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## Six in 10 uninsured African Americans may qualify for coverage or premium assistance

According to a new report released this week by the Department of Health and Human Services, six out of ten (4.2 million) uninsured African Americans who may be eligible for coverage through the Health Insurance Market-

place might qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or tax credits to help with the cost of premiums. If all states took advantage of new opportunities to expand Medicaid coverage under the Afford-



Photo Healthiermi / Flickr

able Care Act, 95 percent of uninsured African Americans who may be eligible for the Marketplace might qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or tax credits to

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## New Cities Summit to focus on "Re-imagining Cities: Transforming the 21st Century Metropolis"

DALLAS - The New Cities Foundation have announced the theme for the New Cities Summit 2014: Re-imagining Cities: Transforming the 21st Century Metropolis.

The New Cities Summit will gather 1,000 of the world's most forward-



thinking urban leaders, mayors, CEOs, architects, entrepreneurs, academics, thinkers, urban planners, scientists and artists for pragmatic, action-oriented discussions on the future of the urban world. The invi-

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## Nominations being accepted for Maura Women Helping Women Award and Young Leader Award

DALLAS - Dallas Women's Foundation is now accepting nominations for both the Maura Women Helping Women Award and the Young Leader Award.

All nominations must be submitted by Friday, Jan. 24, 2014. The recipients will be honored at Dallas

Women's Foundation Leadership Forum & Awards Dinner, presented by AT&T, on Tuesday, April 24, 2014 at the Dallas Omni Hotel. Co-chairs for the evening are retired Texas Instruments vice president Julie England, and Wei Wei Jeang, a partner at Andrews Kurth.

"The advancement of women and girls is not possible without transformative leaders who have been willing to take risks in order to make change. The Maura Awards honor those women who made significant contributions to improve the lives of women

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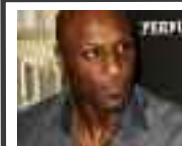


Win tickets to the Chinese Lantern Festival at <http://www.facebook.com/NorthDallasGazette!>

## Wedding day scam turned into blessings for couple



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## NDG Gossip: Lamar Odom reaches plea deal

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## COMMENTARY

## WWRDH: What would Republicans do on Healthcare?

By George E. Curry  
NNPA Columnist

Many ardent conservatives are critical of the Affordable Care Act or what they derisively call "Obamacare." But what are they proposing that proves that they care about uninsured Americans?

The Tampa Bay Times' "Pundit Fact" team discovered some interesting findings when they

approached that question indirectly. Specifically, the newspaper looked at the main Republican alternatives to the Affordable Care Act and the patient diagnosis under the GOP proposals was not encouraging.

"Not all but most of the nine bills on our list use the tax code to put more money in citizens' pockets on the condition that the

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SuVern Freeman Simmons



Ashleigh Smith



Chelsea Swan

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## SuVern "Vern" Freeman Simmons

DALLAS - Dallas will bid farewell to one of its legendary restaurateurs this week, SuVern "Vern" Freeman Simmons of Vern's Place. Ms. Simmons hung up her apron this past week on Dec. 2, 2013 at the age of 84.

A wake will be held on Friday, Dec. 13, 2013 at 8:30 p.m. at Golden Gate Funeral Home located at 4155 South R.L. Thornton Freeway, Dallas, Texas 75224. The funeral service will be held on Saturday, Dec. 14, 2013 at 12 p.m. at

Inspiring Body of Christ located at 7710 South Westmoreland Road, Dallas, Texas 75237. Golden Gate Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements, (214) 941-7332.

Born and raised in Hugo, Oklahoma, Vern moved to Dallas as a young woman with seven children, (she later had another three), and found housing in the West Dallas Projects. In praying for an answer to her need to for work and a way to take care of her small children, she opened her first



restaurant. She not only fed her own children but tens of thousands of other folks as

well. While it was rough in the beginning, Vern's cooking skills and motherly

ways served her well. Customers came, ate and left happy. Life was hard, but good.

In 1967, Vern was looking for a new location for her restaurant and fell in love with the little building at the corner of Exposition and Main streets east of downtown Dallas in the Deep Ellum neighborhood. The rent was right and with a lot of hard work and the help of friends, Vern cleaned up the building that had been vacant for years and soon opened Vern's Place. She cooked the meals, ran the register, washed the dishes, cleaned the tables and made friends with the customers, all

while raising her 10 children. Vern worked hard to make a success of Vern's Place.

The Vern's Place sign read, "specializing in good food" and diners came to the little blue and white building in groves and soon the restaurant was the talk of Dallas. Not only was the food great, the servings were huge. There was always a line at the front door when she opened for lunch and diners shared tables as they ate their food. Vern never advertised and never needed to. Her marketing plan consisted of great food, a smile and a

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## Ashleigh Smith

Sultry, soulful, and sincere are what audiences have said of up and coming vocalist Ashleigh Smith. From the small town of LaGrange, this Georgia Peach is new to Texas soil; however, she is no stranger to the stage. Ashleigh Smith is a graduate student majoring in Vocal Jazz Performance at The University of North Texas. Music and Community Service has always been Ashleigh's passion and first love.

As the newly crowned

Miss Black Texas USA 2014, Ashleigh is ecstatic to promote her own platform, Music to my Ears: Preserving Music in Education for which she has already raised over \$40,000 to help keep music programs alive in public schools. Ashleigh has always had a passion for volunteerism and service in her community holding other titles as Miss Troup County's Outstanding Teen 2006, Miss Columbus 2007 and more recently, Miss Black Texas

USA 2014.

Ashleigh will be representing the Lone Star State at the Miss Black USA Scholarship Pageant in August 2014. The Miss Black USA Pageant is a community driven organization and is committed to addressing health and education, two leading social issues in the African American community. Miss Black Texas USA is excited to promote "I Love My Brown Skin" which is being launched by Miss Black USA in 2014 to instill pride and self-esteem in our young African-American girls.

Miss Black Texas USA State Director, DeLisha Huff mentions "...working with Ashleigh is Music To My Ears...she is a very talented young lady who is about to take Texas and Miss Black USA nationals by storm." Ashleigh has also been awarded the opportunity to do background studio work for Grammy award winning artist Chrisette Michele. The Miss Black Texas USA Organization is on the search for a Talented Teen to become a part of Miss Black Texas USA.



## Chelsea Swan

When electrical engineering senior Chelsea Swan graduates in December, she will leave UT Dallas with a job already lined up, and one that fulfills a childhood dream, no less.

Swan, a self-described "bit of a nerd," predicted her career in sixth grade, when she got her first Texas Instruments calculator and promptly told her mother, "I want to work for this company."

Now, with four internships on her resume and a college degree almost in hand, Swan will begin her engineering job at Texas Instruments in January.

Swan is not unusual among her fellow fall grad-

uates in her quick turn from commencement to employment. Most recent UT Dallas graduates are bypassing the challenge of a months-long job search through networking and investment in internships.

The University Career Center's surveys show that about 84 percent of UT Dallas graduates are either employed or continuing their education shortly after graduation. Employers often seek out UT Dallas graduates in high-demand fields such as engineering, computer science and management.

As the University's student enrollment surges up-

ward – fall commencement numbers of 2,197 show an increase of 15 percent over a year ago and 32 percent

since fall 2009 – UT Dallas graduates continue to maintain their edge in the job market.



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# 'Prisonpreneur': From Cells to Sales

By James Clingman

*This article is dedicated to the folks in jails and prisons. Please share it with them.*

(NNPA) According to the 13th Amendment, slavery in this country has not been fully abolished; there is an exception that says if one is duly convicted of a crime he or she can be enslaved. Read it for yourself; don't take my word for it. So, if you have been enslaved by either doing a crime or because you are in prison for something you did not do, why not learn how to turn your enslavement into a profit by studying to become a busi-

ness owner? When you are released, you will have your business plan in hand, ready to meet the world of entrepreneurship head-on.

For two decades now I have written and spoken about that "exception" in the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and advocated a literal boycott of prisons especially by Black men, who make up a disproportionately high percentage of those incarcerated in this country. How do we boycott prisons? Just refrain from doing some of the stupid things we do that result in prison time. It's bad enough that we have many who have been wrongly convicted and incarcer-

ated — why volunteer to be a slave? We cannot keep complaining about the "prison industrial complex" and refusing to do our part to put it out of business by abstaining from crime.

For those already imprisoned in what has become "Incarceration Nation," why not use the time you have there to research ways in which you can make something or do something and sell it to someone? A few years ago, I wrote an article titled, "Prison Profits." Well, a profit can be generated by prisoners, a profit they can keep in their pockets rather than have it appear on some corporation's Profit

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## WWRDH, continued from Page 1

money will be spent on health care," the newspaper stated. "We found three basic approaches that potentially address insurance affordability."

