Volume XXXVI, Number L December 4-10, 2025

NORTHDALLASGAZETTE.COM NDG A DIVISION OF MINORITY OPPORTUNITY NEWS, INC. FOUNDED 1991 PRINT / WEB / VIDEO

North Dallas Gazette

"Most respected Voice of the Minority Community"

Visit us online at www.northdallasgazette.com

Noted Black Farmer Says Trump is Destroying the U.S. Cattle Industry

John Boyd Jr., President of the National Black Farmers Association (NBFA), The American cattle industry is entering one of its most alarming moments in recent years. Livestock operators across the country are reporting a sudden and steep drop in feeder-cattle prices — a blow hitting producers at the very moment consumers are facing historically high beef costs at the grocery store.

This week, Boyd, issued an urgent warning following new market data showing feeder-cattle futures have sharply plunged after previous highs. Boyd confirmed what ranchers nationwide are experiencing:

"The feeder cattle I personally sold last week are significantly down in price."

Boyd placed responsibility on former President Donald Trump's policy decisions, including increased reliance on imported beef, particularly from South America, which he warns is crippling domestic producers.

As beef prices soar for consumers and ranchers suffer, NBFA Founder & President John Boyd accuses the Trump administration's import-heavy policy of destroying America's cattle industry, and warns rural farmers may not survive the fallout. (Courtesy photo)

"President Trump has ruined agriculture and American farmers," Boyd stated. "When he announced he was going to import beef from his buddy in Argentina, it was downhill from that point."

This unfolding crisis reflects more than just market volatility; it represents a direct threat to the livelihoods of family ranchers and rural communities nationwide. While store-bought beef remains expensive, the farmers who raise America's cattle are receiving less

See CATTLE, Page 10

Inside...

People In The News ...

Dr. Sh-Shanna Ellington

Denise McGovern

NDG Quote of the Week:

"Our nation is a rainbow - red, yellow, brown, black, and white - and we're all precious in God's sight." - Jesse Jackson

The Myth of a $100 Million Contract

- See Page 3

A Rise in the 'Deaths of Despair'

- See Page 4

'Big Ugly Bill' Hits Black Nurses Hard

- See Page 5

The Student CEOs of PVAMU

- See Page 6

DART Marks Rosa Parks Day

- See Page 7

Cowboys Are Back Above 500

- See Page 8

'The Smashing Machine' Has Ups and Downs

- See Page 9

Sister Tarpley: Story of the Candy Cane

- See Page 15

Dr. Sh-Shanna Ellington

By Christine Won
PVAMU


PVAMU

Prairie View A&M University alumna Dr. Sh-Shanna Ellington '24, armed with the "can-do" spirit instilled in her at the University, has been promoted to Superintendent of Police in the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF).

It is a milestone moment not just of personal achievement but one of profound responsibility, she said.

"What's next is the relentless pursuit of a safer Jamaica," Dr. Ellington said. "I am focused on establishing a model of policing that is people-focused, quality-driven, technology-intensive, deeply integrated with the community, and so professionally effective that it becomes a sustainable, international standard."

As Jamaica gains international recognition as a model for addressing crime, Dr. Ellington said she is excited to lead during this critical moment of change.

"What excites me most is the opportunity to move beyond traditional policing models and fully implement a technology-driven, community-centric, and evidence-based approach," Dr. Ellington said. "This is a pivotal time where global best practices are converging with strong political will and community engagement right here in Jamaica."

Her priorities center on the JCF's Transformation 2.0 strategic framework. She outlined the Commissioner's three focus areas: professional development, data-driven policing, and public engagement. She plans to emphasize integrity in training, implement predictive policing tools, and strengthen trust between officers, residents, and community leaders. The Jamaican government has set a goal of reducing murders to under 1,000, a milestone not achieved since 2003, and some experts believe that, if current trends continue, the number could even fall below 800.

Dr. Ellington credits her time at PVAMU, which she said gave her a critical understanding of the societal issues driving crime, as well as imparted the importance of intellectual rigor, transformational leadership, and evidence-based decision-making.

"The program stressed rigorous research methodology, ethical leadership, and the crucial intersection of law, sociology, strategic policy, and community development," she said.

Her story is one of "resilience, service, and boundless ambition."

Dr. Ellington, from Kingston, Jamaica, who earned her PhD in juvenile justice at PVAMU in 2024, was the first in her family to earn a PhD.

Now, almost 16 years on the force, she assumes the role of Superintendent of Police with a vision for the future.

Her goal is to integrate data-driven strategies, technological advancements, and her background in juvenile justice to create lasting, sustainable, positive change.

Her passion for youth empowerment remains central to her work, and she plans to expand restorative justice practices, police-youth mentorship programs, and partnerships with schools and community groups.

For current students and alumni at the University, Dr. Ellington advised, "Never stop learning and embrace uncomfortable challenges."

But above all, she said, let integrity be "your non-negotiable capital."

"In a world of compromise, let your integrity be your absolute foundation," Dr. Ellington said. "People will follow your character long before they follow your title."

Looking ahead, Dr. Ellington said her vision is to build a safer Jamaica through a modern, community-focused policing model.

"The legacy I hope to build is not just one of lower crime rates, but one of a reformed and trusted police institution, where every citizen, especially the most vulnerable, feels safe, respected, and served," she said.

Denise McGovern

Friends of the Dallas Public Library named Denise McGovern as executive director on December 2, 2025. She will start in January of 2026 and lead advocacy for the Dallas Public Library.


Friends of the Dallas Library

Victory Search Group led the executive search process for the nonprofit group in Dallas. A board committee reviewed applicants and identified McGovern as the best choice for leadership.

"The search effort was detailed and thoughtful" said Ken Benson. "She will strengthen our work in Dallas and support libraries across the city."

McGovern served as a board member since 2021 and later became vice chair. Ms. McGovern has worked with leaders to support programs for twenty eight branches and one central location. Her service helped grow awareness of community needs and public access to learning resources.

Denise MsGovern brings more than 20 years of nonprofit leadership experience in Dallas. She worked at the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and directed media projects, while helping increase visibility for concerts across the world.

"Our mission requires energy and passion for advocacy" said Nicole Paquette. "She will help create strong partnerships and reach new supporters in every part of Dallas."

Friends of the Dallas Public Library marked seventy five years of service during 2025. The group supports programs events training and development for library staff members. They fund learning events for youth and adult education programs across the city.

"I have seen the power of public libraries in Dallas" said McGovern. "People need access to reading and learning and I want to support that work."

NDG
NORTHDALLASGAZETTE.COM
A DIVISION OF MINORITY OPPORTUNITY NEWS, INC.
PRINT / WEB / VIDEO

Visit Our Website
www.northdallasgazette.com

Chairman Emeritus
Jim Bochum
1933-2009

Chief Editor Emeritus
Ruth Ferguson
1965-2020

Published by
Minority Opportunity News, Inc.

Editorial Assistant / Writer
De'Shane Frye

Contributing Writers
Jamal Baker
Katherine M. Brown
Allen Gray
Jackie Hardy
Lori Lee
Terri Schlichenmeyer

Religious Editor Emeritus
Shirley Demus Tarpley
("Sister Tarpley")
1941-2024

Special Projects to the Publisher
Clinique Hill

Production
David Wilfong

75 YEARS NNPA

Publisher's Office:
publisher@northdallasgazette.com

Sales Department:
marketing@northdallasgazette.com

Editorial Department:
editor@northdallasgazette.com

The North Dallas Gazette, formerly Minority Opportunity News, was founded in July 1991, by Mr. Jim Bochum and Mr. Thurman R. Jones. North Dallas Gazette is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Minority Opportunity News, Inc.

