



SPORTS

Durham Senior Games kicks off with opening ceremony.



COMMUNITY FOCUS

100 Black Men of Triangle East pinned 19 new members.

The Triangle Tribune

THE TRIANGLE'S CHOICE FOR THE BLACK VOICE SINCE 1998

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VOLUME 28 NO. 17

Week of April 26-May 2, 2026

\$1.00

« 52 WEEKS OF BLACK BRILLIANCE »

2 African Americans among National Inventors Hall of Fame

STAFF REPORTS

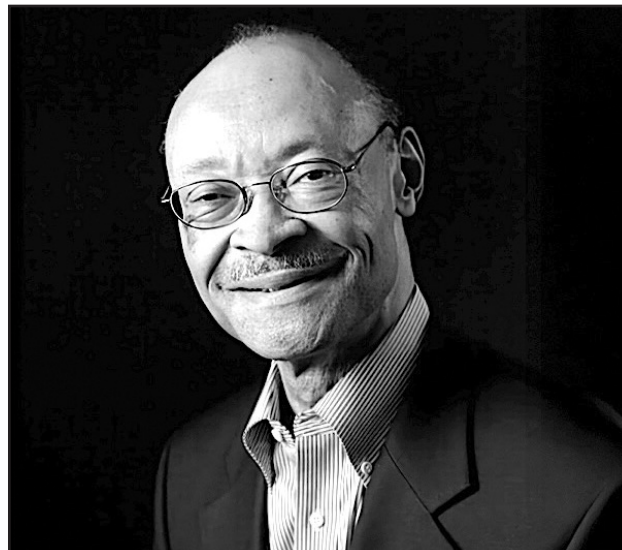
NORTH CANTON, Ohio — Gebisa Ejeta and Frank S. Greene Jr. (posthumous) are among 15 pioneers who will be honored in the 2026 class of National Inventors Hall of Fame inductees.

In partnership with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the ceremony will be held May 7 at one of the innovation industry's most highly anticipated events, "The Greatest Celebration of American Innovation."

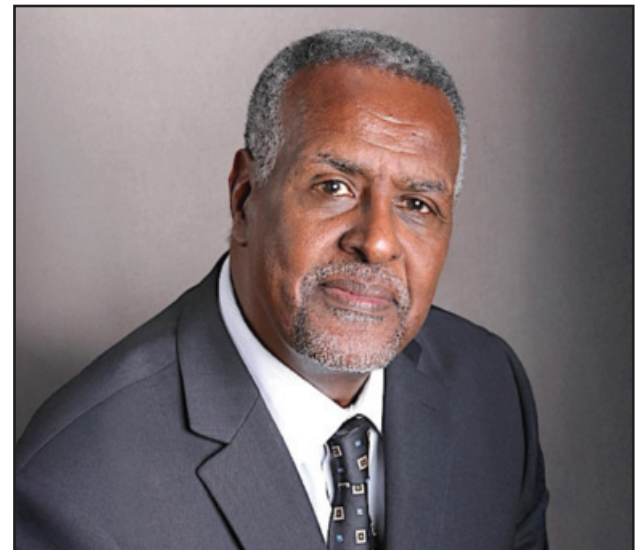
Ejeta, a plant geneticist, developed higher quality sorghum hybrids that are resistant to drought and

disease. By increasing the production and availability of sorghum, a versatile and important cereal grain, Ejeta's efforts have helped feed millions of people across Africa and around the world.

Greene Jr. was a pioneering electrical engineer, inventor and entrepreneur in Silicon Valley. He developed high-speed semiconductor memory systems, including the fastest microchip then available for the ILLIAC IV supercomputer. Recognizing the need for greater participation in STEM fields, Greene also was dedicated to mentoring the next generation.



Frank S. Greene Jr.



Gebisa Ejeta



An artist's rendition of the Purpose Built Communities model.

Southeast Raleigh Promise to break ground on mixed-income housing

By Lori Wiggins
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

RALEIGH - Southeast Raleigh Promise hosted an official groundbreaking ceremony April 24 at 1131 Gregg St.

Focused along the Rock Quarry Road Corridor and the surrounding area, the event marks a major milestone in the organization's commitment to driving lasting impact across its four pillars of focus: cradle-to-career education, economic mo-

bility, health and well-being, and real estate and mixed-income housing. Southeast Raleigh Promise leads as a place-based initiative that brings together residents, partners and resources to create pathways to growth and prosperity. It is Raleigh-Wake County's first Purpose Built Communities model and the 16th in the nation among more than 25 organizations.

"Strong, mixed-income communities create the foundation

for stable neighborhoods and real pathways to economic mobility, while also fostering connection, identity and belonging," CEO Yvette Holmes said. "This development reflects our commitment to ensuring that neighborhoods with a rich and celebrated history remain places where residents at all income levels can grow, thrive and prosper together."

The small-scale development

Please see **SOUTHEAST/2A**

Struggle and Surveillance

By Tyshon Holland
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

DURHAM - Every day, Tayshia Brooks walks the halls of Durham County Jail, observing the inmates' attitudes. The way they think, feel. A lot of the problems she sees have been going on for a long time before anyone went to jail.

"They're not always bad people," said Brooks, 32, a detention officer with the Durham County Sheriff's Office. "A lot of them are trying to make ends meet."

The problems she hears in the jail often stem from financial is-

suess. Bills add up, jobs are insecure, and people make a series of small mistakes that lead them into the criminal justice system. This is not a problem limited to the prisoners she oversees. It shows up in all North Carolina communities.

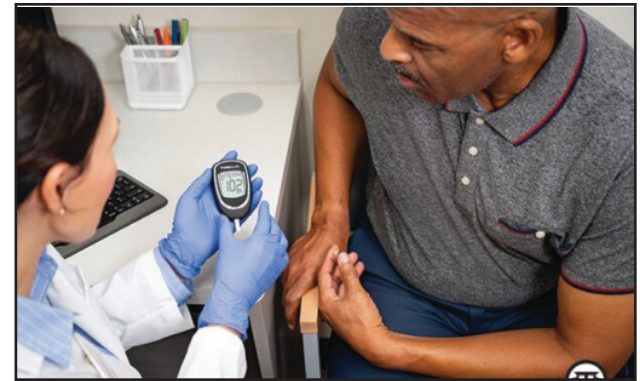
Property crimes comprise a significant portion of the offenses reported throughout the state, according to the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation. Larceny, burglary and motor vehicle theft make up the largest share of reported property crimes each year. Researchers say these crimes occur more frequently in areas where unem-

ployment and poverty are high.

