

The Triangle TRIBUNE

THE TRIANGLE'S CHOICE FOR THE BLACK VOICE

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COVID bill waits for Trump

By Andrew Taylor
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — After months of Washington gridlock, Congress is set to vote on a \$900 billion pandemic relief package, finally delivering long-sought cash to businesses and individuals as well as resources to vaccinate a nation confronting a frightening surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths. Lawmakers tacked on thousands of pages of other end-of-session business in a burst of legislation as Capitol Hill is set to close down for the year.

The relief package, agreed to on Sunday and finally released in bill form Monday afternoon, remained on track for votes in Congress on Monday. It would establish a temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefit and a \$600 direct stimulus payment to most Americans, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction.

The 5,593-page legislation — the longest bill in memory and probably ever — came together Sunday after months of battling, posturing and postelection negotiating that reined in a number of Democratic demands as the end of the congressional session approached. President-elect Joe Biden was eager for a deal to deliver long-awaited help to suffering people and a boost to the economy, even though it was less than half the size that Democrats wanted in the fall. Biden praised the bipartisan spirit that produced the measure, which he called “just the beginning.”

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, a key negotiator, said on CNBC Monday morning that the direct payments would begin arriving in bank accounts next week. Democrats acknowledged it wasn't as robust a relief package as they initially sought — or, they say, the country needs. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi vowed more to come once Biden takes office. “It is a first step,” she said. “We have to do more.”

The final agreement would be the largest spending measure yet. It combined \$900 billion for COVID-19 relief with a \$1.4 trillion governmentwide funding plan and lots of other unrelated measures on taxes, health, infrastructure and education. The governmentwide funding would keep the government open through September.

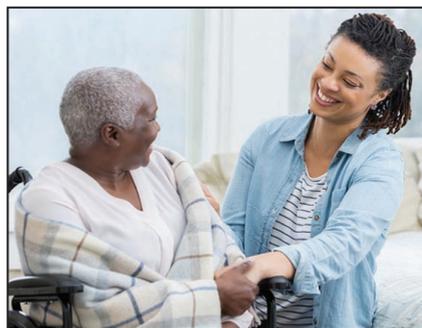
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Please see COVID/2A

NEWSMAKERS OF THE YEAR



Hospital staff



Caregivers



Retail employees



Housekeepers

Whew, 2020 is almost over!

While most of us can't wait to see the year leave, COVID-19 taught us a lot about ourselves — the good and the bad. The Tribune salutes those who put their health on the line every day to serve the needs of others. We can't name you all, but you are an inspiration and the true newsmakers of the year.

Durham finds code violations in apartment units

By Bonitta Best

editor@triangletribune.com

Residents at Garden Terrace Apartments in Durham got the chance to have their say before city officials this week. Members of the Garden Terrace Tenants Union spoke at a housing code violations hearing hosted by the Department of Neighborhood Improvement Services.

So far, city code enforcement officers have found 113 code violations in 17 of the 55 units. Residents have complained for months about mold, rotting walls, pest infestations and other health safety issues.

“One of the reasons we are here is that we want to continue educating people about what we are fighting for as a tenant union,” said union leader Fany Sarmineto. “We know there are limits to what the city can do to defend tenant rights. We know that the city can force the landlord to make certain repairs, but that it cannot force the landlord to do it in a way that ensures that no one will be evicted.”

“We know that the city cannot protect us from rent hikes at a moment's notice, another significant threat to us. We have asked the landlord to come to the table to negotiate



Residents at Garden Terrace Apartments rally at the property management's office in Raleigh last month.

with us, to promise that he will not evict a single neighbor and that he will not raise the rent at this time, which is a very difficult time for many. We know the city cannot force the landlord to make these commitments, but we want officials and people in NIS to understand the importance of our fight and our efforts.”

Garden Terrace landlord Jonathan Dayan was confronted last month in Raleigh by families protesting the unlivable

State's new hires not eligible for health coverage as retirees

By Lynn Bonner
THE POLICY WATCH

State employees hired after Jan. 1 will not be eligible for state employee health coverage if they work long enough for North Carolina to retire.

Eliminating state health insurance coverage for future retirees was part of the state budget passed in 2017 over the objections of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, the N.C. Association of Educators, and the N.C. Retired Governmental Employees' Association. Leaders of those groups said cutting benefits would make it harder to hire correctional officers, teachers, and others to fill job vacancies. The change will not affect people now working for the state.

Senate Republicans pushed for the change to make state employees' retirement benefits similar to benefits private-sector employees receive. Tamika Walker Kelly, president of the N.C. Association of Educators, said the change will make it hard to attract educators.

“It does make it harder to recruit younger millennial teachers

Please see STATE/2A

Who's next to take the vaccine shot?

By John Hanna and Mike Stobbe

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — A federal advisory panel recommended Sunday that people 75 and older and essential workers like firefighters, teachers and grocery store workers should be next in line for COVID-19 shots, while a second vaccine began rolling out to hospitals as the nation works to get the coronavirus pandemic under control.

The two developments came amid a vaccination program that began only in the last week and has given initial shots to about 556,000 Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The COVID-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer Inc. and Germany's BioNTech already is being distributed, and regulators last week gave approval to the one from Moderna Inc. that began shipping Sunday.

Earlier this month, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices said health care workers and nursing home residents — about 24 million people — should be at the very front of the line for the vaccines. Sunday's vote by the panel was who should be next in line, and by a vote of 13-1, it decided that it should be people 75 and older, who number about 20 million, as well as certain front-line workers, who total about 30 million.

The essential workers include firefighters and police; teachers and school staff; those working in food, agricultural and manufacturing sectors; corrections workers; U.S. Postal Service employees; public transit workers; and grocery store workers. They are considered at very high risk of infection because their jobs are critical and require them to be in regular contact with other people. It's not clear how long it will take to vaccinate those groups. Vaccine doses have come out slower than earlier projections. But, at the same time, some experts noted that not everyone who is recommended to get vaccinated may choose to get a shot.

The committee also voted that behind those groups should be people aged 65 to 74, numbering about 30 million; those aged 16 to 64 with medical conditions like obesity and cancer who are at higher risk if they get COVID-19, numbering as many as 110 million; and a tier of other essential workers. This group of as many as 57 million includes a wide category of food service and utility workers but also those in legal and financial jobs and the media.

The expert panel's recommendation next goes to

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Congress rushes toward vote on COVID relief bill

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navirus cases and deaths spiked and evidence piled up that the economy was struggling. The legislation had been held up by months of dysfunction and bad faith. But talks turned serious in recent days as lawmakers on both sides finally faced the deadline of acting before leaving Washington for Christmas. The final bill bore ample resemblance to a \$1 trillion summertime package put together by Senate Republican leaders, which failed to excite many GOP senators.

As talks stalemated, Republicans pulled back to a smaller, \$500 billion posi-

tion that omitted direct payments, supplemental unemployment benefits and food aid, among other priorities. Negotiations only turned serious in recent weeks as failure was no longer an option and as time was running out.

On direct payments, the bill provides \$600 to individuals making up to \$75,000 per year and \$1,200 to couples making up to \$150,000, with payments phased out for higher incomes. An additional \$600 payment will be made per dependent child, similar to the last round of relief payments in the spring.

