

SPORTS

CIAA and Bowie State community mourns unexpected loss.



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Sugar Rush Dessert Factory says goodbye after 10 years.

The Triangle Tribune

THE TRIANGLE'S CHOICE FOR THE BLACK VOICE SINCE 1998

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VOLUME 28 NO. 06

Week of February 8-14, 2026

\$1.00

« 52 WEEKS OF BLACK BRILLIANCE »

Celebrating 90 years of the Richard B. Harrison Library

By Kylie Marsh

Kylie.marsh@triangletribune.com
RALEIGH - Community members gathered in Southeast Raleigh for tears, laughs, and memories at the celebration of 90th anniversary of the Richard B. Harrison Library late last year.

The library opened in 1935 as a storefront on East Hargett Street with 890 books. Spearheaded by Wake County's first Black librarian, Mollie Huston Lee, the library's impact in the community remains significant almost a century after its opening.

Countless supporters and library staff spoke of generations of their families attending events and spending time at the library, checking out its extensive collection which provided works by Black authors and about notable Black figures - something other libraries and schools did not provide.

Richard Berry Harrison was a renowned Black actor and drama professor. He was the first Black man to be pictured on the cover of Time. The library drew notable figures, such as Zora Neale Hurston, John Hope

Franklin, W.E.B. Dubois and Langston Hughes.

"Imagine being a woman in 1935 when rights and opportunities were limited. Now, imagine being a Black woman during that time," said Monica Lucas-Shabazz, a librarian at Harrison. "A Black woman that had unwavering determination, dedication and courage to advocate for a library that not only would educate and inspire but also would become a focal point and gathering spot in the community."

The celebration concluded by announcing the

inaugural cohort of the Mollie Huston Lee Legacy Awards. Octavia Rainey was recognized for an award, as well as Lucas-Shabazz.

Wanda Cox-Bailey, who received the first-ever Mollie Huston Lee Legacy Award, hosted the celebration. North Carolina Assistant State Librarian Tiawanna Nevels said Cox-Bailey is "a tireless library advocate, a beacon of community service and an inspiring leader. These are not just qualities that describe her but values that

Please see LIBRARY/2A



COURTESY OF DIGITALNC COLLECTIONS

Mollie Huston Lee, in her office at the library on New Bern Avenue (1969), was Wake County's first Black librarian.



Biltmore Hills tennis courts was a community gathering spot for Raleigh's Black elite.

Raleigh's Biltmore community wants upgraded tennis courts

By Kylie Marsh

Kylie.marsh@triangletribune.com

RALEIGH - John E. Smith grew up in Biltmore Hills Park, a Southeast Raleigh neighborhood. Smith also has been playing tennis at the park's courts all his life.

Although there is a plan to add eight more tennis courts through the Raleigh Parks Bond Referendum, Smith and others want to see the existing courts upgraded. The park was origi-

nally built with four courts in 1967. Four additional courts were built after petitioning by the community.

"The courts are now 50 years old," Smith said, explaining that the lifespan of a tennis court is 25 years. "There's a difference in playability between an old court and a brand new court."

Last month Raleigh Parks hosted the first of its public input sessions about an additional eight acres to the east of the park. The parcel, which was

the former site of a landfill, is now overgrown with vine.

Project manager Emma Liles says removal of the landfill debris, which looks mostly like construction material, is "prohibitively expensive."

"The site also has some steep slopes, which creates an opportunity for some great views," Liles said, but the plan must include consideration of ADA accessibility.

Please see BILTMORE/2A



History will remember who spoke and who hid

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA NEWswire

America watched it happen in real time. Journalists were arrested for doing their jobs. Not in some distant dictatorship. Not under cover of night in a failed state. In the United States of America.

Don Lemon. Georgia Fort. Trahem Jeen Crews. Jamael Lydell Lundy. Their crime was witnessing power and reporting it. While the arrests were immediate and the outrage was instant, the courage was nowhere to be found.

Yes, statements poured in. Carefully worded. Properly formatted. Issued by politicians, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups and celebrities. Condemnations. Expressions of concern. Warnings about precedent. All of it swift. All of it predictable. All of it ultimately safe. And yet, here we are.

The arrests were not a misunderstanding. They were not overzealous enforcement. They were not a procedural error to be corrected quietly. They were a deliberate, calculated escalation. A message. A threat. A line drawn by an administration that has made clear it no longer recognizes limits.

This was a 9/11-style assault on the First Amendment. Not because of the body count but because of the consequence. After 9/11, Americans woke up in a country where rights could be suspended in the name of power. After these arrests, journalists woke up in a country where truth itself is treated as a threat.

The facts are damning. Federal agents arrested journalists after a federal magistrate judge declined to issue warrants. Charges were pursued over the reported objections of career prosecutors. Journalists were detained overnight. All of it aimed squarely at reporting on federal agent activity and public protest.

Please see HISTORY/2A

Transitions LifeCare hosts Nnenna Freelon for book signing on grief

By Kylie Marsh

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Jazz singer Nnenna Freelon is known for her award-winning talent along with an equally notable family.

But, in 2019, Freelon lost her husband and soulmate, renowned architect Phil Freelon, to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS. Soon after, Freelon's sister, Debbie, passed from cancer, and her beloved dog Basie followed; all within six months.

Living through one loss after another, Freelon relied on her private journal to chronicle her confrontation with, and ultimately, comfort with grief. Her musings, often mimicking the improvisational nature of jazz, are compiled in her book, "Beneath the Skin of Sorrow," which was released in October.

Freelon will read an excerpt and participate in a community discussion on Feb. 11 at Transitions LifeCare in Raleigh.

"This event is an opportunity

to share with a community that's very well acquainted with grief in an open sharing way," Freelon told The Tribune. "...not trying to fix it, not trying to give solutions but just have an open conversation." The book is Freelon's first step into her literary voice.

Transitions LifeCare was founded in 1979. The organization works to address four core pillars of hospice and comforting care: social, spiritual, psy-

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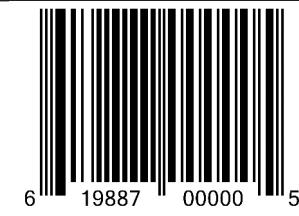
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Managing Editor/Sports Editor: Bonitta Best

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Richardson B. Library is a community treasure

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describe how she chooses to live each day."

Cox-Bailey was the library's branch manager for over 25 years and often forgets she is now "just a patron of the library."

The Harrison Library joined the Wake County Public Library System in

1967 after relocating to South Blount Street; later finding its new home at 1313 New Bern Avenue. It is a powerful cornerstone of the community, bringing together programs in literacy, community service, culture, and preserving vital Black and local history.

One favorite program

was a tea party, in which children would do arts and crafts, listen to stories, and sip tea in their best clothes with their favorite doll or action figure.

Cox-Bailey said Lee was "big about manners," and the tea party was a chance to see how children were faring on that front.

Transitions LifeCare hosts Nnenna Freelon on grief

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chological and physical.

Dwan Kelsey, Transitions associate director of education, told The Tribune that only a small percentage of what the team does is medical care.

"The book signing is critical for everybody in the entire community, because that's not something that we can get away from: grief and loss," Kelsey said. A documentary debunking myths and misconceptions about hospice, "An Act of Love," was narrated by Freelon and released last year.

Freelon said that Western culture frequently ignores conversations about death. Her book is not a how-to guide about dealing with grief and loss but simply opening up the conversation.