- Overhauling health care tax deductions;
- Refundable tax credits and
- Health Savings Accounts

On overhauling health care tax deductions, the newspaper said, "The most generous proposal comes from the conservative Republican Study Committee, which put forward a bill with 100 cosponsors.

H.R. 3121 would give a \$7,500 deduction to individuals and a \$20,000 deduction to families.

"We saw two big catches here. You would need to have insurance in the first place. Plus, the bill would eliminate the biggest tax break households enjoy today, the portion of their premiums paid by their employer. Getting rid of that \$170 billion tax benefit would be a tough sell and a dramatic change to employer-provided insurance."

As for the refundable tax credits, it was noted that they "are like tax deductions, with the big difference that you can claim the credit even if you don't have taxable income. H.R. 2300 from Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., offers a maximum tax credit of \$5,000 for families making up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or about \$47,000 a year."

The paper said, "The proposal from Price would make credits payable in advance. In other words, you could use the federal credit even if you didn't have the money up front to pay for insurance.

"While the details are different, this resembles the program put forward by President George W. Bush. A 2005 study of the Bush plan by the Tax Policy Center, a joint project by the Urban

Institute and the Brookings Institution, found that 'lower-income individuals experience the largest declines in uninsurance rates' under the Bush proposal.

"However, of the 45 million people uninsured then, Bush's \$3,000 tax credit plan would have helped only about 2 million people who made less than 200 percent of federal poverty and just a bit over 3 million overall."

The third option — Health Savings Accounts — fared no better.

The Tampa paper said, "Thomas Buchmueller, a health economist at the University of Michigan, said it is a major undertaking to provide insurance to those who lack the money to pay for it.

"Tinkering with tax deductions and making health savings accounts more attractive is not going to change that basic fact," Buchmueller said. 'Roughly half of the Affordable Care Act coverage gains come from expanding Medicaid. I don't see anything in these proposals that would do much for the people who will gain Medicaid under the ACA.'"

Like so many issues, Democrats and Republicans differ in fundamental approaches.

"One of the widest gaps between Democrats and Republicans is the basic understanding of what it means to offer a plan to people of limited means," the Florida newspaper observed. "For Democrats, a plan is an identified insurance policy, whether public, as in expanded Medicaid, or private, as in buying subsidized private insurance through a web-based, highly regulated marketplace. For Republicans, a plan is anything that makes buying insurance more affordable, however the person finds the policy."

After a terrible 2-month rollout, the

Obama administration finally may be in a position to silence some of its legitimate critics.

A report issued Sunday by the Health and Human Services Administration disclosed that the primary website, HealthCare.gov, has been successfully overhauled and is now able to support more than 800,000 consumer visits a day.

Among the improvement cited:

- The deployment of 12 large, dedicated servers;
- Significantly upgrading memory to improve response time;
- Reducing response time from around 8 seconds in October to well under 1 second;
- Reducing the error rate from approximately 6 percent in November to .75 or three quarters of one percent; and
- Expanding the amount of time the system is up from 42.9 percent in October to above 90 percent.

"The new management system and instrumentation have helped improve site stability, lower the error rating below 1 percent, increase capacity to allow 50,000 concurrent users to simultaneously use the site and will help drive continuous improvement on the site," the report stated. "While we strive to innovate and improve our outreach and systems for reaching consumers, we believe we have met the goal of having a system that will work smoothly for the vast majority of users."

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine, is editor-in-chief of the *National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service* (NNPA.) He is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. Curry can be reached through his Web site, [www.georgecurry.com](http://www.georgecurry.com). You can also follow him at [www.twitter.com/curry-george](http://www.twitter.com/curry-george) and *George E. Curry Fan Page* on Facebook.



## Texas Health HomeCare recognized by NRC as "HomeCare Elite"

DALLAS – Texas Health HomeCare has been ranked in the nation's Top 25 percent of home health providers in an independent rating of home health quality and performance.

The Dallas home health agency was named to the 2013 HomeCare Elite list, compiled annually by National Research Corporation and DecisionHealth to recognize the top-performing home health agencies in the United States.

Texas Health HomeCare is one of 64 LHC Group home health providers incorporating 115 agency locations that achieved HomeCare Elite status for 2013. LHC Group is a national provider of post-acute care services.

"Every day, in 26 states across the nation, LHC Group's team of healthcare professionals deliver high-quality, compassionate and efficient care to tens of thousands of patients and families who depend on us," said Keith G. Myers,

LHC Group's chairman and chief executive officer. "HomeCare Elite status is a meaningful mark of excellence within our industry – and most importantly, it demonstrates we are successfully fulfilling our mission of helping the people under our care."

Now in its eighth year, the HomeCare Elite identifies the top 25 percent of Medicare-certified agencies and highlights the top 100 and top 500 agencies overall. Winners are ranked by an analysis of publicly available performance measures in quality outcomes, best practice (process measure) implementation, patient experience (Home Health CAHPS), quality improvement and consistency, and financial performance. In order to be considered, an agency must be Medicare-certified and have data for at least one outcome in Home Health Compare. Out of 9,969 agencies considered, 2,496 are elite.

## CITIES, continued from Page 1

tation-only event will take place on June 17 -19, 2014 in the Dallas Arts District, the cultural hub of one of North America's fastest growing metro regions.

By 2050, cities will be home to 70% of the world's population. Cities and metropolitan regions are increasingly becoming powerful economic and political actors in their own right. The New Cities Summit responds to this major phenomenon by calling upon city leaders and thinkers to shape ambitious and effective strategies that foster tangible change.

The Summit speaker program will address "Re-imagining Cities" from multiple perspectives, offering practical examples, learnings and solutions from the many sectors that determine the future of cities, including governance, transport, education, healthcare, technology, finance, architecture, design and culture.

An exciting mix of prizes, initiatives and special projects will be showcased at the event. These include the AppMyCity! Prize for the world's best mobile

application, and WhatWorks, a series of inspirational short-talks by urban innovators from a spectrum of sectors and global locations.

Summit participants will also benefit from expert-led tours of the city of Dallas, gaining insight into key urban development projects.

The New Cities Summit 2014 also provides a platform for the Global Cultural Districts Network (GCDN), a strategic network of leaders from the world's most important cultural districts, from Hong Kong to Qatar. The GCDN was launched at the 2013 New Cities Summit and is headquartered in the Dallas Arts District.

The Summit kicks off a week of discussions that will place Dallas at the very heart of global thought-leadership on the future of cities. Following the Summit, Dallas will be host the Annual Meeting of the US Conference of Mayors on June 20-23.

The venue of the 2014 New Cities Summit in Dallas will be the Winspear Opera House in the Dallas Arts District.

John Rossant, Founder and Chairman of the New Cities Foundation, said: "As cities develop, and as they increasingly compete and cooperate across borders, they need to deftly and strategically position and re-position themselves on local, national and global playing fields. For most, this means a difficult but necessary process of re-imagining and transformation."

This calls for creativity, and it also calls for decisive action and common purpose. Dallas, with its can-do spirit and dynamic economy, is a fantastic backdrop for launching a new agenda for all cities globally. It's time to re-imagine the cities we live in today, for the citizens of tomorrow."

Mayor Mike Rawlings of Dallas said: "It is time to re-imagine our cities and tell a new story about the places that define and shape who we are. Change is in the fiber of our dynamic city, making Dallas a great place

to start this conversation. We're proud that Dallas will be the epicenter of these crucial, transformative discussions on our urban future."

Maxwell L. Anderson, Eugene McDermott Director of the Dallas Museum of Art, Chairman of the Dallas Arts District, and Co-Chairman of the GCDN, said: "The re-imagining of cities demands insight into the distinctive character of a place through its cultural heritage, creative industries, and built environment, and the 2014 Summit will stimulate fresh thinking about these facets of urban planning for cities around the globe."

The previous editions of the New Cities Summit took place in São Paulo, Brazil in 2013 and in Paris in 2012. The host city for the 2015 Summit will be announced in Dallas in June 2014.

More information coming soon at [www.newciessummit2014.org](http://www.newciessummit2014.org).

## Breaking out the moves...



Texas Senator Royce West (center) was spotted doing "the wobble" this weekend at the Omni Hotel in Dallas. The party was a celebration of a successful toy drive held by West's law firm in conjunction with the law offices of DJ Weisbrod, Larry Friedman, and Domingo Garcia. (Photo: David Wilfong)

## PREMIUMS, continued from Page 1

help with the cost of premiums.

"The health care law is working to address long standing disparities in health care coverage and improve the health of the African American community," said Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. "Through the Health Insurance Marketplace, 6.8 million uninsured African Americans have new options for affordable health coverage that covers a range of benefits, including important preventive services with no out-of-pocket costs."