The \$300 per week

bonus jobless benefit was half the supplemental federal unemployment benefit provided under the \$1.8 billion CARES Act in March and would be limited to 11 weeks instead of 16 weeks. The direct \$600 stimulus payment was also half the March payment, subject to the same income limits in which an individual's payment phases out after \$75,000.

The CARES Act was credited with keeping the economy from falling off a cliff during widespread lockdowns in the spring, but Republicans controlling the Senate cited debt concerns in pushing against Democratic demands.

People over 75, essential workers next for vaccines

Continued from page 1A

the CDC director and to states as guidance to put together vaccination programs. CDC directors have almost always signed off on committee recommendations. No matter what the CDC says, there will be differences from state to state, because various health departments have different ideas about who should be closer to the front of the line.

Federal officials expect that vaccine doses will be limited for several months. CDC officials say up to 20 million are projected to start getting shots this month, another 30 million next month, and 50 million in February. That's 100 million out of a population of more than 330 million.

Pfizer's shots were first shipped out a week ago and started being used the next day, kicking off the nation's biggest vaccination drive.

Public health experts say the shots — and others in the pipeline — are the only way to stop a virus that has been spreading wildly. Nationwide, more than 219,000 people per day on average test positive for the virus, which has killed over 316,000 in the U.S. and nearly 1.7 million worldwide.

State's new hires not eligible for benefits

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into the profession," she said.

Kelly said if she were a new teacher accepting a job in 2021, it would be a hard decision knowing that teachers hired in 2020 have better retirement benefits.

The NCAE wants to restore state retiree health care "so we can continue to draw the best and the brightest to the state of North Carolina and honor the years of service they are going to put in," she said.

The lost health benefit will make it less likely that new employees will consider careers in government service, said Richard

Rogers, executive director of the N.C. Retired Governmental Employees' Association. The change will make it more likely that people will work for the state for a short time to gain experience, then move on to higher-paying private-sector jobs, he said.

"A few years under your belt and off you go," Rogers said. That happens now, but the lost retiree benefit will make it even harder for the state to retain quality employees, he said.

Rogers said there's a chance the benefit will be restored. "Give it a year or two," he said. "It will come back up. We'll have a har-

der time getting folks hired."

State Treasurer Dale Folwell maintained in 2017 that the state employee health plan had billions in estimated future costs outpacing revenue. In a statement, Folwell said he didn't know the change was in the budget and followed the law as it passed. "Our focus has been on the IT implementation of the law, which had a nearly 3 year runway," he wrote. "I have not seen a fiscal note on the impact. For old and new employees, our focus is on maintaining the pension and healthcare plan for the next generation of public service workers."

Code violations in Durham apartment complex

Continued from page 1A

dition than the ones you have seen," he said. "We hope that you will continue to pay attention because we are in an important fight to expand tenant rights, which the city must find ways to support. What we win in this fight, other tenants will see and they will begin to believe that they, too, can fight to defend and expand their rights."

Dayan has until Jan. 8 to fix the code violations. If not, the NIS will issue its own deadline to make all repairs or face fines and possibly criminal charges.

Childhood intervention can prevent 'deaths of despair'

STAFF REPORTS

DURHAM - Mortality rates among young adults are rising in the United States due in part to "deaths of despair" - preventable deaths from suicide, drug overdoses and alcohol-related liver disease. An intensive childhood intervention program called Fast Track could help reduce these deaths by reducing risky behaviors in adolescence and young adulthood, finds new research from Duke University and the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group.

"To reduce deaths of despair, we must prevent the hopelessness and destructive behaviors that often lead to these deaths," said study co-author Kenneth A. Dodge, the William McDougall Distinguished Professor of Public Policy Studies at Duke's Sanford School of Public Policy. Dodge is a member of the Conduct Problems Prevention Re-

search Group that created the Fast Track program.

"We knew that the Fast Track intervention was successful at reducing aggression in childhood and reducing criminal arrests in early adulthood," Dodge said. "What this latest study demonstrates is that this early intervention also has positive impact in increasing hope and reducing behaviors of despair."

Factors contributing to deaths of despair include hopelessness, cynicism, poor interpersonal skills, and conflict and failure in social relationships. Many of these factors originate during childhood and are ripe for preventive intervention, Dodge said.

"We designed the Fast Track program to improve emotional awareness and interpersonal competence among children at high risk for peer conflict, anti-social and delinquent behaviors, and life-course failure," Dodge said. "The

intervention began when children were in first grade and continued for 10 years. Participants are now reaching their mid- to late 30s."

Participants were drawn from high-risk elementary schools in Durham; Nashville, Tennessee; rural Pennsylvania; and Seattle, Washington. Starting in first grade, students were randomly assigned to either receive Fast Track or be followed as a control group.

The findings show lower rates of "behaviors of despair" in young adulthood for Fast Track participants than for the control group. Among young people ages 15 to 25, the Fast Track intervention was linked with significantly lower rates of suicidal ideation or thoughts of suicide. Within the control group, 24.3% reported suicidal ideation, compared with only 16.3% of Fast Track participants - a 45.1% difference.



COURTESY

Michael Denning speaks during a Zoom meeting.

Black male community college students share their educational journeys

By Emily Thomas
EDNC

Christopher St-Hilaire dropped out of high school at 15 years old. He spent a good deal of time just doing whatever he wanted, including playing video games until four or five in the morning. But at some point St-Hilaire realized that he wanted to make something of himself.

"I knew I needed to go back and start over again, and the first step in that process was getting my GED," said St-Hilaire. His restart began at Central Piedmont Community College, where he eventually graduated with an associate degree. Now, St-Hilaire is a first-year transfer student at Princeton University.

On Dec. 10, St-Hilaire joined three other panelists — Michael Denning, Xavier Johnson-Graham, and Jordan McLean — to discuss the African American male student perspective at North Carolina community colleges. Hosted by APCO Worldwide and moderated by APCO consultant Demetrius Deloatch, panelists gathered online to facilitate a peer-to-peer conversation about why community colleges can be a good choice for students right now.

Success in higher education can lead to stable and rewarding careers — significant during a time when the economy is in flux. But across the nation, community colleges are facing declining enrollments. And in North Carolina, the largest declines in enrollment are among Black males.

The four panelists are all current students or graduates of North Carolina community colleges. They all have different reasons why they decided to start their academic careers at a community college.

For Denning, a graduate of Wake Technical Com-

munity College, attending Wake Early College of Health Sciences gave him the chance to earn college credit while in high school. Denning earned a nursing assistant certification, an associate of science, and an associate of arts. He transferred to a four-year university and earned a bachelor's of science in public health and a master's in business administration. After taking a year off, Denning went on to Columbia University, earning a master's in public health. Now, he is a first-year medical student at the Brody School of Medicine.

Like Denning, Johnson-Graham's community college experience started in high school. Johnson-Graham earned his associate of arts and later transferred to East Carolina University to pursue a communication degree. When the pandemic hit, he returned to Nash Community College and is now working on a credential in broadcast technology and production.

Each of the men stated that finances played a role in their decision-making process. For McLean, a current student and student government association vice president at Fayetteville Technical Community College, finances made FTCC a top choice. "It was a more practical option because of cost and transportation. And, at the same time, I could do community college and be at home as much as possible to deal with health concerns, not just for myself, but also for my family," he said.

