



## SPORTS

**NCCU's Malcolm Reed named to MEAC First Team Defense.**



## COMMUNITY FOCUS

**Millbrook High senior wins Miss North Carolina Junior Teen.**

# The Triangle Tribune

THE TRIANGLE'S CHOICE FOR THE BLACK VOICE SINCE 1998

"Serving Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill"

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## Durham Public Schools begins year-round school year



DPS



GoTriangle senior engineer Willie Reid highlights RUS Bus facility amenities.

ALEX BASS

## GoTriangle to open bus facility near Amtrak station

By Alex Bass

alex.bass@triangletribune.com

RALEIGH - Less than two acres will bring public transportation within walking distance of each other.

The Raleigh Union Bus Station Facility, or "RUS Bus," will offer a road complement to the nearby Union Station that serves several Amtrak routes. Among the RUS Bus facility's 1.76 acres is space for six active buses to provide regional service.

"The services originating from this location and connecting with other services in the region really are an economic lifeline for a lot of individuals," GoTriangle President and CEO Brian Smith said.

On Aug. 3, GoTriangle routes 100, 300, 305, CRX and DRX - with CRX and DRX providing service to Chapel Hill and Durham, respectively - will include stops at the Hargett Street station. Route 100 provides service to RDU Airport. Route 300 can

take riders to Cary, while 305 does likewise for Apex and Holly Springs. GoRaleigh routes 9 and R, including the Hillsborough Street and downtown areas, will stop at the RUS Bus facility, too.

"The growth in the region requires us to grow, expand our service, understand who our passengers are and be empathetic," said Gary Tober, GoTriangle interim chief development officer. Route 100 will stop at

Please see **BUS/2A**



## Black Americans hit hard as medical debt rule tossed

By Stacy M. Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

A Trump-appointed federal judge has blocked a key rule that would have removed medical debt from the credit reports of roughly 15 million Americans, dealing a harsh blow to struggling families already burdened by the high cost of health care, particularly Black Americans who carry a disproportionate share of that debt.

The ruling by Judge Sean Jordan of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas vacated the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's rule issued in January under the Biden administration. The judge sided with credit reporting industry groups, who argued that the CFPB had exceeded its authority under the Fair Credit Reporting Act. The decision halts a rule that had not yet taken effect and was designed to prevent medical debt - which is often the result of billing errors, insurance disputes or unavoidable emergencies - from dragging down a person's credit score. Julie Margetta Morgan, former CFPB official and now president of The Century Foundation, told CBS MoneyWatch that medical debt "doesn't show whether [someone is] likely to pay their mortgage or other debts." The court decision effectively slams the door to that reform.

According to the Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker, nearly 20 million adults in the U.S. owe medical debt, with a total estimated at \$220 billion. Among them, 3 million people owe more than \$10,000. That burden is not shared equally: 13% of Black Americans report having medical debt, compared to 8% of white Americans and 3% of Asian Americans.

Medical debt also disproportionately affects women, people with disabilities, and those living in the South and rural areas. In addition, more than half of all collection items on credit reports are for medical bills, according to the CFPB. While private credit bureaus like Equifax, Experian and TransUnion have taken limited steps - such as removing medical collections under \$500 - consumer advocates note these changes fall short of true relief, especially for low-income households and communities of color.

Medical debt has lasting effects: KFF polling shows people with such debt often cut back on food, clothing and other essentials, drain savings, borrow from friends and family or skip needed care entirely. For many, even those with health insurance, a serious illness or emergency can trigger financial ruin.

The Biden administration's now-blocked rule aimed to address this by recognizing that medical debt is not a reliable indicator of financial behavior and should not influence credit scores. But that rule was effectively frozen after Trump reinstalled Russ Vought, a fierce critic of the CFPB, as acting director in February. Vought promptly issued a directive halting new rules and in-

Please see **DEBT/2A**

## DCABP, Hayti Reborn meetings precede City Council rezoning vote

By Alex Bass

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DURHAM - For Jacqueline Wagstaff and Floyd McKissick, a question-and-answer exchange yielded an agreement, even if just for one point about the Fayetteville Street Corridor Project.

Wagstaff wondered why McKissick, the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People chair, was among the front-seated participants able to offer comments at the Hayti Reborn town hall meeting last week at

Saint Mark AME Zion Church. Wagstaff said the DCABP never has taken a stance on the Hayti district's rezoning.

McKissick agreed. "I've never stated, suggested nor implied that," he said. "To suggest or imply otherwise is false - absolutely false."

McKissick announced during the town hall that the DCABP will meet July 31, not set for 6:30 p.m. at Antioch Baptist Church. The meeting, open to DCABP members, will offer an

opportunity "to listen, learn and discuss" details of the rezoning proposal. "I have no idea how it's going to go," he said.

McKissick added it is plausible for the DCABP to support, oppose or not take an official stance on the proposal.

Wagstaff noted the meeting's peculiar timing. "We have one general body meeting a month - the first Thursday of the month, not the 31st of the month," she said. "That is because I put him

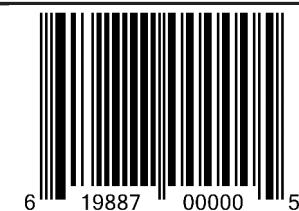
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# GoTriangle to open bus facility near Amtrak

**Continued from page 1A**  
RDU Airport every 30 minutes daily from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Check GoTriangle's website for more schedules and times.

Tober highlighted the overall rider experience, including ticketing accessibility and affordability. UMO, GoTriangle's ticketing service provider, includes a mobile app and reloadable card. A single rider may alternate between unlimited GoTriangle and GoRaleigh routes while spending maximums of \$2.50 per trip, \$5 per day, \$20 per week and \$80 per month. There are op-

tions for riders over 65 and youth under 18 to qualify for free ridership.

"There is no other service that will ever provide that type of affordability," said Kenan James, GoTriangle transit and fixed route supervisor. James, from Cleveland, said the new station is a step in the right direction for strengthening Raleigh's standing as a transportation hub.

Many large cities, James said, run buses every 15 minutes for 24 hours. "They don't run at full capacity, but they run all day long," he said.

Specific routes will not be assigned to specific gates, and information will be up-

dated in real time on large display screens. The facility's ribbon cutting ceremony was July 25.

Tober said the RUS Bus facility will begin operating at about 25% capacity. Room for substantial growth is connected directly to a location Smith called strategic, long-term planning for serving in-town and out-of-town customers.

"That's not only folks who may depend upon transit everyday," Smith said, "but also folks who would look at public transportation as a reliable option to get to where they want to go."



ALEX BASS

Jackie Wagstaff, center, resigned from the DCABP housing committee in May.