Across North Carolina, neighborhoods with higher unemployment and fewer opportunities see more property crimes, particularly burglary and theft, than communities with stronger economic stability, according to Solving North Carolina's Crime Problem, Part 2.

"When you see people come in here, you start to realize most of them didn't just wake up one day and decide to be criminals," Brooks said. "A lot of them were already struggling long before

Please see **STRUGGLE/2A**



COURTESY

NC House, Senate reach deal to fund Medicaid for rest of the year

By Adam Wagner
WUNC

Both chambers of the N.C. General Assembly expect to take up legislation fully funding the state's Medicaid program for the remainder of this fiscal year.

The bill will send \$319 million to Medicaid, funding that Democratic Gov. Josh Stein and N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Dev Sangvai have been asking for since last summer.

Sangvai told a legislative committee earlier this month that North Carolina's Medicaid program would run out of money in May if the General Assembly failed to act. The so-called rebase affects about 2.4 million North Carolinians who receive their health insurance through the state's traditional Medicaid program.

Legislative leaders also signaled Tuesday that the bill, which had not been made public, would come with some reforms to the state's Medicaid program.

"Some of the other provisions in the bill really relate to make sure we're cutting out waste, fraud and abuse, ramping up a bit on the renewal procedures to make sure that folks who are being renewed actually continue to meet the program's requirements, that we're not just making the goal to put as many people as possible on Medicaid," Speaker of the House Destin Hall, R-Caldwell, told reporters.

Hall also said there is a provision requiring State Auditor Dave Boliek, a Republican, to audit the Medicaid program. The goal, Hall said, is to help gain control over soaring costs.

Last year, for instance, the DHHS asked the General Assembly for \$700 million as part of its rebase package. But Medicaid spending was significantly higher than anticipated, and the department soon returned with an \$819 million request. The General Assembly provided \$500 million last summer, leading to the months-long stalemate over the remaining \$319 million.

Next year, the DHHS is expecting the rebase request to top \$1.04 billion, according to Stein's budget proposal that was released Tuesday.

"It's just not sustainable. At the end of the day, if it continues on, the debates about all these other issues we're talking about are not going to matter because Medicaid is going to swamp it all out," Hall said.

With the additional rebase funds, North Carolina's Medicaid spending will rise above \$6.7 billion for the current fiscal year.

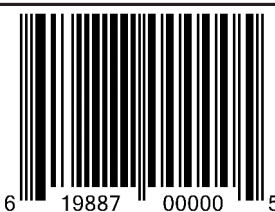
Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, agreed with Hall, saying the provisions will "hopefully begin the process of trying to put some sort of constraints on how

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© 2026 The Triangle Tribune

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Southeast Raleigh Promise breaks ground on housing

Continued from page 1A

will deliver 25 mixed-income rental homes across nine city-owned parcels located within walking distance to downtown Raleigh. The plan includes a mix of styles, including one single-family home, duplexes, and accessory dwelling units which will be available for rent to households earning 30%, 60% and 80% of the area median income.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, Southeast Raleigh Promise has

worked alongside a dedicated team of partners for over three years to bring this vision to life, reinforcing its mission to create access to high-quality, safe and affordable housing for families and individuals. Funding partners include the city of Raleigh, Wake County, the Low Income Investment Fund and Southeast Raleigh Promise, along with support from the Tom Russell Foundation and Purpose Built Communities.

Leading up to the groundbreaking, Southeast

Raleigh Promise hosted neighborhood pop-up events to connect with residents and share information about the development.

The project team includes Urban Trends (co-developer), TightLines Designs (architect), RBI (general contractor) and First Rate Property Management (leasing and management). The Banks Law Firm is legal counsel.

Leasing is expected in phases.

The project will be completed by early 2027.



'May Day' rally in Raleigh to demand NC General Assembly fund the future

STAFF REPORTS

On May 1, working families from across North Carolina will get on the bus and travel to Raleigh to demand a working people's budget for the future. Down Home North Carolina, a grassroots organization representing working families in North Carolina's small towns and rural communities, will gather members in the state's capital to launch its "Fund the Future" campaign, demanding a working people's budget that fully funds public goods, says no to privatization and guarantees budget transparency.

Globally, May 1 is recognized as "May Day" to uplift historic and present-day movements to improve conditions for working families.

Against the backdrop of May Day, and the North Carolina Association of Educators march on Raleigh, the "Fund the Fu-

ture" campaign will amplify the devastating impact of North Carolina's state budget crisis on working families who have been sounding the alarm at local city council and county commissioner meetings.

"Our members have been speaking out in their local communities about the direct toll of the state's budget crisis on everything from underfunded schools to exorbitant utility bills," Down Home NC campaign strategist Todd Warren said. "We don't just want to pass a budget; we want to pass a quality budget that funds the priorities of working, public school families. One that adequately funds health care, schools and disaster relief. On May 1, the General Assembly will hear their voices along with our demands for a budget that serves the people."

The fight for fully funded public schools in North

Carolina stands out as one of the top issues motivating families to travel to Raleigh. Members of Public Schools Strong, a campaign of Heal Together NC in partnership with Down Home NC, Education Justice Alliance and the Center for Racial Equity in Education, also will participate to demand a budget that fully funds public schools.

"Public school families are on the front lines of our state's public-school funding crisis. We're coming to Raleigh to demand our state invest fully in our kids and a public education system that prepares them for success," said Patricia Chambliss, a public school grandparent and Guilford County PSS Team coordinator.

The event will start and end at Halifax Mall with a march through downtown Raleigh beginning at 10 a.m. and events ending 3 p.m. Visit www.down-homenc.org



Durham County Jail

Struggle and surveillance at Durham County Jail

Continued from page 1A

they got here." Haywood Frasier's life was affected by economic problems long before today's time. He grew up in Winston-Salem in the 1970s, when there weren't many jobs and wages would barely cover living expenses.

"If you're struggling to feed your family, you gonna do what you gotta do," Frasier said. "Survival meant working long hours just to keep your head above water. And even with multiple incomes in the household, money was always tight."

