

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT WORKS

By Frederick A. Hurst



688 Boston Road

“IF WE ARE FACING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION...”

“We are moving in the right direction and we must keep pressing forward! So, I urge all of you – parents, students, teachers and administrators – to refresh and reinvigorate our commitment to teaching and learning as we approach the last leg of the 2011-2012 school year.”

By Dr. Alan J. Ingram – 6

MARSHALL G. JONES: HE NEVER GAVE UP

“Marshall Jones was raised by an aunt and uncle on a duck farm on Long Island. His father, who was in the Navy, was not part of his life until Marshall was an adult. His mother moved to New York to get a better job when he was three. Marshall’s uncle, a mentor of sorts, told the youth: “When you grow up, work with your mind, not just your hands. Do the best you can in school. Then you will be successful and have a good life.”

By Carroll G. Lamb – 7

HEART ASSOCIATION COMBATS STROKE IN AFRICAN AMERICANS...

“African Americans are twice as likely to have a first-ever stroke compared to Caucasians, and cardiovascular disease, including stroke, is the leading cause of death for African-American men and women, killing nearly 100,000 annually in the United States.”

By Nikki Burnett – 12

‘REVERSE RACISM’ DOES NOT EXIST, THE ‘RACE CARD’ IS NOT IN THE DECK AND ‘POST RACIAL AMERICA’ HAS NOT BEEN BUILT YET

By Rev. Talbert Swan II – 13

MY LOVELY LADY LUMPS

“I have not sucked in my stomach in four months. I consume carbohydrates with no regret. My waistline has completely disappeared and I have never felt cuter.”

By Lynnette Johnson – 28

COOKE GILCHRIST: A MAN OF PRINCIPALS WHO STOOD AGAINST RACISM

“Are you now asking yourself, who the heck was “Cookie Gilchrist?” If you don’t know I will gladly tell you...”

By Reginald Grant – 31



Don Eversley, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the City of Bridgeport

Don Eversley leaves his Bridgeport, Connecticut job as Director of Planning and Economic Development each day and, heading home, exits his commuter train at his station at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 125th Street in Harlem, New York. He rises each week-day morning and travels by train in the opposite direction to his Bridgeport job to which he brings the unique perspective of a seasoned outsider and provides

a working model of at least one of the activities that is making Bridgeport thrive.

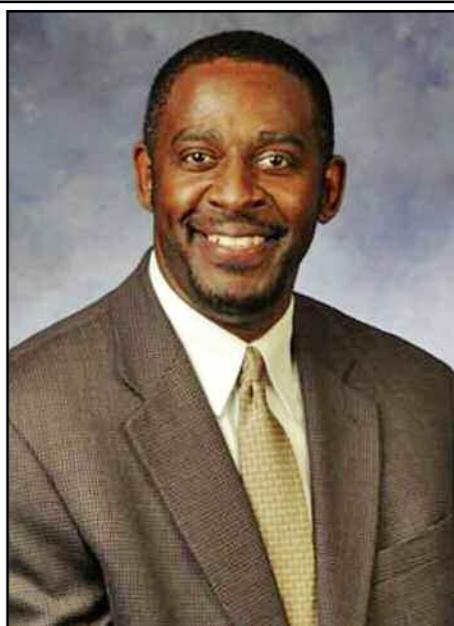
Don was working in the Bronx County Economic Development Department when he was recruited in 2004 by the reform-minded mayor of Providence, Rhode Island to become its economic development director. Former mayor Buddy Cianci had just gone to prison and the new mayor wanted to change the face of econom-

ic development by appointing an outsider to the director position and Don was his choice.

Of the many smaller industrial cities that fell into blight and dysfunction from the 60s through the 80s Providence, as Eversley points out, is probably one of the best examples of economic revival. Its revival began in late 90s. One of the major early developments was the demolition of an old unwieldy downtown train station and its replacement by a smaller one that left many acres available for development. Another was the uncovering of the underground Providence River which allowed for the creation of walkways and bridges and leisure space that made downtown more appealing. Soon Providence began to dramatically expand its commercial office space and downtown residential housing and capped it off with a multi-use downtown mall located on the major bus line that featured shops, movie theatres and more.

Providence residents and suburbanites as well were attracted to downtown frequenting not just the mall but the many businesses that grew up around it to service the visi-

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Kirk Smith, President & CEO, YMCA of Greater Springfield

The great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Our lives begin to end the day we

CALL TO THE CAUSE

By Kirk Smith, President & CEO, YMCA of Greater Springfield

become silent about things that matter.” As I think about the education crisis here in Springfield, these words ring very true to me.

Not a day goes by that I am not reminded of tremendous achievement disparities that exist from one school district to another within our region. Whereas our high school students in Wilbraham and Hampden are graduating at an impressive rate of 97 percent, their peers in Springfield are dropping out of school at a rate of 53 percent! Considering that the unemployment rate for high school dropouts stands at an alarming 15 percent, while the rate for col-

lege graduates is down to 4 percent, these facts are incredibly distressing.

Recently, many of us experienced significant hardships due to the snow storm that left so many without power for extended periods of time. For many, this was a time of great difficulty, accompanied by an ambitious response – even outrage – among people in positions of power who pulled out all the stops to attract the help we needed to get our community members back on their feet. We experienced the best of what can happen when a community comes together in the face of disaster.

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SEAFOOD FRAUD

An investigation by *The Boston Globe* (January 1, 2012) revealed, through DNA analysis, that 48% of 187 seafood restaurants in Massachusetts routinely serve fish that is not what the menu says it is. As a result, customers pay for one variety and are served less expensive ones. Not surprisingly, the State Legislature's Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure has scheduled a public hearing to address fish mislabeling in Massachusetts. How sad!

OIL, OIL AND MORE OIL!

For the first time ever, the top export of the United States is oil and for the first time in more than 60 years it is exporting (sending out of the country) more oil than it is importing (bringing into the country), making some wonder why we don't just keep some of that oil we are sending to other countries and lower our own gas and heating oil prices. You can bet the answer is "profit."

HARLEM'S HISTORIC SHIFT

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Harlem may soon lose its African American seat now that there are more Hispanics than African Americans in Harlem, which is in a Congressional district that has been represented by Adam Clayton Powell and Charlie Rangel for seven decades.

SO SAD!

After Juliet Steer, an African American, was buried in a Jewish church cemetery in Colchester, Connecticut, a seventy-two year-old White Jewish member of the church filed a law-

suit to have her remains exhumed and removed from the cemetery under the pretext that Steer was not Jewish even though the church had voted to set aside a section of the cemetery for non-Jewish people who were not members of the congregation. The seventy-two year old voted for the new section even though her lawsuit claimed that the burial was against church rules and even though two White non-Jewish people had purchased plots in the section who were not included in her lawsuit. The complainant, who had been overheard making derogatory racial remarks about Steer, protested vigorously when the lawyer representing the church filed a court document alleging that she filed the suit only because Steer was Black. (*Sunday Republican*, January 12, 2012)

SO SAD!

No less a behemoth than the Bank of America charged with race discrimination! To be fair, its Countrywide Bank unit, which it purchased in 2008 during the financial crises, made housing loans to 20,000 African American and Hispanic customers before the purchase at higher interest and fee rates than it charged to White customers with similar income and credit histories. Bank of America settled a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice for \$335 million. (*U.S.A. Today*, December 21, 2011)

SO SAD!

The Greater Springfield NAACP called for the resignation of an Easthampton City Councilor who said, "Where's a Puerto Rican when you need one," after he and his White colleague were accidentally locked out of a

meeting room.

I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE

I couldn't help but notice the contrast between the recent closing of Springfield's Sitar Indian restaurant on Main Street in downtown that followed the closing of several others in the area with the burgeoning and bustling restaurant industry in downtown Bridgeport that I wrote about in last month's front page article.

LEGALIZATION!

At a regional conference in Mexico, leaders of 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries concluded that "the authorities in consumer countries should explore all possible alternatives to eliminating exorbitant profits of criminals, including regulatory or market options (decriminalization). Former presidents of Brazil, Mexico and Colombia called for "the legalization of marijuana and an overhaul of U.S. thinking on the 40-year drug war, which has cost a trillion dollars by some estimates but has done little to reduce supply and demand." Presidents from Bolivia to Mexico say that the U.S. government is "failing to control the nation's hunger for narcotics, even as the U.S. politicians lecture Latin

America on how to confront its problems..." And Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega said, "All the money, regardless how much it is multiplied, and all the blood, no matter how much is spilled, will not stop the

drug trade as long as the north continues consuming." (*Houston Chronicle*, December 25, 2011)

IT OFTEN STARTS WITH AN AURA OF LEGITIMACY

In a December editorial, *The Wall Street Journal* (December 30, 2011) accused U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder of playing racial politics for invoking the section of the Voter Rights Act against South Carolina that requires Justice Department approval ("pre-clearance") before certain states with a history of interfering with the right of minorities to vote are allowed to change their election laws. South Carolina's new law, requiring voters to show a particular type of state I.D., is similar to laws recently passed in many other states, such as Indiana and Georgia, and detractors say the laws reflect Republicans' efforts to reduce the minority vote. *The Wall Street Journal* claims that Holder's action against South Carolina is "...the grossest kind of racial politics." Because we know our history, we African Americans know better than to sit back and wait before questionable behavior that has an aura of legitimacy morphs into full blown racism. Go Holder!