P.O. Box 763866 - Dallas, Texas 75736-3866
Phone: 972-432-5219 - Fax: 972-509-9058

The Numbers Behind the Myth of the Hundred Million Dollar Contract

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

Image via NNPA

Odell Beckham Jr. did not spark controversy on purpose. He sat on The Pivot Podcast and tried to explain the math behind a deal that looks limitless from the outside but shrinks fast once the system takes its cut. He looked into the camera and tried to offer a truth most fans never hear. "You give somebody a five-year $100 million contract, right? What is it really? It is five years for sixty. You are getting taxed. Do the math. That is twelve million a year that you have to spend, use, save, invest, flaunt," said Beckham. He added that buying a car, buying his mother a house, and covering the costs of life all chip away at what people assume lasts forever.

The reaction was instant. Many heard entitlement. Many heard a millionaire complaining. What they missed was a glimpse into a professional world built on big numbers up front and a quiet erasing of those numbers behind the scenes.

The tax data in Beckham's world is not speculation. SmartAsset's research shows that top NFL players often lose close to half their income to federal taxes, state taxes, and local taxes. The analysis explains that athletes in California face a state rate of 13.3 percent and that players are also taxed in every state where they play road games, a structure widely known as the jock tax. For many players, that means filing up to ten separate returns and facing a combined tax burden that reaches or exceeds 50 percent.

A look across the league paints the same picture. The research lists star players in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland, all giving up between 43 and 47 percent of their football income before they ever touch a dollar. Star quarterback Phillip Rivers, at one point, was projected to lose half of his playing income to taxes alone.

A second financial breakdown from MGO CPA shows that the problem does not only affect the highest earners. A $1 million salary falls to about $529,000 after federal taxes, state and city taxes, an agent fee, and a contract deduction. According to that analysis, professional athletes typically take home around half of their contract value, and that is before rent, meals, training, travel, and support obligations are counted.

The structure of professional sports contracts adds another layer. A study of major deals across MLB, the NBA, and the NFL notes that long-term agreements lose value over time because the dollar today has more power than the dollar paid in the future. Even the largest deals shrink once adjusted for time. The study explains that contract size alone does not guarantee financial success and that structure and timing play a crucial role in a player's long-term outcomes.

Beckham has also faced headlines claiming he is "on the brink of bankruptcy despite earning over one hundred million" in his career. Those reports repeated his statement that "after taxes, it is only sixty million" and captured the disbelief from fans who could not understand how money at that level could ever tighten.

Other reactions lacked nuance. One article wrote that no one could relate to any struggle on eight million dollars a year. Another described his approach as "the definition of a new-money move" and argued that it signaled poor financial choices and inflated spending.

But the underlying truth reaches far beyond Beckham. Professional athletes enter sudden wealth without preparation. They carry the weight of family support. They navigate teams, agents, advisors, and expectations from every direction. Their earning window is brief. Their career can end in a moment. Their income is fragmented, taxed, and carved up before the public ever sees the real number.

The math is unflinching. Twenty million dollars becomes something closer to $8 million after federal taxes, state taxes, jock taxes, agent fees, training costs, and family responsibilities. Over five years, that is about $40 million of real, spendable income. It is transformative money, but not infinite. Not guaranteed. Not protected.

Beckham offered a question at the heart of this entire debate. "Can you make that last forever?"

Steep Rise in Alcohol-Related Liver Disease Contributing to 'Deaths of Despair' Phenomenon—While Impacting Nearly All Demographic Groups

(Newswise) — A striking rise in deaths from alcohol-related liver disease (ALD) is disproportionately impacting people without a college degree, flagging the heightened risk facing economically disadvantaged groups. That said, almost all demographic groups, including those with a college degree, are experiencing increased ALD death rates, according to an analysis in Alcohol: Clinical & Experimental Research. ALD is a leading contributor to alcohol-induced mortality in the US. Its growing threat is not fully explained by changes in alcohol use, and the socioeconomic disparities in alcohol-related mortality are widening. This speaks to the paradox that alcohol-related harms fall more heavily on the economically disadvantaged even when their drinking behaviors are similar to those of more affluent people.

DWG Studio

Investigators examined trends in ALD mortality among Americans aged 25 and older to see whether they aligned with the "deaths of despair" theory—elevated death rates among working-age adults without a college degree stemming from deteriorating social and economic conditions manifesting as behavioral health problems.

From 2001 to 2020, mortality rates from ALD rose by 63%, from 9 to 17 deaths per 100,000. Increases affected all demographic categories except Black Americans. White Americans and Asian Americans experienced steep rises. Women saw a greater proportional increase than men, likely reflecting their changing alcohol use patterns and greater susceptibility to alcohol-related liver damage.. The rate of ALD deaths rose faster among women without a college degree, especially non-Hispanic White women aged 45+, aligning with deaths of despair patterns. But even among college-educated women, rates of ALD nearly doubled. Among people aged 25–34, risk almost tripled; those aged 55–64 also experienced steep rises.

Based on a comparison of risk between groups, ALD mortality disparities widened by educational achievement, especially among non-Hispanic White men aged 55–74 and women aged 45–74. This supports the deaths-of-despair theory. The probability of dying by ALD also underscored the magnitude of risk for those without higher education.Among middle-aged men aged 55-74 without degrees, death rates have reached 50 per 100,000.

These disproportionate increases among socioeconomically disadvantaged people likely reflect uneven rates of obesity and diabetes, smoking, binge drinking, and other factors. The findings point to the importance of tailoring alcohol use guidelines and interventions to high-risk groups and for addressing the full spectrum of medical, behavioral, and social factors that elevate ALD risk.

Consequences Do Not Deter Young Adults from Using Alcohol and Cannabis Together

(Newswise) — Young adults who experience negative consequences from using both alcohol and cannabis simultaneously are likely to have fewer drinks the next time they drink, but are more likely to use cannabis and alcohol together. This unexpected finding from a study just published in Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research may suggest that young adults associate negative consequences with their drinking, not the combination of alcohol and cannabis use. The study highlights nuanced opportunities for 'teachable moments' to help reduce the harmful consequences of using cannabis and alcohol together.

Prior studies have shown that simultaneous use of alcohol and cannabis puts young adults at a greater risk for harm than using either alcohol or cannabis alone. Yet, concurrent use is quite prevalent among this age group, with nearly one out of five young adults using cannabis and alcohol together.

The current study sought to analyze how any consequences that young adults may experience while using alcohol and cannabis together influence whether they use the two substances simultaneously the next time they drink. Researchers tracked consequences reported by 18- to 25-year-old drinkers across the span of 60 days. The 89 participants reported almost one thousand episodes of simultaneous alcohol and cannabis use. When participants used both alcohol and cannabis at one event, 75 percent of the time they used both substances at the subsequent drinking event and consumed about four alcoholic drinks.

