imagine what that data will show today.

Here are a few things our citizens, business leaders, elected officials and city staff can do to fix this: Reject aspirational

change and “virtue signaling” from our elected officials in the forms of food policy councils and “food is a human right” proclamations that confuse “doing something” with “doing the right thing.”

Demand our elected officials make good on their campaign promises to put a grocery store in Tangerine Plaza.

Instead of focusing so intently on the rushed redevelopment of Tropicana Field, ask city leaders to pay attention to needy residents directly under its nose. Take the foot off the gas of the Trop site and dedicate some bandwidth to the residents of this city who are struggling with chronic disease.

Support local and citizen-run farmers’ markets like the Southside Fresh Market and the Deuces Sidewalk Market.

Hold our new mayor and city council members accountable for supporting the city’s Health in All Policies program. It should continue and be adequately funded, especially where SNAP promotion and support of corner stores are concerned.

Healthy St. Pete: focus on SNAP access promotion and health education to areas of “low income, low access.”

Development Review Commission: consider health when making decisions and allow variances for community gardens.

Wendy Wesley is a St. Petersburg registered and licensed dietitian in private practice.

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Self-Investment & Sisterhood: 2021 Sisters Kin-nect

ST. PETERSBURG – “Invest, Ignite, Inspire” was the theme of this year’s Sisters Kin-nect Conference, an annual event billed as a “dynamic evening of personal investment to ignite and inspire women of all ages to connect and consider new and innovative opportunities to enhance their lives.”

The Oct. 1 convening did not disappoint. More than 200 people – mostly women – gathered for what one attendee described as an “enchanted evening” on the waterfront lawn of the Mahaffey Theater in downtown St. Petersburg.

“It was beyond amazing,” said Charlotte Anderson, a first-time attendee and vice president at the Pinellas County Urban League. “Especially because I don’t have any sister siblings, it was incredible to be among so many women uplifting and inspiring one another.”

The dockside setting was transformed for the occasion, with a 10-foot-tall sound stage, cushioned lounge furniture, tented seating, and a compliment of 10 local vendors (all women).



Kathia Roberts, owner of New Destiny, a boutique publishing company.

The Beat Down Band opened and closed the conference with old-school R&B that helped set the tone for a soulful and relaxing atmosphere.

“The open-air design was our way of creating an open and welcoming energy to the evening,” explained lead organizer Nikki Gaskin-Capehart. “Our goal was for the women in attendance to feel a sense of ‘connection’ to one another and to discover new sources of inspiration among each other.”

Capehart is the director of Urban Affairs for the City of St. Petersburg, which oversees the city’s My Brothers & Sisters Keeper (MBSK) initiative. She and a handful of other women founded the “Sister’s Kin-nect” annual conference in 2019 under the My Sister’s Keeper umbrella, which Gaskin-Capehart said was intended to encourage “sister circle connections that feel like family.”

This year’s conference had three major components, kicked off by Deputy Mayor Dr. Kanika Tomalin, encouraging attendees to build from the strength of sisterhood.

Tomalin was one of three honorees for the evening, receiving the “Invest Award” for her role in shepherding the city’s historic investment in the MBSK initiative.

Also spotlighted was Dr. Jeffery A. J. Johnson and his wife, Teasia Johnson, received the conference’s “Inspire Award” for Dr. Johnson’s commitment to developing a regional girls’ conference along with Gaskin-Capehart that annually engages girls in middle and high school on both sides of Tampa Bay. Anjali Queen B of IHeartMedia went home with the “Ignite Award” for her work in the local media, encouraging women and girls to live their best lives.

The Invest focus of the evening was an on-stage interview of two women whose stories clearly reverberated with the age-mixed audience: Dr. Cynthia Johnson, the newly named director of Economic Development for Pinellas County, and Bemetra Simmons, the incoming president of the Tampa Bay Partnership, a public-private economic development organization.

“Personally and professionally, their example and the advice they shared was so refreshing,” shared Esther Eugene, president of the St. Petersburg NAACP and a Sisters Kin-nect Fellow. “One of my biggest takeaways was Dr. Cynthia Johnson’s testimony about the encouragement and love of her older sister (Sheila Tampa) when she needed it the most.”

Johnson and Simmons are among the handful of African Americans who

helm economic development organizations in Florida. Johnson oversees a staff of 33 and an annual budget of \$10 million, while Simmons was selected last month to oversee economic development partnerships spanning six counties. Women are also a rarity in this field.

When asked to share their secrets of success, Simmons echoed the evening’s theme, saying, “I’ve always been a ‘connector’ with a gift of bringing people together. This new role is perfect for me because it allows me to do just that, on a regional scale.”

The conference endcap was a brief graduation ceremony for the inaugural class of My Sister’s Keeper Fellows. According to Gaskin-Capehart, the six-month fellowship is a leadership program “designed to meet the unique cultural needs of Black women looking to grow and achieve their business and personal goals,” according to Gaskin-Capehart.

“It was an unbelievable growth experience for me,” remarked Kristal Vazquez, one of six women who completed the training and development series. “Being a part of this program made me realize the meaning, and how important ‘fellowship’ is and how even more important it is to be connected with a sister. I am forever grateful for the committee members and the ladies I have grown with for the past six months. I look forward to continuing the work with future fellowships to come.”



Left, ‘Power Broker’ Publisher Gypsy Gallardo interviewing Dr. Cynthia Johnson and Bemetra Simmons as ‘Ignite & Inspire’ guest speakers at Sisters Kin-nect 2021.

Gaskin-Capehart’s team is already planning for next year’s event. “So many sponsors and organizations are asking to continue this tradition,” said Tahisia Scantling, one of the 13-member Fellowship Advisors and Planning Committee.

“This was a celebration of sisterhood, a clarion call for sisters to come together and stay together and to build each other up,” shared Anderson. “I want to be part of making this a movement.”



The inaugural My Sisters Keeper Fellows: Denise Solomon, owner of Grow, Empower, Transform Therapy; Kay-Kay Smith, creator of the Momstuffcoffeeshop Podcast; Tamira Cheedy, Baycare Medical Group; Kristal Vazquez, City of St. Petersburg and owner, Gadgets For Gz Technology Services; Shalia Moore-Hayes, School Psychologist and Community Engagement Consultant with the Patterson Foundation; and Ester Matthews, CEO, All Administrative Solutions.



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USF football and basketball teams give back with Habitat for Humanity

PINELLAS PARK – The University of South Florida Athletics Department recently provided hands-on opportunities for its student-athletes to give back to the community. The partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas and West Pasco Counties brought coaches, players, and alumni from the university’s football and basketball programs to volunteer on build sites in Pinellas Park.

On Friday, Sept. 24, the USF Men’s Basketball team and coaching staff were on-site volunteering alongside Cynthia Thompson, a future Habitat homeowner. Thompson is a single mom to her 10-year-old daughter, Abbey, who is a cancer survivor.

The Fishman Family Foundation sponsored the Thompsons’ home. Jeffrey Fishman is a Habitat sponsor through his foundation and his company, Investors Title, and a USF Alumni and donor.

Abbey recently won her battle with cancer and

is finally cancer-free but struggled with being in and out of the hospital for nine months.

“She had four surgeries and four weeklong rounds of three types of chemo. It was rough, and moving into my own place didn’t seem realistic.” The Thompsons’ will be moving into their safe and affordable Habitat home on Nov. 19.

Earlier this week, the USF Football team decided to jump in. Volunteers from the team were on multiple sites in Teller Estates. Soon to be home to 75 families, Teller Estates is the affiliate’s largest development to date. USF student-athletes completed projects such as landscaping, painting, and installing hurricane shutters.

One volunteer home site includes that of Habitat’s homeowner partner family, the McCammons.

“What volunteers are doing for families such as ours will never be forgotten. With this house, my kids will finally feel secure and have a place to call

home,” said Sherri McCammon, mother of five. The family’s home is to be dedicated later this month.

Habitat sponsor and USF alum Fishman connected with the team, making a great partnership between the two organizations.

“Given the fact that we’re in a pandemic, the team hasn’t been able to do any kind of community service, which is important to USF athletes to give them a realistic picture of the community. Volunteering with Habitat and being outside on the build sites is a great opportunity to get the team out in the community, so I was happy to help make the connection,” said Fishman.

“The opportunity for us to partner with University of South Florida Athletics and have volunteer efforts for a number of Habitat homes just means that more families will be closer to the end goal of receiving their keys,” said Mike Sutton, president and CEO of Habitat for



USF’s Athletics Department partnered with Habitat Pinellas and West Pasco to volunteer on build sites.

Humanity and USF alum. “We thank the athletic department, players from both teams, and Jeffrey Fishman of Investors Title and Fishman Family Foundation for this partnership to build more affordable homes in our community.”

Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County and West Pasco Counties

Since 1985, Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas and West Pasco Counties has served over 900 families and individuals through its new home buyer and neighborhood revitalization programs using locally raised funds.

Volunteers and the future homeowners construct the homes, which are sold at no profit and financed with a zero-interest loan. Habitat homeowner candidates earn 30 to 80 percent of area median income. Can-

didates must demonstrate the need for adequate shelter, the ability to pay back a zero-interest loan, and willingness to partner with Habitat to invest 350 to 450 “sweat equity” hours.

Mortgage monies are used to build even more homes, making each donation to Habitat a perpetual legacy to the community. Habitat believes that homeownership contributes to family

stability, leading, in turn, to community stability. Additionally, the affiliate raises funds through their two ReStores, home improvement outlets where donated household and building items are sold to the public.

For more information about Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas and West Pasco Counties, call (727) 536-4755 or visit www.habitatpwp.org.



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Goodwill hiring for a variety of positions

ST. PETERSBURG – Goodwill’s Job Connection service is hosting a job fair, Wednesday, Oct. 20, from 10-1 p.m. at Goodwill’s Job Connection, 10596 1460 Missouri Ave. N., Largo.

Goodwill Industries-Suncoast, Inc. is hiring for multiple corrections, retail, security, merchandise processing, and maintenance positions. Positions

include certified corrections offers and corrections technicians for Goodwill’s St. Petersburg residential re-entry center.