Many students attending community colleges experience barriers that impede their progress, whether those are the entry into college, classroom work or completion. Deloatch asked each panelist if they had experienced any roadblocks during their college career. For Denning, it was navi-

gating a system that was unfamiliar to him. "You're fresh out of high school or fresh off the workforce, and you're now in a different system that you might not necessarily know a lot about. That was kind of the biggest challenge for me," he said.

Johnson-Graham said his roadblocks occurred in the classroom. "I had trouble, especially with subjects like Spanish, English, writing, and math — especially math. That was definitely one of my biggest roadblocks," he said.

For McLean and St-Hilaire, their roadblocks were more personal. McLean's chronic health problems and St-Hilaire's perfectionism were challenges that could have hindered their completion. But community college faculty and staff helped remove some of those roadblocks, they said. Each of them credited the community college with helping them grow and make progress.

"At the community college, I had tons of teachers that knew me by name, knew my face. And they are always there to help. One thing I love about community colleges is that teachers take not only their personal time, but their instructional time to pause the class and help you with something you may be struggling with," said Johnson-Graham.

St-Hilaire admitted he was an introvert and the small class sizes were perfect for him. "It's such a great environment for you to develop a relationship with your professors. There are a few just coming to mind now that I am still in contact with today," he said.

Just before the panel discussion wrapped, a college administrator asked about the most effective outreach methods for the Black community.

"Start early. Start early. Start early," said Denning.

Ex-Tuskegee Airman dies at age 99

The Associated Press

LYNCHBURG, Va. — Alfred Thomas Farrar, a former Tuskegee Airman, died last week in Virginia only days before a ceremony planned to honor his service in the program that famously trained Black military pilots during World War II. He was 99.

Farrar's son, Roy, told The Associated Press on Sunday that his father died at his Lynchburg home. Alfred Farrar would have turned 100 years old on Dec. 26.

Farrar left his Lynchburg hometown for Tuskegee, Alabama, after graduating from high school to begin his aviation training in 1941. "It was the next best thing to do," Farrar had told The News & Advance in a story that ran last week.

Farrar learned to be a pilot during his time in U.S. Army Air Corps program but didn't fly any combat missions overseas, according to his son.

Roy Farrar said he was proud of his father's service but doesn't remember him having much to say



about his time as a Tuskegee Airman.

"It was just something that he did at the time, that was needed at the time," Roy Farrar said.

After his discharge in 1943, Alfred Farrar studied to be an aerospace engineer and worked as an engineer with the Federal Aviation Administration for four decades.

WFXR-TV reports that the Lynchburg Area Veterans Council plans to honor Farrar and his service during

the council's "troop rally" on Christmas Day.

"In spite of tremendous discrimination, these young American men and women served their nation with distinction and opened the door of opportunity for many other Americans," the council said in a statement.

Roy Farrar said several planes are expected to fly over a separate memorial ceremony for his father on his birthday.

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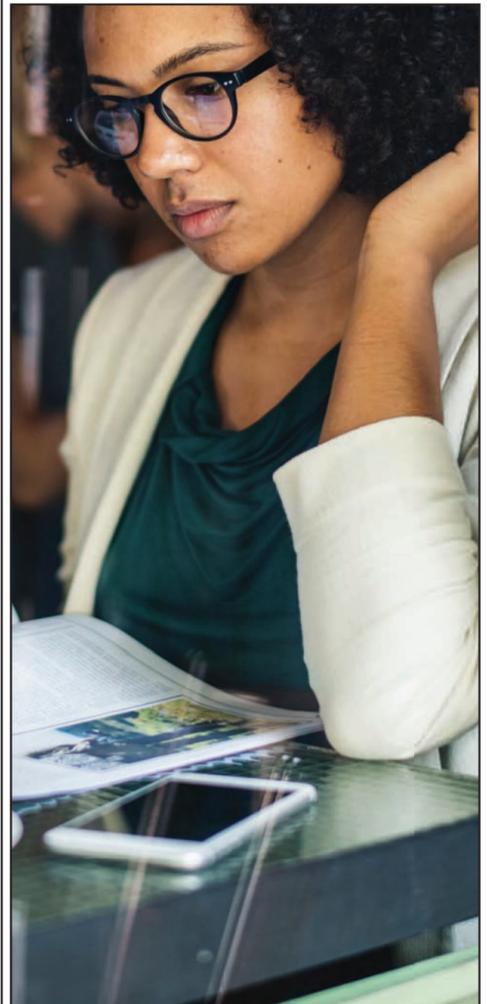
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'Courageous' updates storyline with fresh scenes and follow-up

10th anniversary of inspiring film

By Diana Chandler
BAPTIST PRESS

ALBANY, Ga. — They ceremoniously took an oath to be men of courage. The 2011 movie "Courageous" ended with the lead cast of fathers in various stages of fulfilling their new vow to God and their families.



Officer Adam Mitchell was becoming a more present father for his 15-year-old son Dylan. Officer Nathan Hayes had instilled in his teenage daughter Jade her worth and had begun to mentor the fatherless boy Jade wanted to date. Rookie cop David Thomson acknowledged and began to care for his out-of-wedlock daughter. Officer Shane Fuller's greed landed him in prison, and the officers' comical friend Javier Martinez was enjoying a promotion at work.

Moviegoers will see the fathers' progress in "Courageous the Legacy Edition," the film's 10th anniversary update. The Kendrick Brothers and Sherwood Pictures will release next September with a new ending.

"We had a conversation about the fact that the principles in Courageous, especially for fatherhood, were just as applicable today as when the movie was released a decade ago," director and actor Alex Kendrick said. "And, in many circumstances, you had a new generation of fathers that did not have

children 10 years ago, that would process the movie and those principles differently, because of their new role and perspective on children."

With Sony Pictures on board, the Kendrick Brothers wrote new scenes, filmed them in October and are in the post-production phase of the updated film. The original Courageous has been re-edited to flow more quickly, new cinematic shots have been added, deleted scenes have been reborn and new technology has been utilized in the production.

The new movie will address some of the current law enforcement struggles and societal crises, Kendrick said, but will primarily address timeless concerns of fatherhood and discipleship. "We do address some law enforcement issues ... where it is applicable to what's going on in culture," he said, "but we don't name any groups per se officially, only because ... we didn't do that 10 years ago. ... and because we're hoping that the impact of this film still has life in it for years to come."

The Kendrick Brothers will present as a complement to the movie the documentary "Show Me the Father," presenting true stories of people's relationships with their earthly father and the heavenly Father. "Show Me the Father" will be a separate theatrical release next year, Kendrick said.

Dougherty County law enforcement is still utilized in the movie, and Sherwood Pictures, a ministry of Sherwood Baptist Church under the leadership of Senior Pastor Michael Catt, will own the

new film. The pastor executive produced "Courageous" and other Sherwood Pictures offerings produced before the Kendrick Brothers expanded their filmmaking ministry beyond the church, with their pastor's blessing. Their latest movies, including 2015's "War Room" and the "Overcomer" in 2019, were produced independent of Sherwood Church, although Alex, Stephen and Shannon Kendrick are still active members of the congregation.

Courageous earned more than \$35 million at box offices worldwide and more than \$22 million in domestic video sales, according to TheNumbers.com movie earnings tracking site. Sherwood Pictures' earnings from several Kendrick Brothers' films have financed church ministry and outreaches.

"The church has used their percentage (of earnings) for ministry and for outreach, and for things that everyone would be proud of," Kendrick said. "Flywheel," "Facing the Giants," "Fireproof," "Courageous," those belong to Sherwood Baptist Church. When my brothers and I wrote and produced those, we were on staff at Sherwood Baptist Church."

