

NCCU weighing options on future in MEAC

While some Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference teams will begin their basketball season on November 25, North Carolina Central won't start until division play begins on January 2.

The pandemic continues to wreak havoc on athletic budgets as the non-competitive fall season draws to a close.

Blame it on the Benjamins, or rather the lack thereof. By waiting till January, the Eagles save even more on travel costs and other incidentals, said athletic director Ingrid Wicker McCree at



BONITTA BEST

Tuesday's board of trustees meeting.

Questions were emailed to Wicker McCree prior to the meeting for discussion. One that was on many people's minds was the future of the

MEAC.

Wicker McCree said the conference was actively seeking new members, which would be a main topic of discussion at the athletic directors' meeting later this week.

She explained that with Division I-FCS conferences focusing on becoming more regionalized in the near future, the MEAC has the opportunity to pick up some schools between Delaware and South Carolina.

That led, of course, to the biggest question of the morning: NCCU's status in the MEAC. It was obvious Wicker McCree didn't want to go into much detail - probably because she knew I was listening in - but a couple of trustees didn't give her much choice.

The MEAC's sponsorship of sports is "at a bare minimum and that's a concern," she said. The cancellations of cross country, indoor track and field and women's bowling is hurting the student-athletes, she continued. NCCU needs to add another women's sport to be Title IX compliant, but the MEAC doesn't sponsor the sport they're considering. "If we don't have the sports, then athletes can't play."

When pushed about the possibility of NCCU leaving the conference, Wicker McCree said there were four conferences they would consider:

1. Atlantic Sun Conference, headquartered in Georgia, and comprises nine teams from Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Tennessee and Alabama. However, the ASUN does not sponsor football (teams play in other conferences as football-only members), but Wicker McCree said officials want to add the sport and is aggressively seeking HBCU members.

2. The Big South Conference has already snagged MEAC schools' Hampton and North Carolina A&T, which leaves after this season.

3. The Southern Conference is one of the stronger FCS football conferences with teams such as Furman, Wofford, East Tennessee State and Tennessee at Chattanooga. They are also quite expensive. While the MEAC requires a \$250,000 departure fee, the SoCon's entry fee is \$650,000, she said.

4. The granddaddy of the four is the Colonial Athletic Association, which is composed of James Madison (enough said there), William & Mary, Drexel, etc. The CAA is considered the crème of the FCS football crop, and "the budgets are very high," Wicker McCree said.

Now, again, nobody said the Eagles are leaving the MEAC tomorrow, but it's obvious the administration is exploring other options, which they would be crazy not to.

Wicker McCree said a presentation will be made to the board in January. "We will be ready to do what we need to do."

As stated previously, the

Please see NCCU/2B

Sports

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The Triangle TRIBUNE

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Bryan Mills knew he had the right stuff after a three-interception game against Morgan State.

One and well done

Bryan Mills makes lone NCCU season memorable

By John McCann
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

DURHAM — On the road in Baltimore, Maryland, last season, North Carolina Central was in a compromised situation inside Hughes Stadium, with Morgan State threatening in the Eagles' red zone. First-and-10 on NCCU's 18-yard line, Morgan State quarterback DeAndre Harris eyed one of his Bears upfield near the end zone. A touchdown would give the Bears a 9-6 lead midway through the second quarter.

Harris fired. Bryan Mills doused it.

Long and lithe, Mills — an NCCU defensive back who was not even halfway through his first tussle in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference — intercepted the pass on the 2-yard line. A few minutes later, the

Bears again had the ball in the red zone, on the 14. Harris was still out there trying to pick on NCCU's secondary. Mills disciplined him with another interception, this time on the goal line.

NCCU didn't score off those two swipes by Mills. But the red-zone pilferages kept Morgan State out of the end zone until the Eagles could get their offense going. Mills stole one from backup quarterback DJ Gollatt Jr. late in the fourth quarter, allowing NCCU to milk the clock for a 27-17 win.

Mills transferred to NCCU from College of the Canyons, a junior college in California. He said he knew after the Morgan State game that he'd successfully made the leap and could handle his business on the Division I level. "That really brought

the spotlight on me," he said.

NFL eyes are on him now. He's regarded by Draft Diamonds as a top prospect among players from historically Black colleges and universities who are entering the upcoming NFL Draft. It means Mills' first season with NCCU turned out to be his last. He won't suit up for the Eagles when the MEAC football season starts in February.

"Bryan Mills is an elite-level college defensive back who has good size, instincts, awareness, and is extremely physical," said Donal Ware, a nationally syndicated sports broadcaster and founder of FROM THE PRESS BOX TO PRESS ROW. "As good a cover corner as he is, he relishes making tackles and is instinctive in making tackles"

Please see MILLS/2B

COLLEGE CORNER



COURTESY

There will be no thongs in beach volleyball.



Gray

MDES

sponsors beach volleyball

Maryland Eastern Shore has become the first HBCU to sponsor women's beach volleyball. The program officially competes the spring of 2022.

Head women's volleyball coach Trevor Callarman and assistant Heather Feldman will also coach the beach program.

"Being located on the Eastern Shore near Ocean City, Maryland, and the resorts in Delaware like Rehoboth Beach, Dewey and Bethany — all well-known beach volleyball locations — there is no better place to begin a beach program than here at the university," Callarman said.

Eighty-one NCAA school have beach volleyball programs in Division I, II and III. Seven of the 81 are within an eight-hour drive of MDES: Stevenson, Catawba, UNC Wilmington, Coastal Carolina, South Carolina, College of Charleston and Carson Newman. "Not only will we be the first beach volleyball program on the Eastern Shore, but we will also be the first HBCU to participate in the sport," AD Keith Davidson said. "Beach volleyball is a sport that is in dire need of more diversity and inclusion, and I am confident that this will be a great first step towards achieving that endeavor."

Hargett joins Shaw

Mercedes Hargett has joined Shaw as its new head softball coach. She previously was an assistant coach at the SWAC's Grambling State for two seasons and Alabama A&M before that.