"The fear is that you'll be annihilated, that it will totally choke you, it will totally do away with you. But it doesn't, or it didn't for me," she said. "When I sat still long enough to let it touch me, it was a trembling feeling. It was not a good feeling. But how about sitting with it? I felt some things ease over time."

Now, she is on a "first-name basis" with grief. "I've made a frenemy of grief," she said.

Although everyone will go through grief at some point in their lifetime, Kelsey said every person is



FILE PHOTO

Nnenna Freelon

different. "What makes it challenging is because we bring our own experiences," she said. "People bring themselves, people bring their experiences; what they have seen, what they have understood to be, whether it is correct information or whether it's misinformed information, that's what they bring in."

"So when you ask, how do you get people to that space? You really do it moment by moment and understanding where they

are, you have to meet people where they are."

Kelsey also said that Freelon's book and conversations about grief and loss are critical.

"We're either going to talk about it proactively, or we're going to respond reactively," she said. "Everybody will benefit, because at some point in time, everybody will experience grief, and it may not be the loss of an individual, it just may be a loss. Like I said, grief is grief; it's universal."

History will remember who spoke and who hid

Continued from page 1A

But this is not only about the press. It is about who the press is. This is an assault on Black journalists.

Georgia Fort is an Emmy-winning Minnesota-based journalist whose reporting has centered on communities too often ignored. Don Lemon is a global figure who dared to criticize power and refused to flinch. Jamaal Lundy and Trahem Jeen Crews were documenting protests and state force the way journalists have always done in moments of upheaval.

There is no coincidence here. Black journalists have always occupied the most dangerous intersection in American history. Truth and Blackness have always been treated as insurgencies.

The Black Press of America was born before the end of slavery. Two hundred years ago, Black journalists understood what many still refuse to admit. That power does not yield to politeness. That silence is collaboration. That the truth must be printed even when it involves retaliation.

In 2027, the Black Press will mark its 200th anniversary. It has survived slave catchers, lynch mobs, Jim Crow, COINTELPRO, redlining, FBI surveillance, advertising boycotts and government intimidation.

It has survived because Black journalists understood that the price of silence is always higher than the cost of courage.

And yet today, as federal agents arrest journalists, as citizens are killed by

masked officers in broad daylight, as norms collapse, and as civil rights are stripped away piece by piece, the question remains unanswered.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said the American people are demanding accountability. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer called the arrest of Lemon a dark message to journalists everywhere. Mayor Karen Bass called it an egregious assault on constitutionally protected rights. The Rev. Al Sharpton called it a sledgehammer to the knees of the First Amendment. Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren warned of tin-pot dictatorship and spine-chilling assaults on press freedom.

They are right. And still the arrests happened.

ICE continues to occupy communities. Federal power continues to be weaponized. The Department of Justice continues to be bent toward vengeance rather than law. The Federal Reserve is looted in plain sight. Racism is no longer dog whistled. It is sanctioned. The ambition is not governance. It is domination.

No matter what ails America, history shows the same pattern. Black America bleeds first. Black America resists longest. Black America saves what others abandon.

The question is not whether this moment will be remembered.

The question is who will be remembered with honor.

Silence will answer for everyone else.

Biltmore Hills community wants better tennis courts

Continued from page 1A

Removal of the landfill debris would also cause a major cliff from the adjacent road down into the park, which would be dangerous and create further erosion from the road. A creek running through the new site also could cause the land to move. These present some challenges for environmental remediation, Liles explained.

There is also a proposal for a future greenway that would connect the surrounding areas to the park. Development of the site will be funded through Raleigh's Penny for Parks tax, budgeted at \$250,000.

Despite the purpose of the input session being specifically for the eight acres, John Smith, Donald Haith, Brenda Williamson and Nicole Sullivan, who have been playing tennis together since their college days, spoke up about the older courts getting re-

newed.

"Biltmore Hills was once the mecca of Black tennis," Sullivan said. She added that the \$250,000 for the eight acres could easily contribute to renewal of the old courts. Sullivan and Williamson said the old courts are now sloping and have poor drainage.

When Donald E. Smith was in college in the 1970s, he and others created the Ebony Racquet Club, where Black tennis players could come together.

"We formed because we decided, why should we have to leave the community?" Smith said. According to an initial context analysis by Raleigh Parks, the park is a cornerstone of the community in Raleigh's Black community.

Williamson was among the residents that petitioned for a playground and an additional four courts.

As more people moved

to the city to work at companies like IBM, Black residents wanted to play and be with their community, Smith explained. Eventually, the Ebony Racquet Club grew to 75 coed players. There was no regular schedule. People just knew to come and play.

"When you get off work, you'd come to the courts," Smith said. "It was a gathering point." Ebony Racquet Club is still in operation today, drawing a multigenerational crowd and hosts its own tournaments.

Biltmore Hills Park's additional eight courts will cost \$6.75 million. Public input sessions for the eight acres continue through February.

A public survey can be found at publicinput.com/biltmoreinput, and questions can be emailed to: BiltmoreHillsUpdate@PublicInput.com.



KATLYN PARKER/N.C. A&T

NCAT students plan transportation to polls

By Eric Tegethoff
PUBLIC NEWS SERVICE

North Carolina students are taking voting into their own hands after the election board stripped their college of its early voting site.

"When we look at the demographics which they're targeting and that are consistently losing more access to polls, it's young students, it's minorities," Rozier said. "Sunday is a day that minorities go and vote often. So, there's a commonality where it's really disenfranchisement of young and minority voters."

Despite having a site in previous years, the school lost its early voting place for the March 3 primary. Changes to election law last year put Republicans in charge of the state's 100 county election boards and its Board of Elections, and, since then, polling places have been rejected on several college campuses. Sunday early voting was also removed in a number of counties.

Protect Ours is a movement started at North Carolina A&T State University, the state's largest historically Black college, to transport people to the polls for the state's upcoming primary election.

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Protect Ours is a third-year student organizer for Protect Ours, said there is a clear pattern to the decisions.

"Olu Rouse, also a third-year student and organizer for Protect Ours, said the organization is planning a march to the polls on Feb. 12, the first day of early voting for the March primary, and hopes members of the community will join them.

"We know that losing our polling site is bigger than just a loss for students," Rouse asserted. "It's a loss for the Guilford County community as a whole."

Rozier added the barriers to voting this year will not stop students.

"We're just making a holistic plan that, despite losing our polling sites, we won't lose our right to vote," Rozier stressed. "We'll continue to vote and make whatever provisions necessary in order to get the maximum amount of people out to the polls."

Delays in Leandro case are hurting students, advocates say at press conference

By Ahmed Jallow
NC NEWSLINE

Education advocates, parents and teachers braved the cold last week as they urged the North Carolina Supreme Court to enforce its Leandro ruling and release about \$1.7 billion for public schools, saying delays are hurting students statewide.

Speakers at the news conference described overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages and deteriorating school buildings, and faulted both the court and the Republican-led General Assembly for what they called prolonged

inaction.

"For nearly 700 days, the leadership of this court, backed by the same wealthy and corporate donors as their General Assembly counterparts, has refused to affirm and enforce the constitutional rights that we are guaranteed," said Bryan Proffitt, a high school history teacher and vice president of the North Carolina Association of Educators.

The Leandro case, first decided in 1997 and reaffirmed in 2022, requires the state to provide every student with a "sound, basic education." Advocates said the court's deci-

sion to rehear the case and its delay in issuing a mandate have left school districts without money for staffing, special education services and building repairs.

