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U.S. Surgeon General declares gun violence a public health crisis

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

The U.S. Surgeon General has declared firearm violence a public health crisis, warning of its severe impact on both physical and mental health across the nation.

In a landmark advisory issued Tuesday, June 25, Dr. Vivek Murthy emphasized that gun violence poses a "serious threat to the health and well-being of our country." This is the first time the government's leading public health body has focused directly on gun violence.

"As a doctor, I've seen the consequences of firearm violence up close in the lives of the patients I've cared for over the years," Murthy stated in a video message. "These are moms and dads, sons and daughters, all of whom were robbed of their physical and mental health by senseless acts of violence."

The advisory highlights alarming statistics, revealing that firearm-related deaths in 2021 reached a near three-decade high due to increases in both gun homicides and suicides. In 2022, 48,204 people died from firearm-related injuries, with suicides accounting for 56.1% and homicides accounting for about 40% of these deaths.



In a landmark advisory issued Tuesday, June 25, Dr. Vivek Murthy emphasized that gun violence poses a "serious threat to the health and well-being of our country." This is the first time the government's leading public health body has focused directly on gun violence. (Photo via NNPA)

"The problem has continued to grow," Murthy noted, referencing data showing that 54% of U.S. adults have experienced a firearm-related incident. He also pointed out the disproportionate impact on specific communities, stating, "Black individuals endure the highest rates of firearm homicides, while suicide rates are highest among veterans, older white individuals, and younger American Indian and Alaska Native people."

Murthy also highlighted the tragic impact of gun violence on children. Since 2020, it has been the leading cause of death among children and adolescents, surpass-

ing car accidents, drug overdoses, and cancer.

"I have sat with parents who have lost a child to firearm violence," Murthy shared. "As a father, I know a parent's worst nightmare is to lose a child, to feel like you can't protect your child from harm."

Comparative data from 2015 revealed that the rate of firearm-related deaths in the United States was 11.4 times higher than in 28 other high-income nations, according to the CDC and WHO. The mental and emotional toll of gun violence is also significant, with the report

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Blacks are embracing investment

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What sleep patterns can tell you

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People In The News ...



Keisha Saunders-Waldron



Melinda French Gates

NDG Quote of the Week: "Wherever there is a human being, I see God-given rights inherent in that being, whatever may be the sex or complexion."

- William Lloyd Garrison

Keisha Saunders-Waldron

LIBERTY TOWNSHIP – Keisha Saunders-Waldron has been selected for inclusion in Marquis Who’s Who. As in all Marquis Who’s Who biographical volumes, individuals profiled are selected on the basis of current reference value. Factors such as position, noteworthy accomplishments, visibility, and prominence in a field are all taken into account during the selection process.

Saunders-Waldron has established herself as a distinguished professional in the field of mental health



counseling over the past two decades. Currently serving as the chief executive officer at Confidential Confessions Counseling PLLC since 2015, she has dedicated herself to pro-

viding leading counseling services that address a wide range of mental health issues. Prior to her current role, Saunders-Waldron was a mental health therapist at Agape Psychological Consortium from 2010 to 2016, where she honed her skills and deepened her understanding of individual and couples counseling, as well as corporate workplace counseling focusing on anxiety and workplace burnout. Her expertise in these areas has earned her widespread recognition and respect within the professional community.

In addition to her primary

roles, Saunders-Waldron has also contributed to the academic field as an adjunct professor and university clinical supervisor at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois in 2020 and 2021. She is a member of the American Counseling Association and the North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors.

Saunders-Waldron’s academic background laid a strong foundation for her illustrious career. She earned a Master of Science in mental health counseling from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke in 2010 and a Bachelor of Sci-

ence in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 2004. Her certifications include Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Supervisor, Approved Clinical Supervisor, Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist, Board Certified TeleMental Health Counselor and National Certified Counselor.

Additionally, she graduated from the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program on May 25, 2023. She credits her success to her strong faith, her supportive parents and her children who inspire her to view achieving goals

as a marathon rather than a sprint.

Her published works include articles in the Baltimore Times and Forbes magazine that highlight critical issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans and emotional challenges associated with career changes.

Looking ahead, she aims to be recognized as one of America’s top mental health practitioners by being featured on the cover of Forbes magazine and establishing a franchise for counseling practices. Addition-

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Melinda French Gates

Melinda French Gates has been at the forefront of philanthropic innovation since founding Pivotal Ventures in 2015. Pivotal Ventures is dedicated to advancing social progress through a strategic blend of venture capital investments, advocacy funding, and philanthropic grant-making.

In 2022, French Gates expanded her mission by launching the Pivotal Philanthropies Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to further support philanthropic initiatives with a flexible approach to driving impact.



“When it comes to solving big, complicated problems, it helps to have a lot of tools in your toolbox,” French Gates stated in a previous interview. This philosophy underpins Pivotal Ventures’ efforts to bridge philanthropy, ven-

ture capital, and policy advocacy. The organization’s primary focus areas include:

- Increasing the number of women graduating, investing, and leading in technology: Pivotal Ventures is committed to enhancing women’s roles and leadership in the tech industry, promoting innovation and diversity.
- Accelerating investment in women and girls of color: By focusing on the talents and contributions of women and girls of color, Pivotal Ventures aims to magnify their transformative impact through targeted investments.
- Increasing the num-

ber of women running for and holding public office: Given that more than half of the U.S. adult population is female, Pivotal Ventures advocates for greater female representation in law-making institutions to ensure their perspectives are included in policymaking.

• Backing the creation of a modern caregiving

system: The organization supports initiatives to develop a caregiving system that enables families to effectively balance work and care responsibilities.

• Securing a comprehensive federal paid family and medical leave policy: Pivotal Ventures pushes for policies that benefit all working families, regard-

less of location or job type.

• Expanding access to mental health support for young people: Pivotal Ventures focuses on providing mental health resources for youth, particularly LGBTQ+ youth and young people of color, who are underserved by exist-

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Christina Lewis

(Black PR Wire) New York, NY – Recently, Beatrice Advisors (“Beatrice”) an independent, woman- and minority-owned multi-family office, announced its official launch. Founded by Christina Lewis, Vice Chair of the Reginald F. Lewis Foundation and founder of private investment family office BFO21, Beatrice is the first and only Black woman-owned multi-family office. The firm provides high-quality financial services to a new generation of wealthy individuals and families with the goal of making wealth management more accessible.

“With a mission-oriented approach and unique tech-



nology, we are focused on empowering the next era of high-net-worth individuals who have different needs than their predecessors,” said Christina Lewis. “Beatrice builds on the legacy of my father, Reginald Lewis, the first African American to build a billion-dollar company, as well as the

work of my mother, Filipino-born American business woman and philanthropist Loida Lewis, as we aim to close the wealth gap by modernizing the wealth management industry.”

Offering a single-family office experience to clients at scale, Beatrice strives to provide solutions to those who are historically unadvised or under-advised to expand the demographics of wealth. The firm currently offers three key services: (1) Investment Management, (2) Client Advisory and Financial Planning, and (3) Proprietary Investments. Beatrice plans to expand its offerings over time.

The firm’s innovative

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Published by
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Black Americans are embracing a new era of financial inclusion



Jonathan Jackson
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In a country where wealth disparities persist, financial inclusion is still the road that leads to equity. Black Americans have historically faced barriers to wealth generation and investment opportunities. Today, the tide is turning, and technology is paving the road to education, access, and empowerment.

A myriad of new technologies continue to create more opportunities for our historically underserved communities to participate in the financial system, including in the areas of banking and investing.

What is Financial Inclusion?

At its core, financial inclusion is a term of hope. It aims to ensure all individuals and communities, regardless of socio-economic background, have equitable access to affordable and reliable financial services to manage their finances, invest, save, and build wealth.

For Black Americans, it represents a pathway to rectifying historical injustices and systemic barriers that have hindered economic progress for centuries. Financial inclusion is a prime facilitator of poverty reduction and a generator of financial stability for Black families to accumulate assets and create pathways to mobility.

Technology: A Great Equalizer

Access to modern technology is not universal, and the digital divide is a crucial example of how much we still need to achieve.

But for many Black people throughout the country, technology provides an unprecedented opportunity to participate in the financial market. Here's how:

- **Access to Information:** The internet provides a wealth of knowledge previously kept from marginalized groups at a lower cost only technology can produce. Now, those groups can educate themselves about personal finance, investment strategies, and

cal branches, underserved communities can transact, save, and invest from anywhere.

- **Fintech:** With the convergence of finance and technology, Fintech is leveraging digital platforms to create innovative solutions to democratize financial services. Companies like Robinhood have enabled a new wave of investors to participate in the stock market without costly trading commissions and

investors increased their participation significantly, both almost doubling since 2019.