GHANA SOARS!

"In 2011, Ghana's economy is forecast to grow

13.5%, a clip that exceeds every other country in the world except Qatar according to the International Monetary Fund.... Ghana's growth has made the (African) nation of 24 million Africa's newest middle-income country, joining Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. Nigeria will soon join them, economists forecast."

IT'S NOT THE BLACK; IT'S THE GREEN

Maryland's historically Black colleges – Morgan State University, Coppin State University, Bowie State University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore – are suing the state of Maryland claiming its higher education commission devoted millions of dollars over the decades to "traditionally White institutions" and failed to live up to a promise to provide comparable funds to the Black universities, thus depriving them of the opportunity to recruit and retain the best faculty and students who preferred the better kept White universities. The "promise" was in settlement of a 2006 court action in which the Commission's own study supported the Black Universities' claims. 6

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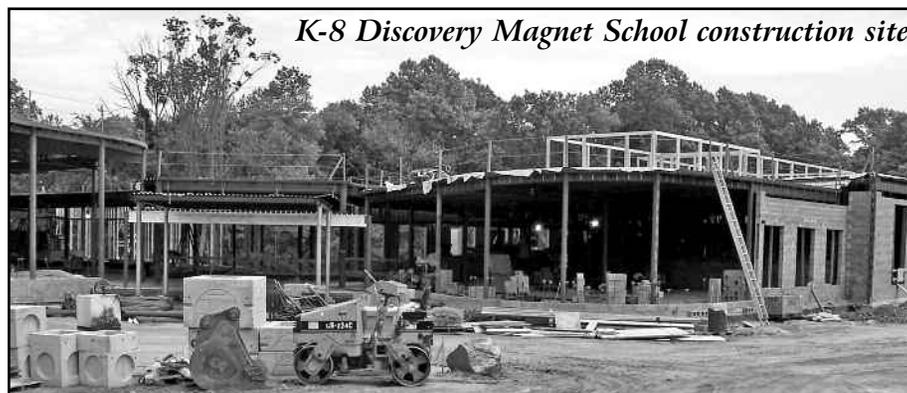
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tors and downtown's new residents. And, money, he noticed, instead of flowing out to the suburbs, began circulating within the downtown community and stayed around long enough to make a difference.

None of this small city transformation got by Eversley's inquiring mind. To the contrary. And his level of appreciation was only enhanced by his big-city experience. He came to appreciate how economic development was so much more doable in smaller cities, which made him that much more susceptible to a city of Bridgeport employment search for a Planning and Economic Development Director under the newly elected Mayor Bill Finch, who was planning to energize the ongoing rebirth of Bridgeport. Eversley applied and beat out the competition and, since 2008, has presided over Bridgeport's economic development progress in conjunction with other key members of the Finch administration.

Eversley was born in Brooklyn after his parents emigrated to the U.S. from Barbados. His mother was a school teacher and his father a civil engineer and, like him, his three siblings also earned professional degrees as their parents expected they would. His sister is a psychology professor, one brother an attorney and teacher and the other an engineer/sculpture.

After graduating from Brown University with a



K-8 Discovery Magnet School construction site

Developer Robert McCloud (left) and Mayor Bill Finch (right)



degree in African American Studies and psychology and securing a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Law, Eversley went to work in the private sector, first as a corporate attorney and

then in his own law practice while starting several side businesses before returning to the government in 2000 to work for the Bronx County Economic Development Corporation.

Eversley has very specific ideas about what makes a city strong starting with its downtown. He believes that downtown is the "front door" of a city and that the success or failure of downtown determines the success or failure of a city. It is the place outsiders use as a barometer for deciding

whether or not to visit the city and spend money. And City residents, he believes, have two neighborhoods, the one they live in and downtown, the latter of which they will use only if it has the right mix of attractions, including entertainment, jobs, a mix of retail stores and adequate transportation.

He is particularly proud of Bijou Square, a once almost completely destitute downtown area revived by private developer Phil Kuchma, who led the way for other entrepreneurs by renovating three old buildings in the Square, including the Bijou Theatre, which now thrives as a banquet hall, and building a 180-tenant residential structure whose ground floor commercial area is now fully occupied with four restaurants and four stores that provide 80 jobs. Antinozzi Associates, an architectural firm that moved to Bridgeport from Stratford, against the

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FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

Dr. Alan J. Ingram, Ed.D.,
Superintendent
of Springfield
Public Schools



“IF WE ARE FACING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, . . .”

By Alan J. Ingram

Believe it or not, we are quickly inching closer to the end of the school year.

For teachers, students and parents alike, it is not unusual for fatigue to begin to take its toll right around this time. The holidays seem a distant memory, the winter doldrums have set in, and this year, there is no February vacation to provide a week for us to re-charge our batteries.

However, as a community, we must continue to push forward with energy, resolve and determination. In the coming months, signs of spring will begin to sprout around us – a symbol of new life and endless possibilities. Let us continue to lift our faces towards that warm sun – even now as we may start to feel spent and wearied by the hustle and bustle of busy school days, the needs of our students or the many demands placed on our school district and administrators.

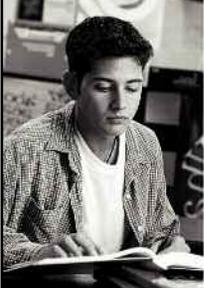
There is a saying that goes: *If we are facing in the right direction, all we have to do is keep on walking.*

We have made great strides in the right direction as a school district over the past several years. There has been an increase in student attendance and decrease in truancy. The number of core academic courses taught by highly qualified teachers has increased, as has the school district's performance in ELA/reading, math and science and technology. The number of students sitting for college-oriented testing such as the SATs and AP exams is also on the rise. And, combining all grades, Springfield Public Schools' MCAS performance outpaced the state's overall average gains in proficiency or above in English Language Arts and math.

We are moving in the right direction and we must keep pressing forward! So, I urge all of you – parents, students, teachers and administrators – to refresh and reinvigorate your commitment to teaching and learning as we approach the last leg of the 2011-2012

school year. Work and play hard. Pledge to engage in the education process in a new way, whether it means volunteering in your child's school, spending 10 extra minutes making written comments on student work or learning more about a club that interests you in your school.

Stay engaged and busy. Before you know it, spring will have sprung. 6



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PARENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

AT THE HEART OF WHAT REALLY MATTERS: WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

By Patricia Spradley

Valentine's Day is this month, so let's talk about matters of the **HEART**. But let's look at it from the perspective of those things that matter most to us. After all, what matters is what we focus on and what we focus on we *believe* matters. Everywhere we go we are confronted by things that are important—but to whom? What's important to me may not be important to you. We can ask ourselves what's important, but what does that really mean? What matter does the importance of one thing have over another? Who decides what's more important anyway? Does it mean that what we consider important may not really be important in the grand scheme of things?

We, from time to time, forget what's important to us and, consequently, should be at the **HEART** of what matters. We've become a society seeking fulfillment in physical things and tangibles so that often we overlook the everyday gifts that bring us the greatest joys. We lose sight of simple pleasures—clean air, ice cream, good company, kind words, a helping hand, leaves changing colors in fall, and quiet time. We take so many things for granted and concentrate so much on things that really don't matter at all!

Something that seems to be at the **HEART** of our focus one moment suddenly loses its luster the next. Perhaps what's truly important to each of us is simpler than we may believe. Perhaps it lies at the foundation of each of our

beings, found in the basic structure of who each of us are: our values and beliefs, our hopes and dreams, our ideals and our passions.

We are what we value and what we believe of ourselves. We are capable of as much or as little as we lead ourselves to believe. And taking stock of our lives is a good starting place. We have the gift of free-will to decide each day, each hour, and each minute what really is at the **HEART** of what matters.

There is a natural (biblical) order of what *should* take priority in our lives—God (or belief in a higher being), You, Spouse, Children, Family and Others. We tend to create our own order which brings about confusion and disarray in our lives. Simply put, however, when our whole

HEART is *first* focused on HIM, order is established for everything else that matters!

Next to our **HEARTS** we hold our ideals and our passions. And by living every day we find meaning in ourselves, meaning in our lives, and meaning in our **HEARTS**. We touch others every day with our words, our actions, and with our joy and our grief. And they in turn touch our **HEARTS** in similar ways. The world isn't always perfect but the choices we make are ours alone, based solidly upon our values and ideals. And subsequently we have the responsibility to look at ourselves each day and ask ourselves who we are and what is it that's truly important to each of us—at the **HEART** of what really matters! 6



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EDUCATION

EDUCATION & HOPE



Gianna Allentuck is an Adjustment Counselor at Elias Brookings School, Volunteer, Wife and Mother. For questions or comments on uniting in hope, call (703) 930-0243

“WON’T YOU BE MINE...?”