With Sherwood Pictures earnings, Kendrick said, Sherwood Baptist founded and operates the 82-acre Legacy Park for youth sports and Christian discipleship, and the Hope Center outreach to the homeless and needy, both in Albany. The church supports many International Mission Board missionaries.

Our Christmas spirit

By Glenn Mollette
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Years ago, our church group was out Christmas caroling. We weren't far from the church and our leader led us out to the back of Mr. Castle's house to sing to he and his wife. His wife came to the door and greeted us with a smile and was gracious. We sang to her when suddenly, through the window, we saw her husband appear in the family room with a big towel around his body.

He obviously had just gotten out of the shower. He came into his family room unknowing that 20 carolers had all eyes on him. Several of the women began to chuckle. I just knew we were all about to see something we had not planned on.

Sitting down on his sofa, he put his feet up and was preparing to relax. The volume of laughter from a couple of his adult friends grew louder when Mr. Castle looked up and saw us. He immediately made an "Oh no" expression while shaking his head a bit and jumped up and departed

to another part of the house. We sang to his sweet wife and moved on down the street with a new visual that I still remember to this day. I'll always remember what a good spirit he and his wife had, and that we all left feeling uplifted by them.

This week I walked to the back of a local nursing home to look through a window to see a friend. Ms. Southard is 99. My wife and I visited in her home recently. She was agile, mentally sharp and dancing around like she always does. Her attitude always uplifts us.

She did say on that very day we were there, "I don't want to end up in a nursing home. I told my son I don't ever want to be in one," she said. Two weeks later, while closing her curtains, she made an awkward step, fell and broke her leg. Surgery was required and also rehabilitation. Her insurance plan would not pay for her to go to the local rehabilitation hospital but instead put her where she never wanted to be, a nursing home.

I found out from a nurse which room she was in and how to find the right window to look through. The nurse said she would meet me at the window and let Ms. Southard know I was there. I dreaded what I might see but wanted to wish her a Merry Christmas. Knocking on the window I was delighted that she was sitting up and started laughing and waving at me. We exchanged Merry Christmas the best we could yelling through a window. While I almost wanted to cry seeing her there, I was so encouraged by her good spirit.

The spirit of Christmas is inside you. This spirit is greater than you and I, and pulls us through the awkward and the very difficult times of life. The Christmas season we celebrate is one of hope and celebration. The story of Jesus is the story of God's hope coming to us in the little baby a long time ago. 2020 has certainly been a year we've needed hope.

2021 is going to be a better year. Vaccines for COVID-19 are coming.

AROUND THE TRIANGLE

RALEIGH ENTREPRENEURS

NC IDEA FOUNDATION is accepting applications for its NC IDEA LABS, a four-week program for entrepreneurs. Deadline: Jan. 3. Visit www.ncidea.org.

CHAMBER

Raleigh Chamber will host a virtual Business After Hours networking session Jan. 11, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Register by Jan. 4 at raleighchamber.org.

HANDGUNS

Introduction to Handguns class is Jan. 7, 6-9 p.m., Eagle One Firing Range. Register at bookwhen.com/e3personaldefense.

FORUM

The annual Economic Forecast Forum will be held virtually Jan. 7, 9-

11:30 a.m. Register at eventbrite.com.

ART WALK

Illuminate Art Walk in downtown Raleigh runs through Jan. 8. Visit www.DowntownRaleigh.org/illuminate.

WINTER DRIVE

Fathers Forever is holding a Winter Drive for gently used men's items: coats, scarves, socks and gloves. Drop off at 3029-105 Stony Brook Drive or Headquarters Barbershop, 5720 Capital Blvd. Visit www.afatherforever.com.

CARY THEATER

Pure Life Theatre presents a virtual musical theater with original music from Nate Jacobs' Motown Christmas through Jan. 3. Get tickets at [### DURHAM TAXES](http://thecary-</p>
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Need help with your property taxes? Durham has several programs for assistance. Visit www.dconnc.gov.

HEALTH

"Understanding and Reversing Diabetes, Heart Disease, and Most Chronic Illnesses" webinar is Jan. 14, 6:30-7:45 p.m. Register at <https://niehs.nih.gov/what>. Deadline: Jan. 13.

COAT DRIVE

Welcome Baby is hosting its annual coat drive now through Jan. 8, Durham County Cooperative Extension Building, 721 Foster St. Call (919) 560-7150.

Regular church attenders have better mental health

By Scott Barkley
BAPTIST PRESS

A recent Gallup study reveals a connection between regular church attendance and a positive self-evaluation of one's mental health. The study, published Dec. 7, focused on 76% of its respondents classifying their current mental health as excellent or good.

Since the poll's inception in 2001, that answer had stayed in the 81% to 89% percent range. This year marked a nine-point drop from 2019 and the lowest point in the study's history for that category.

Demographic breakdowns of the study show the largest decrease among Republicans and those who seldom or never attend religious services. The only group of respondents who reported a better mental health outlook were those who attend religious services weekly.

That stems from having a personal relationship with Christ, said Ian Jones, associate dean of the Division of Counseling at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Jones was quick to point out, though, that this pertains to those consistently growing in their faith and maintaining contact with other Christians. "We have hope in what are normally hopeless situations," he said. "Research shows that Christians are going to be more hopeful and less depressed, but it's those who have an active faith and active conversations with God."

He cited "the enormity of problems" that have accumulated in 2020 and said they have had an effect on people's mental health and brought a lot of "firsts," himself included. "It's not just COVID," Jones said. "Here in the South, we've had 30 named storms and six hurricanes come our way. Three have hammered Louisiana. The most recent one, Zeta, moved the fastest. I was standing out in the middle of that one ... never had done that before."

A firestorm of a presidential election, cultural upheaval and historic fire devastation in California - all during a worldwide pandemic - have contributed to the difficulties of maintaining positive mental health. Most Americans still consider their mental health as excellent (34%) or good (42%) instead of fair (18%) or poor (5%). However, another Gallup study released in May said that American adults who characterize their life as "thriving" had dropped to 46.4%, matching the low point of November 2008 during the Great Recession.

For Christians, a growing marginalization of churches is another contributor to stress. In response to the pandemic, governments in Nevada and California, for instance, have levied what religious liberty advocates claim is an unbalanced application of the law regarding churches and other establishments such as casinos.

That, plus the myriad of

complexities COVID has brought to pastors and churches, has led to a growing concern for the state of mental health among ministers.

The stress can affect marriages as well, said Tate Cockrell, associate professor of counseling and director of D.Min. Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. "COVID has revealed many of the marital dysfunctions couples were able to cover up when they were working and busy, not forced to be around each other," he said.

"Crisis in your overall life reveals the strength of your marriage [as well as] strengths and weaknesses in your relationships. COVID has peeled back the glossy veneer and revealed how many of them are not strong. Now, when people are having to make life decisions day in and day out, it creates stress. I thought my marriage counseling would drop off during this time, but I've never been busier."

Jones said the isolation brought about by the pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues for some. "Genesis 1-3 is clear in that we were built to relate to one another," he said. "Our health is determined by our relationship with God and our relationship to our neighbor."

When Christians don't gather together, it becomes difficult to carry each other's burdens. "Unfortunately, that can have lasting effects," he said.