## DCABP, Hayti Reborn meetings before vote

**Continued from page 1A**  
on the spot. Now, he's got to take it to a vote."

Wagstaff, who said she still is a dues-paying member (\$25) of the DCABP, resigned as its housing committee's vice chair in May.

McKissick used additional town hall meeting time to discuss what he called ongoing proposal related progress.

"What I have heard from the community is that they have not been able to get the developer to the table to answer questions that they have," he said. "My

goal was to try to facilitate the answering of those questions and the addressing of those issues."

St. Mark AME Pastor Julian Pruden invited attendees to return for another session at the church on July 24. Hayti Reborn director Anita Scott Neville and Sterling Bay attorney Jamie Schwedler agreed that community questions gathered on July 16 would receive responses at the meeting.

City Council members present were Mayor Pro Tem Mark-Anthony Middleton, Chelsea Cook and

DeDreana Freeman - all of whom have filed for reelection.

Neville was frank about to whom she was looking for action.

"I am looking at our elected officials," she said. "Sterling Bay is doing what developers do. There is no surprise there."

Wagstaff was blunter.

"Four of these people are going to vote for this," she said without calling out names. "You already know which way it is going to go. I say, 'Just take your vote to the ballot box in October.'

## Medical debt rule toss will hurt Black Americans

**Continued from page 1A**

vestigations, leaving the agency in a state of paralysis.

With 20% of Americans having at least one medical debt collection on their credit report, and with Black communities most likely to carry that debt, the ruling stands as a glaring example of policy decisions with racial and economic consequences. States like Colorado and New York have taken steps to protect consumers, but without federal backing, millions remain exposed.

"There are a lot of flaws in our medical billing and reporting system, and it lands in the consumer's lap," Margetta Morgan stated.

### BUSINESS BRIEFS

#### CAKES AND COCKTAILS

Jamye and Kay's Kreation is hosting Cakes and Cocktails July 27, 2 p.m., 901 St. Albans Drive. Tickets: [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com).

#### SIP & SHOP

Summer Sip & Shop at Lafayette Village is July 30, 6-8 p.m., 8450 Honeycutt Road.

#### SUMMIT

Fourth Annual BLK BIZ SUMMIT is Aug. 1, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Weldon Mills Event Center, 300 E. Main St. Tickets: [www.blkbizsummit.com](http://www.blkbizsummit.com).

#### CHAMBER

Durham Chamber will host "Mid-Year Economic Outlook, Presented by Bank of America," Aug. 5, 8 to 10 a.m., Durham Bulls

Athletic Park-PNC Triangle Club, 409 Blackwell St. Tickets: [durhamchamber.org](http://durhamchamber.org).

#### BREAKFAST IS BACK

Missy Lane's Assembly Room is bringing back coffee and breakfast, M-F, 8 to 11 a.m., 310 E. Main St., Durham.

Send business briefs to [info@triangletribune.com](mailto:info@triangletribune.com).

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## Trump administration restores funds for after-school programs

By Lynn Hey  
WUNC

The U.S. Department of Education was expected to release some of the federal funds for public schools this week that were previously frozen nationwide.

On July 1, the Department withheld about \$6.8 billion in federal funds to schools nationwide for review - with \$165 million in funding to North Carolina - citing the need to review the funding to ensure it aligns with President Trump's priorities.

Then last week, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction received an email from the U.S. Department of Education notifying it that \$35.8 million of those funds, those for after-school and summer programs, will be released.

Other funding is still on pause for teacher training, and for services for English language learners and migrant students.

Last week, North Carolina Attorney General Jeff Jackson joined 24 other states in a lawsuit against the Trump administration seeking an injunction to have the funds that were

appropriated by Congress in March to be sent to states.

AASA, the School Superintendents' Association, brought school administrators to Congress to ask for the funds to be restored. Their advocacy director Sasha Pudelski said she's still hopeful the other funds will still be released.

"They were all appropriated by Congress and they were all budgeted for by school districts, and so schools are relying on these funds for the next few weeks as schools open," she said.

Pudelski said she doesn't know why the after-school and summer program funds were singled out for release before others.

"I could speculate that perhaps the stories coming out about summer programs being cut mid-summer was compelling to some," she said. "Certainly organizations like the United Way and Boys and Girls Clubs and others have a fantastic reputation."

"To the extent that a grantee uses grant funds for such unallowable activities, the Department intends to take appropriate enforcement action... which may include the recovery of funds," the Department warned state agencies.

## Minimum wage falling further behind the cost of living keeps people poor

By Holly Sklar  
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

When the minimum wage does not go up, it goes down in buying power. The federal minimum wage has been stuck at \$7.25 per hour since July 24, 2009. For full-time workers that amounts to \$15,080 if you are paid for 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year.

The minimum wage is falling further and further behind the rising cost of living.

The federal minimum wage peaked in buying power way back in 1968, when it was worth \$15.09 in 2025 dollars, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator. Too little, too late minimum wage increases are the next best thing to eliminating it for minimum wage opponents.

The federal minimum wage was established in 1938 through the Fair Labor Standards Act, which aimed to eliminate labor conditions "detrimental to the maintenance of the minimum standard of living necessary for health, efficiency and general well-being of workers" and detrimental to fair competition among businesses.

We are now 16 years into the longest period in history without a federal minimum wage increase.

Twenty states have minimum wages no higher than the \$7.25 federal level: Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mis-

sissippi, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Five of those states - Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee - don't even have a state minimum wage, and in Georgia and Wyoming the state minimum is \$5.15, so the federal \$7.25 minimum wage applies.

When the minimum wage is too low, workers can be making more than the minimum and still struggle to pay for rent, food and other necessities.

In Louisiana, for example, the median hourly wage for home health and personal care aides in 2024 was just \$10.18, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

That means half of those workers earned less than \$10.18. The median wage for fast food cooks was \$10.70 in Mississippi and \$11.73 in Texas.

The median wage for child care workers was \$10.46 in Mississippi, \$10.63 in Louisiana and \$10.78 in Alabama. Remember, the median wage is the midpoint, not the bottom.

Fortunately, 30 states now have minimum wages higher than \$7.25, but many are still below the \$15.09 value of the federal minimum wage in 1968, adjusted for the cost of living.

Seventeen states plus District of Columbia have a minimum wage of \$15 or higher or are phasing in scheduled increases to \$15

or higher: Alaska, D.C., California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island and Washington State. The highest now are D.C. at \$17.95 and Washington at \$16.66.

Nationally, more than 14 million workers are paid less than \$15 per hour, including overtime, tips and commissions, according to the Economic Policy Institute's Low Wage Workforce Tracker. Nearly 27 million make less than \$17.