Hiring managers will conduct interviews and make job offers on the spot to qualified candidates. Job seekers are encouraged to bring copies of their resumes and to complete an application in

advance.

A list of available positions and an application are available at goodwill-suncoast.org/careers.

Goodwill offers a comprehensive benefits package including tuition assistance and various programs to help team members advance their careers. Goodwill team members also enjoy working for an organization

that’s changing people’s lives for the better.

Staff from Goodwill Job Connection centers will be available to offer interview tips and information about a range of free services available at the centers.

Please call Job Connection at 727-282-4478, 10-2 p.m., Monday through Friday if you have questions.



Goodwill is holding a job fair on Oct. 20. Hiring managers will conduct interviews and make job offers on the spot to qualified candidates.

POP Goes the Waffle opens new storefront

POP, from front page

steps.

They decided that putting a unique spin on their favorite breakfast food might be the business idea they were looking for.

“We started in 2017, first with a lot of product testing,” Fludd stated. “We tried the recipes out on family and friends and came up with a menu.”

The duo started with a food tent, attending events on the weekends to introduce their products, then they purchased a food

truck.

As the business continued to grow and local coffee shops started lining up to sell their sweet and savory waffles on a stick at their stores, Fludd knew she was on to something and wanted to take the business to the next level.

Last year, she remembered hearing about a business incubator program with Stacy’s Chips. Stacy’s is the maker of pita chips in a variety of flavors. The company’s annual Rise Project

provides mentoring and financial support for a selected group of women-owned businesses.

“I saw information about it [in 2020] and thought it sounded like a great program,” Fludd said. “I filed it away and figured I would apply the next year.”

A friend saw the information before the 2021 deadline and mentioned it to her, encouraging her to apply. When a few weeks passed, and she hadn’t applied, her friend brought it up again. She always felt pressed for time with a full-time job, but she finally submitted her information and waited.

“A few months passed, and when I ran across the confirmation email, it reminded me that I hadn’t heard anything,” the 52-year-old said. “I deleted the email. I figured if no one had contacted me by now, I must not have been selected.”

Then, just days later, Stacy’s responded, congratulating her on becoming a cohort in the 2021 Stacy’s Chips Rise Project.

“I was floored,” she said.



After having several potential St. Pete properties fall through, Sara Fludd broadened her search and found a storefront on Tangerine Avenue in Gulfport.



Makes your mouth water. Sausage, egg, and cheese on a delicious waffle

“It was truly a surprise.”

As one of the 10 women entrepreneurs chosen for the 12-week program, Fludd will be assigned mentors from Pepsi or Frito Lay for weekly meetings on her goals and what she wants to focus on for continued success and to take her business to the next level. She said she is grateful for the chance to look at data trends, consumer buying habits and determine how that information impacts what she does next in her own business.

“It’s really exciting to be able to meet with them and have a chance to see this data firsthand. It’s information I would not be able to have access to otherwise,” she said.

Fludd will also receive \$10,000 for a project of her choice to increase sales. She has chosen to use the funds for a world-class website that she believes will help her build a better online e-commerce business.

“I want everyone in the nation to be able to get our waffles,” she said.

A side benefit of the program is the chance to continue networking with the women who are a part of this year’s group. They will have the option of continuing their relationship and supporting each other long after the program has ended.

“Past groups are still in touch with each other,” said the mom of one. “We have already been able to talk and

help each other brainstorm.”

Fludd is excited about this current opportunity for her business and the next phase that she and her husband Roderick have already set in motion.

“We are opening a brick-and-mortar store,” she exclaimed. “There will be a little café area, and with more space, I am excited about the chance to expand the menu and flavor options.”

Until the opening, you can find out when the Pop Goes the Waffle food truck will be near you by going to their website at www.pop-goesthewaffle.com, and don’t forget to follow, like, and share them on Facebook and Instagram.



Roderick and Sara Fludd are creating yummy goodness all over town.

TOM MULLINS

★ ★ FOR CITY COUNCIL

Learn more at www.tomforstpete.com
Vote by mail or vote in person on November 2nd

DEAR WEEKLY CHALLENGER READERS:

My name is Tom Mullins, and I’m running for the District 4 seat on the St. Pete City Council. All voters in all parts of St. Pete get to vote in this election. I’m running against Lisset Hanewicz, a former criminal prosecutor, and I believe I have far stronger ties to South St. Pete. I humbly ask for your support.

Tom Mullins

A PROVEN FRIEND OF SOUTH ST. PETERSBURG

RESCUE OF SPCC

Tom joined a small group of local investors who risked personal funds to rescue St. Pete Country Club during the Great Recession, saving that vital green space for the 6000 residents of Lakewood Estates.

FRANK PIERCE / ECKERD COLLEGE

For +10 years, Tom was a regular in the after-work basketball leagues for former college players at Frank Pierce Rec Center and Eckerd College Gym.

TROPICANA SITE

Tom is leading the push for better re-development concepts that bring their own jobs engine. South St. Pete would benefit from this more than any other neighborhood!

FORMER RESIDENT

Tom is a former South St. Pete resident

BOYD HILL

Tom’s kids both worked at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve.

- ★ Long-time senior officer at Raymond James
- ★ Running as a “smart-growth problem solver”, not a politician
- ★ Graduate of Vanderbilt, with MBA from Dartmouth
- ★ Former union member
- ★ Personally associated with big-time job creation at Raymond James and Allegiant Airlines
- ★ Married 24 years with two children

VOTE ON NOVEMBER 2ND!

Paid by Tom Mullins for St. Petersburg City Council, District 4.

A budget reflective of our values

BY COREY GIVENS JR.
Contributor

ST. PETERSBURG – Each year the mayor presents the city council with his proposed operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year. On Sept. 30, the St. Petersburg City Council approved the mayor’s \$700 million tentative budget.

In keeping with his commitment to fiscal stewardship and responsibility, along with the strong growth in our citywide property values, Mayor Kriseman’s administration has decided to decrease our mileage rate but increase our water bills. Under the new tiered system, customers can expect to see an average increase of at least \$8.10 in their monthly bills.

Are tax dollars being

spent on what taxpayers need or what politicians want?

Our city is underperforming when it comes down to fighting hunger. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, this year, St. Petersburg has grown from two low-income, low-access areas to seven.

Many residents in these areas, also known as food deserts, are forced to survive primarily on unhealthy convenience store diets, which often lead to debilitating diagnoses. Those living within a food desert usually have a minimal access to transportation (public or private).

For this reason, I am respectfully urging the next mayor of St. Petersburg to allocate more of our tax dol-

lars to eliminate food insecurities. I struggle with the fact that so many people in our community go to bed hungry every night. I, too, have struggled with food insecurities. This issue is becoming more prominent in our area, and something needs to be done about it. Whether these people are complete strangers or our closest friends, no one deserves to suffer from starvation.

One of the many lessons learned from living during the pandemic the past 19 months is the reminder that hunger can happen to anyone.

The effects of COVID-19 on health, jobs, the educational and social networks on which people rely heavily left many struggling to make ends meet, creating

an unprecedented and sustained rise in food insecurity.

Food charities and food assistance programs experienced steep increases in demand for services, which they expect will last beyond the pandemic.

Food insecurity is not germane to a particular people or neighborhood, a Black issue or a white issue. It’s not a south St. Pete or north St. Pete issue. It’s everyone’s issue, and it will take all of us to stand up against it if we’re serious about ending it.

I am so proud of local organizations such as Positive Impact Ministries, The Gathering of Women, and Reach St. Pete, who proactively fight hunger in various ways. Just recently, Reach St. Pete received the

keys to a PSTA bus that was donated in-kind and will soon be converted into a mobile food pantry as they work to drive out hunger in St. Pete.

The only issue is funding; that’s why Reach St. Pete is asking the city to step up and assist in this effort.

The increased high demand that local cities are facing is reflective of what’s happening across the state. Food agencies are working to improve the distribution of fresh foods and meats to bolster healthy eating.

These organizations and agencies need our help; they cannot do it alone. If we can afford to hire more cops to patrol the streets, we can surely help that single mother struggling to make ends meet.



“Our city is underperforming when it comes down to fighting hunger,” said Corey Givens Jr.

Combatting food insecurities can be as simple as growing vegetables to give to those in need or as complicated as building a mobile market. Working together in these partnerships helps ensure that no one fights hunger alone.

City charter changes will help bring equity to the city

BY FRANK DROUZAS
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG – The Community Development And Training Center, Inc. (CDAT) held the first in a series of virtual town hall meetings on Wednesday, explaining what the city charter is, the review process, and how citizens can change the way their city operates for the next 10 years.

What is a city charter? Well, the St. Petersburg City Charter is essentially the city’s constitution. It is the legal document that defines the political powers of the city government. The charter establishes the relationship between the mayor, city council, its various departments, and its residents. You can read a current copy of the charter here.

The charter, reviewed by citizens appointed by the eight city council members and the mayor every 10 years, will guide how the city will govern for the next decade. The Charter Review Commission (CRC) develops amendments to the charter, and residents will have the opportunity to vote on these amendments in November.

CDAT’s co-founder Jabaar Edmond moderated the meeting and said they wanted to “generate some community energy” around charter changes.

CRC member Rev. J.C. Pritchett, who Lisa

Wheeler-Bowman appointed, made a brief appearance while sitting in a Houston airport. He said that because the Charter Review Commission had three persons of color and an ally in Attorney Roxanne Fixsen, this will be the first time in this city’s history that the charter will be reviewed “through the lens of equity.”

“Obviously, this city was a segregated town that was built on the backs of Black, Brown, and poor people for tourists to enjoy the sun, the sand, and the water,” said Pritchett, whose mother was a domestic worker in downtown St. Pete. “For us to be able to look at the document was very humbling.”

CRC member Fixsen, who Councilwoman Gina Driscoll appointed, said the shaping of the charter is the most direct way citizens can guide what the city does. She noted that the charter would be reviewed this year through the “lens of equity” due to past data.

Fixsen explained that data from the 2019 Pinellas County Equity Profile showed persistent and prevalent equity gaps across most outcomes for the county. Examples included a higher child poverty rate for Black and Brown children, a six-dollar per hour difference between Black and white workers, a discrepancy in homeownership between Blacks and whites, and a

16.2-year life expectancy difference between Old Northeast and 13th Street Heights District.