By Gianna Allentuck

In the month of February, we celebrate Valentine’s Day around which we discuss hearts, flowers, love and kisses. We cherish our relationships—old or new, family or friends or spouses/partners. We focus on hearts—pink, red, yellow, purple. Big or small. Fancy or simple. We purchase scripted cards or write our own

words to express our devotion. Florists, restaurants, and jewelers alike host Valentine’s specials that keep the economy of love in the black. Moms and Dads search the grocery shelves for the last batch of red and white cupcakes for the day’s Valentine’s party; Teachers and Students fill makeshift mailboxes with handmade or store-bought valentines adorned with Hello Kitty to Snoopy; and Colleagues and Staff fill the Staff lounge with pink frosted donuts speckled with red and white sprinkles. All scrambling to prepare for Cupid’s visit. This “craziness” of love usually lasts for a week or so. Our hearts open long enough to let in the reminders of why we love those we do...

But what of our hearts the other 364 days of the year? Are we a shade colder in our morning hug or afternoon greeting? Are we less apt to seek out a new friend in the lunchroom? Are we a smidge less confident in the conference room because the air is void of Valentine’s warmth? Of Cupid’s direction? The magic of our hearts

should not be the product line of a greeting card company or candy manufacturer. The spirit and energy our hearts pump forth, rather, should be the essence of our daily living. The peace and hope of an open heart—our compass.

In many ways, our hearts always have served as maps or metaphors for our successes. Often we hear folks saying, “she’s all heart” or “he’s got a huge heart” or “they won with heart.” Meaning the grandness of one’s heart can be more powerful than any skill or knowledge or material gifts bestowed upon society. In my twenties, following a victory over cancer, I wrote a book called “Welcome to My Heart” that chronicled my journey with the disease, but, more importantly, paid tribute to all those who supported me and opened their own hearts to me along the way.

Throughout my battle and today still, my reality was hugs filled with strength, healing hands filled with comfort, and hearts filled with love. My life a constant Valentine’s Day déjà

vu with Cupid’s arrow connecting me with partners in hope each and every day... From family and friends to doctors and nurses to colleagues and students and community volunteers. Each one a reflection of my own heart—warm and inviting. Compassionate and dedicated. Peaceful and positive. United in our efforts to serve our community.

I am blessed in my life in that my magic-markered shoebox that is the mailbox of my life is almost always full with valentines; but I continuously seek more partners in hope not only for Elias Brookings School, but for the city of Springfield. So please consider this message as your red paper heart on the lace doily with the candy hearts glued in the middle. With your voice, presence, heart, and time at any school or community center, you will be the ultimate valentine.

Won’t you be mine...? 6

INVENTOR OF THE MONTH

Carroll G. Lamb is Executive Director of The Institute of Black Invention & Technology, Inc. 413-256-6407 www.tibit.biz



MARSHALL G. JONES: HE NEVER GAVE UP

By Carroll G. Lamb

Many of us know about lasers from science fiction, such as the *Star Trek* and *Battlestar Galactica* series. Some people, however, make their living from them.

Marshall Jones, an international expert in laser technology, holds some 50 patents from the United States and 31 from other countries for his inventions affecting the use of lasers in various applications. He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a Coolidge Fellow at General Electric Global Research, where he is a



Marshall G. Jones

project leader. During his 37 years with GE, he has received many awards for his scientific work. He has also been honored with humanitarian awards, particularly for his work with children.

Marshall Jones was raised by an aunt and uncle on a duck farm on Long Island. His father, who was in the Navy, was not part of his life until Marshall was an adult. His mother moved to New York City to get a better job when he was three. Marshall’s uncle, a mentor of sorts, told the youth: “When you grow up, work

continues to page 8

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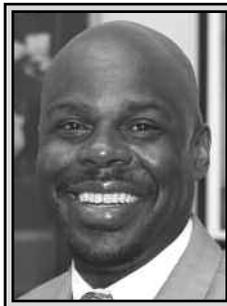
E D U C A T I O N

HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DO YOU HEAR THE ALARM?

PART II

By Kevin McCaskill



Kevin McCaskill is
Director of School
Design of Hartford
Public Schools

Last month I wrote about the plight of our young Black males. This issue is so pressing that a Part II on that same topic is warranted. The statistics, as you recall, are staggering and depressing. The numbers give us a sad indicator of future prospects for some of our young Black males. Last month's article ended with a rhetorical question of what can we do to stem the tide of this problem.

As school systems across the country work at break-neck speed to meet federal and state academic requirements (primarily state testing), very little is being done to meet the holistic needs of our young Black males (as well as our young Latino males and special education students). School programming has been so narrowed to obtaining skills to pass state tests across this fair country of ours, as opposed to championing an education system that develops inquiry, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills which are paramount for success in today's world. Don't get me wrong, testing is an important tool for assessing student acquisition of knowledge, facts, and figures and we as educators must be accountable for student outcomes.

But we need school programming that is holistic—

that is, an educational system that meets the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, and, in particular, the needs of one of our most vulnerable demographic groups: young Black males. This is especially vital during the middle school years. We must provide positive visions and examples of positive Black manhood (an example being Rites of Passage) and Blacks as professionals (i.e. career days/fairs, job shadowing programs).

Schools should provide appropriate activities in the form of athletics, the arts, music, and other areas of interest that capture the imagination of these students, as well as showcase hidden talents that would not show up on a test. This holistic approach should continue through the high school years in the form of career exploration, mentoring within the career exploration, continued exposure to extra-curricular activities, and college-ready programming that is part of the culture of the school. Additionally, counseling services should be readily available to tend to the social and emotional development of these young males.

We need community programming that not only captures the attention of young Black males,

but piques their curiosity and encourages their inquisitiveness, and programming that inspires them to succeed and makes them see that hard work, intellect and decorum are "cool" characteristics to have. This programming will work as a continuation of the values that are present in school and involves linking community organizations with larger institutions such as health care providers, business sectors (i.e. insurance, banking, etc.), partnerships with local colleges/universities, and local government.

Lastly, and certainly not least, parents must be part of the equation. Parents must work with schools and community organizations to keep the circle tight. As parents, we must continue to monitor the comings and goings of our boys, addressing and noting any changes that may affect their psyche and well-being. The sharing of information is paramount. We must leave no stone unturned. If we all do our part, change will come! 6

MARSHALL G. JONES: HE NEVER GAVE UP

continued from page 7

with your mind, not just your hands. Do the best you can in school. Then you will be successful and have a good life."

Dr. Jones did not reach his level of achievement easily. Among the challenges he faced:

- He was born tongue-tied, unnoticed at birth, and required an operation to fix the problem.
- Young Marshall struggled with reading and spelling, and repeated fourth grade.
- He wanted to be a pilot, but when it was learned that his eyesight was not perfect, this dream was abandoned.
- Although he was athletic—a teacher recommended him for a wrestling scholarship to Rochester Institute of Technology—Marshall tore knee ligaments and thus was no longer a good candidate.

Marshall excelled in math and science. Determined to go to college, he worked and took out student loans to pay for it. He graduated from Mohawk Valley Community College, in upstate New York, with a degree in mechanical engineering

technology. Inspired by his roommate, Marshall went on to the University of Michigan, from which he received his degree in mechanical engineering. After working at Brookhaven National Laboratory for several years, he entered UMass Amherst, and earned a Master's in mechanical engineering (1972) and a Doctorate (1974). Then Dr. Jones began his tenure at GE, and works there still.

Dr. Jones, the father of two, gives frequent talks at public schools, encouraging students to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through his demonstrations of lasers. He also exhorts them to develop a PLAN, which is an acronym:

- **Plan** and map out what you want to help you focus on your goals.
- **Learning** should be a constant, as is adapting to change, both critical for a career in technology development.
- **Attitude** is a hallmark of success.
- Be **Nice**; what goes around comes around.

Dr. Jones believes we can accomplish anything: "If you don't try," he says, "you'll never know how much you can do." 6

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

FINANCIAL "CENTS"

WHEN SHOULD YOU START TAKING SOCIAL SECURITY



Walter D. Woodgett can be reached at 413-827-8383 or talkincash@comcast.net

reach 70.

So, the question boils down to this: Should you start collecting Social Security early—thereby receiving smaller, but more numerous, checks—or later, when your checks will be bigger but fewer?

If you really need the money once you reach 62, you've already got your answer. But if you could potentially afford to wait, we recommend you view your decision through a **LENS**:

L: YOUR PROJECTED LIFESPAN — You can't see into the future, but given your family history and general health, you can make an educated guess about your projected longevity. If you're fairly confident that, once you reach 66, you've still got another two or more decades in front of you, you may want to consider delaying taking Social Security past age 62.

If you're of a certain age, the new year means you're that much closer to a day you may have anticipated with a combination of humor and resignation—specifically, the day you're eligible for Social Security. But just because you can take Social Security, it doesn't mean you must take it. So, should you?