"You worked all day and still had to figure out how to make it through the week."

Sanders, a North Carolina Central campus police officer, said many of the calls officers get are about economic stress. "When you don't have the things you need, it becomes survival," Sanders said.

He said when officers talk to people involved, sit-

uations that look simple typically show deeper problems. Sanders recalled a homeless man who went to jail on purpose just so he could sell tobacco in prison.

"He thought he could earn more by selling tobacco products to inmates than he could by trying to survive on his meager income outside," Sanders said.

"People commit crimes for the lack of resources."

Black and impoverished communities have been severely impacted by the increase in mass imprisonment in the United States. As a result, it increased financial distress and decreased trust in public institutions, according to research from the Scholars Strategy Network.

Researchers also see these patterns reflected in statistics. NCCU adjunct professor Brian Kilgore studies the link between economic opportunity and crime. "If the jobs aren't here, people are going to find other ways to feed

their family," he said.

Kilgore said crime statistics rarely exist in isolation. The economy, housing and jobs all influence the trajectory of communities, often shaping what statistics show. "Behind every statistic, there's a community dealing with real circumstances," Kilgore said. "And those circumstances usually involve opportunity."

When Brooks gets to know the individuals personally, they take on new meaning for her. Some prisoners enter feeling defeated by the struggles that brought them there. Others think about their lives after their release.

"Every statistic is a person with a story," Brooks said. "Some people make mistakes, and some people rebuild their lives. Those moments are what keep me hopeful."

Tyshon Holland is a student in the North Carolina Central Mass Communications Department.

NC House, Senate reach deal to fund Medicaid

Continued from page 1A

quickly Medicaid is growing."

Currently, Medicaid provides health care coverage for about 1 in 4 North Carolinians, two out of every five children in the state and five of every eight people in nursing facilities, DHHS officials told a legislative committee in March.

DHHS officials also said at that meeting that the non-expansion Medicaid population peaked in early 2023-24 and is projected to continue declining for the near future.

The rebase helps fund health care for about 2.4 million North Carolinians who receive health insurance via Medicaid. The state provides initial funding for Medicaid, but that number shifts based on inflation, the program's enrollment and how the insurance plans are actually used.

North Carolina uses the rebase to make up the difference between the initial funding amount and the Medicaid program's actual spending.

The only people who receive Medicaid coverage who are not covered by the rebase are those receiving coverage through Medicaid expansion. Those people's insurance is 90% funded by the federal government, with the remaining 10% coming from a tax levied on the state's hospital system.



Black Maternal Health Week Proclamation signing at Executive Mansion.

Stein calls for full Medicaid funding during Black maternal health event

By Ahmed Jallow

NC NEWSLINE

Governor Josh Stein stood with advocates at the Executive Mansion last week to mark Black Maternal Health Week and used the event to call on the General Assembly to close a \$319 million Medicaid funding gap when it returns to Raleigh this week.

"If we do not fully fund Medicaid soon, health care for millions of North Carolinians could be in jeopardy, and the entire health care system weakens," Stein said.

The event brought together lawmakers and advocates who highlighted persistent racial disparities in maternal health outcomes that are impacting not just Black women in North Carolina but across the country.

Stein noted that Black women are twice as likely

as white women to die from pregnancy-related complications in North Carolina, regardless of their income or education. "While there is no single solution, strengthening Medicaid and our health care system is essential," Stein said.

Health officials and advocates said many pregnancy-related deaths could be prevented with earlier intervention, better access to care and stronger coordination across the health system.

Advocates also highlighted community-based services aimed at filling gaps in care, including doula support, mental health services, transportation assistance and nutrition support.

Senator Natalie Murdock, D-Durham, said the state has made some progress, including extending post-

partum Medicaid coverage to 12 months. "But we still need a budget to fully fund Medicaid to keep those gains," she said.

Murdock also said she plans to reintroduce the "MOMnibus Act," a proposal specifically addressing disparities affecting Black mothers, in the upcoming session. She has introduced similar bills in the past three years, but none has made progress through the legislature.

The U.S. maternal mortality rate is among the worst in the world, and it's worse for Black women. More than 80% of maternal deaths are preventable, according to data collected from Maternal Mortality Review Committees. MMRCs are multidisciplinary teams that convene at the state or local level to review deaths during or within one year of the end of pregnancy.

Have a news tip?
Email: info@triangletribune.com



GREG CHILDRRESS/NCNEWSLINE

Tenants began moving into P.E.A.C.H. Apartments in Chapel Hill on April 1 after a nearly one-year delay.

Chapel Hill affordable apartment complex gets tenants after 1-year delay

By Greg Childress
NC NEWSLINE

CHAPEL HILL - A group of newly moved-in tenants gathered in a breezeway at Pine Knoll EMPOWERment Affordable Community Housing Apartments in Chapel Hill recently to chat and to compare notes about items on their punch lists.

It was a gathering and conversation that should've taken place nearly a year ago. It was delayed after Duke Power refused to connect the project because the developer, EMPOWERment Inc., installed one meter for the entire 10-unit apartment complex to accommodate rooftop solar panels.

Delores Bailey, EMPOWERment's executive director, had chosen the single-meter and solar panel approach as a way to reduce energy costs for low-income residents who would rent the apartments. The apartments were primarily built for tenants earning 30% of area median income, which is about \$27,000 a year for Orange County.

The problem with the single meter was that state law does not allow new residential buildings to be served by a master meter for electric services. Duke followed the law. EMPOWERment asked the N.C. Utilities Commission to overrule Duke, but it ruled in the energy company's favor.

That meant Bailey had to raise another \$100,000 to install single-unit meters in each apartment.

The nearly year-long delay caused some people hardship, said Betty Curry, who moved in last week with her husband Silas. Curry said some proposed tenants told landlords they were moving but were left without permanent housing. "I was fortunate enough to have a cooperative landlord, but there were others who were actually sleeping on other people's couches because of all of the bureaucracy," Curry said.

Bailey filed the delayed opening under "lessons learned." "I would have done more research," she told NC Newsline. "I assumed — my bad — Duke would be happy to have solar panels on something like this, so we could pass even more savings on to the residents."

The solar panel concept was scrubbed, but Bailey takes comfort in the fact that the larger goal of providing affordable housing for low-income people in one of the state's wealthiest communities still has been accomplished.

