



SPORTS

Wake Forest native signs with North Carolina Courage



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Inaugural Southeast Raleigh Legacy Gala a rousing success

The Triangle Tribune

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MERRY Christmas



>> THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE 2025 NEWSMAKERS OF THE YEAR

'For Us, By Us'

By Freda Freeman
CORRESPONDENT

RALEIGH – Three childhood friends who grew up in Southeast Raleigh are pooling their business acumen, skills, experience, and money to preserve the history and legacy of their beloved communities.

Terrell Midgett, LeVelle Moton and Clarence Mann joined forces in 2020 to form Raleigh Raised Development, a real estate development and

construction management company. Together they are building homes, renovating schools and supporting the community.

"We're Raleigh raised, we grew up together, we have a passion for the city and what we do. When we got in the business, we saw the changing of the communities, and we wanted to make sure that we were able to provide housing and opportunities," Midgett said.

Moton, North Carolina

Central's head men's basketball coach, lived in the Cottages of Idlewild while growing up. He recalled how neighbors watched out for him, even feeding him when he was hungry.

"It's super important to come back to a community that's been so good to me," Moton said. "I will never forget who I was and where I came from. Now that I've made it out, I've got to send the elevator back down."

Midgett, Moton and Mann believe home ownership is

key to controlling your destiny, and they want to help more Black people own their homes.

"The way that we help our community is by creating spaces and ownership for our community, because if you own the community and you own the spaces and you own the uses that go on in the community, then nobody can tell you any different what goes on in that com-

Please see TRIBUNE/2A



COURTESY

Left to right: LeVelle Moton, Clarence Mann and Terrell Midgett.



Mark Lee, left, educates attendees on the legacy of Hayti.



AG Jeff Jackson reaches settlement with Hyundai and Kia over car thefts

STAFF REPORTS

RALEIGH – Attorney General Jeff Jackson and 35 other bipartisan attorneys general reached a settlement with Hyundai and Kia for selling millions of vehicles across the country that didn't have industry-standard, anti-theft technology, leading to a 10-fold jump in car thefts between 2020 and 2023.

"Hyundai and Kia could have made their cars harder to steal from the outset, but they chose not to," Jackson said. "This settlement means they're going to take steps to address the crimes caused by their mistake and repay customers for what they've lost."

Hyundai and Kia have agreed to:

* Equip all future vehicles sold in the United States with industry standard, engine-immobilizer, anti-theft technology.

* Offer free zinc-reinforced ignition cylinder protectors to owners or lessees of eligible vehicles, including vehicles that previously were only eligible for the companies' software update.

* Pay up to \$4.5 million in restitution to eligible consumers whose cars are damaged by thieves on or after April 29, 2025, and before the consumer has an opportunity to have the zinc-reinforced ignition cylinder protector installed.

* Pay \$4.5 million to the states to defray the costs of the investigation.

Hyundai and Kia chose not to include anti-theft engine-immobilizer technology in millions of their vehicles sold throughout the United States, including in North Carolina.

An engine immobilizer prevents thieves from starting a vehicle's engine without the vehicle's "smart" key, which stores the vehicle's electronic security code. In 2015, only 26% of the vehicles Kia and Hyundai sold in the United States were equipped with engine immobilizers, compared to 96% of the vehicles sold by other manufacturers.

Car thieves were able to easily access these vehicles' ignition cylinder and start these cars without a key. The thefts drastically increased, and many of the vehicles were used in connection with other crimes and were involved in many traffic collisions, some fatal.

Hyundai and Kia didn't respond until 2023, when they offered a software update on most of the affected vehicles and a zinc-reinforced ignition cylinder only for vehicles ineligible for the software update. Still, thieves were able to easily bypass the software update and

Please see SETTLEMENT/2A

Affordable housing crisis needs 'middle housing' for solutions

By Kylie Marsh

Kylie.marsh@triangletribune.com

DURHAM – Traditional West African dance, handmade quilts, and spoken word poetry were a taste of the recent Hayti Heritage Center's 50th anniversary open house. The Center is in the historically-Black Hayti neighborhood, which was the heart of what's treasured as Durham's former Black Wall Street.

Today, it hosts cultural and civic events like concerts, poetry slams and an art gallery. The Center adoringly reminisces the heyday of Black Durham and seeks to recreate it, which can be seen in artifacts preserved in various display cases and plaques throughout the building.

"The building was initially named Hayti Heritage Center after the island nation of Haiti

with regard to self-determination and beauty and love and culture and the arts," said Angel Dozier, marketing and guest experience manager.

The open house featured spoken word by Dasan Ahanu, founder of the Jambalaya Soul Slam; a tour of the building and oral history presentations by Andre Vann and Mark Lee; and

Please see HAYTI/2A

opment with prices ranging from \$215,000 to \$405,000. "Middle housing provides a replicable model for urban infill in neighborhoods nationwide," Bell said. "Hopefully, this won't be as unique as the years progress."