The Road Ahead

The Black community stands at the forefront of this era, where under-resourced communities embrace their newfound access to the financial landscape. But despite increasing literacy and inclusion and the combined efforts of our political leaders, including the Congressional Black Caucus and the Financial Services Committee, and recent legislation like the "Financial Innovation and Technology for the 21st Century Act" (FIT21), history has taught us that our continued progress isn't guaranteed. Some federal regulators, like Securities and Exchange Commission's Gary Gensler, have pursued new regulations that would undermine important efforts to narrow the racial wealth gap and increase financial inclusion for the Black community.

As we look ahead, the support of young and new voices in Congress who champion pro-innovation policies is exactly what we need to sustain momentum. Despite the setbacks, recent progress is encouraging, but there is so much more that can be done to increase participation. Harnessing the power of technology and advocating for financial inclusion can pave the way for a more equitable future where every Black American is ensured the tools needed to thrive and prosper.

Rep. Jonathan Jackson (D-Ill.), representing Illinois' First Congressional District, is a lifelong activist committed to social justice and equity for marginalized groups.

Young Black investors are leading the charge, with three times as many investing in the stock market for the first time in 2020, compared to their white counterparts.

wealth-building.

- **Mobile Apps:** Apps have transformed the way we connect with businesses and one another. Intuitive interfaces, quicker response times, and overall enhanced user experience make apps a powerful tool for us to do business.

- **Financial Literacy:** Educational resources are available to empower individuals to make informed financial decisions, whether through e-newsletters, podcasts, webinars, or online courses.

- **Digital Banking:** Online banking allows for more convenient and cost-effective money management. No longer tied to physi-

high account minimums.

According to the Ariel Schwab Black Investor Survey conducted in 2022, trust in technology surpasses trust in people when it comes to managing assets. Young Black investors are leading the charge, with three times as many investing in the stock market for the first time in 2020, compared to their white counterparts. Additionally, 29% of Black investors under 40 were new to investing in 2020, compared to 16% of white investors.

Federal Reserve data reinforces this trend. In 2022, 58% of American households owned stocks. Notably, Black and Hispanic

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How your sleep patterns change can tell you about your health

Researchers have identified five sleep types; the way people move between these types yields insights about both chronic and acute conditions

(Newswise) — Your sleep tracker might give you information about more than just your sleep—specifically, it might give you information about chronic conditions such as diabetes and sleep apnea, and illnesses such as COVID-19.

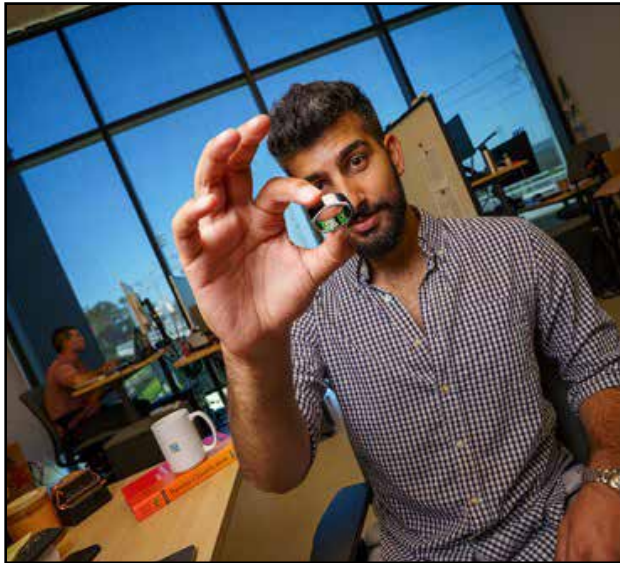
This is one of the findings of a study that analyzed data from 5 million nights of sleep across roughly 33,000 people. Based on the new analyses, the researchers identified five main types of sleep, which they called sleep phenotypes, and which can be further divided into 13 subtypes.

The researchers also found that how and how often a person switches between sleep phenotypes could offer two to ten times more information relevant to detecting health conditions compared with just relying on a person's average sleep phenotype alone.

The study appears in the journal *npj Digital Medicine* on June 20, 2024.

Using data collected from Oura Ring—a smart ring that tracks sleep, skin temperature and other information—the researchers looked at individual people over a series of months, noting whether they had chronic health conditions such as diabetes and sleep apnea, or illnesses such as COVID-19 and the flu.

The research team found that people would often move between sleep phenotypes over time, reflecting a change in an individual's health conditions, and cre-



UC San Diego PhD student Varun Viswanath is the paper's corresponding author. The researchers analyzed data from the Oura ring, a smart wearable that tracks temperature, sleep and other information. (David Baillot/University of California San Diego)

ating what resembles a person's travel log through the data-driven sleep landscape the researchers created.

"We found that little changes in sleep quality helped us identify health risks. Those little changes wouldn't show up on an average night, or on a questionnaire, so it really shows how wearables help us detect risks that would otherwise be missed," said Benjamin Smarr, one of the study's senior authors and a faculty member in the Jacobs School of Engineering and Halicioglu Data Science Institute at the University of California San Diego.

In addition, the researchers highlighted that tracking changes in sleep over the long term at the population scale could unlock new insights that are relevant for public health, such as whether some changes in patterns through these sleep landscapes can provide

early warning for chronic illness or vulnerability to infection.

The research team's work is based on new analyses from the TemPredict dataset from University of California, San Francisco, which was created using data collected from people wearing the commercially available Oura Ring during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

The analyses were led by Smarr, who is also faculty in the University of California San Diego Shu Chien - Gene Lay Department of Bioengineering, and Professor Edward Wang in the University of California San Diego Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, collaborating with the study lead at University of California, San Francisco, Professor Ashley E. Mason, a practicing sleep clinician. The lead author was Varun Viswanath, a

graduate student in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of California San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering.

The five sleep types

These are the five sleep phenotypes researchers singled out based on data from 5 million nights of sleep across roughly 33,000 people. While many factors went into the study, the researchers also identified some trends that help to intuitively separate the 5 sleep phenotypes.

- Phenotype 1: What we think of as "normal" sleep. In this phenotype, people get about eight hours of uninterrupted sleep for at least six days in a row. This is the type of sleep recommended by the National Institutes of Health and was the most common sleep type researchers found.

- Phenotype 2: People sleep continuously about half the nights, but they only sleep for short periods of time in bouts of less than three hours the other half.

- Phenotype 3: People sleep mostly continuously, but they experience interrupted sleep around one night each week. The interrupted night is characterized by one period of relatively long sleep of about five hours, and one period of short sleep of less than three hours.

- Phenotype 4: People again sleep mostly continuously. But they experience rare nights, in which long bouts of sleep are separated by a mid-sleep waking.

- Phenotype 5: People

only sleep for very short periods of time every night. This phenotype was the rarest the researchers found, and represents extremely disrupted sleep.

Tracking changes in sleep type

To measure how sleep phenotypes changed over time, Viswanath constructed a spatial model of all 5 million nights, in which the phenotypes were represented as different islands, composed of mostly similar weeks of sleep. Different patterns emerged over time that allowed the researchers to model each individual's routes between islands.

From there, what helped to distinguish people with chronic conditions, such as diabetes and sleep apnea, was not their average phenotype. Instead, it was how frequently they switched between islands in this sleep landscape. In this way, even if someone switched phenotypes only rarely, the fact that they did switch could still provide useful information about their health.

The data showed that it is rare for most people to go multiple months without a few nights of disrupted sleep. "We found that the little differences in how sleep disruptions occur can tell us a lot. Even if these instances are rare, their frequency is also telling. So it's not just whether you sleep well or not — it's the patterns of sleep over time where the key info hides," said Wang, a coauthor and electrical and computer engineering faculty member

at UC San Diego.

Conversely, people did not tend to remain in patterns defined by broken up sleep. But how often they visited specific disrupted-sleep patterns says a lot about how well they're doing.

"If you imagine there's a landscape of sleep types, then it's less about where you tend to live on that landscape, and more about how often you leave that area," said Viswanath, the paper's corresponding author.

Previous research

In this new paper published June 20, the research team modified the technique used in previous research that had been the largest similar investigation of sleep to date, which had drawn approximately 103,000 nights of data from the UK biobank. That previous study looked at sleep timing and awakenings and many related features, and then constructed a "landscape" of where nights fell in relation to each other. But prior researchers did not do two key things: they could not look across time, as they had only two to three nights per person; and they could not tie the resulting patterns of sleep to health outcomes.

Other large-scale sleep analyses looked at high-level differences in simple sleep characteristics, like the total time people spent asleep.

In contrast, this new work is the first to show that re-

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GUNS, from Page 1

noting increased rates of depression and psychiatric disorders among families and communities affected by shootings.

The advisory proposes a public health approach to

tackle gun violence, akin to strategies used to address cigarette smoking and reduce motor vehicle deaths. It calls for increased federal investment in firearm violence research, communi-

ty-based intervention and education programs, and encouraging health systems to discuss safe firearm storage with patients.

Policy recommendations include:

- Enacting safe storage laws.

- Implementing universal background checks.

- Prohibiting assault weapons and large-capacity magazines.

- Improving mental health care.

- Enforcing effective firearm removal policies under

extreme risk protection and domestic violence protection orders.

While some states have adopted these measures, federal legislation has faced significant opposition. Data from the Giffords Law Center indicates that "states

with strong gun laws have fewer gun deaths."