The report also details uninsurance rates by state and provides several examples of what premiums might look like for African Americans living in major metropolitan areas. One fifth of uninsured African American citizens and permanent residents live the greater Atlanta, New York, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, and Detroit metropolitan areas. A 27-year-old in Atlanta with an income of \$25,000 can

pay as little as \$105 a month for a bronze plan after applying the tax credit, while a family of four with an income of \$50,000 could pay \$148 a month for a bronze plan after applying the tax credit.

Nationwide, about 2 million uninsured African Americans may be eligible for coverage through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

States have new opportunities to expand Medicaid coverage to include Americans with family incomes at or below 133 percent of the federal poverty level (generally \$31,322 for a family of four in 2013). This expansion includes adults without dependent children living at home, who have not previously been eligible in most states.

An additional 2.2 million eligible uninsured African American adults with family incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level live

in states that are not expanding Medicaid. The number of uninsured African Americans who may be eligible for access to health coverage at a lower cost would increase from 60 to 95 percent if all states adopted the Medicaid expansion.

To read the report, visit: [http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2013/UninsuredAfricanAmericans/ib\\_UninsuredAfricanAmericans.cfm](http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2013/UninsuredAfricanAmericans/ib_UninsuredAfricanAmericans.cfm)

To learn more about the Health Insurance Marketplace, including to shop and enroll in coverage online, visit [HealthCare.gov](http://HealthCare.gov). You can also enroll by phone by calling the call center 1-800-318-2596 (TTY: 1 855-889-4325) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week where help is available in 150 languages, or you can find in-person help from certified assisters in your area by visiting <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov/>. You can sign up for a health insurance plan through the Marketplace between now and the end of March 2014.

## Dallas Fire-Rescue accepting toy drive donations for Children's Medical Center

Now that Thanksgiving has come to a close, signs that Christmas is just around the corner immediately become evident.

Everything from lights on houses to seeing Christmas Trees through windows seems to materialize over night; and just as you prepare to shed the pounds from your holiday indulgence, you prepare to shed just as much, if not

more, money from your wallets.

It's a sobering thought that with as much joy as the holiday season should bring, that the financial hardship it causes can bring just as much stress.

While some are able to afford their families the Christmas they desire, it is an unfortunate reality that others are not. It is for this reason that Dallas Fire-Rescue

(DFR), in conjunction with Children's Medical Center, has decided to lend a helping hand for Christmas.

From now until Dec. 21, every fire station will serve as drop-off points for Christmas gift donations.

Donations can range in anything from toys to food; and once all the items are collected, they

will be given to the Children's Medical Center of Dallas Toy Drive, from which they'll be donated to underprivileged families.

Monetary donations are also accepted; and for more information on how to make one, please call DFR's Chaplain's Office at (214) 670-8850.

If you would like to donate directly to the Children's Medical

Center Toy Drive, you can contact the Children's Medical Center Foundation, at (214) 456-8360, for more information.

DFR would also like to remind families looking for assistance that they can simply call 2-1-1. This number will connect the caller with the Community Council of Greater Dallas for further direction.

## Plano's storm damage collection procedures

Due to the tremendous damage and large amount of debris from the recent winter storm, all the tree limbs and other excessive brush may not be able to be picked up at the same time during resident's normal route schedule. City of Plano Environmental Waste Services (EWS) route drivers may have to return the following week(s) to collect the remaining brush. Listed below are four options residents have for disposal of their storm related landscape waste:

Criteria for normal weekly collection of landscape waste is as follows:

- Place trees limbs and brush at your normal collection point before 7:00 a.m. The EWS crews will prioritize completing two (2) passes {completing one week's collection routes equates to one (1) pass} of the scheduled weekly collection routes prior to addressing staged tree limbs and brush material outside the normal collection point.

- As time permits and after completing the first pass, EWS crews will attempt to continue collection services through extended operational hours and/or days.

- Tree limbs and brush must be cut not to exceed six-foot (6') in length and placed in manageable, orderly piles (piles that can be collected manually) with limbs laying in the same direction, each weighing no more than 50 pounds and piles no larger than 4 feet wide, 4 feet high and 6 feet long (4'x4'x6').

- Separate tree trunks and large limbs from other brush and place next to piles. Depending on the size of the trunk, it may require specialized equipment.

- Leaves, plant materials, and grass clippings must be placed in the City-approved biodegradable bags, purchased at the Custer Road Facility, 9901 Custer Road, City Warehouse or some retail stores. Bags must weigh

no more than 50 pounds and be placed within clear sight of the collection point, away from the refuse or recycling cart.

Place staged tree limbs and brush outside their normal collection point:

- If debris is a result of the storm, and at the resident's discretion, you may place the tree limbs and brush outside their normal collection point, closer to where the debris was generated and call (972) 769-4150 to notify EWS Customer Service where the pile has been placed.

- Debris staged at a collection point outside the normal collection point will be serviced after crews have completed the scheduled weekly routes. This may cause a delay in the final removal of your material.

- Materials must be placed in areas and methods

which do not block City streets, alleys and sidewalks, or fall outside the resident's property lines.

- Tree limbs and brush must be cut not to exceed six-foot (6') in length and placed in manageable, orderly piles (piles that can be collected manually) with limbs laying in the same direction, each weighing no more than 50 pounds and piles no larger than 4 feet wide, 4 feet high and 6 feet long (4'x4'x6').

- Separate tree trunks and large limbs from other brush and place next to piles. Depending on the size of the trunk, it may require specialized equipment.

- If there are only a few limbs, that can be carried or pulled to your normal collection point, that is EWS's recommendation to assist with the most efficient and

effective collections.

Schedule a Special Collection for a fee (\$20 minimum or \$10 per cubic yard.)

- Residents should call (972) 769-4150 to schedule a paid special collection. The resident will be given a collection date and the charge will be billed on the next utility bill. Special Collections can accommodate large brush piles and the collection can usually be placed either at the street or alley providing there is adequate overhead and side clearance.

Residents may haul material to the Custer Road Facility, 9901 Custer Road, free of charge. This material will be processed into Texas Pure Products.

- Residents must present their driver's license and a copy of their most recent

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## DSO offers free ticket exchanges for cancelled concerts

For those who were unable to attend their ticketed concert Dec. 6-8, 2013, patrons may call the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's Guest Services Box Office at 214-692-0203 to exchange tickets for another Holidays Full of Wonder performance through Dec. 31, 2013. They will work with each ticketholder to find a date and the best seat available.

For those who have not already exchanged into another performance, the box office will attempt to contact the ticketholder to exchange into a future performance of their choice (pending availability) at no cost.

## WOMEN, continued from Page 1

and girls," said Roslyn Dawson Thompson, Foundation president and chief executive officer.

"We believe there is a ripple effect of this positive change, and we established the Young Leader Award to acknowledge and encourage the next generation of women to invest in the empowerment of women in their communities."

Dallas Women's Foundation Young Leader Award recognizes breakthrough leadership exhibited by a

woman under the age of forty who is achieving success in a field, initiative or sector and creating a path of opportunity for other women to follow.

Last year, the recipient was Veronica Torres.

For more information or to access nomination forms, visit <https://www.dallas-womensfdn.org/events-leadership-forum>.

All nominations must be submitted by Friday, Jan. 24, 2014.

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## Next-generation MOOCs tackle budget-cuts at state universities

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif., -- A new generation of online course providers is marrying the lofty goals of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) with a tangible benefit to students. MOOCs were originally created to spread access to education by putting lectures and course materials from top-notch professors on the Web. However, they do not address rising college costs. As budgets shrink on campuses, from New York to California, students are

struggling to pay for classes and to get into them.

To address this problem, Education Portal, an online education platform, has created the next generation MOOC: a new type of online course that allows students to learn independently and earn low-cost, transferable credit. By taking courses from a third-party, students bypass high costs at their schools while still transferring credits that apply toward their degrees.

"Demand is high," said Jessica Bayliss, education Director at Education Portal. "Students are feeling squeezed by rising costs, which is a big reason why over 3 million students have used our courses in the past two years."

A poll last year of California's San Jose State University students yielded frustrated comments, such as 'Classes are really cramped' and 'A lot of students are saying I'm paying more but receiving less.'

Transferring credits may not be unique, but leveraging three widely accepted credit-by-examination programs is. Education Portal's courses are paired with credit-granting exams, offered by organizations like the College Board and the not-for-profit Excelsior College. The website has over 50 online courses paired with these exams.

The key to credit-by-exam is that it is widely accepted by schools across the US. Credits

earned from exams, like College Board's CLEP and Excelsior's UExcel exams, are accepted at over 2,900 colleges, including most state universities and community colleges.

