



SPORTS

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The Triangle Tribune

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« 52 WEEKS OF BLACK BRILLIANCE »

The creator of the video game cartridge

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Gerald Anderson Lawson (Dec. 1, 1940 - April 9, 2011) was an American electronics engineer. Besides being one of the first African American computer engineers in Silicon Valley, Lawson was also known for his work in designing the Fairchild Channel F video game console, leading the team that refined ROM cartridges for durable use as commercial video game cartridges. His innovations led to him being considered the father of the game cartridge.

In 1970, he joined Fairchild Semiconductor in San Francisco as an applications engineering consultant within their sales division. While there, he created a coin-operated video game called Demolition Derby in his garage, which was never released. Completed in early 1975 using Fairchild's new F8 microprocessors, Demolition Derby was among the earliest microprocessor-driven games.

In the mid-1970s, Lawson was made chief hardware engineer and director of engineering and marketing

for Fairchild's video game division. There, he led the development of the Fairchild Channel F console, released in 1976 and specifically designed to use swappable game cartridges based on technology licensed from Alplex.

At the time, most game systems had the game programming built into the hardware so it could not be removed or changed. Lawson and his team refined and improved technology developed at Alplex that allowed games to be stored as software on removable ROM cartridges. These

could be inserted and removed repeatedly from a console unit without any danger of electric shocks.

In 1980, Lawson left Fairchild and founded Videosoft, a video game development company that made software for the Atari 2600, as the 2600 had displaced the Channel F as the top system in the market. Videosoft did not release any games, although their incomplete titles were saved and distributed to collectors in 2010. Videosoft closed about five years later, and Lawson started



Gerald Anderson Lawson - By Unknown but currently held by Museum of Play/Estate of Jerry Lawson.

Please see CREATOR/2A



Juneteenth has room for both reflection and celebration

By Kylie Marsh

Kylie.marsh@triangletribune.com

Juneteenth has gone underappreciated by many, including Black Americans.

The relationship between Black Americans and the holiday have long been nuanced.

Haillee (who declined to give her last name) is a North Carolina native. Her mother is from the Virgin Islands, and her dad from the north. "Juneteenth is a relatively new holiday to me. I didn't really grow up with any knowledge of Juneteenth," she told The Tribune.

She wasn't taught about the holiday in school, and it wasn't really talked about, "until much later, maybe like two or three years ago."

President Joe Biden made Juneteenth National Independence Day a federal holiday in 2021.

Just a year prior, massive uprisings against police brutality and African Americans put public pressure on corporations and elected officials to make concessions for diversity, equity and inclusion.

"It just feels like a reactionary response to what was happening when the protests were happening and people were getting a little too organized," Haillee said. "I think it was a concession that the U.S. government made. It doesn't really feel like there's anything behind it. I mean, it is nice to have a day off from work."

That said, many working class people are Black and don't get the day off.

"I think white people should be working," Haillee said.

Please see JUNETEENTH/3A

'I'm good' isn't always the truth

Mental health and Black men

By Dominique Lambright
BLACKDOCTOR

Black men are significantly less likely to receive mental health treatment, yet they face higher exposure to stress, trauma and systemic pressures. That gap is not about weakness; it's about access, stigma, and cultural expectations that have shaped how Black men are allowed to express emotion.

"I'm good." It's a phrase said quickly, casually, almost automatically. For many Black men, it's a default response, whether they're overwhelmed, exhausted, anxious or struggling in ways they may not even have words for. But behind those two words is often something deeper: unspoken stress, emotional suppression and the pressure to hold it all together. Mental health doesn't always

look like breakdowns or visible distress. In fact, according to insights from the Counseling Center for Change, many people experiencing mental health challenges appear functional on the surface while struggling internally.

For Black men, that disconnect is often even greater.

Mental health struggles don't

Please see I'M GOOD/2A

One decision could change the next 10 years of your life

By Marlon Smith

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Think back to the most significant turning points in your life.

Perhaps it was meeting a mentor. Starting a business. Taking a new job.

Attending a conference. Making a courageous decision despite uncertainty.

Most breakthroughs begin with a single decision. The Speaker Author Blueprint Summit (TheSpeakerBlueprintSummit.com) on June 27 may become one of those decisions. Why?

Because we are entering a new era where knowledge, communication, visibility, and personal branding are becoming some of the most valuable assets a person can possess.

The old economy rewarded people primarily for what they did. The new economy increasingly rewards people for what they know and how effectively they communicate it.

People are building businesses, brands, and additional income streams through speaking, coaching, consulting, books, online education and digital platforms. Many are leveraging artificial intelligence to scale their impact faster than ever before.

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At the Summit, attendees will discover proven strategies for:

- Turning expertise into influence
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- Expanding income streams
- Creating a lasting legacy

Perhaps even more valuable, attendees will be surrounded by growth-minded professionals who are actively investing in themselves and their future.

Environment matters. The people you meet can influence the opportunities you see. The ideas you learn can shape the direction of your next decade.

The confidence you gain can unlock possibilities you never imagined.

Too often people delay opportunities because they believe there will always be another chance. Sometimes there is. Sometimes there isn't. The future belongs to individuals who are willing to invest in growth before they feel fully ready.

The room matters. The relationships matter. The knowledge matters. The decision matters.

On June 27, you have an opportunity to place yourself in a room designed to help you expand your influence, increase your impact and elevate your future. One decision can change everything. Reserve your seat now at: www.TheSpeakerAuthorBlueprint.com. Your next chapter may begin the moment you walk through the door.

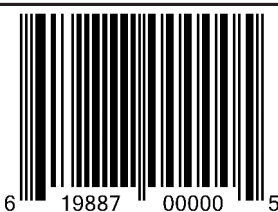
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Fairchild Channel F — By Evan-Amos - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0.

The creator of the video game cartridge

Continued from page 1A to take on consulting work.

Around 2003, Lawson started having complications from diabetes, losing the use of one leg and sight from one eye.

On April 9, 2011, about one month after being honored by the International Game Developers Association,

he died of complications from diabetes.

The interactive Google Doodle game on Dec. 1, 2022, was dedicated to Lawson to celebrate what would have been his 82nd birthday, allowing the user to make games, edit existing built-in games and

share games. On June 9, 2023, Norman Caruso's YouTube series "The Gaming Historian" profiled Lawson and the birth of the Fairchild Channel F video game system in its episode, "The Story of the First Video Game Cartridge."