Before we get to that question, let's review the basic rules governing Social Security payments. You can typically start collecting benefits at age 62, but you'll get only about 75% of what you'd receive if you waited until your "full" retirement age, which varies according to your birth year but is most likely 66. You'll get even bigger monthly checks if you delay collecting them until you're past 66, and you'll "max out" on your payments once you

By Walter D. Woodgett

E: YOUR EMPLOYMENT STATUS — If you're under full retirement age — between 62 and 66 — then for every two dollars you earn over \$14,640 (in 2012), you'll lose one dollar in Social Security benefits. In the months before you reach your full retirement age, for every three dollars you earn over \$38,880 (again, for 2012), you'll lose one dollar in benefits. But starting in the month you reach your full retirement age, you can earn as much as you want without losing any benefits.

N: YOUR NEED, INCLUDING YOUR OTHER SOURCES OF RETIREMENT INCOME — If you have a pension, or you've built substantial resources in your IRA, your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan, and you can support your income needs with modest withdrawals from these accounts, you might decide it's worthwhile to delay taking Social Security to

maximize your benefits. Remember that regardless of your Social Security decision, you typically would have to pay a 10% early withdrawal penalty if you started taking withdrawals from these accounts before you reach age 59½.

S: YOUR SPOUSE/MARITAL STATUS — If you're single, you basically just need to think of yourself when making this decision. But it's a different story if you're married. If you die first, your spouse can keep receiving his or her own Social Security benefit or receive yours — whichever is larger. Consequently, you and your spouse will want to coordinate when you take Social Security benefits so that you can maximize the benefit for the spouse likeliest to live longer. **6**

FINANCIALLY YOURS

IRS RELEASES ADJUSTMENTS TO 2012

TAX NUMBERS

By Samuel N. Wilson Jr.

ment age, there is no earnings limit.

- The "nanny tax" threshold increases to \$1,800 for 2012. If you pay household workers more than this amount during the year, you're responsible for payroll taxes.
- The "kiddie tax" threshold is unchanged for 2012. If your child under age 19 (under age 24 for students) has more than \$1,900 of unearned income this year (e.g., dividends and interest income), the excess could be taxed at your highest rate.
- The maximum individual retirement account (IRA) contribution you can make in 2012 remains unchanged at \$5,000 if you're under age 50 and at \$6,000 if you are 50 or older.
- The maximum amount of wages employees can put into a 401(k) plan increases to \$17,000. The

2012 maximum allowed for SIMPLE plans remains at \$11,500. If you are 50 or older, you can contribute up to \$22,500 to a 401(k) and \$14,000 to a SIMPLE plan.

- For 2012, the maximum amount that can be contributed to a health savings account (HSA) increases to

\$3,100 for individuals and \$6,250 for families.

Tax legislation could change these and other important tax numbers at any time. Before making important business and personal financial decisions this year, contact a professional for the latest rules. **6**

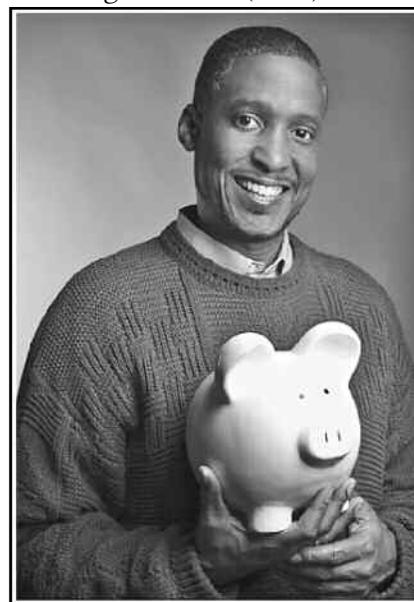


Samuel N. Wilson Jr., Certified Public Accountant, owns an accounting firm in Bridgeport, CT and is an investment advisor. He can be reached at samuel_wilson_cpa@sbcglobal.net or 203-368-6086.

FROM BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

The tax law requires that certain tax numbers be adjusted for inflation each year. Here are some of the 2012 tax numbers you'll need to use as you get started with this year's tax planning.

- The standard mileage rate for business driving remains at 55.5¢ per mile for 2012. The rate for medical and moving mileage decreases from 23.5¢ per mile to 23¢ per mile. The general rate for charitable driving remains at 14¢ per mile.
- The maximum earnings subject to social security tax increases to \$110,100. The earnings limit for those under full retirement age is \$14,640. For those at full retire-



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HEALTH

HEALTH MATTERS



Anika C. Johnson,
PhD (c), MPH, CLC
Hill Health Center
WIC Manager

-Your Health
Is My Wealth-

SENIOR ORAL HEALTH

By Anika C. Johnson

Good oral health allows us to adequately smell, chew and swallow. It also enhances speaking, taste and even the way we communicate (i.e. facial expressions). For valid reasons, most of the benefits, and even the educational materials, traditionally emphasize children's oral health.

It is important to educate young families about the value of oral health. Even though some dental benefits do not begin until children reach the age of 2 or 3, some dental experts are advocating professional oral care at the sight of the first tooth!

Although oral health advocacy in early life is essential, optimal oral health in the later years is just as important. One important reason is that people in their later years are more susceptible to diabetes. Diabetics should take special care of their teeth. In Massachusetts, 14% of the elderly have complete tooth loss (Better Oral Health Coalition for Massachusetts 2010).

One of the barriers for the elderly is access to oral healthcare. Often work-based dental coverage offers comprehensive benefits, whereas government-based coverage offers more limited benefits. Regardless, poor oral health and lack of professional care (attention to regular care) can affect the quality of one's life resulting in pain or difficulty eating.

Going back to the basics, dental plaque, which produces cavities, happens when bacteria in your mouth is mixed with sugar. Carbohydrates or sugary foods/drinks that contribute to plaque build up include bread, milk, chips, fruits, candy, rice and soda. Dental plaque sticks to the teeth and along the gum line. This mixture eats away tooth enamel and causes tooth decay. It should be noted that heredity

also might play a part in oral health.

Besides regular professional dental care, there are several things people can do daily to maintain oral health including:

- Brushing with fluorinated toothpaste at least twice
- Flossing between each tooth
- Trying to eat snacks over a short period of time rather than a long period
- Cleaning dentures or other oral appliances regularly

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From a nutritional standpoint, such foods as cheese have been known to be good for teeth. Low fat cheese options, such as Monterey Jack, Sharp Cheddar and Swiss may protect teeth from cavities. This occurs when there is an increase in saliva flow. Cheeses have the ability to lower acid levels and they also contain calcium and phosphorus which helps keep tooth enamel healthy. Fluids are also important.

An individual produces up to a quart of saliva daily if enough fluids are consumed. Saliva not only helps digest food but it protects teeth against tooth decay. By clearing the sugars out of the mouth, it reduces the time plaque can form around the mouth. Cheese, calcium, phosphorus (and fluoride) may also have a protective effect.

Dear Robust Reader,
Sometimes for optimal health to be a reality we have to look at the smaller details, like our teeth. The quality of our teeth can improve the quality of our lives.

Next month we will be discussing a way keep professionally tailored nutrition advice at your fingertips. Please forward your thoughts, comments and ideas, as they are important to me to: ajohn006@waldenu.edu attention: Anika 6

MEDICAL MOMENT



Dr. Shirley Jackson Whitaker is a kidney and bladder specialist trained in the comprehensive evaluation and treatment of high blood pressure, dialysis, electrolyte abnormalities, bladder and urinary incontinence.
www.drshirleywhitaker.com

Q: What is edema?

From: Iris of Springfield

A: Edema is the accumulation of watery fluid in tissues of the

body commonly in the feet and legs which is called peripheral edema. When the fluid accumulates in the lungs, it is called pulmonary edema or "heart failure." On a physical exam, if there is an indentation in the leg when it is pressed, this is called pitting edema. Systemic diseases involving the heart, liver and/or kidney often

cause the body to retain too much salt, which leads to the body retaining water. This water tends to leak out into the interstitial tissue space where it becomes edema. There is also non-pitting edema which is seen in problems involving the lymphatic system or hyperthyroidism. With this type of edema, there is no indentation of the skin when it is pressed.

Q: My father was recently told he had a "mini-stroke." What does that mean?

From: Sara B of Northampton

A: "Mini-stroke" is a temporary interruption of blood flow to the brain. It is also called a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA). The symptoms of the Mini-stroke/TIA are similar to those of a stroke. The difference is that a TIA does not cause permanent damage to brain tissue like a stroke would. A TIA may recur. With each TIA, there is an increased risk of a subsequent stroke. 6



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Helen R. Caulton-Harris
Director

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HEALTH

COMMUNITY

HEALTH MATTERS



*Doris Harris,
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Prevention Specialist
Caring Health
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HEART ASSOCIATION COMBATS STROKE IN AFRICAN AMERICANS DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Submitted by Nikki Burnett, Regional Vice President, Health Equity New England Region / Founders Affiliate, American Heart Association / American Stroke Association

African Americans are twice as likely to have a first-ever stroke compared to Caucasians, and cardiovascular disease, including stroke, is the leading cause of death for African-American men and women, killing nearly 100,000 annually in the United States. That is why during Black History Month and American Heart Month in February, the American Stroke Association, which is a division of the American Heart Association, is working to bring light to these staggering statistics and provide the tools to educate African-Americans on various ways they may reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease.