"I chose coach Hargett because I think she can win championships here. I think she can build a national championship program, and she had a great recruiting plan," athletic director George Knox said. "I look forward to some very excited things out of our softball programs with her at the helm."

And then there were seven

Last week Florida A&M became the second MEAC school to opt out of a spring football season. Rival Bethune-Cookman was the first.

The Rattlers also will not sponsor indoor track & field and volleyball in the spring semester. Women's and men's basketball, and baseball and softball are still on schedule.

"Florida A&M athletics' decision was made with the health and safety of our student-athletes as our top priority," athletic director Kortne Gosha said. "This was a collective decision with our coaches and staff, given the varying circumstances that COVID-19 has created for our program. We are certainly disappointed that some of our student-athletes will not be able to compete this year. However, we will shift our focus to achieving our academic priorities while planning a safe return

Please see SHAW/2B

HBCU BASKETBALL



Howard women's basketball will have a local flavor next season.

Finally! A CIAA basketball schedule

By Bonitta Best
editor@triangletribune.com

The CIAA released on Wednesday its women's and men's basketball schedules after being the last HBCU conference to do so. The 16-game conference slate begins on January 9 and ends February 20.



Jones

Division play begins on January 28, with the women playing at one location while the men play at another. The tournament is still set for February, with some changes. Early-round games

will be played on college campuses while the semifinals and championships at a smaller arena in Baltimore — for now. Oh yeah, no fans will be allowed at home games.

Lincoln (Pa.) men began their nonconference season on Tuesday with a 99-78 win over Salem.

Wakefield's Allen signs with Howard

Raleigh's Wakefield High senior Amirah Allen signed with Howard University during last Wednesday's early signing period. Allen, who also plays for the Carolina Flames AAU team, is a 6-foot-1 forward who also

runs track, and is a member of the honor society with a 4.1 GPA.

"Amirah is an athletic forward who can play inside and out," coach Ty Grace said. "She has a nice touch around the rim and can knock down the 16- to 17-foot shot. She will impact the game on both ends of the floor for us."

Allen's teammate on the Carolina Flames, Nyla Cooper of Jack Britt High in Fayetteville, will join her at Howard. Cooper is a 5-foot-9 guard who averaged 12.3 points and 3.2 steals per game.

Please see BASKETBALL/2B

Bryan Mills makes one season worthwhile

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in the run and short-passing games. It comes as no surprise that the NFL is interested in him. When you can have three interceptions in a game on any level, that is saying something, especially on the Division I level.

Mills will complete one more college assignment when he plays in the Reese's Senior Bowl January 30 at the University of South Alabama. The annual game puts the shine on the top NFL draft prospects who have completed their college eligibility. Mills joins Doug Wilkerson (1970) and Robert Massey (1989) as the only NCCU players ever invited to play in the nation's most prestigious all-star game for college football.

Nothing but love for NCCU, "that was my only D-1 offer," Mills said. The reason he's skipping his senior campaign is because COVID-19 led the MEAC to move its fall foot-

ball season to the spring, which coincides with the draft process for the NFL, NCCU athletics spokesman Kyle Serba said.

Mills can ball: All-MEAC First Team. AFCA Football Championship Subdivision Coaches' All-America Second Team. BOXTOROW All-America Team. Led the MEAC with five interceptions. Ranked second in the league with 13 passes defended. "I don't see any weakness in my game, actually," Mills said. "I think I'm pretty good at what I do. I can always adjust and get better."

Light in the tail at 170 pounds when he played for NCCU, Mills said he's 185 pounds now after lifting weights — and lifting the fork. More junk in his trunk will help him defend bigger NFL receivers, and he also said he hasn't lost a step after bulking up.

NCCU associate head coach Juan Navarro recruited Mills. He said the one knock on Mills was that he was on the smaller side. Yet he was an aggres-

sive 170-pounder, the coach said. "He was obviously a long kid," Navarro said. "He was athletic. He was fast."

NCCU's defensive scheme has the Eagles looking to avoid giving up passes down the middle of the field and over the top. That made Mills a good fit. What stood out about him during the recruiting process was his ability to explode vertically to make plays on the football at its highest point, Navarro said.

An area of improvement for Mills is his speed after the first 10 to 40 yards from scrimmage, Navarro said. As far as character, nothing to work on there, the coach insisted.

Just one season at NCCU for Mills. Talk about making it count. "They really believed in me, and I just ran with the opportunity," he said. "I believe I would have made plays anywhere. I'm very adaptable, and I can adjust to any scheme."

Shaw hires new softball coach in Hargett

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to play in fall 2021."

ASU's Gray Campbell finalist

Alabama State senior running back Ezra Gray is among 12 finalists for the 2020 William V. Campbell Trophy, which recognizes the best scholar-athlete in football.

Gray is the only HBCU player represented. The computer information systems major has a perfect 4.0 GPA.

The 12 finalists each receive an \$18,000 postgraduate scholarship. The winner's scholarship will increase to \$25,000.



Williams



Kinney

CIAA finally releases a revised basketball schedule

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Myers Park High senior Nia Nelson rounds out the trio. The 5-foot-10 guard from Charlotte guided the Mustangs to a 19-9 record.

St. Aug's Jones resigns

St. Augustine's women's basketball coach Montel Jones is leaving the position at the end of the month. Jones cites personal family reasons.

The Falcons finished 13-42 under Jones' two-season tenure. The team won seven more games in his second year.

"We appreciate coach Jones for his time here..." interim AD David Bowser said. "He will be truly missed. I wish him the best of luck in his endeavor."

A national search has

begun.

How's the weather?

Virginia Union women's basketball has made history by signing its tallest player in program history. Six-foot-5 freshman center Ceanna "Cece" Kinney will join the program next fall.