While participants who experienced more negative consequences from simultaneous use of alcohol and cannabis at one event were more likely to use cannabis and alcohol together at the next event and also more likely to consume less alcohol, positive consequences did not independently influence simultaneous use or quantity of alcohol consumed at the next event. But, when participants experienced both positive and negative consequences from simultaneous use, increased positive experiences dissolved any reductions in drinking if they used both substances together at the next event. The researchers suggest that this may indicate a bias toward reframing negative consequences as positive, or that young adults are using both substances simultaneously simply because they are both available. Future research exploring the relationship between young adults' perceptions of negative and positive consequences and their motives, expectations, and social contexts for simultaneous use of alcohol and cannabis.

Antibiotics Can Trigger Immune Response Through Gut Microbiome Metabolites

(Newswise) — The microbes inside our bodies not only help break down food but also impact our health. Yet their precise influence is not always understood, especially in the presence of prescription drugs. Now, researchers in ACS Central Science report how one of the most abundant gut bacteria responds to tetracyclines, a class of commonly prescribed antibiotics. Newly characterized signals released by the bacterium could aid the host's immune response, inhibit pathogens and restructure the gut microbiome.

"We previously showed that exogenous molecules can trigger production of otherwise 'hidden' metabolites in marine- and soil-dwelling microbes," says Mohammad Seyedsayamdost, the corresponding author of the study. "Our goal here was to extend this analysis to human microbiota and examine their responses to FDA-approved drugs."

Every day, medical professionals across the country prescribe drug treatments for a variety of ailments. Although these drugs may have their desired effect, there is also the possibility that they impact the microbes that keep us healthy. Antibiotics, for example, often inactivate not only offending microbes but also beneficial gut bacteria. Scientists have proposed the idea that consuming pharmaceuticals could also alter microbial metabolism, changing the compounds that bacteria release into the body and impacting human health. To study this, Seyedsayamdost and colleagues exposed separate cultures of the prominent gut microbe Bacteroides dorei to hundreds of U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved drugs — such as antihistamines, hypertension drugs, anticancer agents and antibiotics — and looked for metabolic changes compared to untreated bacterial cultures.

After incubating B. dorei with and without pharmaceuticals, the researchers isolated and identified compounds the bacterium secreted. Among the various drugs tested, low doses of tetracycline antibiotics

See GUT, Page 16

'Big Ugly Bill' Strips Nursing of Professional Status as Black Women Across the Nation Brace for Devastating Consequences

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

Image via NNPA

The Trump administration has declared that nursing is not a professional degree, striking directly at the heart of America's healthcare workforce and landing hardest on Black women, who make up nearly 13 percent of the national healthcare labor force and almost 10 percent of registered nurses.

The administration frames the move as a technical adjustment to loan classifications. For Black women and the communities that rely on them, the consequences are far more severe.

"This is a gut punch for nursing," Patricia Pittman of George Washington University stated. "Education from ADN to BSN and beyond is the single best way to retain nurses, especially in underserved communities."

Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, nursing, physical therapy, physician assistants, and other frontline health professions have been stripped of professional degree status. Students in these fields can borrow only $20,500 per year with a total cap of $100,000. Students in law, dentistry, medicine, and other protected fields can borrow up to $50,000 per year and $200,000 total. Nursing students report tuition and clinical training costs that far exceed the new caps, leaving many unable to continue their education.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing issued a direct warning. "Excluding nursing disregards the rigorous education, licensure, and direct patient care that define our profession," the organization stated. "This decision threatens the healthcare of patients in communities across the country."

The nation already faces a shortage of hundreds of thousands of nurses. Graduate degrees are required for advanced practice roles. Without meaningful access to federal loans, fewer students will enter or complete these programs. Black women, who rely on student loans at far higher rates than white students, now face a barrier to financial mobility and advancement in the nursing profession.

Research shows that Black nurses often serve in underserved rural and urban communities. Studies of Black nurse practitioners describe persistent racism, heavy workloads, and limited institutional support.

Participants in one national qualitative study described taking additional time to address inequities and care for patients facing social and economic barriers while contending with organizational barriers and burnout.

Kim Brundidge, a doctoral nursing student and practicing nurse, described the consequences for the next generation of providers. "If students are not able to afford advanced education, the quality and number of nurses entering the workforce will decline," she said.

Local and national nursing groups are preparing challenges to the reclassification. Leaders across the field warn that the bill undermines the country's ability to meet basic healthcare needs.

"In many communities across the country, advanced practice registered nurses ensure access to essential and high-quality care that would otherwise be unavailable," Jennifer Mensik Kennedy of the American Nurses Association said. "Limiting nurses' access to graduate education threatens the very foundation of patient care."

PVAMU Student CEOs: Turning Big Ideas into Bold Startups

By Christine Won
PVAMU

Prairie View A&M University senior Jayla Stanford, already the successful business owner of TreatsDippedByJay, is not alone in her success.

Finance major Alexander Hernandez has been developing a consulting initiative. He is still working on finalizing relevant trademarks and registration but is already managing three clients.

They're just two of the many PVAMU students building their own ventures while pursuing their degrees.

PVAMU continues to be a launching pad for student entrepreneurs, providing support, mentorship, and programs that turn ideas into thriving ventures.

College of Business Interim Dean Dr. Aneika Simmons, in her welcome message on the college website, shares a unified vision: to continue to be a premier business program recognized for its excellence in teaching, research, and service. The focus is to develop leaders with the goal of transforming students across all backgrounds into successful entrepreneurs who thrive in the global marketplace.

Instagram: treatsdippedbyjay

Inside the College of Business: A Hub for Future Entrepreneurs

Under that umbrella, the College of Business offers more than 10 minors, including Entrepreneurship, for those interested in being their own boss, offering a valuable foothold in the cutthroat world of business for the mavericks, pioneers, and fearless future business leaders.

Moreover, the COB's Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, which was established with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, aims to support PVAMU entrepreneurs' endeavors.

The center is what stood out to Hernandez, who also minors in Entrepreneurship.

"It's a place that feels alive with people who think differently," he says. It's full of curious minds, open conversations, and ambitions that collide in the best way. Everyone there wants to build something, not for the sake of competition, but for impact."

At Prairie View, Hernandez is not just earning a degree; he is gaining a new perspective and paradigm.

"I stopped seeing problems as walls and started seeing them as blueprints," he said. "That's what led me to the Innovation and Entrepreneurship minor. It isn't theory; it's movement. It's where ideas actually get tested, shaped and turned into something real."

Why Minors Matter

A minor often complements a student's major, offering a way to explore a personal interest or gain a specialized skill set that enhances their career path.

"A minor not only enhances your knowledge and broadens your skill set, but it also shows potential employers that you're driven and well-rounded," according to the National Society of High School Scholars.

At PVAMU, there are 1,696 students currently enrolled in minor programs, with more than ten enrolled in the Entrepreneurship minor.

National studies show that while a minor isn't a guarantee of a job, it can make a difference. Employers say they value skills and relevant coursework just as much as a student's major, according to surveys by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

"The continued advancement of knowledge and technology requires students to have skills and abilities in several key areas, making minors an important resource for students as they pursue a well-rounded education, career readiness, and increased marketability," Interim Dean Simmons said.

According to the ICEED Office of Innovation-Entrepreneurship (OIE), PVAMU has produced over 70 entrepreneurs, 50 startups, and hosted more than 20 competitions that provide hands-on, real-life experiences for students.

"The goal of our Entrepreneurship minor is to prepare students for today's rapidly changing technological landscape and dynamic markets by strengthening their capacity for innovation, strategic thinking, and value creation," Interim Dean Simmons said.