It is likely the COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated these outcome gaps.

Fixsen believes there is an urgent need to solve these equity gaps as the county’s demographics are rapidly changing. In 1980, Pinellas was 90 percent white; in 2020, it was 72 percent white, and the projection for 2050 is 50 percent white.

“The experience of today’s children is directly going to impact the future of our city,” she said.

Studies showed that the regional economy would increase by billions if equity gaps were closed in communities across Pinellas.

Currently, city council members are elected through primary elections limited to voters in the council district, and the two candidates who receive the most primary votes go to the General Election open to all city voters. Amendment 1 seeks to amend the charter to limit Primary and General Elections for council members to voters in the council district (eliminate city-wide voting) and allow a candidate who receives more than 50 percent of votes in the primary to be elected.

Amendment 2 aims to amend the charter to create a new process for drawing district bound-



The St. Petersburg City Charter is reviewed by citizens appointed by the eight city council members and the mayor every 10 years. It will guide how the city will govern for the next decade.

aries for city council members to add “independence, robust public input, and transparency,” Fixsen pointed out.

Amendment 3 establishes a chief equity officer for the city and requires the city to develop an equity framework, which includes equity action planning and implementation city-wide.

Amendment 4 seeks to establish a charter-protected equity fund. City council would allocate money to this fund, and once issued, that money cannot be used for any purpose other than to address closing the equity gaps.

The St. Pete City

Charter was originally drafted when the city had a weak mayor form of government. Nearly three decades ago, the city began operating under a strong mayor form of government, but the charter had minimal revisions based on that change.

Due to this, the charter has conflicting provisions concerning the requirements of city administrators, city clerks, and city council administrative officers. Amendment 5 seeks to clarify those contradictory provisions.

The charter currently requires that every 10 years, both a Charter Review Commission and a Redistricting Commission are appointed. As this scheduling gap results in logistical and implementation issues and the current charter provision additionally does not impose ethical requirements on the CRC members, Amendment 6 aims to resolve scheduling conflict and improve the administration and integrity of the CRC.

As the charter does not contain a statement of the city’s philosophy, vision, or goals, Amendment 7 seeks to add a preamble to the charter that “describes the spirit and priorities for the city,” Fixsen explained. The preamble would also acknowledge past shortcomings and promise a renewed commitment to improving the quality of

life for all citizens.

Aaron Dietrich of SEIU Florida Public Services Union, which represents city employees, noted these amendments’ importance.

“We’re in bargaining right now for city employees, and these amendments are really important to us,” he said, “in ensuring how the city raises equity, how it runs its operations, how it spends its budget — these are big, big things for us. It has already impacted how we negotiate at the table when we argue for fair pay.”

Charter Review Commission members:

- Dr. Lars Hafner, chair, appointed by Mayor Rick Kriseman
- Terri Lipsey-Scott, vice-chair, appointed by Councilmember Deborah Figgs-Sanders
- Dr. Ed Carlson, appointed by Councilmember Robert Blackmon
- Vicki Shuman, appointed by Councilmember Brandi Gabbard
- Chris Burke, appointed by Councilmember Ed Montanari
- Tami Simms, appointed by Councilmember Darden Rice
- Roxanne Fixsen, appointed by Gina Driscoll
- Rev. J.C. Pritchett, appointed by Lisa Wheeler-Bowman
- Meiko Seymour, appointed by Amy Foster

Deadline to register to vote for the Nov. 2 St. Petersburg Election is Oct. 4.

St. Pete’s Blue Feliu to receive Latino Leaders award at Hispanic Heritage Celebration

AWARD, from front page

acknowledged, “I’m very proud of my Latin culture. I teach cultural diversity — when I’m asked to — through dance and presentations that I’ve done in the past with Ruth Eckerd Hall and other communities.”

Feliu’s Hispanic heritage hails from her mother, who was born in Puerto Rico.

Originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., Feliu moved to St. Pete man than 38 years ago. Working in the education department at Ruth Eckerd Hall, she created programs in

schools and recreation centers that would connect guest performers with the community.

Feliu noted that bringing art and culture to the youth was a personal passion. Also, for 30 years, she welcomed children into her backyard while her husband, a boxing coach, set up a professional ring and coached children, offering them an opportunity to exercise and get fit right in their neighborhood.

The multi-faceted artist said she believes art teaches them not to limit themselves. “The arts are very, very important, in the sense of creativity.”

Feliu noted that children are often not given an outlet to express themselves in schools and even within communities.

“Dance programs, arts programs, or programs like theater, gives them the opportunity to find who they are and what their talent and their passion is. And it’s not so much just art; you can become a cartoonist, you can become a gamer and create

with your hands.”

Feliu said arts that use technology are just as important because these art forms “are going to be used in our future. And they — the kids — are the future.”

For the last 27 years, she also worked with the holiday performances of the “Chocolate Nutcracker” and its later incarnations, including Jai Hinson’s “Family Blessing.”

“I went in as a mom because my daughter danced in it at a very young age. And then when my daughter left, I was just attached to the kids and the community, and I stayed for 20 years after that.”

She shared her talents as a costumer and a performer and enjoyed watching children graduate and go on to dance in major companies around the country. “I got to watch my community work in a positive way — and to them, I’m Mama Blue.”

She taught dance for the last 30 years at various recreation centers and the old St. Pete Pier, combining various Latin-influenced dance styles into her classes. She also

taught at Pinellas Technical College in teen programs for many years and would frequent preschools and grade schools and bring Spanish instruments and DVDs to share examples of Latinx culture.

She also became involved with St. Pete’s hometown filmmakers Cranstan Cumberbatch and Jabaar Edmond’s *Agent X* films in recent years.

“It is very funny how that happened because I knew Cranstan for many years. And when he said that he was creating this movie, I was just like, ‘OK, I would like to be part of the Sunshine City Film Fest, and I’ll help pass out flyers.’”

But, she said, when Cumberbatch invited her to lunch one day, saying only, “Well, we created this character, and we need you to meet us on the Deuces during your lunch hour,” was when she realized the filmmakers wanted her in the film. “You’re the boss lady in the movie,” she was told. “I became a hitwoman over

lunch,” she laughed.

“Blue is one of the most dedicated, hardest working women I know in the business,” shared Cumberbatch. “She’s been a tremendous support to us, and we’re so blessed to have her on our team.”

For Feliu, the process and collaboration of working on the *Agent X* series have been an honor and an experience she believes she would never have had in her hometown of Brooklyn.

Filmmaker Debbie Yati Garrett cast Feliu in her own film, *Simi*. “When I first met Blue, she was volunteering at the Mahaffey Theater, and that was almost 15 years ago,” Garrett recalled. “Since then, I’ve watched her dance in the ‘Family Blessing’ annual holiday event, perform in fashion shows, appear in movies, videos, and commercials.”

Garrett said among the fellow actors in the community, Feliu is known as “the ‘Samuel L. Jackson’ of films because she always lands a role.” She said that Feliu —

wife, sister, grandmother — is an innovator, entrepreneur, creative artist, and a “Latin sister with a lot of soul...and a consistent asset to the community.”

Feliu shared that her most recent advocacy project — Not that Kind of Grandma — shares her youthful exuberance for life.

“I feel that when people consider you a grandmother, they just assume that you’re the kind of grandma that would be sitting, knitting, rocking. For me, being 63, I don’t feel that way...and I love to have fun.” Feliu said the project reflects her belief that grandmothers are getting younger.

As far as this weekend’s award ceremony, Feliu stated that to be honored for her work by the Latino Leaders award means the world to her. While many other people lose their culture as they assimilate into American culture, Feliu, whose father is African American, feels the opposite.

“I don’t want to lose any part of me.”



Blue Feliu

Woodson Museum hosts town hall on climate resiliency and environmental justice

BY MARK PARKER
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — The Initiative on Coastal Adaptation and Resilience (iCAR) held its first in a series of meetings on climate resiliency and environmental justice at the Carter G. Woodson African American Museum last Saturday.

Founded in 2015 by USF St. Petersburg professors Dr. Barnali Dixon, Dr. Rebecca Johns, and Dr. Donny Smoak, iCAR's mission is to build awareness of climate impact on the region, identify research gaps as it relates to certain neighborhoods, and help local organizations develop the skills necessary for climate resiliency.

The Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg and the Sierra Club sponsored last Saturday's town hall meeting.

Students from USF, USFSP, and the University of Tampa volunteered their services for the event, which was held in the lush Legacy Garden behind the Woodson Museum. The students registered attendees and passed out fliers, ran a kids table with activities

for children, and served pizza – of which there was enough to feed a small army – to guests.

While the topics were serious and the discussions sometimes intense, the mood was relatively light, and the event was informal. Guests were asked to fill out large sticky notes with their questions and place them on a poster board, and the experts on the topic answered each question. Other posterboards were placed around the meeting displaying maps with specific data as it relates to patterns of risks and specific resiliency issues.

The maps were made possible by the Community Resiliency Information Systems (CRIS). CRIS is a web-based, interactive tool designed by iCAR to identify unique resiliency needs at the community level, and solutions are customized by neighborhood to ensure equitable climate resiliency. CRIS allows residents from diverse communities to communicate their resource and information needs to local and state officials. Passing this information and local concerns to leaders and legislators was a key



Mayoral candidate Ken Welch fielded questions from the crowd on environmental justice at the iCAR town hall meeting held Sept. 25 at the Carter G. Woodson African American Museum.

focus of the event.

CRIS combines physical data such as storm surge, flooding, and sea-level rise with environmental hazards, socioeconomic data, live survey data, and sensor data to create heat maps. The most heavily discussed map on display showed a disproportionate amount of pollutants in the air around the Midtown area of St. Pete.

However, researchers did point out that as bad as the map looked, more testing needed to be conducted in Midtown and other areas of the city before they could draw any more specific conclusions.

sions.

"This area right here, the area north of Lake Maggiore – which is all Midtown, Childs Park – this is the highest risk of cancer from toxins in southern Pinellas County," said Johns.

Dixon said they recently put a sensor in Bartlett Park, and she is seeking more funding to put sensors in other areas.

