



SPORTS

Norfolk State alumna gets own clothing line with NASCAR



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Durham Beta Phi Chapter celebrates Achievement Week

The Triangle Tribune

THE TRIANGLE'S CHOICE FOR THE BLACK VOICE SINCE 1998

"Serving Raleigh, Cary, Durham and Chapel Hill"

VOLUME 28 NO. 01

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52 WEEKS OF BLACK EXCELLENCE



In a Virginia Capitol Building that still has statues in honor of Jefferson Davis, Barbara Rose Johns will be on the first floor of the U.S. Capitol in the same position the Lee statue formerly occupied.

The Johns statue now joins Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune and Rosa Parks as one of four Black women honored in the U.S. Capitol in statue form.



MINT MUSEUM

On April 23, 1951, Barbara Johns, 16, led a walkout of students at the Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville, Virginia, to protest school segregation and the discriminatory education conditions of Black students. Her determination led to the lawsuit *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, which ultimately became part of the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Her strength and unwavering belief in equality and justice helped change the entire nation for the better.



Durham County Commissioner Nida Allam previously ran for Congress in 2022.

Durham County commissioner to challenge Valerie Foushee

By Colin Campbell
WUNC

DURHAM - Durham County Commissioner Nida Allam launched a campaign last month to unseat Democratic Congresswoman Valerie Foushee in the March primary.

Allam ran against Foushee in 2022 but came a few thousand votes short. She has served on

the Durham County commission since 2020. She recently wrapped up a stint as commission chair and is the first Muslim woman to hold elected office in North Carolina. She says the incumbent hasn't fought hard enough against the Trump administration on immigration and other policies.

"We have seen that when ICE

and CBP were here in our district, kidnapping our neighbors and separating families and terrorizing folks, our member of Congress posted a tweet," Allam said. "Like, this moment requires urgency, because families are hurting right now. We can't wait for three years for new leadership. We need people in

Please see **FOUSHEE/2A**

20 NC Democratic legislators are running unopposed

By Colin Campbell
WUNC

Twenty state legislators will likely win another term after no one filed to run against them in the 2026 election. All but one of the lawmakers running unopposed are Democrats who represent left-leaning districts.

In the Triangle, they include Reps. Vernetta Alston and Zack Hawkins of Durham, Sarah Crawford of Raleigh, Ray Jeffers of Roxboro and Senator Natalie Murdock of Durham.

The list also includes Reps. Mike Colvin of Fayetteville, Tracy Clark of Greensboro, Pricey Harrison of Greensboro, Kanika Brown of Winston-Salem, Brian Turner of Asheville, and Sens. Michael Garrett of Greensboro and Gladys Robinson of Greensboro. The largest concentration of uncontested legislative races is in Mecklenburg County, where Reps. Terry Brown, Julia Greenfield, Carolyn Logan, Laura Budd, Aisha Dew and Jordan Lopez, and Sens. Mujtaba Mohammed and DeAndrea Salvador are all running unopposed.

Conservative commentator Andrew Dunn downplayed the impact of so many districts without Republican candidates. "You don't get a prize for fielding candidates," he said on the social media site X. "I'm glad that there aren't Republicans running in some of these districts where they have no chance. Keeps focus and \$\$ where they are more valuable."

Only one Republican is running without any opposition in the primary or general election. No one filed to run against Rep. Wyatt Gable of Jacksonville, but a spokesperson for House Democrats says the party has recruited an unaffiliated candidate who will petition for ballot access in that race.

House Democrats boasted in a news release that they have candidates in all 120 districts. The news release said that it "reflects a renewed commitment from communities across North Carolina to contest every seat and offer voters real choices."

But two of the 120 are unaffiliated candidates who haven't yet qualified to appear on the ballot. They'll need to collect more than 2,000 signatures first. The unaffiliated candidates are Asjiah West, who is challenging Gable, and Leah Knox, who is seeking the seat held by Rep. Keith Kidwell, R-Beaufort.

"These candidates have until noon on primary election day to get signatures from 4% of the total number of registered voters in their district, as required by law," House Democratic Caucus spokesperson Sam Lozier said in an email. "We have a plan in place to ensure that this requirement is fulfilled."

All 14 of the state's Congressional districts have candidates from both parties, and that's also true for all statewide judicial races. And while both former Gov. Roy Cooper and former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Whatley are favored to be their party's nominees for U.S. Senate, both must first defeat multiple primary opponents on their party's ballot in March.

With the list of candidates now final, the State Board of Elections voted to approve early voting schedules for the March primary in all but 13 counties. The 87 county early voting schedules had previously been approved unanimously by local election boards, with support from both Democrats and Republicans.

Please see **NC/2A**

NC employees and teachers may see more premium hikes

By Lynn Bonner
NC NEWSLINE

Medical claims are going to cost the State Health Plan more than anticipated in the next two years, according to plan consultants.

With costs increasing and revenues failing to meet projections, the state health plan's reserve account will fall below its target in January 2028, consultants told health plan trustees last month.

A looming deficit pushed the

State Health Plan trustees to increase beneficiaries' insurance premiums, out-of-pocket costs and copays for 2026. The premium increase was the first in years. For the first time, premiums will be pegged to employee salaries.

The health plan is still on firmer financial footing than it has been in the past, state officials told reporters. The plan won't be running a deficit in 2026 or 2027 as was once projected, said Tom Friedman, State

Health Plan executive administrator.