Innovative Entrepreneurs

Hernandez, a Houston native, said his drive to fix, build, and improve has been a part of his life for as long as he can remember.

"I've worked my whole life, as far back as I can remember," he said. "Even as a kid, I was always in the middle of something that needed fixing, figuring out better ways to make things

See PVAMU, Page 13

DART and Rep. Toni Rose Commemorate Rosa Parks Day with Special Bus Ceremony in Dallas

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), in partnership with State Representative Toni Rose, celebrated Rosa Parks Day on Monday, Dec. 1, 2025, with a morning program honoring the civil rights icon's enduring legacy and courage. Representative Rose, who serves Texas House District 110 covering Oak Cliff, Pleasant Grove, and Balch Springs, is a longtime advocate for equity and mobility justice in Dallas.

In 2021, Rose authored House Bill 3481, which passed unanimously, designating December 1 as Rosa Parks Day in Texas to honor her historic act of heroism on a Montgomery bus. "Rosa Parks' courage showed us what it means to take a stand by staying seated," Representative Rose said. "Her legacy reminds us transportation is about access, dignity, and opportunity for every community."

As part of the celebration, DART displayed one of its new buses featuring a commemorative placard on the headrest above the front seat, honoring Parks' refusal to give up her seat seventy years ago. The bus was stationed at Rosa Parks Plaza, providing photo opportunities and public viewing to educate and inspire attendees about her impact on civil rights.

Randall Bryant, Chairman of the DART Board of Directors, said, "Rosa Parks' bravery changed the course of American history, inspiring the work we continue to do every day." He emphasized that public transportation has played a critical role in the civil rights movement and remains central to equitable community service initiatives.

Rosa Parks Plaza, dedicated in her honor, serves as a prominent reminder of Parks' transformative influence on transit, civil rights, and American history. DART's commemoration reflects the agency's commitment to community-centered service and equitable access for all riders.

The program highlighted ongoing efforts to connect Dallas residents to safe, reliable, and dignified transportation options while honoring historical figures whose courage shaped the city's social and civic landscape. DART and Rep. Rose encourage the public to engage with Rosa Parks Plaza and reflect on her legacy in daily life.

Lewisville to Premiere Centennial Film 'Lewisville: 100 Years of Change'

The City of Lewisville will premiere the centennial-themed film Lewisville: 100 Years of Change on Saturday, December 13, 2025, at 3 p.m. The screening will take place in the Huffines Performance Hall at Lewisville Grand Theater, located at 100 N. Charles Street, and is part of the city's yearlong centennial celebration.

Lewisville: 100 Years of Change chronicles the city's transformation from a small farming community to a thriving North Texas city, featuring stories from longtime residents who witnessed Lewisville's tremendous growth firsthand. Many of these personal accounts have never been shared publicly, offering unique insight into the city's history.

The film incorporates archival photographs and footage to illustrate Lewisville's evolution, combining historical context with firsthand memories to present a compelling narrative of the city's past century. The documentary-style project was created by filmmaker Matthew Alson Thornbury, a former Lewisville resident commissioned by the city for the centennial celebration.

Following the screening, Lewisville Mayor TJ Gilmore will host a mayoral roundtable discussion, inviting the audience to participate with questions for former mayors David Denison (1973-1977), Bobbie Mitchell (1993-2000), and Dean Ueckert (2009-2015). The discussion will highlight leadership, community development, and the city's evolution over time.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn from both the documentary and the roundtable discussion, gaining a deeper understanding of Lewisville's history, culture, and civic milestones. The event aims to connect residents with the city's legacy while celebrating achievements over the past 100 years.

The Lewisville Centennial Celebration continues throughout 2025 and 2026, with Lewisville: 100 Years of Change serving as a centerpiece event. Residents are encouraged to attend and engage with the film and discussion to commemorate the city's historic centennial milestone.

Dallas Surges Above .500 as Playoff Race Heats Up

By Jamal Baker
NDG Contributing Writer

The Dallas Cowboys are officially revitalized and riding a three-game winning streak after defeating the Super Bowl runner-up Kansas City Chiefs 31–28 on Thanksgiving Day at AT&T Stadium

Sitting at 6-5-1, the Cowboys are above .500 for the first time this season and heating up at the right time, with a postseason berth now well within reach.

"We'll play anybody, anywhere," head coach Brian Schottenheimer said. "I think you can see that by what we've done the last couple of weeks. The moment's not too big for us, we just play. And then we know the fourth quarter's going to come, and when the fourth quarter comes, we know we're going to find a way to win. And I think you just keep doing that."

Confidence is growing within the Dallas locker room as both sides of the ball are now playing complimentary football.

Quarterback Dak Prescott continued his hot streak Thursday, posting 320 passing yards and two touchdowns—bringing his total to nine scores over his last three games.

"We can be whatever we want to be," Prescott said. "Everything's in front of us. I just was telling the offense that, when we're in those kneel downs at the end of the game, but it's not going to happen next Thursday. It's going to happen Sunday when we get in the building.

"It's just taking it one day at a time, putting everything in, understanding that we win during the week with our preparation and that we just get to come out here and play the game that we love and playing it free. All these wins, all they've done is just given us more and more confidence."

Wide receiver CeeDee Lamb heard the noise surrounding his name after suffering multiple drops against the Philadelphia Eagles and responded in dominant fashion.

Lamb recorded seven catches for 112 yards and a touchdown—reminding those that disrespected his name that he is a true superstar.

"It's a team achievement and, overall, for myself, it's just good to be back on the right track," said Lamb. "... It's how it goes. No one can really guard me. It was just me dropping the ball, and I don't do that often, so it's just a series of events. It was a great experience for me.

"I learned a lot, and we move forward."

The trade deadline additions of defensive tackle Quinnen Williams and linebacker Logan Wilson, along with the return of injured players like linebacker DeMarvion Overshown and cornerback Shavon Revel, have provided the extra boost the Cowboys' defense desperately needed.

"I think it's getting better week in and week out by the good things we've been doing as a unit," Williams said. "We still have a lot of things to clean up, a lot of things to get better in, but I think we're going in the right direction to be the defense that we want to be. We got a long way to go, but everybody's up for the task to achieve the goal that we want to achieve."

More help is on the way for the defense as cornerback Trevon Diggs has returned to practice after missing the previous six games for the Cowboys.

"I'm really excited," Diggs said. "I feel like momentum is going, and I just want to make sure I go out there and continue the momentum, put out great effort, make plays, and just continue to try and help this team win."

In what will feel like a playoff atmosphere Thursday night in Detroit, the Cowboys will take on a Lions team also fighting for a postseason spot.

Buckle up, ladies and gentlemen—December football is here, and the Cowboys look poised to make a Cinderella run.

Klyde Warren Park Hosts 2025 Mayor's Tree Lighting Celebration on Dec. 6

DWG Studio

Klyde Warren Park will host the annual Mayor's Tree Lighting Celebration on Saturday, December 6. This free family-friendly event invites North Texans to enjoy holiday cheer and beloved community traditions.

Energy Transfer presents the celebration featuring music, dance, movies, and activities for all ages. The 52-foot Mayor's Tree lights at 6 p.m. with 37,500 bright LED lights. A total of 3,836 ornaments decorate the tree, illuminating the park through Jan. 5, 2026.

