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Ellis embraces cinematography for mental wellness advocacy

By Alex Bass
CORRESPONDENT

RALEIGH – Greg Ellis was comfortable and at home on Sept. 16, surrounded by familiar faces in a familiar setting, Roberts Park - just a short trip from his native Wendell.

The former East Wake High School multisport standout, who became an All-American football defensive end at UNC Chapel Hill and later a Pro Bowl selection while with the Dallas Cowboys (1998-2008), now wants others to feel comfortable and at home when discussing mental health care.

Ellis, having stepped

aside from playing and coaching football, travels the country as a mental health advocate who employs a specific model as a contribution to ongoing mental wellness pursuits.

“The average individual is not going to walk up, not even to their mom in some cases, and admit, ‘Hey mom, I need to get some help,’” said Ellis, who celebrated his 50th birthday last month. “The end goal is to introduce people to their local mental health care providers.”

Ellis’ nonprofit, Getting My Help Mental Wellness Foundation, includes a GMH app.

He also is the writer/di-

rector of the movie “My Dear,” which addresses implications and consequences for unattended mental health needs.

North Carolina premieres of the film were held in Fayetteville and Raleigh earlier this month. There is a panel discussion, and a question-and-answer session with local mental health care providers after the movie.

Attendees can return to the app, select a description aligned with their needs and receive information on local resources.

Gabriel Bewley, a mental health counselor associate with Renewed Strength Counseling Services of

Knightdale, said Ellis’ transparency enhances his authenticity.

“He’ll be the first to say he doesn’t know everything about it,” Bewley said.

Still, Ellis embraces how his “role model” standing can contribute to what Bewley explained as to “destigmatize the discussion point” on how 1 in 5 people receive mental wellness care.

“We know that there are more people out there that need it,” Bewley said. “When we talk about it more, it gets out there in the public more, and we’re able to build connections with people with whom we normally would not build



ALEX BASS

Greg Ellis speaks at Robert Parks. connections.” in what has been quite a year for him. He was in- reach in Chicago on Oct. 1 Please see **ELLIS/2A**



COURTESY

Moral Mondays returns to the North Carolina Legislature to protest budget cuts.

Moral Mondays: A Southern Call to Conscience

STAFF REPORTS

On Sept. 29, advocates, clergy, and leaders will deliver a casket to the office of Senator Ted Budd to represent the lives in North Carolina that will be lost as a result of the massive cuts to Medicaid, SNAP and other critical programs.

The 11 a.m. demonstration is part of the next phase of the Moral Monday Movement, led by Bishop William J. Barber II and Repairers of the Breach, which brings together poor and low-wage people, impacted fam-

ilies, and clergy to confront lawmakers over the “Big, Bad, Ugly, Deadly, Destructive Budget Bill.”

“A Southern Call to Conscience” is part of a 12-state campaign spanning Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, Texas, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, West Virginia, North Carolina and Virginia.

“This is a moral emergency, not a partisan squabble,” Barber said. “If Congress will not listen in Washington, we will bring the cries of the people straight to

their hometowns, face to face. Lawmakers must reckon with their choices, not behind closed doors in D.C., but right here among their constituents.”

This protest will spotlight how the budget bill’s cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and rural health systems will especially harm children, seniors and people with disabilities.

The caskets represent the over 800 individuals who are dying

Please see **MORAL/2A**



Scott gives \$70 million to UNCF to support HBCUs

By Glenn Gamboa
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Billionaire philanthropist MacKenzie Scott has donated \$70 million to the UNCF, as the nation’s largest private provider of scholarships to minority students works to raise \$1 billion to strengthen all 37 of its historically Black colleges and universities.


The gift is one of Scott’s largest single donations ever and among the first to be publicly disclosed in 2025. Famously private, Scott only discusses her donations through her website and does not confirm them until after the recipients do.

“This extraordinary gift is a powerful vote of confidence in HBCUs and in the work of UNCF,” the non-profit’s President and CEO Michael L. Lomax told The Associated Press in a statement. “It provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity for our member institutions to build permanent assets that will support students and campuses for decades to come.”

Lomax said Scott’s donation would be used for UNCF’s pooled endowment, which aims to establish a \$370 million fund — \$10 million for each UNCF member HBCU. That fund will be invested and designed to pay out about 4% annually, which will then be divided among the HBCUs to help stabilize their budgets. Increasing HBCU endowments is a priority since they trail endowments at non-HBCUs by 70%, according to the UNCF.

The broader \$1 billion fundraising effort is an attempt to help HBCUs address the funding disparity they face when compared to other colleges and universities. A 2023 study by philanthropic research group Candid and ABFE, a nonprofit that advocates for investments in Black communities, found that the eight Ivy League


Please see **HBCU/2A**




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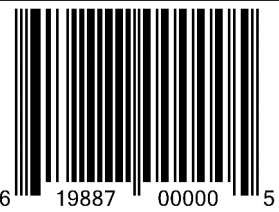


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Ellis is advocate for mental health care providers

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ducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in May.

Earlier this month, the Dallas Morning News ranked him No. 80 among the top 100 all-time Dallas Cowboys.

"That's a lot of gray area there," said Ellis, who was

eager to acknowledge the on- and off-field impact of teammates not listed. "What kind of teammate were they? Did they play a role on a team that uplifts?"

For Ellis, a full-circle answer to that question came at Roberts Park.

Tim Marriott, who has worked there in various ca-

pacities since 1977, coached Ellis in youth sports. He said Ellis made a strong impression back then.

"I figured since he was so into his family, he would grow into a God-fearing man, which he has done," Marriott said.

MacKenzie Scott gives \$70 million to UNCF to strengthen HBCUs

Continued from page 1A

schools received \$5.5 billion from the 1,000 largest U.S. foundations compared to \$45 million for the 99 HBCUs in 2019.

Since Scott, a novelist who received the bulk of her fortune after divorcing Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, signed the Giving Pledge in 2019, promising to donate more than half her wealth, HBCUs have been among her favorite grantees. She previously gave UNCF \$10 million in 2020.