Happy New Year!
from
The Triangle Tribune

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HBCU sports hang tough in COVID

This is normally the week I count down the top 10 HBCU sports moments of the year.

But a virus called COVID-19 changed all that. Entire sports seasons have been wiped out, athletic budgets shredded along with staff furloughs and layoffs. And for every game that's played, two more are either canceled or postponed.

Still, for those of us fortunate enough to cover HBCU sports, there's no such thing as a bad year. No top 10, but we were never bored.

The CIAA and SIAC managed to finish their basketball tournaments before COVID canceled the MEAC and SWAC.

Fayetteville State women defeated Bowie State for their first CIAA title since 2012. (Yeah, seems like a lifetime ago, doesn't it?)

The conference was looking to send four women's teams to the NCAA Division II Tournament: FSU, Bowie State, Lincoln (Pa.) and Virginia Union. The women really rocked it last season.

Meanwhile, Virginia Union coach AnnMarie Gilbert shocked Panther Nation by leaving for Division I Detroit Mercy. Gilbert led VUU to five postseason tournaments in five seasons.

On the men's side, Winston-Salem State and Fayetteville State played a thriller of a final. The Rams pulled out the one-point win on two free throws by Robert Colon with 4.6 seconds left and giving second-year coach Cleo Hill Jr. his second career CIAA championship. His first was at Shaw.

Alfonza Carter retired as Shaw's athletic director, but not before hiring former WSSU-Hampton-Maryland Eastern Shore men's basketball coach Bobby Collins. Another Ram joined the Bears athletic department when WSSU associate AD George Knox replaced Carter at the helm.

(All starting to come back to you now, eh?) In the MEAC, North Carolina Central women pulled the trifecta against rival North Carolina A&T by defeating the Lady Aggies three times - the third time in the quarterfinals of the MEAC Tournament, which sent them to their first tourney semifinal since DI reclassification.

But the men had everyone's attention. After defeating NCA&T to win the regular season title, the Eagles were the favorite to win a program-record fourth straight championship. Then an automatic berth to the NCAA and maybe, finally, hopefully, a first tourney win. But it was not to be.

The virus kept growing; George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery - among too many others - were murdered and suddenly sports didn't seem all that important. For a while. People can take only so much tragedy before needing an escape.

Then a 6-foot-11, 19-year-old, five-star recruit born in the South Sudan and raised in California named Makur Maker announced he was attending Howard University on a basketball scholarship. The first five-star recruit at an HBCU in 40 years. All of a sudden, HBCUs became the "black" thing to do.

But not even Maker could compete with the "Prime Time" show that was about to invade the SWAC's Jackson State.

Deion Sanders' hiring set the HBCU world on fire. The press conference alone was worth the price of admission.

While some initially blew off Sanders' hire as a publicity stunt, he has since hired a football staff with an impressive pedigree, and snagged the best FCS recruiting class ever by an HBCU on signing day.

With basketball and football seasons either shortened, canceled or postponed, it may not have been your typical banner HBCU sports year, but it sure beats the heck out of covering anybody else.



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Sports

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The Triangle TRIBUNE

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COLLEGE CORNER



COURTESY

No worries about Aggie-Eagle Classic

The rivalry continues!

North Carolina Central and North Carolina A&T signed a 10-year football agreement through 2030. CC is sure you ALL know that the Aggies are leaving the MEAC in June for the Big South Conference. Naturally, fans were worried if the contest would continue, although we weren't. Who's going to discontinue their top moneymaker, eh?

"I know there have been some concerns about whether this great tradition of North Carolina A&T meeting North Carolina Central on the gridiron would continue with our move to a new conference this fall," said A&T Athletic Director Earl Hilton. "I am happy to say that this tradition is alive and well. We look forward to this game each year. Aggies have a lot of friends and family who are Eagles, and Eagles have a lot of friends and family who are Aggies. It is truly a family feud."

The home team will alternate each year, starting in Greensboro on Sept. 25, 2021.

SIAC postpones season
Unlike its HBCU Division II counterpart, the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference is not giving up on the spring '21 season just yet.

The conference announced a delay in the start

of winter and spring sports until March 1. The sports are women's and men's basketball, golf, track and field, baseball and softball.

If the conference decides to cancel all activities, each institution will still have the option to participate independently to keep contractual obligations and not get sued.

"In light of the fluid and dynamic nature of unfolding COVID-19 related developments, this decision was primarily informed by a desire to protect the health and safety of SIAC student-athletes, staff and stakeholders, while also attempting to preserve critically important opportunities for student-athletes to resume conference competition at some point going forward," said SIAC Commissioner Gregory Moore. "The SIAC will continue to closely monitor developments and make further adjustments as may be required."

Clothing optional
NCCU's first home basketball game was last weekend. A few days before the contest, CC received a list of do's and don'ts by the athletics department. It took us two days to read it all.

A few guideline samples are an online health screening questionnaire on the day of the event. (Do people

ever lie on those things?) Proof that we completed the form. The usual face mask and temperature check. No floor level seating. No face-to-face interviews. Certainly no concessions, and so on. In other words, CC will be reporting from home, which we think will make some folks very happy.

Over H-E-R-E!
In case you were in a cave last week, billionaire philanthropist MacKenzie Scott gave away more of her millions to almost 400 organizations, including 17 HBCUs. Now, if we can just get her to notice the black media.

Anyway, kudos to the HBCUs, and hopefully nobody will forget it's for the institution and not their personal bank account:

- * Alcorn State
- * Bowie State
- * Claflin University
- * Clark Atlanta
- * Dillard University
- * Elizabeth State
- * Lincoln (Pa.) University
- * Norfolk State
- * N.C. A&T State
- * Virginia State
- * Prairie View A&M
- * Morgan State
- * Winston-Salem State
- * Delaware State
- * Maryland Eastern Shore
- * Tougaloo College
- * Voorhees College

MEAC to induct 5 into HOF

By Bonitta Best

editor@triangletribune.com

The MEAC Basketball Tournament is still a go, and so is its 2021 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony - albeit virtually. Five members will be enshrined during tourney week next March.

The class:

* **Lamin Drammeh, South Carolina State:** Drammeh was a five-time MEAC champion in the men's long jump. He is a two-time Olympian, representing his native Gambia, West Africa, in the 1996 Games in Atlanta and the 2000 Games in Sydney, Australia. Drammeh is the current school record-holder in the outdoor long jump and once held the school record in the indoor long jump.

* **Demetrius Harrison, N.C. A&T State:** the Aggies' all-time leader in career tackles with 497, and second-most in MEAC history, was a two-time defensive player of the year (1988, 1989). As a junior, Harrison was named First Team All-American by the Associated Press, and led the conference in tackles in both 1988 and '89. He also was named the Sheridan Black College National Defensive Player of



the Year that season. Harrison was recently named to the MEAC 50th Anniversary All-Time Football Team.

* **Lauren McCoy, Bethune-Cookman:** McCoy recorded three 20-win seasons as Wildcats softball became a MEAC dynasty and made NCAA history in 2005. That season, the Lady Wildcats advanced to the NCAA Super Regional, winning the Gainesville Regional before losing 1-0 to Texas. McCoy threw five no-hitters in her career, including two perfect games, and had an ERA of 1.70 or lower in each of her three seasons. McCoy ended her B-CU career with 456 strikeouts and 28 shutouts.