"One of the great things about this tool is that it's flexible," said Johns. "We don't currently have a public health module, but we can create one if that's what the community wants."

Dr. Henry Alegria, a professor of chemistry at USF, succinctly said that "science costs money."

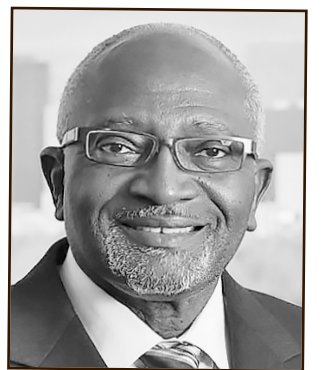
"So, we're doing what we can with the funding that is available," he said. "If we were to get more funding, we can add more things, measure more things, and we could get them installed in more locations to get a more granular picture of what's happening and make comparisons county-wide."

Alegria added that residents who are currently experiencing the effects of environmental inequities must get involved in these programs and make their voices heard, as the squeaky wheels are the ones that get the most oil.

"We want equity," he said.

Former county commissioner and current mayoral candidate Ken Welch fielded questions from the crowd. He said it is a fact that the climate will continue to change over the following decades, "and we have to respect the science and what it says."

"And the science tells us that there is a disproportionate impact on



Dr. Robert Bullard

lower-income communities with sea-level rise," said Welch. "The science has to dictate our decision making."

In collaboration with a diverse set of community partners, iCAR is hosting Dr. Robert Bullard on Oct. 20 as the keynote speaker for its annual workshop on climate resiliency. Bullard will speak about the intersections of environmental and climate justice and strategies for moving the community forward to equitable resiliency.

The virtual keynote address will take place at 7:30 p.m. RSVP at bit.ly/30uGdSt.

Follow iCAR on Facebook at www.facebook.com/iCAR atUSFSP.

New assistant program director for the Office of Multicultural Affairs hopes to create a safe space for all students on campus

USFSP, from front page

on a football scholarship. He was pursuing a degree in sports management until a severe football injury changed his path. Since football was no longer part of his college life, he got involved in student organizations focused on diversity and inclusion.

Originally from Harrisburg, Pa., Anderson received his bachelor's degree in sports management from Clarion University and his master's degree in student affairs and higher education from Slippery Rock University in Slippery Rock, Pa.

Anderson found his dream job at the USF St. Petersburg campus in the summer of 2021. We talked to him about his new role, the importance of diversity and inclusion, and becoming a mentor to students.

What does the OMA do?

We're here for all students, but we focus on underrepresented students. A lot of people think it's students of color, which is one group that we do help, but we also help our

LGBTQIA+ students and partner with Veterans Affairs to help our veteran students get connected to resources. We focus on creating an experience for all underrepresented students to thrive, setting them up for success.

What inspired you to pursue a job in multicultural affairs?

My mentor Rogers Laugand. He is the director of multicultural affairs at Clarion University. I went to a predominately white institution, so I didn't see a lot of people who looked like me, and I connected to him. I got to see what diversity looked like on campus, and that's where I learned about inclusion. It wasn't until I started to learn more about my identity as a Black man that I started to understand what it was.

I also started getting involved with organizations on campus, and after partnering with different groups, I learned much more about different identities. My mentor was overseeing all those

organizations, so I thought, who is this man who looked like me doing all these great things and supporting these students?

I wanted to be like him, so I did some soul searching on my biases about certain communities. That's when I fell in love with advocacy and social justice work.

Why do you think diversity and inclusion are important here?

I think multicultural affairs is important because our students come from so many different places in life. They are highly motivated to get involved, and for me, I feel like it's my job to be their Rogers Laugand.

I want to be that person to support them while they are going through their journey. I get to educate them and motivate them to do different things.

When I came here, our student organizations were not highly sought out because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But we're getting them back up and running, and these students are

ready to work.

I'm so excited to see that, and it lets me know that diversity and inclusion work is more important than ever here because they want to advocate for their identity. They want to advocate for people who look like them. So, I'm here to help them do that, whether it's on-campus or in the St. Petersburg community.

What do you hope to accomplish at the USF St. Petersburg campus?

I want to create a hub for students. What I mean by that is a space where I can come into my office, and students will be hanging out because they are comfortable at the OMA. A space where all students, regardless of their race or gender, can feel safe with me.

They can come here and just leave everything at the door and relax and be their authentic self. I want them to have a space to watch YouTube videos, read books, or watch a movie. Whatever the case may be, they can do it at



DeWayne Anderson, assistant program director for the Office of Multicultural Affairs

OMA.

I'm also passionate about getting all our student organizations back up and running. I think we started doing that slowly, but we aren't all the way there yet because of remote learning. It altered the way we do things; this is the first

time many students are back on campus.

So, we are taking things slowly by offering a virtual and in-person component. I want to make sure all our student organizations are thriving and in a good place. I know we will get there.

Join Next Stepp at the annual Benefit Gala

ST. PETERSBURG — The Next STEPP Center is a beacon of light on 22nd Street for women and families experiencing pregnancies in St. Petersburg. Carole Alexander, director, and her Next Stepp team

can continue to work with, support, and provide needed items and services for women and families because of the donations of volunteer hours and financial support of the community.

The Next STEPP Center, like so many other non-profit agencies, has been negatively impacted by COVID, and donations and volunteer hours are low. The center is reaching out to the community

to join them in their annual fundraising benefit this Saturday night.

The 2021 Annual Benefit Gala — their major fundraiser of the year — will be held Saturday, Oct. 16 at 5 p.m. at the historic

Coliseum, 535 Fourth Ave N.

The delicious meal, catered by Banquet Masters, and the program are complimentary. No charge for the benefit gala. This is their way of raising funds

for the upcoming year and raising friends to support this ministry that depends on faithful volunteers.

It is not too late to join them at the gala. Visit www.nextsteppgala.com/joinus to register.

Join us for an exciting event

28TH ANNUAL STEPPING BEYOND BOUNDARIES Gala 2021

OCTOBER 16TH - 5:00PM

THE HISTORIC ST. PETE COLISEUM

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THE NEXT STEPP CENTER

LIVE STREAMING

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@THENEXTSTEPP

See **RENTS**, page 18

Pinellas County

YEAR	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black
2015	11.2	66.1
2016	9.7	64.6
2017	11	65.2
2018	10.7	73.6
2019	12.3	68.3

- Pinellas County Racial Make-Up:
 - White (NH) = ~81%
 - Black (NH) = ~10%
- Black people in Pinellas County have consistently higher **rates** of new HIV cases.
- Non-Hispanic White people had a 15% increase** in the rate of new HIV cases between 2018 and 2019.
- Non-Hispanic Black people had a 7% decrease** in the rate of new HIV cases between 2018 and 2019.

Data Source: www.FLHEALTHCHARTS.com

The Woodson and PCF partner to raise \$27 million

ST. PETERSBURG – The Woodson African American Museum of Florida and the Pinellas Community Foundation (PCF) have joined forces to raise \$27 million for a new and expanded museum. In choosing to create a partnership with PCF, The Woodson sought an organization with deep community commitment, experience in fundraising, and a reputation for collaborating on solutions that address the county's greatest needs.

The Woodson African American Museum of Florida, formerly known as the Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum, will be the first newly constructed landmark museum in Florida dedicated to celebrating African-American history, art, and culture. The existing museum operates in the former rental office and community center of Jordan Park, the site of one of our nation's first public housing communities constructed in 1939.

After the significant reconstruction of Jordan Park in 2006, the community center was repurposed as a museum and named in honor of the father of African-American history, Dr. Carter G.

Woodson.

The new museum is planned on 5.5 acres of city-donated land along 22nd Street South, known as the Deuces, a few blocks away from The Woodson's current location. The Deuces, the most historic and celebrated African-American corridor in St. Petersburg, was once a thriving epicenter for Black businesses and culture during segregation. The community is currently undergoing a revitalization as a flourishing arts district with an African American Heritage Trail embodying the community's rich history.

The Woodson's mission to preserve, present, and interpret African-American history and culture has garnered a broad audience, including community partners, members, volunteers, and friends. The museum brings individuals together from all walks of life, serving as a bridge and gateway for courageous, constructive, and meaningful discussions regarding history, culture, race, equity, and empowerment.

The Woodson inspires and enlightens people who seek to learn more about the untold or rarely celebrated stories and contributions of African

Americans.

As a result of the museum's growth and popularity, it has exceeded the use of its current single-story 4,000 square foot facility. The vision for the new 30,000 square foot edifice, designed by renowned Black-owned Huff + Gooden Architects, in partnership with Wannenmacher Jensen Architects, is the result of a broad community discussion with renowned museum experts held by The Woodson's leadership, co-sponsored by the City of St. Petersburg.

The community's involvement helped guide the project plans, ensuring they are rooted in history and culture while preparing to meet the needs of future generations.

"The African American experience in St. Petersburg and our country has too often been ignored, an after-thought, relegated to a space that limits or narrowly defines its impact rather than boldly celebrating its importance," said Pinellas Community Foundation CEO Duggan Cooley. "A purpose-built museum for African-American history and culture raises the prominence of The Woodson and all that means to our community."

Terri Lipsey-Scott, executive director of The Woodson, said the new museum would be the first in the state built as new construction specifically showcasing the contributions of African Americans.

"The state of Florida deserves a properly constructed museum dedicated to showcasing the African American experience throughout Florida and beyond," she said.

With its new campus, The Woodson looks to join the other internationally acclaimed museums throughout the state of Florida, like The Dali, and draw attendees from around the world. In addition to housing its permanent collection and regular exhibitions, the building is being constructed to meet rigorous standards for climate control and security, providing access to national and international touring exhibits, which will be presented in the new museum's three galleries.

Exhibitions, such as The Woodson's acclaimed "REVERBERATIONS, Black Artists on Racism and Resilience," demonstrate the transformative and educational power of the museum in uplifting Black life and culture



The Woodson African American Museum of Florida partners with Pinellas Community Foundation to help raise \$27 million for a new museum, which will be the first newly constructed museum in Florida dedicated to celebrating African-American history, art and culture.

while elevating lost and denied history.