Though Scott hasn't addressed HBCU donations specifically, she wrote in 2020 that her funding decisions were "driven by a deep belief in the value different backgrounds bring to problem-solving on any issue."

Scott hasn't made any announcements about her

giving since she acknowledged \$2 billion in gifts in 2024, bringing her total to \$19.2 billion. According to Forbes, Scott's net worth is currently around \$34 billion.

Her unusual donations — which are much larger than most foundations give at one time and carry no restrictions on when they can be used or what they can be used for — financially strengthened the nonprofits that received them, said Phil Buchanan, president of The Center for Effective Philanthropy, which studied Scott's giving over three years.

"We didn't see the fears people predicted come to pass," said Buchanan, who disclosed that The Center for Effective Philanthropy received a one-time \$10 million grant from Scott. Though some worried that the large gifts would cause

the recipients to increase staffing too much or hurt their fundraising efforts, Buchanan said their study of 2,000 nonprofits saw little evidence of that. "Folks are pretty prudent," he said. "This shows that if you carefully vet nonprofits, we can trust them to make good use of funds."

It's a lesson that UNCF hopes other funders will learn, following Scott's example.

"We are deeply grateful for MacKenzie Scott's continued support," Lomax said. "By entrusting UNCF to decide how best to use these funds, she affirms that HBCUs merit investment at this scale and her generosity will strengthen our member institutions and provide pathways to success for tomorrow's changemakers."

NC Republicans push for tougher bail moves, more

By Gary D. Robertson

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
RALEIGH — North Carolina Republican legislators are poised to approve criminal justice measures designed to toughen bail rules, restrict magistrates' powers and evaluate offenders' mental health after the fatal stabbing of a Ukrainian refugee on a Charlotte commuter train. The bill also could help get the death penalty carried out again in the ninth-largest U.S. state.

Senate and House Republicans unveiled legislation that their leaders previously signaled would surface when the General Assembly reconvened on Monday after nearly two months away from Raleigh.

The Aug. 22 death of 23-year-old Iryna Zarutska — her attack caught on camera — and subsequent charges against a suspect who had previously been arrested more than a dozen times caused public outrage. An array of Republicans, President Donald Trump among them, have attempted to blame Zarutska's death on Charlotte-area leaders and Democratic state officials for what they call soft-on-crime policies.

Any final measure would then go to Democratic Gov. Josh Stein's desk. Stein, the former attorney general, has suggested pretrial release changes and greater emphasis on mental health are needed in light of Za-

rutska's death.

But the measure took a different direction — away from bipartisan support — when Senate Republicans approved an amendment that could in the future open the door to other forms of capital punishment beyond lethal injection, which is currently the state's sole method. North Carolina last carried out an execution in 2006.

The stabbing suspect, Decarlos Brown Jr., could receive a death sentence if convicted of first-degree murder in state court or a federal count filed against him. Brown, whose criminal record included serving more than five years in prison after pleading guilty to robbery using a deadly weapon, had been charged in January in Mecklenburg County, which includes Charlotte, with misusing the 911 system, a misdemeanor, according to court records.

But a magistrate — a non-elected local court official who often determines if a defendant can be released while awaiting trial — released him on a written promise to return for court. And it took more than six months for a court to order a mental evaluation for him. Brown's mother told Charlotte-area television that she had sought an involuntary psychiatric commitment this year after he became violent at home.

GOP Sen. Ralph Hise said

the legislation has nothing to do with winning political points but rather is a response to the failure of the criminal justice system. "We need a criminal justice system that protects society from individuals. I believe these are many great steps in this bill," Hise said.

The measure, named "Iryna's Law," would prohibit cashless bail for certain crimes and eliminate some of the discretion that magistrates and judges have for pretrial release decisions. For example, first-time defendants accused of a violent offense could only be released on a secured cash bond or receive house arrest with electronic monitoring. Such house arrest and monitoring would be the only option for some repeat defendants.

The bill also attempts to ensure that more suspects are subject to psychological examinations before their potential release. Defendants accused of a violent crime and committed involuntarily in recent years to a mental health facility would be subject to a psychological evaluation.

The legislation also would give the state Supreme Court's chief justice the ability to suspend a magistrate from their post and lay out grounds why the official should be removed permanently. Such actions now sit with local judges.

Moral Mondays: A southern call to conscience

Continued from page 1A

every day from poverty, and the 51,000 more projected to die annually due to provisions included in the budget bill that passed in July. This wave of Southern protests is a direct response to the immoral federal budget that prioritizes corporate profits and militarism over health care, housing and the well-being of people.

"This budget is a massive harm to poor and low-income people all around North Carolina," said Pastor Joel Simpson of First United Methodist Church in Taylorsville. "Experts say 307,000 people will lose Medicaid. Impacted people are upset. I've talked with people whose parents are in nursing homes, parents who are caring for children and aging parents at home. I've spoken with a former law enforcement officer who is now on disability and depends on Medicaid and SNAP themselves while also caring for aging parents."

Joining as national partners in this next phase are Indivisible, the National Urban League, Masjid Muhammad, the National Council of Churches, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the AME Zion Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, the Ohio Council of Churches, North Carolina Council of Churches, Red Letter Christians, AM Kolel, Franciscan Action Network, OBRA Hispana, Hood Theological Seminary, Neighborhood Folks, Foundry United Methodist Church and Sojourners.

Visit www.breachrepairers.org.



COURTESY

Randelyn Pi  re of ViiV Healthcare addresses NMAC's U.S. Conference on HIV/AIDS in Washington, D.C.

Living long with HIV/AIDS is possible. Living well is harder

By Jennifer Porter Gore

WORD IN BLACK

When Randelyn Pi  re walked into a church basement in Atlanta recently, he saw something that was once unthinkable: older Black people living with HIV testifying about their experiences, and how their faith and diagnosis don't have to conflict.

"We've [had] people come to us and say, 'I didn't know that something like this could exist. I didn't know that I would be allowed to have my faith and also have my HIV care,'" Pi  re said.