* **Rod Milstead, Delaware State:** Milstead was an offen-

sive lineman for the Hornets from 1988-91 before embarking on an eight-year NFL career. He was a First Team All-American as named by the Associated Press, Walter Camp and Sheridan Black College in 1991. Milstead was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys in the fifth round of the 1992 NFL Draft. He played in Cleveland, San Francisco and Washington, and won Super Bowl XXIX in 1995 with the 49ers. He was recently named to the MEAC 50th Anniversary All-Time Football Team.

* **Allen Suber, B-CU:** The 2002 and '03 MEAC offensive player of the year, Suber was a two-time All-American and a finalist for the Walter Payton Award.

DI player transfers now immediate

By Michelle Brutlag Hosick
NCAA.org

The Division I Council granted a blanket waiver allowing all transfer student-athletes to compete immediately this season if specific criteria are met. In order to be eligible for the waiver, the student-athletes must meet the following conditions:

* They must be enrolled full time at the school for the fall 2020 term.

* It must be the first transfer from a four-year school.

* The student-athlete must have left their previous school in good standing academically and not facing disciplinary suspension.

* Both the head coach and the student-athlete must certify that impermissible recruiting did not take place.

The waiver applies only to students who transferred from another Division I school, not from other NCAA divisions or schools outside the NCAA. The regular transfer waiver process is available to non-Division I transfer student-athletes.

"The Council continued its trend of voting in favor of maximum flexibility for student-athletes during the pandemic," said Council chair M. Grace Calhoun, athletic director at Pennsylvania. "Allowing transfer student-athletes to compete immediately will provide additional opportunities to student-athletes during this continued difficult time, and perhaps allow games to be played that otherwise might not have been."

Applicable to all sports, the waiver was initially proposed by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association and was supported by the Men's and Women's Basketball Oversight Committees, the Student-Athlete Experience Committee and the National Association of Basketball Coaches. Providing immediate eligibility for these students could help teams if their rosters are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student-athletes also supported the waiver. "We are thrilled at the passing of the blanket waiver as we believe it is in line with DI SAAC in ensuring that all of our student-athletes have the best opportunity to thrive both academically and athletically," said Council member Caroline Lee, former soccer student-athlete at Southeastern Louisiana. "In a time of great uncertainty amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we feel it is in our best interest to grant immediate eligibility for those who have transferred in order to best support their mental health and well-being."

Support among other groups impacted by the change was mixed. The Working Group on Transfers, which has proposed changing the base rule to allow student-athletes in all sports to compete immediately, supported the waiver and noted it was the same as the change the group had proposed to the waiver process in February.

The American Association of Baseball Coaches supported the waiver. The men's ice hockey coaches did not, noting the low number of transfers in the sport and their lack of support for changing the rule. Likewise, the Football Oversight Committee observed the change would come too late to affect most Football Bowl Subdivision schools. All other sports already can compete immediately after their first transfer, provided conditions are met.

The Council modified the proposal it will vote on in January that would allow all student-athletes access to the one-time transfer exception. The modification specifies that midyear transfer student-athletes in sports that do not already have a midyear transfer restriction would not be subject to the notification of dates. The Council also granted a blanket waiver to allow conferences to retain their automatic qualification.



COURTESY

Tina Turner reflects on her life in new picture book

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA NEWSWIRE

At 81, Tina Turner quietly reflects on her "imperfections and all" in a telling new pictorial autobiography where she explores her fashion and artistic expressions.

In "That's My Life," the Queen of Rock n' Roll reflects on growing up in Nutbush, Tennessee, and how her hometown became an escape from the harsh realities of her life.

"I was the child who always had scraped knees and tousled hair because I climbed trees and rolled in the grass," the "Private Dancer" singer writes. "As an adult, I wanted my clothing to reflect that free spirit and keep it alive. Leather, feathers, silk, and other natural fibers, metals, stones and gems, make me feel at one with the natural world I love."

Turner's life story is well-

documented. Chronicled in the blockbuster 1993 autobiographical film, "What's Love Got to Do with It," the famed singer suffered through a violent marriage to Ike Turner.

The unspeakable battering and sexual assault besieged upon her by her former and late husband raised eyebrows within the music industry.

It also gained Turner a new generation of adoring fans because of what she overcame. Now, her new book attempts to focus more on her and not the terror heaped upon her during her 18-year marriage to Ike.

The 320-page hardcover book captures Turner's vast shoe collection and wigs. It contains quotes from people like Mick Jagger and Oprah Winfrey while chronicling her many collaborations, performances, and what she calls her defining moments.

Turner writes that she "became stronger, more confident, happier, loved," capturing her three-decade romance with German music executive Erwin Bach, whom she married in 2013.

"I wanted to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. I never dressed to appeal to the men in the audience," Turner told NBC News this month. "I wanted to show women that it was possible to look glamorous and exciting without being immodest — that I enjoyed looking good in a way that was joyous and celebrated my femininity without exploiting it."

"I often had three generations of fans at my concerts: grandmothers, mothers and fathers, teenagers and children. I wanted everyone to feel comfortable because it was all about having a good time together."



STOCK PHOTO

Are your employees zoning out in Zoom meetings?

STAFF REPORTS

The coronavirus changed the world into a planet of remote workers, but several months into the pandemic some companies and individuals are still grappling with the challenges of working apart. Employees have more distractions at home and some can find it harder to focus. Questions persist: Can video conferencing be as effective as in-person communicating? Will workplace culture — and production — suffer from a lack of traditional human interaction?

"Many companies and employees weren't prepared for this major life switch," said Cynthia Spraggs, a veteran of working remotely, author of "How To Work From Home And Actually Get SH*T Done," and CEO of Virtira, a completely virtual company that helps other businesses work virtually.

"Companies became obsessed with maintaining their brick-and-mortar culture despite the fact their offices were completely deserted. I heard several horror stories about companies mandating that employees eat lunch on camera or play bar games with cocktails on Zoom after an exhausting workday.

"Not only were these extra obligations not necessary, they didn't take into account the busier new lives of harried workers — many now with home-schooled kids and juggling schedules with spouses also working from home. Some remote workforces have transitioned smoothly, but a great many need to learn how to adjust."

Drawing from experiences she has had advising companies on how to work remotely and maintain performance, Spraggs offers some tips on getting the most out of online meetings:

* Flex your virtual meeting time. "From managing hundreds of regional and global online events, I can tell you the maximum anyone should be in an online meeting is four hours," Spraggs said. "Two hours is much better for a maximum. When they run longer, your participants are going to experience significant muscle and eye fatigue, not to mention be tempted by the incredible distractions that come with working remotely."

* Template everything. When managers ran meetings in a conference room, they could ban phones and have everyone's attention. With remote meetings,

managers have lost that control.

* Protest pointless meetings. "Pointless includes inviting a whole host of people to a meeting who don't need to be there," Spraggs said. "Don't take valuable chunks of work time away from team members for a call they don't need to be on."

* Treat meetings like contract discussions. Spraggs notes that back in the day, informal meetings in a physical office sometimes allowed employees to shine in front of their bosses. "But online looney-goosey meetings without any real point don't get anyone anywhere," she said. "To accomplish anything of substance, set a strong agenda and stick to it. Get opinions from everyone. For the introverts not comfortable with sharing, consider implementing anonymous input forms. You'll be amazed how engagement increases."