Republican lawmakers have criticized the ruling, saying the state constitution gives the legislature sole authority over state spending and that courts cannot order appropriations.

Ryan Breen, a Wilson County school board member and attorney, said part of the \$1.7 billion at issue would be used for

Please see LEANDRO/3A



Delays in Leandro case are hurting schoolchildren

Continued from page 2A
capital improvements. "In Title I counties, that funding is necessary," he said.

State Rep. Rodney Pierce, a Democrat who represents Halifax, Northampton and Warren counties, said he was a former Leandro student and teacher and now has a child in public school. "Children across North Carolina are paying the price for political games and chronic underfunding," he said.

Speakers cited schools without full-time teachers, heavy reliance on contract workers for special education, and heating and cooling systems that fail. Profitt said educators have

sent photos showing classroom temperatures as high as 85 degrees and as low as 45.

The group called on the court and the General Assembly to issue a ruling enforcing Leandro, release the disputed funds and pass a full state budget, which is now more than seven months late.

The case began in 1994, when five low-wealth rural counties sued the state over school funding. The N.C. Supreme Court ruled in 1997 that North Carolina was failing to meet its constitutional obligation, a decision it reaffirmed in 2022 when it ordered lawmakers to fund the first

two years of a remedial plan.

Democrats controlled the General Assembly until 2011 but did not fully fund the remedies outlined in the Leandro case. In recent years, Republican lawmakers have also declined to appropriate the full amount called for in the court-ordered plan.

After the court shifted to a 5-2 Republican majority in 2023, justices agreed to reconsider that ruling. They heard arguments in February 2024 but have not issued a decision.

North Carolina ranks near the bottom nationally in teacher pay and per-pupil spending.

Early medical release from incarceration still restricted in N Carolina

By Eric Tegethoff

PUBLIC NEWS SERVICE

Early medical release from prison is designed as a compassionate response for people who are severely ill behind bars. In North Carolina, the program remains inaccessible to most.

In 2023, the General Assembly expanded early medical release with rule changes, such as decreasing the age for consideration from 65 to 55. That same year, eight people applied for early release and four died waiting for a response. In 2024, six applied and four were released.

Molly Crane is the Equal Justice Works fellow with Families Against Mandatory Minimums or FAMM. She said more people in North Carolina prisons should be eligible for medical release, but some are excluded no matter how sick they are.

"In some ways, this kind of defeats the purpose of medical release," Crane said. "We know that medical release exists because people who are critically ill are the most expensive to house, the most burdensome to care for and the least likely to recidivate, and that's true irrespective of the crime of conviction."

As the prison population ages rapidly, Crane said prisons are essentially becoming nursing homes for many. A 2017 study from the Vera Institute of Justice found recidivism rates for



The population inside U.S. prisons has aged significantly in recent decades, increasing the importance of early medical release programs.

people ages 50 to 65 was about 2%. For people over 65, the rate was essentially zero.

Crane also noted that people on early release are still overseen by parole officers. She said family members also suffer when their loved one is incarcerated and terminally ill, because they can't visit and often don't know what's happening.

Crane has visited prisons around the country and seen people who couldn't be released despite their dire health situation.

"I've seen people on ventilators who are handcuffed to the bed and have chains around their waist," she said. "I've seen people who are choking on their own vomit, and there's no one available to intervene."

People with lung failure who develop wasting syn-

drome because there isn't equipment available to help them breathe."

Crane said North Carolina lawmakers could make the program more accessible, such as by clarifying the definitions for medical standards so that it's easier for staff to know who qualifies.

She also pointed to efforts in other states, like the Just Housing Amendment in Cook County, Illinois, which bars housing providers - including nursing homes - from discriminating against people based on convictions that are more than three years old.

"That would be helpful as well in North Carolina," Crane said, "so that a conviction from 50 years ago for someone who can't move any parts of their body is not a barrier to them finding nursing care."

BUSINESS BRIEFS

ADVOCACY DAY

Black Business Advocacy Day will be highlighted at the Durham County Commissioners meeting Feb. 9, 7 p.m., 200 E. Main St., Second Floor. Register: www.gdbcc.org.

CHAMBER

Durham Black Chamber of Commerce is hosting a virtual seminar on effective leadership Feb. 13, noon to 1 p.m. Register: www.gdbcc.org.

SHOWCASE

N.C. Central is hosting a

Black-Owned Business Showcase Feb. 16, 6 p.m., NCCU School of Business, Lawson Street, Lobby area.

BHM

"Circulating Black History: Community Spend Week" in Chapel Hill and Carrboro begins Feb. 16, noon to 2 p.m. The Flying Pierogi, 101 Two Hills Drive, Suite 140, Carrboro. Register: monkeylink.co/d52333.

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT
Durham youth ages 14-21 can apply for 2026 Durham YouthWorks Program.

Visit durhamnc.gov. Deadline: Feb. 21.

GROUNDBREAKING

* KB Home's groundbreaking for its newest housing community, Jade Creek, is Feb. 9, 10-11 a.m., 8522 Old Highway 86, Chapel Hill.

OPENING:

* LIVE Hydration Spa Cary, a physician-led wellness spa, opens Feb. 13 at 683 Cary Towne Boulevard, Suite C.

Send business briefs to info@triangletribune.com.

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STOCK PHOTO

For solopreneurs running their own business on their own, there are tips for maximum growth.

Tips for Triangle 'solopreneurs' to grow their own businesses

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You've put in the late nights, the weekends and the hustle. And now, what started as an opportunity to make extra money has turned into an enterprise with real potential.

If you handle everything on your own - logistics, production, marketing, finances and everything in between - you're part of a growing group of entrepreneurs nicknamed "solopreneurs." While the image of a small business often includes an owner and a few employees, for many entrepreneurs, "solopreneurship" makes the most sense for their business model and goals.

If you're considering the solopreneur life or have already launched your business, Justin Hurst, a JPMorgan Chase Senior Business Consultant in Charlotte, offers five helpful tips for you to grow your business in 2026.

1) Identify or solidify a business opportunity.

If you want to become a solopreneur or enhance your current offerings, look for a need in Charlotte or come up with an innovative idea. Maybe it's a service that can help others or a product that could enhance or simplify their lives.

Once you have your big idea, careful planning and preparation can give your startup its best shot at becoming a success. That can include researching your industry's trends to see if you're meeting a niche or a growing need. Look for long-term demand and understand your total addressable market, not just seasonal or trendy zeros.

2) Make a business plan.

Start by writing or refining a business description to outline your goals and strategy. Your plan doesn't have to be long, but it should outline your mission, goals, competitive analysis, marketing approach and financial forecasts.

If you're already running a business, examine your customer base. Do you have repeat customers? Are they referring others to you? Side hustles that work have a steady and growing customer base. If yours does, it's a positive sign your business may be ready for the next step.

3) Maximize savings to impact growth.

Many entrepreneurs use some personal savings to get their businesses started but also pursue business lines of credit or small business loans to fund equipment

and marketing plans. No matter how you get started, prioritizing saving along the way will help secure the funds you need to get your business up and running. One powerful tool for solo entrepreneurs is the new Solo 401(k) from JPMorgan Chase. This plan is designed for business owners without full-time employees, apart from their spouse, and allows for high annual contributions - up to \$72,000 for themselves and their spouse - with both pre-tax and Roth options.