FILE PHOTO

Black men should stop keeping silent about their mental health.

'I'm good' isn't always the truth from Black men

Continued from page 1A

always show up in obvious ways like crying, shutting down completely or asking for help. In fact, for many, they often show up in ways that are socially acceptable, normalized or even praised, which makes them harder to recognize. What looks like "being strong," "handling business" or "staying busy" can sometimes be a way to avoid, mask or manage internal distress.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, men are more likely to externalize emotional distress, meaning it shows up through behavior rather than open expression.

That means someone can look "fine" on the outside while struggling deeply on the inside. That means instead of saying "I'm over-

whelmed" or "I'm hurting," it may come out as: frustration, detachment, risk-taking behavior, substance use or simply shutting down emotionally.

This is where it gets complicated because many of these behaviors are misinterpreted. Anger gets labeled as attitude not pain. Silence gets seen as strength not struggle. Busyness gets praised not questioned.

So, someone can look productive, composed, even successful on the outside while internally dealing with stress, anxiety or depression that no one sees. And when those signs go unrecognized, support doesn't come because from the outside, everything looks fine. That's why understanding what hidden mental health

struggles look like is so important. Because sometimes the people who say the least are carrying the most.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that suicide rates among Black men have been rising in recent years. That's not just a statistic, it's a signal that something deeper needs attention.

One of the most important shifts we can make is redefining what strength actually means. Strength is not silence.

Strength is awareness. It's honesty. It's the ability to acknowledge what you're carrying. Healthy emotional expression doesn't have to look one way.

The key is not how you express it, but that you don't keep it locked inside.

Child tax credits could address NC youth poverty

Public News Service Advocates said North Carolina children would benefit from a state-level child tax credit to support family well-being, as a new report showed the state continues to lag behind many others.

The annual Kids Count Data Book from the Annie E. Casey Foundation ranked North Carolina 34th in child well-being. The state saw a small decrease in child poverty and in the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas, but it found nearly 10% declines in math scores for eighth graders and literacy scores for fourth graders, a trend mirrored across the

country in the post-pandemic years.

Leslie Boissiere, vice president of external affairs for the foundation, said children's well-being affects more than their individual outcomes.

"It's not only the well-being of the child, it's the academic outcomes of the child, it's the climate in the classroom; it's just a ripple effect from the child to the family to the community and even to the school," Boissiere said.

For the first time, the report offered a comprehensive score, rather than just a ranking, to better track whether investments in children yield positive improvements. North Caro-

lina received a score of more than 530 on a 1,000-point scale.

Neil Harrington, senior director of policy and research for the advocacy group NC Child, said modest gains in economic well-being are encouraging, but families are still struggling to afford basic needs. He urged lawmakers to create a state-level child tax credit program similar to the federal program that lapsed in 2021.

Child poverty dropped by nearly half during the expanded tax credit years but rose sharply when the credit disappeared, according to advocates.

Please see CHILD/3A

One decision can change 10 years of your life

Continued from page 1A

Marlon Smith is an international keynote speaker and best-selling author whose presentations have inspired audiences in 45 states and 19 countries. As founder of the Speaker Author Blueprint Summit, he is on a mission to help people transform their knowledge, experiences, and stories into greater influence, income, and legacy.

Mother sues property owner over son's death in laundry room

By Greg Childress

NC NEWSLINE

DURHAM — The mother of a Durham man who died of heart failure after he became trapped in the laundry room of her downtown apartment building has sued the property owner and management firm.

Debra Davies seeks compensatory damages for the estate of Jason Pulliam, who was 39 at the time of his death. Davies also asked the court to award her damages for the "infliction of emotional distress" caused by her son's death. According to the lawsuit, Davies suffered "severe emotional distress, mental anguish, grief, anxiety, loss of sleep, emotional suffering, and other psychological injuries" due to defendants' alleged "negligence."

The lawsuit, filed in Durham County Superior Court, claims an electronic door malfunctioned and would not open from in-

side the laundry room, preventing Pulliam from quickly receiving the care that might have saved his life. "Had Jason or the other occupants of the laundry room been able to freely exit the room, or otherwise summon assistance, emergency personnel could have been alerted sooner and provided life-saving care earlier," the lawsuit asserts.

The lawsuit contends the defendants "knew or reasonably should have known that residents and visitors utilizing the common areas of Ashton Place could suffer medical emergencies, fires, accidents, or other events requiring immediate egress from the laundry room or immediate access to emergency assistance."

Davies is represented by Howard Stallings Law Firm in Raleigh. Lee Rodio, the lead attorney in the case, declined to answer questions. "We'll let the allegations in the complaint

speak for themselves," Rodio said.

Davies' lawsuit names Downtown Home Improvement Corporation Inc., the Raleigh-based nonprofit developer of the 51-unit affordable housing complex for seniors, and Winston-Salem based Community Management Corporation, the firm DHIC hired to manage the property. Ashton Place Housing LLC and Ashton Place Managing Members, LLC are also named as defendants.

Jack Bayliss, an attorney with Carruthers & Roth, the legal firm that represents DHIC, said he had not seen the complaint. Yolanda Winstead, DHIC's executive director, was unavailable for comment. Calls to CMC were not returned.

Winstead did discuss Pulliam's death briefly with NC Newsline in November: "Based on our investigation, Ashton Place was not responsible for this unfortunate death that hap-

Please see MOTHER/3A



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Juneteenth has room for celebration and reflection

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Juneteenth commemorates the day the last enslaved Africans in Texas were finally informed of their freedom under the Emancipation Proclamation by Union Soldiers in 1865.

But what does freedom truly mean, especially under the current administration?

"I feel like it's a platitude, and, materially, nothing has changed for Black folks for a very long time. I'm unimpressed," Hailee said.

Serayah Silver is a multidisciplinary artist and service worker.

Silver told The Tribune that freedom is something self-determined, especially for Black Americans, or Black people throughout the diaspora.

"We've been creating a kind of freedom for ourselves, not even since then, since before then," Silver said. "I mean, that's what Blackness in America is: the creation, and first and foremost, creation of our own culture, of our own identity, of our own

freedom." Sharing food, listening to music and letting loose comes with that, Silver said. Celebration and reflection go hand in hand.

Constance Sartor Walker was born and raised in Durham.

She has embodied Durham's Black history as a resident of historically Black West End neighborhood.

For four years, she has hosted a Juneteenth celebration that blocks off Carroll Street with music, food, vendors and games. This year's celebration will be the biggest yet.