But more changes are coming to the insurance plan that covers about 750,000 state employees, teachers, retirees and dependents. The health plan trustees are scheduled to vote on benefits changes in March and on premium increases for 2027 in July. The North Carolina Association of Educators opposed the 2026 premium hikes. Another increase for 2027

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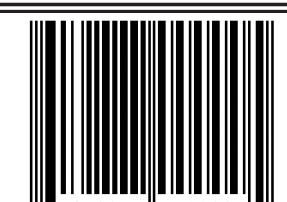
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Valerie Foushee gets challenger in primary

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Congress and elected office at every level who are going to be bringing working families' voices to the seat and pushing back against Trump's authoritarianism."

Foushee has said she's been working on legislation to restrict the Trump administration's immigration enforcement actions.

"In Congress, I am pushing to pass legislation like the Neighbors Not Enemies Act to repeal the President's sweeping power to detain foreign nationals," she said in a social media post. "I'm also proud to co-sponsor the Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act, the ICE Badge Visibility Act, and more, and remain committed to protecting our immigrant communities."

Allam's campaign has been endorsed by U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders and several national progressive groups, including Justice

Democrats and the Working Families Party.

"Nida is a proven fighter with the courage to take on corporate power, billionaires, and billionaire-funded Super PACS like AIPAC," Sanders said in a news release, referring to the pro-Israel lobbying group that helped fund Foushee's 2022 campaign.

"At a moment when the oligarchs are tightening their grip on government, we need leaders like Nida — leaders who answer to working families, not the billionaire class."

Foushee announced in August that she will not take any contributions from AIPAC next year, *IndyWeek* reported. A significant percentage of funds used in the 2022 primary between Foushee, Allam and other candidates came from AIPAC.

Foushee faced criticism last year for taking an AIPAC-sponsored trip to Israel.

"This district deserves someone who is going to

speak up for what a majority of Americans across this country are saying — a majority of Democrats have said that what Israel has conducted in Gaza is a genocide, and that they don't support it, and they want to see our party do better," Allam said.

Foushee defended her Israel trip at the time, saying "fostering diplomatic dialogue and facilitating de-escalation efforts is the only way to reach a bilateral ceasefire, ensure the release of all remaining hostages, alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and achieve the ultimate goal of a permanent two-state solution."

The 4th Congressional District includes Durham, Orange and portions of Wake and Chatham counties.

Foushee is a former state senator from Orange County who was elected in 2022 after longtime Congressman David Price retired.

20 NC Democratic legislators unopposed

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Wake and Mecklenburg counties, however, are expanding early voting with more locations than they offered four years ago.

Wake County will have 12 early voting sites, up from eight in 2022. Thirteen county election boards disagreed on early voting plans, including Guilford, Cumberland, Pitt and Brunswick — meaning the state board will decide on their schedules during a meeting next month.

The early voting period will run from Feb. 12-28 ahead of the March 3 primary.

NC employees, teachers may see premium hikes

Continued from page 1A

would amount to a pay cut for educators, President Tamika Walker Kelly said in a statement.

"Their wages have been stagnant for years already lagging behind neighboring states and well below the national average," her statement said. "Now, on top of inflation and a rising cost of living, they're being asked to shoulder yet another financial burden. Educators do exceptional work in our schools, and they deserve to see the value of that work reflected in both their pay and their benefits."

After trustees heard a presentation on health plan finances Dec. 5, Friedman said the health plan needs to move more aggressively to lower costs for the plan and for beneficiaries. "This is a cost problem," he said. "We have to drive those costs down so we can continue to invest in health."

Part of attacking that problem will involve creating more financial incen-

tives for beneficiaries to use lower-cost providers, he said.

"There are a lot of areas where there are significant variants in cost that are not driven by quality," he said.

"We have to make it affordable and simple for members to go to lower-cost, high quality providers."

Using medical imaging — MRIs and other diagnostic scans — as an example, the health plan could save money if more enrollees used freestanding radiology centers rather than getting those scans in hospitals, he said. The plan would have to offer financial incentives to beneficiaries to draw them to the freestanding offices and would have to negotiate lower costs with the providers in exchange for higher patient volume.

"We don't need a lot of movement to save tens of millions of dollars in this area," he said.

That strategy could work in the Triangle, where freestanding medical imaging offices are clustered.

But those independent offices aren't available in and around Mecklenburg County, so health plan administrators will need to use a different strategy there.

Some rural counties have no imaging options nearby. The health plan may need to contract with mobile imaging services to cover rural areas.

The health plan started to build a "preferred provider" network this year, where hundreds of providers have agreed to bundled payments to cover costs of procedures rather than billing separately for each step in medical treatment. Primary care is the best developed arm of the network, with providers statewide participating, according to a Health Plan map.

An important step in broadening the network will be adding more OB-GYNs and making "better maternity bundles to make it more affordable to have a baby in North Carolina," Friedman said.



COURTESY

Bianca Carolina is using her story to end the stigma associated with HIV.

From Heartbreak to Advocacy to Role Model

Bianca Carolina's HIV Awareness Journey

By Clayton Gutmore

THE ATLANTA VOICE

Discovering you have HIV can be one of the most devastating pieces of news a person can receive.

For Bianca Carolina, it was crushing, but she refused to remain in shambles. Today, Carolina is an HIV advocate, a wife, an expecting mother of two, and an inspiration to many people living with HIV. She uses her story to illuminate that life isn't over after a diagnosis. Through education and social media content, she shows that life, love and long-held aspirations are still possible.

"The message I would love to give out is you can still find love, you can still build a family, and your life still has value and purpose. It is no longer what it once was, but HIV is no longer a death sentence, so we should not treat it that way," Carolina said.

Carolina learned she was HIV-positive in 2019 while in a relationship with the man who infected her. When she received the diagnosis, her heart sank.