Such moments are hallmarks of a remarkable demographic shift that was unthinkable in the early days of the epidemic, when an HIV or AIDS diagnosis almost always meant a death sentence. But now, roughly half of Americans living with HIV are 50 or older, and, by 2030, that figure is expected to climb to 70%.

Aging with HIV brings new health challenges and the need for people with the disease to find vibrant and supportive communities. That's why advocates are weaving medical science and social support to create partnerships with communities, such as faith communities, that may not have realized how much they could impact the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

"We're always testing education programs ... linking people to care and either directing them to treatment or to PrEP," said Pi  re, who works as the head of U.S. External Affairs for ViiV Healthcare. The U.K.-based company is the only pharmaceutical company focused exclusively on developing HIV medications. It produces 17 prescription medicines, conducts research focused on people living with HIV and AIDS, and offers several programs that provide direct support to communities.

Nationally, Black Americans make up just 12% of the population but account for approximately 38% of new HIV diagnoses. So, ViiV Healthcare's initiatives go beyond the health care system to build connections between HIV/AIDS service organizations and community-based groups. The goal: to better educate the community and help end the epidemic.

This summer, ViiV Healthcare launched its Re-ViiVal to Care program, which connects people living with HIV who are members of faith communities to resources that help them build community and spiritual connection, as well as direct access to HIV care resources.

Pi  re, who has worked in Georgia's public health system and the AIDS Drug

Assistance Program, is encouraged by the early impact he's seen from Re-ViiVal to Care. He says a recent attendee told him, "I'm not living with HIV, but as a result of this experience, I'm going to share what I've learned and what I know and what I've heard."

Yet, even as churches and advocates collaborate, looming federal budget cuts threaten to unravel gains. Estimates are that the budget cuts laid out in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will cause between 10 million and 14 million people to lose their health care coverage. This figure includes approximately 7 million Medicaid enrollees. Such cuts will make things more difficult for anyone who relies on prescription medications like PrEP.

Pi  re advises people living with HIV/AIDS, their family members, friends and supporters to be vigilant.

"Educate yourself. Understand what's happening, understand where you are, understand what you need to continue the continuity of care," he said.

As for advocates for those living with HIV/AIDS, Pi  re says they must "stand steady" with communities. "Keep providing these resources and programs that are really important," he says, and "stay here until HIV isn't."

Election training ensures NC voters can exercise rights

By Eric Tegethoff

PUBLIC NEWS SERVICE

A program in North Carolina trains poll workers to ensure voters are able to cast their ballots fairly and freely.

Most local governments in the state hold their elections in odd-number years. The North Carolina Black Alliance is holding bi-weekly "election protection

training" in the lead up to elections this year on Nov. 4.

Jovita Lee, program director for the alliance, said the poll workers will be up-to-date with the latest information on laws in the state, such as a voter ID law which went into effect in 2023 after years of legal wrangling in the courts.

"They are equipped with knowledge to let them

know, 'Hey, this is or is not an acceptable form of ID. So, you should be able to cast a full ballot or, if not, this is how you cast a provisional ballot.' So on and so forth," Lee outlined.

Lee said the group expects to train between 25 and 100 workers for this year's municipal elections. The sessions are held every

Please see **ELECTIONS/3A**

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Nearly every county in North Carolina is holding municipal elections in November.

Election worker training ensures NC voters can exercise rights

Continued from page 2A
other Thursday through Oct. 30. The next training is Oct. 2.
Workers are trained in a number of areas, including identifying voter intimidation so they can inform the proper people in such instances.
Lee said noted poll workers are dispatched to areas with high Black pop-

ulations and where voter intimidation has happened before.
"Unfortunately, we do have instances where intimidation is present at a polling site, and elections should be calm, free and fair for everyone, regardless of party affiliation," Lee asserted. "That is what we're ensuring at the site."
Lee added they are fol-

lowing potential shifts in laws and policies on the state and federal level.
"We are already having conversations around the 2026 elections, specifically getting folks also geared up for the primaries because we are an early primary state," she said.
The 2026 primary election in North Carolina is March 3.



Gov. Stein urges General Assembly to pass budget

By Sergio Osnaya-Prieto
EDUCATIONNC

Gov. Josh Stein sent a letter to General Assembly leaders last week, urging them to pass a comprehensive state budget — or at least fund teacher pay raises, Medicaid, and public safety initiatives in their September session, according to a press release.
Legislators were supposed to pass a comprehensive budget for the 2025-27 biennium by July 1, when the new fiscal year started. Instead, the General Assembly passed a "mini-budget" at the end of July to keep the state government operating.
North Carolina is now one of only two states without a comprehensive budget three months into the fiscal year, according to Stein's letter. The General Assembly reconvened for Sept. 22-25. "In the absence of a comprehensive budget, the following items cannot wait and demand your attention in your September session," Stein wrote.
In the letter, Stein called on lawmakers to fund a

\$451.6 million request to provide teachers with an average 5.9% pay increase, restore master's pay and give other school personnel a 3% increase. Another \$226.5 million request would fund a 2% raise for other state employees.
His original budget proposal in March included an average raise of 10.6% for teachers over the next two years, with higher raises for beginning teachers. "Teachers outweigh all other classroom factors in determining how well students perform," the February proposal said. "For North Carolina to attract and retain excellent teachers, the state must pay them more."
He also urged legislators to fund relief efforts for small businesses in western North Carolina still recovering from Hurricane Helene. He said he had requested \$13.5 billion from the federal government, but small businesses would still need assistance for this year's peak tourism season.
In a separate disaster recovery request, Stein asked lawmakers to provide \$26.75 million in funding

for recovery from Chantal, the tropical storm that damaged central North Carolina in early July.
In his letter, Stein also said he'd be willing to compromise on funding for the Medicaid rebase — the updated level of funding necessary for the program, following the passage of the federal budget bill in July.
Stein said that the Office of State Budget and Management and Department of Health & Human Services concluded the rebase requires an additional \$319 million. However, he will accept the General Assembly's proposed \$190 million increase and a reevaluation in January, he wrote.
"North Carolina is also on the clock to fully fund Medicaid," Stein wrote. "I am committed to working with the General Assembly to find a solution that keeps the program running so that North Carolinians do not lose their health care. Let's come together to do right by the people of North Carolina and prioritize the things that make North Carolina strong."