"In our 30 years of managing properties, what we know is there are people walking around these streets all day long working who don't have a decent place to live in Chapel Hill," Bailey said. "While this is open to all people of Orange County, we're looking for residents who are sleeping on people's couches for one reason or another or are constantly moving because of rising rents."

Eight of the 10 units are

occupied, Bailey said. A three-bedroom rents for \$900 a month and a one-bedroom is \$650 to \$700, she said. "\$900 for a three-bedroom in Chapel Hill is an amazing rent," Bailey said.

The average rent in Chapel Hill for all bedrooms and all property types is \$1,900 a month, according to Zillow Rentals.

Bailey said EMPOWERment will be able to keep rents affordable because the \$3.8 million project is debt free. EMPOWERment received most of its funding from the federal government, the town of Chapel Hill and donors, she said.

Resident Betty Curry touted the apartment complex's affordability. Curry declined to share her rent amount but said it was "nowhere near" the nearly \$1,000 a month she was paying for her previous apartment.

"I'm feeling very positive about this, and I'm just hoping that everything goes well so that we can continue to thrive and have more PEACH apartments," Curry said. "I know that's her [Bailey] goal."

Tonaka Cook was also feeling positive after moving into one of the studio units. Like Curry, she was impressed by the apartment's affordability.

"It's a nice, safe, quiet community," Cook said. "The apartment has all of the updated amenities, and, for the price, it's a blessing."

AbbVie selects Durham for new manufacturing campus

STAFF REPORTS

DURHAM - AbbVie announced on Wednesday a \$1.4 billion investment to build a 185-acre pharmaceutical manufacturing campus in Durham.

The state-of-the-art campus will support the production of AbbVie's immunology, neuroscience and oncology medicines. Durham was selected based on the strength of its local workforce and its ability to support future expansion. Construction begins this year, with completion by the end of 2028.

Over the next four years, AbbVie plans to hire 734 employees, including engineers, scientists, manufacturing operators and laboratory technicians. The project will also support the local economy by generating more than 2,000 construction jobs during campus development.

The first phase of construction will include the building of small volume parenteral drug product manufacturing facilities, next-generation laboratories, a warehouse, administrative offices and employee wellness facilities to support the company's growing pipeline. When completed, the campus will serve as AbbVie's U.S. Center of Excellence for SVP manufacturing, delivering next-generation medicines to patients worldwide.

"Durham County is excited to welcome AbbVie and their transformative investment to our community," Durham County Commissioners Chair Mike Lee said. "We are laser-focused on recruiting great paying jobs with meaningful career pathways for Durham residents. The quality of entry-level jobs included with this announcement provide gen-



COURTESY

Future look at AbbVie campus.

uine opportunities for economic mobility that we so greatly value."

AbbVie is a Fortune 100 Company headquartered in Chicago. Its mission is to discover and deliver innovative medicines and solutions that solve serious health issues today and address the medical challenges of tomorrow. With a presence in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, AbbVie employs approximately 29,000 people in the United States.

"We are thrilled to welcome this significant investment, which serves as a powerful testament to Durham's growing reputation as a premiere global hub for innovation and talent," Durham Chamber President and CEO Geoff Durham said. "Beyond the economic impact, this partnership highlights the company's deep-rooted commitment to our community through sustainable growth and meaningful local engagement. Their decision to call Durham home reinforces our shared vision of a thriving, inclusive economy where corporate success and community prosperity go hand in hand."

AbbVie's operation will

be facilitated, in part, by a North Carolina Job Development Investment Grant, which was approved by the state's Economic Investment Committee on Wednesday. Over the course of the 12-year term of the grant, the project is estimated to grow the state's economy by \$8 billion. The Durham County Board of County Commissioners and Durham City Council are both scheduled to consider local awards to support the JDIG at upcoming meetings this spring.

Partnering with Durham County, the city, and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce on this project are the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the North Carolina General Assembly, North Carolina Department of Commerce, North Carolina Department of Transportation, North Carolina Biotechnology Center, North Carolina Community College System, Durham Technical Community College, North Carolina Central University, Duke University, Duke Energy and Enbridge Gas North Carolina.

V i s i t
www.abbvie.com/manufacturing.

North Carolinians more rent-burdened than ever

By Zamone Perez
PUBLIC NEWS SERVICE

North Carolinians are spending a larger portion of their income on rent, and a recent slowdown in prices has not changed much, according to a new report.

Research from the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies found rental increases are hovering near zero nationwide, despite major increases in the post-pandemic years. Prices at professionally managed apartment complexes declined by a little more than 0.5%. But more renters, including those with high income, are now more rent-burdened than ever before.

Whitney Airgood-Obrycki, senior research associate at the center, said rents have far outpaced incomes over the past couple of decades. "Rents and utilities have often risen much faster than household incomes," Airgood-Obrycki said. "Even when we're seeing flat rents or slightly declin-



ing rents, that doesn't necessarily mean that incomes are moving in the same way at all those times. So, people may have lower wages, higher unemployment."

North Carolina incomes have grown only 6% since 2001, compared to rental costs, which have grown by 30% over the same period.

More than half of renters in areas like the Research Triangle, Greensboro and Winston-Salem are rent-burdened. In the Charlotte metro, the number is well above 40% of renters.

Airgood-Obrycki said North Carolinians have the lowest amount of

money to work with each month after paying their rent and utility bills.

"We look at a metric we call 'the residual income,' and that's the amount that households have left over after they pay rent and utilities each month," Airgood-Obrycki said. "For lower-income households, that fell to a record low of just \$210 in 2024. So, we're seeing really challenging conditions, but we are seeing some improvement."

Renters in smaller communities outside of the major metro areas in the Tar Heel State also face heavy burdens, with more than a third being rent-burdened.

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Alumni of Panther Branch Rosenwald School.

Wake Co. Rosenwald school nears centennial celebration

By Derick Lee
EDUCATION/NC

"Urban" may be the adjective that comes to mind when many people think of Raleigh. However, the Panther Branch Rosenwald School is situated on the outskirts of Wake County, less than five miles from the Johnston County line.

Despite having a Raleigh address, the school is perched on land characterized by the same rural features of neighboring counties. For Dr. Pam Thompson, an educator and former cancer researcher, the Panther Branch Rosenwald School is a part of her sense of "home."