"We are excited to add Cece to our 2021-22 roster," head coach Tierra Terry said. "Her height, athleticism, basketball IQ, contagious positive energy, and love for the game will be a great addition to our team."

Ceanna is the granddaughter of former VUU dean John Kinney.

Giving back

Houston Rockets star Robert Covington is giving

back to his alma mater, Tennessee State. Covington plans to build a \$1 million practice facility for the basketball teams. The 2013 graduate is one of just two active HBCU players in the NBA. (Norfolk State's Kyle O'Quinn is the second.)

"I'm a walking product of a kid that went to an HBCU and created a narrative for myself," Covington told FOX17 news in Nashville.

Watch List

Jackson State junior Ameshya Williams was named to the Lisa Leslie Award Watch List. Williams is the only HBCU player on the list.

The 6-foot-4 center averaged a double-double last season of 12.8 points and 10.1 rebounds per game.

NCCU weighing options

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athletics department has suffered a \$2.8 million decrease. Furloughs, Wicker McCree said, were instituted across the board to "save our student-athletes."

On a side note, Wicker McCree admonished the media as being "very aggressive" in our reporting. She called out HBCU Gameday for reporting on Norfolk State's recent board meeting, forcing the NSU AD to comment on things she wasn't ready to comment on.

I guess we all should just sit by the phone and wait for it to ring instead.



Former North Carolina Central star Nick Leverett is all smiles as he progresses in his NFL career with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Leverett posted the above photo on Instagram with the words: "Living the dream. Thank you Jesus!"



Raleigh loses out on NCAA Tournament.

March Madness in one place?

NCAA looking at Indianapolis

By John Marshall
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The University of Maryland-Baltimore County pulled off one of the greatest upsets in American sports history at the 2018 NCAA Tournament, knocking off Virginia to become the first No. 16 seed to beat a No. 1.

The madness kept coming that March from Pittsburgh to San Diego. Top-ranked Xavier lost in the second round and so did No. 2 seeds North Carolina and Cincinnati. Two third-seeded teams were bounced early, as were three No. 4 seeds during an opening weekend that epitomized the beloved spectacle the NCAA Tournament has become.

That coast-to-coast excitement won't happen this season: The NCAA announced on Monday it plans to hold the entire 2021 men's tournament in a single geographic area to mitigate the risks of COVID-19. It is in talks with Indianapolis to serve as the host city. Instead of all those upsets, buzzer beaters and star-turning performances being spread out at venues across the country, the bracket will be played out at sites in one city, a sort of one-stop shopping version of the tournament typically played in every region of the U.S.

The news comes nine months after the coronavirus pandemic led to the cancellation of the 2020 tournaments, a severe economic

blow not just to the host cities but scores of athletic departments across the country. "It will be a very controlled environment," NCAA senior vice president of basketball Dan Gavitt said. "It'll be different, it'll be historic and it'll be hopefully something we all treasure and experience just once, hopefully not ever again."

There was no immediate word on the women's tournament, which runs concurrently in March and early April. The pandemic has disrupted every sport for months now. The NBA and NHL completed their seasons in controlled-environment bubbles and baseball trimmed its regular season to 60 games with a World Series played entirely in Texas and no home games for the LA Dodgers or Tampa Bay. The NFL has forged ahead with its regular season, though with dozens of positive COVID-19 tests.

The original plan was for the 67 games of the 2021 NCAA Tournament to be played at 13 sites across the country, starting with the First Four in Dayton, Ohio. Regional sites were set for Minneapolis, Denver, New York City and Memphis, Tennessee. As COVID-19 cases across the country spiked and wreaked havoc on the college football season, it became clear to the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Committee that multiple sites would not work. "We coalesced around a decision that we were not going

to be able to host the tournament through 13 different sites," Kentucky athletic director and committee chair Mitch Barnhart said. "Through the pandemic, it was unreasonable to expect that."

Centralizing the tournament will allow a controlled environment with venues, practice facilities, lodging and medical resources all near one another. Indianapolis, the only city the NCAA is currently negotiating with, made the most sense since the Final Four was already scheduled there for April, and NCAA headquarters is on the edge of downtown, walkable from various sites. The NCAA set a Nov. 25 start date for the season as it tries to bounce back after the cancellation of the 2020 NCAA Tournament led to a \$375 million shortfall in revenue distributed to member institutions.

Schools have scrambled to fill schedules while the coronavirus has ripped through college football, causing the cancellation of more than 60 games. Multiple basketball programs are currently on pause due to COVID-19, and the Ivy League announced last week the cancellation of winter sports, including men's and women's basketball.

Gavitt said there is no plan to change the start date, and the NCAA Tournament is expected to be played in March and April as scheduled. No determination has been made if fans will be allowed.

Half of pastors see negative economic impact for church

By Aaron Earls
BAPTIST PRESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — After a few years of economic optimism, pastors say the 2020 economy is hurting their congregation. According to a new survey from Nashville-based LifeWay Research, almost half of U.S. Protestant pastors (48%) say the current economy is negatively impacting their church, including 5% who say the impact is very negative.

Around 1 in 6 (15%) believe the economy has had a positive effect, including 4% saying it is having a very positive impact. More than a third of pastors (35%) say there's been no impact.

Even with a 12-point jump from 2018 to 2019 (14% to 26%), perceptions of negative impact had been trending downward since 2010, when 80% of Protestant pastors said the economy was harming their church.

The 2020 negative numbers are the highest since January 2016, when 51% of pastors said the economy was hurting their church. "The recovery from the last recession was slow for many churches," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "Even in a good economy, it can be easy to focus on external factors that are hurting your

church's finances. Clearly, many pastors are seeing the recession in 2020 impacting their church."

Most Protestant pastors say giving has been at or below 2019 levels, as well as at or below their budget for this year. Around a third report giving levels lower than last year and lower than their current budget.