When she shared the news with her then-partner, his calm, unsurprised reaction alarmed her. The situation worsened when she discovered he had been infecting other women as well. Her former partner was a public figure, and, in 2019, while he was hospitalized, a social media post

about his condition drew comments from people alleging he had knowingly exposed several women to HIV. That is where Carolina learned she was not the only one.

"Up until that moment, I thought I was the only person he had intentionally infected. I didn't know there were others. I guess I was still in denial. I didn't know the extent of this person's willingness to hurt people," she said.

The revelation was devastating, but Carolina chose not to let her diagnosis define her. She began by educating herself and researching HIV. However, she quickly noticed that most of the material she found catered to gay men or white women.

Carolina explained that HIV disproportionately affects the Black community, yet she struggled to find heterosexual Black women publicly sharing their status or stories.

Because of this, she didn't see herself reflected in the advocacy space.

On July 12, 2024, she posted a YouTube video about how she learned she was HIV-positive. It has since garnered more than a million views and has inspired many others to share their truths.

"The most impactful thing that has come out of me sharing my story is people being able to share theirs. Oftentimes, I am the

only person some people have ever disclosed to, and they've been living with HIV for decades," Carolina said.

Carolina documents her ongoing journey on Instagram, where her handle, @bianca.carolina, has nearly 30,000 followers.

Her page features videos of her daily life, educational content about HIV and updates on her pregnancy with her second child. Recently, she shared that her doctors approved her to breastfeed, something she described as both empowering and deeply meaningful.

Determined to show that life continues after diagnosis, Carolina spoke to a room full of journalists in August at the National Association of Black Journalists' annual convention in Cleveland, Ohio. She sat on a panel organized by ViVi Healthcare alongside music artist Tamar Braxton.

Together, they emphasized that HIV can affect anyone and urged people to educate themselves and others.

"Speak to a therapist or seek community, it is crucial. At least disclose to one person who loves you that you're HIV-positive. When the thoughts of disgust and shame come, that's when support steps in. You cannot live with this alone. It will eat you alive," she said.



Survey: Dissatisfaction with North Carolina schools, but teachers not to blame

By James Farrell

WFAE

A new survey from Elon University found dissatisfaction with North Carolina's public schools. But survey respondents place the bulk of the blame on factors outside the classroom.

Only 36% of the 800 survey respondents gave North Carolina's traditional public schools a grade of an A or a B. That was lower than the rate for private schools (51%), charter schools (41%) and home schooling (40%).

But when asked to list the top factors for underperformance, respondents were most likely to cite a lack of funding or resources. When asked to list three reasons for school underperformance, lack of funding was listed in 60% of responses.

And they generally blamed the state government or local school boards, not teachers, with 46% of surveys listing state government and 44% of surveys listing local school boards as deserving "a lot"

of blame. Only 19% of responses listed teachers as deserving "a lot" of blame.

"They often thought that part of the issue was maybe the state's top education and political leaders did not work well together to improve schools," said Jason Husser, director of the Elon Poll. "Fifty percent said that the state's top leaders did not work very well or not at all well together. So, I think that I would treat this if I was a state leader as a sign that there's opportunities for growth, not so much one that is condemning of those leaders."

Scores went up when respondents were asked to grade the public schools in their local area, with 48% rating them an A or a B. Husser said it's common in polling for people to feel negatively about issues at a broad level and then more positively at a local level. For instance, polls often show people feel negatively about the U.S. Congress but positively about their local representatives.

Some of that could be at play here, Husser said, but

not to the same extent. "That is somewhat true in what we found with education attitudes in North Carolina," Husser said.

"However, we found it going from 36% in general adults saying that public schools get an A or a B to 48%; that is a meaningful change, but it's not like it turns and flips altogether."

The survey also suggested many in North Carolina don't understand the state's educational system. For instance, only 41% correctly knew that North Carolina's state superintendent was an elected position, and only 52% knew local school board members were generally elected positions.

Husser argued that reflected the complexity in the process of how state decisions get made.

The survey also asked respondents to weigh in on the use of AI in schools, with results reflecting ambivalence. While 59% of respondents wanted to see AI being taught in schools, 63% said schools should restrict student AI use.



North Carolina and nine other state legislatures don't have any working class representation.

Project Censored highlights 12 underreported stories in 2025

By Eric Tegethoff
PUBLIC NEWS SERVICE

2025 was a big year in news, but some stories slipped through the cracks.

Project Censored is highlighting 12 of the year's most underreported stories. The organization selects topics that weren't thoroughly covered by the mainstream press.

Many of the stories on the list impact North Carolina directly, such as the severe underrepresentation of the working class in state legislatures.

Just 1.6% of state lawmakers are working class, according to research from Duke University and Loyola University Chicago that's conducted every two years.

Andy Lee Roth, editor-at-large for Project Censored, said this issue impacts what legislatures can achieve.

"When you have a lack of working class representa-

tion in state legislatures," said Roth, "that means that working class perspectives on social and economic issues are simply missing from the key public policy debates that take place in those chambers."

North Carolina is among 10 states that didn't have any working class state legislators.

Roth noted that the work of Project Censored also celebrates the importance of independent journalism, where many of the underreported stories originate from.

Another story on the list details Amazon and Wal-

mart's use of surveillance technology on its warehouse workers.

Roth said workers have complained that the technology is used for punishing workers when something goes wrong.

"Amazon and Walmart, some of the biggest employers in the country, are not only using, but they're

pioneering workplace surveillance technologies," he said. "These technologies intimidate warehouse workers and aim to increase their productivity, but often at the expense of workers' physical and mental health."