Stroke is a disease that affects the arteries leading to and within the brain and is the No. 4 cause of death of all citizens in the U.S. Stroke is also a leading cause of disability. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood (and oxygen) it needs, so it starts to die.

African Americans are at greater risk for cardiovascular diseases, including stroke, than any other ethnic group. Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death for African Americans. In fact:

- **53%** have high blood pressure diagnosed in their family
- **41%** have diabetes in their family
- **70%** feel knowledgeable about stroke, however, 75% gave an incorrect definition of stroke
- **88%** did believe that stroke would have a high impact on the quality of their life
- The prevalence of high blood pressure in African Americans in the United States is the **highest in the world.**

Only 31 percent of African Americans know the warning signs of stroke and knowing the signs of stroke is important as early intervention is most critical in effective stroke care. **Call 911 immediately at first sign of stroke.** Warning signs include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body;
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding;
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes;
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination;
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

During February – when both Black History Month is celebrated and American Heart Month is recognized—the American Stroke association offers a number of tools to prevent and overcome stroke. Power To End Stroke is an education and awareness campaign that embraces and celebrates the culture, energy, creativity and lifestyles of African Americans. Live better in seven easy steps and find out where you stand by taking the My Life Check at

www.powertoendstroke.org/mylifecheck

You can also download a toolkit for your place of worship at www.powertoendstroke.org/tools-power-sunday.html. The power is in your hands to prevent and overcome stroke, and the American Stroke Association will provide the information and tools to support you every step of the way.

For information on stroke call 800-4-STROKE or go to www.strokeassociation.org. For more information on the American Stroke Association's Power To End Stroke campaign visit www.powertoendstroke.org. **6**

LATIN@ GROOVE



Magdalena Gómez is the Co-founder and Artistic Director of Springfield's first and only Latin@ theater, Teatro V!da. Ms. Gómez has been a teaching artist for over 35 years.

A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION

By Magdalena Gómez

Springfield is a mecca of powerful women who work for social change, and 43-year-old Julia Ortiz is no exception. While juggling work and a family, Ortiz has worked her way up to graduate school “one course at a time.” She is currently getting her Master’s degree in Organizational Management and Leadership at Springfield College. “Many people don’t realize that you can go to college one course at a time; better to do it at a snail’s pace than not at all.”

A few years ago Ortiz needed a job and became a per diem interpreter. It was then she realized that at the core of all health disparities is the need for comprehensive language access. “First I want people to understand that an interpreter facilitates the communication process verbally, while a translator works with written materials. They are entirely different fields and require very different skills.”

In 1996, the U.S. Congress enacted the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which was created to protect the civil rights of patients, and which include the right to a professional interpreter and privacy at any health facility. Ortiz is clear on the issues: “HIPAA gets violated all the time. A patient’s right to privacy is violated the moment anyone other than a professional interpreter is asked to facilitate a verbal exchange between the health care provider and patient. This includes family members, friends, and any person other than a trained interpreter. In our own city, I’ve seen a janitor pulled aside in a hospital and asked to interpret private patient information.”

Ortiz explains: “There are health practitioners as well as patients who don’t know the HIPAA laws fully. Whenever anyone is functioning as an



Julia Ortiz

interpreter by default versus a trained interpreter, it may result in a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” Right to privacy in healthcare is a civil right. “Shoppers have customer service for complaints. Patients can demand patient advocates and social workers when their legal rights are not being applied. Many just don’t know it.”

Ortiz exemplifies how one person can make a difference. Until last year, The Area Health Education Center in Springfield used to train about 60 medical interpreters a year. Last year when the Springfield-based training was terminated, Ortiz took action: “I advocated for partnering with AHEC in the Berkshires, which remained active. As a result of Ortiz’s advocacy, the Berkshires AHEC hosted the training at Mercy Hospital last year and at Baystate’s Brightwood Health Center this year. “When you train with AHEC you get six college credits and are assured that it is licensed and certified by UMass Medical. Those credits might encourage you to continue your education in the field. Not all programs offer this. It’s important to research your program and be informed.”

Ortiz mentions a language access campaign that was created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts three years ago. “They were simple PSA’s that were available in many languages letting people know that it is one’s legal right to have an interpreter for health care. What happened to those commercials? I want to know.”

Yo tambien quiero saber. *(I also want to know. The Editor)* **6**

COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES



Rev. Talbert W. Swan, II is Pastor of The Spring Of Hope Church Of God In Christ

(This is a 4-part series that will continue in the March, April and May issues of Point of View)

Dear Pioneer Valley,

Please, stop using bankrupt and meaningless terms like “reverse racism,” “race-baiting,” “the race card” and “post-racial!” There are no such things! We do not live in a “post-racial” America. There’s no place that fits that description, especially not here in the Pioneer Valley. We do not live in a “post-racial era,” white folks are not victims of “reverse racism,” the deck of cards we have all been dealt has no “race card” in it and neither civil rights activists, such as myself, nor civil rights organizations, such as the NAACP, are

“racists” or “race-baiters.” These are concepts that do not exist, yet are touted as fact each time an issue concerning race comes to the forefront in the valley.

Only if you relegate racism to a concept that only occurs in the mind or in the construct of a video game and pretend that there is, and has always been, universal equality, can you declare the actions and desires of oppressed people banding together to fight racism as morally identical to the actions of their oppressors. Only when the actions of historically oppressed people and those of their historical oppressors are detached from the conditions of their emergence and given an abstract description can they be made interchangeable.

‘REVERSE RACISM’ DOES NOT EXIST, THE ‘RACE CARD’ IS NOT IN THE DECK AND ‘POST RACIAL AMERICA’ HAS NOT BEEN BUILT YET

By Reverend Talbert W. Swan, II

Over the past few months, the NAACP and I have been accused of being racists for having the audacity to take a stand against racism. It’s almost as if our accusers live according to some fantasy that if you don’t say “racism” out loud, it will cease to exist. Therefore, those of us who say it out loud, which has been termed, “playing the race card,” have somehow become the racists and in some twisted way, are “benefitting” from the pervasiveness of racism.

So, the three young men that burned the Macedonia Church of God in Christ to the ground in Springfield because they were angry that Barack Obama, a black man, was elected President of the United States weren’t racists—those who dared call their

actions racist were the true racists. The comments made by Easthampton City Councilor Donald Cykowski, which inferred that all Puerto Ricans were criminals, weren’t racist—those of us who called the remarks racist, asked the city council to censure Cykowski or called for his resignation were the true racists.

Let me suggest that if you have somehow managed to convince yourself that those who fight racism, and not those who hold racist views and act on them, are the ones keeping racism alive and well in the valley, you are confused and are in dire need of a history lesson. 6

TO BE CONTINUED IN MARCH

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

THE Y AND DUNBAR: AN HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Community to Benefit from 260 Years of Innovation



YMCA OF GREATER SPRINGFIELD

Springfield – Springfield’s Mason Square neighborhood is about to experience the benefit of 260 years of providing opportunities for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Recently, the **YMCA of Greater Springfield** and **Dunbar Community Center** entered into a collaborative agreement designed to strengthen community services for the youth, families and seniors in Mason Square.

The Dunbar Community & Family Center will continue to pursue Dunbar’s longstanding mission to support, educate, protect and extend opportunities and services to those who may be vulnerable and underserved, and will have the added benefit of the Y’s deep-rooted understanding of the challenges and needs facing men, women and children from a vast array of cultural, racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and its innovative and proven approach to meeting those needs.

“The Y has been serving the greater Springfield region for 160 years,” says Kirk Smith, President & CEO, YMCA of Greater Springfield. “And Dunbar has been serving Mason Square for nearly a century. It makes sense to bring together the best of both organizations to better meet the educational, health, and overall wellness needs of our families who live here.”

The collaboration was made possible with the support of five major donors, without whom Dunbar’s vital services to the Mason Square community likely would have ceased: the Amelia Peabody Foundation, Baystate Health, Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company and the United Way of Pioneer Valley.

“Starting from its founding days as a ministry of the Saint John’s Congregational Church by Rev. Dr. William N. DeBerry, the Dunbar Community Center has been committed to serving the needs of the residents

of Mason Square and beyond,” says Victor Woolridge, Board Chair, Dunbar Community & Family Center. “On behalf of the Dunbar Board, its staff, alumni, members and supporters, I want to express our deep appreciation to all of the funders who have committed to stand beside us and provide precious resources during these difficult times. I’m confident that with their support, the support of the community, and the strong collaboration that we’ve forged with the YMCA, that the history and legacy of the Dunbar will be preserved for future generations.”

Historically, Mason Square has been a predominantly African-American neighborhood and since 1812 Dunbar’s programs and services have reflected the culture, heritage and traditions of the community. In fact, the organization was created based on a need to specifically support those who felt disenfranchised from other community organizations. Likewise, the Y has long been committed to providing

programs and opportunities that acknowledge and respect the heritage of the African-American culture.

“Ever since the days of exclusive African-American YMCA’s back in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Y has been celebrating diversity and encouraging participation from families of different backgrounds,” says Smith. “The same is true for Dunbar. We are proud to say that two organizations once separated by society are being brought together for one purpose: to provide opportunities for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility to more members of our community, regardless of their cultural, racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.”