Some of the designs Bell showed featured shared driveways and closer distances between dwellings, but

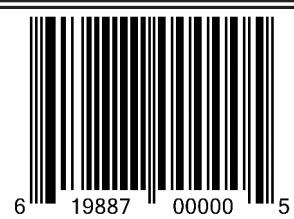
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Tribune newsmakers are Raleigh raised and proud

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munity," Mann said. "If you own that space, you determine what goes on in that community and you create something for your own people."

Moton and Mann credit Midgett with being the impetus for Raleigh Raised. Midgett and Moton have been friends since about 9 years old. Mann, who's 10 years younger, knew them through the Raleigh Boys Club. Later, Midgett, who worked in construction, and Mann, whose family was in real estate and land acquisition, started doing business together and worked on various projects from 2010 and 2020.

"Raleigh was really changing during that decade, and he said let the three of us get together and form the perfect company to impact the community, because all the redevelopment and development happening in Raleigh, the faces that were benefitting from the changes were not the faces that we were used to," Mann said.

Mann said no one should benefit from Raleigh's redevelopment more than the city's lifelong Black residents. "The folks who have legacy should have priority on receiving all

these changes, not people from out of town. The people who should benefit are the people who suffered in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s who slaved and went through Jim Crow and all this racism and segregation here in the city. They should be included in the positive change happening here in the city, not just folks from a different demographic, not people who 20, 30 years ago wouldn't even have come to our neighborhood," he said.

Raleigh Raised's planned developments include Cottages of Idlewild and Holt at Oberlin, which they broke ground on in August and September, respectively. Working with Raleigh Housing Authority, the company is drafting a master plan to build a mixed-use development that will provide opportunities for over 1,000 families. They are also remodeling several schools, including Brentwood Elementary School and East Garner Middle School in Raleigh.

"The Cottages of Idlewild will be long-term affordable housing. We partnered with the Raleigh Land Trust to keep the housing at the current affordable rates for the next 99 years. The families that stayed in

the area - such as the McDougalds, Motons, Jones, Pulleys, Blaylocks - will forever be a part of that community because all our projects are named after people in the community," Midgett said.

Holt at Oberlin will bring eight market rate townhomes and one single-family home to Oberlin Road in late 2026. Oberlin was the largest Reconstruction-era Black settlement in Wake County. One way Raleigh Raised hopes to preserve the legacy of neighborhoods is by naming its redevelopment projects after Black families who have lived in those communities for decades. Holt at Oberlin is named after the Holt family who led the fight for the desegregation of Raleigh public schools.

"I was taught your blessing is when you give. So, the more you give, the more you get in return," Mann said. "Especially coming from the community I come from, it's important to give back to those communities, because, frankly, they're in need. If we are blessed enough to be abundant enough to help folks, then we should do that. Your blessing comes from helping people."

Jackson reaches settlement with Hyundai and Kia

Continued from page 1A
thefts continued.

Customers who are eligible to have the zinc-reinforced ignition cylinder protector installed will be notified by the companies and will have a year from the date of that notice to schedule their appointment.

If you receive a notice, schedule your installation as soon as possible.

In addition, consumers who previously installed the software update on their vehicles or were scheduled to do so but still had their car stolen or attempted to be stolen on or after April 29, 2025, can file a claim for restitution for certain expenses.

For more information about eligibility and how to submit a claim for compensation, visit the following:

For Hyundai: Visit www.HKMultistateimmobilizersettlement.com

For Kia: Visit <https://customercare.kiausa.com/SWLD> or call (800) 333-4Kia(4542)

Hayti Heritage Center celebrates 50 years

Continued from page 1A

Mayor Bill Bell was also in attendance.

"A lot has happened in this community around Hayti, and this is a symbol of what it's all about," Bell said.

The event space, which is more "intimate," is the location of the Jambalaya Soul Slam, which meets every third Saturday of the month at 8 p.m.

The Bull City Slam Team emerged out of the Soul Slam and competes in national competitions.

The African American Quilting Circle meets every second Saturday of the month, and quilts are on display in the Lyda Moore Merrick Gallery in the lobby.

Merrick was a Black female activist and writer from Hayti who fought for the rights and dignity of Black disabled people, creating the Merrick/Washington Magazine for the Blind.

Danielle McDonald is a member of the quilting circle. She said she likes that everyone has their own creative style and uses it to tell their story.

"This is my happy place,"

she said. "This is where I de-stress and be creative and let loose."

Willa Brigham said the quilting circle, which is open to everyone, began through word of mouth. It now has over 60 members. "[Hayti] gave us a safe place to be, so this is home," she said.

Urban Renewal, a national project that razed Black neighborhoods deemed "blighted" in the 1950s to make way for the interstate highway system, destabilized Hayti.

"I think about the businesses that were lost," presenter Mark Lee lamented at the open house. A mural on the second floor states that the Durham Freeway "destroyed much of Hayti but replaced little," displacing over 400 families, and lost an estimated \$300 million in today's dollars. "The promise of a renewed Hayti never came."