The top story on Project Censored's list is ICE's solicitation of social media surveillance contracts to identify people who are critical of the agency. Roth said stories on this subject appeared in Common Dreams and The Intercept in February, but not in major outlets like the New York Times.

"We quote immigration rights activist Cinthya Rodriguez," said Roth, "who works for the Latinx rights group called Mijente and told The Intercept, 'ICE's attempt to have eyes and ears in as many places as we exist, online and offline, should ring an alarm for all of us.'

"We quote immigration rights activist Cinthya Rodriguez," said Roth, "who works for the Latinx rights group called Mijente and told The Intercept, 'ICE's attempt to have eyes and ears in as many places as we exist, online and offline, should ring an alarm for all of us.'



Student loan borrowers in default may see their wages garnished in 2026

By Sequoia Carrillo
WUNC

Once that happens, the federal government can try to collect on the debt by seizing tax refunds and Social Security benefits, and also by ordering an employer to withhold up to 15% of a borrower's pay. Borrowers should receive a 30-day notice from the Education Department before this wage garnishment begins.

The Trump administration will resume garnishing wages from student loan borrowers in default in early 2026, the U.S. Education Department confirmed to National Public Radio.

The move comes after a years-long pause in wage garnishment due to the pandemic.

"We expect the first notices to be sent to approximately 1,000 defaulted borrowers the week of Jan. 7," a department spokesperson told NPR. The spokesperson said wage garnishment notices are expected to increase on a monthly basis throughout the year.

A borrower is in default when they have not made loan payments in more than 270 days.

economic strain on low- and middle-income borrowers."

About 5.5 million borrowers are currently in default, according to a recent analysis of the latest federal student loan data published by the American Enterprise Institute, a public policy think tank.

Another 3.7 million are more than 270 days late on their payments, and 2.7 million are in the early stages of delinquency.

"We've got about 12 million borrowers right now who are either delinquent on their loans or in default," Preston Cooper, who studies student loan policy at AEI, told NPR. That's more than 1 in 4 federal student loan borrowers.

Cory Turner contributed to this story.



Victoria Scott-Miller, left, accepts GoFundMe check of \$71,000 from Ashlie Ouzts.

NC's first Black-owned children's bookstore reopens in Southeast Raleigh

By Kylie Marsh

RALEIGH - December 29 was the fourth day of Kwanzaa, dedicated to Ujamaa, or cooperative economics. It also was a historic day in North Carolina.

Liberation Station, the state's first Black-owned children's bookstore, reopened its doors at its new location, 430 Hill Street in Raleigh, thanks to over \$71,000 in community donations through GoFundMe.

The bookstore was open for a year in downtown Raleigh before racial threats and security concerns led founders Victoria Scott-Miller and Duane Miller to shut down. Scott-Miller said Monday's celebration was not about grief.

"Today, this moment right here isn't about what tried to stop us. Struggle doesn't get the spotlight today. Grief doesn't get the microphone. Today belongs to liberation," she said to a small crowd of children and families gathered to celebrate the reo-

pening and purchase books.

"When the world said, 'not now,' we said, 'watch us,' and every time something tried to dim our light, we gathered more candles," Scott-Miller said. "Liberation is not a moment, it is a practice."

The Millers' two sons, Langston, 9, and Emerson, 15, spoke on the significance of the bookstore's opening.

"I like this bookstore because I see kids who look like me. I see kids who are smart, brave and doing amazing," Emerson Miller said. "That makes me feel good about who I am."

Langston Miller discussed how people of color, including Black people, have been racially profiled by Immigration and Customs Enforcement nationwide.

"This can be very frightening for a young Black child to be looked at as a potential threat or to be misidentified. That is why this is important," he said.

Despite receiving death threats at the former downtown location, the family

stood steadfast in their mission.

"I'm sure you have all heard the saying that it takes a village to raise a child, but what is a village without the resources? What is a classroom without the materials to learn or to teach? And how do you find these resources when they are constantly being taken away?" Langston asked. "These are the reasons it was imperative that we return."

The three cut the ribbon before patrons lined up to enter the intimate space and browse titles from authors throughout the African diaspora, like "I is for Immigrants," "The ABC's of Black History," and "Be, Black Girl, Be."

Liberation Station is in Montague Plaza on Rock Quarry Road, named after James "Monte" Montague, president of Black-owned F7 International Development.

Montague Plaza was developed with the intention of supporting Black-owned businesses in Southeast Raleigh, a historic Black community.

MLK '26 DREAMFEST

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

	
Art Exhibition: Christopher Evans "Within the Light Finding the Balance" Page-Walker Arts & History Center JAN 7 THRU MAR 7	Film Screening & Panel Discussion John Lewis: Good Trouble The Cary Theater 7:30 p.m. JAN 16th
Dreamfest Children's Program Page-Walker Arts & History Center 10:00 a.m. JAN 17th	2026 Dreamfest Cultural Celebration Cary Arts Center 5:00 p.m. Pre-Show Activities 6:30 p.m. Showtime JAN 17th
Interfaith Service Christ the King Lutheran Church 3:30 p.m. JAN 18th	Dining & Discussion First Cary United Methodist Church 5:30 p.m. JAN 18th
MLK 5K Walk for Hope Mt Zion Church 10:00 a.m. JAN 19th	MLK Outdoor Day of Service Good Hope Farm, Hemlock Bluffs 10:00 a.m. JAN 19th
Meet the Artist Reception Christopher Evans Page-Walker Arts & History Center 6:00 p.m. JAN 30th	

JAN 17

REV. JEROME GAY
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

KWEILYN MURPHY
MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES

2026 DREAMFEST CULTURAL CELEBRATION

- KIDS ARTS & CRAFT ZONE
- COMMUNITY INFORMATION BOOTHS
- CHARITABLE COLLECTION

ACTIVITIES BEGIN AT 5PM | SHOW STARTS AT 6:30PM

CARY ARTS CENTER, 101 DRY AVE, CARY NC 27511

CARY carync.gov/dreamfest
DIAL 311 or (919) 469-4000
outside of Cary Town Limits





CHARLES FLANAGAIN

Charles Flanagan, at a community event in Georgia, says sharing personal health stories can break the silence that surrounds chronic illness among men.