The success of "REVERBERATIONS," initially hosted at The James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art and currently on display at the Scarfone/Hartley Gallery at the University of Tampa, demonstrates the critical need for expansion that will allow The Woodson to host world-class exhibits in its own space.

The partnership between The Woodson and PCF unites the unparalleled expertise of the museum with a well-regarded finan-

cial partner. The foundation demonstrates its 50-plus years of community experience through other recent partnerships benefitting the Tampa Bay community, including its fundraising effort that saved the Gladys Douglas Preserve and the distribution of millions of COVID-relief dollars to area charities. The foundation's longevity is a testament to its ability to honor donor expectations while positioning itself as a trusted partner, ably uniting community challenges with solutions.

From a Teen's Perspective Stress

BY DACIA JACKSON

Everyone is affected by stress. To understand stress, you first must understand the hypothalamus section of your brain, which is a section of your brain that monitors and maintains homeostasis in the body and controls hormones.

Due to people's natural response to events, emotions eliciting fear, anger, or worry, can cause the hypothalamus to send alerts through the nervous system to the kidneys. Basically, telling them to release adrenaline and cortisol. Also known as epinephrine or the stress hormone.

According to WebMD.com, cortisol is "nature's built-in alarm system" and "controls your mood, motivation, and fear" by working with parts of your brain. Adrenal glands located in your kidneys make cortisol, so the hypothalamus must signal the kidneys for the person to feel stressed.

Stress can have several physical and mental reactions in your body. It



can cause your body's temperature to rise, feel jittery, irritable, or angry. Long-term stress can have severe consequences, two of them being insomnia or anxiety.

Everybody is affected by stress somehow, and by the time you're a teen, it is nothing out of the ordinary. Stress, like many things, fortunately, has two sides. There is such a thing as good stress. Stress can keep you on your toes, alert your body of danger, and motivate you. It's hard to think of stress as a good thing when it's like a thought you can't shake, but if you were in a life-threatening situation, you might actually be grateful

for it.

Stress in teens can be caused by several things: school, extracurriculars, friends, problems at home, puberty, death of a loved one, or moving. If you were to list all the possible teen stressors of the past year, you would have to include the coronavirus.

The stress of waiting for the latest news on safety precautions you should be taking, to wear a mask or not, and whether kids should be vaccinated. The responsibility given to the next generation has unequivocally affected the mental health of many teens.

Stress is a problem; so, let's stop it.

It's just as President

Theodore Roosevelt said, "complaining about a problem without proposing a solution is called whining." So here it is — coping mechanisms.

When I'm stressed, I like to distract myself. Distractions like reading, listening to music, art, watching TV, going to the beach or park, cooking, or building models. I always have to find some other activity that isn't related to my assignments.

If I don't distract myself, I'll stress myself out to the point where I have a headache, and I don't feel well. So, coping with stress is super important to my health. And every person who suffers from stress, which is everyone, should find a healthy outlet.

When you're stressed, you tense up, so try and relax. This is probably the last thing you want to do when you have an assignment due tomorrow and you haven't started; however, the consequences of stressing and making a habit out of it could be harmful!

In my opinion, stress can become an ongoing pattern. Once you stress

over an assignment and get that assignment done on time with a flawless grade, the next time you run short on time, you're going to remember the previous success and repeat it until it becomes a habit.

An endless cycle of stress. So, relax!

When you're stressed, everything seems urgent. Everything you have to do today has to be done and completed right now! Everything you need to do in the future has to be decided and prepared upon today. The only way to cope with this is to have your priorities straight.

There is always something more important. This is always difficult for me because I want to do everything now so I can have more time for other activities.

Everybody faces stress, which means there are millions of different strategies to dealing with it. Realizing that stress doesn't pick a person because of gender, religion, ethnicity, or political standpoint is the start of winning the fight against it!



Sean Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens" states, "Be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first thing first, think win-win, seek first to understand then to be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw."

Balance is the solution! So, try to have some fun! Pick an activity you enjoy, such as exercising deep breathing or relaxation exercises, or even spending time with your family or friends.

Visit The Weekly-Challenger.com for more information.

Dacia Jackson is a teen journalist, author, and artist with aspirations of becoming an attorney. She is currently pursuing an interest in journalism while attending a Florida online school. Dacia is honest, ambitious, and tenacious, so her column will always be truthful, extraordinarily unique, and hopefully impactful.

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BY JESSIKA WARD
Dream Defenders

Studies have shown that incarcerated Black women are at higher risk of premature births. These results are said to be because of economic and social impacts stemming from mass incarceration and population health and health inequities that exist for Black babies whether their mother is incarcerated or not, including the persistence of racial disparities in preterm birth and low birth weight for all Black babies.

It is known that often white medical personnel believe Black people don't feel pain in the same way white people do. This same stigma is also seen in prisons and jails. Correction officers and doctors often don't take the pain of incarcerated Black women seriously.

In Alachua County, a Black woman named Erica Thompson was seven months pregnant when she was arrested for violating her probation for a traffic citation. According to Thompson, she told jail staff that she was experiencing contractions but was not given the proper attention or care. The baby, named Ava,

Dream Defenders: The Freedom Column

The prison experience: Pregnant, lactating, and the mother of a newborn

later died after Thompson prematurely gave birth inside the Alachua County jail. Now, Attorney Ben Crump will represent Thompson as she sues the jail for the wrongful death of her infant.

Being pregnant and giving birth are amongst the most memorable experiences in a woman's life. The postpartum experience should be one of bonding between a mother and her child. However, this experience is much different for women who are in jail and prisons.

Shackled until the moment they give birth with only law enforcement and a doctor present, these women are only given 24 to 48 hours with their newborn until their baby is taken away. Giving birth while incarcerated is one of the most inhumane experiences a person will go through.

The postpartum experience for incarcerated women is not one of mother-to-child bonding; it is instead a period of lactating with no baby to breastfeed and heavy bleeding without access to a laundry machine or proper menstrual products.

The Prison Policy Initiative predicted that 55,000 women in the United States would be arrested while pregnant this year. According to their study, in the



United States, there are more women in jails than in prison. People in jail are incarcerated for under a year and held for minor crimes, whereas prison describes a place for convicted criminals of serious crimes.

However, when studies are conducted, and numbers are calculated to track the number of births behind bars, the numbers are combined. Kimberly Haven, a formerly incarcerated individual and the executive director of Reproductive Justice Inside, said that her organization works with prisons and jails to conduct accurate studies.

"It's hard to help change the system when we don't have accurate numbers," said Haven. "We need the jails and prisons to share accurate information with us so that we know how to help. Some [jails and prisons] try to do the right thing, but there are still some that don't."

In a single year, women in prison and jail had 753 live

births, 46 miscarriages, four stillbirths, and 11 abortions. Of the 753 live births, there were three newborn deaths and no maternal deaths, and nearly a third of the live births were cesarean deliveries.

As laws are being passed to ban abortions and place those who have experienced miscarriages or stillbirths under suspicion for criminal acts, incarcerated women are dying and losing their babies inside prison and jail walls. So are the health rights of women being violated while pregnant and in prison?

"Many women give birth in prisons and jails every year, but many more give birth in hospitals because most prison medical units aren't equipped to handle deliveries," said Wanda Bertram, communications strategist of the Prison Policy Initiative.

Though incarcerated women may give birth inside of a hospital, these women are usually shackled. The shackling of pregnant prisoners and over-incarceration of pregnant women are all major concerns, but so are the healthcare needs of expectant mothers, healing from childbirth, and lactating.

Shackling a woman by the ankles, wrists, and waist during pregnancy and delivery is said to be medically hazardous, emotionally traumatizing, and unnecessary for security reasons. According to the "AMA Journal of Ethics," pregnant women who are shackled are at increased risk of falling and sustaining an injury to themselves and their fetuses.

The "AMA Journal of Ethics" reports that most correctional facilities do not have on-site obstetric care. Because of this, pregnant women are typically transported to community-based providers for prenatal care, and women in labor are transferred to medical facilities for delivery.

Organizations are working daily to help incarcerated pregnant women gain access to prenatal and postpartum medical care. Whether an incarcerated woman decides to carry her pregnancy to term or have an abortion, she has a constitutionally protected right to obtain appropriate medical care.

"This neglect of pregnant women is likely often illegal because people in prison have a constitutional right to be afforded proper medical care," explained Bertram, noting the Supreme Court decision in a 1976 case called *Estelle v Gamble*.

"Currently, we know that individuals in the care, custody, and control of the state do not know

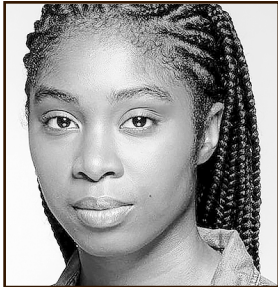
what to expect during their pregnancies, nor do they know their rights to care," said Haven. "Clear policies are needed to inform standards of care for pregnant people."

With the medical and legal expertise of Reproductive Justice Inside and informed by the voices of the directly impacted, they have developed the nation's first comprehensive Model Pregnancy Policy Manual that covers specific subjects such as pregnancy testing, prenatal care, high-risk pregnancy care, miscarriage management, abortion care access, labor and delivery, postpartum care, counseling, and social services.

Once a woman gives birth, she bleeds and lactates. This natural progression of life is a complication while inside a jail or prison. Institutions don't always provide mothers in the postpartum phase unrestricted access to hygiene products commonly used by mothers after giving birth—underwear, sitz baths, chux pads, and other items.

Institutions also don't have appropriate waste disposal receptacles for these items. Some facilities create systems to pump and store breast milk that can later be delivered to the infant, but most don't allow this.

"Let's also look at breast milk; oftentimes, pumping is not afforded to the individual. Given everything we know about how important breast milk is for infants, the fact that this is not practice is unacceptable," said Haven.



"Individuals should be given the opportunity, supplies, and education to pump their breast milk on their body's schedule and to make it available to the caregiver of their infant."

Reproductive Justice Inside has launched a new initiative that will make it easy for institutions and individuals to pump, providing dedicated refrigerators to institutions. Through litigation and advocacy, Reproductive Justice Inside works to secure prenatal and postpartum healthcare rights in prisons and jails throughout the country, attempting to end the barbaric practice of women giving birth while shackled and to protect the health of incarcerated women and their babies.