Thompson's earliest memory consists of her great-grandfather sitting on the stoop with a metal Igloo cooler, distributing lemonade to the community as they gathered for the school's homecoming. The same building also served as a gathering location for Vacation Bible School when she was growing up.

It is also the place where Thompson's mother went to school as a child. She recalls her mother's stories explaining everyone's determination to get an education; some of her peers walked over eight miles to and from school, and a potbelly stove was positioned in the middle of classrooms and used to heat the space.

Present day, Thompson serves with an after-school program at Panther Branch. She still considers it a space for family and hope, one that allows education to take place. "This place is full circle with helping any and everybody in the community," she said.

In the early 20th century, amid segregation in the Jim Crow era, a partnership between Tuskegee Institute's (now Tuskegee University)

Founder Booker T. Washington and the president of Sears, Roebuck and Co., Julius Rosenwald, established a fund dedicated to expanding access to education for African Americans.

As a philanthropist, Rosenwald granted up to a third of the cost for each school built across the southern region of the United States. Notably, Tuskegee faculty and North Carolina natives' Robert R. Taylor and William Augustus Hazel developed the architectural designs used as the first models for what became known as "Rosenwald Schools."

North Carolina's first Rosenwald School, the Warren Grove School in Chowan County, was completed on Oct. 8, 1915. North Carolina continued to construct over 800 other schools using this model — the highest number out of any state. Nationwide, it is estimated that over 5,000 schools were built before the program's end in 1932.

Ultimately, Rosenwald schools faced a stark decline in enrollment, particularly following the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education ruling that determined schools segregated on the basis of race were unconstitutional. As a result, many of the former Rosenwald School buildings were abandoned and left to decay in time's palms. However, through preservation efforts, some of these buildings have been reclaimed as historical landmarks. Sites like the Panther Branch Rosenwald School have been given both a new breath of life and a fresh coat of paint.

In 2013, Jeffrey Robinson became the senior pastor of Juniper Level Missionary Baptist Church. Situated across the street from the Panther Branch Rosenwald School, Robinson recalled joking about how the building could be blown down with just a hard breath.

Robinson joined the efforts to renovate the building. Yet, after several preservation meetings resulted in stagnation, he said, "I cannot keep going to a meeting and we talk about what we can't do. What can we do?"

Faced with tens of thousands of dollars in costs solely to scrape the old paint, church members gathered to do it themselves in 2015. Over time, it became evident to one group of onlookers that the collective didn't quite know what they were doing. After a period of chuckling at the motivated Juniper helpers each morning, the spectating neigh-

bors, one of whom happened to be a contractor, offered support by completing the scraping and applying a new coat of paint.

For JLMBC, that was the momentum it needed. Robinson said the church was then able to secure a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation to install the specific windows that were in alignment with preservation guidelines established by the school's 2001 historical site designation. After raising the entire building to replace the footers, the five-year renovation process was complete just as the community braced for the pandemic.

Since then, the church has aimed to leverage the school and expand its holistic approach to serving the community, especially amid the challenges of COVID-19 in the rural area. Supported by funding from the American Rescue Plan Act since 2022, the Juniper Level After School Program is one of the offerings provided to families in the local community. Executive Director Frances D. Bisby estimates the church buses travel upward to 18,000 miles a year, providing transportation for students throughout the year.

"People would rather see a sermon than be preached to," said Renee Robinson, wife of Pastor Robinson. "If you're not going to feed people, if you're not going to help people, if you're not going to help children, then what's the point? To me, you'll be heavenly minded but no earthly good."

AROUND THE TRIANGLE



Annual Herbfest is May 3, noon to 4 p.m.

KNIGHTDALE FESTIVAL

Latin American Festival is April 26, 1-6 p.m., Knightdale State Park, 809 N. First Avenue.

hosting a meet and greet May 3, Bad Daddy's Burger Bar, 9402 Falls of Neuse Road. Register: www.eventbrite.com.

with Durham City Council member Matt Kopac, April 28, 6-7 p.m., St. Mark AME Zion Church, 531 S. Roxboro St.

RALEIGH PARTY

A block party is April 25, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., 8321 Six Forks Road. Open to the public.

FUNDRAISER

Community Music School's "Brighter Futures Through Music" fundraiser is May 5, 6-8 p.m., AJ Fletcher Opera Theater inside Martin Marietta Center. Visit: cmsraleigh.org.

MAY DAY

"No Kings and No Billionaires May Day" rally is May 1, 5 p.m., CCB Plaza, 201 Corcoran St.

FORUM

EPIC presents "Healing Forward" family community wellness forum May 2, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., North Carolina Central's Miller-Morgan Building, 500 Nelson St.

PAGEANT

Raleigh-Apex NAACP Mother of the Year Program is April 26, 4:30 p.m., Martin Street Baptist, 1001 E. Martin St.

CARY HERBFEST

Annual Herbfest is May 3, noon to 4 p.m., Page-Walker Arts & History Center, downtown Cary.

FUNDRAISER

Wellness Zumba fundraiser is May 2, 10 a.m. to noon, 1000 E. Forest Hills Boulevard. Register: www.zeffy.com.

SNEAKER BALL

Green Road Family Sneaker Ball is May 1, 6:30-9 p.m., Green Road Community Center, 4201 Green Road. Call 919-996-4141.

SCHOLARSHIP

Applications are open for the 2026 Friends of the Page-Walker Scholarship awarded to a graduating high school senior and a Cary resident. Visit: www.friendsofpage-walker.org. Deadline: May 5.

CHAPEL HILL DINNER

Mildred Council Community Dinner is April 26, 1 p.m., McDougle School Cafeteria, 900 Old Fayetteville Road. Tickets: orangecountync.gov.

CELEBRATION

Grand opening celebration for the new pavilion at Grosvenor Gardens is May 2, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 1101 Hillsborough St.

DURHAM CONVERSATION

Hayti Reborn presents a community conversation

MENTORSHIP

Sparkle Mentoring Program for teen Black girls is

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Black college football gets an upgrade

If you want something done right, do it yourself. The NCAA's four HBCU conferences - MEAC, SWAC, CIAA and SIAC - announced a collaboration Wednesday to create a Black College Football Poll and Black College All-American Teams to debut July 1, the official start of the college football season.

For the record, I never spell out the four conference names. If you don't know who they are, then why are you reading this column?