"Instead of it just being a social event, we're gonna, I call put a little 'teeth' to it," she told The Tribune.

This year, the celebration will highlight Durham's Black leadership.

"We are going to add on a day of recognition to the ones in this generation who are leading us in this city," she said. "Whether they're there or not, their names will come up, and you will know who they are, and the history that they are making by serving in the capacity that they're

serving in." Walker said Juneteenth's significance needs to be steadfastly carried on to the younger generations. It is imperative that the celebration take place on June 19, the actual holiday, instead of the 20th or 21st. This year, she said the city of Durham didn't grant her organization, the West End/Lyon Park Legacy Project, any money to hold the celebration, as it has in years past.

Still, she expects almost 400 attendees as it's open to the public.

There will be coloring pages of famous historical Black figures, basketball shooting and jump rope contests, food trucks and information about community resources.

"We have to tell the history and let people know how important it is for us to keep the freedom," Walker said. "We've not only got to be the storytellers of our history, we have to leave a legacy of what we're talking about. We can't tell children what to do if we are not doing it ourselves."

Child tax credits could address NC youth poverty

Continued from page 2A

"Creating programs or tax benefits that put money back into the pockets of families can make it easier for them to kind of pull off that budget balancing act and afford the rising cost of raising a family in our state," Harrington said.

The report also found across-the-board improvements in N.C. community factors, including declines in teen birth rates.



Residents of Willard Street Apartments and nearby Ashton Place in downtown Durham formed tenant unions to fight against what they contend are poor management and shoddy building maintenance.

Durham mother sues over son's death in laundry

Continued from page 2A

opened to occur on the premises," she said.

Pulliam died in the Ashton Place laundry room in November 2024. A tenant told investigators at the time that Pulliam appeared "distressed and in need of assistance" when he entered the laundry room. "As his [Pulliam's] condition deteriorated, it became apparent that emergency intervention was urgently needed," the lawsuit said. "However, the laundry room door had become inoperable from the inside, preventing their escape."

The tenant, who said she was trapped in the laundry room with Pulliam, told investigators that she banged on the door and called for help, but her efforts to get someone's attention were unsuccessful. Neither she nor Pulliam

had brought cellphones to the laundry room.

Eventually, two more residents entered the laundry room, but were not aware the door was malfunctioning, so they too became locked in the laundry room, the lawsuit said. One of them called 911, but by the time police and first responders arrived, it was too late. They were unable to

The residents of Ashton Place and nearby Willard Street Apartments, both developed by DHIC and managed by Community Management Corporation, formed tenant unions in March to fight against what they contend are poor management and shoddy building maintenance. The newly formed Willard Street United and Ashton Seniors in Action tenant unions demanded that their shared landlord formally recognize the unions

and commit to quarterly meetings with tenants.

The N.C. Tenants Union, which helped residents organize, said DHIC continues to recognize Willard Street United because it is a project-based voucher property and believes it is legally obligated to do so under federal housing law. DHIC, however, rescinded its recognition of Ashton Seniors in Action because it does not believe it is obligated by federal law to do so.

Hailey Huget, an organizer with N.C. Tenants Union, said the group unequivocally supports Ashton Place residents in their demand for "recognition and a seat at the table through collectively bargaining their leases."

"These seniors deserve a real voice in their living conditions and not more lip service," Huget said.



LYNN BONNER/NC NEWSLINE

North Carolina Senator Natalie Murdock, D-Durham, speaks at a news conference aimed at reducing pregnancy-related deaths among Black women.

State action can reduce pregnancy-related deaths of Black women

By Lynn Bonner

NC NEWSLINE

Healthcare providers, advocates and politicians gathered in Raleigh last week to push for state laws and grant programs they say would reduce pregnancy-related deaths among Black women.

In North Carolina, the Black maternal death rate was 61.4 for each 100,000 births from 2019-23, according to America's Health Rankings. The maternal mortality rate for white women was 22.3 per 100,000 births.

Nationally, Black women die from pregnancy-related complications and conditions at about three times the rate of white women.

Speakers pointed to implicit bias, inadequate support for women after they give birth, and lack of access to doulas and midwives as reasons Black mothers are more likely to

die.

Dr. Michele Benoit-Wilson, an OB-GYN in Raleigh, presented vignettes to illustrate the potentially deadly consequences of inadequate postpartum care, a lack of access to addiction specialists, and doctors dismissing Black women's reports of worrying symptoms.

Most pregnancy-related deaths are preventable now "with the policies, the funding, and the moral imperative that we, as citizens of this state, owe to every family who calls it home," Benoit-Wilson said.

A 2025 state report on maternal deaths in North Carolina from 2018-20 found that 87% were preventable. But legislation filed in North Carolina aimed at preserving Black women's lives faces new hurdles in an era of anti-diversity and anti-equity policies.

Murdock has filed versions of a Momnibus bill

for several sessions. The latest version would have the state establish a required implicit bias training program for healthcare professionals, set up a grant program aimed at improving the health of pregnant Black women, establish a training program to recruit a diverse lactation support workforce, and expand access to medical care in maternity care deserts.

The Senate's Republican leadership has never granted the bills a hearing.

Still, it's important to continue to talk about the high Black maternal death rate and to offer solutions despite the political climate, Murdock said.

"We are making strides, but we still have a very long way to go," Murdock said. "Now, more than ever, we have to continue beating the drum as some people want to ignore the data. The data is here."

NC House committee OKs sweeping election bill

By Lynn Bonner

NC NEWSLINE

A North Carolina House committee advanced an elections bill that would change a range of election laws, with some Democrats objecting to provisions expanding the window for challenging voters, granting the state Auditor new powers, and allowing the state elections board to shroud its legal hiring in secrecy.

The bill was set to speed through the House committee process Tuesday but hit a speed bump as dozens of protesters filled legislative halls and committee rooms.

What happens after it gets to the state Senate remains in question. Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, said Tuesday afternoon that he did not know all the details on the bill. It may have some provisions the Senate would want, he said, but he hasn't spoken to House members about it.

"I would say that bill's probably got a long way to go," Berger said.

Republicans in both chambers are interested in shortening the early voting period for primaries. The shorter early voting period is not in the House bill now, but it is a provision the Senate could add.

Rep. Hugh Blackwell, R-Burke, a bill sponsor, told the House Election Law Committee meeting Tuesday morning that the aim is more integrity. "We're not trying to put up obstacles so much as to do what we can to improve, where we can, the integrity of the process," he said.