"I'm a full-time student, working and broke," said Elisa Fleming, one of the 76,000 students who passed a CLEP exam in 2012. Fleming cited credit-by-exam as saving her time, money, and stress and planned to take sev-

See MOOC, Page 13

## Students can register for NCAA Men's Final Four SLANT program

NORTH TEXAS – As children stocked a food pantry, sorted donated clothing and shelved library books at Reconciliation Outreach in East Dallas, the NCAA's North Texas Local Organizing Committee officially kicked off SLANT (Service Learning Adventures in North Texas), the youth education program chosen as the legacy project for the NCAA Men's Final Four championship game. Registration for the free SLANT program, which gives North Texas elementary and middle-school children a chance to become champions of com-



munity service, is now open at [myslant.org](http://myslant.org). The deadline to complete service projects and submit project

information online – which qualifies children to attend several special NCAA Final Four activities – is March

21, 2014.

"One of the most important lessons we can teach children is to give back, and SLANT does that and much more," said Bob Bowlsby, Big 12 Commissioner and a member of the North Texas Local Organizing Committee. "This is a terrific program that gives kids the tools to examine their surroundings, identify problems and find creative ways to solve them."

SLANT is a student-led program designed to inspire youth to take up the challenge of improving their neighborhoods and communities in unique and creative

ways. the North Texas-based Big Thought, creator of the hugely successful SLANT 45 curriculum and one of the nation's leading nonprofit organizations focused on innovating public education, has been tapped once again to orchestrate and operate the program. The goal is to recruit 7,000 children to the program.

"The NCAA is thrilled to be a part of this nationally recognized program, which gives kids a chance to be part of the NCAA Men's Final Four," said Bowlsby. "And while we will be celebrating champions on the basketball court, we'll also

be cheering on these young hometown champions for the good work they'll be doing."

This year students can choose from four categories of projects – health and wellness, learning and literacy, hunger and homelessness, and environmental impact. Participating teams will receive free student journals, an adult leader's guide and SLANT T-shirts for student participants.

Teams that complete their service-learning projects will receive two vouchers per student participant for free tickets to Bracket Town

See SLANT, Page 12

## Living wage job gap calls for new course in the US economy

By LeeAnn Hall

In August, fast food workers walked off the job in 50 U.S. cities, demanding a raise to \$15 an hour. The strikes touched off a national debate about raising wage floors.

But this debate has been missing some critical context: a data-driven analysis of what it actually takes to make ends meet in America today, and how the \$15 threshold and other proposals stack up.

People who are working full time should earn enough to be able to make ends meet. This is a basic American value.

But it turns out \$15 an hour falls short – for most family structures, far short. Furthermore, our current economic path isn't creating

nearly enough jobs that pay above even this basic threshold.

These are some of the findings of a new economic study, released Dec. 3 by the Alliance for a Just Society, providing the data-driven analysis needed to put the wage debate in context.

The study, America's Changing Economy: Searching for Work that Pays in the New Low-Wage Job Market – 2013 Job Gap Study, calculates what it costs to make ends meet by analyzing state-level data on the components of a basic, no-frills household budget – including food, housing, utilities, child care, health care, and transportation. *The Job Gap Study* uses these household budgets to calculate living wage levels in 10 states, including lower-cost

states like Idaho and higher-cost states like Connecticut, and also New York City. It calculates living wages for five different household structures, from a single individual to two working parents with two kids.

So what is a living wage? The study finds the living wage for a single individual ranges from \$13.92 an hour in Montana to \$22.66 an hour in New York City. For two working parents with two kids, the living wage ranges from \$17.69 per parent in Idaho to \$24.52 per parent in New York City. For a single parent with one child, it ranges from \$19.36 in Montana to \$30.02 in New York City.

How many job openings will pay these living wage levels, under current economic trends? Not nearly

enough. Even at the lowest living wage level, the number of job seekers for each projected job opening that pays a living wage ranges from 5 to 1 in Colorado to 25 to 1 in Connecticut. This is a serious "job gap."

At the national level, the numbers are similarly troubling. With 20.8 million job seekers in 2012, there are 7 job seekers for every projected job opening in occupations with median wages above \$15 an hour.

Low-wage jobs are on the rise since the official end of the recession in 2009: jobs with median wages below \$15 an hour grew from 36.6 percent of total employment in 2009 to 39.5 percent in 2012.

This isn't just a "jobless recovery" – it's an economic course that has

slashed 4 million better-paying jobs (above the \$15 median wage threshold) and replaced them with 3.6 million lower-paying ones (below the \$15 threshold).

The findings of the Job Gap Study cast the wage-raising proposals in a new light. Raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour, for example, still falls far short of any living wage level.

As for the fast food workers' call for a \$15 an hour wage, it only begins to get in the ballpark of the lowest living wage thresholds – which seems a modest target.

This debate about wages is important for our whole economy. Because when 50 million workers don't make enough to cover the basics – as we have now – the

whole economy stagnates.

If we don't want the trend toward low-wage jobs – and anemic growth – to become America's "new normal," we need to chart a new course with the rules we write for the economy.

One element of this course should be responsible wage floors – floors that uphold the principle that people working full-time should be able to make ends meet while re-orienting job growth to create more economy-boosting jobs.

*LeeAnn Hall is the Executive Director of the Alliance for a Just Society, a national research, policy and organizing network with affiliates in 10 states. The Alliance has produced the pioneering series of Job Gap Studies annually for 15 years.*



# Cirro Energy gives \$5,000 to Collin County Holiday Toy Store

PLANO – A \$5,000 donation from Cirro Energy, a subsidiary of Dominion Resources, will help power the “Holly Jolly” Holiday Project at the Children’s Advocacy Center of Collin County (CACCC). The families and caregivers of abused and neglected children in the Advocacy Center’s care will choose toys from the Toy Store powered by Cirro Energy on Dec. 12 at 2205 Los Rios Blvd. in Plano.

Cirro Energy and CACCC will host an opening ceremony on Dec. 11 at the Toy Store. After Cirro Energy team members help set up the store, CACCC and local dignitaries will officially open it. Cirro Energy officials will then pres-



ent a \$5,000 check to help buy toys to fill the store.

“The Cirro Energy team shares the Advocacy Center’s passion for helping abused and neglected children,” said Jim Hayes, managing director for Cirro Energy. “By donating our time, efforts and money, we hope to inspire and spread cheer to these deserving kids through the Toy Store

powered by Cirro Energy.”

Each year, the Children’s Advocacy Center of Collin County hosts an annual Holiday Project for children in its care. Last year, CACCC served more than 1,100 children through the Toy Store.

This year the Toy Store powered by Cirro Energy gives caregivers of children served by CACCC the op-

portunity to pick three gifts. Cirro Energy’s donation directly funds the organization’s Holiday Project. The majority of the money from Cirro Energy will buy gifts for the Toy Store. This is the first time that the Toy Store has received commercial underwriting.

The public can contribute by sponsoring one child’s holiday gifts, “adopting” an entire family or donating a gift card or new, unwrapped toy from Dec. 5-9. In addition, CACCC relies on volunteers to help operate the Toy Store. This year, Cirro Energy employees will volunteer their time to help set up the Toy Store.

“Children come to the Children’s Advocacy Center of Collin County broken, battered and abused,” said

Melanie Carroll, vice president of development, Children’s Advocacy Center of Collin County. “The Holiday Project is a unique opportunity for the community to bring such happiness

to these children by making their holiday wishes come true. We appreciate the support of Cirro Energy and everyone who volunteers

See CIRRO, Page 11

## FREEMAN, continued from Page 2

handshake. The quality of the food spoke for itself. Her trademarked peach cobbler probably pulled as many people as the stews, fried chicken, short ribs, chicken and dumplings, collard greens, sweet potatoes, smothered cornbread and other great dishes. For 42 years that marketing plan was enough for success.

Vern always considered her restaurant as a means to take care of her family. But the restaurant also served as her ministry in the community. She made sure the homeless had food to eat and the disenfranchised who may have been out of work. She respected all people and wanted to make sure they had something to eat.

In November 2007, Vern retired for her cooking and restaurant when faced with her landlord putting the property up for sale. She scrambled to raise enough money to buy the property which was priced at almost four times the appraised value. No bank would loan her the money. At 78 years of age, Vern turned the operation over to her granddaughter, Gina Pier, who moved the location to Elm

Street. After facing many difficulties with the move, Vern’s Place officially closed for good in July 2009.

When interviewed upon her retirement, Vern reflected on how she was proud of the fact that she raised her family without ever having to borrow money or go on welfare. She made sure all of her children were educated. “We had it rough, but with

the help of the Lord, we made it. Sometimes business was good and sometimes things were slow. Everybody loved me because I didn’t care what color they were or how old they were,” Vern stated. “You must treat people like you want to be treated. If the food is not right to them, take it back and prepare it the way they want it.”