Both the poll and the All-American teams will be split into two divisions: FCS and Division II. And rightly so. Gives everyone a fair advantage.

"We're extremely excited to partner on the formation and creation of the Black College Football

Poll and the Black College Football All-American Team," the four commissioners released in a joint statement.

"We view this strategic alliance as a game changer for our respective leagues and, undoubtedly, a significant step in the right direction towards unifying our collective conferences as it relates to preseason/postseason polls and awards while simultaneously recognizing the best Black College Football teams and student-athletes at the highest level."

The weekly poll will be conducted throughout the regular season by a panel of head coaches and media members. They also will vote on preseason and postseason All-American first and second teams.

Individual awards for the coach of the year, freshman of the year, and offensive and defensive players of the year will be announced during the postseason.

There are a plethora of Black college football polls, all-conference teams and individual awards by a variety of white-owned and Black-owned media organizations.

But this alliance changes the landscape. It's coming straight from the top.

This is the second major collaboration among the four conferences.

Last July, they formed the "HBC4Us Association," dedicated to protecting the "integrity, legacy, cultural value and competitiveness of HBCU athletic programs."

HBC4Us was instigated after a presidential change created a hostile environment toward anything Afrocentric. The Association released its four-prong mission:

- * Student-athlete leadership and development
- * Preservation of cultural heritage
- * Competitive excellence
- * Financial sustainability and partnerships

Wednesday's announcement certainly falls under No. 4, which is sure to garner significant publicity, sponsorships and corporate dollars.

SWAC Commissioner Charles McClelland teased about a major announcement at last week's SWAC Golf Championships, among other things - more to come next week.

"As stewards of our storied athletic programs, we are committed to honoring our legacy while creating opportunities that ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of HBCU athletics for generations to come," the HBC4Us statement said.

If you're going to talk the talk, then walk the walk.

- HBCU Commissioners:**
- * McClelland
 - * Sonja O. Stills, MEAC
 - * Jacqie McWilliams Parker, CIAA
 - * Anthony Holloman, SIAC

The Triangle Tribune Sports

April 26 - May 2, 2026 | 6A

Durham Senior Games Opening Ceremony



BONITTA BEST

They were not a part of the competition, but the Durham Center for Senior Life Dancers and Drummers got everyone in the mood at Monday night's opening ceremony at the Holton Resource and Career Center. From now till May, senior adults 55 and over will participate in a variety of sports throughout Durham. Watch all the ceremony performers on our YouTube page.

Special Olympics North Carolina Plane Pull



COURTESY

Special Olympics North Carolina hosted its annual Plane Pull fundraising event last week. A unique team building activity for groups, the event allows seven-person teams to pull a regional plane 25 feet. The measure of success is to see which team can pull the plane the fastest. Each team must raise a minimum of \$1,000 by the event date.

This year, 80 teams competed and raised over \$125,000 for Special Olympics. Prizes were awarded for the three divisions: Law Enforcement/First Responders, Corporate/Business and Community/Gyms.

COLLEGE CORNER NCCU gets its first female tennis POTY

Lincoln (Pa.) soccer player Nia Miller and Bluefield State track and field athlete Robert Scott III will represent the CIAA at the 2026 Black Student Athlete Summit as HBCU Fellows through the NCAA Office of Inclusion. The May 20-23 summit at the University of Oregon will focus on "Beyond NIL." Miller and Scott will have all of their expenses paid.

WOMEN

N.C. Central
For the first time in the Division I era, the Eagles have a conference player of the year. Senior Alejandra Hidalgo Vega was named the 2026 MEAC women's tennis player of the year.

Hidalgo Vega has dominated No. 1 singles as an Eagle. Her older brother

Hugo won the 2024 MEAC Men's Tennis Player of the Year Award at NCCU.

Both the women's and men's championships will be live streamed April 25 on ESPN+.

In golf, the ladies placed third at the NEC Women's Golf Championship, their best finish since joining the conference in 2022-23. Schools can join other conferences for a particular sport. The MEAC doesn't sponsor golf.

Freshman Sanaa Carter led the way with a top 10 finish. The golf season concludes May 4-6 at the PGA WORKS Collegiate Championship in West Palm Beach, Florida.

In basketball, NCCU doesn't have a head coach (yet).

Please see **NCCU/7A**

NC high schools might get a new sport: boys volleyball

By Rachel Moody
UNC MEDIA HUB

Lev Marushevskiy cheers on the Triangle Math and Science Academy Tigers as they make a "kill" in a recent match.

They're playing against their rivals, The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics Unicorns.

Marushevskiy graduated last year and is now a student at UNC-Chapel Hill. But he's still passionate about getting boys' high school volleyball sanctioned. After all, he did co-found the team at TMSA, an Apex charter school.

Volleyball has been spiking its way into the hearts of high school boys all across the state the past few years. However, the North Carolina High School Athletic Association still doesn't recognize it. Now, athletes and coaches are pushing for statewide sanctioning to bring the sport up to the next level.

"I had to reach out to other teams' coaches to schedule tournaments and matches, as well as knowing whether we had enough money to be able to afford going to states each year," Marushevskiy said.

Being unsanctioned means many teams face extra hurdles like finding a practice space, buying jerseys or even getting a coach. Manny Price founded a team at a Gaston County charter school.

"I had meetings with the principal, just like, you're not going to have any equipment. Like you need to get a net, and then it was just like we can use the girls net," Price said. "We practiced in an elementary school gym."

Price later transferred out of his charter school. He's now a senior at NCSSM where he still plays volleyball. He says statewide sanctioning will advance the sport.

Please see **VOLLEYBALL/7A**

NCCU's Hidalgo Vega named player of the year

Continued from page 6A but it signed a recruit: high schooler Keileen Edwards from Midlothian, Virginia.

Shaw

The Bears and Winston-Salem State will play a softball doubleheader May 1 at Knightdale Community Park. It's the final "local" games for Shaw. The team travels to Fayetteville State May 2 to close out the season.

In tennis, the CIAA Tennis Championships is also this weekend on Virginia State's campus. Shaw finished the regular season undefeated at 11-0 but 0-6 against nonconference opponents.

Howard

The Bison are in the record books after winning the program's first NEC Women's Golf Championship. They knocked off 10-time NEC champion Farleigh-Dickerson. (Bet it's still in shock.) Marley Franklin won the individual crown. Howard advances to postseason play.