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

ANCBH
UNC-Chapel Hill alumna Dr. Bahby Banks was honored with the 2025 Robert "Ed" Strother Partnership Award from the Association of North Carolina



Banks

Boards of Health. The award honors individuals who have established public and private collaborations that improve public health. Banks is CEO of Pillar Consulting and founder of We Activate Youth!, a nonprofit building the next generation of public health leaders.

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

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Lawrence Lockett Jr.

This college chaplain fills the pews by teaching, not just preaching

By Rev. Dorothy S. Boulware
WORD IN BLACK

Lawrence Lockett Jr. has energized the faith community at Morgan State University.

Founded as a Bible institute, Morgan State has a rich faith tradition. Lockett has been a volunteer minister, along with other roles he's held on campus. Under his leadership, Morgan's chapel services have grown from around 25 students to more than 200.

It's understandable for parents of strong faith to worry about the spiritual lives of their children who've gone away to college. After all, it's easy for a young person, perhaps on his own for the first time, to succumb to the temptations of partying late on Saturday night and sleeping in on Sunday morning.

But Minister Lockett Jr., now chaplain at MSU, is packing them into the pews most Sundays. He is engaging them in lively ways during the week. And students are joining the choir, accompanying worship on various instruments, and serving as readers and leaders throughout the service.

It is by the grace of God for sure, but also by the loving service of Lockett, who's beginning his second year as the school's director of chapel. Sometimes, it's standing-room only.

"We've been trying to fig-

ure out what to do next because on Easter Sunday we had 342 people, and some were standing in the back," he said.

Word In Black talked to Lockett about the secrets of his success.

Word in Black: How did you get so many young people to chapel every Sunday?

Lawrence Lockett: Well, first of all, I changed the time of service from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. I realized a lot of the students like to sleep in late. It gives them time to do whatever they need to do. I'm sure many of them still like to party hearty over the weekend. So, they have a good chance just to kind of refocus, recalibrate, get themselves lunch, and then come over to the chapel for service.

WIB: Tell me about pastoring on a college campus.

LL: Morgan started as a biblical institute, so the Christian traditions have always been here. As a pastor or shepherd, I'm walking students through their questions, not always just trying to preach answers to them. It's about being vulnerable.

I tell them I was in their same position, just trying to figure it out. And it's not me just trying to give them answers. Having been there helps me really walk with them and anchor them in the storm of life that's going to come. I want them to understand that their soul really matters. A lot of students focus on mental

health, but they really need to focus on spiritual health as well.

WIB: What is "Spend a Block?" Didn't you receive an award for it?

LL: That started last year. We just basically do services outside: outside the residence halls, in the quad, wherever it may be. Honestly, worship on a college campus looks different than it did 20 or 30 years ago. Students want something real and authentic, something they can gravitate to and something that's convenient.

WIB: What should I expect when I arrive for Sunday service?

LL: You're gonna see a lot of involvement with students. I've learned that students like to feel invested, and they want to participate in what's going on. They don't want to be told by adults what they should and shouldn't do. So, when you go to the service, you'll see our praise team full of students.

You'll see a choir full of students. You'll see students reading scripture. You'll see students giving testimonies. And then I'll come in and give a sermon, or I'll have a guest friend, or a guest preacher come in to do the sermon.

But you're gonna see a lot of student involvement, and I think that also assisted with a lot of the growth because when they see fellow students, they understand they're just like me, and if they can do it, I can do it.

AROUND THE TRIANGLE

RALEIGH MARKER

The unveiling of historic marker "Remake" to its new location is Sept. 29, 11:30 a.m., St. Paul AME, 402 W. Edenton St.

MEETING

The next District C Conversation with Corey Branch is Sept. 29, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Worthdale Community Center, 1001 Cooper Road.

REVIVAL

Revival is Sept. 30 to Oct. 2, 7 p.m., Compassionate Tabernacle of Faith, 2310 Compassionate Drive. The public is invited.

VETERANS

Women Veterans Support Services' annual Domestic Violence Luncheon is Oct. 1, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Hilton North Raleigh, 415 Wake Forest Road. Tickets: wvssnc.org/events.

FESTIVAL

SPOOK-tacular Fall Festival is Oct. 3, 5-7 p.m., Method Road Community Center, Method Road.

FESTIVAL

FOODESFEST returns to Triangle Town Center Oct. 3-5. Tickets at www.food-esfest.com.

ALZHEIMER'S

2025 Walk to End

Alzheimer's is Oct. 4, 9 a.m., Halifax Mall, 300 N. Salisbury St. Visit alz.org.

HEALTH

Walk for Mental Health is Oct. 4, 10 a.m. to noon, Historic Oak View County Park.

GRANTS

Funds for programs to help N.C. teens are now available. Visit www.doa.nc.gov. Deadline: Oct. 10.

CARY

LUNCHEON

Dress for Success Triangle's 2025 Women Making Change Luncheon is Oct. 8, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Embassy Suites Hotel, 201 Harrison Oaks Boulevard. Tickets: www.dfstrianglenc.org.

DURHAM WORKSHOP

"Empowerment Unleashed" workshop to help displaced individuals with professional growth is Sept. 29, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Durham Co. Main Library, 300 N. Roxboro St.

CELEBRATION

Reopening celebration of Sherwood Park playgrounds is Sept. 30, 3:30 to 5 p.m., 1720 Cheek Road.

FAIR

DPS 2025 College Fair is

Sept. 30, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 5:30 to 7 p.m., Durham Marriott city Center, 301 W. Morgan St. Register: strivefair.com.

BLESSING

Bless the Block returns Oct. 4, noon to 4 p.m., Southside Church of Christ, 800 Elmira Avenue.