Guests can enjoy Santa photos, story time, face painting, balloon artists, and holiday marketplace vendors. Frosty, Rudolph, DJ Richy Smart, Frozen, and The Nutcracker appear during the festive programming.

Honorary Event Chairs include the Catalina Gonzalez Jorba and Santiago Jorba family supporting community involvement. Kit Sawers and Jesse Moreno will be available for interviews before and during Saturday's celebration.

The event runs Dec. 6 from 4 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. at Klyde Warren Park. These celebrations strengthen community connections and highlight traditions emphasizing togetherness, gratitude, and seasonal joy.

Film Review: 'The Smashing Machine' Has Its Ups and Downs

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

Courtesy Toronto Film Festival

(***) "Am I going to hurt him befor he hurts me?"

That's what's on the mind of mixed martial arts (MMA) champion fighter Mark Kerr before every match. He developed that aggressive stance early in life. Born in Toledo, Ohio, to an Irish dad and Puerto Rican mom, as a kid he was a World Wrestling Federation (WWF) fan who wrestled in his backyard. Years later becoming a high school state champion, winning wrestling awards at Syracuse University and earning a silver medal at the 1995 Pan American Games.

Kerr's amateur wrestling experience helped when he transitioned into mixed martial arts. He famously became a pioneer of the full-contact fighting sport that embodies striking, grappling and other combat sports from around the world. That set the stage for him becoming one of the first stars in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) world. They called him "The Smashing Machine," because of his brutal fighting stye.

That's Kerr's backstory. In his biofilm, indie writer/director Benny Safdie (Uncut Gems) catches Kerr (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson) at the heights and depths of his fame. He's partnered with his girlfriend Dawn Staples (Emily Blunt), has a deep friendship with fellow MMA fighter Mark Coleman (Ryan Bader). and is coached by Bas (Bas Rutten, MMA champ; Paul Blart: Mall Cop). Kerr knows how to kick ass and holds the record for the longest winning streak for an MMA Bellator Heavyweight Champion.

During his high-profile career, Kerr garnered fans around the world. Particularly in Japan, where martials arts is extremely popular. The wins have come at a price for the big gregarious man who's surprisingly soft spoken outside the ring. The chronic pain he suffers, from countless injuries, has made Advil about as effective as a cough drop.

It's a big boy pain that's only soothed by narcotics. Drugs that are changing Kerr's personality and starting to drive a wedge between Dawn and him. Now they're fighting a lot. Romantic bliss is overshadowed by scream fests. In fairness to him, sometimes when he needs to concentrate just before a match and block out extraneous stimuli, she becomes an unwanted distraction. She's there to support him ostensibly but making her feelings dominate the conversation. Dawn: "I just need you to let me in." Kerr exasperated and trying to block her whining out: "It's always about you. Only about f—ing you!"

Safdie's surprisingly deep script takes audiences into the nooks and crannies of the MMA world. It deglamorizes the sport, goes behind the spectacle and introduces audiences to the humans that are taking punches and kicks to the face for money, the joy of fans and an adrenaline rush. The involving, docudrama, cinema verité style reveals a lot. Similar to the way filmmaker Darren Aronofsky showcased the wrestling world with his 2008 film The Wrestler, starring Mickey Rourke. You can almost smell the sweat off Kerr's body. When he shoots up opioids, you wince because it looks just real enough to be repulsive.

Safdie and cinematographer Maceo Bishop, with his grainy, video-looking, fly-on-the-wall camerawork, never intrude on the actors. They hover over shoulders and bring you into their lives. The Phoenix, AZ homes and arena locker rooms seem real (production designer James Chinlund). What they wear fits them whether they're glammed up or dressed down (costume designer Heidi Bivens). Between the brutal fighting, tense arguments and moments of exaltation, the footage is pretty lean because Safdie as an editor makes judicious cuts. Jazz interludes and Elvis's bellowing of "My Way" display a full array of musical tastes that are complemented by Nala Sineprho's musical score.

Johnson is just one of many wrestlers who've jumped into acting. However, he distinguishes himself from others because he gets under a character's skin and emotes in ways that are believable and touching. But there's a key difference with this characterization. He isn't a larger-than-life hero. He doesn't have all the answers and likely won't come to save the day. That's not the life Kerr led. He was a champ who became a broken man, then found a way to survive his physical and emotional scars. Johnson plays him that way. No frills.

Scenes in the ring are up Johnson's alley. However, surprisingly, he excels more in the dramatic sequences with his emotional tug-of-wars with Dawn. He handles the weird blend of happiness, fear, sadness and anger well. Well enough for Blunt to build off those volatile feelings and turn her version of Dawn from a supportive, mouthy spouse to a ball-busting, self-centered saboteur. This is one of Blunt's best performances. Also, MMA fans may be surprised to see Bader go far deeper into his Coleman character than they could ever fathom.

This is an intriguing sports movie. Certainly not as uplifting as popular pugilist films like Rocky or Creed. Different. Filled with ups and downs. And the downs go deep into a world of addiction.

Those who see his gritty biopic will learn that you can take the dog out of the fight, but you can't take the fight out of the dog. They'll know because the director, Johnson and the cast and crew told them so.

For more information about the Toronto International Film Festival go to https://tiff.net/.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrown-Ink.com.

'Lewisville: 100 Years of Change' to Premiere at Grand Theater

The City of Lewisville will premiere the centennial-themed film Lewisville: 100 Years of Change on Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, at 3 p.m. The screening will take place in the Huffines Performance Hall at Lewisville Grand Theater, located at 100 N. Charles Street, and is part of the city's yearlong centennial celebration.

lewisvilletx100.com

Lewisville: 100 Years of Change chronicles the city's transformation from a small farming community to a thriving North Texas city, featuring stories from longtime residents who witnessed Lewisville's tremendous growth firsthand. Many of these personal accounts have never been shared publicly, offering unique insight into the city's history.

The film incorporates archival photographs and footage to illustrate Lewisville's evolution, combining historical context with firsthand memories to present a compelling narrative of the city's past century. The documentary-style project was created by filmmaker Matthew Alson Thornbury, a former Lewisville resident commissioned by the city for the centennial celebration.

Following the screening, Lewisville Mayor TJ Gilmore will host a mayoral roundtable discussion, inviting the audience to participate with questions for former mayors David Denison (1973-1977), Bobbie Mitchell (1993-2000), and Dean Ueckert (2009-2015). The discussion will highlight leadership, community development, and the city's evolution over time.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn from both the documentary and the roundtable discussion, gaining a deeper understanding of Lewisville's history, culture, and civic milestones.

The event aims to connect residents with the city's legacy while celebrating achievements over the past 100 years.

The Lewisville Centennial Celebration continues throughout 2025 and 2026, with Lewisville: 100 Years of Change serving as a centerpiece event. Residents are encouraged to attend and engage with the film and discussion to commemorate the city's historic centennial milestone.

Gabriel Awards Launch 2026 Competition, Celebrating 60 Years of Inspiring Media

Ready to submit your work for recognition from a respected and long-standing media institution. The 2026 Gabriel Awards honor storytelling that uplifts audiences and highlights hope within human experiences.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of this program celebrating excellence across multiple media formats.

Updated category descriptions offer clearer guidance to help creators choose appropriate divisions for submissions.