Raising the minimum wage is good for business as well as workers. Workers are also customers and minimum wage increases boost the consumer spending that businesses depend on. Raising the minimum wage also pays off in lower employee turnover, lower hiring and training costs, increased productivity and better customer service, which keeps customers coming back.

State and local minimum wage increases are important, where possible. But it's long past time to raise the federal minimum wage so people can earn decent wages wherever they live.

Holly Sklar is the CEO of Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, a national network of business owners and executives who believe fair pay makes good business sense: [www.businessforafairminimumwage.org](http://www.businessforafairminimumwage.org).



Durham workers walk out of store during lunch rush.

## Wingstop workers strike to demand fair treatment

STAFF REPORTS

DURHAM - Wingstop workers began a three-day strike Tuesday to protest ongoing disrespect from management, inadequate scheduling and poverty wages.

Employee Tabitha Moore and others walked off the job after waiting for more than two hours outside the store for their manager to open the doors. The crowd filled the lobby of the store before heading to the sidewalk for a protest, waving signs and chanting, "No justice, no chicken! The unions in this kitchen!"

This action follows a previous walk-out from Wingstop workers in May after a manager cursed at and threatened a senior worker.

"We stood outside waiting for our manager for two and a half hours. He

didn't even answer the phone for me when I called him. Customers waited outside the store with us, they were furious," said Moore, a Wingstop worker for five years who previously walked out because of management disrespect. "Management has clocked me out twice while I'm still on clock, it's unprofessional. The old manager got fired, but this new manager has cut everyone's hours in half. I just got my phone turned back on, but I'm not sure which bill I'll have to cut next week."

Workers delivered a petition to Wingstop management on Tuesday, signed by 10 workers, which read: "We, the undersigned workers at Wingstop, are standing together to demand better working conditions, higher wages, and dignity and respect on the

job. Therefore:

\* We demand that the General Manager treat us with dignity and respect and effectively communicate with us.

\* We demand that the General Manager respect our time when we show up to work on time and the store is not opened.

\* We demand to be compensated for the hours that we miss because of the General Manager's absence.

\* We demand that we are paid for all the time that we work. We should not be clocked out when we are working.

\* We demand fair and consistent scheduling. We need a set schedule that doesn't change week to week.

Striking workers were joined by members of the Union of Southern Service Workers.

## Durham mayoral candidates debate issues and each other

By Alex Bass

alex.bass@triangletribune.com

DURHAM - Tuesday's Partners Against Crime/District 1 mayoral candidates forum inside the Holton Career and Resource Center began warm and finished hot.

Candidate discussions about accountability for issues like crime, housing, and municipal rezoning were framed by not-so-subtle comments directed at incumbent Leo Williams. The two-hour session concluded with forum facilitator James Chavis being shouted at by a disgruntled attendee, identified as Victoria Peterson. She expressed her disappointment over being unable to ask a question before leaving.

"If we don't have air conditioning here, then how can we talk about other things," said candidate Pablo Friedmann, who noted the center is shared by the city and Durham Public Schools - the latter for whom Williams worked previously.

Williams, Friedmann, Anjanee Bell and Rafiq Zaidi participated in the forum. Chavis said candidates Lloyd Phillips and Angela Reddick also were invited but did not respond.

Zaidi wasted no time discussing how to combat crime, and said Durham, unlike cities like New York, has not used what would be its greatest information gathering resource - rewards.

"You said, 'See something, say something.' Money talks," Zaidi said.

Zaidi asked Williams about Baltimore Mayor



Left to right: Rafiq Zaidi, Leo Williams, Pablo Friedmann and Anjanee Bell.

Brandon Scott, whom Williams referenced for effective efforts in combatting crime. "We need to invest in that mayor and get him here in Durham," Zaidi said. "I'm willing to call him in, without hesitation."

The gathered assembly of more than 50 people asked the candidates' stances on the Fayetteville Street Corridor Project and the forthcoming Hayti district rezoning vote scheduled for the Aug. 4 City Council meeting.

"Obviously, I can't say that right now. Just legally, I can't," Williams said about his vote. "It was the council that I was on that put \$10 million into that (Hayti district)."

It is this council, under my leadership, where we're making sure that in anything that happens over there, the acknowledgement of Hayti will be at the forefront and preserved."

Bell spoke of reimagining Durham, and ensuring processes include people at the center and in leadership. "It's a gritty city. It's scrappy. It's diverse," Bell said. "Do we want to be unimaginative buildings?"

Involving community leadership and building youth into leaders pro-

vided the evening's strongest unity moment, which came full circle to combatting crime. "Sometimes, we need to just shut up and listen to our young people," Williams said.

Bell recalled her childhood days to frame that which she wishes for her own children. "I rode bikes around my neighborhood," she said. "I can't think about that with my children without understanding where they are and who is watching them."

For Friedmann: "People will call law enforcement," he said. "How do we report it is the million-dollar question."

Zaidi shared a message he received from a Durham high school student as a reminder that HOW something happens is as vital as WHAT happens. "You've got to come to the people before you make a move," he said. "Not the developers and not any outsiders."

Friedmann added: "If the planning process actually worked from Day One - listen to the community and build it up with the community - then it would be a 7-0 (council) vote every single time."

### «APPRECIATION



DANIEL COSTON | THE CHARLOTTE POST

James Ferguson II, who along with law partner Julius Chambers successfully argued for busing as a tool to desegregate public schools in the 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* decision, has died at age 82. Mr. Ferguson launched North Carolina's first multiracial law firm in 1967 with Chambers and Adam Stein.

## Pioneering civil rights attorney James Ferguson II dies

By Herbert L. White  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

James Ferguson II, who, along with law partner Julius Chambers, successfully argued for busing as a tool to desegregate public schools in the 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* decision, has died at age 82. Mr. Ferguson launched North Carolina's first multiracial law firm in 1967 with Chambers and Adam Stein.

The United States Supreme Court sided with Darius and Vera Swann, who argued the school district was not doing enough to desegregate its campuses. During the case, Ferguson's law office was set ablaze by an arsonist.

"I just want to feel that I've done all I can do to bring about equality - for everybody," Ferguson told The Post in 2016. "That's what life is about - trying to create the society we think we want."

Mr. Ferguson, who opened a one-man practice on East Trade Street in 1964, joined forces with Chambers and Adam Stein three years later to launch North Carolina's first multiracial law firm, Ferguson

Stein Chambers. The firm is now known as Ferguson Chambers & Sumter. Among Mr. Ferguson's noteworthy legal wins were pardons for the Wilmington 10 more than four decades after the civil rights activists were convicted of arson in the 1971 firebombing of a supermarket. He also represented the Charlotte 3.