SuVern “Vern” Freeman Simmons was married for over 30 years to Robert Simmons, who preceded her in death. She was a

longstanding and faithful member at God’s Holy Temple where Rev. Curtis Scott, Sr. was the founding pastor and Rev. Pearson is pastor.



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## Kind of chilly...



Friday night saw a deep freeze over the Dallas / Fort Worth area. Above, downtown Dallas sits under a blanket of ice and snow that caused major traffic problems throughout the city. (Photo: David Wilfong)

## Art and Appetite' opens at Amon Carter

FORT WORTH — This spring, the Amon Carter Museum of American Art invites visitors to feast their eyes on the rich tradition of food in American art with the opening of the exhibition *Art and Appetite: American Painting, Culture, and Cuisine*. Exploring the many meanings and interpretations of eating in America,

*Art and Appetite* brings together 65 paintings from the 18th through the 20th centuries to demonstrate how depictions of food have allowed American artists to both celebrate and critique everything from trends in the national diet to the broader issues of society and politics.

Featuring many iconic works by such noted artists as Edward Hopper, Norman Rockwell and Andy Warhol, the exhibition is on view from February 22 through May 18, 2014. *Art and Appetite* is organized by the Art Institute of Chicago; admission is free.

Despite the prevalence of works about food, research has rarely focused on the cultural significance of the objects depicted in these paintings, nor has it addressed how these images embodied changing ideals throughout the nation's history. Thematically and chronologically organized, *Art and Appetite* breaks with the traditional histories of the genre to explore how these works illuminate American attitudes about patriotism and politics, identity and gender,

progress and history, and production and consumption.

The exhibition examines 250 years of American art, from the agricultural bounty of the "new world" to Victorian-era excess, debates over temperance, the rise of restaurants and café culture, the changes wrought by 20th-century mass production, and much more.

From the earliest years of the newly established United States, American artists such as Raphaëlle Peale used still-life painting to express cultural, political and social values, elevating the genre to a significant aesthetic language.

Later, in the antebellum era, depictions of food highlighted abundance, increasing wealth and changing social roles, while elegant decanters of wine and spirits in still-life paintings by John F. Francis reflect the prevalence of drinking and the mid-century debates over temperance.

During the Gilded Age, despite the implications of the term, American artists moved away from excess and eschewed high Victorian opulence in favor of painting the simple meal. Many artists, such as William Harnett and De Scott Evans, also used images of food to serve up biting political commentary that addressed the social and economic transformations of the 1880s

See ART, Page 16

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# Wedding day scam turned into blessings

By Ivy N. McQuain  
NDG Contributing Writer

Glamour Hall.

## The Miracle of Social Media

No bride ever dreams about having her wedding day stolen from her. Instead she dreams of walking down into the arms of her true love and being the center of attention before all of her guests.

She dreams of the first dance she and her husband will have, and eating the first slice of wedding cake, and leaving for a blissful honeymoon. Those are the things that a bride dreams about on her wedding day. Unfortunately for Latoya Sims the dreams of her wedding day were stolen from her just one week before her wedding.

Her wedding venue, Glamour Hall also known as Glam For You, was allegedly closed abruptly due to bankruptcy and nonpayment of rent by owners Dolores McCaskill and her alleged husband Stanley Iwouha. Just like that and without notice to Sims and her groom to be, Nathaniel Jones was out in the cold with their wedding plan only eight days away.

The weekend of Nov. 1 was one of the most heartbreaking experiences the couple had to endure. They had worked and sacrificed everything to get married on Nov. 8. Sims even took a second job to pay for her dream wedding and when they wrote the final check payment, totaling \$4,350, they knew they were on their way to wedding bliss.

"No one slept that whole weekend. All my fiancée, mother and I could do was cry... we were utterly devastated," said Sims.

Fortunately, her mother was determined to get just for her daughter so she reached out to FOX 4 News and what happened next was nothing short of amazing. When she told her story to one of the producers a fire was lit in Dallas and by the time her story aired at all broadcasting times, the phone lines at the station were ringing off the hook. Business owners throughout Dallas were eager to make it right for this couple, the first two being the West End Event Center – Downtown Dallas and Celia's Floral. Sims felt that a sigh of relief but soon she began to feel discouraged because she had no additional money to get the things that were promised in her rental agreement with

There have been so many success stories that have come from social media sites. Those stories include families being reunited, the lost being found, crimes being reported and justice being accomplished for victims. Sims was used to seeing stories of hope in her timeline but was surprised when her friend Will Duckett contacted her with excitement that she was a trending topic and that there were more than 10 business owners who were rallying together to help her have a wedding. And Cassandra "Cass" Butler owner of The Butler Enterprises spearheaded all of it. Butler recalled that she was watching the news story and was deeply saddened and touched by the young couple's sacrifice, so she did what she does best, take care of business. Butler took to Facebook and posted a request to her business friends asking for any donations of service to help this couple keep their wedding date of Nov. 9, 2013.

"When I saw the story I immediately felt connected to the couple," Butler said. "I don't know why but I believe God allowed her soul to touch my soul and that's why I felt so compelled to reach out to her."

Butler was so determined to find Jones that she began using all of her resources which led her to being contacted by FOX 4 reporter Neeha. Soon Butler was calling Sims to discuss the details of the event and preparing for the biggest short notice charity event for Butler Enterprises. Through Facebook alone, Butler was able to assemble more than 10 businesses ranging from cake decorators to photographers to party favor vendors and everyone in between. Business owners, majority women and Black owned, stepped up and joined together for a greater cause.

## Making it Happen

Sims immediately called her fiancée and through tears thanked God for the blessing of Butler and her friends. Butler assured Sims and her family that they could stop worrying, relaxes, because she was going to take care of everything. For Sims it was all she needed to hear and she knew that Butler would genuinely take care



*Above, Latoya Sims and Nathaniel Jones celebrate being newlyweds in what turned out to be a very memorable occasion. At bottom, the wedding party documents the event. (Photos by SimplyAngelicStudios.com)*

of her special day. From Tues., Nov. 5 to their wedding day Butler called, texted and emailed her continuously just to keep her in the loop, something McCaskill failed to do after she received their final payment.

Butler worked tirelessly coordinating vendors from all over the Metroplex. Initially, most of the vendors committed to do only a shared service for the wedding or reception but after seeing her dedication to a complete stranger; a majority of the vendors stepped up and committed to offering their full services. The best part is that not one vendor requested payment and helped turn Sims' \$4,350 loss into a wedding that cost more than \$15,000.

Patricia Sanders coordinated the volunteers

"All I did was used my resources and contacts," said Butler. "I didn't ask these vendors to give no more than what they could and I was shocked that they all wanted to step up and give more to help this bride and groom."

Since the wedding and its airing on FOX 4 News each vendor has received an abundance of overflow in their businesses. Eldridge has reported that since she walked away from her job to pursue what she believes is a calling from God she has received orders of her specialty coated pecans for the holi-

days. Butler reported that she signs at least 3-4 new contracts per week. Kimble reported that people are requesting that she writes a cookbook. Other businesses have reported their increase in business from their act of kindness as well. It is evident that Sims and her groom weren't the only one who received a blessing, these vendors gave their time and services for free because they answered the call for help.

Sims and Jones were married in a lavish wedding with all the trimmings and the joy that miracles do happen for those who believe. Sims cautions any bride and groom to research and review any vendor before making a final decision and to ask questions. They are truly happy for the outpour of help they received but they are especially thankful for Butler who organized everything in a moment's notice.

The newlyweds issued this heartfelt thank you:

"We are so grateful for all that you have done. Words cannot express our deepest gratitude. To see so many people volunteer their time and not mumble one disgruntling word lets us know there are still kindhearted people within this cruel world. Our story could have been overlooked or simply watched with the thought of keeping us in prayer. But, as Fox News graciously aired the story, Mrs. Butler, was quick to do something that we are so thankful for. We thank the photographers, make-up artist, video crew, bartenders, servers, bakers, DJs, those that provided the party favors, the decorators, the venue, the florists, those that provided the food and dishes – everything... thank you. You all went above and beyond the call of duty, doing an exceptional job making us feel as if there was never a moment of mishap. You are all saints, incredible individuals, and if my husband and I could start the entire process over from day one, it would be each of you we would choose to do the whole day over with again and again."