A new model for men's health in communities

By Andrea Stevens
THE AFRO

In church halls, community centers and conference rooms across the country, a quiet movement is gaining momentum. Its focus is on breaking the silence surrounding men's health, particularly among men of color.

At the center of the effort is John Bruce, director of strategic partnerships at the Men's Health Network and senior pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church. The health network offers resources for men's mental, physical and sexual health. For the past three years, Bruce has worked to connect faith-based organizations and health advocates to address chronic illness, mental health and the importance of early screenings.

"My personal journey started in Baltimore during the HIV epidemic," he said. "I watched churches become places of healing and outreach. That experience shaped my commitment to health equity."

Bruce says too many men, especially Black men, are left out of vital health conversations. A conver-

sation with a rideshare driver brings the issue home.

"He starts talking about his father's prostate cancer," Bruce said. "He had never heard what symptoms to look for. By the time we got to the airport, he was in tears. That's when I realize how powerful one honest conversation can be."

According to USA.gov, "Regular preventative health screenings can help identify signs of serious illness before they become deadly." But many men don't take advantage of these screenings. Research shows that "in the U.S., 9% of prostate cancer cases are found at a distant stage."

The Men's Health Network seeks to create more of those open conversations through advocacy, education and strategic partnerships.

One of its key collaborators is Charles Flanagan, a retired Air Force veteran and owner of RISE Resiliency, a mentoring and leadership organization.

"I deal with mental health every day," Flanagan said. "Working with the Men's Health Network has helped

me, but it's also allowed me to help others who feel isolated."

Flanagan says community events that open doors for men to talk openly about their challenges is crucial. He recalls being part of a panel discussion that brings together local leaders and health experts from across the region.

"We tell people to be comfortable being uncomfortable," he said. "It starts with real conversations and leads to lasting change. I want men to know they're not alone. Healing happens when we show up for one another."

Despite growing support, Bruce notes that the federal government still lacks an Office of Men's Health, unlike the existing offices for women's and minority health.

That absence is part of what drives the network's grassroots mission.

"We need to engage all sectors," he said. "That includes churches, schools, local governments and families."

Community health means sharing our stories and encouraging others to do the same.

AROUND THE TRIANGLE

RALEIGH COLLECTORS

NC Collector's Roadshow is Jan. 3-4, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., NC State Fairgrounds, Jim Graham Building.

DEMOCRATS

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries will attend a reception benefiting the Democratic Party Jan. 9, 5 p.m., Umstead Hotel. Contact: James Walling at walling@cccc.org.

TENNIS

Unsanctioned: RRC Elite 8 tennis tournament is Jan. 9-11, Raleigh Racquet Club, 5516 Falls of Neuse Road. [Regisster](http://regisster.playtennis.usta.com)

VETERANS

The next Veterans and Coffee meetup is Jan. 13, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Greene African American Cultural Center, 401 MLK Jr. Blvd.

DURHAM LUNCHEON

Workforce in Action

Luncheon is Jan. 9, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Harvey Estes Center, 1121 Slater Road. Register: www.giveittothepeople.com.

GARDENING

Hattie Meadows Gardening School classes will begin at Sanford L. Warren Library Jan. 10, 10 a.m. to noon, with "The Dirt on Soil," 1201 Fayetteville St. Call 919-560-7290.

SHOWCASE

DPS Showcase of Schools is Jan. 10, 10 a.m. to noon, Northern High School, 4622 N. Roxboro St.

County Public Transit will implement a one-year pilot of fare-free fixed-route transit. Learn more at www.orangecountync.gov.

COFFEE

The next Coffee with a Cop is Jan. 7, 8-10 a.m., Mediterranean Deli, 410 W. Franklin St.

MOVIE

"End of Life" movie night is Jan. 8, 4-6 p.m., Seymour Center, 2551 Homestead Road. Register by Jan. 7 at 919-968-2070.

MISC.

AWARD
Better Business Bureau of Eastern Carolinas announces a new Women-in-Business Award. A \$1,000 grant will go to a female business owner or entrepreneur.

Learn more at www.cognitiforms.com/BBForms. Deadline: Jan. 5.

SCHOLARSHIP

Applications are open for the Connia H. Watson Memorial Scholarship for two Durham high school seniors. Learn more at gdbcc.org. Deadline: Jan. 15.

CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT

Beginning Jan. 2, Orange



Graduates celebrate before receiving their certificates.

Durham Skilled Trades graduates first class

STAFF REPORTS

DURHAM — A Durham-based nonprofit vocational school marked a milestone years in the making: the graduation of its first class since relaunching in 2025.

More than a ceremony, the moment symbolized resilience restored, doors reopened, and futures rebuilt — one skill, one student, one story at a time.

Originally founded in 2017 by two local plumbers determined to fill open positions in their own contracting businesses, Durham School of Skilled Trades quickly became proof of a simple truth: when education is practical, personal and purposeful, people show up.