For close to half of churches (45%), giving in 2020 has been about what was budgeted. A third (33%) say it is lower than budgeted, while 21% say giving has been higher. When compared to 2019, 35% say giving has dropped this year, 32% say it is the same, and 29% say it is above last year's levels. Those numbers accelerate a downward giving trend that began last year.

In 2018, LifeWay Research found 42% of pastors said their offerings were up, 37% said giving was the same, and 15% said it was below 2017. "2018 looks like as good as it gets for positive economic impacts for churches," McConnell said.

"People quickly got used to improved take-home pay from tax changes and were seeing flat wages, meaning 2019 was more difficult for churchgoers to maintain 2018 giving. Now, in 2020, a recession brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has set a third

of churches behind their 2019 giving."

Some churches are faring worse in giving than others in 2020. Minority led, mainline and smaller congregations are more likely to say they've felt the brunt of the declining economy.

African American pastors are the most likely to say the economy is having a very negative impact on their church (20%).

Black pastors are also more likely to say their giving is lower than budgeted (48%) and below 2019 levels (50%) than white pastors, among whom 31% report giving below budget and 34% who say offerings are down from last year. Evangelical pastors are more likely than their mainline counterparts to say giving in 2020 is higher than budgeted (23% to 14%). Similarly, evangelical pastors are more likely than mainline pastors to say giving is above 2019's offerings (32% to 19%).

"The economic impact of COVID-19 has been very uneven, and that includes churches," McConnell said. "The types of churches that are most likely to be struggling financially are also the most likely to have not gathered in person in September. The exception is larger churches, but they were most likely to have less than 30% of their pre-COVID attendance in person."

Keep Thanksgiving, family and friends alive

By Glenn Mollette
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Joe Biden or Donald Trump will never visit me in my home, stand beside me at the funeral home or dance at my wedding. I will not be receiving any calls from either of them to pray for me during sickness or to check on how my children are doing.

I probably will never sit in a room with them to visit, laugh and tell funny stories or just to hang out over a cup of coffee. I do not personally know either one. I welcome the opportunity to visit with either of them, but doubt it will happen.

I feel like I know them because I have seen them on television my entire life and heard them speak. I have been very emotional about them these last few months and felt very convicted about my vote. I have written words, spoken words and stood on the firing line for my candidate.

Most importantly, I voted. I have also received my share of emails, and real mail from people just as adamant about their candidate, often expressed in very colorful words.

Sadly, over the last few months, I have seen people who I have known for many years take as strong or stronger stance than I've taken.

The distance between us

has grown farther and the climate colder. Acquaintances, life-friends, school buddies and even family.

Both of our candidates have campaigned in their own and different ways. The issues have been heatedly debated and argued. As a nation, we have stressed ourselves to the max over these political candidates.

And, while our vision for our nation has not changed, or our love and support for our preferred candidate has probably not dwindled, we must make a concerted effort to keep friends, family and the hopes and spirit of Thanksgiving alive.

As strongly as I feel about our nation and our leadership, I will not throw my friends and loved ones under the bus. My father was a Republican and my mother was a Democrat. They both voted and life went on. They were married for over 60 years. They did pretty well. They didn't divorce over an election or politics. I do not remember them even arguing about an election.

This election was important to all of us, but I'm not going to stab my mother in the back or cut my father's throat for Joe Biden or Donald Trump.

By the same token, I have played sports with people all through school, sang in choirs, danced with friends, prayed and wept

with people at hospitals and funerals, baptized thousands of young and old people alike.

I'm not going to throw these people in the lake or smash somebody's car. I am not going to try to destroy somebody's business or life for Joe Biden or Donald Trump.

Nor will I attend any Thanksgiving or other holiday meals refusing to be civil and gracious because of opposing political feelings and beliefs in the room. Why would any of us? For Joe Biden or Donald Trump?

I refuse to let this election kill Thanksgiving or any of the friendships and relationships that I share with real people in my life. Life, our friendships, our relationship with God and the personal work and service of being a good human being are most important to me.

Thanksgiving season is here. Life doesn't always go our way, but we all have a lot to be thankful for this year. Keep this good season alive with gratitude. Most of all, extend Thanksgiving to all others. If it's not reciprocated, then it's on them. Keep Thanksgiving alive in your heart.

Learn more at www.glennmollette.com. His column is published weekly in over 600 publications in all 50 states.

AROUND THE TRIANGLE

HOLLY SPRINGS ANNIVERSARY
Holly Springs School Ceremony is Nov. 22, 3 p.m., W.E. Hunt Recreation Center, 301 Stinson Ave.

RALEIGH CHALLENGE
Triangle annual Holiday Challenge to "maintain, don't gain" begins Nov. 16. Register at <https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com> and join at any time.

MARKET
Black Farmers Market's season finale is Nov. 22, 1-4 p.m., Southeast Raleigh YMCA, 1436 Rock Quarry Rd.

ARTSPLOSURE
Artsposure has relocated its office to 19 W. Hargett Street.

DURHAM ARTISTS
Deadline for Durham Arts Council's Emerging

Artist Program has been extended to Nov. 30. Register at www.durhamarts.org.

CHAPEL HILL PUPPETS
Puppet Show presents Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock, a classic African tale, on Zoom Nov. 24, 10 a.m. Register at orange-countync.gov.



Strategies to avoid the flu

BLACK HEALTH MATTERS

It's cold and flu season, and the usual advice is being dispensed: Get the influenza vaccine, wash your hands regularly and avoid contact with anyone who's already sick.

But is there anything else we can do? "You can't be overly cautious," said Dr. Trish Perl, chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. "But you have to be smart. A lot of people don't recognize how serious the flu can be."

The risk may be particularly acute when it comes to the heart. A 2018 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* indicated the incidence of heart attack was six times higher within a week of being diagnosed with the flu compared to the year before or after the infection. "The data are becoming more and more compelling that the flu vaccine prevents cardiovascular events as well as mortality, especially for people over 65," Perl said.

Several factors make the flu virus a particularly formidable foe, she said. It can be transmitted through the air, survive on some surfaces up to 48 hours, and survive on a hand that's not washed for up to an hour.