*The reality of it all is that the Jones' were not the only couple involved in the wedding venue scam. Other couples lost out on their deposits because they signed the nonrefundable contract. McCaskill and Iwouha are professional con artists who rent venue spaces; host lavish events which earned the couple estimated profits of \$60,000-\$80,000. McCaskill lied several times about her whereabouts and the readiness of the venue, including having a family emergency and filing bankruptcy.*

*To date there have been no formal charges filed against McCaskill and Iwouha.*





NDG Gossip: Odom reaches plea deal

By Shenice Sanders  
NDG Intern

Lamar Odom has just reach a plea deal regarding his DUI arrest. On Monday morning the NBA player agreed to three years of probation and also to attend a three-month alcohol-education program.

Odom, 34 was also ordered to pay \$1,814 in fines by June 9. As if things could not get any worse Odom's license is still suspended after he refused to take a Breathalyzer test at the time of his arrest. In October Odom plead not guilty to one charge of driving under the influence from his Aug. 30 arrest. Based on a report taken at the time of his arrest, the basketball player was driving in an erratic manner at 50 miles per hour (the speed limit is 65).

He was unable to perform the field sobriety test then subsequently said "no" when the officer asked him to do a chemical test. Lamar Odom was released from jail at 8:33 a.m. the morning following his arrest after posting \$15,000 bond.

With everything going on in Odom's life you have to wonder what is going to happen to his marriage?

A source tell *ENews!* "Khloé is in no rush to make any decision," that there's no truth to the divorce rumors.



Other sources report the couple is heading for divorce according to Hollywoodlife, "Khloe doesn't want to be a wreck at the wedding, watching her sister and Kanye embark on their life long journey of love together while she's still in a fu\*\*ed up marriage that's going nowhere," a source connected to Khloe and Lamar tells HollywoodLife.com EXCLUSIVELY.

"She wants to be in a good place mentally so that she can be there for Kim and at 100 percent. She loves her sister so much and doesn't want to have any negative energy or be in a bad place when she and Kanye marry each other," the source adds.

As the rumors continue to unfold one thing remains constant, most sources have confirm that Odom is back in full swing and has been speeding a lot of his time at the Rhode Island training facility.

I guess it is safe to say a comeback is in store and as far as the marriage we will just have to wait and see!!!

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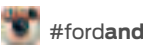
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# ExxonMobil named 'Employer of the Year' at Texas Workforce Conference

AUSTIN – Exxon Mobil Corporation (ExxonMobil) was named the Employer of the Year at the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) 17th Annual Texas Workforce Conference held Dec. 4-6 in San Antonio. ExxonMobil was chosen as the Employer of the Year from among five exemplary finalists, and out of 25 private-sector employers. All nominees were recognized for contributions to their community's workforce through innovation and collaboration with the Texas workforce system.

Energy company ExxonMobil has championed workforce and economic development statewide, and particularly in the Gulf Coast region. The company's planned expansion in Baytown will create

an estimated 10,000 construction jobs and 350 permanent jobs. The company is investing in a workforce initiative program to recruit and train thousands of new workers for in-demand jobs in the greater Houston area in its chemical operations along the Gulf Coast. ExxonMobil's \$500,000 commitment to build an alliance with nine regional community colleges to fund the Community College Petrochemical Initiative further promotes training programs and recruitment of workers for high-paying jobs.

ExxonMobil also works with seven area K-12 schools in two school districts—providing funding, volunteers and actively participating in initiatives to increase interest in science, technology, en-

gineering, and math (STEM) occupations. The company leads in STEM promotion by sponsoring the ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair annually.

"I commend ExxonMobil for their collaboration with Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast and other workforce partners to positively impact their community," said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. "Between the jobs the company has brought to the area, partnerships with economic development entities, and its efforts in readying the workforce, particularly in STEM education, ExxonMobil has been instrumental to the economic health of the Gulf Coast region and the state of Texas."

The company has worked

closely with Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast (Gulf Coast) in recruiting for new-hire process operators, its management serves in leadership positions with the Greater Houston Partnership and the Economic Alliance Houston Port Region, and the company works closely with the Baytown Economic Development Foundation, nonprofit organization Junior Achievement, the City of Baytown Summer Youth Work Program and United Way.

"ExxonMobil has thoughtfully invested its time and resources in the Gulf Coast area," said TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Hope Andrade. "The company's leadership is engaged in the Gulf Coast community and through this successful public-private partnership, has advanced the Gulf Coast region's economy and workforce. We want to thank ExxonMobil for its continued commitment and hard work to support success in this region and throughout our great state."

Additionally, four other exemplary employer finalists for Texas Workforce Solutions Employer of the Year included:

Caterpillar Inc. (Caterpillar) was nominated by Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas (Heart of Texas). The construction and mining equipment manufacturer located in Waco cross-trains its workers in different departments to increase employee skills, provide additional professional development opportunities and

**See TWC, Page 13**

## CELLS, continued from Page 3

& Loss statement. If prisoners would build up their brains the way they build up their muscles, they would come out with a new skill set as well as a new body.

We can do as our ancestors did during their enslavement period in America. Many enslaved Africans became "Intrapreneurs," as Juliet E.K. Walker describes in her book, *The History of Black Business in America*. Despite their lack of physical freedom, they leveraged their knowledge, and even their services in some cases, in exchange for a plot of land from which they could earn profits that would end up being used to purchase their freedom, and the freedom of others.

They did not succumb to the conditions under which they were held; they made the best of their negative situation by utilizing their time not only to obtain freedom, but also to be prepared for freedom when it came.

We all know it takes money to be free. God showed us that when He told the Israelites to go back and get treasure from Pharaoh. Check it out in Exodus 12, the first case of reparations in history. God knew they would need "money" when they secured their freedom. We must learn from the past and use it to propel us forward to true economic freedom.

While in jail and when released from jail, our brothers and sisters must change not only their behavior, but their attitude about business as well. All the excuses and reasons for crime notwithstanding, we know the system is against us, but many of us keep engaging it and repeating that process over and over again. Recidivism rates are around 60 percent after three years of incarceration.

We know there is a cause and effect relationship between poverty and crime, and to the degree that we

can shift that equation to our advantage, by teaching our young children and teenagers entrepreneurship, and by starting and growing our own businesses, we should make every effort to do so. It is our responsibility to do what we can, to control what we can control, to stay out of prisons, and then to advocate for the kind of training in our schools that can at least provide the opportunity for business ownership among our youth.

I am going to make up another new word for this: "Prisonpreneur." A recent CNN segment featured men at San Quentin becoming technology entrepreneurs while in prison, and getting great jobs when they were released. They were taught all the skills of owning a business while they were spending time incarcerated. What a novel idea, huh? Well, it's not novel at all, as I have just shown you with our enslaved ancestors, but now that CNN has lauded it, maybe it will take hold throughout the prison sys-

tem population.

We need to stop being so hard-headed and make the appropriate changes necessary to control our own destiny, rather than turning it over to a prison system that is only interested in making a profit from the work we

put in every day behind prison walls. The answer: Work for yourself not for the new slave master, the prison system. Be a Prisonpreneur.

*Jim Clingman, founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber*

*of Commerce, is the nation's most prolific writer on economic empowerment for Black people. He is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati and can be reached through his Web site, blackonomics.com.*

## Tips to prevent holiday-related fires

DALLAS – During the holidays many of us deck our homes with festive decorations to spread holiday cheer. While jolly and bright, holiday trimmings can also pose serious fire hazards if not handled properly. Safety experts at Parkland Health & Hospital System encourage caution this winter with Christmas trees, lights, candles and other decorations which all have the potential to start a fire.

"We want everyone to enjoy this holiday season without worrying about keeping their homes and loved ones safe," said Shelli Stephens-Stidham, director of the Injury Prevention Center of Greater Dallas, housed at Parkland. "While decorating your home, be aware of potential fire hazards and take appropriate safety precautions."

Although uncommon, Christmas tree fires are likely to be serious when they occur. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), on average one of every 66 reported fires that began with a Christmas tree resulted in death. Unlike Christmas tree fires, fires started by candles are much more common. On average, a candle fire in the home is reported every 40 minutes. Holiday lights and other decorative lighting with line voltage, meaning the lights are running on the line voltage of the home without a transformer, were involved in an estimated average of

160 home fires per year from 2006-2012, reports the NFPA.

To ensure that the holidays remain safe for everyone, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and American Academy of Pediatrics recommend the following safety tips:

### Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "fire resistant."
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree's green needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- Place the tree away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk of the tree to expose the fresh wood, which allows for better water absorption and will help keep the tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- Be sure to keep the stand filled with water, because heated rooms can dry out live trees rapidly.

### Lights

- Check all holiday indoor and outdoor lights, including those that were just purchased, before hanging them on the tree or

**See FIRES, Page 15**

## CIRRO, continued from Page 7

their time, money and energy to make the holidays special for the children that we serve."

The Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County provides safety to children

victimized by abuse or neglect. By coordinating and tracking the efforts of all the professionals working each child's case, the CACCC ensures no client's needs go unmet. They provide help,

such as assistance with rent, food or other basic needs for victims of abuse. CACCC also offers comprehensive therapeutic services for children and their non-offending family members who experience trauma as a result of abuse.



# SLANT, continued from Page 6

fan fest, and admission to the Reese’s College All-Star Game & SLANT Celebration at the AT&T Stadium on Friday, April 4, 2014.

Teams can be formed in a variety of ways – from neighborhoods and sports teams, to youth and religious organizations, to classrooms and after-school programs.

Also, organizations and businesses are encouraged to become SLANT partners by offering the program to their students or program participants, recruiting adult volunteers, helping spread the word or

partnering in other creative ways. SLANT partners include school districts, private schools, nonprofit organizations, after-school providers, youth and cultural organizations, museums, religious organizations, youth sports leagues, universities, businesses and more.

“We’re excited that SLANT is making a comeback for the NCAA Men’s Basketball Championship,” said Gigi Antoni, president and CEO of Big Thought. “It’s a win-win for everyone because our region benefits from the efforts of these extraordinary kids. But our children also win, too, because they develop 21st-century skills like problem-solving, collaboration, curiosity and resilience.”

**HOW SLANT WORKS.** To participate, students work in a team under the supervision of an adult “coach” (at least 18 years old). Coaches must register their participant(s) and team at [myslant.org](http://myslant.org) between now (Dec. 4) and March 1, 2014. The size of the team is left to the decision of the coach. There is no minimum or maximum number of youth who can be involved on any one project. Coaches can be teachers, parents, volunteers, college students, etc.; and projects may be done in the classroom, during an after-school program, or with

a sports team, youth group or at home. All program materials will be sent to the team coach at the address provided during registration.

Examples of service-learning projects. While kids are encouraged to use their imagination, here are examples of possible projects. In health and wellness, children can start an exercise club for kids in their community or host an activity day for nursing-home residents.

In the education and literacy category, kids can plan a fair to showcase and teach others about different cultures and tutor or read to younger children. Hunger and homelessness projects might include making care packages for children/teens living in foster care or who are homeless, creating a canned food drive to help those who are in need, or donating items to homeless shelters. In the environmental impact category, children can clean up a park or school grounds or create a campaign to educate and encourage the use of reusable grocery bags instead of plastic ones.

Registration runs Dec. 4, 2013 through March 1, 2014. The deadline to finish projects and submit completion information at [myslant.org](http://myslant.org) is March 21 (teams who complete this step will be invited to the culminating event on April 4).

On April 4, the Reese’s College All-StarGame & SLANT Celebration will be held at AT&T Stadium the weekend of the 2014 NCAA Men’s Final Four. On April 4-7, Bracket Town fan festwill be held at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas.

For more information, go to [myslant.org](http://myslant.org), send an email to [info@myslant.org](mailto:info@myslant.org) or call the SLANT hotline at 469-621-8989. For more information on the 2014 Men’s Final Four and SLANT, visit [www.NCAA.com/FinalFour](http://www.NCAA.com/FinalFour).

# DEBRIS, continued from Page 5

City of Plano water bill. Hours of operation are Monday through Saturday from 8:00 am to 4:30 p.m.

If a tree is growing on residential property, it is the citizen’s responsibility to prepare the tree for collection if damaged from the storm. City staff will not enter a resident’s property to cut fallen tree limbs blocking streets or alleys; however, they will cut limb(s) closest to the street curb or alley pavement when blocking vehicle passage. To report a tree blocking a street, contact the Public

Works department at (972) 769-4140. If the tree is blocking an alley, contact Environmental Waste Services at (972) 769-4150 or [ewscustomerservice@plano.gov](mailto:ewscustomerservice@plano.gov).

EWS will post daily updates by 8:00 a.m. each morning to communicate collection progress and completed scheduled route days on: [planoenvironmentalwaste.com](http://planoenvironmentalwaste.com), and on the city website homepage at [plano.gov](http://plano.gov), follow us on Facebook and @cityofplanotxpr on Twitter.



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## TWC, continued from Page 11

promote employee engagement. The company offers college tuition assistance to eligible employees and partners with local high schools, universities, colleges and community organizations to address workforce concerns and collaborate on training.

Durcon Inc. (Durcon) was nominated by Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area (Rural Capital). When the work surface manufacturer decided to relocate its nationwide manufacturing activities into its 120,000 square-foot production and warehouse facility in Taylor, the company was eager to work cooperatively with

regional higher education organizations, Taylor Independent School District and Rural Capital. Durcon invested more than \$7.5 million in its Taylor facility and has increased its workforce from 220 to 430.

GE Manufacturing Solutions (GE) was nominated by Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County (Tarrant County) and Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (North Central Texas) for its manufacturing site in north Fort Worth. The company has partnered with both boards to take an active role in school districts working on science, technology, engineering and

math (STEM) projects, and "Build Your Own" future workforce programs. The company has shown a commitment to hiring veterans and has taken the lead in advancing the National Association of Manufacturers' veterans-credentialing initiative through its National Manufacturing Institute.

Village Farms of Monahans was nominated by Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande (Upper Rio Grande).

The agricultural employer uses hydroponic climate control technology to grow crops in greenhouses. This allows the company to employ workers year-round and offer a higher-than-average hourly wage and benefits, rather than the tradi-

tional industry model which relies on contract migrant seasonal farm workers during a harvest season of only a few months.

Each of the 28 local workforce development boards recognized a Local Employer of Excellence at the conference. The award honors an employer that is actively involved with Texas Workforce Solutions and has made a positive impact on employers, workers and the community.

Awards also were granted to local workforce development boards that provided outstanding services to Texas employers, workers, job-seekers and local communities.

Additionally, monetary awards were given to the

boards that were recognized for outstanding performance. Monetary awards will be used to enhance board service programs during the next year.

The primary goal of TWC and the workforce boards is to respond to the

needs of Texas employers through locally designed, market-driven workforce development initiatives and services.

All employers, workers and job seekers are eligible to take advantage of these services.

## MOOC, continued from Page 6

eral more.

It is also very affordable, almost unbelievably so. It costs less than \$100 to earn three college credits, and the exams cover most of the topics students need to take during their first two years.

"Since Education Portal has courses in history, math, science, and other core topics, many students use them to knock out their general education requirements," said Bayliss. "This allows them to start their major classes earlier and have a better chance of graduating on time."

The potential savings for students is significant. The average cost of one semester at a public university is \$4,327, according to the College Board. Students who take just one semester's worth of classes could save over \$3,500 and graduate quicker.

"Students shouldn't have to go into significant debt to earn a degree," said Bayliss. "Online courses paired with credit-by-exam, like Education Portal's, are a key way many students can cut the cost of their degree in half."

Education Portal is an online education platform, built on the principal of the solving problem of educa-

tion-access and improving education accessibility to everyone, by offering a fast and inexpensive way to earn college credit. High

school and college Web courses are helping lifelong learners earn low-cost college credit. Education Portal uses innovative instruction to deliver over 7,000 fun and engaging lessons, covering all of the topics

taught in the first two-years of college.

Over half-a-million students, instructors, and lifelong learners use Education Portal's lessons each month (<http://education-portal.com/>).



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**December 15, 8 a.m.**  
Join us in Early Morning Worship Service; stay for Bible Classes at 9:30 a.m. and for our regular Morning Worship at 10:45 a.m.

**December 18, 10:30 a.m.**  
You're invited to our Wednesday Morning Bible Study and/or our 7 p.m. Evening Bible Study.

Brother Ramon Hodridge,  
Minister of Education  
1026 Avenue F  
Plano, TX 75074  
972-423-8833  
www.avefchurchofchrist.org

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**December 15, 8 a.m.**  
You're invited to our Sunday School at 9:30 a.m. and stay for Morning Worship Service as we praise God for all of His blessings.

**December 18, 7 p.m.**  
Join us in Bible Study each Wednesday to learn more about God's Word for your life.

Dr. Timothy Wilbert, Sr.  
Senior Pastor  
4215 N. Greenview Drive  
Irving, TX 75062  
972-257-3766  
www.biblewayirving.org

**CHRIST COMMUNITY  
CHURCH  
IN RICHARDSON**

**December 15, 8:45  
or 11 a.m.**  
Join us in one or both of our Worship Services as we honor and praise God for His many blessings.

Dr. Terrence Autry,  
Senior Pastor  
George Bush Fwy at  
Jupiter Road on the  
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For Community help the Assistance Center serves Collin County by responding to people in crisis for emergency shelter, clothing, food, and access to medicine and medical services for county residents. Call the church or Allen's City Hall for details.

**December 15, 8 a.m.**  
Join us in Early Worship at 200 W. Belmont Drive location in Allen as we praise God and at 9:30 a.m. at 1550 Edelweiss Drive in Allen for Sunday Morning Worship.