"No pregnant woman from the date of a positive pregnancy test through the postpartum period should ever be shackled. Right after she delivers a baby, you shackle her leg to the bed! It's against the law," said Haven. "If we don't make these systems report out, then we can't stop it. Some officers follow the law and try to do the right thing, but [the shackling] still happens. We need to hold these institutions accountable because we've seen too many times the damage [shackling] does."

Haven said one way to end this is not to arrest pregnant women or send them to jail or prison and instead put women on house arrest or GPS monitoring.

"Let's make maternal health and healthy birth outcomes the priority," stated Haven. There are other ways of doing this. I do not believe putting a pregnant person or a post-pregnant person — someone who has just given birth — into an incarceration system, especially not when we know what we know about COVID-19."

Jessika Ward is a journalist and the press secretary for the Dream Defenders, a youth-led organization that organizes Black and Brown youth to build power in Florida communities to advance a new vision the Dream Defenders have for the state.



Ben Crump
@AttorneyCrump

Erica Thompson gave birth ALONE in a Alachua County Jail cell after staff members ignored her screams for help! By the time EMS arrived, it was too late & unfortunately, her daughter later died at the hospital. This tragedy should have NEVER happened!



gainesville.com

A baby born in Alachua County Jail died. The mother said jail staff ignored her s... Erica Thompson said she gave birth and had the umbilical cord cut before EMS arrived. The Alachua County Sheriff's Office said it is investigating.



INSPIRATIONS

BY DIERDRE DOWNING-JACKSON

A prayer for our children

A Positive Prayer

Heavenly Father, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, we praise Your name!

Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD our strength and our redeemer.

Thank You LORD for the breath of life You have given us this day to praise Your Holy name.

We thank and praise You for using us as Your instruments of peace, service, inspiration and courage.

Bless the children of GOD, who now experience the restoration of protection and joy, because of the love given to them unconditionally and the importance assigned to their lives.

Bless those who support the celebration of our children.

Keep us humble Dear LORD and may we never be weary in well-doing.

Let us always remember to trust in the LORD and do good.

Guide us as we enter into GOD's work and make things right.

In JESUS name, and by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, we will always pray.

AMEN

"Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from Him."

Psalms 127:3 NLT

Inner Truth

God-life within assures me that all is well.

Deep inside me is a truth I want to know consciously all the time. When I am centered in it, I know all is well in my life and the world. When I am aware of it, there is no room for struggle or problems of any kind. I find it in the place the psalmist called "The secret place of the Most High."

I simply become still and rest my attention on God-life within. Then I, too, discover this secret place where the highest truth dwells. I meet God at the core of my being. Here I find solace, passion, joy, and a sense of oneness with all life. Resting in the Silence, I hear and see through spiritual ears and eyes.

No matter the circumstances of life, I know this deeply seeded and ever-available truth: God is here and all is well.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Psalm m51:6

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From Daily Word Publicationhttp://www.dailyword.com/

Local non-profit offers free gowns for homecoming

TAMPA – Sisters Empowering Women, Inc. (SEW) has free evening gowns for girls to wear this homecoming season. The Gowns for Girls program provides evening gowns to girls whose families can't afford to purchase a dress.

To qualify, a child must receive free or reduced lunch, live in a single-parent household with limited income, be in foster care, or living in a home that is at or below the poverty level. Special circumstances are sometimes considered for those who may not meet the outlined requirements.

“Homecoming is a special time for a high school student,” said SEW President Karin Davis-Thompson. “We know that with these tough economic times, many families are finding themselves in a financial pinch.”

Davis-Thompson said many families who a year ago may not have needed assistance are now finding it hard to pay the mortgage, and a gown for homecoming seems out of reach.

Amber Congae, SEW's board co-chair, said the organization has assisted more than 150 girls since the program's inception.



Sisters Empowering Women, Inc. is giving away free gowns to those in need for homecoming season for students in Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco Counties. The photo above shows one of this year's lucky recipients.

“It's wonderful to see the looks on their faces when they find the perfect gown,” Congae said, noting that half of the gowns are new, while the others have been donated by various organizations and members of the community.

Gowns are provided to girls living in Hillsbor-

ough, Pinellas, and Polk Counties. Appointments are REQUIRED. Contact SEW at (813) 593-3924 or e-mail sistersempoweringwomen@gmail.com for an appointment or to donate a gown.

There is also limited assistance available for hair, make-up and shoes.



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Bob Devin Jones and the Dali explore the life of surrealist Aimé Césaire

BY J.A. JONES
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG - The Dali Museum's exhibit "Aimé Césaire: Poetry, Surrealism, and Négritude," on view until Dec. 5, reviews the life of the surrealist poet and politician from the French Caribbean island of Martinique.

Co-curated by Bob Devin Jones, artistic director of Studio@620, the exhibit features a performance by Jones and others, "Until the River Never Grieves." Monday's performance sold out at the Dali, along with Wednesday's and Thursday's performance at Studio@620.

Césaire was born on June 26, 1913, in the small coastal town of Basse-Pointe on the French-Caribbean Island of Martinique. One of seven children, he learned to read and write early and excelled in school. After receiving a scholarship in the 1930s, he traveled to Paris to attend prestigious liberal art schools, including École Normale Supérieure, one of the country's major universities.

While there, he met Leopold Senghor, who would later become the first president of Senegal, and Guyanese poet and politician Léon-Gontran Damas. With them, Césaire founded the journal "L'Étudiant noir" - The Black Student.

During these years, Césaire coined the term Négritude, which he defined as "the simple recognition of the fact that one is Black, the acceptance of this fact, and of our destiny as Blacks, of our history and culture."

For Césaire and his wife Suzanne, with whom he founded the anti-colonialist surrealist journal "Tropiques," and other students and intellectuals living during the years of Nazi occupation, the surrealist

movement, most often understood through the experimental paintings of Salvador Dali, was really about "freedom."

Césaire linked his philosophy of negritude - "Black consciousness" - to the surrealist movement's abstract visual and theoretical ideas and saw the two movements as compatible. He was quoted as commenting, "Surrealism provided me with what I had been confusedly searching for."

His work challenged and questioned what colonialism did to the mind and spirit of Black people and how they could regain their footing in hostile, racist environments. But his language, as a surrealist, was complex, full of symbols, dreamy, and subverted meaning instead of directly criticizing regimes or political leadership.

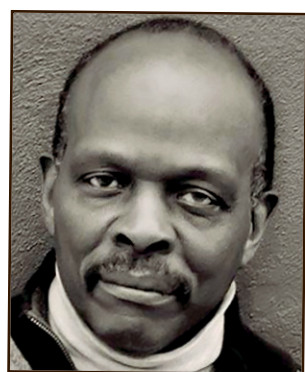
The poet-philosopher went on to become elected to the top governmental of Martinique, serving as mayor for 17 years before retiring. He died in 2008 at the age of 94 and has been recognized as one of the most influential artists and intellectuals of his time.

Jones' performances of "Until the River Never Grieves" (the name of one of Césaire's poems) weave the poetry of Césaire along with dance, music, Jones' poetry, and several dancers and other performers.

For Jones, approaching Césaire's work meant not considering it in an "Aristotelian or Socratic" way of asking a lot of questions and doing theoretical research - but in a way that would allow him to "jar the floor."

Using Césaire's poetry from the book "Lost Body" written alongside art by painter Pablo Picasso, the theater director, performer, and playwright knew he would need a more expressive take on the work.

In other words, for Jones, if the poems in "Lost



Bob Devin Jones


Body" reflected the "displacement" of Black people - whether from the continent by slavery, colonialism, or by psychic loss of identity of self, all of which Césaire's poems seem to cover - it needed to be a theatrical experience.

For Jones, he needed a way to enter the work and share it with viewers, which would allow him to "stomp, stomp, and stomp again." He mentioned Ntozake Shange's influence - the writer, director and performer of the theatrical classic "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow is Enuf." Shange is credited with creating the choreopoem form melding poetry and dance, in the same way Jones does in "Until the River Never Grieves."

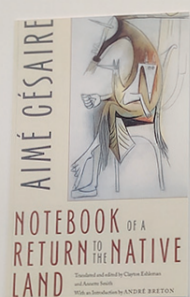

Jones noted that "the first thing that inspires me about his (Césaire's) poems - and which is why I don't call myself a poet, although I've written several poems - is that a good poem leads you through its labyrinth, and then at the end, it brings it all together, and it makes you reflect on yourself, and makes you catch your breath."

Jones said the poems in "Lost Body" often seem to revolve around the question of "how do you get back home." And importantly, said Jones, he found that in Césaire's work, "no matter what the subject matter, gets me home."

The exhibit at the Dali is on until Dec 5.



The Three Faces of Aimé Césaire: Until The River Never Grieves...
Presented in Partnership with The Dali Museum
Written and Directed by Bob Devin Jones

And you ghosts rise blue from altars from a forest of fanned beasts of twisted machines of a juggle tree of rotten flesh of a basket of owls of eyes of a network of straps in the beautiful seal of human skin I would have words vast enough to contain you earth tant earth drunk...

Notebook of a Return to the Native Land

What's going on, 2021?

BY FRANK DROUZAS
Staff Writer

It's been a half-century since Marvin Gaye's masterwork "What's Goin' On" carved its indelible mark on the musical and cultural scene. Fans, critics, and artists alike have acknowledged it as the apex of the Motown star's brilliant career.

Although he had scored catchy hits like "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)" and the seminal "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," the 32-year-old Gaye was looking for a new direction in 1971. He wanted a break from the Motown sound — a jazzier effort that explored his inner feelings and spoke of the plight of his brothers and sisters.

The result was "What's Going On," Gaye's first truly mature record, lyrically and artistically. As each song blends into the next, it gives the illusion the album is one long song, full of religious, introspective, and compassionate overtones — a departure from the sensual themes that made him a household name and sex symbol.

Conceptual in nature, the album deals with the country's violence, oppression, social injustice, and chaos, centering on the Vietnam War, pickets and protests, the ecology, poverty, racial disparities, and drug addiction.