MEN

N.C. Central

Chicago State transfer Rodrigo Alves is one of 10 finalists for the 2026 Arthur Ashe Jr. Male Sports Scholar of the Year.

Alves is in his second season at NCCU. Student-athletes must hold a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA and be active in the community.

And speaking of tennis, the date has been set. A sign unveiling ceremony honoring the "NCCU 2025 Men's Tennis HBCU National Champions" is April 28, 2 p.m., at the Student Union. The public is invited.

Shaw

The Bears ended their tennis season with a 5-2 loss to Averett University to close out at 6-6.

In basketball, acting head coach Wykevin Bazemore snagged Christian Brothers University transfer Danny Lans.

Goodbye. Hello.

* East Central (Okla.) University LB Amajah Lewis to Arkansas-Pine Bluff

* Norfolk State F Rodney Baines to Virginia State (basketball).

* New Mexico State PG



Howard women's golf team.



AJ English and Terry Davis

DeAvion "Dee" Wilson to Texas Southern (basketball).

* Georgia Southern G Sean Van Dorn Jr. to Southern (basketball).

Coaching Updates

* Virginia Union made it official last week with the hiring of alumnus A.J. English as men's basketball coach. Joining English as associate head coach is another alumnus Terry Davis.

* Hampton head coach Ivan Thomas added

former UNC Greensboro assistant Bryant Stith as associate head coach.

* Grambling and Texas Southern promoted assistant coaches on an interim basis.

* Delaware State hired alumna Khadijah Rushdan as head women's coach. Rushdan was an assistant at Marquette.

* Still vacant are Allen, Edward Waters, Kentucky State, Lane, Lincoln (two openings), Mississippi Valley State, NCCU and Shaw.



RACHEL MOODY

North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics boys volleyball team faces off against the Triangle Math and Science Academy in Durham.

NC high schools might sponsor boys volleyball

Continued from page 6A

"A lot more people are gonna know about it. And they're gonna know like, OK, it's varsity men's volleyball. It's not club anymore. It's official," he said. "It's gonna be taken a lot more seriously. Teams are going to be practicing more. The jerseys are going to be a little bit more sophisticated I feel like."

That's also the hope of Sarah Conklin, the founder and director of North Carolina Boys' Volleyball Association.

"I was a mom with a son who wanted to play volleyball," Conklin said. "He said he wanted to play for his school. I was like, well,

it doesn't exist. And he's like, can't we just start it?"

Since then, her association has helped grow the number of teams in the state from just seven in 2022 to more than 100 this year.

"We run the entire state season until we're sanctioned, which God willing will be this spring," she said.

Before a sport can be sanctioned by the NCHSAA, at least 25% of member schools must participate. That's 112, which they've already surpassed at 118.

Conklin says they've submitted a proposal to the athletic association,

which will vote on next month.

"Our foot has been on the gas pedal to get this across the finish line because hundreds of boys, if not thousands of boys across the state, will have the opportunity to play," Conklin said.

Marushevskiy says that despite all the barriers that came with being the captain of an unsanctioned team, the competition kept him motivated.

"As long as I got the opportunity to win another volleyball game, I'd be willing to do all these logistics," he said. "It's no problem at all."



The Best in HBCU Sports
triangletribune.com

BLACK MMA - UFC FIGHTERS

Hi Everyone, Sankofa and I traveled back in time to November 12, 1993, to Denver, Colorado to watch the first four Black athletes compete in the "UFC 1: The Beginning". Those individuals fighting in this first-of-a-kind event were Zane Frazier, Art Jimmerson, Patrick Smith, and Trent Jenkins. The person providing the color commentary of the event was none other than the Hall of Famer running back for the Cleveland Browns, Jim Brown. Boy, I bet you wished that you were a fly on the wall for this event.

POP-UP FACT
MMA - UFC stands for Mixed Martial Arts - Ultimate Fighting Championship.

RASHAD "SUGA" EVANS
Rashad Anton Evans was born in 1979, Niagara Falls, New York and attended Niagara-Wheatfield High School where he participated on the wrestling team. He was named 2 times All Star wrestler while in high school. He also played high school football as a running back and safety. While attending Niagara County Community College, he won the wrestling National Junior College Championship in 2000. Later, he attended Michigan State University (Spartans) where he wrestled for the NCAA Division 1 Spartan's team. Rashad became the UFC light heavyweight champion in 2008. Evans is retired from the UFC and works as a sports analyst for ESPN and coach. He is also an active board member for Always Progress, an organization that helps at-risk-youths in his community of Boca Raton, FL.

ANGELA "OVERKILL" HILL
Ms Hill has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Cooper Union School of Art in New York City. She worked full time as an animator and part-time as a bartender. Ms. Hill is the first Black American female UFC Champion. In November 2023, she won a unanimous decision over Denise Gomes at the "UFC Fight Night 231" in São Paulo, Brazil. Ms. Hill's record is 16-13 in Mixed Martial Arts and 11-13 in Ultimate Fighting Championship. She fights in the Strawweight Division, which ranges from 106-115 pounds.

POP-UP FACT

The difference between MMA and UFC is that MMA is the full contact combat sport of Mixed Martial Arts. It consists of striking and wrestling while standing or on the ground. The UFC is the organization that promotes the sport.

TRUE FALSE **TELL THE TRUTH!**

Print the letter **T** on the line if the statement is True or **F** if the statement is False.

_____ Beginning in 1993 Black Americans were allowed to compete in the UFC.

_____ Cleveland Browns running back Jim Brown provided color commentary for the first Blacks competing in the UFC.

_____ Quinton "Rampage" Jackson was the youngest person to win the UFC light heavyweight title.

_____ Rashad "Suga" Evans attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where he was named 2 times All Star wrestler.

_____ Angela "Overkill" Hill fights in the Strawweight Division which is between 106-115 pounds.

ONE MINUTE MADNESS!

In one minute or less, unscramble the words that show an association with the art of combat sports. The first letter of the word is in **bold**.

IttimUae iighnFtg
aTiechni noouckKt
oOcntag
ooCri ttConeaormm
lalH fo mFea
xMied aaMrtil rAts

WHO AM I?

Match the individual to the statement.