Those characteristics make hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes key

allies during flu season. "Most common illnesses are spread by your hands," said Charles Gerba, a microbiologist at the University of Arizona who has spent a career tracking germs everywhere from toilet seats and airplane trays to computer touchscreens and hotel TV remote controls. "Hand hygiene is the most important thing you can do for yourself."

He advocates washing hands or using sanitizer when coming home after a day of touching our germ-ridden world. Experts suggest other tactics to keep in mind during cold and flu season:

- Get enough sleep. One study found people who get fewer than six hours of sleep at night are more susceptible to catching colds.

- Disinfect phones and tablets. "You're continually touching them along with other surfaces, which is great for moving germs around," Gerba said. "You can use alcohol wipes on phones, and you should clean and sanitize them once a day."

- Have a cup of tea. A 2018 review of the latest studies suggests catechins, a flavonoid and antioxidant in tea, can inhibit the spread of flu virus in the body.

- Eat right and don't forget the vitamin D. Some studies suggest vitamin D can strengthen the im-

mune system and fight infection. Sources include fatty fish, dairy products, supplements and sunlight. "There isn't really a lot of literature that suggests this will reduce the risk of acquiring and transmitting influenza," Perl said. "But maintaining appropriate nutrition is very important in making sure your immune system is responsive."

- Be a careful shopper. Holiday crowds might provide an unwanted gift. Gerba advised paying particular attention to your children. "Bring the sanitizer with you and clean their hands right away," he said. "Or you could just do your shopping online."

- Try not to touch your face. The eyes, nose and mouth are prime entry points for germs you pick up throughout the day. That makes habits like rubbing your eyes, scratching your nose or biting your nails especially risky during flu season. "People do it so subconsciously and so often that it's difficult to stop," Gerba said. "You've got to really make an effort."

Overall, Perl said, people shouldn't be too anxious about flu season. "It's really mostly common sense and getting your flu shot," she said. On the other hand, don't be too cavalier either.

FILM



COURTESY

Madalen Mills and Anika Noni Rosen star in "Jingle Jangle."

Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey fantasy tale

By Dwight Brown
NNPA NEWS WIRE

What a nice surprise. David E. Talbert, a playwright-turned-filmmaker, lets his musicality fly and creates a viable family Christmas movie that's as strong as any Disney film. Inspired by musicals like *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Dr. Dolittle* and *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, and motivated by his son's desire to see enchanting movies with people who looked like him, Talbert created this vibrant fantasy/family/musical. Originally targeted to be a theater piece, it has finally evolved into a live-action, CGI and animated feature film.

All is good in the fictional village of Cobbleton, where the very bright inventor Jeronicus (Justin Cornwell, TV's *Training Day*) is the toast of the town and proprietor of its treasured toy store, which boasts his

magical devices. He is loved by his wife Joanne (Sharon Rose), adored by daughter Jessica (Diaana Babnicova) and admired by the locals. However, his apprentice Gustafson (Miles Barrow) is a bit jealous of his success. And when one of Jeronicus' inventions, a mini robotic man toy named "Don Juan Diego" (Ricky Martin), tempts the young man into a diabolical scheme, trouble ensues.

Many years go by and the much older Jeronicus (Forest Whitaker) is a shadow of himself. Depressed, lethargic, lonely, no confidence and washed up in a dusty old toy store now a pawn shop. Meanwhile, the adult Gustafson (Keegan-Michael Key) thrives; he's famous for inventions he calls his own. But are they? Darkness shrouds the elderly Jeronicus, until one day he is visited by a little girl named Journey (Madalen Mills). Could she be the secret to his revival?

Within the first five minutes, the most noticeable element of this slick production is the supreme coordination of the singers, dancers, extras and sets. Each musical piece is its own wonderland, perfectly sung by lead performers and impressively choreographed against backdrops equal to those in a Tony Award-winning show.

The film's vibe has a very Broadwayish, pop, modern feel. Credit the catchy, melodic, feel-good songs to a notable array of talented musicians: Grammy-winning producer/songwriter Philip Lawrence, Grammy nominees Davy Nathan and Michael Diskint and John Legend.

The gimmick of a precious book of inventions creates an inciting incident that pulls the main characters away from happy land into drama. The devilishness of the Don Juan

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Have a news tip?
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Jingle Jangle movie

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Diego character provides an evil antagonist angle that the script needed. As the incorrigible Don Juan coaxes Gustafson, like the devil tempting a wretched soul, he says: "It isn't stealing when you borrow indefinitely." Yeah, uh huh.

If the production seems a bit long winded, it's because it takes 2 hours and 2 minutes to unwind. Sharper, tougher editing would make what's on view even more child friendly. That imperfection is counterbalanced by the film's sage themes: the moral will triumph over the immoral and finding self-belief in the bleakest times is a must.

PROBLEM SOLVED

The Governor's Ball offered me a refund but then reneged

By Christopher Elliott

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Q: I had purchased tickets to the Governor's Ball Music Festival in New York, which cost me \$330. I received an email on March 26 that it was canceled due to the COVID-19 virus. In the email, it said to click a link for refund information. But when I initially saw the email about the cancellation, I didn't click the link right away as I was still sad about the cancellation and processing the news.

On April 14, I clicked the link to refund information, which is actually a series of clicks and links before it actually brings you to the page with the information you need. It said that refunds were only allowed to be requested until April 10. There was supposed to be a refund button on my order page if I requested a refund in the short time period they had allotted.

But by the time I tried to get my refund, the button was no longer there.

I messaged the festival's Instagram account explaining that I need to request a refund. I told them I didn't know about the short deadline until it was too late. I also said my family really needs the money right now. They sent me the most generic response that made me think they didn't even read the email. They said that I missed the refund deadline and that I can use my order to attend next year's festival. Can you help? - Tala Cohen, Hamden, Conn.