BLOCK PARTY

Missy Lane's inaugural Block Party is Oct. 4, 300 block of East Main Street. Tickets: missylaneshblock-party.com.

PHOENIX FEST

The festival returns Oct. 4, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., along Fayetteville Street at Lake-wood Avenue. Visit its Facebook page.

MOVE ALONG

Move-A-Bull City, an Open Streets event closed to vehicles, is Oct. 5, noon to 4 p.m., in downtown Durham. Visit moveabull.org.

CHAPEL HILL FUNDRAISER

Healing Pines Respite's annual golf classic is Sept. 29, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., for beginning and experienced golfers, Governor's Club, 11000 Governors Club Drive. Proceeds benefit women with cancer. Visit www.healingpinesrespite.org.



COURTESY

Robert X. Golphin in "Chest Candy."

Raleigh screening to spotlight Black veteran's mental health

STAFF REPORTS

RALEIGH — The award-winning psychological drama "Chest Candy" will have its North Carolina premiere at the Raleigh Film & Art Festival Oct. 4 at 7:30 p.m. The 17-minute mini-pic, starring and directed by multi-award-winner Robert X. Golphin, explores family dynamics in the aftermath of trauma.

At the three day festival, Golphin will also serve as a panelist on Oct. 5 at 2:30 p.m. to discuss the role of voices in independent cinema.

"Chest Candy" follows the story of a Black Army veteran and father spiraling into psychological collapse, forcing the three generations of women closest to him to confront their shared grief and fractured bonds before it destroys their family.

The film's original score was composed by Brian McKnight Jr., who spent part of his childhood in Raleigh. He is the son of R&B icon Brian McKnight and house music icon and North Carolina resident Julie McKnight. "So humbled. This is major. I'm so proud to be a part of this incredible body of work with this team," McKnight Jr. said.

The film is dedicated to the memories of Golphin's grandmother Henrietta Pompey Bennett and Niko McKnight, McKnight Jr.'s brother, both of whom passed shortly before the film's world premiere this spring.

Though "Chest Candy"

was not filmed in North Carolina, the project has strong ties to the state: Golphin attended Millbrook High School, Campbell University and holds a B.A. in theatre and film from Saint Augustine's University, where he graduated magna cum laude. In 2021, he was an honoree at the HBCU Living Legends Scholarship Banquet, representing SAU.

"North Carolina has always been one of my second homes," Golphin said. "My loved ones are here, and I completed my undergraduate studies here. It's where I co-founded a local production company and created multiple projects. And though my hometown is Philly, and I've collabo-

rated with artists across the country and even as far as Africa, North Carolina helped shape both my artistic voice and my growth as a person."

The film, six years in the making, was shot on Pennsylvania farmland in 2024. And throughout all levels of the production process, it has benefited from the guidance of military veterans and mental health professionals, including North Carolina native S. Denice Newton, a medically retired Army veteran, author and radio host.

Admission is free, but advance registration is required. Tickets are available at www.robertx-golphinentertainment.com

BOOK

Dating profile turned marriage-merger proposal

The Marriage Narrative
By Claire Kann
Berkley Romance Trade

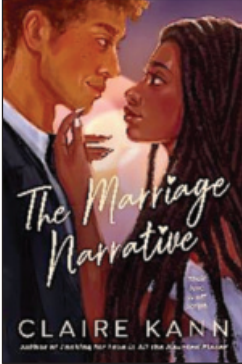
Zinnia is an ambitious, successful business-woman who is not about to wait around for her one true love.

She turns her dating profile into a marriage-merger proposal: a few strategic meetings, move in together, get married — all within 30 days.

Her friends think it will never work... until she meets Jordan, a near-perfect applicant with a big

secret.

Jordan's family has spent the last decade starring in a massively popular reality show about their lives.



He has finally agreed to join the cast, but production wants him to marry an actress (his ex) in a romantic storyline to boost viewership.

Convinced Zinnia is perfect for the role instead, Jordan proposes a mutually beneficial marriage

agreement: she gets her business partner husband, and he gets to help his family on his terms.

Together they face strict schedules, wild plot twists and behind-the-scenes hostilities, all while acting like besotted newlyweds — an intense performance that evolves into a relationship they never expected.

As the line between reality and show blurs, Zinnia and Jordan must learn to take charge of their own lives despite conflicting family dynamics, the complexities of adult friendships, and a wedding vow they may not be able to keep; they promised not to fall in love.

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NCCU made a believer out of Johnson

When Thomas Johnson got a recruiting call from a North Carolina Central assistant coach three years ago, he thought it was a hoax.

"First of all, I'd never heard of NCCU prior to me coming here," the Lawndale, California, native said. "I was preparing to go to Long Beach City College."

The assistant called on a Tuesday, Johnson said, and told him: "We're in the middle of our season, we need you. Be here by Sunday and you've got a full scholarship."

Johnson's response: "At first, I thought they were lying to me. There was no school out here."

But one visit was all it took.

Johnson played in 10 games that season, recording eight total tackles. He joined a

stellar defensive unit that helped the Eagles defeat Jackson State in the 2022 Cricket Celebration Bowl.

He upped his stats as a sophomore with 24 tackles (seven solo) and two sacks, as the Eagles advanced to the FCS playoffs for the first time in their Division I era.

Injuries curtailed his season after three games in 2024, but he's making up for lost time. Johnson already has equaled his 25-tackle total of 2023 (16 solo), seven tackles for a loss of 43 yards and a career-high 5.5 sacks for a minus-39 yards.

Those are the type of numbers that can thrill and chill at the same time. While good for the team, it also can bring outside attention from recruiters with thick wallets.

But, for now, Johnson is happy to be an Eagle.

"I didn't know what I was stepping into. I love the environment, the culture; I felt it as soon as I got here," he said. "They (coaches) want you to develop and become a man."

Work in Progress

For the second straight week, North Carolina A&T coach Shawn Gibbs apologized to Aggie Nation.