The key is consistency. According to data from Chase, while Solo 401(k) accounts are a popular choice for self-employed business owners, 70% didn't contribute in the past year. Building small, sustainable habits - such as setting up automatic monthly contributions or scheduling quarterly check-ins with a financial advisor - can strengthen follow-through. Over time, these simple actions add up, helping ensure Solo 401(k) accounts reach their full potential and deliver meaningful long-term results.

You could also look for additional financing from angel investors - wealthy individuals that can provide small investments, usually in the very early stages of a business. Angel investors accept more risk but want an ownership stake. Crowdfunding can also be beneficial for solopreneurs. With the right product and approach, you can raise small dollar amounts from a large pool of individual online backers with the bonus of connecting with your target customers early on.

4) Develop your marketing and brand strategy.

Define your brand voice and value proposition and choose the right marketing channels for growth. You might explore channels such as social media, email marketing or paid advertising.

If you're already running a business, examine your customer base. Do you have repeat customers? Are they referring others to you? Side hustles that work have a steady and growing customer base. If yours does, it's a positive sign your business may be ready for the next step.

5) Plan for growth and operations.

The logistical side of entrepreneurship in-

cludes thinking about order fulfillment, customer service, project management and scheduling. Invest in the right tools to streamline daily operations, improve customer experience and save time.

A final note: Self-employment comes with new tax responsibilities, including quarterly estimated taxes and self-employment tax. You may also need to collect and remit sales tax, depending on your industry - and you could have to pay sales tax in all the states where your goods or services are sold.

You may already be operating as a sole proprietor, but going full time could mean exploring a more formal business structure. While creating an LLC for your side hustle is common, consider which structure best supports your long-term goals and legal needs. Depending on your industry, you may need licenses, permits, insurance, contracts or compliance paperwork before you can legally or safely scale operations.

If you want more assistance in taking your solo business to the next level, your local financial institution has resources that can help. You can also reach out to a Chase business banker today for more information and advice.

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The Triangle Tribune Classifieds

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LEGAL NOTICES



LEGAL NOTICE

Uniformed Security Services for Durham County Facilities & Parking Decks
RFP No. 26-013R1

The County of Durham will receive sealed proposals for qualified Contractor(s) to establish a contract to provide uniformed security services for Durham County government facilities, and parking decks on **March 10, 2026, at 2:00 P.M Eastern Time**, in the Durham County Purchasing Division of Finance, 201 East Main Street, 7th Floor, Room 703, Durham, North Carolina 27701. **No proposals will be accepted after the official time and date.**

An electronic copy of this Request for Proposal (RFP) can be obtained from Durham County's eBid System located under Bid Opportunities at:

Pre-bid Conference:

A Pre-Proposal Conference will be held at **10:00 A.M. Eastern Time, on February 17, 2026**, located in the Durham County Purchasing Division's Conference Room, 201 East Main Street, 7th Floor, Room 703, Durham, North Carolina 27701.

Durham County | Bid Opportunities
<https://dconc.gov/Finance/Purchasing/Bid-Opportunities>

Proposers can download a copy of the solicitation and all addenda without registering in the system. However, in order to **automatically** receive email notifications of solicitations and addenda issued by the Purchasing Division, Proposers **MUST** register in the eBid system.

Durham County is an equal opportunity employer.

The County reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or in part, such proposals as appears in its judgment to be in the best interest of the County.

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STOCK PHOTO

Young women are leaving the church at the same rate as young men.

What can women's ministries do to address young adults leaving the church?

By Carol Pipes and
Scott McConnell
BAPTIST PRESS

We've seen a steady decline in both Christian identity and church attendance with each passing generation in the United States. A stat that should concern all church leaders is that among teenagers who were active in church for at least a year during high school, 2 of 3 are not attending shortly after graduation.

This cultural retreat from church is also impacting churchgoing numbers among women. For generations, the number of female churchgoers has been a few percentage points higher than the number of male churchgoers.

Among young adults today, women are engaging in religion at the same rate as men, and among Protestants, there's no difference between the rate of leaving between young women and young men.

For most of those who drop out of church, leaving is not an aspiration. Instead, church attendance gets ignored amid the numerous life changes and

activities that come with college life or launching a career.

Young adults who drop out of church list many reasons for doing so. The five most common reasons include two major life changes, two perceptions of the church and a lack of relationships in the church.

Our research clearly identifies that having a variety of adult voices speaking into students' lives is one of the most influential aspects of their spiritual development.

Here are practical ways to encourage women in your church to invest in young women.

*** Look for teens at your church to connect with.**

Simply seeking them out on Sunday morning and asking them about their week and talking to them about the things they're interested in shows you care.

*** Consider volunteering in student ministry.**

This could be a weekly role or ask your student minister if there are special events or activities you could help with.

*** Help them fall in love with the Bible and teach**

them how to study it for themselves.

*** Show them they're valued.** Amid the many changes in their lives, they need to see you believe they matter more than politics, jobs or degrees.

*** Listen.** As they form opinions and make many new choices, listen to their views and care about why they have those views.

*** Get them ready to launch.** Help seniors to begin thinking about church after high school by asking about their plans for church involvement.

If they're going to college, help them find a campus ministry. If they're moving away, do a little research with them on churches in that area.

As their opinions are forming, we need nonjudgmental moments when they can share their thoughts and discover what Scripture says on those topics.

Your ministry can help young women remain connected to the church by intentionally investing in their lives because the church flourishes when disciples are being formed.



Aging on Your Terms: Stay healthy and independent

By Dr. Heidi Schwarzwald

NORTH AMERICAN PRECIS SYNDICATE

Healthy aging isn't just about luck and genetics; it's about empowering yourself to live your best life as you get older. By focusing on healthy habits, strong support networks and proactive care, you can significantly improve your quality of life, allowing you to age on your own terms.

As a physician, I often hear questions from older adults about maintaining their health and independence. While individual needs and preferences vary, I typically suggest focusing on three key pillars: preventing falls, managing prescription medications and developing a personal health management plan.

There are simple actions you can take as early as today to stay healthy on your terms.

Preventing Falls to Stay Steady and Independent

Aging brings changes to muscle strength, bone density, balance and reaction time. If not addressed proactively, these shifts can make older adults more susceptible to falls. Falls are the primary cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults, yet many are preventable.

Simple preventative measures can significantly reduce your risk of falling and help you maintain your independence. Here are a few focus areas to consider:

*** Home safety:** Modify your living environment by eliminating tripping hazards, enhancing lighting and installing grab bars in bathrooms.

*** Physical activity:** Incorporate balance and

strength-training exercises such as tai chi, yoga or walking to improve stability and coordination.

*** Vision and footwear:** Ensure regular eye examinations and wear supportive, non-slip footwear to prevent stumbles.

*** Medication review:** Consult with a health care provider to identify any medications that may induce dizziness or drowsiness, thereby increasing the risk of falls.

Managing Medications with Clarity and Confidence

Many older adults take more prescription medications as they age, which can be challenging to manage. The Journal of the American Medical Association reported that more than 4 of 10 adults 65 or older take five or more medications, often prescribed by multiple health care providers.

There are steps you can take to stay on track and be prepared:

*** Know your medications:** Understand why you take each medication, what it does and any potential side effects to monitor.

Maintain an up-to-date list of all your medications, including doses and reasons for taking them. This list should include over-the-counter drugs, supplements and herbal remedies, and is something that you should share with your primary care provider.

*** Use and store them correctly:** Understand how and when to take your medications and what to do if a dose is missed. Be sure to store them properly to maintain their effectiveness.