His work also took him to South Africa in the 1980s, where he trained lawyers during the apartheid regime where Black people were relegated to second-class citizenship.

Mr. Ferguson, known as "Fergie" to friends, said he realized he wanted to practice law in 1960 as a high school senior. As a student advocate for civil rights in segregated Asheville, Mr. Ferguson and his peers consulted the city's two Black lawyers for advice. The attorneys promised to help whenever they could.

"It hit me that that was a wonderful position to be in," Mr. Ferguson recalled. "I knew I wanted to be in a position to bring about community change."

Mr. Ferguson took on high profile civil rights cases in the 1970s as North Carolina became a hotbed

of cases. In addition to the Wilmington 10, who earned pardons from Gov. Beverly Perdue, he represented the Charlotte 3 - T.J. Reddy, James Grant, and Charles Parker - who were convicted in 1971 for the burning of Lazy B Stables three years earlier. The Lazy B was desegregated in 1967. Gov. Jim Hunt commuted their sentences in 1979.

Mr. Ferguson also represented Darryl Hunt, a Black man from Winston-Salem who was wrongfully convicted in 1984 and sentenced to life imprisonment for the rape and the murder of Deborah Sykes, a white newspaper copy editor. The introduction of DNA evidence and confession by Willard Brown to the crimes led to Hunt's exoneration.

"Never give up and never take things personally," Mel Watt, an attorney at Ferguson's firm before leaving in 1993 when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, recalled in 2016. "Practicing civil rights is just hard and difficult. Fergie has managed to keep his freshness and his commitment going despite the trials and tribulations."

## Let's talk about HIV — and getting tested annually

By Martin Henson

BEACON MEDIA

In 2023, 52% of all newly diagnosed HIV cases among adults and adolescents in North Carolina were Black.

This fact doesn't make for polite conversation in the Southern Bible Belt, and it's not comfortable in

most spaces in general. North Carolina is a basketball state, so I suppose I could work HIV testing into a conversation about NBA Hall of Famer Magic Johnson, who destigmatized living with an HIV positive diagnosis. "Hey, Magic is the best point guard of all time; I remember he had HIV, right?"

And then I'd say: "By the way, when was the last time you got tested?"

Would this approach be corny? Yes. Effective? I'm not sure.

Trump's recent "Big Beautiful Bill" and its looming cuts to Medicaid, meaning more people will be less likely to get any medical care and do things like HIV tests, make me wonder if I should be integrating getting tested into my conversations ... no matter how clumsy I sound.

My yearly primary care visit came just in time for National HIV Testing Day on June 27. Why did I feel awkward requesting the test?

It should be routine for

anyone engaging in sexual activity, but it is not. After

I got tested, I realized that

I rarely talk about STD testing with people in my community. I do regularly run men's groups where topics can range anywhere from the NFL to grieving the loss of loved ones. Topics can be heavy there, making it the perfect time. Yet, it hasn't happened.

There is a silent epidemic of HIV, marked by stigma and long incubation periods before visible symptoms, that is only getting worse. HIV landed on my radar due to my work with Black men, who meet the same intersections of culture, masculinity and health care that HIV often impacts.

There are 1.2 million people in the U.S. living with HIV. That number doesn't scare me. What scares me is the 13% of people who don't even know they have it, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

One in five people in the U.S. are tested so late for HIV that the disease has already progressed to AIDS.

With many counties in North Carolina being classified as Health Professional Shortage Areas - areas with a shortage of care providers - specialized HIV care will be one of the first services to go.

More people are impacted than many people realize, since the lack of healthy dialogue around it causes society to rely on outdated information about HIV transmission. HIV rates are rising among heterosexual couples, who can transmit the virus through unprotected sex - challenging the outdated assumption that HIV only affects LGBTQ men.

The federal government

cut funding for the Health Resources and Services Administration Ryan White Program in half. I think of how this affects the men in my community who will never publicly disclose, the ones who my public conversations may help.

The lack of funding for the Ryan White Program, combined with the incoming Medicaid cuts, will likely harm those who are uninsured, low-income and living in rural areas.

Also, there are so many other things to worry about for North Carolinians that feel more pressing: the recent floods, the closing of rural hospitals, cuts to food stamp benefits.

My outlook is likely a part of the problem, since the HIV conversation is more important than the little attention I give it.

I wish that vague memories of the early 1990s AIDS crisis were the only things that scare me about HIV. I know HIV is no longer a terminal disease thanks to advances in health care.

I also know that stigma still prevents people from getting tested, and Black men, along with many other communities, are dying from a preventable progression of the disease into AIDS.

I asked my primary care doctor for an HIV test, and with the current landscape of health care, I believe everyone else should too.

Martin Henson lives in Raleigh. He is an advocate and executive director of BMEN Foundation, which convenes Black men to address issues in their lives and communities.

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Eric Lewis Williams

## Duke Divinity School celebrates African American tradition

By Alex Bass

[alex.bass@triangletribune.com](mailto:alex.bass@triangletribune.com)

DURHAM - Two years ago, Duke University Divinity School called Eric Lewis Williams to lead its Office of Black Church Studies. This summer, Williams issued a call to religious leaders for a two-way teaching and learning experience at Duke.

The Black Religious Auto-biography Seminar, held July 19-25, included over 40 students from across the United States and more than a handful of instructors. Seminar content is rooted in first-person accounts of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells, among many others.

"They contended with the political, economic and social problems of their day," Williams said. "We are doing the same thing in our day. Things have changed in many ways. But, in many ways, things are the same."

Tarence E. Lauchie, a senior pastor from Grand Rapids, Michigan, connected the social media concept of influencers as one and the same with the endeavors of the auto-biographers. "We are influencers, everyday, all day," Lauchie said. "That's a freedom, it's a privilege, and I think it's something worth celebrating."

There also is the imperative responsibility of understanding the difference

between "freedom of speech" and "freedom from speech," and the vitality of speaking truth of and to power, like the auto-biographers. "When silence occurs through someone either abasing what is being said or discrediting what is being said - like the concept of 'fake news' or 'real news,' it is an oxymoron, because news should be news," Lauchie said. "We are now privileged to have exposure to what was, in relationship to what is, and possibly navigate what it could produce. Stewardship tells me what to do with it once I've been exposed to that writing."

For Jessica Bell, a lawyer and praise team member from Chicago, participating offered the opportunity to bring written text "full circle" through listening. Morning and afternoon discussion sessions challenged students to select passages from specific texts and verbalize reflections about those passages.

Bell admits she might not be as familiar with some terminologies as ordained clergy but embraces her role as what she called a "disruptor of thought" for fostering understanding through multiple viewpoints.

"Sometimes, my clients will say something that is not something I thought about at all or not something I was expecting for them to say," she said.