"That's something that still shocks me every time that I do one of these tours," Lee said, "is how much we lost and how much we're still trying to regain."



An artist's rendition of The Cottages of Idlewild in Raleigh.

FILE PHOTO

Middle housing is needed for affordable housing

Continued from page 1A
community members welcome and love it, Bell said. The Cottages at Carey Park were designed within the existing fabric of the community, which minimizes disruptions.

"You always hear about developers coming and making decisions for communities; we're making decisions with communities," Bell said.

Fussell discussed the Cottages of Idlewild in Raleigh, an 18-unit cottage court of affordable units, up to 80% of area median income.

All designs presented are fee-simple, meaning homeowners purchase only the structure and not the land with it.

This is an increasingly popular form of property development and acquisition which protects homeowners from skyrocketing property tax costs. "Zoning is critical

when it comes to housing and addressing the lack of middle housing that our nation is facing," Bell said.

Zoning can be tricky for these types of developments, though. They can take a long time. For example, Fussell said the Raleigh Unified Development Ordinance allowed for cottage courts. The process for getting the Cottages at Idlewild began in 2021 and didn't break ground until this summer.

That said, they didn't have to go through a rezoning process. They were able to acquire city-owned land and build 18 units in partnership with Raleigh Raised Development, a Black-owned residential development company started by three friends who grew up in Southeast Raleigh.

"A lot of banks don't understand it," Fussell said. "If you're not making a profit, they don't understand." To get the project to the finish line, Fussell said RALT had to piece together funding from corporate donors, private donations and four different lenders. The city and county added approximately \$8 million.

Bell said there's frequent pushback from concerned community members when zoning is brought up, but constant communication is important. People just want to be informed and involved in the process. "Communication matters," she said. "No one's happy about construction, but that involves asking more questions."

Eli Spevak presented on several middle housing projects he has designed in Oregon. He also mentioned the policy changes that Portland and the state adopted that make it easier for developers to build these types of developments. Fussell said the North Carolina legislature is listening.

North Carolina Gov. Stein cancels Medicaid cuts amid legal battles

By Gary D. Robertson

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — North Carolina Democratic Gov. Josh Stein is canceling Medicaid reimbursement rate reductions he initiated over two months ago, preserving in the short term access to care for vulnerable patients while a political fight with Republican legislators to enact additional funding gets resolved.

Stein and state Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Dev Sangvai said the state agency would restore reimbursement rates

for doctors, hospitals and other medical providers of Medicaid services, which otherwise generally had been cut by 3% to 10% starting Oct. 1.

The governor had said the reductions, while unsettling for some Medicaid patients and providers, were needed to deal with a funding shortfall for Medicaid, which serves more than 3 million people in

the ninth-largest state. The shortfall is not directly related to President Donald Trump's new law that in part cuts Medicaid nationwide.

North Carolina, like other states, is carefully monitoring program spending in case of possible future financial demands because of it.

"What has not changed is the program doesn't have enough money. What has changed is that the courts have made very clear that the rates have to go back," Stein told The AP in an interview.

The first-year governor said the reductions were unavoidable because a stopgap spending measure the legislature approved in the summer fell \$319 million short of what was needed to address population changes and rising health care costs.

"The legislature forced these cuts onto the program," Stein said. "It was absolutely nothing that the de-

partment or I wanted to have happen."

But Republican legislators repeated that Stein's rate reductions were unnecessary and politically motivated, carried out early in the fiscal year when Medicaid funds were readily available. Stein "manufactured a crisis out of thin air, and regular North Carolinians paid the price for it," GOP state Rep. Larry Potts, a health budget writer, said in news release.

"I'm glad he's finally cleaning up his mess, but it should've never gotten this far."

Still, state House and Senate GOP leaders tried but could not work out this fall legislation to provide extra money that would buttress the program longer. Stein attempted to pressure lawmakers to approve funds — even by formally calling a special legislative session last month. But House

Please see MEDICAID/3A

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North Carolina Gov Stein cancels Medicaid cuts

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Speaker Destin Hall and Senate leader Phil Berger refused to convene it, saying Stein failed to meet qualifications for such an extraordinary meeting.

The governor was pushed to relent as Medicaid consumers such as

children with autism and providers like adult care homes successfully sued the health department so far and blocked certain rate reductions. A host of groups representing doctors and other service providers filed their own broader challenge.

As part of the reversal, Sangvai said in an interview, the providers will receive retroactively reimbursements for the difference between the reduced and full rates for claims filed after the reductions took effect.



North Carolina tax cuts reduce revenue that could support families

By Eric Tegethoff

PUBLIC NEWS SERVICE

New tax cuts go into effect next month in North Carolina, but critics say they are not making the state more affordable.

Starting next year, the state will reduce the income tax rate from 4.25% to 3.99%, and the corporate income tax rate from 2.25% to 2%.