What's on Your Mind?  
Don't copy the behavior, at-

titude and action of the world. Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Romans 12: 2a. Join us for one or both of our Worship Services as we praise God for the victories in our lives.

**December 18, 7 p.m.**  
You're invited to join us for Wednesday Night Live in the Joycie Turner Fellowship Hall on Belmont Drive, with old school prayer and testimony. Also, come to our Corporate Prayer and our Kidz Zone (an environment to equip children to grow and to show God's love.)

Dr. W. L. Stafford, Sr.,  
Ed.D.  
Senior Pastor  
1550 Edelweiss Drive  
In Allen for Sunday  
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Admin. Building Address  
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**December 18, 7 p.m.**  
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Pastor Sam Fenceroy  
Senior Pastor  
300 Chisholm Place  
Plano, TX 75075  
972-633-5511

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IN PLANO**

**December 15,  
8 a.m. and 11 a.m.**  
Join us for one or both of our Worship Services as we praise and honor God. Sunday School starts at 9:45 a.m. After each service ministers and deacons are available to meet with you for prayer or questions.

**December 18, 7 p.m.**  
Come see what the God's Word can do for you each Wednesday in Bible Study.

Dr. Isaiah Joshua, Jr.  
Senior Pastor

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**December 15, 7:30 a.m.**  
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**December 16, 7 p.m.**  
Come to Monday School as we study the Word of God. We will worship Him and praise His Holy name.

**December 20, 7:30 p.m.**  
Join us at our Men's Fellowship each Friday as we praise and worship God.

Pastor Rickie Rush  
7701 S Westmoreland Road  
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972-372-4262  
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# 'Recognizing Your Source of Success'



Send email to: [salesmanager@northdallasgazette.com](mailto:salesmanager@northdallasgazette.com) to sign up for Sister Tarpley's weekly electronic newsletter.

"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel'"

2 Samuel 7:8

David was nearing the end of his life. The prophet Nathan was responding to David's idea to build a temple where the Ark of the Covenant would stay. God reminded David through the prophet of his roots and where He had brought him.

God took David from the fields of pasturing sheep to pastoring a nation. God reminded David that He cut off all of David's enemies for his sake and the sake of his nation. David never lost a battle.

At this time of the year

when you have all that you think you need to get what you want for Christmas gifts for your love ones, it's important to remember where your source of success comes from.

Have you ever felt tempted to look at your accomplishments with pride as if you were the reason for your success? Have you ever thought your prosperity was due to your ingenuity?

Has your material success been a testimony to others that God is the ruler of all aspects of your life, even

the material side?

The greatest temptation some of us will ever face is pride of ownership. If we think our success is a result of our own effort we affront God and open the door to pride.

*"A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor."*

**Proverb 29:23**

Success can be a greater test than adversity. Not every man can carry a full cup. Sudden elevation frequently leads to pride and a fall.

"The most exacting test

of all to survive is prosperity," said Oswald Chambers. Success can be a breeding ground for complacency with God and pride of ownership.

Do you have a proper understanding of who you are? Do you understand that it is God who has given you the ability to work and achieve?

God is the source of all good things. Ask God today if your life models this belief and His Word.

God's Word is a river of life. It satisfies and comforts your soul like a stream

in the desert.

Ask God to help you to be like the tree planted by the water, with roots that dig down into His Word and faith that stands strong as the well-rooted tree in the hot and dusty seasons.

Ask God to bless you that you may be a blessing to others. Ask Him to guide and direct you in all that you do.

Don't forget to thank God for loving you and providing all your needs along the way; in Jesus' name you must pray.



Tyanna Lott and her best friend Payton displaying her mother's book, *Without Fear or Favor*.

## FIRES, continued from Page 11

outside. Make sure all the bulbs are in good working order and there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or

tacks. Never pull or tug on lights to remove them.

- Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) to avoid potential shocks.

- Turn off all lights before going to bed or leaving the house.

### Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or non-leaded metals.

- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other

evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked over and out of reach of small children or pets.

- Before lighting any fire, remove all decorations from the fireplace area and have the fireplace inspected to

ensure it is fully functional and not in need of repair.

For more information about holiday fire safety, call the Injury Prevention Center of Greater Dallas at 214.590.4455 or visit its website at [www.injurypreventioncenter.org](http://www.injurypreventioncenter.org).

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AWANA: Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.  
Contact Information: 972-423-6695  
[www.smbcplano.org](http://www.smbcplano.org)



## The Dogs of Christmas by W. Bruce Cameron is a fun holiday tale

This Christmas, you're giving up a lot.

You're giving up a corner of your home for a Christmas tree. You're giving up money to make sure the best gifts are beneath that tree on Christmas morning. You're giving up time to bake, decorate, send cards, maybe even volunteer.

You're giving up a lot this Christmas, whether you realize it or not. But, as in the new book, "The Dogs of Christmas" by W. Bruce Cameron, you're getting so much more in return.

Josh Michaels didn't want to answer the phone.

After Amanda left him for another man, there was barely any reason to even have a phone but he picked the receiver up anyhow, hoping it was her. When he found out who was on the line, he was immediately sorry he did.

It was his scruffy neighbor, Ryan, who told Josh a hurried, convoluted story about France and his ex-girlfriend's dog, Loose. Blah-blah-blah, and before Josh could protest, Ryan left the dog on Josh's porch and, tires spinning, was gone.

Loose. As in Lucy.

As in, a female dog. A pregnant female dog.

Josh had never had a dog, didn't know the first thing about caring for one, and didn't want this tail-thumping German-Shepherd-

something. He didn't want puppies, either, but he felt bad when Lucy's puppies died. Was it fate that somebody abandoned five tiny pups in his truck while he was at the vet's?

Maybe, and it was a miracle that Lucy adopted them. Dogs were pretty awesome.

Still, Josh had lots of questions, so he called the local animal shelter and spoke with a girl named Kerri, who offered to come to his house. He wasn't expecting her to be so pretty or funny. Josh could imagine himself asking her out - and when he finally did, he decided he liked her. Kerri could almost make him forget about Amanda.

Almost.

But what he couldn't forget was that Lucy was somebody else's dog. Kerri wouldn't let him forget, either, that keeping six dogs was illegal and that he'd promised to adopt the puppies out - which was something Josh couldn't bear.

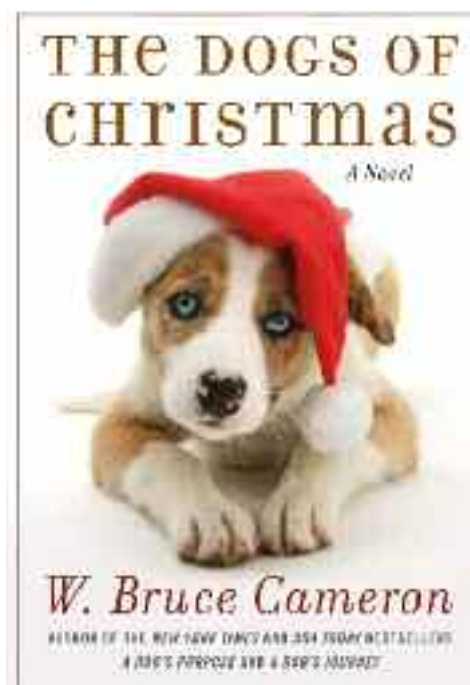
He'd had enough loss in his life. Could he lose his little dog family, too?

It's a good thing you weren't sitting next to me while I was reading "The Dogs of Christmas." I never cry at novels, but I cried at this one... though it's really not a sad story.

Yes, this book has sad elements in it (ones that dog lovers will completely understand), but it also oozes with humor and charm. Author W. Bruce Cameron introduces us to a

wonderfully geeky main character, a sweet-but-socially-inept man to whom bad things perpetually happen. That makes for a delightful story, a perfect plot, and a book that's hard not to love.

If you must have a holiday tale to put you in the Christmas mood, this is the one you must have. For whatever little free time you've got left this season, "The Dogs of Christmas" is worth giving it up for.



## ART,

continued from Page 8

and 1890s.

In the 20th century new ways of eating and socializing began to change depictions of food in art. Restaurant dining became a common subject in the works of William Glackens, John Sloan and others.

Modern artists employed food in their radically new explorations of pictorial form, all the while challenging national ideals of family and home.

Finally, during the 1950s and 1960s, Pop artists, among them Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, addressed the ways in which mass production and consumption dramatically altered the American experience of food.

Hamburgers, fries and cakes were depicted as objects of mass-produced foodstuffs without human referent. Artists employed new means to explore the visual power of advertising, the standardization of factory-produced meals and the commercialization of American appetites.

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