"That gives context in a completely different way."

Bell noted Monday's pairing of Douglass, once enslaved before escaping into freedom, with those of Charlotte Forten, always a free woman and abolitionist. "There's really almost nothing they had in common," Bell said. "They're still trying to answer the same questions, deal with the same things and kind of come up with the same solutions."

Clarence Cunny, an ordained elder who lives in Virginia, ministers virtually to a non-denominational church based in New Jersey. For Cunny, screentime reinforces a unique binding of religion and auto-biographies. "It's a composite person of all of us, but it is still a living person," Cunny said of the church. "What challenges did we face? How did we face them together? Who said this? Who said that?"

The seminar incorporates field trips, including the Historic Stagville Plantation in Durham. Filmography and musical presentations extend the antebellum through the present storytelling legacy of African American auto-biographers. "They still mustered the power to love, not to degrade and not to demean," Williams said.

"They still tried to find a way to reach out across the aisle. They still are trying to take care of their families."

## Empowering homeowners to transform HOAs

Dear Editor,

North Carolina is home to over 15,000 registered Homeowners Associations, ranking fifth in the nation. These associations govern communities that house more than 3 million North Carolinians, nearly a third of the state's population.

Yet, despite this massive reach and authority, North Carolina has no state agency providing oversight or enforcement of HOA operations.

This lack of accountability has left homeowners vulnerable. When HOAs act improperly - whether through mismanagement, lack of transparency or

abuse of power - residents often have nowhere to turn but the courts, an option many cannot afford.

While HOAs were originally created to maintain property values and community standards, unchecked power and minimal regulation have led to serious abuses in too many neighborhoods.

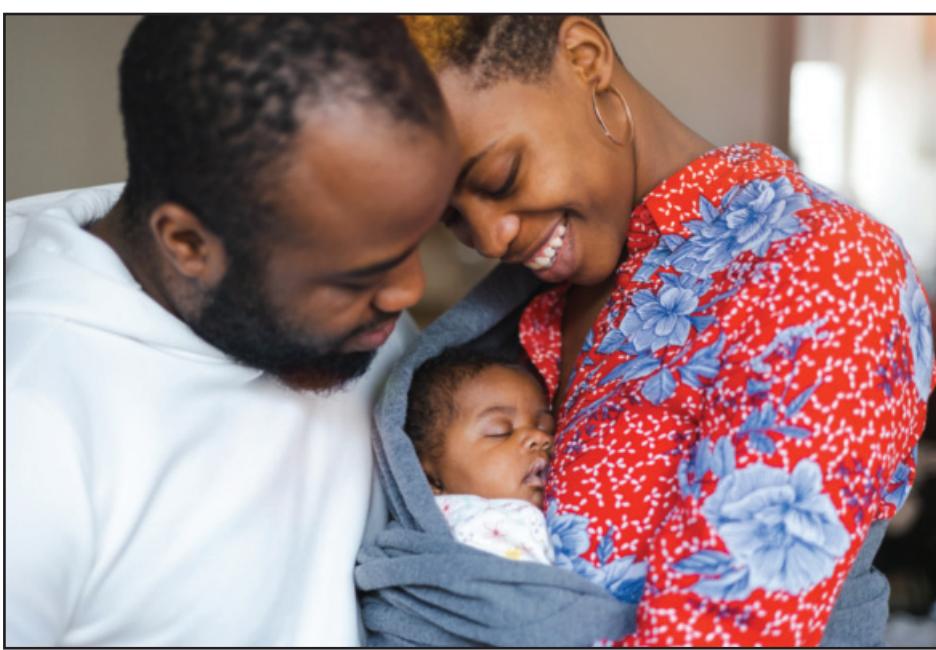
Over the years, multiple bipartisan bills have been introduced to create basic oversight mechanisms, including complaint processes, financial transparency rules and enforcement authority. But every attempt has been quietly killed, largely due to the outsized influence of

national HOA trade groups and industry lobbyists in the General Assembly.

This cannot continue. It is time for North Carolina lawmakers to stand with homeowners, not just industry insiders. We need a state-level oversight agency with real enforcement power just like other regulated industries that affect millions of residents.

The status quo has failed. As voters and homeowners, we must demand meaningful reform and protect the rights of millions living under HOA rule.

Charles Williams  
Citizens For HOA Reform



## How paid family and medical leave benefits families and businesses

STATEPOINT

The United States is one of the only countries in the world that does not guarantee paid family and medical leave to workers, leaving millions of babies without the care they need in their earliest months of life.

Paid leave is associated with higher breastfeeding rates, regularly attended well-child visits with pediatricians, and other key markers of short- and long-term health for young children and adults. Plus, early relationships with parents and caregivers, specifically in the first three years of life, shape a child's brain development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning, health and well-being.

With less than a third of people in the United States having access to paid family and medical leave, many families are left without financial security during a critical time for child development.

Access to paid leave is lowest among workers with the greatest needs, including those with lower incomes, without college degrees and who work part-time. The production, transportation

and construction, maintenance and service sectors have some of the lowest rates of access.

Advocates are bringing awareness to the many working parents and caregivers who are forced to sacrifice their jobs and savings when they need time off to bond with their young children or care for themselves or a sick or injured family member.

"All workers - regardless of location, education or job type - should have access to paid family and medical leave to provide the care and stability children and families need to thrive," says Emmett Avery, coalition manager for the Vermont Paid Leave Coalition, a statewide alliance advocating for the strong paid family and medical leave program in Vermont.

Interestingly, paid family and medical leave is not only good for families, real-world results show that it's also good for businesses and the economy. Access to paid leave benefits businesses by increasing employee productivity and morale, improving employee retention and reducing turnover costs, and

states with paid leave programs see fewer families relying on public assistance, lowering costs for taxpayers.

"Paid family and medical leave is a commonsense policy that's supported by an overwhelming majority of voters and essential for infants and toddlers, families, businesses and the economy," says Dan O'Brien the policy director for Children First PA, a nonprofit organization that works to improve the lives of children in Pennsylvania and beyond. "Everyone can help push for policies that give all working families the time they need to care for their loved ones without sacrificing their jobs or financial security."

If you believe all families deserve the time and support to care for loved ones without risking their jobs or financial security, advocates encourage you to act now.

You can join the movement for paid family and medical leave at <https://ncit.org/take-action/paid-family-and-medical-leave-action/> and help push for policies that put children and caregivers first.

## Fresh, filling summer salads

FAMILY FEATURES

Salad season is in full bloom. With fresh flavors abounding this season, the options are nearly endless. Just choose your favorite base, toppings and dressings, and you're set with a delicious first course or hearty meal all on its own.