"A public health approach can guide our strategy and actions," the advisory concluded. "The safety and well-being of our children and future generations are at stake."

As white 'Deaths of Despair' made news, Black ones skyrocketed

By Jennifer Porter Gore
Word in Black
San Diego Voice & Viewpoint

A little less than a decade ago, it was alarming news that shook the nation. Deaths from suicide, drug overdose, and alcohol-related liver disease were slashing the life expectancy among white Americans.

The "deaths of despair" phenomenon centered mostly on non-college-educated whites whose declining socioeconomic conditions, researchers said, led to a spike in premature deaths between 1999 and 2013.

But researchers at the University of California-Los Angeles medical school



Having culturally competent care — clinicians intimately familiar with the lived experiences of historically disadvantaged groups — is essential for effective mental health treatment. (iStockphoto / NNPA)

and other institutions have found that deaths of despair have skyrocketed during the last 7 years. The spike, researchers say, has been fueled by the exploding use of illegal drugs such as fentanyl and heroin, as well as

an increase in alcohol-related deaths around the same time as the COVID-19 pandemic began.

In fact, "[f]rom 2015 to 2022, the mortality rate from deaths of despair nearly tripled among Black

people and it also has surpassed the rate among white people," says the analysis, published in JAMA Psychiatry. The rates among American Indian or Alaska Native midlife adults in 2022 also were nearly 2.4 times higher than for whites.

"While the opioid crisis did raise drug overdose deaths among white Americans for a time, it was an anomaly," says Joseph Friedman, the social medicine expert at UCLA who was the lead author on the analysis. But by 2022, he says, the rate of such deaths among whites had started to decline but had increased exponentially among Black people.

"What's really important is that now, with these three causes of death, the gap has closed, and it's moving in the other direction," Friedman said. The deaths of despair theory reached the national agenda in 2015 when two Princeton University economists argued that poor mental health, stemming from a lack of economic opportunities, was behind rising premature mortality rates among less-educated whites.

The UCLA researchers added that flaws in the methodology of the 2015 report didn't give enough consideration to longstanding racial inequities in income, educational attainment, incarceration, and

access to quality medical care. Those factors, they wrote, can contribute to drug use and poor mental health outcomes.

Because they did not consider those flaws, the Princeton study distorted conclusions about who was most at risk of death of despair, according to the UCLA research. Statistics for Native Americans weren't included at all, which UCLA first pointed out in a January 2023 report.

"It was burned into the American psyche that it was white people in the rural U.S." who were most at risk of dying prematurely, Friedman said. "It was just

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CNN faces backlash for excluding Black-owned media from presidential debate coverage

CNN has come under fire for denying media credentials to every Black-owned media entity, including those based in Atlanta, for the upcoming presidential debate on Thursday. Despite granting over 600 media credentials, not even one was extended to Black-owned outlets, sparking outrage and accusations of systemic exclusion in a predominantly Black city.

The rejection has ignited a firestorm of criticism, highlighting the broader issue of racial inequity in media representation. Atlanta, a city with a rich history of Black culture and leadership, finds its Black-owned media sidelined at a critical political event.

The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), a leading voice for Black-owned media, revealed a letter from CNN rejecting their request for

credentials. In an email, CNN's Dylan Rose said the network could provide the Black Press transcripts and photos from the debate.

The NNPA represents the 197-year-old Black Press of America, which counts among its more than 230 newspapers and media companies, The Atlanta Voice, Atlanta Daily World, and the Atlanta Inquirer. The popular Rolling Out magazine also counts among the Black Press' members frozen out by CNN.

Media personality and Black Star Network owner Roland Martin tweeted that his phone had been "buzzing from Black-owned media outlets in Atlanta who say they are being denied media credentials to the debate."

The prolific news leader, further noted, "They don't care about us. This is de-

spicable. The treatment of Black-owned media is pathetic."

Added NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., "CNN's decision is an affront to the very essence of press freedom and diversity. In a city where Black voices and perspectives are essential, this exclusion is both a slap in the face and a stark reminder of the ongoing struggles for equitable media representation."

The timing and nature of the rejection letter have only fueled the outrage. Despite having ample time and resources to accommodate a diverse range of media outlets, CNN's refusal to include Black-owned entities suggests a troubling oversight or, worse, a deliberate and overtly racially-motivated dismissal.

Local Black-owned media outlets, many of which

have served the Atlanta community for decades, expressed their frustration and disappointment with collective assertions that CNN has intentionally overlooked the heartbeat of the city's news and culture.

The exclusion comes at a time when media diversity and representation are under intense scrutiny. Advocacy groups and com-

munity leaders have also called for immediate corrective actions from CNN and other major networks to ensure that Black-owned media entities are not just included but are given the respect and opportunities they deserve.

As the debate approaches, the spotlight is not just on the candidates but also on the institutions that

shape public discourse. CNN's decision has cast a long shadow over the debate, raising critical questions about who gets to tell the story and who gets left out.

"Our exclusion from this pivotal event is not just an insult to our organizations but to our readers and viewers who rely on us for their news," Chavis argued.

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ally, she aspires to mentor 1,000 students to become skilled counselors, addressing the shortage in the field while continuing to make

significant contributions to mental health awareness and support.

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Catch Up & Read program hits Galleria Dallas this summer

Exhibit celebrating the power of literacy will be on display July 1-29 in the shopping center

Catch Up & Read, a Dallas-based nonprofit whose mission is to equip children from underserved communities to read on grade level by the end of third grade, will be Galleria Dallas' Gallery Wall partner for the month of July.

The nonprofit's exhibit, "Growing Confident Readers and Teachers Across North Texas," will be displayed on Galleria Dallas' Gallery Wall on Level 1 next to Apple from July 1-29.

Catch Up & Read empowers teachers with evidence-based literacy practices that give first-through third-graders the reading foundation they need to succeed in school and life. During this school year, the program, now in



its 15th year, has worked with 20 schools, 126 teachers and 860 students. 94% of students in the program grew in reading skills, significantly outpacing their peers, and 95% of teachers report seeing a significant positive impact on their teaching.

The Gallery Wall offers

viewers important information about the science of reading, including the five pillars of reading, why third-grade reading is so important, and summer reading tips for parents to help beat the summer slide that can happen between school years.

Along with the Gallery

Wall, Catch Up & Read will offer Read Alouds with special speakers Tuesday mornings at 10:30 throughout July. Galleria Dallas will also offer readings on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. throughout July with children's authors including Jenn Hill, Rachel Más-Davidson and Brad

Davidson, Nancy Churnin, Ha Dinh and Orion Jean reading from their books. Readings will take place on Level 3 near the Children's Play Place.

"At Catch Up & Read, we believe in the power of literacy to transform lives and communities," said Carol Goglia, presi-

dent and CEO of the nonprofit. "The Gallery Wall at Galleria Dallas will help Catch Up & Read engage the community and raise awareness of the critical importance of learning to read by third grade."

"Over the years, Catch Up & Read has trained more than 500 teachers who have impacted more than 50,000 students with high-quality reading instruction," said Galleria Dallas Director of Marketing Megan Townsend. "We're proud to feature the nonprofit on our Gallery Wall in July and encourage shoppers to bring their children or grandchildren in to take advantage of the book readings happening on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during the month."

My Head Start Success Story

By Masada Ellis

There's nothing like adversity to prove who you are. I've always been a strong-willed person but having children of my own has made me laser-focused on how to use my perseverance to carve out a legacy they will be proud of.

Until I enlisted in the Marine Corps at 18 years old, I lived at home in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, with my mother and six sisters. Three of them were God sisters, but we were raised as biological siblings. Like many other cities in the Deep South, Hattiesburg had an integral role in the Civil Rights Movement.

It was the largest site for the Freedom Summer voting registration campaign in 1964. This historical connection isn't lost on me when I think about how, decades later, I was four years old in Head Start,



Masada with his family with The Washington Monument in the background (Photo via NNPA)

memorizing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" speech. I often recall this memory because Dr. King is one of my heroes, and it reminds me that my Head Start teacher saw potential and capability in me beyond my years. She saw the determination in me.

Life was tough growing up. My mother, sisters, and I dealt with the persistent challenge of insufficient money, food, and no access

to quality healthcare. Since I was young, I wanted to make a difference and improve the lives of those in circumstances like the ones faced by my family. I also wanted to go to college, so I joined the Marines as a path to get there.

I think it's true that ingenuity is born of necessity. While in the Corps, I made some mistakes that resulted in time in the brig and the loss of military benefits, but I'm a fighter. I

don't believe in giving up. After my military service, I had limited resources, so I found a way to work several jobs to pay for school and earn my bachelor's degree while supporting a young family.

When my physical disabilities made it painfully obvious that working a standard, "9-to-5" job wasn't going to work for me, I took my degree in audio engineering and my passion for music and launched a business as an event planner and songwriter.