Though the program gained early momentum, it could not provide hands-on training during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the classrooms went quiet, but the mission never disappeared.

That mission found new life during the pandemic recovery, when the North Carolina Community Colleges Proprietary Schools director reached out to William Calhoun, a longtime leader in vocational education, with a simple question: What would it take to

bring the school back?

The answer came through months of fundraising, curriculum refinement, and a move into a larger, lab-focused training facility.

In June 2025, the doors reopened, this time with deeper roots, broader vision and a renewed sense of purpose.

"This graduating class represents resilience, community and the power of second chances," said Calhoun, president of the School of Skilled Trades.

"We rebuilt this school around one belief: that education changes lives. This class didn't just learn that lesson; they lived it."

Students ranged in age from 17 to 35 and arrived from all walks of life: a working mother striving for financial stability, a young man rebuilding after incarceration, a high school graduate who knew a chalk-and-talk classroom wasn't the right fit, and even college graduates who discovered that traditional degrees hadn't delivered the security they were promised.

Graduating with highest honors, Qion Toney delivered remarks that captured both the grit and gratitude of the class. A former stu-

dent at North Carolina State University, Toney chose plumbing not for prestige but for purpose.

"We're here to celebrate something big... something priceless. Options," Toney said. "This school gave us a skill that can't be outsourced, automated or replaced by a YouTube tutorial [or AI]. Plumbing isn't just a trade; it's security, dignity, and knowing you can walk into chaos and leave things better than you found them."

The school's tagline, "Get equipped. Get empowered. Get employed." is more than a line in a brochure; it's a lived promise.

"Our mission is to equip students with skills that truly matter," said Kim Calhoun, assistant campus director. "That means knowing which tool to reach for on the job but, just as importantly, building the inner tools that carry you through the hard days. The days when the car won't start. When child care falls through. When quitting whispers louder than continuing. We teach students how to keep showing up, because that's where real opportunity begins."

Visit Schoolofskilledtrades.org.

6 steps to start a new year routine

FAMILY FEATURES



* Plan meals and snacks.

The hectic nature of life, especially busy weekdays, is inescapable. Whether you're wrapping up late work meetings, running kids to activities, tackling homework or juggling errands, turning to a tasty, convenient air fryer snack like Mrs. T's Snack Pierogies can hold the family over before mealtime. Easy for teens to prep on their own and ideal for busy moms, they're a perfect bite to whip up while getting back into the swing of things in 2026.

* Update family calendars.

Keeping up with a schedule full of field trips, sporting events, work meetings, social commitments and weekend activities can be a chore, but turning to technology makes it more manageable. Choose a family calendar app that can be downloaded to your devices and log all of your upcoming events so everyone stays in the know.

* Review screen time habits.

While tech can encourage better organization and planning, it can also encroach on special moments together. After a

break from school and work, you might've noticed more screen time around the house — making this an ideal time to return to screen time limits or, at the least, mindfulness of how often you and your loved ones are in front of a TV, computer or mobile device. Encourage kids to put down the tablets and instead opt for family game nights or craft sessions, putting your creativity to the test while reconnecting offline.

* Plan for downtime.

Reshaping day-to-day schedules, reviewing routines and preparing for a strong start to 2026 doesn't mean fun is out the window. You can meet your goals and set your family up for success with, like always, a little planning. While building out your calendar with mandatory meetings and obligations, make sure to prioritize downtime, too. Schedule family game nights, dinners at home when everyone is available or a weekend trip to a favorite attraction. Remember what matters most in the hustle and bustle: shared moments with your nearest and dearest.

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NCATT
Leon Hunter returned from a severe injury to play the 2025 minor league baseball season.

Former A&T pitcher battles injury

N.C. A&T SPORTS INFORMATION

GREENSBORO — Former North Carolina A&T right-handed pitcher Leon Hunter sent a fastball from the mound in the last outing of the Tacoma Rainiers' 2023 season, collecting his 43rd strikeout of the year. It was the last pitch he delivered for months.

Shortly after the throw, Hunter felt a burning sensation in his right arm, which he initially brushed off as a routine muscle pull. However, the next day brought a much more complex diagnosis of a torn Latissimus Dorsi muscle, an injury that sidelined him much longer than expected.

In fact, it took Hunter approximately 18 months of rehabilitation to return to the game, and it was full of challenges beyond what was physically seen.

"It's more so a mental battle," said Hunter, who has played professional baseball since being drafted by the Texas Rangers in 2019. "There are days where I felt great, and it's like I can do this again, and then a week after, you feel like you're back to square one, and it's like 'OK, what's going on?'"

Regardless, Hunter poured his heart into rehabilitation, allowing his work ethic in the weight room and a mindset focused on tackling each day to carry him back into doing what he loves.

He credits his approach to navigating this setback to playing multiple sports growing up. Basketball, football and baseball each presented different requirements and coaching styles that pushed Hunter to go harder.

He carried this drive into his return to the field for the 2025 season with the Seattle Mariners' Double-A affiliate, the Arkansas Travelers. Hunter, a Garner native, made 26 appearances and posted a 5.40 ERA.

It illustrates the challenges of regaining his rhythm, which helped Hunter put together a minor league career in which he has made 134 appearances, including two starts. He has a career record of 24-7 with a 3.52 ERA in 199.1 innings.

His career numbers also include 244 strikeouts and 14 saves while walking only 84 batters. Hitters have only batted .220 against him over his career.

That's why his eyes are fixed on improving with each opportunity he gets. Hunter elected for free agency on Nov. 6.