Consider this Greek Beet and Watermelon Rice Salad, a Greek-inspired Jasmine rice dish loaded with fresh, tangy flavors that are sure to please your taste buds. Made with Success Boil-in-Bag Jasmine Rice that cooks up soft and fluffy every time, this recipe offers a hint of floral, sweet flavor to keep you feeling full. In just 10 minutes, you can have sweetly aromatic Jasmine rice that's perfect for your lifestyle needs. It's naturally gluten free, non-GMO Project Verified and free of MSG and preservatives.

Fruit salad may be nothing new, particularly when using fruits like oranges, cherries or grapes, but watermelon may be the fun new spin you need at your next cookout. The pairing of sweet watermelon, tangy feta cheese, refreshing mint, earthy beets, nuts and fluffy rice offers a winning combination. Quick tip: Make sure the rice is fully cooled after cooking to avoid a warm, watery re-



### Greek Beet and Watermelon Rice Salad

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Servings: 4

1 bag Success Jasmine Rice

½-cup olive oil

2 tablespoons lemon juice

½-teaspoon salt

½-teaspoon black pepper

1 cup thinly sliced, cooked golden beets

1 cup thinly sliced watermelon

½-cup feta cheese, crumbled

½-cup pitted black olives, halved

½-cup red onion, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon fresh mint, thinly sliced  
2 tablespoons walnuts, toasted and chopped, for garnish

Prepare rice according to package directions. Allow to cool completely.

In medium bowl, whisk oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Add rice to bowl with dressing and stir to combine. Let stand 5 minutes.

Transfer rice to serving platter. Lay beet slices down one side of rice. Lay watermelon slices down opposite side. Top with feta, olives, red onion and mint. Garnish with walnuts.

**Tips:** Substitute capers for olives, if preferred.

## AROUND THE TRIANGLE

### KNIGHTDALE GAME NIGHT

The next House Party! Black Trivia & Karaoke Game Night is July 31, 7-10 p.m., 4001 Widewaters Parkway, Suite G. Tickets: [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com).

### RALEIGH MARKET

The next Black Farmers Market is July 27, 1-4 p.m., SE Raleigh YMCA, 1436 Rock Quarry Road.

### MUSEUM

A local artist market pop-up is Aug. 2, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., NC Museum of Art, 2110 Blue Ridge Road.

### DURHAM GRANTS

Southern Documentary Fund is accepting entries for the 2025 SDF Production Grant. An info session is July 29 at 1 p.m. Visit [southerndocumentaryfund.org/programs/film-making-grants/](http://southerndocumentaryfund.org/programs/film-making-grants/).

### FUN CARAVAN

DP&R's Fun Caravan will visit five parks in July. The last is Whippoorwill Park, July 30, 9-11 a.m. All children must be supervised.

### CANDIDATE MIXER

People's Alliance PAC's fall candidate mixer is Aug. 5, 6-8 p.m., Motorco Music Hall, 723 Rigsbee Ave.

Renew membership at: [www.durhampa.org/](http://www.durhampa.org/).

### DONATIONS

Donations for community flood relief drive can be dropped off at 308 Crutchfield St., Suite D, M-F, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### CHAPEL HILL NNO

National Night Out is Aug. 5, 6-8 p.m., Hargraves Community Center, 216 N. Roberson St.

### CHANTAL

A fund has been set up to assist Topical Storm Chantal victims. Donate at [www.orangecountync.gov/ChantalFund](http://www.orangecountync.gov/ChantalFund).

# Will NCCU make 2 Atlanta trips?

North Carolina Central is in a familiar preseason spot. The Eagles have either been picked No. 1 or No. 2 for the past three seasons.

Yes, it's O-N-L-Y preseason, but fans want to see their team at the top from start to finish so they can brag all year long.

Last season's loss at South Carolina State still haunts Eagle Nation, just like the year before in Washington, D.C., against Howard. NCCU still got to play in the postseason with an NCAA at-large berth despite the Howard defeat, but everybody was home for the holidays last season.

**BONITA BEST** Alumni can get spoiled really quick. Playoffs? Well, better than nothing. But we all know where they want to go in December.

**BEST** "Last two seasons my Eagles fumbled the MEAC. What makes others think different this year. Put up or shut up," an alumnus wrote on our Facebook page this week.

This is the culture coach Trei Oliver has established heading into his sixth season (five on the field). High expectations are the norm.

Oliver has a message for any team that overlooks the Eagles this season: "You're going to get mopped," he said at Tuesday's MEAC Football Media Day in Baltimore.

The event was moved to handle the increased media attention after the firings of DeSean Jackson to Delaware State and Michael Vick at Norfolk State. Although it's been several months, the media frenzy hasn't slowed. That's good for the conference but possibly problematic for Jackson and Vick.

"We talked trash with them at the coaches' dinner, told them it's going to be rough their first year," Oliver said.

However, LeSean McCoy, who interviewed all the coaches and is a former Philadelphia teammate of Vick's, let it slip that while Vick and Jackson play the humble card in public, it's a different story online.

"We have a group chat. And in the group chat, they're not saying that," McCoy said.

"Who's all in the chat? Tell me their names," Oliver asked. There's always room for more bulletin board material.

**NIL vs. Exposure** Name, Image & Likeness is here to stay, and coaches are always asked how can HBCUs compete with the bigger institutions?

The answer is they can't monetarily. But they aren't dirt poor, either.

"This right here is keeping us relevant," Oliver said at the MEAC-SWAC Challenge press conference earlier this month. "The culture of the HBCUs and without this, where would we be? We don't have all that NIL money and stuff to pay kids. But when I visit somebody's home, I have the opportunity to tell them, 'we're going to play on ABC; we have the opportunity to play in the Celebration Bowl, the MEAC-SWAC Challenge; this is so much bigger than the game.'"

**Welcome Home** Oliver lost four assistant coaches during the offseason. One vacancy was a shoo-in to fill. Record-setting quarterback Davius Richard was named the QB coach in April.

Richard's professional career looked bright until he was injured in an HBCU all-star game that eventually ended his career.

Oliver, who still gets emotional when discussing the incident, said Richard's hire was a no-brainer.

"He did so much for our university. He had another opportunity to leave and make a whole lot of money, but he stayed true to our program. He had to medically retire. At some point, I had to take care of him. That was the least I could do."

# The Triangle Tribune Sports

July 27 - August 2, 2025 | 6A



Over 200 young girls participated in the MEAC Flag Football Clinic.

COURTESY

## MEAC's Girls on the Gridiron clinic highlights future talent

MEAC SPORTS INFORMATION

NORFOLK, Va. - The MEAC hosted the third annual MEAC Girls on the Gridiron Flag Football Clinic at Hughes Stadium on Morgan State's campus. The event was held in partnership with the NFL, Wells Fargo

and MSU.