And when hard times hit my business, the memory of reciting Dr. King's speech resurfaced. I turned to Head Start. "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Head Start was pivotal in preparing my twin boys for school while my wife and I regrouped financially. It's one thing to experience Head Start as a student, but as a parent, I gained an even deeper appreciation for the depth and scale of Head Start's impact on families and communities.

As parents, Head Start invited my wife and me into our children's classrooms. The teachers identified a speech issue with one of our boys and connected us with a speech therapist. He speaks clearly (and non-stop) now.

The staff saw how engaged I was as a dad and invited me to start a fatherhood group. I also got involved with the policy council, was elected chairperson, and now I serve on the Episcopal Community Services (ECS) Board of Directors.

Today, I use all my plat-

forms and relationships to advocate for and promote Head Start and champion the needs of children, families, and veterans in my community, state, and nationally. After years of making appeals, my military benefits have been partially restored, which has helped my wife and I purchase a family home.

Together, we have the privilege of raising the most amazing human beings in the world. At times my circumstances have been mentally and physically debilitating, but I get up every day and keep going so my children can see that setbacks are on the flip side of success, and the two can coexist. I want them to remember me as someone who never gave up.

Masada Ellis is a Business MBA, NotApologetic-Studios LLC, MC, Speaker, Writer, Artist, and on the ECS Board of Directors.



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House Committee on Oversight and Accountability turns over evidence, asking AG to investigate the oil industry

By Lori Lee
NDG Contributing Writer

Rep. Jamie Raskin and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, recently requested the Attorney General's office investigate decades of misinformation by the fossil fuel industry to obfuscate the environmental effects of fossil fuel. The action last month came in the form of a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland, which followed the committee's own three-year investigation and a May Senate Budget hearing on the matter.

The joint investigation charged that ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell Oil, BP America, the American Petroleum Institute (API), and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, pledged to reduce



emissions and to transition from oil, all the while striving to secure the continued use of fossil fuels decades into the future. As stated by one BP official in a 2019 email released after the investigation, goals for net zero emissions put certain

assets too much at risk.

At an October 2021 hearing, leaders from the six entities acknowledged the central role of fossil fuels in climate change and the dire threat to humanity but refused to pledge meaningful actions to prevent it.

Not only did the entities refuse to act but made concerted efforts to hide the dangers of fossil fuel use, while propping up natural gas as a suitable substitute and transitional fuel. This, despite the knowledge that without using inefficient and expensive carbon capture, natural gas technology would keep emissions at unacceptable levels under the Paris Agreement.

In April, Raskin made public over 4,500 documents detailing efforts to keep the public in the dark despite industry knowledge of massive harms. These documents revealed efforts to mislead about the benefits of carbon capture and biofuels. The documents also demonstrated how partnerships with academic institutions were used to lend credibility to deceptive

campaigns.

Raskin compared the complex scheme to the deceptive practices of the tobacco industry, which resulted in lawsuits that spanned decades, as states sued big tobacco on behalf of citizens.

Despite valid subpoenas, all six entities—Exxon, Chevron, Shell, BP, API, and the Chamber—refused to fully comply with the investigation, making baseless legal arguments and flouting long standing congressional practices, Raskin and Whitehouse argued in the letter.

The subpoenaed companies also produced over 100,000 generic documents that were not responsive to the subpoenas.

Despite their noncompliance, Raskin and Whitehouse argued the documents

do demonstrate deceptive practices by the oil industry to entrench the use of fossil fuels.

The evidence at hand warrants an executive branch investigation, said Raskin, especially considering the subpoenas that were disregarded by the six entities.

Dr. Geoffrey Supran of the University of Miami and Sharon Eubanks, former lead counsel in the civil RICO action against big tobacco, pointed out similarities between the fossil fuel and the tobacco industry. These industries both use the same four-step playbook, he said—learn of product dangers, scheme to deny the science, scare-monger about the economy, while using propaganda, a comparison that builds a heavy case for reviewing fossil fuels.

Federal judge halts Biden's student loan forgiveness plan: administration vows to fight on

President Joe Biden's ongoing efforts to alleviate the burden of student loan debt have hit another significant obstacle. U.S. District Judge John A. Ross, an Obama nominee, issued an order halting further loan forgiveness under the Biden administration's income-driven repayment plan known as SAVE. This decision is a component of a more significant legal conflict that several Republican-led states started.

Judge Ross stated that the administration is "preliminarily enjoined from any further loan forgiveness for borrowers under the Final Rule's SAVE plan until such time as this Court can decide the case on the merits." The ruling is a major setback for Biden, whose administration launched the SAVE plan after the

Supreme Court quashed a more comprehensive debt relief initiative last year. That plan had aimed to eliminate up to \$20,000 in federal student debt for approximately 43 million borrowers.

The judge rejected the administration's motion to dismiss the case, affirming that the states involved had standing and "are likely to succeed on the merits of their argument that the early loan forgiveness provisions... were promulgated in a manner exceeding the Secretary's statutory authority."

The Biden administration, undeterred, quickly responded. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre vehemently disagreed with the ruling, asserting that the Department of Justice would con-

tinue to vigorously defend the SAVE Plan. "Since day one, the President and his Administration have fought to fix a broken student loan system and make sure borrowers aren't saddled with unmanageable student loan debt," she emphasized.

Jean-Pierre pointed out the SAVE Plan's immediate benefits: lower monthly payments for 8 million Americans and accelerated debt cancellation for hundreds of thousands of borrowers. She criticized Republican officials and their allies for obstructing these efforts, accusing them of fighting to prevent their constituents from accessing much-needed financial relief.

Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey, rep-

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Stars from Broadway Dallas' very own high school musical theatre awards shine bright at 15th annual Jimmy Awards

The 2024 nominees from Broadway Dallas' Annual High School Musical Theatre Awards, Damson Chola Jr. of Cleburne High School's "Little Shop of Horrors" and Fabiola Caraballo Quijada of Tyler Legacy High School's "Something Rotten," journeyed to New York City to represent Broadway Dallas at the 15th Annual Jimmy Awards®. More than 130,000 high school students across the country participated in musical productions for consideration in the Jimmy Awards, but Damson and Fabiola both emerged as finalists among 102 selected participants from 51 cities, proudly representing Broadway Dallas. Damson ultimately took home the biggest award of the evening as the recipient of the 2024 Jimmy Award for Best Performance by an Actor.

Hosted by Josh Groban, the 15th annual Jimmy Awards® took place on



Fabiola Caraballo Quijada and Damson Chola Jr. honored at 15th annual Jimmy Awards. (Courtesy photo)

Monday, June 24, 2024, at Broadway's Minskoff Theatre. The event showcases the finest high school musical theatre talent nationwide, featuring nominees from over 50 regions across the U.S. Over 900 nominees have participated

in the program to date. "I am incredibly proud to see our two lead performers represent Broadway Dallas among the top eight finalist spots in the National Jimmy Awards," says Ken Novice, president and CEO of Broadway Dallas.

"Fabiola and Damson exemplified magnificent talent, poise, and impeccable professionalism on behalf of Broadway Dallas. It's truly thrilling for Damson to bring home the Jimmy Award for Best Actor in a Musical in this national program; it's a testament to the remarkable talent in our city, the exceptional leadership of the Broadway Dallas Education and Community Partnerships staff, and the unwavering support of our entire organization, from staff to board members. This is a night that will be etched in my memory forever."

Damson Chola Jr. was honored with the 2024 Jimmy Award for Best Performance by an Actor, recognizing his achievement in the Broadway Dallas

High School Musical Theatre Awards. Each year, the Jimmy Awards celebrate the Best Performance by an Actor and Actress, chosen from a group of talented student performers sponsored by regional awards programs supported by professional theatres. Winners are selected by a panel of industry experts, with the awards named in honor of James M. Nederlander's dedication to nurturing young talent. As the recipient of the Best Performance by an Actor, Chola will receive a \$25,000 scholarship. Damson will attend Carnegie Mellon University for a BFA in Musical Theatre on a full-ride scholarship this fall.

"The Jimmy Awards was another worldly experience. It gave me the oppor-

tunity and the training for what it would be like to be a Broadway professional," says Damson Chola Jr. "I owe whatever my life may become to Broadway Dallas, The Jimmy Awards, Cleburne ISD, Plaza Theatre Company, Keli Price, Tina Barrus, Tabitha Ibarra, The Midkiff Family, and my own family (The Chola Family). Thank you for seeing me."

As a finalist, Fabiola Caraballo Quijada received a \$5,000 scholarship and the SCAD Achievement Scholarship, a \$10,000 annual scholarship to Savannah College of Art & Design, contingent upon acceptance and enrollment.

"The Jimmy Awards have taught me to believe

See AWARDS, Page 12

June Squibb and Fred Hechinger in *Thelma* (Photo via NNPA)

Film Review: 'Thelma' is one tough (and entertaining) granny to watch

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

(***) They shouldn't have messed with this granny. She's coming for them—and she's packing heat!