A: The Governor's Ball should have given you more time to decide between a refund and ticket credit. It should have also clearly disclosed the deadline for deciding. And, most importantly, it should have made the default a refund, not a ticket credit.

Your case serves as an important reminder to act

quickly when a company offers a refund. You can't assume the offer will last forever. (In fact, it rarely does.) Looking back, you probably wish you'd taken a little less time to process the cancellation news. You missed your deadline by only four days. I've seen a lot of businesses do what the Governor's Ball did.

Remember, they want to do everything they can to keep your money. So, from their perspective, imposing a short deadline and automatically choosing a credit makes perfect sense - at least financially. But it makes zero sense from a customer service perspective. I reached out to the Governor's Ball on your behalf. After several weeks, a manager contacted you and agreed to refund your \$330 as "an exception."

Get help by contacting Christopher Elliott at <http://www.elliott.org/help>.



Town of Chapel Hill approves affordable housing funding plan

STAFF REPORTS

The Chapel Hill Town Council has approved \$513,395 in funding to support three affordable housing projects. The approved funding plan will support construction of new, affordable rental housing, predevelopment and site improvement activities, and provide rental housing subsidies. The projects will add approximately 125 affordable homes in Chapel Hill, providing homeownership and rental opportunities for households with a range of incomes, and provide stable housing for households at threat of or experiencing homelessness.

MASTER LEASING PROGRAM
The \$140,000 awarded by the Town for Community Home Trust's

master leasing program will assist with monthly rents, security deposits, and utilities for families living in eight Community Home Trust subsidized apartments at reduced rates over a two-year period. Community Home Trust will lease near-market-rate apartments and sublease them to extremely low-income individuals and families who are either experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness or face obstacles to renting in the private market.

PEACH APARTMENTS DEVELOPMENT
The \$200,000 awarded to EmPOWERment, Inc., will assist with the construction of 10 rental units in the Pine Knolls Neighborhood. The project will address a specific rental gap that continues to go

unmet: families earning less than 60% area median income or \$54,000 annually for a family of four.

HOMESTEAD ROAD DEVELOPMENT
The Town's 2200 Homestead Road project was awarded \$173,395 of funding to develop a mutually supportive mixed-income community with a range of housing types.

This community will increase the availability of homeownership and rental housing for households with a range of incomes, provide housing for vulnerable populations, and ensure long-term affordability. This project includes an innovative partnership among affordable housing developers' Self-Help, Habitat for Humanity of Orange County, CASA, and Community Home Trust.

SENIOR CORNER



Eat healthy and stay active.

Five tips for managing high cholesterol

FAMILY FEATURES

High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke, but typically shows no symptoms.

Understanding the role cholesterol plays, potential risk factors and how to manage it are important aspects of protecting your heart health.

LDL cholesterol (low-density lipoprotein) is considered "bad" cholesterol because it contributes to fat buildup in the arteries while HDL cholesterol (high-density lipoprotein) is considered "good" cholesterol as it can carry LDL cholesterol away from the arteries to be broken down and passed from the body.

The LDL cholesterol level is important to monitor and is optimal when it is less than 100 for otherwise healthy people, according to the American Heart Association, which recommends adults age 20 or older should have their cholesterol and other risk factors checked every four to six years by their primary care physician with a simple blood test.

Cholesterol management is not one size fits all, so those who have already experienced a heart attack or stroke, or have family history of high cholesterol, may need to have their cholesterol levels and risk factors checked more often, and may need to take lifestyle changes or take prescribed medication

to help manage cholesterol levels.

Make informed decisions about managing your cholesterol levels and overall health with these tips from the American Heart Association's "Check. Change. Control. Cholesterol" program, nationally supported by Amgen:

* **Assess your risk.** Your health care professional can help determine your risk for a cardiovascular event like heart attack or stroke and help manage your cholesterol as one aspect of preventive care.

Your medical and family history and your lifestyle provide important clues about your risk level. Risk is elevated for people who have had a heart attack or stroke; blockages in the arteries of the heart, neck or legs; chronic inflammatory disease; kidney disease; or other medical concerns.

* **Eat a heart-healthy diet.** From a dietary standpoint, one of the best ways to lower your cholesterol is to avoid foods with saturated fat and trans-fat. Limit saturated fat to 5% to 6% of your daily calories and avoid trans-fat, which means limiting intake of processed or fatty meats and full-fat dairy products. Choose low-fat dairy products and lean proteins instead.

A heart-healthy diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, whole grains, lean vegetable or animal proteins and fish while limiting things like trans fats, sodium, pro-

cessed meats, refined carbohydrates and sugary foods and beverages. Eating this way may also help increase your fiber intake, which can help lower cholesterol levels by as much as 10%.

* **Be physically active.** A sedentary lifestyle lowers HDL cholesterol. Just 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise a week is enough to help lower both LDL cholesterol and high blood pressure.

Consider mixing up the options to keep your exercise routine engaging and prevent boredom. Try activities like brisk walking, swimming, bicycling or dancing.

* **Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.** Smoking lowers HDL cholesterol. What's more, when a person with unhealthy cholesterol levels also smokes, the risk of coronary heart disease increases more than it would otherwise. Smoking also compounds other risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Nonsmokers should avoid exposure to secondhand smoke as much as possible.

* **Lose weight.** Being overweight or obese tends to raise LDL cholesterol and lower HDL cholesterol. A weight loss of as little as 10% can help improve your cholesterol numbers.

Find more resources and tools to help manage your heart health and cholesterol at heart.org.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

CITY OF RALEIGH

Marchell Adams-David last week was named the City of Raleigh's next city manager. Adams-David was chosen from more than 60 candidates. She has worked as an assistant city manager



Adams-David

since 2014.

"This is certainly a big moment for me and my family, but, more importantly, this is a significant moment for our city," she said. "I hope to represent what change and progress can mean, and it is my goal that we can continue to build on the positive foundation we've already established and find new ways to expand how we connect

and serve our growing, diverse community moving forward."