Sally Hodges-Copple, public policy analyst with the North Carolina Budget and Tax Center, said the 1 in 5 North Carolina families who make less than \$25,000 a year will save only \$5, but the top 1% will see a cut of more than \$3,600 next year.

Hodges-Copple said the cuts will result in a \$1 billion loss in revenue for the state, and that money could have been used to support North Carolina

families.

"For example, that would be enough to do a 10% average raise for teachers over two years, to provide free school breakfast for students, and to increase child care subsidy rates closer to the cost of real care," she said.

Hodges-Copple added that revenue could have also been used for other priorities, such as increasing state employees' pay, funding the Housing Trust Fund or food assistance for 1.4 million people over four months.

The North Carolina General Assembly is at an impasse over next year's budget, in part because of differences on the planned income tax cut.

The House approved a plan to delay the cut, but the Senate's budget keeps it in place.

The reductions are part

of a longer process of decreasing taxes, including the complete phase-out of the corporate income tax by 2030. Hodges-Copple said the state has given up a lot of revenue since this process began.

"Due to tax cuts since 2013, North Carolina is missing out on \$18 billion in annual lost revenue," she said. "So, just imagine what we could have done with that 18 billion."

Without action from the General Assembly, the tax cuts are set to go into effect on January 1.

Hodges-Copple added that the highest income bracket will receive an even greater cut to their taxes from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed in Congress, which will reduce taxes by more than \$60,000 for North Carolina's top 1%.

The reductions are part

Four Trump appointees to take the bench in NC's federal district courts

By Brandon Kingdollar

NC NEWSLINE

The U.S. Senate confirmed four of President Donald Trump's nominees to North Carolina federal courts, twice as many as in his entire first term.

Senators voted to approve Lindsey Freeman and David Bragdon to serve the Middle District of North Carolina on Tuesday, and Matthew Orso and Susan Courtwright Rodriguez to serve the Western District of North Carolina on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively.

Though Trump had an outsized influence on the federal courts in other states during his first term, he appointed just two federal judges for North Carolina.

However, Trump entered office for his second term with twice as many vacancies to fill in North Carolina because the state's two Republican senators, Thom Tillis and Ted Budd, refused to negotiate with President Joe Biden on vacancies that opened in the state during his presidency.

That standoff began when Biden nominated North Carolina Solicitor General Ryan Park for the Fourth Circuit.

Tillis and Budd were staunchly opposed to Park's nomination and vowed to withhold their "blue slips" for any nominees in the state afterward. (Senate protocol requires the support of at least one senator for district judge nominees in their home state.)

After losing the 2024 election, Biden ultimately rescinded Park's nomination in a deal to advance several district court judges in other states. With this week's confirmation of the four Trump nominees, all active judges in the Middle District of North Carolina are Republican appointees, as are all but one in the Western District.

Each of the new judges has experience with the federal judiciary, either as clerks or through litigation, with Orso and Rodriguez succeeding judges they clerked for. All but Bragdon were able to win the support of several Democratic senators in addition to the unanimous support of Republicans.

Orso and Rodriguez, both approved with 57 votes, received the backing of five Democratic senators: Sen. Dick Durbin, Sen. Ruben Gallego, Sen. Tim Kaine, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen and Sen. Sheldon White-

house. Freeman's 60-39 vote was the most bipartisan, with eight senators who caucus with Democrats supporting her: Durbin, Kaine, Shaheen, Whitehouse, Sen. Maggie Hassan, Sen. Gary Peters, Sen. Angus King and Sen. Jackie Rosen.

Bragdon was confirmed in a 53-45 vote with only Republicans in favor.

Carl Tobias, a University of Richmond law professor and an expert on the federal courts, said North Carolina will benefit from having a full complement of judges after more than a year of vacancies.

"It's good for the courts. It's good for the judges," Tobias said. "It was important to get them filled. It's just unfortunate that Democrats didn't get to put any through because they made it all contingent on [Park's nomination]."

He added that Democrats should "feel pretty good" that three of the four nominees received bipartisan support in the Senate, and their backgrounds reflect the level of experience of traditional judicial nominees.

"They're probably more like establishment conservatives."

Six vaccines that can keep you safe this holiday season

By Jennifer Porter Gore

WORD IN BLACK

Christmas, Kwanzaa and other end-of-year holidays typically mean travel followed by close indoor contact with friends or loved ones — near-perfect conditions for nasty airborne viruses to spread. And when it comes to communicable illnesses, experts say, this holiday season is going to be a doozy.

Public health officials say winter is shaping up to be another three-virus merry-go-round, with rates of COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus all on the upswing in many regions of the country. The flu has been declared "prevalent" in some states, meaning the virus has infected so many people that health care workers should take extra precautions.

Still, given the mixed messages about vaccines coming from public health agencies under the control of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President Donald Trump's Health and Human Services secretary, deciding whether to get seasonal jabs can be confusing. To make things a bit easier, Word In Black researched the top six vaccines that experts recommend before hugging older relatives, bouncing babies on your knees or squeezing into airplanes and buses with fellow travelers.