Producers should carefully review categories and confirm eligibility dates before beginning the submission process. Applicants must gather links or files early to prevent upload delays near the approaching deadline. Submissions close Jan. 30, 2026, giving entrants limited time for careful preparation.

CATTLE, from Page 1

and less for their livestock, creating a widening gap that is squeezing producers from all sides. Rising feed costs, unpredictable environmental conditions, and a flood of imported beef are combining to create an environment where many long-standing cattle operations may not survive.

The National Black Farmers Association remains committed to advocating for fair markets, honest pricing, and policies that strengthen, not undermine American agriculture. John Boyd continues to call for greater transparency, stronger domestic protections, and immediate action to stabilize the industry before further damage occurs. The future of American cattle producers depends on leadership that values domestic production and prioritizes the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

In moments like this, it is more important than ever to stand firmly with America's farmers and support the National Black Farmers Association as we continue fighting for fair markets, equitable policies, and the survival of family agriculture.

Tax Refunds Expected to Rise by About $1,000 Next Year

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

Image via NNPA

Federal tax refunds are positioned for a sharp rise next year, with new projections showing that the average payment could increase by about $1,000 for millions of Americans.

Analysts expect the typical refund to reach roughly $4,151 for the 2026 filing season, a major jump from the $3,151 average refund taxpayers received during the 2025 season.

CBS News reported that IRS filing data has revealed that the average direct deposit refund for 2025 stands at $3,151, up from $3,092 the prior year.

"When people go to file, they'll be surprised by really, really large refunds," Don Schneider, deputy head of U.S. policy at Piper Sandler and one of the report's authors, said in a recent podcast about the analysis. "In a typical year, we might have about $270 billion in tax refunds, and it'll be that plus another $90 billion."

Analysts expected a spike to come after the Trump administration's sweeping tax and spending law was signed in July.

The law eliminates federal taxes on some overtime and tipped income and lifts the state and local tax deduction cap from $10,000 to $40,000. All changes were made retroactive to 2025, setting up larger refunds when taxpayers file in early 2026.

Because most Americans receive their refunds within about 21 days of filing, the size of those payments often carries significant weight in household budgets. Next year could bring one of the biggest refund seasons on record.

The benefits will not be evenly shared. Piper Sandler's analysis shows middle and upper-middle income households, those earning between $60,000 and $400,000, stand to gain the most.

That finding matches a Tax Policy Center review that estimated that people earning more than $217,000 receive six of every ten dollars in new tax breaks created by the July law.

High earners will see some limits. The expanded $40,000 SALT deduction begins to phase out for households earning more than $500,000. Lower-income filers are also unlikely to benefit because the higher SALT cap only helps people whose state and local tax bills exceed the standard deduction. Filers must itemize to claim it, which tax experts note is less common among lower-income households.

Schneider said the impact falls primarily on households in the middle of the income distribution rather than those at the lowest or highest ends.

"This isn't going to the very bottom of the distribution. It isn't going to the very top of the distribution either," Scheider said.

When Computers Took Over the Factory Floor: Case Western Reserve Economist Traces How Workers Adapted—and What It Means for AI's Future

(Newswise) — In the early 1970s, a quiet revolution began in American factories. Lathes, drill presses and milling machines—once guided by the steady hands of skilled machinists—started thinking for themselves.

Computer numerical control (CNC) technology, as it was called, transformed these tools into automated systems that could execute complex operations from programmed instructions—with no human touch required.

Sound familiar?

As artificial intelligence (AI) stands to automate white-collar work on an unprecedented scale, a new study co-authored by Case Western Reserve University economist David Clingingsmith examines what happened another time computers came for American jobs—and what it can teach us today.

The research, conducted with researchers from Yale and Brandeis universities and published in the Review of Economics and Statistics, meticulously traces how computerized machine tools reshaped manufacturing from 1970 to 2010. The team built a detailed measure of which industries and regions were hit hardest, then tracked long-term impacts on productivity, jobs and workers.

"This is the missing chapter in America's automation story—the bridge between factory electrification and today's robots and AI," said Clingingsmith, associate professor of economics at Weatherhead School of Management. "What surprised us was how well workers adapted. They didn't just lose jobs and disappear. They fought back."

That fight took several forms.

Clingingsmith said workers left metal manufacturing for plastics or wood products—industries computers couldn't yet master—or moved into wholesale and retail trade. Union protection made a crucial difference: In the 1970s, 45% of metalworkers belonged to unions that could negotiate job protections and retraining programs. Others returned to school, as colleges quickly added degrees in computer-aided manufacturing and engineering.

The result? Unlike the robot revolution of recent decades, CNC automation boosted productivity without triggering net job losses in affected areas.

"Those transitions weren't painless," Clingingsmith cautioned. "When you lose a good job and your role falls out of an industry, you can end up on a lower trajectory—even if you adapt."

Key findings from the study include:

• Productivity and jobs: CNC technology boosted labor productivity by 7% but reduced production employment by 12%, with job losses concentrated among non-union, mid-skilled workers with a high school education or less.

• Skills shifts: Employment declined 24% for high school dropouts but increased 17% for college graduates, reflecting automation's displacement of routine tasks and creation of new demand for programming skills.

• Adaptation: Displaced workers successfully shifted to non-metal manufacturing and retail sectors, while enrollment in CNC-related college programs surged as workers retrained for higher-skilled positions.

Clingingsmith said the findings shed light on today's AI debate. CNC technology mainly affected middle-income workers, such as machinists and autoworkers. AI, by contrast, could "come for the jobs" of highly educated professionals in law and finance and others in customer service positions.

"The workforce adapted to computers in the 1970s,

See WORKERS, Page 13

WORKERS, from Page 12

but the conditions that made that possible—strong unions, concentrated industry impacts and available alternatives—may not exist for the AI transition," Clingingsmith said. "We can't insulate workers from technological change, but we can help them adjust. That means recognizing how education needs will shift and ensuring people have paths to retraining."

The regions hardest hit by CNC automation—the Rust Belt and what Clingingsmith calls the "aircraft manufacturing archipelago" of Southern California and suburban Seattle—offer another lesson.

"Clusters still matter," he said. "The same places that once lost factory jobs could become growth engines again for high-value manufacturing if we invest in the skills and systems to support them."

PVAMU, from Page 6

run."

He says he has never been the type to sit still, always asking the question, "How can this be improved?"

That question has followed him everywhere to this day.

After graduation, Hernandez plans to work in finance and consulting while continuing to build ventures that support small businesses and promote local economic growth. In the long term, he aims to create a unified community space that seamlessly blends culture, design, and opportunity.

"A place that connects people, encourages walkability and brings together small and large businesses to create lasting impact," he said. "This minor gave me the tools and confidence to see how ideas like that can actually happen."

Hernandez isn't the only one turning ideas into impact. Across campus, more PVAMU students are finding their entrepreneurial footing through the minor's mix of creativity and strategy.

PVAMU Junior Management Major R'Tyvia Lavan is already a business owner. At Prairie View, she is combining education from her business classes with her real-life, experiential knowledge, as both a student and an entrepreneur.

After graduating, Lavan aims to become a licensed aesthetician and owner of what she calls a "one-stop spa," where people can relax, recharge, and feel beautiful inside and out.

"My goal is to run my business with confidence and purpose, creating a space that inspires self-care, positivity, and empowerment in everyone who walks through the door," Lavan said, who is also minoring in Entrepreneurship.