In the days ahead, there will be a series of events and opportunities to introduce more area residents, businesses and community leaders to the partnership and illustrate what the Dunbar Community & Family Center will bring to Mason Square. 6

COMMUNITY INFORMATION



United Way
of Pioneer Valley

UNITED WAY OF PIONEER VALLEY ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY IMPACT FUNDING

Strategic Funding Focused On Making An Impact On Community Needs

Springfield – The United Way of the Pioneer Valley has completed a two-year process that began with an assessment of community needs and culminated in the awarding of \$2.1 million in funding for three Community Building Blocks: Education, Income and Health. According to Dora D. Robinson, President and CEO of the 90-year old UWPV, “This is indeed a proud moment for an organization whose mission is to mobilize people and resources to strengthen our communities.”

A Request for Proposal (RFP), issued in July 2011, clearly articulated the organization’s funding priorities and criteria with a focus on measurable outcomes and indicators. The review process was volunteer-driven and staff-supported. The 22 grant review team members represented a cross-section of volunteers from the community including representatives of private industry, nonprofits, health, education, and government from across the Pioneer Valley.

Overseeing the review process was the Community Impact Committee to make sure the

process never lost sight of the objective and remained true to UWPV’s mission and values. The results:

- 52 organizations will share in \$2.1 grant funding that will span 18-months (January 2012 through June 2013).
- Community partners receiving funding in this cycle are diverse in terms of size, location, communities served, leadership, and scope of services.

According to the United Way’s Sr. Vice President of Community Impact Sylvia deHaas Phillips, additional grant funding opportunities are available in the areas of basic needs and emergency services; disaster relief, recovery and rebuilding funding; small grants, capacity building and pro-active grant making.

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Overview of SPHERE schools followed by time to meet with SPHERE representatives, submit résumés, and learn about future employment opportunities at the individual schools.

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When: Saturday, March 3, 2012

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Please submit your résumé to: SPHERE@Renbrook.org. For more information, call Pam Garrett at (860) 738-1629. For directions to Watkinson: www.watkinson.org/podium/default.aspx?f=26761

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HAMPDEN BANK AND THE CARING HEALTH CENTER ANNOUNCE GRANT PARTNERSHIP OF \$100,000 OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

Springfield – The Caring Health Center, the only freestanding, community controlled healthcare center serving the southwest area of Springfield, Massachusetts, and Hampden Bank entered into a partnership that would give \$20,000.00 over the next 5 years to the Caring Health Center. A spokesman from the Caring Health Center stated, “We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone at Hampden Bank for aiding us in our continued battle to provide the people of Springfield with the healthcare that they need.”

The Caring Health Center provides primary and preventative care for all ages, also focusing on disease prevention through patient screenings, immunizations, family planning, nutrition education, and treatment of chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and sickle cell anemia. The mission of the Caring Health Center is to work within the community to provide health, to care for the ill, to comfort the sick, and to bring the

highest level of health care to those who are challenged by socio-economic, linguistic and cultural barriers.

Since 1852 Hampden Bank has been “brightening the days” of its customers. A local community bank serving the families and businesses throughout Hampden County, Hampden Bank has ten branch office locations in Springfield, Agawam, Longmeadow, West Springfield, Wilbraham, at Tower Square in downtown Springfield and Indian Orchard. In addition to offering the most up-to-date banking services, Hampden Bank offers clients a full array of insurance and financial products through its subsidiary, Hampden Financial, a strategic alliance created with the MassMutual Financial Group.

The Hampden Bank Charitable Foundation was established in 2007 to provide grants to nonprofit and community-based organizations throughout Western Massachusetts. 6



REBUILDING TOGETHER ACCEPTING NEW APPLICATIONS 20th Annual “National Rebuilding Day,” Saturday, April 28th

Springfield – Rebuilding Together is currently accepting new applications from low-income homeowners in the city of Springfield. On Saturday, April 28th, the nonprofit Springfield, MA affiliate of Rebuilding Together will celebrate its 20th annual “National Rebuilding Day”. This year Rebuilding Together will complete 15 home repair projects with 500-1,000 volunteers in just one day! The 200 affiliates nationwide will complete 8,000 homes with 250,000 volunteers on this day.

This year the focus will be on tornado damaged homes, however this is not a requirement to apply. According to FEMA, the long-term recovery from the series of tornadoes on June 1, 2011 is estimated to be 18-24 months. In Springfield alone a total of 1,600 homes sustained damage and 220 were condemned. A total of 25% of the homeowners did not have insurance and still more had inadequate insurance.

The initiatives of the program focus on providing safety, security, and independence to its recipients, while preserving home ownership and reducing the risk of homelessness. **To see if you qualify and receive an application, to sponsor, volunteer or donate, contact Rebuilding Together at: 413-788-0014 www.rebuildingtogetherspringfield.org 6**

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

BUSINESS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Larry Martin, Editor, is Business Services and Special Projects Manager at Regional Employment Board of Hampden County Inc. ("REB")
 lmartin@rebhc.org
 www.rebhc.org

THE CHALLENGES OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

By Larry Martin

It is a buyer's market out there when it comes to job opportunities and the employers (demand) are the ones doing the buying. In basic economics, if you have an over-supply of a product or service, demand dictates that prices will fall and competition within the supply chain will increase. In other words, wages will decrease and competition for jobs will increase. During the "good times" when manufacturing and construction were the leading industry sectors and the services sectors were trailing as a distant runner-up, a point of equilibrium would normally be established on the supply/demand curve. Large organizations and dominant industry leaders would take a role in growing their entry-level workforce through internal training programs. New business entrants to the market would also see the value of investing in their workforce as a key to their success in gaining market share. During these times, vocational schools would "prime" the construction apprentice and technical worker pipeline with the traditional schools, continuing to focus on students who were heading to college or other post-secondary training.

Thanks to technology innovations and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the manufacturing sector has been in a sharp decline since the late 1980s. The construction industry's decline came later, and like the "dot.com bubble," plummeted during the housing market collapse. Now, we are in a "service" based economy with manufacturing and construction as runners-up. Businesses are running lean and cost cutting measures

are the norm, beginning with employee development. Large companies who have achieved "economy of scale" and can invest in entry-level employees are rare. Gone are the jobs where if you did not have a high school diploma, you could knock on the door of the human resources of a large manufacturer to get a job as a production worker. In fact, you will be hard pressed to find a human resources department these days with this function being centralized to out-of-state offices and applications being accepted online only!

This is a demand driven market with employers wanting applicants who can "hit the ground running" and "immediately contribute to the bottom line" or "have proven" experience and other euphemisms that say one thing—no room for entry level candidates. In a demand market with an oversupply of labor, these things can be expected. However, a paradox exists with employers also denying employment opportunities to applicants who have the prerequisite experience, but have been unemployed for a period greater than six months. In some instances, employers only want to hire individuals who are presently working—*unemployed need not apply!* Ironically, wages have been reduced significantly while requiring college degrees or five years experience at a minimum.

However, as I mentioned earlier, in supply and demand, equilibrium will be achieved. As the economy slowly recovers (and it is *slowly* recovering), job vacancies for high demand occupations, flat population growth and the workforce getting older, employers will soon face job vacancy issues and the equilibrium will shift to supply.

It all balances out in time.

A new job opportunity came across my desk as I composed this article.

Career Opportunities at Comcast – Enfield Call Center, Enfield, CT. Technical Customer Account Executives and Billing Customer Account Executives. Please apply online at www.Comcast.com/Careers. The applicant will be required to take a online customer service assessment. 6



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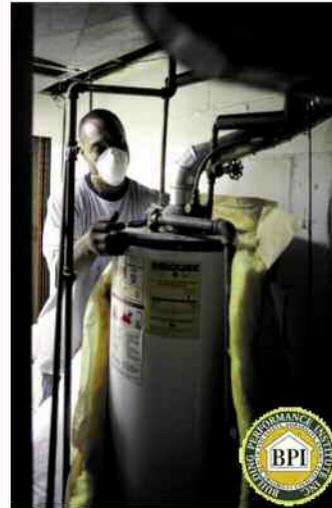
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COMMUNITY FOCUS



Jamina Scippio-McFadden is a member of the Mass Communications faculty at Fort Valley State University (Georgia) and does communications and marketing consulting. She is a freelance writer for POV.

“CONNECTING COMMUNITIES FOR A CAUSE”

By Jamina Scippio-McFadden

For thousands of New Englanders living with cancer and the people who support them, the impact of the illness is not limited to a certain time of the year. Living with cancer becomes a family affair that impacts everything from family finances to family gatherings. Friends often provide additional support giving the person affected a sense of community.

It was this sense of community that led Kelly Turner-Cole to start the C.H.A.I.N. Fund, Inc. The organization helps individuals who can't work due to cancer-related issues pay their bills. One of the ways C.H.A.I.N. raises funds is through its signature event “Breakfast and a Movie” (BAM).