A healthy aging plan depends on the individual, but there are universal

components that I recommend for older adults:

*** Regular check-ups with your primary care provider:** Foster a trusting relationship with your PCP and prioritize routine physicals and screenings for early detection of potential health concerns.

*** Know your numbers:** Regularly monitor and track key health metrics like blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol levels.

*** Healthy lifestyle:** Maintain a balanced diet, engage in consistent physical activity and ensure adequate sleep.

*** Mental and emotional health:** Prioritize your mental and emotional well-being. This includes annual cognitive tests; seeking support for stress, anxiety or depression; and participating in activities that promote mental stimulation and social connection.

Signify Health can be part of your healthy aging support system starting with an In-Home Health Evaluation.

These evaluations are a cornerstone of proactive health care, designed to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of your health status.

Through IHES, our experienced clinicians can help identify potential health risks early, facilitate the development of personal health management plans, and help connect you with the appropriate resources and support to help you optimize your health as you age. Many Medicare Advantage plans offer In-Home Health Evaluations at no cost to members, and it's easy to see if this is an option for you. Visit HelloSignify.com or call 1-855-984-5121.

AROUND THE TRIANGLE



Pals & Gals Vintage Valentine's Party is Feb. 13, 7-9 p.m., Raleigh Museum.

GARNER VALENTINE'S

Grown Folks Valentine's Day Affair for 35 and older is Feb. 14, 8 p.m., Heather Hills, 901 Claymore Drive. Call 919-763-6657.

POP-UP

Azia B's Beauty Studio is hosting a Valentine's Day pop-up every Friday and Saturday now through Feb. 14 at 7400 Six Forks Road, Suite 23.

VOTING

Souls to the Pools is Feb. 15, 2-4 p.m., at MLK Jr. Memorial Gardens, 1215 MLK Jr. Boulevard.

DURHAM FORUM

Durham NAACP is hosting a political forum Feb. 8, 2-5 p.m., St. Joseph's AME Church, 2521 Fayetteville Street.

INTERNSHIPS

A workshop on connecting Durham's youth to internships and business opportunities is Feb. 10, 2-4 p.m., Durham Nativity School, 1004 North Mangum St. Register: www.gdbcc.org.

GARDENING

The Gardening School's next class is Feb. 14, 10 a.m. to noon, Stanford L. Warren Library, 1201 Fayetteville St. Contact: ashley_troth@ncsu.edu.

LECTURE

Professor Kelly Lytle Hernandez will discuss "The

Whites-Only Immigration Regime: 1896-1952" Feb. 10, 5:30 p.m., Karsh Alumni and Visitors Center, 2080 Duke University Road. Free to public.

BALL

Antioch Annual Pepper-mint Ball is Feb. 14, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Sheraton Imperial Hotel, 4700 Emperor Boulevard. Call 919-949-4022.

CHOCOLATES

Valentine's Day Market to shop and taste is Feb. 14, noon to 4 p.m., Sweet Lov-able Chocolates, 810 Fayetteville St., Suite 104.

CHAPEL HILL BUDGETING

Orange County Cooperative Extension hosts "Food Budgeting 101" seminar Feb. 10, 10-11 a.m., Seymour Center, 2551 Homestead Road. Register: 919-968-2070 by Feb. 9.

HILLSBOROUGH SUMMIT

Ag Summit is Feb. 16, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Whitted Human Services Center, 300 W. Tryon St. Register: orangecountync.gov/Ag-Summit.

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NCDOR | NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

NCCU's most important recruits on sideline

February 4 officially was National Signing Day, but the 24-hour sports cycle makes it more a promotional event than any revealing information.

For North Carolina Central, the player recruits take a slight backseat to the recruiting class head coach Trei Oliver assembled on his coaching staff.

Head coaches are only as good as their staff, and players are only as good as the assistant coaches assigned to their unit. It's a brotherhood, a camaraderie that is part coach, part mentor and part disciplinarian.

Oliver had to refill several positions left vacant by "mo' money" or ineptitude.

The biggest shocker was the departure of offensive coordinator Matt Leone to Tennessee State after five seasons. Leone gave the Eagles bigger and better wings to fly on offense.

Since their 2022 Celebration Bowl season, the Eagles have averaged over 30 points and 400-plus total yards per game.

Despite what Eagle Nation consider a subpar 8-4 season, Leone still helped quarterback Walker Harris receive the 2025 MEAC Offensive Player of the Year Award.

Tennessee State may be in financial straits, but Leone didn't come cheap.

Head coach Reggie Barlow got a rude welcoming to the Ohio Valley Conference in his first season.

The Tigers finished 2-10 and 0-8 in the OVC. This after former coach Eddie George led the team to a share of the OVC championship and a trip to the FCS playoffs, which - by the way - knocked NCCU out of the running.

The way athletics directors are pulling the plug these days, Barlow has one more year to get it right despite a five-year deal.

Can't let fans drink the winning Kool-Aid and then send them back to tap water.

New NCCU OC Chris Barnette helped put Alabama State in the running for a SWAC championship.

The Hornets averaged over 42 points and 460 yards of offense per game. Sound familiar, Eagles. A loss to Celebration Bowl runner-up Prairie View A&M kept them out of the championship.

Barnette also has coached at South Carolina State, Winston-Salem State and North Carolina A&T.

Can he keep NCCU's offensive machine percolating? All eyes will be watching.

And not far behind Barnette in the spotlight is new defensive coordinator/safeties coach Tommy Thigpen who replaces former DC Jesse Thompson.

Thigpen was a star linebacker at North Carolina and recent co-defensive coordinator/linebackers coach for five seasons until Bill Belichick and his girlfriend arrived. He coached in the NFL last season.

NCCU's defense uncharacteristically broke down at critical times last season with miscues and undisciplined penalties. And who can forget Delaware State going for it on fourth down inside its OWN 30-yard line - and converting?

If that's not a slap in the face, what is?

The Hillside High alumni community would never forgive me for not mentioning the hiring of former director of track and field Omar Beasley. The NCCU alumnus put the Hornets on the national and international map. Beasley was an assistant coach at North Carolina Wesleyan before becoming NCCU's director of speed development.

The stakes have been raised in the MEAC, and defense is the star.

Defense is what got South Carolina State to two straight trips to Atlanta. And defense is the catalyst to dethroning the Bulldogs.



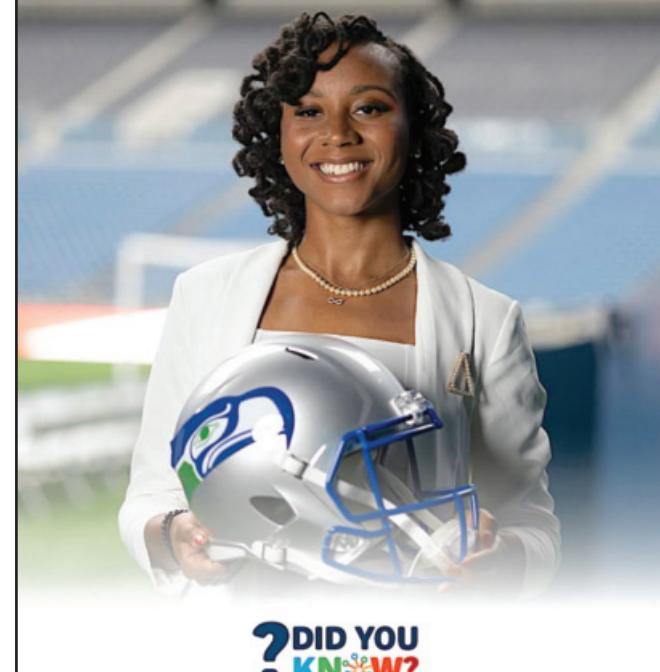
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The Triangle Tribune Sports

February 8-14, 2026 | 6A

Hillside High Proud Alum



DID YOU KNOW?