Writer/actor and first-time director Josh Margolin has a wild imagination. One he honed while a member of various improvisational groups. He also has a 103-year-old grandmother he loves dearly. Hence the hilarity and premise of this scorned grandma movie that is a consistently endearing, low-budget indie film. For nearly 98 minutes (editor Margolin), every moment in this action/comedy has a purpose and is so fun to watch your eyes won't veer from the screen.

Thelma Post (June Squibb, Nebraska) is 93 years old and still living alone in her L.A. home. She's adored by her under ambitious, irresponsible grandson Danny (Fred Hechinger, *The Underground Railroad*), a twentysomething who can't keep a job. Possibly he was over coddled by his mom (Parker Posey) and dad (Clark Gregg). Maybe he has mental/emotional issues. Nonetheless, Thelma still loves him.

And so, that day she

gets a desperate phone call from Danny, with this weird voice, and he says he needs \$10,000 for bail as he's been jailed after an incident, Thelma steps up to the plate. "I'm going to need to mail \$10,000 to this address." She sends the money off, only to find out that she's been scammed. A con man tricked her and impersonated her grandson. The feisty nonagenarian is pissed!!! She's aided by her old friend Ben (Richard Roundtree, *Shaft*), her deceased husband's best bud. The two head to Van Nuys, CA, aboard Ben's trusty, two-person electric mobility scooter. They're gonna retrieve her money. One way or another. At gunpoint if they have to!

The scam call setup focusses on a problem many seniors face and law enforcement can do little about. That idea seeds a very engaging storyline that has a natural momentum. She's got to find the culprits. Anyone who goes along on her ride, in a theater or from a couch with a bag of chips, will follow her quest until it ends. In this case, that ending has plenty of off ramps but struggles to find a definitive final moment before it hits a good one. That's the only part of Margolin's

very thoughtful, playful and emotionally involving script that falters. Otherwise, what's on screen is so fresh it's as if the writer/director was back in his improv days, asked audience members for a suggestion for a skit, and someone blurted out: "An old woman gets scammed by a con artist and..." Then he acted on it.

Viewers will love the main and supporting characters that inhabit Thelma's world and the ones she meets along the way. All of them have distinctive personalities that the cast turns into animated portrayals. Squibb thoroughly embodies a determined old woman who's fired up and not going to take any s--- off anybody: "What about my money? Am I supposed to let them just have it!!!!" She doesn't come off like a super hero, doesn't have super powers and the script gives her all of the characteristics, aches and pains a much older woman would have. Within those confines, Squibb takes care of business. She's blunt, not tech savvy, has vision issues... and she exploits the potential of each of those secondary characteristics quite well. Love her del-

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Michael Jackson's Legacy: Fifteen years after his death, his influence in the world of music continues

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

In what may have been his greatest triumph, a very frail and emotionally tested Michael Jackson walked out of a Santa Maria, Calif., courthouse on a sunny June day in 2005, having beaten 13 charges related to allegedly molesting a young cancer patient. As he slowly walked toward a waiting caravan of black SUVs, the King of Pop appeared almost unfazed, even dazed, by what had just occurred. He was exonerated but still drawn with a nearly puzzled look as many cheering fans stood by, one having released white doves signifying innocence. Joseph Jackson, the patriarch of the world-famous Jackson family, appeared to nudge his son's arm upwards, helping him acknowledge the loyal fans from everywhere.

A reporter asked this journalist, "Where do you see Michael Jackson in five years?" The response was "Dead." Unfortunately, almost four years to the date, that prognostication came true. Jackson had died of an overdose of the sedative propofol. He was 50, and a stunned world couldn't conceive that it had lost the biggest pop music entertainer ever to grace the



At the time of his death, he was rehearsing for a series of London concerts aimed at reviving a career shattered by allegations, wild spending habits, and strange bedfellows. (Photo via NNPA)

planet. At the time of his death, he was rehearsing for a series of London concerts aimed at reviving a career shattered by allegations, wild spending habits, and strange bedfellows. A Los Angeles court sentenced Dr. Conrad Murray, who was Michael Jackson's personal doctor at the time of the singer's death in 2009, to four years in prison for involuntary manslaughter in 2011.

Triumphs and Trials: A Complex Life

Michael Jackson's rise to fame began early. He was the seventh of nine children. Born on August 29, 1958, in Gary, Indiana, Jackson joined his brothers Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, and Marlon

to form The Jackson Five, a group that quickly rose to stardom. Jackson's solo career, launched in the 1970s, reached unprecedented heights with the release of "Thriller" in 1982. The album became the best-selling of all time, with over 21 million copies sold in the United States and at least 27 million worldwide, cementing Jackson's place as a global icon.

However, Jackson's life was not without its challenges. His eccentricities, including his high-pitched voice, numerous plastic surgeries, friendships with children, and a pet chimpanzee, earned him the nickname "Wacko Jacko." In 1993, he faced his first

public child molestation allegations, which he vehemently denied. Although a jury acquitted him of all charges in a high-profile 2005 trial, the allegations severely damaged his reputation.

A U.S. tax court judge noted in 2021 that Jackson had "earned not a penny from his image and likeness in 2006, 2007, or 2008," highlighting the lasting impact of these allegations. Despite this, Jackson's popularity has surged in the digital era. According to Billboard, global consumption of his music grew from 4.7 billion to 6.5 billion on-demand streams between 2021 and 2023, a 38.3% increase. In February, the BBC reported that Sony Music Group confirmed it would acquire half of Jackson's catalog in a deal valuing his music assets at more than \$1.2 billion.

The Enduring Appeal of

Jackson's Artistry

Jackson's artistry continues to captivate audiences. "MJ The Musical," a jukebox show featuring his music, has enjoyed successful runs on Broadway and in London's West End. Next year will see the release of the Antoine Fuqua-directed biopic "Michael," starring Jackson's nephew Jaafar Jackson. However, the musical and biopic have faced criticism for not addressing the abuse allegations in detail.

The *New York Times* noted that "no one's looking at the man in the mirror" in its review of MJ The Musical, while the San Francisco Chronicle remarked that the show is "pop perfection" but has "an allegation-shaped hole." This selective representation is part of a broader effort to rehabilitate Jackson's image, which has been ongoing for decades.

Michael Jackson's Influence Today

Today, Michael Jackson's influence is seen in the work of numerous artists, from Bruno Mars to Beyoncé.

His innovative approach to music and performance continues to inspire new generations.

While the controversies surrounding his life may never fully dissipate, the BBC notes that Jackson's contributions to music and culture remain a significant part of his legacy.

As fans mark the fifteenth anniversary of his death, Jackson's star continues to shine brightly.

His music, moves and overall talent resonate more than ever, proving that the King of Pop's legacy is enduring and evolving.

As Jackson himself once said, "I'm just like anyone. I cut, and I bleed. And I embarrass easily."

GATES, from Page 2

ing systems designed for adults.

In addition to her philanthropic endeavors, French Gates is an outspoken advocate in the political arena. She has openly opposed Donald Trump's policies and declared her support for President Joe Biden's reelection bid. "In this election, I cannot vote for a man who rolls back women's reproductive rights and says the heinous things that he says about women. So, I absolutely am not voting for Trump, and I will vote for Biden," she told Gayle King on

"CBS Mornings."

French Gates emphasized the critical role of women voters, particularly in battleground states, in shaping the upcoming election. "It is going to come down in this election—it will come down to the women turning out in the battleground states," she insisted. "They ... women turned out in the midterm elections and said, 'This is enough,' and we've got to do it again."

A staunch reproductive rights advocate, French Gates celebrated the recent Supreme Court decision upholding access to the

abortion medication mifepristone but acknowledged the ongoing battle for reproductive freedoms. "Today's Supreme Court decision is welcome news, but the fight for reproductive rights is far from over," she wrote on the social media platform X.

French Gates' dedication to philanthropy began with her co-founding the Gates Foundation, where she guided the world's largest charity for over two decades.

Her past and present initiatives reflect her commitment to creating a healthier, more prosperous, and more equitable future.

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Biden-Harris Campaign 2024 commits \$1.5 million advertising buy with the Black Press of America

(Baltimore, MD) The Biden-Harris Campaign announced an immediate commitment to a \$1.5 Million advertising-buy with the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) representing the Black Press of America across the United States. The Biden-Harris Campaign also helped to sponsor the NNPA's 2024 Annual National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, June

19-22, 2024.

Jasmine Harris, Director of National Black Media for Biden-Harris 2024, made the announcement of the advertising-buy with the Black Press at the NNPA convention. "In August of last year, our campaign announced the earliest and largest investment into Black media for any reelection campaign in history.

"This partnership with

the NNPA is a continuation of those efforts, and will strengthen our work in meeting Black voters where they are, to underscore the stakes of this election for Black America. President Biden and Vice President Harris are responsible for creating millions of new jobs for Black workers, and record low Black unemployment. Black America has far too much to lose this election."

Bobby R. Henry Sr., Chairman of the NNPA emphasized, "It is extremely important to show support of the business side of the Black Press owned by Black business leaders. Verbal support is good, but financial support is better."