Reagan Culclager, a senior majoring in Business Marketing with a minor in Entrepreneurship, is working toward eventually opening her own law firm. Although she does not currently own a business, Culclager said her coursework is helping her build the foundation to start one in the future. More than that, it gives her confidence that she can turn that dream into reality.

Culclager credits the program, and especially courses taught by Professor Philip Bouchard, with shaping her entrepreneurial mindset. "His lessons have taught me key fundamentals of entrepreneurship that have been both entertaining and impactful," she said.

Tristan Jackson, another student in the Entrepreneurship minor program, has always been sales-oriented. During his freshman year, he said he found himself constantly searching for popular products to resell until he had an epiphany.

He can create that viral product and be his own boss.

"That realization sparked my passion for entrepreneurship and gave me the confidence to turn ideas into action," he said.

Currently, he has his own beverage company, which he founded as a student, Peu Flava Tops, which he plans to continue scaling after graduation.

"My goal is to build innovative, community-driven ventures that create opportunities for others and leave a lasting impact," Jackson said.

An Inspiring Generation

Together, these students represent a new generation of PVAMU innovators: bold thinkers shaping businesses that serve their communities and redefine what it means to be a Panther entrepreneur.

From startups to social ventures, PVAMU students are proving that great ideas can grow anywhere when given the right support. The Entrepreneurship minor helps turn passion into purpose by connecting students with the skills, networks, and opportunities to launch what's next.

To explore the Entrepreneurship minor and other programs in PVAMU's College of Business, visit pvamu.edu/cob.

The Turkey Is My Gobble, Gobble Wish List

By Dr. James L. Snyder

What I enjoy the most about holidays is the "eating frenzy." It gives me opportunity to get away with a lot behind The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's back, which is a great challenge. I'm not always successful, but I try and I have my family to thank for that.

In the last few years, I have had some health issues, beginning with a heart attack, which was not that bad because I survived without any issues. Other issues concerning my health have developed over the years, requiring me to be on health pills.

Nobody knows more about that than The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. She oversees my medical pills daily. When I wake up in the morning, my medications are ready for me to take. Maybe I've become a drug addict!

I can handle all of these pills as long as they keep me healthy. What I have a hard time handling is my diet. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has me on a very strict diet that eliminates sugar in every category. I'm not allowed to have sugar or any foods that contain it. I really didn't know how many foods had sugar.

She is quite overseeing in this regard for me. I have no idea what pills I am taking, but I leave that in the very qualified hands of The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. She knows medicine better than the doctors I know. She goes with me on every doctor's visit and communicates with the doctor regarding my medicines.

Although my diet is very strict in this regard, the holiday season enables me to compromise it just a little behind the back of you know who.. When we have a family gathering around the dinner table with that big Turkey in the middle, there are all kinds of sugar-saturated foods there, much to the chagrin of The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Being a family holiday gathering there is little she can do about it. They all bring their favorite food and much of it has sugar in it.

Usually, we have around 12 family members at these dinners, including several infants full of energy, which is a distraction and makes my sneaky plan more possible and easier to pull off.

If I eat something with sugar in it, and The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage doesn't see me eat it, I'm off free and that sugar is at my most gracious disposal. During the last 10 years following my heart attack, I have worked on this to perfect it. I'm not there yet but I'm working on it..

Throughout this family Thanksgiving celebration, I keep boasting about the turkey and how delicious it is, and I get others around the table to talk about it in order to divert attention from my plan. Now, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is actively involved in the serving of this meal.

My plan is to sneak a sugar-laden cookie or two from the table when she is distracted. With doughnuts, cookies, and pies all around, I couldn't be in a better place.

When I want to pick up a cookie, I will cause a little distraction and talk about how delicious that turkey was, and whoever made that turkey is a genius. Everybody will laugh and point to the person who baked that turkey, none other than The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Everybody will be laughing while behind the laughing I sneak a few cookies and slide them onto my plate.

After all, how can I get caught eating something somebody in our family baked? It would be very rude for me not to eat something that someone in our family brought to the meal. That is, everything but broccoli.

Those Thanksgiving dinners are some of the most wonderful times of the year. Yes, I love and enjoy the turkey. But if I can use the turkey to create a shield to sneak several cookies, it is that much more delicious.

After the meal when everybody has gone, I usually go and sit down in my easy chair and relax a bit and reflect on our time around the Thanksgiving table.

It is then that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage will come and say, "I know you didn't eat any cookies during the meal so I thought I would bring you one in appreciation of your faithful abstinence."

Nothing feels more wonderful than when a plan comes together. I'm not sure who is tricking whom here. Did I tricked her, or is she tricking me into believing that she didn't see me take some cookies off the table?

I look at her and say very cheerfully, "You know those pies on the table today looked so delicious and I was so tempted when looking at them."

"Well," she said, "maybe I will let you have a small piece of pumpkin pie tonight for supper."

Refusing her offer would be stupid; I munched her cookie, dreaming of the pumpkin pie I'd enjoy later-life's perfect moment.

As I was thinking of our family celebration I was reminded of a Bible verse, Psalm 127:3, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

Thinking about my family at our Thanksgiving celebration caused me to remember how blessed I am. My goal is not to take this blessing for granted but thank God each day for it.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamessnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamessnyderministries.com.

Story of the Candy Cane

Sister Tarpley
NDG Religion Editor

Some Things to think about this Holiday Season: The story is told of a Candy Maker in Indiana who wanted to make a candy that would be a witness for Christ, so he made a Christmas Candy Cane.

He began with a stick of pure white, hard candy. The white part of the candy was to symbolize the Virgin Birth and the sinless nature of Jesus. The hard part of the candy was to symbolize Him as the Solid Rock, the foundation of the Church and the firmness of the promises of God.

The Candy Maker made the candy in the form of a "J" to represent the precious name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Lord and Savior. It could also represent the staff of the "Good Shepherd" with which He reaches down into the ditches of the World to lift out the fallen lambs, whom, like all Sheep have gone astray.

Thinking that the candy was somewhat plain, the Candy Maker stained it with red stripes. He used three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received by which we are healed.

The large red stripe was for the blood that was shed by Jesus Christ on the cross so that if we had faith in Him and believed, we could have the promise of eternal life.

Unfortunately, the candy became known simply a Candy Cane; a meaningless decoration seen only at Christmas time.

However, the meaning is still there for those who, "Have eyes to see and ears to hear." I pray that this symbol will again be used to witness to the Wonder of Jesus and His ultimate and dominant force in the universe today.

Also this season as you are shopping for gifts for family, friends and coworkers, remember that God has a place where things are freely given to everyone. Along with your gifts tell your family and friends about this unique store:

Heaven's Grocery Store – As I was walking down life's highway some time ago; I saw a sign that read "Heaven's Grocery Store"; as I got closer the door opened wide, and when I came to myself I was standing inside.

I saw a host of Angels; they were everywhere; one handed me a basket and said, "My child, shop with care."

Everything a Christian needed was in that grocery store and all that you couldn't carry you could come back the next day for more.

First, I picked some Patience, Longsuffering and Gentleness. Love and Goodness were in the next row. Further down the aisle on a shelf there was some Understanding, I know that I would need it everywhere I go.

I got two boxes of God's Wisdom, two bags of Faith and I picked up some Temperance too. I just couldn't miss the Holy Spirit for it was all over the place. I stopped to get some Strength and Courage to help me run this race.