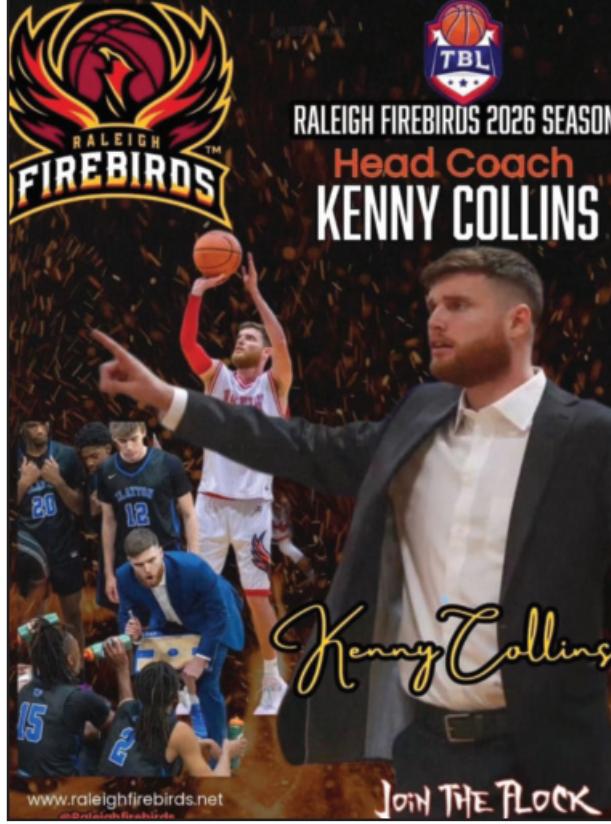
DID YOU KNOW THAT A HILLSIDE ALUM IS HEADED TO THE SUPER BOWL?

DPS

Hillside High alumna Dajah Stallings is headed to the Super Bowl! The Durham native is making history as the community engagement and legends coordinator for the Seattle Seahawks. She is the first Black woman to serve in this role.

Stallings' journey started in Durham and continued through UNC-Chapel Hill and Georgetown universities, where she earned her degrees and built a career centered on service, leadership, and supporting athletes on and off the field. Stallings also held roles with the Cleveland Browns, Washington Commanders and the NFL Players Association. From Durham Public Schools to the NFL's biggest stage, her story proves that no experience is wasted.

Firebirds' New Coach



The Raleigh Firebirds have hired Kenny Collins as their next head coach, and occasional player, for the 2026 TBL season.

Collins returns to the Firebirds after six seasons with the team, interspersed with professional stints overseas. While he'll lead the team from the sideline, he will also be ready to suit up and contribute on the court when the roster requires it. Collins' background includes time at Wake Tech and a standout playing career at St. Augustine's University. He is the varsity boys head coach at Clayton High School, where he's built a strong program focused on developing young men both academically and athletically.

HBCU FOOTBALL

NCCU's Oliver completes coaching staff

By Bonitta Best
editor@triangletribune.com

Beasley, N.C. Wesleyan

Shaw

The CIAA and Bowie State community is in mourning over the unexpected passing of Bowie State Vice President of Athletics Clyde Doughty Jr.

N.C. Central

Offensive lineman Ja'Quan Sprinkle has transferred to LSU with two years of eligibility left.

Coach Trei Oliver has finalized his staff:

* Offensive coordinator: Chris Barnette, Alabama State

* Defensive coordinator/safeties: Tommy Thigpen, UFL

* Offensive line: Grayson Reed, USC

* Cornerbacks/recruiting coordinator: Elijah Coleman, Howard

* Speed development: Omar

The Bears open the fall season with a CIAA matchup at Fayetteville State on Aug. 29 in coach Lamar Manigo's second season.

Then it's a trip to Barton College Sept. 5 before their Sept. 12 home opener against Ferrum College at Durham County Memorial Stadium. Two more home games include Lincoln (Pa.) and Livingstone.

The Bears hit the road for two

games at Bowie State and de-

fending champion Johnson C. Smith on Oct. 3 and 10, respec-

tively.

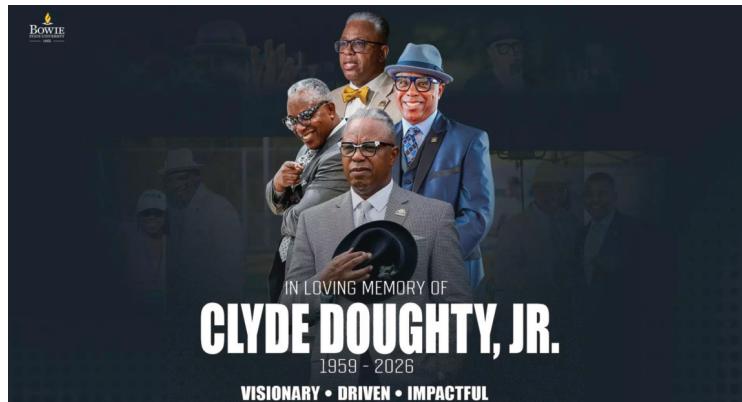
Virginia State comes to Dur-

ham Oct. 17 before a road trip to

Virginia Union and a home finale

against Bluefield State. No-

ember 7, which used to be the



Raleigh Classic against rival St. Augustine's, is a bye week.

The CIAA Football Champion-

ship is Nov. 14 at Durham County Stadium.

Hampton

New coach Van Malone's game

debut is Aug. 29 versus Virginia-

Lynchburg in one of five home

games. North Carolina A&T

visits Nov. 14.

The Pirates travel to Norfolk

State Sept. 19 and will play arch-

rival Howard Oct. 3 at Audi Field

in Washington, D.C. Homecom-

Please see NCCU/7A

COLLEGE CORNER

N.C. Central women on first two-game win streak of season

The SIAC has fined Morehouse over the treatment of Tuskegee head men's basketball coach Benji Taylor by security last weekend.

CC knows everybody has seen Taylor being led away in handcuffs after the game. Totally embarrassing. The conference didn't disclose the amount of the fine.

"Our historic institutions are expected to provide competitive environments that prioritize the safety, dignity and mutual respect of student-athletes, coaches, officials and fans," Commissioner Anthony Holloman said in a statement.

WOMEN

N.C. Central

Forward Aniya Finger came off the bench and gave Maryland Eastern Shore, well, the finger with a career-best 30 points to help the Eagles win their first conference game of the season. It also was the Hawks' first conference loss.

"I was in a groove," said Finger, whose previous scoring high was 21 points twice. "I was able to go inside and outside."

The Eagles continued that momentum Tuesday night with a resounding 103-51

Please see NCCU/7A

SPORTS SHORTS



RALEIGH

* Raleigh spring youth athletic registration runs Feb. 1-14 for ages 5-17. Sign-up at local community centers.

* The Nate McMillan Foundation is sponsoring "For the Love of Basketball" clinic for ages 9 through high school, Feb. 14, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., New Life Camp, 9927 Falls of Neuse Road. Con-

tact: Wanda Thomas at 919-749-2009.

DURHAM

* Registration for Durham Senior Games & SilverArts is Feb. 2 to March 6. Call 919-560-4355.