The clinic welcomed over 200 participants, as female athletes ages 12 and up took part in a series of offensive and defensive drills, along with one-on-one competitions. Instruction was led by players and coaches from each MEAC member

institution, providing hands-on guidance and skill development.

South Carolina State head coach Chennis Berry reflected on the impact of the event.

"Flag football is growing fast and seeing so many young women out here

today shows how powerful the game is in bringing people together. I encourage all of them to stay involved and join the movement as we continue to grow the game and build a stronger community

Please see GIRLS/7A

### HBCU FOOTBALL

## NCCU picked to finish second in the MEAC

By Bonitta Best  
editor@triangletribune.com

The SWAC last week announced the creation of the SWAC TV streaming platform.

Debuting Aug. 1 for download, it will be available on Roku, Amazon Fire, Apple TV, Google Play and Android TV. Unlike most streamers, however, it is free and will feature live events for the 18 league-sponsored sports, plus exclusive content, sports talk shows and podcasts.

"With over a century of profound history and even brighter days ahead, we look forward to effectively utilizing SWAC TV as a catalyst to tell the impactful stories and legacies both past and present that have helped shape the SWAC into what it is today, which is one of the premiere athletic associations in the nation," SWAC Commissioner Charles McClelland said.

The platform will stream a tripleheader Aug. 30: Southern at Mississippi Valley State, Langston at Grambling State and Texas Southern at Prairie View A&M.

**N.C. Central**  
Coming to Egleland in 2026:

\* Gino "Turbo" Addison, RB, Florida

\* JaQuez "QUEZ" Crawford, QB, Greensboro

But for right now, the Eagles were picked to finish No. 2 behind defending conference champion South Carolina State. The Bulldogs had one more first-place vote (5-4). Morgan State is third, followed by Norfolk State, Howard and Delaware State bringing up the rear.

Five Eagles were named to the All-MEAC First Team Offense: QB Walker Harris, TE Luke Bracey, C Noah McKinney, OL Tre

Please see NCCU/7A



COURTESY

N.C. Central DB Malcolm Reed

### COLLEGE CORNER

## Former Duke, NBA star hired by Tennessee State to head its men's basketball program

#### WOMEN

##### N.C. Central

Point guard Kenadi Banks, class of '26, has committed to basketball.

The tennis team was named to the Intercollegiate Tennis Association All-Academic Team. The ladies finished with a cumulative 3.45 GPA.

#### N.C. A&T

The Aggies took the CAA 2024-25 Team Academic Excellence Award.

#### MEN

##### N.C. Central

Basketball earned the National Association of Basketball Coaches Team Academic Excellence Award

for the second straight year. Teams must have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA; the Eagles finished with a cumulative 3.2 or higher.

The tennis team also earned All-Academic team status by the ITA after posting a 3.86 cumulative team GPA.

#### Tennessee State

Former Duke and NBA star Nolan Smith was named the Tigers new men's basketball coach last week. Smith leaves Memphis after a year under head coach Penny Hardaway.

"I'm so happy for Nolan and his beautiful family,"

Please see DUKE/7A



Former Duke/NBA star Nolan Smith and his family at his press conference.

# MEAC Girls on the Gridiron flag football

Continued from page 6A  
through football."

At the conclusion, players and coaches gathered to present the Girls on the Gridiron MVP award. Zayla Guidry received the honor for her outstanding performance throughout the day.

As the clinic continues to grow on a national scale, MEAC Commissioner Sonja Stills emphasized the importance of empowering women through football.

"I'm hoping this clinic gives younger women the confidence and courage to play football," Stills said. "It's amazing to see how many girls are out here, excited to touch the MEAC community and the greater Baltimore region. This gives women another competitive opportunity to show that football is truly for everyone."



COURTESY

Former Winston-Salem State cornerback Tre'Von Hester.

## NCCU picked to finish second in the MEAC

Continued from page 6A  
von Humphrey and OL AC  
McMoore.

Linebacker Max U'Ren, DB Malcolm Reed and DB Jelani Vassell were voted to the First Team Defense.

### Edward Waters

The season hasn't started and already a coaching vacancy.

Edward Waters coach Toriana Morgan resigned a day after attending the SIAC Media Day, citing personal reasons. He

coached the Tigers for four seasons and helped them reclassify from NAIA to NCAA Division II and a SIAC membership.

Former Bethune-Cookman and Alabama State coach Brian Jenkins was named interim coach.

### Winston-Salem State

Rams cornerback Tre'Von Hester was blessed that doctors found his brain tumor right in the nick of time.

Hester had brain surgery

in November and will sit out this season. He vows to return to the field. Read more on his remarkable story by sportswriter John Dell in The Winston-Salem Journal.

### Goodbye, Hello.

\* Alabama-Birmingham  
CB Nasir Bashir to Norfolk State

\* Monroe P Kye Collins, Jackson State

\* Tennessee K/P Connor Littlefield, Alabama A&M



North Carolina Central women's tennis team.

## Duke, NBA star to head Tennessee State program

Continued from page 6A  
former Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said in a statement.

"Nolan was an All-American

and a national champion at Duke. He was a joy to coach, and our fans loved him; they called him 'The People's Champ.' He was also an exceptional

assistant coach. Now, he's ready to be an exceptional head coach at Tennessee State. I'm incredibly proud of him."

## Mo'ne Davis to try out for new women's professional baseball league in August

By Alanis Thamas  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mo'ne Davis is not done playing baseball.

The former Little League phenom who at 13 became the first girl to pitch a victory — and a shutout — in the Little League World Series, will be one of more than 600 players to try out for the Women's Professional Baseball League set to launch next year, the league said.

Davis will join other women's baseball stars like Kelsie Whitmore, the first woman to sign a professional contract with an MLB-partnered league, at the tryouts, which will be held in Washington, D.C., from Aug. 22-25.

Davis will try out as a pitcher, as well as at second base, shortstop and center field, per the league. Her decision was first reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The WPBL is aiming to launch in the summer of 2026 with six teams and would be the first U.S. pro league for women since the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League — depicted in the classic film "A League of Their Own" —



MIKE CAUDILL/AP

Hampton infielder Mo'ne Davis throws to first base during an NCAA softball game in 2022.

dissolved in 1954. Next month's tryouts will determine the 150 players who will be selected for the league's inaugural draft in October.

Davis' rise to stardom came swiftly in 2014 when she delivered 70 mph fastballs for Philadelphia's Taney Youth Baseball Association during that year's Little League World Series. She became an instant in-

ternational sensation and was named Sports Kid of the Year by Sports Illustrated.