Nonetheless, critics said, the bill would create more obstacles for eligible voters. Under the bill, the state Board of Elections would conduct an audit after each primary and general election. After an analysis of government databases, the state board



would have up to six days after an election to send county boards lists of names of people who should have their votes discarded.

"Why are we adding this provision?" asked Rep. Pricely Harrison, D-Guilford. "It does seem like what's going to happen is you're going to have eligible ballots tossed."

Harrison and Rep. Phil Rubin, D-Wake, worked with bill sponsors to make some changes before the Election Law meeting, but continued to question some of its other provisions. State Auditor Dave Boliek, a Republican, would be able to select counties for post-election audits.

Rubin said it was not right to have a partisan who campaigns for candidates conducting these audits. Boliek is an elected official who campaigned for Berger this year during his primary.

"I know the statute says it won't affect the outcome of the election, but going into the county as part of the group running for office and grabbing your ballot boxes, he's going to send a message," Rubin said.

At a news conference, Rubin also objected to the provision that cuts the office of Democratic State Attorney General Jeff Jackson out of state elections legal cases and directs the elections board to hire private attorneys instead. The bill

would make secret from the public "[a]ll communications or documents made or used in connection with the provision of legal services by counsel employed or retained under this section" by exempting those documents from the state's public records law.

The state elections board would absorb the cost of hiring the private lawyers. It's unclear whether their legal costs would be public record.

Rubin said the elections board shouldn't spend taxpayer money on outside lawyers. If they do, "we need to know and understand and have accountability for how that money is being spent," he said. "Otherwise, you have a situation where you're creating legislation that leads to litigation. Then you can hire your friends and give them a ton of money to defend it. It's not a good system for government accountability."

At the news conference, bill opponents said it would make it harder for people to vote and have their ballots counted.

"The General Assembly has decided that it is OK to take our free and fair elections and put a very heavy foot on the scale," said Dawn Blagrove, executive director of Emancipate NC. "We deserve election laws that make it easier and not harder for all of us to exercise our constitutional right to vote."



A rendition of the Emanuel Nine Memorial.

Emanuel Nine Memorial in Charleston, South Carolina, to open in fall

SUBMITTED TO THE TRIBUNE

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Deona Smith opened her remarks at the preview for the Emanuel Nine Memorial by saying the names of the nine people killed 11 years ago at Mother Emanuel AME Church.

Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Rev. Daniel L. Simmons, Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Myra Thompson, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson.

"We wouldn't be here if it were not for the Nine," said Smith, executive director of the Mother Emanuel Memorial Foundation. "It was a horrific thing that happened here on June 17, 2015."

One week before the 11th anniversary of the mass shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, Smith shared with media a first look at a memorial that is being built next to the historic church at 110 Calhoun Street.

The memorial is designed to be a permanent public space honoring the nine worshippers who were killed during Bible study by a white supremacist.

The site also honors the five survivors, the resilience of the congregation, and all people impacted by hatred and racial violence.

Construction is well underway, and the memorial will open to the public this fall. Admission will be free. "It is a safe space that should be available and accessible to everyone. Everyone in our community and visitors alike," she

said.

The Mother Emanuel Memorial Foundation was formed in 2017 and is an independent organization with a board of 15 members that is separate from the church. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with independent governance and financial oversight and is fully responsible for the memorial. The foundation board is co-chaired by the Rev. Eric Manning, senior pastor of Mother Emanuel, and John Darby, CEO of The Beach Company.

The media preview included a walk through the construction site and a visit to a museum space across the street that houses many of the works of art, tributes and gifts sent to Mother Emanuel in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. Those items are being curated by Lee Bennett Jr., the church's historian, and serve as a visible testament to how deeply the attack moved people around the world.

For Smith, a Lowcountry native who grew up AME and has personal ties to the church and its congregation, leading the foundation is deeply meaningful. "This is my charge: to lead this organization and to try to present a memorial that the families, the survivors and the community at large can be proud of," she said. "Something that earns the respect and honor of who they were as people in our community."

The memorial, designed by architect Michael Arad, who also designed the 9/11 Memorial in New York, will feature a Memorial Courtyard with a

names fountain, Fellowship Benches, a Contemplation Basin for quiet individual reflection, and reimagined church grounds connecting the memorial to Mother Emanuel AME Church.

The foundation has raised and pledged approximately \$19.9 million toward a \$25 million campaign goal. Donors have ranged from individuals, the true drivers of the project, to major corporations like Boeing, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, TD Bank, Coca-Cola Consolidated, The Beach Company and Nucor, as well as municipalities and philanthropic organizations.

"In the same way that Charleston came together after the tragedy, Charleston has come together to fund this memorial," Smith said.

One piece of the memorial is fully dependent on continued fundraising: the Survivors' Garden, which will be built on the east side of the church to honor the five people who lived through the attack. "We talk a lot about the Emanuel Nine.

Very few people talk about the survivors, and they're the ones who experienced it and who are still here," she said. "So, it's very important that we not forget them and that we make sure that Survivors' Garden is built."

She said the foundation needs to raise at least another \$2 million to complete it.

To support the Emanuel Nine Memorial and the Survivors' Garden, or to learn more, visit emanuelnine.org.

Let's celebrate what makes a father a father

By April Mial

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

When I decided to produce the movie "TORN APART," the sequel to "TORN," I wanted to focus on something we don't see very often in films: a father-daughter relationship as the main story.

I wanted to tell a story about how fathers and daughters grow together. How they disappoint each other, challenge each other, forgive each other and ultimately learn from one another. I believe that some of the most important relationships in our lives are not the easiest ones.

Bernard Baxter is a fictional father, but his journey is familiar.

When audiences first met Bernard in "TORN," he was trying to rebuild his life after prison. Like many men, he returned home, wanting to pick up where he left off — only to discover that life had moved forward.

Without him, his wife Juanita spent five years raising their children Jasmine and Tyrell. She had grown. His children had grown. The world had grown.

So, at a pivotal point in the movie, Bernard had a

choice. He could remain angry and bitter, or he could do the difficult work of earning his place back into their lives...He chose the harder path.

In "TORN APART," we meet Bernard nearly 10 years later. His marriage is strong, and his children are successful adults. His son is married and expecting their first child. His daughter is building a successful career. For the first time in his life, Bernard feels as though life is finally moving in the right direction... Then tragedy hits.