"Right now, I'm just trying to get back in the swing of things when it comes to commanding pitches and getting in the high leverage counts," he said. "So, basically, just getting ahead, staying ahead, and using my weapons to get guys out."

Hunter is grateful to the Mariners organization for their support throughout the process. Through the ups and downs, he is intentional about appreciating where he stands.

"The biggest lesson is don't take the position I am in right now for granted," he said. "I feel like there were a lot of guys that were on the same roster as me that didn't get the opportunity they definitely should have."

The Triangle Tribune Sports

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Clothing line fit for a Queen



Norfolk State alumna Brehanna Daniels unveils Trailblazer, a clothing line honoring her legacy as the first Black female NASCAR pit crew member.



INSTAGRAM

HBCU FOOTBALL

Former SAU coach gets second chance

By Bonitta Best
editor@triangletribune.com

Delaware State gave coach DeSean Jackson a new three-year contract through the 2028 season. The Hornets finished 8-4 and one game shy of a conference championship.

"Just two days before Christmas last year, I began the next phase of my professional career, as a first-time head coach, in a community I did not know, with players I did not recruit," Jackson said in a statement. "...We have some unfinished business to take care of on the field, and I am proud to be a part of the athletic transformation taking place at the school."

Albany State

Director of Athletics Kristene Kelly wasted no time replacing Quinn Gray. Former St. Augustine's head coach David Bowser, where Kelly was an associate AD, was hired last week.

"As the landscape of college athletics continues to evolve, it was important for us to identify a leader prepared to operate as a true CEO of the program in today's college athletics environment," Kelly said. "Coach

Bowser has demonstrated success operating within that change, navigating Division II football through roster management, multiple recruiting pathways, academic accountability and the realities of the transfer portal."

Bowser was special assistant to the head football coach, director of player personnel and linebackers coach at Johnson C. Smith, which won its first CIAA championship since the 1970s.

Before St. Aug's, Bowser was associate head coach at Fayetteville State for two decades.

Florida A&M

After weeks of speculation, alumnus and star quarterback Quinn Gray is the Rattlers' new head coach. Gray spent three years at Albany State, compiling a 24-11 overall record, 20-4 SIAC and leading the team to its best season in program history.

"I'm home! I am humbled and excited about the opportunity to lead this great program that is known to be the standard in HBCU football and the one that groomed me into the man I am today," Gray said.

Please see FORMER/7A



Will DeSean Jackson stick around the full three years?



WELCOME
David Bowser
HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

#CREATINGLEGACIES

The Power of Legacy: Howard guard Cam Gillus

By Rob Knox
HOWARD SPORTS INFORMATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The air above the white steel-truss Edmund Pettus Bridge is quiet, but it carries a weight, as if each breeze were whispering the names of people who once walked this road with nothing but courage to protect them, their bodies bruised, bloodied and still moving forward.

Cam Gillus felt the ground beneath him holding memories of fear and hope, and his own footsteps suddenly felt small, almost reverent. The Howard University men's basketball junior point guard knew he was standing in history, stepping into a heartbeat that was not his own but somehow lived in his chest.

As one of more than 150 student-athletes and administrators who participated in

the Big Life Series: Selma to Montgomery, sponsored by the Big Ten Conference from July 18-20, Gillus experienced a profound connection to history.

"My biggest takeaway was just realizing the pain and struggle Black people had to go through and how far we have come to make life better for us," Gillus said of his walk across the historic bridge. "The most meaningful part was hearing the stories and being on the historical sites we visited, like the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where Bloody Sunday occurred. It was very powerful and eye-opening to experience these things."

And, in that way, what he felt in Selma, Alabama, mirrors the path in front of him now.

Just as generations before him paved the way, Gillus is learning that he, too, has a responsibility to lead, to steady

others and to leave something behind for the ones coming after him. Legacy is not only held in monuments and bridges. It is held in people.

Gillus grew up in Falls Church, Virginia, splitting his formative years between the DMV and Sidwell Friends School in northwest D.C. The District shaped him long before college basketball did. The culture, the pride, the pace, the way people carry themselves; it all seeped into him.

So, when the chance came to transfer from Lehigh University back to this familiar orbit, Howard felt less like a decision and more like a reflection of his roots.

Point guards, like marchers, are defined by action. Gillus laughs a little when he talks about it: the small kid, ball too big for his hands, trying to be heard among bigger

bodies. Ball-handling, passing, knowing where everyone was supposed to be; those were survival tools. But intelligence was the separator.

"Growing up, I was always one of the smaller dudes," he said. "I had to learn how to see the game differently. I always felt like I was one of the most intelligent players on the court. That is what helped me thrive as a point guard."

Two men helped him mold that gift: his father, Darren Gillus, who built the foundation and coach Eric Singletary at Sidwell Friends, who took him from good to polished. Singletary's mentorship exemplifies how guidance shapes future leaders and that lineage of influence mattered.

"He really helped me take my game to the next level," Gillus said. "He poured all his knowledge into me."

Former SAU coach gets ASU job

Continued from page 6A

Savannah State

Fayetteville State coach Richard Hayes loses another coordinator. Defensive coordinator Thomas Howard was named the Tigers' new head coach. Howard also was a coordinator at Alabama A&M and South Carolina State.

"This is a new chapter, not just for me, but for every SSU student-athlete, fan and supporter," Howard said.

ard said. "...Now, it's time to get to work and put this program back on top."

Welcome Back

Chicago State, a predominantly Black institution, has instituted football beginning in 2026. Bobby Rome is the inaugural head coach.

Legacy Bowl

More players added to the 2026 Allstate HBCU LEGACY BOWL.