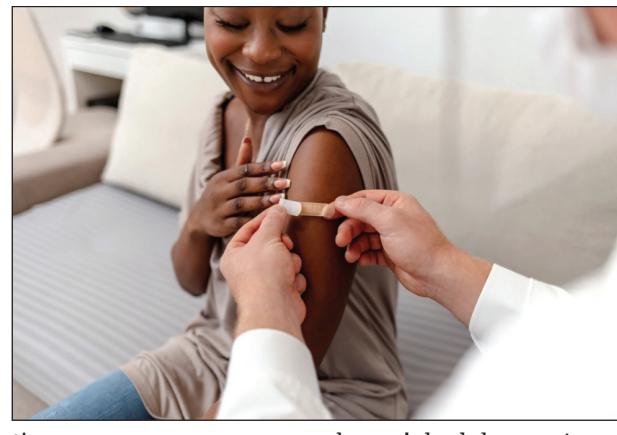
As always, consult a trusted health care professional for personal guidance.

* **Updated flu vaccine:** Seasonal flu still causes millions of illnesses and tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S. each year and is the deadliest vaccine-preventable disease besides COVID-19. The flu sent a record-setting number of people to the hospital during the 2024-25 season, even though flu shots are highly effective in reducing the risk of severe illness or hospitalization.

Without action from the General Assembly, the tax cuts are set to go into effect on January 1.

Hodges-Copple added that the highest income bracket will receive an even greater cut to their taxes from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed in Congress, which will reduce taxes by more than \$60,000 for North Carolina's top 1%.

The reductions are part



haven't had the vaccine, as well as pregnant women in their third trimester. Also, if it's been 10 years or more since your last tetanus shot, you've never had one, or can't remember if you have, ask your provider about getting a booster shot.

* **MMR and Varicella:** Outbreaks of measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox are on the rise, especially in communities with lower vaccination rates or among travelers. This year, the U.S. lost its status as having eradicated measles, and several outbreaks — some deadly — have occurred nationwide, most prominently in Texas and South Carolina.

* **Shingles vaccine:** Shingles is a reactivation of the chickenpox virus that can cause severe pain and long-lasting nerve damage. People don't catch shingles from others, but someone with shingles can transmit the virus that causes chickenpox to people who aren't immune.

* **Travel-specific vaccines:** Those headed overseas during the holidays should check the CDC's travel health site or visit a travel clinic at least four to six weeks before departure. Depending on destination and activities, experts may recommend:

* Hepatitis A and/or B

* Typhoid

* Yellow fever (for specific countries)

* Polio booster in areas where polio is still circulating

Fewer Black students missing school as attendance slowly rebounds from COVID-19

By Alvin Buyinza

WORD IN BLACK

Chronic absenteeism rates in K-12 schools, which skyrocketed after school reopened following the COVID-19 lockdown, have fallen over the last few months nationwide, and it's possible that some states could see their rates cut in half within two years.

That's according to a new report from EdTrust, a nonprofit that advocates for racial equity in education. The report analyzed attendance records and policies, investment plans, and disciplinary policies and practices across 22 states and Washington, D.C.

The report's findings indicate that chronic absenteeism rates from the 2022-23 academic year can be reduced by the 2027-28 school year if states continue to implement the suggestions outlined in the EdTrust report.

They include conducting early interventions, where students and parents are made aware of the risk of missing too many school days, after school tutoring, and using wraparound services that address students' mental health.

The report and its recommendations are especially important for curbing the disproportionate share of Black students who are missing from school.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Black students made up about 37% of students nationwide who were chronically absent — defined as missing at least 18 days of



Concerned mother and son listening to school principal.

school — during the 2022-23 school year. That's compared to around 22% of white students and 33% of Hispanic students.

Experts say Black students make up a larger share of chronically absent students because they tend to face a wider combination of challenges at home and in the classroom, including lack of transportation, food insecurity, poverty, suspensions and lack of school engagement, according to Attendance Works, a nonprofit that works to reduce chronic absenteeism.

Carl Felton III, an EdTrust policy analyst and the report's author, says chronic absenteeism is not just a reflection of a school's environment. He says it also reveals "the state of our students' experiences and that they need some support, and [that] support looks like more than just making them go to school."

Research shows that Black students who are chronically absent from school are less likely to graduate and more likely to struggle academically and

socially compared to their peers with more consistent attendance.

Part of what states and school districts have to do to lower their chronic absenteeism rates is to monitor school attendance data, Felton said. States that collect data are better positioned to direct resources to address issues among students who are the most chronically absent.

But some states may not be improving as quickly as EdTrust projected to meet the goal.

Felton said he knows many people are concerned that chronic absenteeism rates remain abnormally high. But he notes that even slower-than-expected progress in reducing absenteeism nationally represents thousands of students resuming their education and taking it seriously.