Send your sports announcements, photos to: info@triangletribune.com



NCCU's Oliver completes coaching staff roster

Continued from page 6A
ing is Oct. 24 against Monmouth.

Bowie State

Clyde Doughty Jr.'s last hire was Dawson Odums as the new head coach. Odums coached at Norfolk State from 2021-24 but had his success at Southern for eight seasons.

Kennesaw State

Former NCCU head coach Jerry Mack was named the Paul "Bear" Bryant newcomer coach of the year. Mack led KSU to a 10-3 record, a Conference USA championship and its first-ever bowl appearance.

Legacy Bowl

The 2026 Allstate HBCU

Legacy Bowl is two weeks away. Players to look for:

- * Jackson State RB Dene-
rio Davenport
- * Clark Atlanta WR Ron-
nie West
- * Savannah State DL Tony
Rountree Jr.
- * Jackson State LB Reid
Pulliam
- * Prairie View A&M Calvin
McMillian
- * Norfolk State DB Daylan
Long
- * Mississippi Valley State
WR Cameron Nelson
- * Howard OL Cesar Reyes

Transfer Portal

- * Virginia State QB Savan
Briggs
- * Alabama State RB Karl
Ligon
- * Prairie View A&M WR Jy-
zaiah Rockwell

* Albany State CB Jona-
van Carr

- * PVAM OL Jalen Cooper
- * Jackson State LN Ash-
ton Taylor
- * Alabama A&M LB
TyQuez Richardson
- * Howard LB Ja'Quavion
Smith

Goodbye. Hello.

- * Arkansas FS Kartrell
Townsend to N.C. A&T
- * Winston-Salem State QB
Daylin Lee, Tenn. State
- * Monroe OL Jermaine
Dale, Morgan State
- * Millersville DL Koren
Robinson, Lincoln (Pa.)
- * South Florida QB Marce-
lis Tate, Tennessee State
- * Alabama State WR Jalen
Jones, Texas Tech
- * Jackson State RB
Ahmad Miller, Syracuse

N.C. Central women on first 2-game win streak

Continued from page 6A

win over William Peace. Aysia Hinton set a program record in the Division I era with 36 points, including shooting 40% from 3-point range.

The team travels to defending champ Norfolk State this weekend before returning home for a three-game stand, beginning with Delaware State Monday.

In softball, NCCU was picked to finish fourth in the conference. Sophomore Simone Mack was named to the All-MEAC Second Team. Howard is No. 1.

The Eagles have 18 home games and four tournaments against national teams. The season begins this weekend at the NFCA Leadoff Classic in FLORIDA! The weather may be warm, but the competition will be stiff: Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Notre Dame, Eastern Kentucky and South Alabama.

Volleyball has a new recruit. Peyton Jenkins, from Brookwood High in Snellville, Georgia, committed this week.

Shaw

The Bears' anticipated matchup against first-place Fayetteville State last month was postponed due to weather. The revamped schedule has Shaw playing Claflin in back-to-back contests.

The Panthers came to Raleigh Wednesday night, and the Bears return the favor this weekend in Orangeburg. Then it's a showdown in Fayetteville next Monday.

In softball, new coach Theresa Stephens makes her debut Feb. 7 at Raleigh's Worthdale Park (weather permitting) against Lees-McRae College in a doubleheader. Then the team can literally walk to William Peace Feb. 13 for a 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. doubleheader.

N.C. A&T

Head basketball coach Tarrell Robinson earned his 255th career win last week, the most Division I wins by a women's or men's basketball coach in NCAT history.

MEN

N.C. Central

Look who's back in first place?

The men made it a doubleheader sweep over UMES and, in the process, took sole possession of first place. The Eagles hadn't played in 15 days due to the weather. Joe Slack led the way with 19 points, while Dionte Johnson scored 14 of his 18 points in the second half.

NCCU follows the women to Spartan Nation this weekend. Norfolk State will be seeking payback after a two-point loss in Durham. Then it's a makeup game against the Hornets Monday night at McDougald.

Shaw

The men follow the women in both Claflin matchups and to Fayetteville.

HBCU Classic

North Carolina A&T and Hampton will battle in the NBA HBCU Classic Feb. 13, 11 p.m. in Los Angeles. Yes, that's PM our time and 8 p.m. LA time.



KATIE SCHROECK

NC Courage acquire defender Cameron Brooks from Napoli

STAFF REPORTS

CARY — The North Carolina Courage have acquired defender Cameron Brooks via permanent transfer from Italian club Napoli for an agreed-upon fee and signed the Texas native to a two-year guaranteed contract through the 2027 NWSL season, with a one-year option.

Brooks will join the team immediately for preseason camp and does not require an international spot. She started her professional career with the Gainbridge Super League's Fort Lauderdale United ahead of the league's inaugural season in 2024 and moved to the Italian Serie A Femminile club Napoli in July 2025 following the season.

The defender has played every minute of the 2025-26 season for Napoli, leading the team to a 4W-4L-2D record through 10 games.

"This moment means everything to me. I've had to earn every step of my journey, and those experiences shaped the competitor I am today," Brooks said. "The North Carolina Courage set the standard in this league, and that's the environment I want to be in. I'm ready to work, compete and do whatever it takes to help this club win."

Brooks played 1,417 minutes across 19 appearances for Fort Lauderdale in her lone season in the Super League, winning 68% of her tackles and 80% of her aerial duels.

"Cameron has worked hard to earn this opportunity, and we're delighted to welcome her to N.C. Courage," chief soccer officer Ceri Bowley said. "She's hungry, motivated and ready to embrace the standards of this club. She's a centre back who enjoys having the ball, takes responsibility in possession and defends with anticipation. We're excited to support the next phase of her journey."

Across a five-year collegiate career, Brooks made 72 appearances for the Texas Longhorns, including 44 starts. As a fifth-year player, she scored three goals and added five assists in her final season in Austin.



KEMET BLACK LOVE ACTIVITY SHEET

Hi Everybody!
It's that wonderful time of year again! Every 14th of February, Valentine's Day is celebrated. This is a special day to strengthen the bond between couples, family and friends. Sankofa and I have found four couples who we think have that special bond. So just what is it that they have? LOVE, LOVE, LOVE!

SIGNS OF LOVE

What are Signs of True Love? Circle all that apply.

How many did you circle? _____

Support Compromise Indifference
Happiness Mutual Respect Fear
Sacrifice Growth Hatred Trust

KIDS CELEBRATE VALENTINE'S DAY WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Things to do: Make a craft, write a poem, cook together, read a story about love, give a gift, have a party, watch a heart-warming movie.

FAMOUS BLACK LOVE COUPLES

Sterling K. Brown and Ryan Michelle Bathe
They met when they were both students at Stanford University, studying their craft of acting. They both have found success in Hollywood and have been at one another's side the whole time. After marrying in 2006, they went on to have two sons, Andrew and Amare.

Alicia Keys and Swizz Beatz (Kasseem Dean)
They began their teenage love story in the 90's and proved that if it's meant to be, it will happen. The two married in 2010 and are the proud parents of two sons, and a third child from a previous relationship. The acclaimed musician and artistic producer have come a long way from the center of social media drama. Through it all, hip-hop's power couple continues to thrive together with many successes.

Boris Kodjoe and Nicole Ari Parker
They met and fell in love on the set of the Soul Food TV series. It was love at first sight. The pair married in May 2005 in Gundelfingen, Germany and have two beautiful children together.