By then my basket was getting full, but I remembered that I needed some of God's mighty Grace. I'm glad that I didn't forget Salvation for it is free also; I tried to get enough of it for you and me.

I started to the counter to pay my grocery bill, for I thought I had everything to do my Master's Will. As I went up the aisle, I saw The Power of Prayer; I simply had to put that in the basket, for I knew that when I stepped outside, I would run right into sin.

Joy, Peace, and Meekness were all plentiful; they were on the last shelf. Songs and Praises were hanging near so I helped myself. Then I said to the Angel, "How much do I owe?"

The Angel smiled and said, "Not a thing, just take them everywhere you go." I smiled at the Angel and said, "Really, how much do I owe?" The Angel smiled again and said, "My child, Jesus paid your bill a long time ago!"

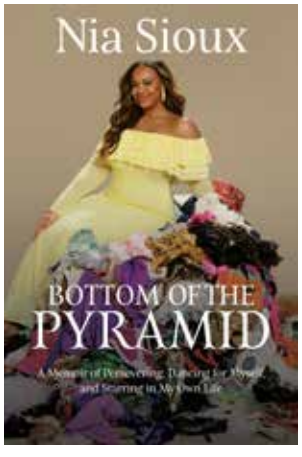
(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in December 2014. It has been edited for space.)

NDG Bookshelf: 'Bottom of the Pyramid' Exceeds the Usual Memoir

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Every solid building has a strong foundation.

And when you're hired for a new job, that's where you start: at the bottom, in the back office, the least position, the lowest rung. You won't stay there long, if you can overcome the obstacles and seize all opportunities. It won't be easy but you can do it. As in the new memoir, "Bottom of the Pyramid" by Nia Sioux, when you're in last place, there's nowhere to go but up.



Nia Sioux always loved the stage.

Born into an upper-middle-class family, Sioux remembers how much she wanted to take dance classes when she was a preschooler, and that her parents were happy to support her interests. Fortunately, there was a dance studio just down the road from their Pittsburgh home, and so Sioux started classes at Dance Masters of Pennsylvania, later renamed Abby Lee Dance Company (ALDC). There, she worked hard and gradually moved up in the team's lineup, garnering praise and solo dances.

Quickly, the solos, she says, made her mother very uncomfortable. There seemed to be racial undertones to the costumes Sioux was made to wear, and the music didn't seem appropriate for a little Black girl.

Mother and daughter discussed it, and Sioux's eagerness overcame any doubt.

Later, when Lifetime Channel interviewed ALDC dancers for a TV show that was eventually called Dance Moms, Sioux was overjoyed to be chosen as one of the show's performers. For awhile, she was the only Black dancer in the team – and that became a problem.

Infamously, the show introduced a "pyramid" in which Abby ranked the dancers, and Sioux was almost always at the bottom. Drama was encouraged, criticism was swift, and there seemed to be a lot of favoritism within the dancers' hierarchy. She endured the pain of it but ultimately, she seized other opportunities and decided to quit Dance Moms.

"I'd gotten a glimpse of what my life could look like without the show," she says, "and it was beautiful."

No one who's ever watched a half-hour of reality TV should be surprised that author Nia Sioux has written this book, or that what she says happened, happened. The surprise is that "Bottom of the Pyramid" is so entertaining and so satisfying.

Going beyond the usual memoir and past the show's curtain, Sioux shares her life story and its ups and downs, professionally and otherwise. There's a lot of gratitude in that, plus strength and determination – but also some swiping, sniping, and resentment, all of which are like catnip to reality fans. Still, Sioux reminds readers that there were actual humans, young women, behind the lines and second-takes for the camera, and that the over-the-top theatrics could be negatively impactful on their tender lives.

For a reality TV watcher or a fan of the show, past or present, that's a good reminder to watch for authenticity inside the drama. If you never missed an episode of the show or you want to follow the stars, "Bottom of the Pyramid" is a good place to start.

McKinney Records Strong Year of Hotel Occupancy Tax Revenue in FY24-25

The City of McKinney's hospitality industry achieved record hotel occupancy tax revenue in FY24-25, demonstrating unprecedented growth. Year-end figures show over $3.3 million collected, surpassing last year's total by $200,000, a 6.7% increase. This milestone reflects the city's growing appeal as a destination for both business and leisure travelers, highlighting McKinney's expanding tourism profile and economic impact.

Flimbone08 / Wikimedia

Hotels consistently outperformed prior-year revenue benchmarks, with every month posting year-over-year gains throughout 2025. June and July were especially strong, with double-digit increases of 12.6% and 12.4% respectively compared to the same months in 2024. Occupancy rates held steady at 71.2%, reflecting a healthy mix of short-term and extended-stay visitors across more than 20 hotels and 300 short-term rental properties.

Rising occupancy rates have created opportunities for new development, including full-service hotels and resort-style properties expected to open in 2026. Several new properties will include Avid Hotel, AC Marriott, and a dual property combining La Quinta and Hawthorn Suites. The city is also supporting the JW Marriott Resort Hotel near Craig Ranch through an economic development agreement, with groundbreaking expected before the end of 2025. This resort will feature 290 guest rooms, more than 51,000 square feet of event space, and luxury amenities for both business and leisure guests.

Hotel occupancy taxes are being reinvested into McKinney's tourism infrastructure, marketing campaigns, and visitor programming. Year-round events, corporate meetings, weddings, and sporting tournaments continue to drive overnight stays, helping to maintain high occupancy rates and strengthen the city's hospitality economy. These investments ensure McKinney remains competitive within the Dallas-Fort Worth region and attracts visitors from across Texas and the nation.

Aaron Werner, Executive Director of Visit McKinney, emphasized that this record year demonstrates how travelers are discovering McKinney in new ways. "Our hospitality community is rising to meet the growing demand, and this record revenue allows us to reinvest in programs, amenities, and events that benefit both residents and visitors," he said. City leaders are leveraging these trends to enhance the visitor experience and support sustainable growth across McKinney's hospitality sector.

Looking ahead, McKinney's city leaders and Visit McKinney remain focused on expanding tourism while encouraging further hospitality development. The city is committed to creating an environment that supports economic growth, improves visitor amenities, and solidifies McKinney's reputation as a premier destination in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. Continued investment in tourism infrastructure, new hotel projects, and local events will ensure that McKinney maintains momentum well into 2026 and beyond.

GUT, from Page 2

had the strongest effect on bacterial cultures, inducing the microbes to produce two types of new compounds: doreamides, named in this study, and N-acyladenosines. Further testing showed that both compounds trigger human immune cells to produce proteins called pro-inflammatory cytokines, which can help respond to infections. The doreamides also induced production of host antimicrobial peptides that inhibited the growth of several bacterial strains, including pathogenic ones, but not the growth of B. dorei.

The experiments demonstrated a secondary effect of antibiotic treatment beyond inactivating microbes directly. Low-dose tetracyclines caused B. dorei to produce compounds that stimulate the immune system and induce immune cells to generate antimicrobial peptides, which could alter the microbial balance in the human gut. These findings set the stage for animal studies to explore possible therapeutic properties of the doreamides.

The authors acknowledge funding from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, the National Institutes of Health, the MacArthur Foundation, the Simons Foundation, the National Research Foundation of Korea, and the Edward C. Taylor 3rd Year Fellowship in Chemistry.