"That should not be taken lightly, but that should show us that the right things are happening, even if it's not happening as fast as folks want to see it," he said.

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BIDS



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MISCELLANEOUS

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A school and church on opposite sides of the American flag.

GRAPHIC BY EUNJI LEE

Vouchers raise concerns about the separation of church and state

By Rachel Moody
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

There are now over 100,000 Opportunity Scholarship recipients. The scholarship provides vouchers for K-12 students to attend North Carolina private schools. Last school year, more than 75% of the scholarship funds, or \$329 million, went to faith-based schools.

Some argue that tax dollars going toward religious private schools violates the principle of the separation of church and state. Others, like former Democratic state representative Marcus Brandon, disagree.

"I don't care what a parent chooses," Brandon said. "And if they choose a private school, if they choose a charter school or a public school, that is OK with me. As long as it's safe and the kid can thrive."

Brandon was one of the four primary sponsors of the Opportunity Scholarship Act that created the private school vouchers in 2013. Last November, state lawmakers increased funding for the program by \$463 million.

"In our country, a Muslim could start a school; a Buddhist can start a school, a Christian can start a school," said Brandon, also the executive director of CarolinaCAN, a pro-school choice advocacy group. "We would have to have state-sponsored religion, and the legislation would read only Christian schools can be started. And that is the only way that it is unconstitutional."

Rob Boston, the senior

adviser for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, supports parents who choose to send their children to private schools with their own money, but it is against taxpayer dollars going toward religious schools.

"Of course, the Supreme Court doesn't agree with us but when you tax everybody and turn that money over to a religious group that uses it to further its particular theological perspective, we believe that is in fact a backdoor form of a church tax and should be seen as a violation of separation of church and state," Boston said.

Recipients are awarded between \$3,458 and \$7,686, depending on household income, though there is no maximum limit. This money goes directly to the qualifying private school the student will attend for tuition and fees. According to data from the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority, at least 60% of eligible schools were faith-based last school year.

Mark Storslee, a UNC Chapel Hill associate law professor, says this does not violate the separation of church and state but is parental choice. He focuses on the First Amendment and its two religious clauses.

"We basically have on the establishment clause side, law kind of specifying that in many situations, funding for private religious schools among other schools is permissible," he said. "And we have on the free exercise side, basically

law saying that where a state chooses to fund private education, funding religious schools might not only be permitted but actually required."

Storslee said denying funding to religious private schools while funding secular private schools is discrimination.

"Most of the bullying that takes place in the public school," Brandon said. "What are they supposed to do? Are they supposed to kill themselves? And that's the reality for a lot of LGBT kids."

Boston countered that private schools aren't the solution. "A lot of private religious schools teach things that Americans ought to be concerned about," he said. "They might not teach modern science. They might teach creationism instead. They teach children that it is sinful and wrong to be LGBTQ plus."

Grace Christian School in Sanford received the largest amount from vouchers last year at more than \$5 million. The school's website states: "We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, fornication, adultery, and pornography are not in obedience to God's will and word."

"If you see a school that does not align — and that's not only with LGBT things — that's with just your personal values, period, then you would be a dummy to send your child there," Brandon said. "You have options."



FAMILY FEATURES

Salami



Prosciutto

Easy, elegant charcuterie boards for effortless holiday hosting

FAMILY FEATURES

When holiday occasions call for you to don your hosting cap, skip complicated appetizers and hors d'oeuvres to instead serve sustainable charcuterie with sommelier-approved wine pairings. After all, simplicity can still equal premium flavor with the right meats, cheeses and libations.

Prosciutto, Sottocenere and Aligote

Niman Ranch Prosciutto Firm cheese, such as Sottocenere Toasted crostini Aligote wine



Capocollo

On a cheese board or platter, arrange buttery, silken prosciutto with Sottocenere, a firm cheese speckled with black truffle, or any firm cheese striped with dill or paprika or washed in ale. To round out these savory flavors, pair with Aligote, a white burgundy from France that's citrusy but refined with hints of green apple and honeydew.

Genoa Salame, Vintage Grand Ewe and Syrah

Niman Ranch Genoa Salame Aged, firm sheep's cheese, such as Vintage Grand Ewe Olives Syrah wine

On a cheese board or platter, arrange genoa Salame, featuring the rich flavors pulled from the spices and wine used in its making. Pair with an aged, firm sheep's cheese such as Vintage Grand Ewe, with notes of toasted almond, maple syrup and cultured butter. The sweetness of the cheese gives way to the genoa Salame to be the star. Finish the board with skewered olives and serve with an unfussy red wine low in tannins like Syrah.

Capocollo, Aged sharp cheddar cheese Thyme-infused honey Txakoli wine

Start your cheese board or platter with savory capocollo laced with pockets of cured fat that balance out the meat. Its mild smokiness works well with an aged sharp cheddar for a salty, intriguing but complementary match.