Flash forward 50 years where we've experienced an ongoing pandemic, catastrophic weather, rising gun violence, protests for police shootings, a deadly retreat from a foreign war, and yes, more racial disparities, and it's clear that in 2021, the soulful "What's Going On" remains just as relevant today as ever.

Deciding to give the record a listen for the first time in years, I settled in, dropped the needle, and heard Gaye croon the opening lines of the title track: *Mother, mother There's too many of you crying Brother, brother, brother There's far too many of you dying*

He could be referencing the many young men who were killed during a prolonged war that had a vague objective — or he could mean young Black men lost to gun violence and police shootings, I mused. Either way, these silk-smooth lines hold true in our current times, as so many lives have been lost in a war that's slogged on for two decades. Just replace Afghanistan for Vietnam.

"You see, war is not the answer," he sings.

The song is a plea for us all to find a common understanding, to all get along. And such common ground has been hard-to-find-real estate lately. As young Black men and women have been gunned down by police far too often these days, people have taken to the streets to protest — sometimes only to be beaten by riot-ready policemen.

"Picket lines and picket signs. Don't punish me with brutality," sings Marvin.

The track "What's Happening Brother" unfolds from the viewpoint of a vet returning from Vietnam to his own country to ask:

"War is hell; when will it end? When will people start gettin' together



The more things change, the more they stay the same. Marvin Gaye's 1971 'What's Going On' album spoke about the country's violence, oppression, social injustice, war, pickets and protests, the environment, poverty, racial disparities, and drug addiction.



again?"

He complains that he can't find work and money is tight and keeps asking: "What's happening, brother?"

Amidst a pandemic that is still very much with us, I wondered when we would truly start getting together again after hearing those lines. And with the economy still stumbling and too many of us not earning enough or even able to find job opportunities, yeah, Marvin, I'll say money is tight these days.

In the dreamy "Flyin' High (In the Friendly Sky)," he sings of the helplessness an addict feels, with such chilling lines as:

Nobody really understands, no, no And I go to the good place where the good feeling awaits me Self destruction's in my hand

Another by-product of the pandemic, drug dependency, has risen in our country, and too many of us have turned to opioids, stimulants, and other substances to cope with anxiety and stress. Rampant drug use was hardly rare among urban dwellers in the early 1970s, and these days we have seen cases of substance abuse rise again. Overdoses have spiked since the onset of COVID-19.

It is that awareness of self-destructive behavior captured perfectly as Gaye sings over lush orchestration:

I can't help it, so stupid minded But I go crazy when I can't find it.

The future of humankind is on a lot of people's minds these days, just as it was in 1971. In "Save the Children," Gaye talk-sings at the start of the song:

I just want to ask a question Who really cares, to save a world in despair?

The mellow, ethereal "God Is Love" follows, which blends seamlessly into

the masterful "Mercy Mercy Me (the Ecology)," in which he crystallizes his concerns for future generations. Gaye sings of blue skies disappearing and poison in the air, oil spills on the ocean, and

radiation underground.

Written in a time when the country's awareness of environmentalism was at a peak, the song still holds water today. With climate change bringing about extreme temperatures, killer hurricanes, and uncontrollable wildfires, we have a ringside seat to the environment's destruction at the cost of our modernization.

"Oil wasted in our ocean and upon our seas," Marvin sings eerily prescient, given the recent spills off the coasts of California and Texas.

Kicked off by a stark percussion beat that gives way to a dark yet funky bass line, the album's finale, "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)" captures the despondency and suffering in American ghettos. Inflation, piled-up bills, ever-present crime, and police brutality — the nightmare landscape is drawn with vivid strokes. Unfortunately, it is a backdrop that is still prevalent in too many parts of the country.

Crime is (woo!) increasing

Trigger happy policing Panic is spreading God knows where we're heading

"What's Going On" has artistry, spirituality, a sense of compassion, a hint of foreboding. It is some of the most soulful soul ever made, and once the record ends, you immediately want to play it again.

Though the album closes on a dark note, it is not a work without hope. Marvin Gaye, at his best, was a man who could touch the souls of people the world over through his music. And in the Latin-flavored "Right On," he tells us:

Aw true love can conquer hate every time

Give out some love, and you'll find peace every time.

In these divisive times with tensions rising and tempers flaring, with uncertainty, despair, and anger looming over us like a gathering storm system, we should all pause, exhale, and keep Marvin's message in mind now more than ever.

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Dear Reader: Run with Endurance, and Allow Perseverance to be Your Baton



Dear Reader,
I'm not sure how my words will find you when you read them, but I pray that they find you well and bring you hope and perspective.

In life and on our journey throughout, we sometimes encounter brokenness, heart-break, and disappointment. These circumstances can often leave one in a place of great sadness, confusion, and an uncertainty on how to move forward.

I want you to know that you should grow in better and be courageous in your pursuit of it, because you can't receive better if you continue to be a victim to someone else's bitterness. The Lord wants to lead you to a better place, and you should trust Him with your journey. It's OK to move forward and know that forgiveness doesn't mean that you have to go back.

This week's column is dedicated to Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

My dear reader, I pray that you will be empowered to move forward, and I also pray that you will grow in better and not be afraid to pursue it because you truly deserve it. I want you to know that you are not alone, and it is my prayer that this column will make you feel as though you have a place to belong and somewhere to call home.

Share your story and prayer requests below or at SenecaHoward.com/contact, and our team will be sure to keep you lifted in our prayers.

P.S. Yours Truly, The Writer Seneca Howard www.SenecaHoward.com



Pastor's Corner
BY REV. DR. DORAL R. PULLEY,
SPIRITUAL LEADER
TODAY'S CHURCH Tampa Bay

Way of Being

“And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, who touched my clothes (Mark 5:30)?”

Without you telling them, people can tell when you are a person who prays consciously and consistently. There is a positive energy that people feel exuding from you. They intuitively know that there is something special about you. Some people may describe it as a light in your eyes, a shine on your face, or a halo above your head. That's how people felt about Jesus, our Perfect Pattern.

The woman who had an issue of blood realized that making a connection with Jesus would make a difference in her life (Mark 5:25-34). Although she exhausted her financial resources in seeking medical attention, hearing about Jesus gave her hope for healing. She did not feel that prayer from Jesus or conversation with him was necessary for her to be whole. She was clear that all she needed to do was be in his presence close enough to touch his clothes, and her faith in Jesus being Jesus was enough to heal her.

Peter, a disciple of Jesus Christ, manifested this same aura. “They brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them (Acts 5:15).” Like Jesus, Peter did not need to see anything, think anything, say anything or do anything to heal the people. Peter being Peter, was enough. You being you is enough. You being your authentic self is more than enough.

CHURCH NEWS

The Weekly Challenger

www.theweeklychallenger.com

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Morning Worship **10:45 a.m.**
Baptist Training Union..... **5:00 p.m.**
Prayer Meeting and Bible Study
Wednesday 7:00 p.m.



Rev. Brian K. Brown

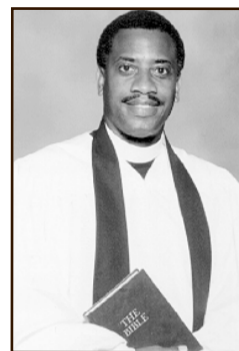
THE ROCK OF JESUS MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

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9:30 a.m. Sunday School (First Sunday Only)
Sunday School 9:15 a.m. / Devotion 10:15 a.m.
Praise & Worship 10:20 a.m. / Worship Services 10:30 a.m.
Saints of Prayer - Monday 12:00 noon
Weekly Bible Study - Tuesday 6:30 p.m.
Adult Choir Rehearsals - Thursday 6:30 p.m.

Van service is available by calling: (727) 327-0015

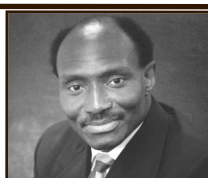
THE ROCK OF JESUS IS LOCATED AT:
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7:00 p.m. via ZOOM - ACCESS CODE: 509-102-8823 PASSWORD: THESHIP

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CHURCH NEWS

St. Mark M.B. Church

After The Valley – Genesis 26:23-3322

From the text we see another valley at Gerar where Isaac found himself. Isaac has spent time in the valley but according to verse 23 he is not to dwell in the valley. We may be experiencing valleys like Isaac, but God does not want us to dwell in valley always. Also, in verse 23 we see Isaac leaving the valley and making his way up to Beersheba. We find that we must wait on God, trust in him, and look up to him while in the valley for one day he will deliver us. God's word tells us that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. As we look at the valley of COVID we find ourselves in, we trust God that this valley experience won't last always.

In all of our circumstances, 'an after' does come. As we dwell in our now there will be an after the valley. Life is about hills and valleys but with God these hills and valleys will turn. The question asked of the text by Pastor Brown was how should we return from our valley moment? God does some of his greatest work to us and for us not on the mountain but in the valley and sometimes the greatest things we learn about ourselves happens not when all is going well, but when trials and troubles come, and we find ourselves in a valley. We learn how to trace, trust, treasure, lift up, pray, believe, and be delivered by God because he met us in the valley.

The first point from verse 24, We Should Return Listening. The valley is a quiet and lonely place, but God will do things in the valley to sharpen our hearing. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing the word of God. Some of us won't hear until we're hurting or listen until we're losing. We learn how to listen to God in

the valley so we can learn how to listen to him when we come out of the valley. Some valleys we may never go back in because we listened after we got out of the valley. But if we fail to listen, we may find ourselves back in the valley. We need to listen to the small still voice of God, listen to the wisdom of the sage of the community, our mothers and fathers who have been where we're going. If we listen, we may be able to detour around some valleys and live a better life. God said to Isaac and says to us, don't be afraid because he is with him. Things may not go our way but listen and don't be afraid. Fear should not be a factor from keeping us from doing the things God desires us to do and be. At our lowest points God is with us and has always been with us.

The second point, We Should Return to Laboring. The first thing Isaac labors to do is erect a place of worship. Praying and worshipping is not just for our low moments so we can get out of places we don't want to be. It should be a way of life that we praise and worship at all times. Our heart should be an altar that we talk to God. Do we only pray and worship when things are going bad and when things turn we forget worship, pray, and praise? Our labor should be in staying faithful to God because he is the reason we got out of valley situations. Isaac also labor in making room for God. He settled and was faithful at Beersheba. He was able to get settled where he was because God's word settled him. Are we unsettled? Are things going well but we're not satisfied? The only one who can settle us is. As long as we have God, and he is centered in our lives we can



Rev. Brian K. Brown,
Pastor

be comfortable wherever we are.