Gibbs apologized last week for his over-exuberance in their comeback win against Hampton. This week it was his players' performance against their hated rival.

"We were outcoached. We were outplayed and outcultured," he said at his Monday press conference. "We have a lot of work to do. I didn't have our guys prepared for the stage. I didn't put them in the best position to be successful. And I made some horrible decisions throughout the game that contributed to our defeat."

Gibbs issued another apology to NCCU coach Trei Oliver who was squirted with a water bowl during pregame warmups.

"That's not how we're going to do stuff. The main thing that has to change is our culture, and that young man is no longer on this team," Gibbs said. "And anybody that's going to act like that will not be a part of this team."

Judging by the YouTube comments, Aggie fans are split on Gibbs. On the one hand, some like his candor with the fans and media, while others are not so empathetic.

"As a Head Coach You Have To Many Excuses I Understand Being Held Accountable But You Talk To Much To The Media Some S*** Should Be In-house Only Bruh," wrote elitefamily-sports8621.

And, as usual when the Aggies are losing, the questionable decision to leave the MEAC rises again.

"Their championship football team days are OVER! ... They allowed a check to trick them out of their #1 spot because they're seeking validation from people who don't even like them. SAD!!!"

The Triangle Tribune Sports

September 28-October 4, 2025 | 6A



PHOTO/PHIL JACKSON

The Atlanta BEST Academy Polo Team at the 2025 Black-Tie Soul Symphony.

Historic high school polo team makes debut

Submitted To The Tribune

ATLANTA - The Atlanta BEST Academy Polo Team recently made its competition debut at the 8th Annual Atlanta Polo Party during the 2025 Soul Symphony Weekend.

Caleb Choice-Sanchez, Sincere Poole, Declan Fitz-

patrick, Ryland Hammond, Mikel Banks, and Quinn Ramsey led the Atlanta BEST Academy Polo Team to a 4-3 victory over the Starr Creek Polo Club from Cumming, Georgia.

The team was formed two years ago for students who wanted to play polo but had no prior experience with

the game or riding horses. Co-founded by celebrity fashion designer Miguel Wilson, the first-ever all-Black high school polo team was created through his nonprofit, the Ride to the Olympics Foundation, in partnership with the 100 Black Men of Atlanta and Atlanta's BEST Academy.

"We are making history, and these young men are blazing a trail that we hope others will follow," Wilson said. "For too long, a socioeconomic barrier has kept most Black people from participating in polo and other equestrian sports. My

Please see **POLO/7A**

HBCU FOOTBALL

Shaw's Manigo gets first win as head coach

By Bonitta Best

editor@thetriangletribune.com

And then there was one. The SIAC's Benedict College is the last undefeated HBCU team left. The Wildcats have wins over Fayetteville State, Central State and Tuskegee.

N.C. Central (3-2) vs. East Texas A&M (0-3)

The Eagles' defensive unit asked for a cookout as thanks for a job well done. The defense held archival N.C. A&T to 42 total rushing yards enroute to its second straight game of limiting opponents to under 300 total yards.

But last weekend in Greensboro was extra special.

"We stepped it up as far as our effort and communication in our intent in everything we do,"

defensive lineman Thomas Johnson said at Monday's press conference. "We don't like losing here at all. We told our coach we needed a little cookout. As big as you think it is (42 yards), we're prepared to get that every week."

The offense also deserves its own cookout after setting a program record with 745 total yards. Redshirt running back Chris Mosley's five-touchdown performance earned him a helmet sticker by ESPN's "College Football Final" crew - a rarity for any HBCU or FCS player.

"The whole unit takes pride in that because in football, it takes everybody," offensive coordinator Matt Leone said. "...Without the offensive line and without the other 10 guys on the field, it's hard to get anything done. It's a collective



N.C. Central's offensive line proves how much experience matters.

group, and everybody takes pride in that."

Coach Trei Oliver said there will be no letdown after NCAT. Nor is he taking the winless

Lions for granted.

East Texas A&M used to be called Texas A&M University-

Please see **NCCU/7A**

COLLEGE CORNER

NCCU men's tennis wins HBCU title

Johnson C. Smith and Bluefield State universities have been selected to participate in the Athletic Prevention Programming and Leadership Education Training Institute in Denver.

APPLE, as it's called, is the nation's top substance misuse prevention and health promotion program for student-athletes and administrators.

"The APPLE model equips institutions with the tools to create a healthier, safer environment, and I am confident that both schools will use this experience to elevate prevention programming and leadership development within the CIAA," Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams Parker said.

WOMEN

N.C. Central

After a five-match losing

streak, the Eagles returned to the winning column with a big 3-1 win over Radford. Kamren Harper recorded a team-high 15 kills (CC just loves saying that word), and teammate Manuela Cripa tabbed 39 assists, 10 digs and two service aces. NCCU hosts Delaware State and Maryland Eastern Shore this weekend in the start of MEAC play.

In cross-country, both the women and men will compete in the Cedric Walker HBCU Challenge Oct. 3, 5 p.m., at WakeMed Soccer Park in Cary.

In softball, the ladies have been invited to the 2026 NFCA Division I Leadoff Classic in Clearwater, Florida. The Feb. 5-8 showcase will feature 18 teams, including Oregon, Tennessee, Clemson and Liberty. Softball also snagged Buffalo transfer Hannah McGonigle.

And in golf, NCCU finished



N.C. Central men's tennis team and coaches.

second at the Thomas W. Dortch Jr. HBCU Golf Classic. Texas Southern took the crown.

Shaw

Basketball coach Jacques Cur-

tis has his roster. The sports information department sent out a tease last week of jersey numbers. Somebody told CC

Please see **NCCU/7A**

High school polo team makes Black history

Continued from page 6A

foundation was created to dismantle that barrier, providing these students with access to the skills and opportunities that come with it. It's about more than just a game; it's about leveling the playing field."

Wilson's foundation provides financial support to the team, covering the costs of riding lessons, horse rentals, uniforms, equipment and more. Events like the Soul Symphony Weekend and the Annual Atlanta Polo Party help the foundation raise money.