Serve with a side of thyme-infused honey for herbaceous sweetness. Pair with Txakoli, a dry Spanish wine that's easy to drink with hints of salt and pine-sap.

AROUND THE TRIANGLE

RALEIGH MARKET

Handcrafted Holiday Market is Dec. 20-21, NC State Fairgrounds - Exposition Center, 4285 Trinity Road.

MEDITATION

World Meditation Day is Dec. 21, 9:30-11 a.m., Lake Lynn Community Center, 7921 Ray Road.

PAJAMA PARTY

Worthdale Holiday Pajama Giveaway is Dec. 21, 3-6 p.m., for ages 5-12, Worthdale Community Center, 1001 Cooper Road.

REOPENING

Liberation Bookstore will officially reopen Dec. 29 at 430 Hill St.

ASSISTANCE

Seniors needing help with their energy bills can apply online at www.ncdhs.gov or call their local department of social services.

DURHAM NATIVITY

Annual Black Nativity Durham is Dec. 19-21 at Hillside High School, 3727 Fayetteville St. Tickets: www.blacknativitydurban.com.

VIGIL

Homeless Memorial Vigil is Dec. 21, 7 p.m., Urban Ministries of Durham, 410 Liberty St.

NYE

A New Year's Eve celebration is Dec. 31, 10 p.m., Bar Virgile, 105 S. Mangum St. Tickets: www.eventbrite.com.

KWANZAA

The 40th annual Kwanzaa Festival is Jan. 1, 2 p.m., Durham Armory, 212 Foster St. Free to the public.

CHAMBER

Tickets are going fast for the Greater Durham Black Chamber of Commerce

CHAPEL HILL VIGIL

Orange County Homeless Memorial Vigil is Dec. 21, 5 p.m., Chapel Hill Cold Weather Cots Location, 828 MLK Boulevard.

CARRBORO KWANZAA

Kwanzaa celebration is Dec. 27, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Drakeford Library Complex, 203 S. Greensboro St. Free to the public.

MISC. AWARD

Better Business Bureau of Eastern Carolinas announces a new Women-in-Business Award. A \$1,000 grant will go to a female business owner or entrepreneur. Learn more at www.cognitoforms.com/BBFoms. Deadline: Jan. 5.

Salame

Aged, firm sheep's cheese, such as Vintage Grand Ewe Olives Syrah wine

Black Business Gala

February at the Durham Convention Center. Tickets: blackgala.eventbrite.com.

CHAPEL HILL VIGIL

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Genoa Salame, Vintage Grand Ewe and Syrah

Niman Ranch Genoa Salame Aged, firm sheep's cheese, such as Vintage Grand Ewe Olives Syrah wine

S.C. State's Berry has last laugh

"I keep receipts. All through the season, we had those conference calls. Nobody would ask me any questions. It was always directed to the two NFL guys. I get 1 or 2 questions, and they get 20 or 30. So I'm gonna say that. There are good football coaches that comes through HBCUs." —South Carolina State coach Chennis Berry.

See, you all thought I was exaggerating about those weekly MEAC conference calls. It was sickening the way those journalists fawned over DeSean Jackson and Michael Vick like they walked on water or something.

Coaches have massive egos.

They might say all the politically correct things in public, like how all the attention is good for the conference — blah, blah, blah — but inside is a different story.

BONITA It is funny,

BEST though, that Berry took offense since he's just two years into the conference. North Carolina Central coach Trei Oliver or former Howard coach Larry Scott should have been more irate as the longest tenured coaches at the time.

But South Carolina State was the defending conference champion, and Berry was treated like an afterthought on Monday mornings.

Think the media have learned their lesson? Probably not.

How many is that now?

As of Wednesday, seven HBCU schools were seeking football coaches. It's going to be interesting to see how many go the NFL route.

* Morehouse's hiring of former NFL pro Terance Mathis was a bust. The Maroon Tigers won just four games in his two seasons.

* Savannah State coach Aaron Kelton resigned right after the season ended. Kelton compiled a 16-24 overall and 11-20 SIAC record in four seasons. That he lasted four years is amazing with the swift hook athletics directors are pulling on coaches today.

* Albany State (and Benedict under second-year coach Ron Dickerson Jr.) are the main reasons Morehouse and Savannah State have openings. Dickerson guided the Tigers to the playoffs in his second year, and Quinn Gray led the Golden Rams to the national quarterfinals. Media reports had Gray, who officially resigned from ASU on Monday, heading to his alma mater Florida A&M, but no contract had been signed as of Wednesday.

* No one was probably more surprised at a pink slip than Langston coach Quinton Morgan after 10 seasons. Morgan posted a 68-33 overall record and 59-23 mark in conference play. He is the second winningest coach in program history. Granted the Lions finished 3-7 this season, but it was their first losing season since the shortened 2020 pandemic year.

* Former Bowie State coach Kyle Jackson had a hard act to follow after Damon Wilson. The Bulldogs never won a division title in his four seasons or earned a playoff berth. That was in stark contrast to the legacy Wilson left before heading to Morgan State.