This year marks the 197th Anniversary of the Black Press of America. Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr, NNPA President and CEO,

concluded, "The Biden-Harris Campaign is being responsive to interests of Black America through the campaign's advertising initiatives with the National Newspapers Publishers Association. The Black vote throughout the United States will be a key determinative factor to the outcome of the 2024 national elections. We profoundly thank the Biden-Harris 2024 Campaign."



Jasmine Harris, Director of National Black Media for Biden-Harris 2024. (Photo via NNPA)

WVU studies challenges facing female, minority entrepreneurs in rural areas

(Newswise) — Self-employment and entrepreneurship rates among women and Black people lag well behind those of white males, especially in rural areas. With support from the United States Department of Agriculture, West Virginia University researchers are trying to understand why.

The research, led by Heather Stephens, professor of resource economics and management and director of the Regional

Research Institute, aims to identify what factors could support entrepreneurship for women and minorities, as well as barriers that deter them from starting their own businesses.

The project is a collaboration with Daniel Eades, a WVU Extension specialist in rural economics. Results of the research will be used to help local and regional economic development professionals establish policies and programs to facilitate success for such

groups.

For the first part of the study, Stephens, postdoctoral fellow Xiaoyin Li and a team of RRI PhD students from economics and natural resource economics collected and are analyzing county-level data.

According to Eades, the research findings will then be translated into fact sheets and training materials that can be distributed to local policymakers and practitioners working within rural entrepreneurial

development ecosystems. This will include educators in Extension, business incubators, regional economic development agencies, financial service providers and chambers of commerce.

Evidence suggests small employers are more likely to buy locally and recycle their earnings back into the

economy, and self-employment decisions for women and minority groups may be different than those of white men. For example, for women, self-employment may allow them to enter the workforce and still provide flexibility with home or family obligations.

One of the challenges may be that in places that

have historically had large employers, such as a mine, residents may not be in the mindset of starting a business — what Stephens calls an 'entrepreneurial mindset.'

WVU is working with colleagues from Penn State University and the University of Maine on the project.

FILM, from Page 9

meanor and sense of humor.

Roundtree couldn't be more charming as the nursing home patient who is eager to have his debut in the home's presentation of Annie, but more than willing to jeopardize that chance to help his old friend. Roundtree passed away October 2023, and this performance is a great coda to his storied career. Hechinger rides the thin line between loser son and doting grandson well. Parker is manic as the frantic mother and nursing home employees Rochelle and Colin, played by Nicole Byer and Quinn Beswick, act like they really are bewildered. If there is a letdown, it's the lead scammer role (Malcolm McDowell). Wish that part was more demonic or grandiose so McDowell could

have played it up. He's the actor from A Clockwork Orange, give him room to be flashy.

At times, Thelma encounters people she thinks she knows but really doesn't. It's an idiosyncrasy that isn't unusual for people who've lived a very long life. That and other challenges they face are on view in this touching film. From older people living alone and facing dementia to the peculiarities of nursing homes. Nice to find a writer who can share the everyday issues, indignities and oddities seniors face in a funny respectful and non-condescending way. Just humorous observations with touches of action film satire thrown in for good measure.

Margolin's direction is fluid throughout and never

gets in the way. The homes (production designer Brielle Hubert) reflect the kind of interior spaces older people live in. The kinds that look like they're from another era. The seniors' clothes (costume designer Amanda Wing Yee Lee) seem properly worn. Music swirls around the daring escapes, dramatic moments and whimsical scenes appropriately (composer Nick Chuba). Every gag, interaction and step of Thelma's harrowing trek is well documented by cinematographer David Bolen. That said, the film's tiny budget is obvious.

Thelma is here to lead super senior citizens into the 21st century and protect their dignity. Don't cross her. She's packing heat and laughs.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.



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Want to make more money? Start by spending time with the right friends, new research shows

(Newswise) — BINGHAMTON, N.Y. -- New research involving faculty at Binghamton University, State University of New York shows how people with friends who make more money than they do are more likely to save and make smart financial investments themselves.

By combining Facebook data with county-level tax information, a research team including Binghamton's Brad Cannon sought to better understand how social interactions affect choices regarding personal finances.

"There are plenty of people who have some money saved, but they're not taking full advantage of it, whether they could be making more in interest or maybe they just don't know how to make investments of any kind," Cannon said. "There really needs to be a social connection to help people overcome these obstacles, so the most natural takeaway from this study is that we can benefit from interacting with people who have more financial experience because they can help us improve our financial



decision-making."

The researchers point out that simply having richer friends doesn't guarantee that a lower-income person will automatically start making better investments, and the study's findings include the savings decisions of all households (including those of high and low socioeconomic status).

Cannon and his collaborators used data created by other researchers with access to Facebook's database of 27.2 million users — those social media connections served as a proxy for the relationships people have in their daily lives —

and financial information, particularly interest and dividend income from IRS tax returns. Interest and dividend income served as indicators that a person had a bank savings account and owned stocks.

County-based data was also used to examine areas where people could potentially connect with others of higher and lower socioeconomic status compared to counties where there was less potential for such interactions.

The researchers found that for every 10% increase in friends of high socioeconomic status, there was a

nearly 3% greater chance of stock-market participation for a person with a lower income and a 5% increase in the chance they saved money.

Cannon said one of the study's unexpected findings was that being around wealthier people mattered more than friending ability.

For example, he said, a person who joins a tennis club where most of its members are wealthy becomes more likely to make wealthy friends since they're around more people of high socioeconomic status.

On the other hand, he added, if you're part of a lacrosse team where there are fewer wealthy members, you could still have many wealthy friends if you're proactive or strategic in choosing who to be friends with.

"Our results indicate that the former (exposure to wealthier individuals) has a much larger effect on household savings decisions than the latter (proactively making wealthy friends)," Cannon said.

"It is a well-documented fact that Americans, on av-

erage, do not have enough saved for retirement. This is likely partially due to low levels of savings and partially due to low levels of stock market participation. Additionally, there is evidence suggesting that wealth inequality is exacerbated when the stock market does well," said Joshua Thornton, assistant professor of finance at Baylor University, who co-authored the study. "Our findings suggest that encouraging friendships with wealthy individuals could help Americans to save and invest more."

"Individual choices, the social environment, or public policies that enhance economic connectedness within the social network may help people achieve greater financial market participation. Such participation is important for upward mobility by providing access to financial opportunities and knowledge," added David Hirshleifer, professor of finance and business economics at the USC Marshall School of Business, who also co-authored the study. "Greater financial literacy and great-

er saving and investment in the stock market are, in general, important for wealth accumulation."

Pointing to other research, the study cited casual restaurant chains Olive Garden and Applebee's, as well as publicly funded locations, such as libraries and parks, as examples of places where it could be easy for people of different income brackets to interact.

"So, if you're thinking about policy," Cannon said, "this suggests that just creating more opportunities in communities to interact socially with wealthy people or people who have experience investing seems like it could potentially go a long way toward helping those who could benefit from that knowledge to save more."

The study, titled "Friends with Benefits: Social Capital and Household Financial Behavior," was published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, and it was co-authored by researchers from the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business and Baylor University's Hankamer School of Business.

AWARDS, from Page 8

in myself more than anything," says Fabiola Caraballo Quijada. "All the staff, coaches, and nominees have given me so much love, support, and assurance that have reminded me that I am capable and enough to succeed and live life to the fullest and it makes me truly excited to work towards a fu-

ture where I can share my talents and my story with the world."

"We couldn't be prouder of Damson and Fabiola," says Allison Bret, Director of Education & Community Partnerships at Broadway Dallas. "The world knows what remarkable talents they are — I cannot wait for them

to discover what remarkable humans they are too. These two young people approach performing with such maturity, grace, and truth. Thank you to all of the supporters of this incredible program."

These accomplishments highlight the excellence fostered by Broadway Dallas and celebrate the success of Damson and Fabiola on a national stage.

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Trinity Park Conservancy and Beck Construction Group To Host a free community job fair at Dallas College – West Campus on June 29

Trinity Park Conservancy / Harold Simmons Park and BECK Construction Group will hold an in-person job fair offering on-site hiring, local job opportunities, and job/career services.

The event takes place on June 29 from 10 a.m. to 2

p.m. at the Dallas College West Campus (3330 N. Hampton Rd. in Dallas).

Companies will be looking to fill full-time and part-time positions, specifically in construction, construction management, certifications, and job services.

Plus, on-site advice will be offered on how to build the skills need to turn a job into a career.

Trinity Park Conservancy conducted 6,000+ community engagement sessions to discuss Harold Simmons Park with the lo-

cal community. Feedback from these community sessions included access to jobs and careers related to the park.

Harold Simmons Park is partnering with organizations specializing in hiring, skills training, and other

job-related services. The Harold Simmons Park project will begin construction later this year. Our goal is to provide these construction opportunities first to our nearby communities.

“Harold Simmons Park will be more than just a

park,” said Tony Moore, CEO of Trinity Park Conservancy. “We are intentional with involving community members, and creating a park that enriches the lives of the community, now and for generations to come.”

DESPAIR, from Page 5

a very small piece of the truth that was very interesting but was widely sold as something it wasn't.”