The 2025 Soul Symphony Weekend, a reimagined version of the annual Atlanta Fashion & Polo Classic, took place from Sept. 19-21, and featured a star-studded lineup of events, including a black-tie gala, a live fashion show, and thrilling polo matches.

The main attractions for the weekend were the Black-Tie Soul Symphony and the Annual Atlanta Polo Party.

The events were attended by guests of honor, Maryland Governor Wes Moore and Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens. Other no-

table guests included television personalities like Chris and Nell Fletcher (Love & Marriage Huntsville), Egypt Sherrod and Mike Jackson (Married To Real Estate), Dr. Heavenly Kimes (Married to Medicine), Monyetta Shaw (The Real Housewives of Atlanta), and Toya Johnson-Rushing (Toya & Reginae).

Actors Clifton Powell, Palmer Williams, and Rob Riley were also in attendance, alongside musicians Kevin Ross, Pastor Troy and Q Parker.

The list of guests also included national television host Portia Bruner and community leaders' Pastor Jamal Bryant, Bishop Vance Oldes and Morris Brown President Kevin James.

Wilson first made history in 2019 by co-founding the Morehouse Polo Club, the first polo team at a historically Black college and university. Since then, he has focused on creating more youth polo teams for Black students across the country.

"Miguel Wilson with the Ride to the Olympics Foundation actually came to BEST Academy just before I arrived as the principal and began having

conversations about a phenomenal opportunity for students to be able to participate in a polo where they would learn how to care for horses, learn how to ride, as well as to be able to compete," said Robert Williams, principal of Best Academy at the Thomas W. Dorch Jr. Institute.

"When the opportunity presented itself, and along with the 100 Black Men of Atlanta, we were excited about the opportunity and wanted to join with Miguel Wilson to create this wonderful event. The students have grown as leaders on campus and have really strived for excellence both on the field and off."

All proceeds from the Soul Symphony Weekend will benefit the Ride to the Olympics Foundation, which will continue to provide financial support to the Atlanta BEST Academy Polo Team and work to create more youth teams in different cities.

For more information on the Ride to the Olympics Foundation or to make a donation, visit <https://www.ridetothelympics.org/>.

NCCU looks to keep win streak going in Texas

Continued from page 6A

Commerce before reclassifying to Division I from Division II. The Lions have lost to SMU, Florida State and Grambling State. NCCU is their home opener.

"They are a very physical ballclub," Oliver said on the MEAC teleconference. "Their quarterback (Eric Rodriguez) is an unbelievable athlete, and it's their home opener."

The Eagles have a bye next week before another big SWAC matchup at Florida A&M on Oct. 11.

Shaw (1-0 CIAA, 1-2) vs. Virginia Union (1-0, 2-1)

Shaw coach Lamar Manigo was happy to endure the traditional Gatorade bath after earning his first win as head coach.

The fact that it also was a conference victory made it extra special.

"Overall, it was a great team effort. Last week was the first real consistent week of practice we put together," Manigo said at his weekly press conference. "The energy was high and the attention to detail was high."

The Bears are among five teams that won their conference openers, placing

them in a tie for first place.

Another one of those five comes to Durham Sept. 27.

Two-time conference champion Virginia Union knocked Johnson C. Smith from the unbeaten ranks in a dominating second-half performance. The Panthers defense held the Golden Bulls scoreless in the second half.

Coach Alvin Parker is seeking his third straight win over the Bears.

Shaw running back Trey Thorpe recorded his first 100-yard game of the season with 19 carries for 113 yards and two TDs – more than the entire Lincoln (Pa.) team's 70-yard total.

Shaw travels to Bluefield State next Saturday for a 1 p.m. matchup.

Team of the Week

Yeah, like this is a surprise.

North Carolina Central's offensive line helped the Eagles set a record in total yards, while the defense held its second straight opponent under 300 yards.

CAA

North Carolina A&T (1-3) has to regroup as it heads to University of Maine (0-

4) this weekend for a CAA matchup.

Hampton had its five-game win streak against Howard snapped in a 34-7 loss.

The Pirates travel to Elon this weekend before facing another rival, Norfolk State, Oct. 4 at home.

Legacy Bowl

The 2026 Allstate HBCU Legacy Bowl announced its first two players for next year's all-star game.

Southern defensive lineman Kcelby Givens has been selected to Team Robinson, named after Grambling State legendary coach Eddie Robinson Jr.

Morgan State linebacker Erick Hunter was selected to Team Gaither, named after Florida A&M coaching legend Jake Gaither.

"Announcing Kcelby Givens and Erick Hunter as our first selections to the Legacy Bowl fills us with pride," said Doug Williams, co-founder of the Black College Football Hall of Fame.

"They exemplify the high level of talent, character and spirit of today's HBCU football players."

The Allstate HBCU Legacy Bowl is Feb. 21 on Tulane University's campus.



The Best in HBCU Sports
triangletribune.com

NCCU men's tennis wins HBCU Classic

Continued from page 6A

that Curtis has the talent this season. We shall see.

In soccer, the ladies' record is 1-2-2. That's two ties so far this season. If CC has said it once, we'll say it again, that's a lot of running to end up in a tie. Gracious! Shaw hosts Mount Olive Oct. 1, 4:30 p.m., at Durham County Memorial Stadium.

In volleyball, Winston-Salem State comes to Spaulding Sept. 29 at 6 p.m.

MEN

N.C. Central

Hail to the champs!

For the first time since 2014, the Eagles won the 2025 HBCU National Ten-

nis Championship in Georgia. NCCU finished with 82 points, 25 points better than second-place Alabama State. Two-time defending champion Tennessee State was third.

Both the women and men will compete in the MEAC Individual Championships Oct. 2-4 at the Cary Tennis Park.

In golf, the Eagles placed third at the Dortch Jr. HBCU Golf Classic. Jamal Hutchison tied for second in the individual race. N.C. A&T won the meet, with Alabama A&M in second place.