* Since coach Larry Scott led Howard to its only Celebration Bowl appearance in 2023, the Bison have gone 9-15. The grumblings were getting louder. New Auburn coach Alex Golesh was the head coach at South Florida, Scott's alma mater. Golesh needed a tight ends coach, Scott's specialty before taking the Howard job. Bye.

* ESPN's 30 for 30 should do a show on Florida A&M since the departure of Willie Simons in 2023. There have been three presidents and five athletics directors since then. Not to mention the "donation" of \$237 million that wasn't.

James Colzie III was 12-12 in two seasons, including the Rattlers' first losing season (5-7) since 2017. Bye.

The Triangle Tribune Sports

December 21-27, 2025 | 6A

SOCCER



KATIE SCHROECK

Lauryn Thompson rose through the national youth ranks.

Courage sign Wake Forest native Lauryn Thompson through '29

STAFF REPORTS

CARY — The North Carolina Courage recently signed English Youth International forward Lauryn Thompson to a guaranteed contract through the 2029 NWSL season.

A Wake Forest native, Thompson shone for both the Courage and Indy Eleven academies as she rose through the youth ranks. Internationally, Thompson has been a key piece of the England Youth National Teams, most re-

cently competing for the U-19s in a trio of UEFA Women's Euro Qualifying matches.

"I am so excited to be signing for the Courage. Getting the opportunity to play for the team I grew up watching, in front of my friends and family, is incredibly special. Starting my professional career here is a dream come true," Thompson said.

Thompson played a key role for the England U-19 squad during the October window, starting two of the

three matches and scoring two goals as a substitute against Estonia. Previously, Thompson shone at the 2024 U-17 World Cup, scoring one goal as England finished fourth at the tournament.

"Lauryn is an exceptional young player, and we're excited she and her family have put their trust in us for the next phase of her development on and off the field. This is a proud moment for Lauryn and a meaningful one for our club as we continue to invest in local, tal-

ented players," Courage Chief Soccer Officer Ceri Bowley said. "With roots here in North Carolina, Lauryn's belief in us and desire to be here can't be overstated. This contract is the first step in what we believe will be a bright career."

Thompson joins the Courage's already young roster, which now features six players 21 or under, including Aline Gomes, Manaka Matsukubo, Shinomi Koyama, Riley Jackson, Sydney Schmidt, and now Thompson.

HBCU FOOTBALL

Seven openings and counting

By Bonitta Best
editor@triangletribune.com

The 2025 HBCU FCS champion has been crowned and in dramatic fashion.

What started out looking like a rout turned into a four-overtime classic, with a little controversy on the side.

South Carolina State won its second Cricket Celebration Bowl in five years with two different coaches: Buddy Pough and Chennis Berry.

Howard

Coach Larry Scott shocked Bison nation this week after announcing his departure for Auburn as tight ends coach.

Scott coached Howard for six seasons (23-37), winning

two regular season titles and finishing runner-up in the 2023 Cricket Celebration Bowl. Before Howard, he coached tight ends at Florida and was the first Black offensive coordinator at Tennessee in 2017.

SIAC

Morehouse football coach Terance Mathis and offensive line coach Bob Whitfield were released last week. Mathis, a star NFL player, led the Maroon Tigers to 4-16 (4-12 SIAC) in two seasons. Assistant head coach George Copeland has been appointed interim.

"The gentlemen have served with enthusiasm



COURTESY
Howard coach Larry Scott has taken his talents elsewhere. throughout their time at Morehouse, and we wish them the very best in their next endeavors," director of athletics Harold Ellis said. "We are committed to strengthening our programs

Please see SEVEN/7A

COLLEGE CORNER

WSSU women continue their basketball rebound

CIAA women's basketball continues to impress.

Virginia Union, Winston-Salem State and Claflin all have one-loss records, with Bowie State and Fayetteville State right behind with two losses.

VUU, WSSU and Claflin are undefeated in the conference. The Rams (8-1, 1-0) have surpassed their win total of last year's 6-20 season under first-year coach Tierra Terry.

On the men's side, the Panthers haven't lost since their season opener to Millersville. VUU (10-1) had a big win over

West Liberty last month. WLU has been a thorn in the conference's side since the regional postseason tournament goes through there and CIAA teams can never get over the West Liberty hump. Hopefully, VUU's win means a change is coming.

WOMEN

N.C. Central

The Eagles (2-9) ended a seven-game losing streak with a hard-fought 61-51 win at Queens University Wednesday. It was the first-ever

Please see WSSU/7A



Southeast Raleigh Legacy Gala

The Black Chamber of Raleigh and the Men of Southeast Raleigh hosted their inaugural Southeast Raleigh Legacy Gala, which was a sold-out success. Southeast Raleigh community members dressed to kill while showcasing the power of partnerships and community spirit.

COURTESY OF BLACK CHAMBER RALEIGH