She appeared on the cover of Sports Illustrated, has her jersey displayed in baseball's Hall of Fame and

was named Sports Kid of the Year by Sports Illustrated.

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**HISTORIC BLACK AMERICAN RESORTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**HIGHLAND BEACH, MARYLAND**  
This beach resort is listed as the oldest existing Black American vacation home community in the United States. It was founded by Charles Douglass, son of abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

**IDLWILD, MICHIGAN**  
This Black resort, nicknamed "Black Eden" was known as the meeting place for Black intellectuals and famous Black entertainers. Now considered a ghost town, attempts are being made to revitalize the resort.

**EATONVILLE, FLORIDA**  
It is the oldest Black-incorporated community in the United States and was the home of Zora Neale Hurston, and people can visit the museum or library named in her honor.

**BEACHES, BEACHES, BEACHES!**  
Place each Black American beach in its correct state.

**WHAT STATE OF MINE AM I IN?**  
Match the popular Black American destination city to its state.

**AMERICAN BEACH, FLORIDA**  
American Beach was founded in 1935 by Florida's first Black American millionaire, Abraham Lincoln Lewis. This beach attracted the most influential Black politicians, celebrities and athletes.

**GREEN BOOK**  
In 2018, the movie Green Book was produced and came to the big screen. It was about the famous Black American Dr. Don Shirley, a concert pianist. Played by Best Supporting Actor, and Oscar winner Mahershala Ali, it tells the story of how a well-known pianist had to travel throughout a segregated south to play his music. He used The Green Book to stay safe as he traveled. Whites started using illegal means and violence to take property ownership away from Blacks, but many Black owned resorts are making a comeback.

**AMERICAN BEACH, FLORIDA**  
American Beach was founded in 1935 by Florida's first Black American millionaire, Abraham Lincoln Lewis. This beach attracted the most influential Black politicians, celebrities and athletes.

**KEMET**

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## Community Focus

Bull City Blazers  
Summer Camp

COURTESY

The Durham City Fire Department recently completed its Bull City Blazers Summer Camp. The young ladies learned about fire service and teamwork.

Miss North Carolina  
Junior Teen Queen

INSTAGRAM

Millbrook High senior Jalyssa Walker is the new National American Miss North Carolina Junior Teen Queen.

"I poured my heart out this weekend, smiling through everything I did, constantly saying 'No matter what my placement is, I'm just happy to be here,'" Walker wrote on her Instagram page. "In no world did I think I would be walking away with the crown as this is only my second year. ...I cannot wait to begin my reign, this is only the beginning."

## Kenan Center's 'magic man' wins Massey Award

By Susan Hudson

UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

James Brower sat on a bench between the Kenan Center and UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School's McColl Building, alongside his wife, Wanda, and sister Brenda Snipes. The housekeeper and 2025 recipient of the C. Knox Massey Distinguished Service Award, the University's highest honor for employees, was ready to discuss the award and his work at Carolina.

But the friends he'd made over the past two decades kept interrupting the interview to give Brower a hug and to tell him how much they miss him.

Brower is assigned to Fetzer Hall now, but for 23 years, he worked in the Kenan Center, emptying the trash, vacuuming the carpet and checking in on his fellow employees. They were the ones who nominated him for the award,

calling the man with the shy smile and the ready chuckle "an institution" and "a magic man."

"Everyone knows and loves James in this building," wrote one nominator. "If I don't know something or somebody, I can count on James to fill me in. I so look forward to my morning and afternoon check-ins from James when he stops by the office."

The five-story brick building with 60,000 square feet of space is home to the William Rand Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust, the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, offices for the business school as well as a 220-seat dining room and a 130-seat tiered conference room. Keeping it clean and ready to host meetings and events — including the campus welcome for Lee H. Roberts upon his election as Caro-

lina's 13th chancellor in August 2024 — is an exacting task for a housekeeper.

"It's a given that the garbage will be removed, boxes broken down and removed, chairs and tables set up and broken down, and that perfect carpet lines magically appear every morning," wrote one of Brower's nominators.

But Kenan Center employees appreciated Brower's personality as much as his work ethic. When Brower wasn't around, they missed "the warmth, care" and the "exceptional service that we rely on to make our work environment feel welcoming and like an extension of family," wrote one nominator.

Brower grew up in Goldston, North Carolina, a town of less than 300 people in rural Chatham County. His father worked at a sawmill, and his

## SCHOOL NEWS



WCPSS

Ogochukwu Frank-Ito

Wake Young Women's  
Leadership Academy

## WAKE COUNTY

Ogochukwu Frank-Ito of Wake Young Women's Leadership Academy is one of 102 high school seniors selected to attend American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation, July 19-26, in Washington, D.C.

The weeklong program, founded in 1947, has provided civic education to thousands of students, teaching them how the federal government works.

Frank-Ito is one of two participants who will represent North Carolina as a "senator" at ALA Girls Nation. Senators will participate in mock Senate sessions complete with caucuses and debating bills that range from personal to political interests.

Other activities on the agenda include a visit to Arlington National Cemetery, where they will place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; a visit to Capitol Hill to meet with real-life U.S. senators from their state; and a tour of D.C. monuments.

Frank-Ito, a rising senior, was active during her week at ALA Tar Heel Girls State. She also participates in many activities in her school and community, including National Honor Society, Mock Trial, Future Business Leaders of America, Student Government Association and flag football.

ALA Girls Nation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our nation's future leaders to learn about the inner workings of the federal government before they are of voting age. Students leave the program with increased confidence and leadership skills for college and in their future career paths. Some participants go on to have careers



Jackie Ellis



Tammie Sexton

provided strategic direction for instructional leadership across the district. She oversaw the work of the district's area superintendents and supported the implementation of the district's Strategic Plan. Her leadership was instrumental in advancing strategies focused on continuous school improvement, equity and student achievement.

Sexton retired in 2025 after serving as WCPSS western area superintendent, a role she held since 2019. She began her district career as a classroom teacher and later as principal of three elementary schools, including founding principal of two.

Known for her ability to build strong school communities and cultivate effective school cultures, Sexton worked closely with principals and staff across the Western area to ensure student growth and school success.



COURTESY OF UNC

James Brower is congratulated by well-wishers.

mother died when he was only 2. He was the baby of seven children, with three sisters and three brothers. "They spoiled me," Brower said.

His first job was driving a van and making deliveries.

Brower came to work at Carolina in 2001 for better pay and benefits. The people at the Kenan Center felt like his extended family. "They ask me how my family's doing, and I ask them how their

family's doing," he said. When asked what he'll do with his \$10,000 Massey stipend, he gave Wanda Brower one of those shy smiles.

"My wife," he said. "It's her choice."