* Norfolk State WR Dre-

'Sean Kendrick

* Florida A&M CB TJ Huggins

* Fayetteville State DL

Shawn Robinson

* Johnson C. Smith S

Daryl "TJ" Taybron

* Ft. Valley State CB Dar-

nell Stephens

* Elizabeth City State LB

Chris Calhoun

* Sean Kendrick

* Florida A&M CB

Malek Huggins

* Florida A&M CB

Ah'Maree Lee

* Arkansas-Pine Bluff CB

Zach Williams

* Tennessee State LB

Micah Gay

* Sean Kendrick

* Florida A&M CB

Malek Huggins

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Zach Williams

* Tennessee State LB

Micah Gay

* Sean Kendrick

* Florida A&M CB

The Durham Beta Phi Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity recently held its annual Achievement Week program to acknowledge the achievements of members and other community leaders. The program is one of the fraternity's national mandated programs. The event was held at St. Joseph AME Church in Durham.



Pictured left to right: Antonio Jones, chapter basileus; Jerry Fulmer accepting the Star Studded Award for Louis Threatt; Gene Lofton, Basileus Award; Hank Speller, Basileus Award; D. Curtis Lawson, Superior Service Award; Camille Johnson, High School Essay Award; Jim Harper III, Founders Lifetime Achievement Award; Kumani Simmons, Omega Man of The Year Award; Thomas Taylor, Star Studded Award; Claiborne "Tre" Tapp III, Citizen of the Year Award; and Bryan Patton, first vice basileus of the chapter.

BOOK



Southeast Raleigh women's book club launches

STAFF REPORTS

Calling all women who love books.

A new women's book club launches on Jan. 10 at the John P. "Top" Greene African American Cultural Center.

The club will meet the second Saturday of each month from 2-4 p.m.

Led by former St. Augustine's employee Patricia Nwosu, the club will offer an inspiring gathering where readers can dive into monthly selections and explore the meaning behind the stories.

Whether participants enjoy fiction, memoirs, poetry or nonfiction, this welcoming space encourages open dialogue, different perspectives and meaningful connections. Together, we aim to build a community of women who read, reflect, and rise through literature.

Nwosu helped shape the academic direction of SAU's humanities department, supported faculty and mentored students. She was also a featured participant in an initiative that brought together

alumni, educators, and community members to preserve and celebrate the legacy of SAU and its contributions to civil rights history.

Activities include monthly group discussions, themed reading challenges, author spotlights, guest speakers, book swaps and community-based outreach. Optional creative writing sessions and literary outings further enrich the experience and nurture participants' personal and intellectual growth.

History in the Making Carrboro Poet Laureate



CITY OF CARRBORO

Amanda Bennett, a poet, cultural critic and public humanities practitioner, has been selected the ninth poet laureate for the town of Carrboro. Bennett is the first-ever Black woman selected.

She is the author of "Working the Roots" and is a postdoctoral fellow in grant operations management and creative engagement with the UNC-Chapel Hill Arts & Humanities Grant Studio.

For over five years, Bennett has hosted community poetry workshops and open mics across North Carolina centering care, healing and collective imagination. She has performed at Charis Books & More in Atlanta, and Epilogue Books and Attic 506 in Chapel Hill.

Bennett also writes Woo in the Real World, a Substack that explores the intersections of spirituality, scholarship and everyday life, reflecting her belief that poetry is a living practice of care, communion and transformation.

Mary T. Horton Christmas Brunch

The Durham County Missionary Union hosted its annual Mary T. Horton Christmas Brunch at the Hilton Hotel. The celebration reflected a rich legacy of grassroots faith, leadership, unity across churches, as well as a shared commitment to spiritual well-being and health ministries.



New 'People's City Council' forms in Bull City

SUBMITTED TO THE TRIBUNE

Durham's 2025 municipal election was one of the most contentious in recent memory.

Many residents have expressed deep frustration with the city's current political climate and growing concern about the direction it is heading under its existing leadership.

In response, a coalition of former political candidates, community organizers, and activists has come together to form an alternative governing body known as the Bull City Council.

The Bull City Council describes itself as a more community-centered alternative to the official Durham City Council.

Its stated mission is to restore "all power to the people" by activating Durham residents to collectively address community concerns rather than relying on a local government that, organizers argue, has consistently prioritized corporations and devel-

opers over poor and working-class communities.

The council is led by former city council candidate Ashley Robbins, who has been declared "The People's Mayor."

Robbins ran openly as a socialist and earned 11.25% of the Ward 2 primary election vote, funding her grassroots campaign entirely out of pocket.

She drew significant attention for using unconventional tactics to highlight class disparities in Durham.

Robbins faced criticism for distributing "Wanted" posters in poor and working-class neighborhoods that featured images of certain city council members and accused them of "social murder" based on their policy decisions.

Robbins and other organizers have also engaged in direct community care efforts.

During the past two Durham City Council meetings, they have provided free meals outside City Hall as part of a nationwide mu-

tual aid initiative known as The People's Table. The event included hot meals and the distribution of groceries, hats, gloves, thermal socks, emergency blankets, and hygiene kits for unhoused community members.

The Bull City Council plans to focus on a wide range of issues affecting Durham residents, including class inequality, gentrification, food insecurity, gun violence, community safety and defense, and environmental racism.

Looking ahead, it intends to conduct outreach to organizers and activists across Durham to build alliances under the banner of the Bull City Provisional Government.

Organizers say the effort aims to model what true, uncompromised, people-powered and people-centered leadership can look like in Durham.

For more information, call 919-523-5753 or email: bullcitycommunitybiz@gmail.com.