O'Shea Jackson Sr. aka Ice Cube and Kim Woodruff
Ice Cube has had only one woman by his side, his wife Kim Woodruff. He was so happy when they started their life together. The two married in April 1992 after their son O'Shea Jackson Jr. was born. They have four children together.

TRUE LOVE!

What is true love?

Write **A** if you agree or **D** if you disagree with the statement.

True love is when you tolerate someone.

True love is a sense of companionship where you feel you are on the same team.

True love is a feeling of deep attachment towards someone.

True love is a selfless act of caring and concern for the well-being of another person.

True love is a strong connection that you have with someone more than with others.

True love is a waste of time.

www.KEMETCOMIC.com

ONE MINUTE MADNESS!

In one minute or less, unscramble these Black Love Ingredients:

The first letter of the word is in bold.

tcepseR
rsutT
nomaunicmtioC
eLov
Stghren



ANSWER KEY
SINS OF LOVE
Choose 7
TRUE LOVE!
D A A A A

Sugar Rush says goodbye

After 10 amazing years, it is with a full heart that I announce that Sugar Rush Dessert Factory NC is permanently closed.

What started as a dream in my kitchen became so much more because of you. Your orders, your encouragement, your word-of-mouth support, and your trust in me to be part of your proposals, birthdays, weddings, holidays, and all the everyday moments in between have meant more than I can ever fully express!

Thank you for believing in my craft, for showing up year after year, and for allowing me to do what I love for a decade. This journey has been filled with late nights, early mornings, countless lessons, and so much joy.

While this chapter has come to a close, the gratitude I carry with me will last a lifetime. I am forever thankful for every order placed, every kind review shared, and every person who supported my small business along the way. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for 10 beautiful years.

With love and appreciation,

E. LaShawn Smith
Creative Director/Owner



Sugar Rush Dessert Factory at RDU announced its immediate closure on Monday.

Avoid common rental scams

STATEPOINT

Are you looking to rent a home or apartment? Then you need to protect yourself from rental fraud.

Rental scams are common. The Federal Trade Commission reported over 10,000 cases in 2023 alone. By following a handful of practical, common-sense steps, you can protect yourself and avoid costly mistakes.

* **Always see the apartment before renting.** Fraudsters are known to post phony ads using real pictures of properties they don't actually own. They will push you to rent the unit, and to send your personal information to them, without seeing the apartment first. Visiting a unit is not only a way to avoid this scam, it also has the benefit of helping you ensure the apartment fits what you are looking for. If you are moving to a new city and can't visit in person, ask if the property manager will take you on a video tour of the unit.

* **Don't pay rent or a security deposit until you have signed a lease.** Application fees are commonly requested before signing a lease agreement, but the security deposit or first month's rent are not required before signing. Be especially careful if a prospective property manager asks you to wire transfer money. There's never a good reason to wire money to pay an application fee, security deposit or first

month's rent. And when you wire money, it's the same as sending cash: you have no way to get it back.

* **If the price seems too good to be true, it might be.** If the unit is listed for substantially less than other comparable units in the area, that could be a sign that the listing is part of a rental scam.

* **Make sure you sign a complete lease.** Do not rent an apartment without signing a lease. When you get a copy of the lease, make sure to read it carefully and confirm key details. The agreement should always include these terms: applicable fees, monthly rent cost and maintenance costs. If you have questions or concerns about the language in the lease, ask.

* **Do not give a property manager extensive personal information until you want to move forward.** A property manager asking for personal information before you've seen a unit or before you've stated that you would like to rent the unit is often a sign of a scammer looking to steal your identity. That said, providing personal information, including your social security number, should be required before you are ready to move ahead with renting the unit.

* **Watch out for listings with grammatical and spelling errors.** If the rental listing has a lot of errors, this might be a red

flag. Most property managers will take the time to proofread the listing first.

Foundation arises on Cottages of Idlewild



FACEBOOK

The building of the Cottages of Idlewild is heating up with the foundations being poured last week. The 18 affordable-home community is scheduled to open later this year.

The Quiet Epidemic
Why people with diabetes lose their sight

NORTH AMERICAN PRECIS SYNDICATE

For the nearly 40 million Americans living with diabetes, the threat to their vision unfolds quietly, often without warning.

Diabetic retinopathy, a complication that damages blood vessels in the retina, has become the leading cause of blindness among working-age adults in the United States. Yet, what makes this epidemic particularly tragic is that it doesn't have to be this way.

"The vast majority of severe vision loss from diabetic retinopathy is preventable," said Janice C. Law, M.D., retina specialist in Tennessee. "Studies show that regular eye examinations and timely interventions can reduce the risk of severe vision loss by 90%."

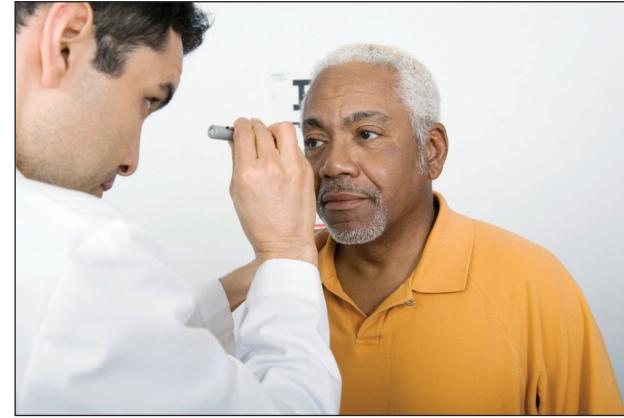
Still, many Americans are falling through the cracks. Only about 60% of people with diabetes receive the annual dilated eye examinations recommended by the American Academy of Ophthalmology, a shortfall driven by lack of access, awareness and time.

If you or someone you care about has diabetes, schedule a dilated eye exam today. Uninsured or underinsured? See if you qualify for a no out-of-pocket cost medical eye exam through EyeCare America. This public service program matches volunteer ophthalmologists, physicians who specialize in medical and surgical eye care, with eligible patients aged 18 and older who need eye care. Visit www.aoa.org/eyecare-america to learn more.

In its early stages, diabetic retinopathy often presents no symptoms at all, a fact that underscores the importance of preventive screening rather than waiting for problems to emerge.

"Even if your vision seems fine, a yearly dilated eye exam is important," Law said. "By the time patients notice flashing lights, blurred vision, floating spots or other warning signs, the disease may have already progressed significantly."

If you have type 1 diabetes, you should have eye examinations at least yearly beginning five years after being diagnosed with diabetes. Your ophthalmologist may recommend



more frequent examinations.

If you have type 2 diabetes, you should see an ophthalmologist at least yearly as soon as you are diagnosed, regardless of your age. Follow your eye doctor's recommendation about how often you should be rechecked, as this varies for every individual. You may need to have your eyes checked more often than once a year.

But diabetes isn't the only reason to see an ophthalmologist. All healthy adults should have a comprehensive eye exam by age 40, when early signs of cataract, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration may begin to emerge.

"Forty is typically when subtle signs of eye disease begin to emerge," Laura C. Fine, M.D., chair of EyeCare America, said. "Many times, people don't even notice any changes to their vision."

From Stress to Success

Mastering Money, Time & Health in 2026

Marlon Smith

Mens In-Person Summit

Tony Jackson

Dr. Michael Diamond

Saturday, February 21

A full day with speakers who are respected global leaders.
Breakfast, lunch, and meaningful brotherhood

FIRSTSUNDAYS Men Building Up Men to Build Up Our Families

Register here: <https://www.firstsundays12.com/>