The third point from verses 26-28, We Should Return to Loving. In these verses we see that those who were enemies of Isaac now saw that God was with him and desired a covenant with Isaac that they do no harm to each other. Some of us may never have gone to the next step if it wasn't for the heartbreaks, failure, darkness, and sadness. God takes the bad and makes it better. We know we are delivered, at peace, in the will and center of God when our enemies want the best from us and we know if we give them the best and take nothing for ourselves and we can say the Lord gave, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Isaac loved them by forgetting, forgiving, and fellowshiping with them even though they did what they did. Isaac knew that God was with and if he gave them everything they asked he didn't loose anything with God. We need to understand that when we withhold what others want from us, we close our hands and God can't give anything else to us. If we let it go, God has more for us. Some things can't flow from God into our lives until we flow love, forgiveness, and understanding.

Join us Sunday mornings in the sanctuary or via live-stream on YouTube @ St Mark MBC at 10:20 for Sunday School, worship service at 10:45 a.m., and bible study on Wednesdays @ 7:00 p.m.

The College Hill Church of God in Christ

TAMPA – Oct 6, 2021 - The College Hill Church of God in Christ, in partnership with the Hillsborough County Health Department, will serve as a vaccination and booster site on Saturday, October 30th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This is the second time the church has opened its doors as a vaccine site, the first was earlier this year in March.

Superintendent Charles Davis, church pastor, said he believes it is important for a church to minister to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the community.

"God is not only concerned with our spiritual health, but our overall well-being," he said. "It is important for our community to have access to the medicines God has allowed the doctors and scientists to create to keep us safe."

All three of the approved vaccination shots will be available.

Anyone interested in getting their initial vaccine or the booster should contact info@chccogic.org or call 813-382-0650 or (813) 300-2208 to register. If you are interested in a booster, please make sure that you bring your vaccination card or



Charles Davis

proof of vaccination with you.

The College Hill Church of God in Christ is located to 6414 N. 30th Street, Tampa, FL 33610.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

- **Pfizer (2 doses required)**
- **Moderna (2 doses required)**
- **Johnson & Johnson (1 dose required)**
- **Pfizer Booster shot available to those who qualify**
 - **must** have vaccination card as proof of original dose
 - **must** be at least 28 days after fully vaccinated
 - **must** be immune compromised

October 30, 2021

9am to 2pm

**College Hill
C.O.G.I.C.**

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Tampa, Florida 33610

Call (813) 382-0650 or
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Supt. Charles Davis, Pastor

The Valley and its Way – Genesis 26:17-22

Even before Covid we experienced valley moments with some of the same situations we find ourselves experiencing during Covid. Sometimes we can be in the valley because we sent ourselves there and other times someone made a valley moment for us. We may be in the valley, but the valley does not have to be in us for God is still God on the mountains and in the valleys. In the valley we can still trace, trust and treasure him and he can meet us and give us what we need to hang on a little while longer. The text is a reminder of a déjà vu moment for Isaac.

He was facing a famine much like his father Abraham had experienced earlier in Genesis when Abraham didn't

acknowledge his wife as his wife, but his sister. His son Isaac now does the same with his wife Rebekah. God sometimes leads us to places where we are uncomfortable as he led Isaac and we feel we have to be fake to be safe and blend in. Both Abraham and Isaac decided to play a part rather than be who God called them to be. Some of us are in the valley and don't know it because we don't know the signs and believe this is just our lives. If we pay attention to where we are God can show us that even when things don't go our way, he is the way and his way, word and his will shall prevail.

The first point from verse 18, The way of the valley can be fatiguing. We can get tired

emotionally, mentally, financially, relationally, and physically. We're in a place where nothing is going our way. If you're tired when you wake up, all through the day and go to bed tired, that can be a sign that you're in the valley. Isaac moved from dirt work to being over his own corporation. Sometimes God brings you to the valley where you have to do what you used to do, and you don't want to do it. But in order to survive you have to do it all over again. Before Covid we did things we had the economic ability to do but in Covid times we've let some of those things go. We may also be spiritually tired. We attend church, do what is right, still we may find ourselves asking why when we're

doing all we know to do to serve the Lord.

The second point from verse 19, The way of the valley can be frustrating. Isaac's herdsmen worked hard to dig and find a wellspring of water but the herdsmen of Gerar fought with them over the water and claimed it to be theirs. They had worked hard and were frustrated because others claimed it. We too can find ourselves in similar circumstances when we have worked hard, and others came along after our hard work to lay claim to what we've accomplished. We become frustrated when things don't go our way.

The third point from verses 20 and 21, the way of the valley has its feuding. In

the valley there is struggle and strife. People can be fighting, blocking, and trying to hinder us and we don't know why. Sometimes we even fight with ourselves. The old man and woman may want to react by resorting in like manner, but the new person says to turn the other cheek. We have a tendency to act like where we are. In the valley we may go low. God says he brought us from the mountain to show those in the valley how to live on the mountain even when in the valley. Let us not find ourselves feuding with everything and not clinging to what scripture says we are.

The final point from verse 22, The way of the valley can be favorable. In the verse Isaac digs a third well and the

herdsmen of Gerar did not fight them. Isaac then calls the place Rehoboth because God had made room for them. When there is fatigue, frustration, and feuding we need faith. Faith is not just speaking but doing. God made a promise to Isaac in Genesis 26:3 that he would be with him through all the things in the valley. He pressed forward until he received the promises of God. Let us also press forward and hold to our faith through our fatigue, frustration, and feuding.

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Experts In Life-Changing Care

By Karen Davis-Pritchett M.Ed., Empath Health Vice President of Access and Inclusion



Honoring care for the soul during Pastoral Care Month

PINELLAS COUNTY – The care of the body, mind, and spirit are essential facets of wellbeing at every stage of life. Doctors and nurses see to physical ailments while counselors support emotional health. Pastors tend to spiritual care. The end of life is perhaps the most pivotal milestone for these parts to work together.

Suncoast Hospice, a member of Empath Health, recognizes the critical role clergy play in the lives of our patients. Whether someone is feeling uncertain about the next step on their path or ready for the transition, having someone there to discuss matters of the spirit can be a reassuring resource for patients and their families.

As we celebrate Pastoral Care Month, we offer heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the many churches and spiritual leaders we partner with. We also want to recognize the work of spiritual care professionals such as Ricardo Bain, D. Min, BCC., Suncoast Hospice spiritual care coordinator.

As a pastor at Elim Seventh-day Adventist Church in St. Petersburg, Bain watched as members of his congregation faced the unique issues that came at the end of life and recognized the necessity of a spiritual leader who could relate to these challenges. He took it upon himself to become a more well-rounded servant of the

Lord and went back to school to become a board-certified chaplain. Now he provides care for the soul both in church and at the bedside as a spiritual care coordinator.

“Spiritual care coordinators are like hitchhikers,” explained Bain. “A hitchhiker doesn’t drive the car. They are going along for the ride. We are meeting patients where they are, whatever their faith is. We work with them to find inner peace along their journey.”

Hospice care focuses on managing symptoms, including addressing emotional and spiritual factors to improve quality of life. Spiritual care coordinators play a crucial role in tying these areas



Richardo Bain, Suncoast Hospice Spiritual care coordinator

support. However, it is not uncommon for patients to refuse these services before they fully understand the benefits.

Bain recalls one patient who vehemently refused to speak with him initially, to the point of demanding he leaves their home. Several months later, an unexpected change of heart brought him back to her bedside. The once reluctant patient was now ready for the conversation. Through an open discussion of spirituality and prayer, they were able to form a connection so strong she asked him to perform her funeral service. Because of the support and comfort provided by Bain, she passed peacefully surrounded by her children.

Spiritual care coordinators offer the same level of support to everyone who works within the hospice care journey — both loved ones and interdisciplinary care team members. Offering words of counsel, hope and support to those who provide care can help keep the patient at the heart of the matter.

“It’s my privilege to walk with people along the most important journey toward the end of their earthly experience,” Bain averred.

Learn more about how Suncoast Hospice provides compassionate care for the body, mind and spirit at SuncoastHospice.org.

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Residents call for mayor to declare state of emergency on skyrocketing rents

RENTS, from page 10

percent answered “yes” to declaring a local state of emergency, and 96 percent answered “yes” to guaranteeing residents a place to live in St. Pete.

Muhammad, like Wells, believes that if the city were to establish more

housing co-ops, this could help combat the affordable housing issues plaguing the city. “The city could get behind local efforts that are being led by residents to develop cooperatively owned businesses. This could include hous-

ing co-ops as well,” said Muhammad.

Faith in Florida would like to hear from you. If you could not attend last week’s meeting but still have ideas to share, please call Nick Carey at (704) 258-0926 or email him at

ncarey@faithinflorida.org.

The emergency meeting was a joint effort from several local organizations including SEIU-FPSU, St. Pete Tenants Union, Dream Defenders, Florida Rising, Florida for All, Party for Socialism and

Liberation, Pinellas Democratic Socialists of America, and Faith in Florida.

Get support

- Emergency Assistance Helpline: Call 855-379-3515, Monday-Friday from 8:30-5 p.m.
- Help is also available

by emailing erap.pinellas-county.fl@tetrattech.com.

- Gulfcoast Legal Services provides free housing legal assistance to low-income clients. Visit gulfcoastlegal.org/request-assistance.



STORM SEASON IS COMING. LET’S GET READY NOW.

We are preparing for the next big storm now – strengthening our system, upgrading equipment and investing in new grid technology. We continue to focus on improving response and restoration times by identifying potential issues in advance and installing technology that will allow us to reroute power to avoid outages.



Sign up online for phone or email alerts, or text REG to 57801 for text alerts.



There are three ways to report an outage: Text OUT to 57801, call 800.228.8485, or report it online.



If you see a downed power line or other safety hazard, call 800.228.8485, or report it online.

For additional tips, please visit duke-energy.com/StormSafety.