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.

NCDHHS gets funding for suicide prevention

STAFF REPORTS

RALEIGH — The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services has received \$870,000 per year over the next five years for suicide prevention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's new Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program is the first to take a comprehensive public health approach that addresses family, community and societal issues that contribute to suicide.

North Carolina, along with nine other states, received funding to improve the timeliness of state surveillance data on emergency department visits for nonfatal firearm injuries. The funding is part of a new cooperative agreement with the CDC's Division of Violence Prevention for the Firearm Surveillance Through Emergency Rooms project, and includes partners at UNC's Carolina Center for Health Informatics and Injury Prevention Research Center.

With these grants, the NCDHHS will be better able to gather and analyze data for use in support of evidence-based interventions statewide to reduce suicide deaths and nonfatal firearm injuries.

Prior to the pandemic, suicide was a leading cause of death and continues to be a concern due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and North Carolina has seen an increase in phone calls into disaster crisis lines. This project is timely and can help to meet the needs through interventions focused on suicide prevention and to prepare for potential increased needs

as the pandemic continues.

"It has only been in the past two decades that the concept of suicide prevention has expanded to recognize that positive changes in systems, communities and society can reduce suicide and suicidal injuries," said Assistant Secretary for Public Health Mark T. Benton.

Suicide is a growing public health crisis that took more than 48,000 lives in the United States in 2018, according to the CDC. In North Carolina, approximately 1,400 people died by suicide in '18. North Carolina's goal is to decrease suicide and self-inflicted injuries by 10% among our vulnerable populations, which have been identified as males, veterans and/or those living in rural communities,

where the burden of suicide is disproportionately higher.

The use of firearms is the leading method of suicide across these groups. Reducing suicide attempts and fatalities among these populations will substantially reduce the overall burden of suicide for North Carolinians. Our prioritized prevention strategies will focus on safe storage of lethal means (firearms) during periods of suicidal risk, increasing health care provider training and other interventions as identified.

Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or use the online Lifeline Crisis Chat. Both are free and confidential. You will be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.

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RECIPE OF THE WEEK



All-day holiday delights

FAMILY FEATURES

The holiday season and all its celebrating often means full days of visiting family and friends, opening gifts and enjoying moments with loved ones, even if much of that interaction may take place virtually this year. With all the laughter and happiness, you're bound to get hungry, and feeding the family throughout the day means you'll need recipe ideas ready for the occasion.

Centering your holiday meal around a turkey cooked to golden perfection is the ideal way to serve a feast. Without the right preparation and execution, however, your bird could fall short. To ensure your holiday dinner centerpiece lives up to expectations, follow these simple tips, from purchase to plate:

One Terrific Turkey

* Buy the right bird. Finding a turkey that's just the right size for your expected party is the start to a successful gathering. One common rule of thumb is the buy 1 pound of turkey per person; so, for a 10-person meal, purchase a 10-pound turkey. Don't forget that nearly everyone



loves leftovers, so you may consider buying a few pounds more than necessary.

* Be patient. If you opt for a frozen turkey, don't rush the thawing process. For larger turkeys, it can take days to defrost properly.

* Timing is everything. Finding the right amount of time for your turkey to spend in the oven is crucial but not always the easiest thing to do. For an 8- to 12-pound bird, aim for 2.5 to 3.5 hours; 12-16 pounds for 3.5 to 4 hours; 16-20 pounds for 4 to 4.5 hours, and so on. The key is bringing the turkey to a temperature reading of 170 F.

* Let it rest. Instead of pulling the turkey out of the oven and immediately carving it, give it a chance to rest for 20-30 minutes, which allows the juices to

soak into the meat and moisten it up.

Sweet Potato Casserole with Pecans and Toasted Marshmallows

¼ cup chopped pecans
1 pouch Honest Earth Mashed Sweet Potatoes
nonstick cooking spray
1-1/2 cups miniature marshmallows

Position oven rack in upper one-third of oven. Preheat oven to 350 F. In blender, blend pecans into sweet potatoes.

Divide between two 1-cup ramekins sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle with marshmallows and bake about 15 minutes or until marshmallows are toasted and browned.



It's never too early to start toy shopping.

How to select safe toys for kids this Christmas

STATEPOINT

Children look forward to opening their Christmas presents all year. However, there are some things to keep in mind to make sure gifts are safe and appropriate. To help you make savvy selections, PlaySafe.org from The Toy Association, the premier site for toy safety information, is offering the following guidance:

* **Avoid shady sellers:** This time of year can be especially costly, making it tempting to shop around. However, that low priced toy may not actually be "a good deal."

"U.S. toy safety laws are considered the gold standard. Before reaching your home, a toy is subjected to over 100 different safety standards and tests, and must be certified compliant by an independent testing laboratory," said Joan Lawrence, The Toy Association's "Toy Safety Mom" and senior vice president of standards and regulatory affairs. "The cheap imitations and counterfeits available online from illicit sellers haven't met these same safety standards."

A recent survey of U.S. parents who are their household's primary toy purchaser revealed that 71% of parents whose kids get Christmas gifts from grandparents who shop

online aren't completely confident that their elders know how to ensure that toys are from verified sellers. In the same survey, 19% of parents report that their child has received a knock-off toy that was bought online.

Parents should talk to gift purchasers about sticking with verified sellers. This includes buying directly from brand websites or by following provided links to official retailers selling a brand's products. For those who do choose to shop through lesser-known online sellers, checking out reviews and a product's legitimacy before making a purchase is essential.