Juanita dies, and Bernard finds himself standing still once again while the rest of the world continues moving forward.

This time the daughter he once helped raise now helps him heal and move past his mental prison. Juanita provided support in "TORN," and Jasmine provides similar support in "TORN APART."

Jasmine helps him rebuild his failing lawncare business, encouraging him to find purpose again. She also helps him imagine a future beyond his grief and to even find love again.

I'm not a parent, but I think parents see themselves as only teachers for their children and not what their children can teach them. Nor do they think that strength sometimes comes from accepting help, from listening and from admitting that they are hurting.

That's why I chose to include therapy in Bernard's journey. Too often, Black men are told that strength means remaining silent. That strength means carrying every burden alone. I wanted to challenge that idea.

As Father's Day approaches, I find myself thinking not only about Bernard but about my own father. He has been one of the most important influences in my life. He encouraged me to work hard, think critically and strive for excellence. We have not always agreed on everything. In fact, there have been times when we strongly disagreed, but there was respect, and something that I've learned to appreciate.

The older I get, I realize that fathers are human. They make mistakes. They experience disappointments. They carry burdens we may not always see.

But when they continue to love, continue to learn and continue to be present, that leaves a lasting impact.

This Father's Day, I celebrate the fathers who keep showing up. And I especially celebrate mine.

April Mial is the president of Rock, Groove and Jam!, a media platform that celebrates the value of female aspiration and experience. [V i s i t : RockGrooveandJam.com](http://www.rockgrooveandjam.com) or follow her on Facebook and Instagram.



Mial

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AROUND THE TRIANGLE

KNIGHTDALE SPLASH BASH

Cool off at the Splash Pad Bash June 27, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Knightdale Station Park, 700 N. 1st Avenue.

RALEIGH ARTS

A cultural arts gathering is June 27, 4-8 p.m., Latta University Historic Park, 1001 Parker St.

CONFERENCE

She Will Overcome Conference is June 27, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Woman's Club of Raleigh, 3300 Woman's Club Drive. Tickets: she-willconference.com.

VILLAGE

It Takes A Village community giveback event is June 27, 2-8 p.m., Fred Fletcher Park, 821 Washington St.

DURHAM TEEN ZONE

My Durham Teen Zone Summer Program, a drop-in summer program for ages 13-17, runs June 22 to Aug. 14, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at two locations. Call 919-354-2730 for more information.

HIV

National HIV Testing Day Observance is June 24, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Durham Bus Terminal, 515 W. Pettigrew St.

GIVEAWAY

Durham County Dept. of Social Services' food giveaway is June 24, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 414 E. Main St., while supplies last.

ROUNDTABLE

The next Community Luncheon Roundtable is

June 25, noon, Elizabeth Street United Methodist Church, 1209 N. Elizabeth St.

GARDENING

The next Hattie Meadows Gardening School class is June 27, 10 a.m. to noon, Stanford L. Warren Library, 1201 Fayetteville St. Contact ashley_troth@ncsu.edu.

COMMUNITY

Bull City Community Field Day is June 27, 1-6 p.m., Herndon Park, 511 Scott King Road.

MISC.

BLOOD The American Red Cross is issuing an urgent call for blood and platelet donors. Register at: RedCrossBlood.org.

Former HBCU coach raising profile

Five years ago, Vanessa Blair-Lewis dared to dream big.

Coming off a legendary 13-year coaching career at Bethune-Cookman, Blair-Lewis achieved what so few HBCU basketball head coaches had - a chance to lead a predominantly white program.

The operative word here is "lead." Not join a staff as an assistant or associate head coach but the... Head. Woman. In. Charge.

As successful as she was at B-CU, a familiar coaching adage in HBCU sports circles didn't skip by Blair-Lewis.

You know, the joke that a PWC has to be scraping rock bottom before hiring a Black head coach.

The Patriots were scraping pretty low. The program was 3-19 overall, 0-14 in the Atlantic

10 when Blair-Lewis was hired on April 21, 2021.

Was she intimidated? After all, critics are quick to dismiss the accomplishments of HBCU coaches, and women's sports are placed even lower on the food chain.

But what did she do? At the first team practice, she had a banner covered with cloth raised in the rafters that read "FUTURE WOMEN'S ATLANTIC 10 CHAMPIONS." Only the players and staff knew what it said.

The cover came off four years later when GMU won its first-ever A-10 Championship and first NCAA Tournament appearance.

Blair-Lewis' five seasons went like this:

* 2021-22: 10-19 overall, 3-12 A-10. GMU hadn't won 10 games in three seasons.

* 2022-23: 16-15, 8-8. The Patriots' first winning season since 2017-18.

* 2023-24: 23-8, 14-4. First 20-win season since 2017-18; program records for regular-season and conference wins; and a postseason appearance in the inaugural Women's Basketball Invitational Tournament.

* 2024-25: 27-6, 14-4. A program-record in wins, first conference championship and a Big Dance appearance.

* 2025-26: 23-10, 16-2. A regular-season championship, a program record in conference victories, 400 career coaching wins and another postseason appearance.

Her reward: a two-year contract extension that will take her through 2031-32. If, and that's a big IF, they can keep her.

GMU fans shouldn't be surprised at the Patriots' success after the job Blair-Lewis did at Bethune-Cookman before the university left the MEAC for the SWAC.

She left the program with a 196-168 record, six winning seasons, four regular-season titles, a tournament championship and an NCAA berth.

But it was that 2018-19 season that should have made Power Four conferences sit up and take notice.

Bethune lost MEAC Defensive Player of the Year Ashanti Hunt, top freshman Kiana Williams and four additional players throughout the season from season-ending ACL injuries. It was the talk of the league.

Fingers were being pointed: were the coaches overworking the players, who was in charge of strength and conditioning, etc.

But what did Blair-Lewis and her staff do? Guide the team to its first tournament championship since 1984 and an NCAA berth.

Now, if that's not a coach, who is? The team could have easily folded during the season with a woe-is-us mentality.

So hardly anyone in HBCU country is surprised at Blair-Lewis' success. After what she did at Bethune, George Mason was gravy.