Without question, America's mental health crisis writ large has gained more attention in the past two decades, and it became Topic A during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet multiple studies show overall well-being is still under-addressed and under-treated — especially among Black Americans, who continue to face barriers to adequate mental health care.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. live with a men-

tal illness, including just over 21% of Black people. Suicide is now the second-leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 14, and the suicide rate among Black youth ages 10 to 19 surpassed that of white peers for the first time in 2022.

The rate has increased 54% since 2018, compared to a 17% decrease for white youth. But almost 20% of all youth ages six to 17 experience a mental health disorder each year, ranging from anxiety and depression to more severe illnesses like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Despite the fact that

racism is recognized as a public health crisis, access to medical care for Black people — including mental health care — remains a significant challenge. More than half of all adults with mental illness do not receive treatment, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

An analysis from KFF, a health policy research firm, issued last week found that Black (39%) and Latino (36%) adults who report fair or poor mental health are less likely than white adults (50%) to say they

received mental health services in the past three years. Barriers to access included “costs and difficulties finding providers, with people of color citing additional challenges such as difficulty finding providers with shared background and experiences, lack of information, and stigma and embarrassment,” according to the KFF analysis.

Having culturally competent care — clinicians intimately familiar with the lived experiences of historically disadvantaged groups — is essential for effective mental health treatment.

Yet according to the KFF survey, 41% of Black respondents said it was either “somewhat” or “very difficult” to find a mental health care provider who understood their issues, could schedule an appointment in a timely manner, and who were affordable.

At the same time, just 4% of psychologists and 2% of psychiatrists are Black, according to their respec-

tive medical professional organizations. Experts say that further exacerbates the challenge of finding culturally competent care.

If you need emotional support, are thinking about suicide, or are worried about someone else, call or text the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988. Help is available 24/7. TTY users can dial 711 then 988 to get help.

SLEEP, from Page 4

searchers can quantify the changing dynamics of people's sleep over time and use this quantification to give people better insights into their sleep health. The research also suggests that these changes in sleep may indicate a higher risk for a wide range of conditions.

Paper “Five million

nights: temporal dynamics in human sleep phenotypes” in the journal npj Digital Medicine

Paper authors include Varun K. Viswanath, Wendy Hartogenesis, Stephan Dilchert, Leena Pandya, Frederick M. Hecht, Ashley E. Mason, Edward J. Wang, and Benjamin L. Smarr.

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Did You See My Key?

By Dr. James L. Snyder

My life has been bombarded with questions from the beginning of the day until I fall asleep at night.

For the most part, I don't prioritize questions. Usually, when people ask me a question, there is something behind that question. If I don't see what's behind the question, I could answer it in such a way as to get myself in trouble—and believe me, I've been in trouble many times before.

This is no truer than with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. She can taunt me with a question out of nowhere. I get in deep trouble when I realize what is behind the ques-

tion.

A good example is the other day when she came into the living room and, with both hands on her hips, said, "Did you see my key?"

At first, I had no idea what she was talking about. Usually, when she asks a question, I have been in Lala land for so long that I couldn't bring my thoughts together.

I looked back at her and said, "Oh, my dear, what key are you talking about?"

Looking into her purse, you will find she has a key to everything. I refuse to ramble through those keys because I might find a key she has for me. Of course, if I had seen that key, it

might have solved a lot of my problems, or it might not have.

Responding to me, she said, "You know, the key to my car."

"You mean to your Sissy Van?"

I could hear her grit her teeth as she stared at me with one of "those stares".

"I had my key yesterday and I cannot find it today. Have you seen it?"

If I had seen her keys, this would've been a great opportunity for me. I could use them as a bargaining chip to get something for myself. Oh, how I wished I knew where that key was. Imagine what I could get for it.

"I'm sorry," I said re-

luctantly, "I have not seen your key anywhere."

On occasion, I have driven her Sissy Van, but it's been well over a year since I did. I tried to think of where those keys might be, and I searched a few places, but as always, I came up empty; what I wouldn't give to be able to find that key.

That's the way life is for me. I have an opportunity before me, but I just don't have the resources to seize it.

I hadn't seen her key for so long that I didn't even know what it looked like. But that didn't keep me from looking around because finding those keys would have been a treasure.

One thing about The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, when she starts something she never stops until she finishes it. Most of the time, it drives me crazy, which, according to her, is a very short drive.

If I don't find something I need at the time, I just quit looking, knowing that when I least expect it and when I'm not looking for it, I will find it. That's happened to me so many times I can't recall.

A friend used to say, "If you have something, you usually don't need it, and when you need something, you usually don't have it." That seems to be the rule in my life as far back as I can remember.

With The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, she must have it right then and there when she needs something. "Now" is her favorite word.

Trying to console her, I said, "If you just make up your mind that you don't need your keys right now, because you do have a spare key, you sooner or later will find it when you least expect it. That's just the way life is."

I can remember a dozen things I lost, and no matter how hard I looked for them, I could never find them. Then, I found them when I gave up and started something else and just assumed

See SNYDER, Page 15

DEBT, from Page 7

resenting one of the states that filed the lawsuit, celebrated the ruling. "By attempting to saddle working Missourians with Ivy League debt, Joe Biden is undermining our constitutional structure," Bailey declared. "Only Congress has the power of the purse, not the President. Today's ruling was a huge win for the rule of law and for every American who Joe Biden was about to force to pay off someone else's debt."

Arkansas Attorney Gen-

eral Tim Griffin echoed this sentiment: "With Independence Day fast approaching, another court has reminded President Biden that he is not a king. He can't go around Congress and unilaterally cancel student loans. He should have learned that from Schoolhouse Rock!"

According to the lawsuit, which Florida, Georgia, North Dakota, Ohio, and Oklahoma have joined, the SAVE Plan allegedly violates the Constitution's guarantee of the separation

of powers. Despite the ruling, Judge Ross noted that other beneficial aspects of the program, such as lowering monthly payments and limiting interest accrual, could continue, acknowledging that the states had not demonstrated harm from these provisions.

Adding to the administration's challenges, U.S. District Judge Daniel D. Crabtree issued a separate ruling blocking parts of the SAVE Plan set to take effect on July 1. Crabtree found that while the states had not shown irreparable harm

from provisions already in effect, they had demonstrated potential harm from the forthcoming provisions.

The Biden administration has made significant strides in debt relief, forgiving substantial amounts under the SAVE Plan. Last month, officials announced \$613 million in debt cancellation for over 54,000 borrowers, part of a broader effort that

has resulted in \$167 billion in loan forgiveness for 4.75 million people through various administrative actions.

Despite legal setbacks, the Biden administration remains resolute. "Today's rulings won't stop our Administration from using every tool available to give students and borrowers the relief they need," Jean-Pierre affirmed. "President

Biden and his administration will continue to build off of the progress made in delivering debt cancellation to over 4.75 million Americans through various actions, and we will never stop fighting for students and borrowers, no matter how many roadblocks Republican elected officials and special interests put in our way."

LEWIS, from Page 2

and tech-enabled approach empowers clients by tailoring investments around their individual goals. Clients have access to a personalized dashboard that provides a single, unified view of their entire investment portfolio and assets. With Beatrice's research technology fully integrated within its client portfolio technology, the office can leverage its capabilities to customize and scale investment research across portfolios.

Meredith Bowen will serve as Beatrice's President and Chief Investment Officer (CIO), and brings

extensive experience in managing client allocations, investment portfolios, analyzing investments and building leading technology solutions. Meredith previously served as a Partner at Seven Bridges Advisors, where she worked with many families to address the investment complexities that come from inherited, generational and institutional wealth. As part of her role as President and CIO, Meredith will oversee Beatrice's investment strategies, asset allocation, client engagement, and the expansion of its suite of investment opportunities and

partners.

In addition to Meredith Bowen, Michael Hymes has joined Beatrice's executive team as Managing Director and Head of Client Advisory. As a wealth advisor, Michael brings extensive experience working with highly sophisticated families, and will lead Beatrice's Client Advisory and Financial Planning practices. Michael previously served as a Vice President and Financial Advisor at Shufro, Rose & Co. At Beatrice, Michael will oversee client engagements to understand, protect, and develop client wealth through strategic planning approaches and techniques.

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Giving Jesus the Key

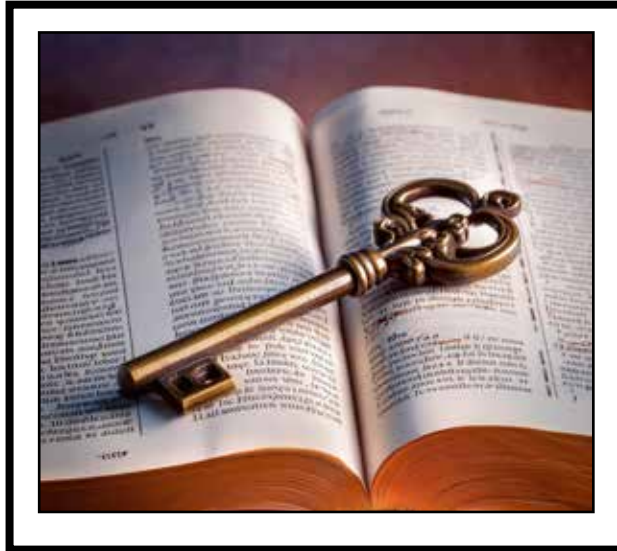


Sister Tarpley
NDG
Religion
Editor

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.