Shaw

Just like the women, coach Bobby Collins has his roster in place. One


player that caught our eye is 7-foot center Daniel Mbaeteka from Benin City, Nigeria.

In soccer, Shaw finished in a scoreless tie against Methodist University.

That's even worse than scoring in a tie. All that running for nothing. Anyway, the Bears battle Carolina Christian College Sept. 29, 4 p.m., at WRAL Soccer Park in Cary, before playing Mount Olive after the women Oct. 1, 7 p.m., at Durham County Stadium.

Nike Air


Florida A&M, Morehouse, Norfolk State and Spelman will receive Nike's Yardrunner Collection's Air Max 95 shoes.



THE IMAGE OF JESUS ACTIVITY SHEET


Hi everyone!

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed my last trip back in time. Sankofa 82' and I took Todd with us to meet Jesus. You know, Jesus really does look just like He's described in the Bible.



GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Jesus' line of descendants can be traced back to Ham and Shem, who were sons of Noah. Ham and Shem and their descendants were people of color from Africa. Originally, Ham's descendants, Hamites, and Shem's descendants, Semites, were probably Black, according to our modern standards of "race" in the United States.



IN BIBLICAL DAYS, CULTURAL, NOT RACIAL DIFFERENCES WERE NOTICED

Genesis 42:6-8, is a clear example that the people of Israel and Egypt had the same physical characteristics. In this example, Joseph (the Israelite) was now the governor of Egypt. He recognized his brothers who had come to Egypt to buy corn. But his brothers did not recognize him. It is a fact that ancient Egyptians were African people. Which means they had the same physical characteristics as the Israelites. Had Joseph had European features, it would have been easy for his brothers to recognize him.


WHAT COLOR WAS JESUS?

By modern American legal standards, anyone with a tiny amount of African ancestry is considered Black and accordingly this would include Jesus, even though in the ancient past there was no racial categorization or race prejudice. His mother, Mary, was Afro-Asiatic and probably looked like a Black American of today.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS


Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph were of typical Afro-Asiatic stock as people of color of first century Palestine. They were not Europeans as often pictured in Western art. In many places all over Europe and North Africa the Madonna (the virgin Mary) and the Christ are both depicted as Black. Throughout the world, many Christians of all races worshiped the Black Madonna as the original representation of "the Mother of God."

The Greek Orthodox Church remade the Madonna as a Greek and then other European countries followed a similar practice.




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WHAT JESUS LOOKS LIKE TO ME!

Draw a picture below of what you believe Jesus looks like.



FILL IN THE BLANK

Fill in the blank with the correct word.

Ham and Shem
Mary and Joseph


Egyptians
Jesus'

_____ were people of color.

_____ hair was like pure wool.

_____ were people of color from Africa.

It is a fact that ancient _____ were African people.



ANSWER KEY

FILL IN THE BLANK

Mary and Joseph
Jesus'
Ham and Shem
Egyptians

THE IMAGE OF JESUS, 9/28/25 #222 WWW.JOEYOUNG.ORG KEMET ACTIVITY SHEETS © 2025 BY JOE YOUNG

Meet The Tribune's new journalist



COURTESY

The Tribune welcomes Kylie Marsh, our new multimedia journalist. Kylie, a Durham native, is a former freelancer with the paper. She relocated to Charlotte and was a freelancer at our sister publication, The Charlotte Post. She'll hit the ground running on Oct. 1. Her email address is: kylie.marsh@triangletribune.com.

Rissi Palmer's new series at the Carolina Theatre

STAFF REPORTS

DURHAM — The Carolina Theatre of Durham celebrates Grammy-nominated singer, songwriter and advocate, Rissi Palmer, recognizing artists who elevate marginalized voices in country music.

The honor comes just weeks before the launch of a new season of The Wavemakers Series, the groundbreaking music and conversation program curated by Palmer in partnership with the Carolina Theatre. Tickets are on sale at the Carolina Theatre box office and website.

Palmer was celebrated last month with the Academy of Country Music's Lift Every Voice Award in Nashville, Tennessee, where she was recognized for her pioneering work as the creator and host of Apple Music's "Color Me Country Radio with Rissi Palmer."

Artists' Miko Marks, Wavemaker selection Madeline Edwards and K. Michelle paid tribute to Palmer's artistry and impact. Accepting the award on her birthday, Palmer reflected on her journey in Nashville and the importance of embracing the very differences that make artists stand out.

"In a time where we are being told that it's not OK to stand out, I want everyone out there, all the little girls who don't see them-



COURTESY

selves, I want you to know your story is important," Palmer stated in her acceptance speech. "That's one of the most beautiful things about country music, is that it's all about the story; write your stories because your stories are important."

The ACM recognition underscores the mission of The Wavemakers Series, which highlights emerging voices in multiple genres of music — particularly artists of color and those under-

represented in the industry — through an intimate blend of live performance, on-stage interviews and audience Q&A.

"Wavemakers is more than a concert series; it's a chance to meet extraordinary artists up close, hear their stories, and discover new voices shaping the future of music," Palmer said.

The performances will take place from November 2025 through May 2026 at the Carolina Theatre. Visit www.carolinatheatre.org.

50 years and still going strong in arts community

Centerfest celebrated its 50th anniversary in grand style last weekend. Hundreds of people attended the two-day arts festival in downtown Durham.



MATHIAS BISHOP



Duke Law School honors Jerome Culp Jr. legacy



FACEBOOK

Duke Law School recently honored the legacy of Jerome Culp Jr., the first tenured professor of color at Duke Law.

Professor Mario Barnes, Chancellor's Professor of Law at UC Irvine School of Law, delivered the Jerome M. Culp Jr. Lecture, presented by the Center on Law, Race and Policy. Barnes discussed Culp's impact on his life and scholarship after having served as a research assistant for Culp. Culp's family was also in attendance for the lecture and to participate in an oral history project documenting his impact.

Making the Grade



COURTESY

Dennis Gibson is the Durham Nativity School Student of the Week. He also is a member of the Thomas Mentor Leadership Academy.