Longtime readers of *POV* may recall an article about the group a few years ago (“Links of a Chain” by Vern Mitchell, July 1, 2009, in his *A Connecticut Flava* column). Since that time, the New Haven, CT-based organization has expanded into the Metro-Atlanta area. Now C.H.A.I.N. is entering the Greater Springfield market.

“We’re excited to be able to provide services to residents in Springfield,” Turner-Cole told members from the St. John’s Congregational Church’s Sisters in the Spirit Women’s Ministry. SJCC Sisters in the Spirit is partnering with C.H.A.I.N. to present the February 25th “Breakfast and a Movie” event.

“I attended a ‘Breakfast and a Movie’ event over a year ago,” said Helen Gates-Bryant who is coordinating the Springfield event. “Not only are you

attending a breakfast and watching a movie on the opening weekend, but you’re supporting people and families affected by cancer.”

The cause is personal for C.H.A.I.N.’s Turner-Cole, a New Haven Police Officer. In 2001 when she was diagnosed with Stage III Breast Cancer, unlike many of the cancer patients she met, Turner-Cole was overwhelmed with support from family, friends and coworkers. After seeing others battle cancer but without the abundance of resources, Turner-Cole knew she had to do something. Her passion led to the creation of the C.H.A.I.N. Fund, Inc. and ultimately the “Breakfast and a Movie” event—a fundraiser that has grown from about 300 to over 1,000.

The February 25th “Breakfast and a Movie” event will occur in three different states (Connecticut, Georgia and Massachusetts) at the same time. In Springfield, doors open at 8am at the Entertainment Cinemas at Springfield Plaza on St. James Avenue. The featured film is Tyler Perry’s “Good Deeds,” a film scheduled to open the day before. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased online

or at St. John’s Church (643 Union Street). For more information about the Springfield “Breakfast and a Movie” and the C.H.A.I.N. Fund, visit www.thechainfund.com. 6

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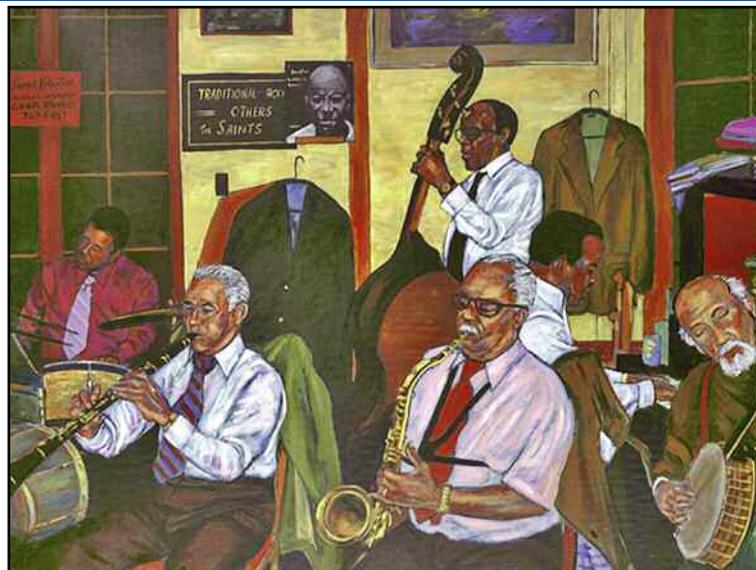
Rosemary “Tracy” Woods is the Gallery Manager of Artist Square Group Gallery and owner of Art for the Soul Gallery. She can be reached at 413-301-6314.

HONORING THE LONG, CREATIVE TRADITION OF JAZZ AND RHYTHM & BLUES MUSICIANS

By Rosemary Tracy Woods

Although April is National Jazz Month, in celebration of Black History Month, Artist Square Group Gallery is offering a special on this great jazz piece by local artist and former teacher, Paul Midura. The sale will last until the end of March.

Artist Square Group Gallery is proud to exhibit the works of local artists. If you are a local artist and are looking to exhibit your



Musicians playing in Preservation Hall, New Orleans, Louisiana - Acrylic on canvas, 30"x40"

work, contact me for information about joining this group gallery. We are also looking for quilters and others

using diverse artistic mediums.

Even in this economy, consumers are investing in and buying originals and prints and there’s no better time to start your collection. Come in and learn about the art of collecting art through a workshop that will be conducted by Dolores Howard in the near future. Also, classes in water colors will be coming soon.

We are looking for seniors to gallery sit and students who want to do an internship. The business of Art offers many opportunities. Stop in and learn more. We are located on the 2nd floor of Tower Square in downtown Springfield. Call 413-301-6314 for additional information. 6

Around Town & . . .



Daughter, Shadae (left), Son, Perren, and Daughter-in-law, Letesha (right), gave a surprise 40th Wedding Anniversary party for their parents, Henry M. Thomas III and Devonia (Dee) Thomas at the MassMutual Center.



Ayanna Crawford of the YMCA lights the Kinara candles during Kwanzaa ceremony with assistance from children of the Center After School Program



Bringing in 2012 at "The Hands in the Air" Extravaganza presented by Black Lotus Entertainment at Cedars Banquet Hall are from left: Marjorie and Rick Hurst, Willette Johnson and Hugh Anderson, Pat and Willie Spradley and Emurriel and Buford Holloway



Beauté Within celebrates the new year with a Pre-New Year's Eve celebration, "Girl's Night Out"



The City of Springfield celebrates Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday with a flag raising and program with keynote speaker, Mayor Setti Warren of Newton, MA.



Wesley United Methodist Church held their 30th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Breakfast. From left: Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno, Scholarship Committee Chairperson Adrienne Caulton, 2012 Scholarship Recipient Brittney Marie Gonzalez, Keynote Speaker Rev. Dr. Fred A. Allen, National Director of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, Wesley Pastor Rev. Joyce Whetstone, and Mistress of Ceremonies Helen Caulton-Harris, Commissioner Springfield Division Health and Human Services

. . .In The Community



April Robinson and her 5th grader class at Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School spearheaded a canned food drive for the needy



The Springfield Boys and Girls Club Family Center Lyrics 4 Life performing arts group during a recent performance



Keynote Speaker Springfield City Councilor Bud Williams and Bethel A.M.E. Pastor Angelo Dawson with young people at Martin Luther King Jr. celebration



The Springfield Pastor's Council celebrated their annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Service at Third Baptist Church



The Brianna Fund For Children with Physical Disabilities held their 14th Annual Gospel Concert featuring from left: Co-Master of Ceremonies Reverend JP Morgan Jr., pastor of Holy Trinity COGIC; 3 Tenors in the Spirit: Rev. Dr. Mark Flowers, pastor of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church; Rev. Dr. Atu White, pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church; and Rev. Bernard Penn, pastor of Hope 7th Day Adventist Church. \$15,000 was raised to help support needs of the 2012 Brianna Fund Angels, Malachi Lockett Jones and Aniya Lee Woodall



The Freedom Choir performs during the 8th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services program, "Walking In His Footsteps" at the Eastfield Mall

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT WORKS

continued from page 5

advice of many skeptics, relocated to a second store location in Kuchma's property in Bijou Square, a former dance hall, and is thriving.

Another architectural firm, Eversley revealed, is about to relocate its 60 employees to downtown Bridgeport in a former bank building, one that fled the floundering city ten years ago for Sheldon, Connecticut. New Haven's Cask Republic restaurant is opening a branch on the ground floor of the same building, whose upper floors are filled with residential tenants, and will be brewing its own brand of beer on site. The principles of Stamford's Saltwater Grill

neighborhoods. He has placed particular emphasis on the East End, a primarily African American neighborhood. The city's blight unit, made up of some of the approximately 40 employees under Don's charge, has been especially aggressive in dealing with cleaning up vacant lots and blighted properties through a concentrated program to counter what property owners cannot or will not do. As a result, the deterioration of the struggling East End neighborhood, which long ago lost its major commercial base and which still has other problems, has been reversed and is now attracting businesses, enjoying improved parks and a new fishing pier that connects it to the waterfront.

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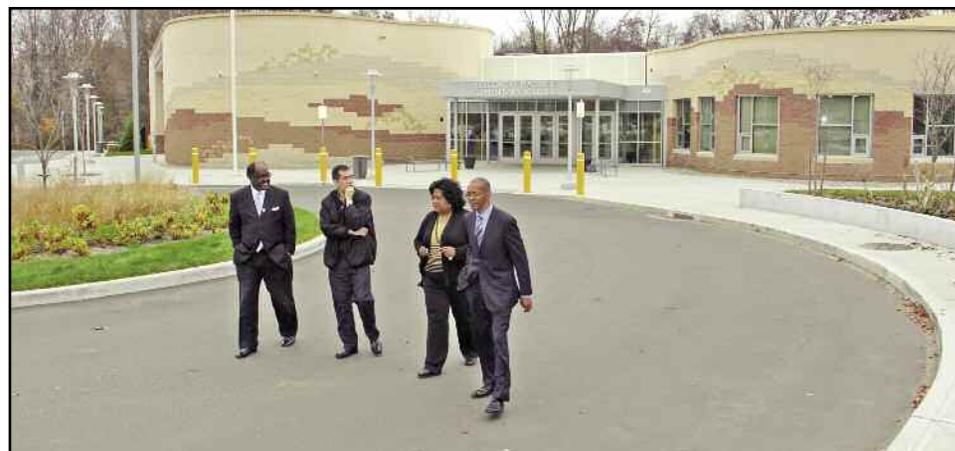
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Photos of the completed K-8 Discovery Magnet Elementary School constructed as a regional effort by the McCloud Group

closed it and are in the process of opening a new restaurant in Bridgeport. It is nothing unusual, Eversley noted. In the last two years, downtown Bridgeport has become home to at least two dozen new, thriving multi-cultural restaurants and a treasure trove of retail businesses.