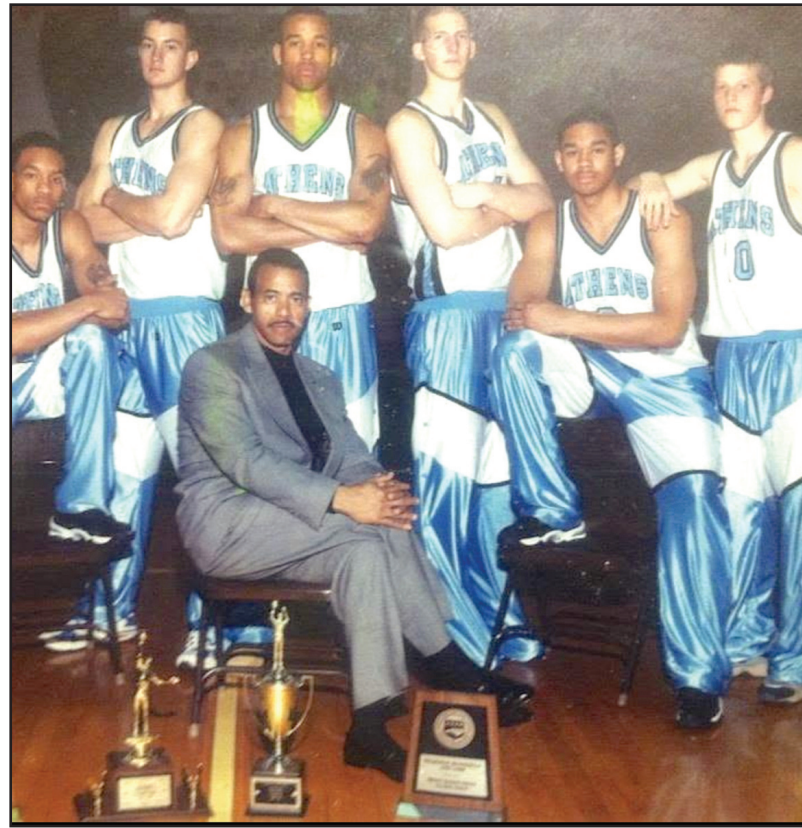
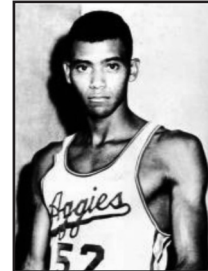
BONITTA BEST

WakeEd Partnership Stars of Education Gala

Lawrence Dunn is one of five Wake County public school educators to be inducted into the Wake County Public School System Hall of Fame. Dunn is a trailblazing educator and coach whose career spanned decades, beginning after his graduation from Berry O'Kelly High School in segregated Raleigh.

A standout athlete who earned a basketball scholarship to North Carolina A&T State University, Dunn later returned home to mentor generations of students as a teacher and coach. He led championship teams at Garner and Athens Drive high schools, where he was the inaugural men's basketball coach, and was inducted into the 2012 NCHSAA Hall of Fame for his lasting impact on student-athletes and the game.

WakeEd Partnership, a business-backed nonprofit organization committed to supporting educators and public education, announced the honorees for its 13th annual Stars of Education Gala, Nov. 9, 5 to 8 p.m. at the Raleigh Convention Center. Visit www.WakeEd.org/Stars.



COURTESY

HBCU Football Club hopes the World Cup amplifies HBCU competitive soccer

By Leoneda Inge
WUNC

DURHAM - Thousands of college students across the country love and play soccer at a competitive level. But there aren't nearly as many soccer teams at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

An organization called HBCU FC is working to change that during this season of World Cup action in America, Mexico and Canada. This spring, it held an inaugural HBCU Football Club Classic at Durham County Memorial Stadium.

Raymond Brooks heads digital development for HBCU FC, based in Greensboro. He says the gooooooal is to "amplify HBCU culture" through the global game of soccer.

Brooks played soccer for Mars

Hill University in western North Carolina. He says it was hard choosing between attending a predominately white school, like Mars Hill, because it had a soccer team and eliminating a historically Black college from his list because it didn't.

"It was a very, very harsh decision," Brooks said. "If you look at a lot of 'person of color' athletes now today playing soccer at these big NCAA schools, I wouldn't say they regret their decisions. But they sometimes wonder and reflect what would happen, maybe, at a different school."

Brooks says he now knows an athlete can be committed to a favorite HBCU and still have the love of the game.

The stands were empty at the stadium for the HBCU FC Classic, but the music was thump-



COURTESY OF WUNC

Equality FC at the inaugural HBCU FC Classic at Durham County Memorial Stadium in April.

ing, and the weather was perfect. The soccer players participated in six versus six games, and they also took part in a one

versus one skills competition. The co-ed teams looked the

Please see [HBCU/7A](#)

COLLEGE CORNER NCCU women's coach completes her staff

The SWAC has tweaked its basketball tournament for 2027.

Instead of everyone getting a shot to participate, only the top 10 teams will advance. The Nos. 1 and 2 seeds will receive byes heading into the semifinals. That looks good on paper, but the delay just makes teams rusty and ripe for an upset. Looks like athletic directors want to make sure the best teams gets a shot at the title and an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament.

Over in the MEAC, the conference will add women's flag football and women's golf as championship sports beginning with the 2026-27 season.

"The addition of women's

flag football and women's golf represents an exciting step forward for the MEAC and our member institutions," Commissioner Sonja Stills said. "As we continue to create meaningful opportunities for student-athletes, these sports further strengthen our commitment to supporting the growth of women's athletics while enhancing the championship experience across our conference."

WOMEN

N.C. Central

New basketball coach Olivia Gaines has completed her staff with the additions of Brett Vana and Rakim Gregory.

Please see [NCCU/7A](#)

Former Howard standout leads Kings to first UFL title

Wheeler named United Bowl MVP

By Derek W. Bryant
HOWARD SPORTS INFORMATION

WASHINGTON - Former Howard University standout Ian Wheeler led the Louisville Kings to their first United Football League title after dethroning the D.C. Defenders, 27-20, at Audi Field.

Wheeler was named United Bowl MVP, finishing with 81 rushing yards on 10 carries and a touchdown. He recorded 170 rushing yards and a pair of touchdowns during the Kings' playoff run.

The sold-out crowd saw an instant classic with the upstart Kings erasing a nine-point halftime deficit.

Louisville trailed by three entering the fourth period until Wheeler delivered the go-ahead

score on a 44-yard rushing TD. The Kings never looked back from there.

Backfield mate James Robinson provided the knockout punch, scoring from 16 yards out on the left side to make it an 11-point lead.

Wheeler wrapped up his career as one of the MEAC's most dynamic players, finishing with nearly 2,500 all-purpose yards while returning a school-record three kickoffs for touchdowns.