Revelation 3:20

Graduates, this is something to ponder. A friend of mine tells the story of an encounter he had with a very important government official - the head of state for a country.



In the course of some meetings with my friend, the official came up to him and said, "I perceive that there is a difference between you and me. Is it because I come from a different denomination?"

My friend began to explain why there was a difference.

"If you were to come to my home, I would invite you in as an honored guest. As my guest, you would enjoy everything I had in my home.

However, you would still be a guest. You would not have the keys to the home, and your authority in that home would be merely as a guest.

But, if I said to you that I am turning over my home to you and you now have the keys to my home, I would be your servant."

My friend continued, "This is the difference be-

tween you and me. You have merely invited Jesus into your home as a guest. I have given Jesus the keys to my home [heart] and I am His servant."

"How can I do this too?" The man replied. "All you have to do is invite Him in as the new owner."

The man did this and is now allowing Jesus to rule and reign in every detail of his life.

Is Jesus a guest in your home or a ruler? So often many of us enter a relationship with God that brings us salvation. This is the gospel of salvation.

But what God really desires for us is to experience the gospel of the Kingdom.

He wants us to experience His power and presence every day of our lives and to see His hand at work in us.

This only happens when we give Him the key to our life; He must be more than an honored guest.

Where are you today? Has your life with God been more like an honored-guest relationship, or does He have the key to your life?

(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in June 2017.)

SNYDER, from Page 14

they were gone forever.

It was the next day, and I had forgotten about her lost key. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came to me and said, "Well, I found my key." She said it as though she was rubbing it in my face.

"Where did you find it?" I asked, curious to find out where it had been all this time.

Looking at me a little

nervously, she said, "I found it in my purse." She paused for a moment and then continued, "There's a little pocket in front of one of my other pockets in my purse. I always forget that it's there, and I never looked until today."

I was happy for her and congratulated her on finding her lost key. The key was not lost; she had just forgotten where she had

put it.

In my Bible reading today I read a very important verse. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

There was a time when I was lost spiritually and didn't know it. The whole reason for Jesus to come into this world was for lost people just like me. At the time I thought I was fine, but then God interrupted my life and showed

me I was indeed lost. It is through Jesus that I found my way back to God.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamesnyder51@gmail.com, website www.james-snyderministries.com.

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*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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NDG Book Review: Three good reads about the Civil War

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

You're already familiar with the argument.

Chances are, in this contentious climate we live in, you know what it's like to have a fractured family, or to have to defend your beliefs. So this summer, read about a period in history when war rent the country, pitted brother against brother, righted a very large wrong, and left scars on the land, on people, and on families...

Sometimes, history is in the details and in **"Voices from Gettysburg"** by **Allen C. Guelzo** (Kensington, \$29.00), you'll read a



Terri Schlichenmeyer

sense of what it was like to be on the battlefield or near it. Filled with authentic voices, maps, and other documents, this is a puts-you-in-the-action kind of book that you won't be able to put down.

At some point in your lifetime, you've undoubtedly read or learned something about Harriet Tubman. In your mind, she may seem invincible, like some sort of being with superpowers, due to her bravery during the Civil War and the lives she helped ferry to freedom. In **"Night Flyer: Harriet Tubman and the Faith Dreams of a Free People"** by **Tiya Miles**

(Penguin Press, \$30), you'll learn that some of what you think you know are myths, and that there's actually so much more to Tubman's life and actions.

It's true that Tubman helped free hundreds of people but this book explores more, including the environment that nurtured her and the relationships she had with the women she helped, and others. We get a fresher, deeper look at the person Tubman was, allowing readers to learn more about the spiritual life that soothed her in times of trouble. That alone might offer inspiration for today's sojourners.

And finally, if you'd like a little bit of surprise with your summertime reading, reach for **"Wide Awake: The Forgotten Force that Elected Lincoln and Spurred the Civil War"** by **Jon Grinspan** (Bloomsbury, \$32).

Despite what you may think, the elections we've seen lately in this country weren't the most contentious: at the beginning of the 1860 political season, a bunch of young Northerners, both men and women, Black and white, began organizing on behalf of antislavery speakers and abolitionists. They called themselves the Wide Awakes

and during the election, they became a political force to be reckoned with. It's possible, says Grinspan, that the Wide Awakes were one of the major catalysts for the War. This book packs the action in, and it'll show you that history can be full of surprises.

If these books merely whet your appetite for more, you're in luck: there are literally thousands and thousands of books about the Civil War available. All you have to do is ask your favorite bookstore or librarian for help, and they can put the book you want directly in your hands, without a single argument.

Standout student grabs TWO diplomas as school year comes to an end

Dimarreá Jackson is a 2024 Dallas Independent School District Collegiate graduate. On Sunday, May 19, 2024, she received her high school diploma from Hillcrest High School, and on Friday, May 10, she received an Associate's Degree of Science from Dallas College.

While attending Hillcrest High School, she also was a part of the Ptech Program - Early College High School and took college classes at Dallas College in which she completed her senior year earning two degrees. Her oldest sister Diamond Jackson preceded her in the family to receive two degrees in May 2023 (*North Dallas Gazette Publication* June 1, 2023).

Even though her family is composed of DISD alums with four generations alive today, Dimarreá is the first to make Academic All-State. In addition to playing sports, she was the football team manager and basketball captain.

Her senior year success kicked off with her winning Homecoming Queen and ended with Academic All State and two degrees Spring 2024.

Her senior academic accolades include, but are not limited to: Academic All-State, Highest Honors graduate, National Honor Society, Black Student Union Association and Top 10% of the graduating class of 2024.

Outside of class, she was the Varsity Basketball Captain, Most Valuable Player for Track, triple jump District and Area Champ



Dimarreá Jackson made the most of her time in public school, excelling in the classroom and on the sports field; wrapping it all up with an Associate's Degree to go along with her high school diploma. (Courtesy photos)

and Regional qualifier, 4x200-meter relay District and Area Champs and Regional qualifiers and K104's "Beast of the Week."

"I have had the pleasure of being Dimarreá's (DJ), basketball coach for the past two years at Hillcrest High School," said Richard Norton, Hillcrest basketball coach. "DJ is one of a kind in the best way possible. Very seldom do you find a frown on her face, and her smile lights up the room. She is a leader, not afraid to speak her mind or to redirect a teammate in a time of need. Not only is she an AMAZING person, but she is also a talented scholar and athlete."

"DJ was a four-year letterman for both basketball and track. During her time at Hillcrest, she was an Academic All-District for each sport she played and



was honored with Academic All-State her senior year from the Texas Girls High School Coaches Association along with Texas Association of Basketball Coaches. During her senior basketball season, she and her teammates managed to achieve a 20+ win season (had not accomplished this task in over 10 years) and helped secure their first Bi-District Championship in over 15 years. She was also awarded 2nd Team All-District honors her senior season.

"DJ's personal character is equally as impressive as her academic and athletic achievements. As a public speaker she can hold the attention of an entire locker

room, and when speaking one-on-one she demonstrates empathetic listening skills, as well as a powerful intellect. DJ cares deeply about those around her and is always ready to lend a helping hand or word of encouragement. She is often the voice of reason within our basketball program, and always maintains a calm demeanor. With her unwavering enthusiasm and sense of humor, having DJ in our program is a joy."

Dimarreá even gained recognition for her achievements before high school as she was interviewed by the Ellen Degeneres Show via zoom, top student of her 8th grade class

at T.W. Browne, track 1st place medalist for her 200-meter dash in the South District Championship, cheerleader, percussionist in the band, Chess Club member, and National Honor Society at Bishop Dunne.

Dimarreá was raised by her mother, Demetria Jackson, in a single parent household with two siblings and a pet dog, Nemo.

Dimarreá enjoys relaxing, being with friends, eating, reading, watching movies, golf, bowling, playing with Nemo and family time.

Prairie View A&M University was her choice among 25+ schools offering her acceptance and \$400,000 in scholarship offers. She plans to pursue a BS Major in Psychology and a Minor in Criminal Justice.

In conclusion, Dimarreá's nana, Rona Jackson, a graduate at UNT DALLAS and graduate of Paralegal Studies at Dallas College, remarks "Dimarreá has always been a high achiever. As an educationalist, I have witnessed the hardship effects of Covid 19 with students, so her success this year was not surprising, but amazing and well earned. She demonstrated strength, dedication and perseverance over the past few years despite Covid 19. I believe success is in the future for Dimarreá considering her triumphs this far and that she has the potential to exceed above expectations and to God we give thanks."

(Read the full release on Jacks at www.northdallasgazette.com.)