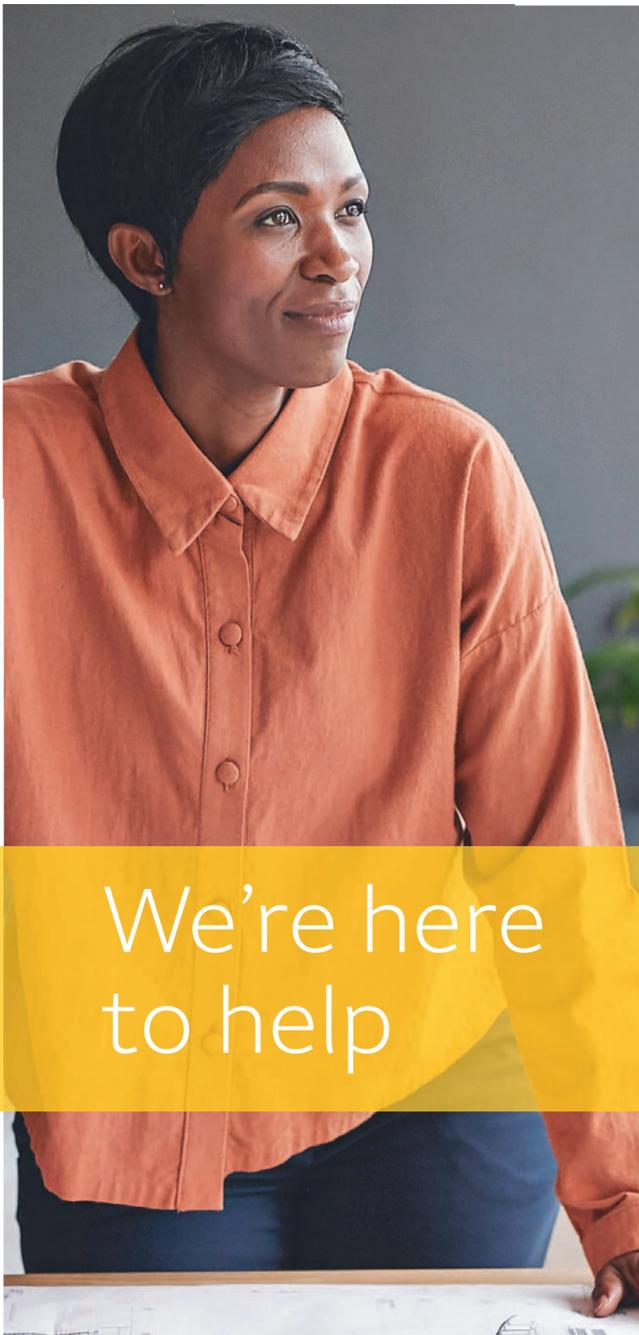
* **Follow age recommendations:** Playing with toys above a child's age grade can lead to misuse and possible injury. However, 26% of parents in The Toy Association survey report that their child has received a toy which was meant for kids who were older. Pay special attention to age grading on product labels and encourage family members who are also toy shopping to do the same. These are not merely suggestions, they're firm recommendations made by safety experts based on childhood developmental stages. Find this information on labels and in

product descriptions. If it's not available, that's a red flag and could mean the toy is illicit.

* **Pay attention to toys labeled 3+:** Toys labeled 3+ may contain small parts that can be a choking hazard for children under 3 or kids who still mouth toys. While these items often make great gifts for older kids, they should be stowed away after playtime to keep younger siblings safe. Not sure if a toy is small enough to be hazardous? Consider getting a Small Parts Tester to test toys and other small household objects.

* **Monitor playtime:** Kids find ways to play with things that are not toys, including objects that can be very dangerous if accidentally swallowed. The Christmas season may introduce new curiosities to the house (e.g. batteries, high-powered magnets, decorations, medications from visiting family members). On the other hand, there is a federal law that requires batteries in toys to be kept inaccessible, thanks to the use of a locking mechanism. Keep dangerous, non-toy items out of reach and monitor children during playtime.

For additional toy safety information, tips and resources, visit PlaySafe.org.



We're here to help

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Rebuilding: Where Should You Make Changes To Thrive In Tomorrow's Economy?

WELLS FARGO

All of us have had to adjust to living in a very different world. We're faced with the realization that COVID will affect our lives for the foreseeable future. Plans for personal finances, small businesses and even attending college have all been altered. Despite these unexpected life changes, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Wells Fargo is here to help you rebuild a stronger financial foundation, even in the midst of the unexpected.

How can I rebuild and grow my personal finances during challenging times?

Making any kind of savings or credit goals can feel overwhelming, but there are simple money management solutions that can assist in making your goals a reality. First, it's a good idea to conduct a financial health check-up to know where you currently stand. You can do this by reviewing your credit report to be on the lookout for any discrepancies, calculating your debt to income ratio, and assessing your emergency savings. It's also important to determine if you need to obtain health insurance or plan for retirement. Depending on the results of your financial health check-up, you may need to consider more proactive strategies to help you gain financial stability. We suggest starting by writing down your goals and creating an action plan. Starting small and building over time will make each goal more achievable.

How can students financially prepare for 2021?

Students heading to college may be rebuilding their education funds to prepare for next year's expenses. As a first step, we suggest adjusting your FAFSA to reflect any financial changes over the past months, which will be helpful if you need to appeal your school's financial aid offer. The majority of campuses

have moved to distance learning, which can be a helpful benefit when you're trying to plan your next semester costs. If you're still falling short, you can apply for emergency grants, such as the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. Your school's financial aid office can also connect you to many emerging micro-scholarships. If financial gaps remain, consider transferring to a lower-cost institution to make the most of your education funds.

What can my business do to stay on track in the new year?

The holidays and new year will look very different from last year. It's important to plan ahead with realistic sales projections that reflect how the weather, COVID spikes, and other variables will affect your business. Ensuring your production processes and social-distancing guidelines are streamlined can set your business up for success. It's helpful to have relationships with professional organizations, mentors, and even customers who can help you keep up with trends. These relationships go a long way when negotiating with vendors for discounts and learning how to best meet your consumers' needs.

As you rebuild today for an uncertain future, Wells Fargo is here to help you every step of the way. To learn more, visit wellsfargo.com/heretohelp.