The former walk-on also shined in the classroom, earning a cumulative 3.57 GPA and being named to the MEAC Commissioner's All-Academic Team. In October 2023, the two-time MEAC champion was accepted into Howard University Medical School.

Please see [UFL/7A](#)

New NCCU women's coach completes her staff

Continued from page 6A

Vana is Gaines' former basketball coach at Louisburg College, less than an hour from Raleigh. He led LC to a national junior college championship in 2013 with Gaines as his star player.

Gregory was an assistant coach under Gaines at the SIAC's Allen University during the 2024-25 season. He coached at Palmetto (S.C.) Scholars Academy last season.

The men join assistant coach and former Eagles standout Cassie King and director of operations Austyn Chestnut.

Howard

CC forgot to give Howard a shoutout for sending seven student-athletes to the NCAA Outdoor Track Championships. Two earned first-team All-American honors: junior Yahnari Lyons, 200-meter dash, and sophomore Cenaiya Billups, 400m hurdles.

On the second team were Aniya Woodruff, 400m hurdles, and the 4x100-meter relay team of Lyons, Sey, Robinson and Darden.

Mississippi State

CC was thinking about Anita Howard just the other day. And then we saw she is an assistant at Mississippi State. Still looking good we see.

Who can forget that CIAA women's semifinals matchup between Howard's Livingstone team and Jessica Kern's Lincoln (Pa.) team. Not one man in the audience that night can tell you what the score was.

MEN

N.C. A&T

The Aggies earned first-team All-American honors in four of the five events they competed in at the NCAA Championships. Junior Isaiah Taylor was the top finisher at third in the 400m hurdles.

NCAAT added two fourth-place finishes, one sixth-place and one seventh-place finish to conclude their outstanding track season.

Morehouse

Freshman Jaelon "J.T." Ridley has been named to



Anita Howard



Jaelon "J.T." Ridley

the fourth cohort of the Dr. Charles L. Sifford Scholarship recipients. Ridley is among 12 golfers from HBCUs around the country.

The late Sifford was the first Black golfer to earn a PGA Tour card in 1961. The fund helps cover tuition expenses for HBCU

students enrolled in accredited PGA programs.

Goodbye. Hello. (Basketball)

* Vanderbilt/Louisiana-Lafayette guard Karris Bilal is headed to Texas Southern.

HBCU FC Club hopes World Cup helps HBCUs

Continued from page 6A

part wearing matching team shirts bearing the names "Equality FC," "The Yard FC," "Unity FC" and "The Fight FC," in my HBCU school colors of orange and green.

Several members of the women's soccer team at Virginia State University competed. They say they're glad their sisterhood is strong because it's needed on the field.

Junio Tatiana Ward says most of the teams they play are all white and there has been controversy.

"I know there's been several teams who have called us names and say we are aggressive, we're loud, we're ghetto," Ward said. "But we just play our game, and let that speak for itself."

Last fall, the Trojans defeated Shaw University to win its first USCAA Small College National Championship.

Most of the soccer teams at HBCUs are women's teams, and they are in the SWAC, including Jackson State, Grambling State and Alabama A&M universities.

The most celebrated HBCU soccer team is Howard University. In 1971, the Bison men's soccer team was the first and only HBCU to win an NCAA Division I Championship. They were stripped of the title, citing ineligible players. But Howard came back and won the national championship soccer title again in 1974.

Jacky Fulu Kiazayadioko says he hopes the presence of the 2026 FIFA World

Cup brings HBCU soccer back to its glory days. He is a "winger" at Shaw, one of only a few HBCU men's soccer teams.

"I'm very excited! Just to let y'all know my team haven't made it to the World Cup in a long time!" Kiazayadioko shouted. "We finally made it to the World Cup! I'm getting my ticket!"

Kiazayadioko was raised in Charlotte but celebrates his home family team from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He says he hopes to play for them one day.

Meanwhile, the winner of the inaugural HBCU FC Classic was Equality FC. The team won \$5,000, which it donated. This fall, HBCU FC says it is kicking off a Match Day Tour to highlight HBCU student-athletes.



Howard standout Ian Wheeler.

Wheeler leads Kings to first UFL championship

Continued from page 6A

Wheeler inked an undrafted free agent deal with the Chicago Bears after the 2024 NFL Draft.

In his NFL debut, he scored two rushing touchdowns en route to the Bears grabbing a 33-6 victory over the Buffalo Bills during preseason action. He earned a spot on the squad despite suffering a season-ending injury in the final preseason game.

For more information, visit the Bison athletics website at www.HUBison.com.

JUNETEENTH ACTIVITY SHEET

Hi Everyone! I'm so excited about JUNETEENTH! My comic book is now available, and a TV special featured me in celebration of Juneteenth. Enjoy this activity sheet and learn more about the meaning of Juneteenth!

BACK IN TIME...

"Sankofa 82" and I arrived in Galveston, Texas June 19, 1865. There is a lot of celebratory noise and African American former slaves dancing in the roads while singing and shouting. They have just learned that they are FREE! This day became known as Juneteenth with a host of other names, such as: Juneteenth National Independence Day, Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day (TX), Freedom Day and Black Independence Day.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. This document stated that slaves who were in states and parts of states in rebellion against the Union would be free. Some two and one-half years later, on June 19, 1865, slaves in Galveston Bay, Texas got the message from U.S. General Gordon Granger that President Lincoln had freed them through an executive order, known in the field as "General Order #3". White southerners suppressed information about the Emancipation Proclamation and continued to hold slaves in bondage until the arrival of the Union Army. General Granger on June 19, 1865 arrived and set 250,000 slaves free. Newly freed Blacks celebrated their official freedom on June 19, 1866. This celebration was given the name JUNETEENTH. Juneteenth is the combination of the words June and tenth coming from 19th. Texas was the first state to recognize Juneteenth as an official holiday in 1979. President Biden made it an official federal holiday on June 17, 2021.

TELL THE TRUTH!

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

General Gordon Granger freed 250,000 slaves in Texas. _____

Another name for Juneteenth is Bondage Day. _____

Texas was the first state to recognize Juneteenth in 1989. _____

President Biden made Juneteenth a federal holiday in 2021. _____

ONE MINUTE MADNESS!

In one minute or less, unscramble the words that have Juneteenth meaning. The first letter of the word is in bold.

mniatEpciaon _____

onlsvGaet _____

eeenJthunt _____

nnUoi _____

aciPtoimrano _____

DID YOU SEE THAT?!