* Don't drive yourself to distraction. "Train yourself to cut down distractions to improve productivity," Spraggs said. "Turn off your phone and notifications. Otherwise someone is going to ask you something, and there will be that dead air as everyone waits for you to respond."

Rid yourself of 2020's financial stress

By Alan Becker
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

2020 has been a tough year for nearly everyone, and that may be especially true for retirees and those nearing retirement who suddenly are worried about whether their careful planning and years of saving could be upended by events beyond their control.

After all, retirement is supposed to be a pleasurable and satisfying time when you kick back and enjoy the fruits of all those decades of labor. That's difficult to do if you're jittery about a volatile stock market, or you fret over every expenditure because you aren't sure whether your savings can go the distance in a lengthy retirement.

As this year draws to a close, and we look toward 2021, plenty of people still have worries. For them — and maybe for you — the future is uncertain. But, frankly, the future is always uncertain, and worrying about your finances without taking charge of your situation does no one any good.

So, if you're already in retirement or plan to be there soon, how can you reduce some of that financial stress that's weighing you down in these tumultuous times?

* **Take control.** Just stewing and letting the emotional strain rule your days



and nights does no good. Instead, focus on actions you can take to help reduce some of that stress. Review your financial assets so you truly know where you stand. Those assets might include savings accounts, investment accounts, retirement accounts, life insurance, real property or other items. You can't create a plan unless you know exactly where you stand, so taking stock of things should be the first step. That way you aren't operating in the dark.

* **Reconsider the timing of your retirement.** Whenever the economy is shaky, it's best to consider your options ahead of time so you can be prepared before problems arise. If you're still working, for example, and you suddenly lose your job, one option may be to retire earlier than you originally planned and take Social Security. That can come with downsides, though. If you begin drawing Social Security before your full retirement age (between 66 and 67 for

most people) you receive a reduced monthly check. That could cost you tens of thousands of dollars over a long retirement. Conversely, if your job situation is stable but you're worried your nest egg is inadequate, consider postponing retirement. That will allow you to save more, potentially increase your Social Security benefits, and can potentially give your investments time to recover from temporary market declines.

* **Review your budget and clean up bad habits.** Many of us have less-than-stellar financial habits that we developed over the years. Those patterns of behavior don't magically disappear as you approach retirement. You need to be intentional about changing bad habits so you aren't spending more money than you need to — or should. To help you determine the difference between necessary and discretionary spending, review the past six months to a year of expenditures.

BOOK

New-Generation African Poets: a Chapbook Box Set (Saba)
Edited by Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani
Akashic Books, \$34.95

Praise for the chapbook series:

"Dawes and Abani have taken on the vital project of publishing short collections by contemporary poets from Africa, packaged together in beautiful boxed sets." - **New York Times Magazine**

"An ambitious, vital project that delivers exactly what it promises... As a group, the chapbooks dispel stereotypes about African writing. They also illustrate what editors Dawes and Abani note about the many ways poets

can understand or redefine their ties to Africa. These insights are poignant and valuable, especially at a time when millions around the globe find themselves somewhere between new countries and ancestral lands they've left behind." - **Washington Post**

"A collection pulsing with fresh talent in a series that poetry lovers worldwide should be grateful for." - **Shelf Awareness**

The limited-edition box set is a project started in 2014 to ensure the publication of up to a dozen

chapbooks every year by African poets through Akashic Books. The series seeks to identify the best poetry written by African poets working today, and it is especially interested in featuring poets who have not yet published their first full-length book of poetry.

The 11 poets included in this box set are Michelle Angwenyi, Afua Ansong, Adedayo Agarau, Fatima Camara, Sadia Hassan, Safia Jama, Henneh Kyereh Kwaku, Nadra Mabrouk, Nkateko Masinga, Jamila Osman, and Tryphena Yeboah.

ABOUT THE EDITORS: Dawes is an award-winning author of 21 books of poetry. Abani is an award-winning poet and novelist.

You are worth more than red flags and broken mirrors. Love does not equal violence.

There is help and there is hope.

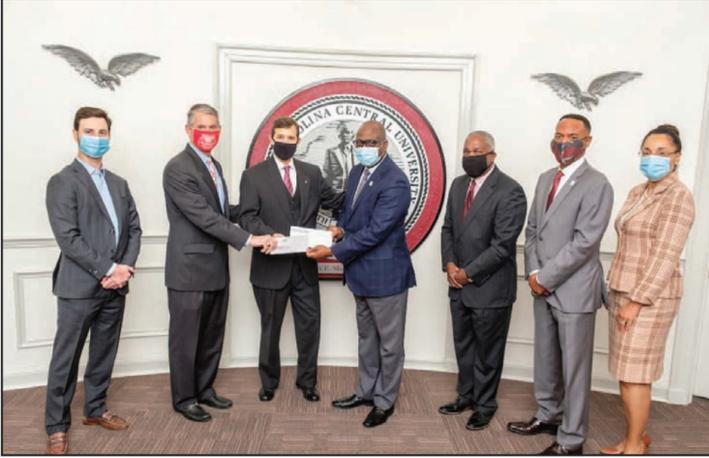


NCCADV

North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence

800-799-SAFE
(7233)

HBCU NEWS



Left to right: Joey Nelson, Jay Harris, Lee Barnes, Johnson O. Akinleye, Jeff Mercer, Anthony Nelson and Gia Soublot.

N.C. CENTRAL
Family Fare's Shared Purpose Initiative has created and fully endowed an entrepreneurship endowment at NCCU's School of Business.

After years of planning and collaborating with NCCU leaders, Lee Barnes, president of Family Fare; Jeff Mercer, business consultant for Family Fare; and Jay Harris, owner of Harris Beverages, recently presented the gift to NCCU Chancellor Johnson O. Akinleye, Ph.D. The gift establishes the Family Fare Endowed Entrepreneurship Program Fund and will be matched with a Title III federal grant for a total of \$50,000.

"I am thankful that local companies like Family Fare and Harris Beverages give back to the communities in which they serve," Akinleye said. "With this gift, NCCU will nurture future entrepreneurs who continue the legacy of our graduates who lead businesses in the Triangle re-

gion and across the state of North Carolina."

The funding will be used to establish an Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub that will serve as a coworking space and training ground for NCCU students interested in launching entrepreneurial ventures. Family Fare Convenience Stores is headquartered in Durham, and has over 100 locations throughout North Carolina and Virginia.

Harris Beverages is the premier distributor of beverages to stores in an eight-county area in central North Carolina, and is Durham's only locally owned and operated beverage wholesaler.

SHAW UNIVERSITY

Shaw University's Center for Racial and Social Justice will partner with the City of Raleigh for a series of public listening sessions on race, racism, and social equity beginning in February.

The Center launched in

June to further the development of a more just and equitable society.

The goal of these listening sessions is to develop a plan to guide changes to current programs and develop new programs—all intended to improve the quality of life for Raleigh citizens.

"As the founding location for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Shaw has a rich legacy as a social justice leader," said President Paulette Dillard. "This partnership with the City of Raleigh allows Shaw to expand its work and make meaningful impacts for the citizens of Raleigh."

"The big goal of our collaboration is to develop an actionable plan to build a more equitable community for all of us," said Mayor Mary Ann Baldwin. "We're very excited about this partnership and the good work to come."

In January, Shaw and the city will release guidance on participation in these conversations.