A. Rashad "Suga" Evans B. Quinton "Rampage" Jackson
C. Angela "Overkill" Hill D. Jon "Bones" Jones

Column 1	Column 2
I started out as a street fighter but eventually made it to the UFC Hall of Fame.	_____
At 23, I am the youngest MMA-UFC light heavyweight champion ever.	_____
I might only weigh 115 pounds, but you don't want any of this smoke.	_____
Twice I was named All Star Wrestler at my high school.	_____

KEMET: THE OTHER DAY I SAW YOU WIN YOUR MMA MATCH. WHY DID YOU TAKE A BOW?

BECAUSE...

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ANSWER KEY
TELL THE TRUTH
ONE MINUTE MADNESS
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COURTESY

Last week, 19 new men were welcomed into the 100 Black Men of Triangle East brotherhood during its pinning ceremony. They will continue the work of mentoring, leading and uplifting the next generation.

HBCU NEWS

N.C. CENTRAL
NCCU will celebrate a new class of changemakers prepared to soar into their next chapter during its 147th Commencement Exercises May 8-9 at McDougald-McLendon Arena, 700 E. Lawson St.



Boyd

The graduate and professional ceremony will begin May 8 at 9 a.m.



King

Baccalaureate ceremonies will follow on May 9, with the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities at 9 a.m., and the College of Health and Sciences, School of Business and School of Education at 2 p.m.

This year's speakers - the Rev. Gwendolyn Boyd, pioneering engineer and higher education leader; Dena King '06, former U.S. attorney for the Western District of North Carolina; and Pro Football Hall of Famer Ray Lewis - will challenge graduates to lead with purpose, resilience and impact in their communities and beyond.

Rev. Gwendolyn Elizabeth Boyd Graduate, Professional Ceremony, May 8, 9 a.m.

Boyd is an engineer, educator and nationally recognized advocate for STEM education, known for her leadership, speaking and ministry. A native of Montgomery, Alabama, she graduated summa cum laude from Alabama State University and became the first African American woman to earn a master's degree in mechanical engineering from Yale University. Boyd spent more than three decades at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, where she held key leadership roles and advanced diversity initiatives. Appointed by former U.S. President Barack Obama to national education leadership roles, Boyd has been a champion for expanding access and opportunity in STEM fields.

Attorney Dena King '06 Baccalaureate Ceremony for College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, May 9, 9 a.m.

King was the U.S. attorney for the Western District of North Carolina from November 2021 to February 2025, following her nomination by former U.S. President Joseph Biden Jr. and confirmation by the U.S. Senate, becoming the first person of color to hold the position. With nearly two decades of public service, she led an office of ap-

proximately 100 prosecutors and staff serving more than 3 million residents across 32 counties, overseeing a broad portfolio of criminal and civil matters. During her tenure, she advanced initiatives focused on civil rights protection, public safety, fraud prevention and the prosecution of violent crime, while strengthening partnerships with law enforcement and community stakeholders. She earned a bachelor's degree in business management at North Carolina State University and juris doctor from NCCU School of Law.

Ray Lewis Baccalaureate Ceremony for College of Health and Sciences, School of Business and School of Education, May 9, 2 p.m.

Lewis is widely regarded as one of the most dominant defensive players in NFL history, leading the Baltimore Ravens to Super Bowl victories in 2000 and 2012, and earning Super Bowl MVP honors in 2000. Since retiring, Lewis has become a New York Times best-selling author for his memoir, "I Feel Like Going On," and a sought-after motivational speaker, sharing lessons on leadership, resilience and personal growth. Inducted into the 2018 Pro Football Hall of Fame, he has also pursued business and philanthropic endeavors while remaining committed to community impact.

Coats for the formerly incarcerated

First at Blue Ridge, in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, is a premiere therapeutic recovery first center for the formerly incarcerated. Mark Merrick is the executive director, and Dr. LaShawnda Key is a DAC employee under the Rehabilitation and Reentry section. Key, a member of Juniper Level Missionary Baptist Church, issued a plea for coats for individual released through the justice release program. Juniper Level auxiliary president Angela Hinnant and Logan's P.A.L.S. CEO Logan Thomas worked together to answer the call. Seventy-five coats were collected and donated to First and Blue Ridge.



COURTESY

Left to right: Angela Hinnant, Dr. LaShawnda Key, Logan Thomas, Dr. Fred Thomas and Mark Merrick.

Violet Love celebrates 10 years of women helping women

STAFF REPORTS

CARY — Violet Love, a North Carolina-based nonprofit founded by a mother-daughter duo, will celebrate its 10th anniversary with "Violet Love: A Kentucky Derby Inspired Mother's Day Brunch" on May 2 at the Prestonwood Country Club.

The 11 a.m. brunch brings together community leaders, philanthropists, and supporters for an elegant afternoon of purpose and celebration. Proceeds will directly benefit scholarships and educational support for women in North Carolina, Ghana and Sierra Leone, with a focus on expanding access to higher education, vocational institutions and critical resources that help women succeed.

Violet Love has worked to remove financial barriers for women who have the ability and drive to succeed but lack access to opportunity. The organization supports women pursuing academic degrees and vocational training by providing



scholarships, educational tools and wraparound support.

"Violet Love is not a gatekeeper, we are resource providers," founder Ann Michelle Roberts, said. "Our work is about meeting women where they are and helping them move forward when financial limitations stand in the way of their potential."

Violet Love's leadership model is rooted in legacy, service and community care. The organization's reach over the last 10 years has extended from local communities in North Carolina to women across AF-

rica, impacting countless lives through education and empowerment.

"This milestone represents more than an anniversary, it represents sustained commitment, generational leadership and what's possible when women invest in women," Roberts added.

The Kentucky Derby-inspired brunch blends tradition and purpose, encouraging guests to don festive attire while supporting a mission grounded in equity, education and global sisterhood. Email: Violetlove919@gmail.com.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

DURHAM CITY

Durham Deputy Chief Walter Tate has been promoted to interim police chief, effective May 1. Chief Patrice Andrews also will retire on the same day. Tate has worked in the DPD for over 30 years and deputy chief since August 2023.

Are you or someone you know a Mover and a Shaker?

Drop us a line at Movers and Shakers, c/o The Triangle Tribune, 5007 Southpark Drive, Suite 200-G, Durham, NC 27713, or email us at info@triangletribune.com. Photos welcome.



Tate

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