Match the actors with the movie.

A. Jamie Foxx B. Taraji P. Henson C. Nate Parker
D. Chiwetel Ejiofor E. Cynthia Erivo

12 Years a Slave _____

Harriet _____

Hidden Figures _____

Django: Unchained _____

The Birth of a Nation _____

...JUNETEENTH!

ATTEND AN EVENT

COOK TRADITIONAL FOOD

PUT TOGETHER AN EVENT

LOVE EACH OTHER MORE

SUPPORT A BLACK BUSINESS

WATCH A BLACK MOVIE

READ A BOOK BY A BLACK AUTHOR

GET YOUR COPY OF THE NEW JUNETEENTH COMIC BOOK! VISIT WWW.KEMETCOMIC.COM OR JOEYOUNG.ORG

Mr. & Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Pageant

Local teens from Wake, Johnston and Harnett counties took center stage last week-end during a historic celebration of culture, leadership and achievement.

Say Y.E.S. Foundation, Inc. hosted the inaugural Mr. & Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Pageant in Garner, the first Juneteenth scholarship pageant serving the three-county region. The event recognized young people for their dedication to leadership, service, and personal excellence while awarding scholarships to support their educational goals. The evening culminated with the crowning of 2026 Mr. Juneteenth Timothy Rouse and Miss Juneteenth Kaleigh Hilliard, and featured performances by Shawn "Coco" McMillan, Kimberly Michelle and The Gifted Arts.

"This pageant was created to give our youth a platform to shine, lead, and understand that their dreams and contributions matter," Say Y.E.S. President and Founder Natasia McLean. "Juneteenth reminds us how far we've come, and these young people remind us how bright our future can be."

"We wanted every participant to walk away knowing they are seen, valued and capable of making a difference," pageant director Karen McLean added. "This experience was about building confidence, celebrating heritage and investing in the leaders of tomorrow."



The pageant court and judges.

COURTESY



Miss Juneteenth Kaleigh Hilliard and Mr. Juneteenth Timothy Rouse.

2026 Immersive Brick Experience Tour for LEGO lovers in Raleigh

BrickUniverse 2026 Immersive Brick Experience Tour returns to the Raleigh Convention Center June 27-28. The tour showcases exhibition works by LEGO artists from across the country. Tickets at www.eventbrite.com.



COURTESY

The Parlour on Parrish



FACEBOOK

Introducing The Parlour on Parrish, a micro luxury private event venue in the heart of downtown Durham.

The Parlour is where small gatherings become significant moments — bridal showers, sip and shops, private dinners, milestone celebrations and everything in between. Doors open July 1 at 104 W. Parrish St.

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

A sweet morning treat for Dad

FEATURE IMPACT

While breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day, having the same predictable dishes over and over can make this essential mealtime a particularly boring one.

Spice up the start of Dad's day with a breakfast that's full of flavor. Delight his taste buds with an instant boost by adding bacon to his morning meal with these Sticky Cinnamon Bacon Roll-ups.

For more morning recipes, visit Culinary.net.



COURTESY

Sticky Cinnamon Bacon Roll-ups
 Recipe courtesy of *Farmland*

Nonstick cooking spray
 12 slices Farmland Applewood Smoked or Honey and Maple Bacon
 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 ½-cup sugar
 ¼-cup melted butter
 4 flour tortillas (8 inches)

2 tablespoons apple-sauce

Heat oven to 375 F. Spray baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray.

Cook bacon according to package directions, drain. Combine cinnamon and sugar; mix well.

Brush melted butter on both sides of each tortilla, coat both sides with cinna-

mon sugar.

Place three slices bacon and 2 teaspoons apple-sauce on one edge of tortilla. Roll up and place seam-side down in prepared pan. Repeat with remaining tortillas.

Bake 12-16 minutes until sugar mixture is bubbly. Cut tortilla roll-ups in half before serving. Serve warm.

Vision loss prevention starts years before symptoms appear

NNPA

If you wish to protect your vision, you need to start getting annual eye exams, or at least every two years, and improve your lifestyle habits.

Vision loss prevention starts by taking care of the basics: movement, diet and sleep.

For many people, vision problems seem to appear out of nowhere. They wonder if there was some symptom they were missing in the past few years that could have warned them.

The truth is, many eye conditions develop over time, over years, in fact; and the only reason you might not have noticed is that you were ignoring some symptoms or attributing them to something else. Before the change becomes too obvious, the damage is permanent and too late to fix.

Several serious eye diseases can progress silently in their early stages.

You never know when your normal daily routines might be ruining your vision, slowly damaging it.

* **Glaucoma:** Often called the "silent thief of sight," glaucoma gradually damages the optic nerve, usually without early warn-

ing signs. Peripheral vision loss may occur so slowly that people do not notice changes until the disease has advanced significantly. Once your vision has been damaged by glaucoma, there's no way to restore it, which is why early detection is so important.

* **Age-related macular degeneration:** This eye disease affects the macula, the central part of the retina responsible for sharp vision. While AMD is more common in older adults, the processes that contribute to retinal damage may begin years earlier. If you have a family history of age-related macular degeneration, then you will want to start taking care of your eye health very early on.

* **Diabetes:** Diabetes affects 1 in 9 Americans of all ages and 1 in 7 adults, according to Global Statistics. The illness plays a major role in preventable vision loss. Diabetic retinopathy occurs when high blood sugar damages blood vessels in the retina. Many patients experience no symptoms at all in the early stages. However, untreated retinal damage can eventually lead to severe vision impairment or blindness.

* **Eye exams are crucial:** The only way you are going

to catch this retinal loss is through regular eye exams. There's really no other way. Take the time out of your busy schedule every year to do these eye exams so you can detect these illnesses early enough that medical intervention can occur.

Most people have a bad habit of only going to get their eyes checked when they feel there's something wrong.

Comprehensive eye exams do much more than determine whether someone needs glasses or contact lenses. They can identify subtle changes inside the eye that may signal disease before vision is affected.

A lot of health insurance plans cover eye exams every two years, so there's no excuse anymore to avoid them.

* **Lifestyle habits matter:**
 - Eat a diet high in green leafy vegetables.
 - Reduce processed foods in your diet.
 - Exercise and move a lot more.
 - Sleep eight to nine hours a night.
 - Drink enough water during the day.
 - Don't spend too much time on screens.
 - Reduce alcohol usage and quit smoking.