REPORT



Affordable child care crisis could cost NC billions

By Nadia Ramlagan
N.C. NEWS SERVICE

RALEIGH - Fewer than 1 in 3 parents of young children has access to quality, affordable child care during the pandemic, according to a new report. The survey of more than 800 North Carolina families found child care is least accessible in rural counties, and in Black, brown and Indigenous communities.

Muffy Grant, executive director at the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, said before COVID-19, inadequate child care cost businesses and taxpayers around \$2.4 billion in lost revenue. That amount has already jumped to \$2.9 billion, and Grant believes it's likely to skyrocket as the public health crisis continues. "So, what we have here is a very strong economic case for investments in accessible, affordable, high-quality, flexible, culturally competent child care," Grant said. In the survey, 55% of

households reported at least one adult having lost a job, been furloughed or having reduced pay or hours due to COVID-19. More than 70% have had difficulty finding a satisfactory child care arrangement, and about 10% said they couldn't find one at all.

Dr. Sherika Hill teaches in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke University and is a researcher at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. She said

entire regions of North Carolina lack programs proven to boost children's early well-being.

"We have engineered a lot of different policy through subsidies and for families to get vouchers or discounted care for high-quality child care centers. But we haven't gone far enough to make sure that those centers are located in communities of diverse groups," Hill said.

Of those working parents surveyed, 25% predicted

their child care will disappear as the pandemic continues, and 30% predicted care will be unaffordable. And as more parents turn to makeshift child care arrangements in order to keep working, Hill said the long-term effects on child development remain unknown.

"When you're in a disruptive child care setting, where you're having to rely on different and piecemeal child care arrangements, we have no idea what are going to be just the long-term mental consequences of that, in terms of relational secure attachment, and even in brain structure and development," she said.

She added women of color more frequently report their child care provider is no longer open, or they can't afford one because of reduced income. For rural families, only 15% are currently relying on formal child care, down from 44% pre-pandemic.



4 new year's resolutions to improve heart health

STATEPOINT

High blood pressure, the leading risk factor for heart attack and stroke, continues to disproportionately affect communities of color. Addressing this health inequity is especially important right now, as people with hypertension and serious heart conditions are at an increased risk for more severe outcomes if they acquire COVID-19.

According to the American Heart Association, the prevalence of high blood pressure among Black adults in the U.S. is among the highest in the world, with hypertension in Black women nearly 40% higher than white women. While many longstanding inequities and stressors produced by structural racism have created and continue to exacerbate these conditions, there are steps individuals can take to help improve their blood pressure right now. The new year is a great opportunity to prioritize self-care and get started.

This is why the American Medical Association, the

AMA Foundation, Association of Black Cardiologists, American Heart Association, Minority Health Institute and National Medical Association have launched the "Release the Pressure" campaign with ESSENCE. The campaign is aimed at partnering with Black women to help improve their heart health and be part of a movement for healthy blood pressure, with a shared goal of engaging more than 300,000 Black women.

As part of the campaign, the AMA and this coalition of national health care organizations encourages Black women to take a pledge to be part of a healthy blood pressure movement at ReleaseThePressure.org. Specifically, the pledge encourages Black women to take the following four steps:

1. Set a blood pressure goal: Schedule an appointment with your physician or other health care professional, in-person or virtually, to work in partnership on understanding your blood pressure numbers and knowing

your goal for optimal blood pressure.

2. Monitor blood pressure numbers at home: Once you learn your blood pressure numbers, take and keep regular records of your blood pressure.

3. Activate a personalized wellness plan: Identify specific goals for fitness and heart healthy eating, and connect virtually with family members and friends from your "squad" to keep you on track.

4. Make regular check-ins with your "squad": Lean on your family and friends to help you achieve your heart health goals by checking in with them on a daily basis.

"Preventive care is vital to breaking the devastating impact of high blood pressure within the Black community, particularly during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," said Patrice A. Harris, M.D., president of the AMA. "At the individual and family level, it starts with understanding blood pressure numbers and taking action to manage blood pressure."

SCHOOL NEWS

DURHAM COUNTY
The Durham Public Schools Board of Education voted in favor of adopting a grading scale of 90-100 for state-required final exams and CTE final exams. This would be in effect for the 2020-21 school year, including the assessments to be conducted in December and January as well as at the end of the year.

"The State Board of Education has given our Board the authority to weigh our final exam scores differently during this pandemic," said DPS Board chair Bettina Umstead. "We wanted to send a message to our families that we hear their concerns, and to the state board and federal Department of Education that local districts need more flexibility regarding testing during this pandemic. We expect our students to continue to do excellent work with the support of their teachers all year long; that is what will drive their final grades in their classes."

The state still requires students to take state assessments in person. The window for making up first-semester exams is through Feb. 15. Students

who do not make up the exam by then will be given opportunities in the spring. This decision only affects state assessments (EOC and CTE), not teacher-given final exams.

Although the final exam grade will be no less than a 90, students' actual performance on the exams must still be recorded and included in their education record. The final exam grade will show up on the report card but not on the official transcript. It will count as 20% of the student's final grade; the remaining 80% will reflect their work in the classroom.

WAKE COUNTY

The Board of Education voted to move all students to remote instruction from Jan. 4-15. This decision was made due to the impact of an increased number of COVID-19 infections in Wake County. Health experts continue to advise that in-person learning is not a significant contributor to the spread of COVID-19. High school and middle school students who are scheduled to come to school for testing will still be expected to do so.

FINALISTS

The 10 finalists for the 2020-21 Wake County Public School System Teacher of the Year were announced on Dec. 8. The 10 made the final cut from approximately 10,700 teachers in the district.

* Gregory Eyman, Brentwood Magnet Elementary
* Robin Giberson, Buckhorn Creek Elementary
* Sean Hines, Mount Vernon Middle
* Kimberly Holland, Oakview Elementary
* Victoria Lightfoot, Cedar Forks Elementary
* Kelly O'Hare, Olive Chapel Elementary
* Jennifer Pride, Heritage Middle
* Aaron Steele, Knightdale High

* Bethany Wilcox, Leesville Road Middle
* Bria Wright, Hortons Creek Elementary

Teacher of the year candidates were nominated and elected by their peers at their individual schools earlier this year. All nominees were then asked to develop an "e-portfolio" and short video to highlight their work and philosophy around teaching. The teacher of the year will be named in February.

ORANGE COUNTY



Price named board chair

Renee Price was elected unanimously as chair of the Orange County Board of Commissioners for the next year. Price was vice chair for the past two years. She was elected to her third term as commissioner in November.

Jamezetta Bedford, who is in her first term as commissioner, was chosen unanimously as vice chair. "Being selected to serve as chair by my peers certainly is an honor, and I am

most appreciative, said Price. "I realize that my responsibilities to the Board and to the Orange County community suddenly have expanded, and I will endeavor in earnest to serve with, by and for the people."

A native of Rochester, New York, Price has lived in Orange County since 1990. Before becoming a county commissioner in 2018, Bedford served three terms on the Chapel Hill-

Carrboro City Schools Board of Education.

New commissioners Amy Fowler and Jean Hamilton joined the Board. Fowler is a native of Winston-Salem and was elected to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Board of Education in 2017. Hamilton is also a former member of the CHCCS Board of Education. She earned a Ph.D. in Economics from UC Berkeley and has lived in Chapel Hill since 2001.



STAY TUNED!

A new partnership in January.