Creative development of downtown residential housing, he said, has been a significant part of the engine for commercial regeneration. Bridgeport's "adaptive reuse of older downtown commercial buildings by reprogramming them for different purposes from which they were built" is a signature accomplishment. As a result a half dozen such buildings have been converted to residential with commercial on the ground floors and another half dozen are in the pipeline. Subsequently, residential demand has attracted retail supply and, as a consequence, Bridgeport's downtown is humming with activity.

While Don, through his expertly staffed office, has remained focused on revitalizing downtown, he has not ignored the Mayor's charge to attend to the

Eversley is particularly pleased by the progress at the Steel Point Harbor waterfront project located just across the harbor from downtown, a 50-acre formerly decrepit residential and manufacturing waterfront property that is on the development fast track. A developer is in place, site development has begun, and a special code district invoked to expedite occupancy. It will certainly become a booming, mixed-use development and the pride of Bridgeport.

Bridgeport, Eversley is quick to point out, provides an affordable location in a very expensive part of the state. Its costs of housing and industrial space is much lower than surrounding communities; yet, it is well placed via highway, rail and water to make it attractive to folks who are looking for a lower cost of doing business.

And, thanks in great part to Mayor Finch, regionalism is catching on. People are more willing to work in one city and live in another of which Eversley is living proof. There is much more commuting between cities and within Connecticut itself. Mayor

Finch not only works with other cities on various projects, Eversley said, but he is also attracting younger talent to Bridgeport, young professionals who can live for a fraction of the cost of living in New York and Connecticut suburbs and who can easily access New York through Bridgeport's modernized transportation system or simply become part of Bridgeport's employment market.

Eversley finds smaller cities like Providence, Rhode Island, Springfield, Massachusetts and Bridgeport, Connecticut "interesting to work in because you can make major, block-by-block differences and it becomes easier as you go." In Bridgeport, in particular, he observed, "Where new blood and different ideas are valued, there is no '800 pound gorilla'." No one entity is big enough to run the city alone which makes for more cooperation and less parochialism.

Don Eversley, a New Yorker and major player in the reinvention of Bridgeport, Connecticut, appears to have been an excellent pick. 6

OUR LOVE



Azell Cavaan is a journalist who has written for newspapers and magazines throughout the US and abroad. If you have an interesting love story or know of someone who does, contact Azell at Azell@honeybeepublicrelations.com.

A HEALTHY KIND OF LOVE

By Azell Cavaan

As our thoughts turn to love this Valentine's Day and couples cozy up with fine wines and fancy chocolates, let's think about the diamond that is most precious not only on February 14th but year round – a healthy heart.

African Heritage Diet Pyramid



The greatest gift you can give your boo is a promise to take care of your health as best you can and to help them do the same. For black couples, such a pledge is especially meaningful. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, African American adults are more likely to be diagnosed with coronary heart disease, and more likely to die from heart disease. Interestingly, a separate study recently revealed that patients have higher survival rates following coro-

nary bypass if they're married.

But none of us want to test the veracity of that.

This Valentine's Day forget the jewelry (okay, maybe *in addition* to jewelry) and show your love for your sweetheart by coming up with a plan to take better care of your heart and theirs. Don't worry, this doesn't mean you must run five miles a day or completely swear off Aunt Vera's fried chicken. Subtle changes can be significant and couples who embark on healthier habits together not only build stronger hearts, but stronger bonds.

There's no better place than your kitchen table to get started. A Northeastern University professor recently helped develop an African Heritage Diet Pyramid. The pyramid is a new twist on an old idea of health and nutrition and it's filled with foods we love to eat – greens, yams, nuts and more. Romantics have long said that food can be an aphrodisiac, so stock up on new heart-healthy recipes and turn up the heat!

And there is just no getting around it: you must exercise if you are going to adopt a heart-healthier lifestyle. Actually, why would you not want to? Exercise has been touted to do everything from treat depression to improve memory, with the power to cure a host of problems while preventing even more.

It's okay if you're not ready to hit the gym.

Just grab your man or woman by the hand and head out for brisk walk. Some fitness experts say walking is perhaps the best form of exercise because it not only reduces stress and lowers blood pressure, but also releases endorphins which exhilarate the mind and quite simply make you feel oh-so-good!

So this Valentine's Day I encourage couples to not only celebrate your love for each other but also the health, vitality and, prayerfully, the longevity of your hearts. 6

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FEATURE: MOROCCO: A COUNTRY IN TRANSITION?

By Nikol Payen, Assistant Professor English Department, Westfield State University

Morocco, the name alone conjures up an exoticism for which droves of tourists make the pilgrimage each year to experience. So it's of little wonder that I found myself there last summer battling the harsh rays of a merciless desert sun. Sandwiched between Algeria and Western Sahara in North Africa (or Maghreb), it is enshrouded with an air of mystique. Its rich history of conquest and colonization, first by the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs and then the French is evident in both the physical landscape and the culture. If not for the strait of Gibraltar, the northern tip of this ancient land would kiss southern Spain, one of its last colonizers. As social, economical and political winds of change blow throughout the Arab world, Morocco, upon first blush, seems indifferent. But traveling throughout the country's Northern Atlas reveals another story, one that the average Moroccan would rather dismiss. Despite its denial, Morocco remains a country in transition—one that is clutching old world values while meeting new world needs.

At a quick glance, Casablanca differs little from New York, Johannesburg, and Rio Di Janeiro. The urban skyline of steel, concrete, and glass mimics its more famous cosmopolitan counterparts. An ever-present cloud of smog looms overhead, fumes emanating from myriad office buildings, factories, high-end department stores, restaurants, as honeycombs of housing complexes stack against one another. Yet no place captures this straddling of old and new world values more than Casablanca (or Casa), the country's economic capital.

As technology infiltrates the booming metropolis, cybercafés abound—found virtually on every corner. Whether for luxury or need, these services meet the high demand for computers, which are not typically found in average Moroccan households. And with this leap into the technological era comes challenges. The pervasive influence of modernity is also reflected in this Muslim country's fashion sensibility as images from Europe and America put their stamp on it. Most businesswomen are ferociously flashy sporting Prada and Channel suits, with the *hijab* (head covering) providing a chic cultural accent. A

hefty splash of “bling” and heavy black kohl-lined eyes prove neither Paris nor New York holds the monopoly on style.

As for the traditionalists, the *Jallaba*, an over-garment, remains the preferred choice to maintain modesty and the respectful gaze of men. For those of the secular persuasion—mostly teen girls—only painted on jeans and slinky tanks will do. The elders, now the minority since the average Moroccan is under thirty years of age,



<http://blog.travelpod.com/travel-blog>

Mausoleum of Mohammad V in Rabat

bemoan such harsh cultural rift. Many blame the Internet for filtering moral decay into their society. How else could such indecent dress as well as homosexuality have otherwise permeated the sacred land of Moulay Idriss I, descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

In a city of four million, where the gap between rich and poor consistently widens, where there's growing industry but unemployment remains rampant, it's no surprise why tension is high. Flashing lights of trendy bars, clubs, cafes and shops, and the liveliness of street vendors hawking their wares underscores the bustle of folks jostling from point A to B. Strings of traffic lights assure relative flow of congested streets, while pedestrians rely solely on their navigational wits as walk signals do not exist. In the backdrop, a cacophony of clanging metal, bulldozers, and drills scream the efforts of construction workers laying the foundation of a much needed tram system to accommodate an overpopulated city. This infrastructure project of King Muhammad VI will not only create jobs but spur economic growth. As the country transitions, it will also relieve employers of lost productivity due to

an inadequate transportation system.

This is not his first reform effort. In 1993, King Muhammad VI spearheaded the construction of Hassan II Mosque, an exquisite and majestic architectural masterpiece built partly on water. The project, which cost a whopping \$800 million and took ten years to complete, attracted engineering students and Islamic scholars worldwide to lend their talents. It is the second largest mosque outside of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Oddly, even with

bodyguards in tow. He travels extensively throughout the country with his wife, a Moroccan of Arab descent from the intellectual class with whom he has two children, a two-year-old daughter and four-year-old son, Hassan III, heir to the throne. But in a country where a vibrant Parliament represents the needs of the people, is a monarchy an anachronistic appendage to government?

Rabat is a lovely city where medieval castles stand in stark contrast with Spaniard and French inspired architecture. There's electricity in the air on this hot afternoon. With Ramadan only days away, most folks are preoccupied making final preparations for a long month of fasting. But others can only focus on the more urgent matter at hand: jobs. Ironically, the Mausoleum of Mohammad V, grandfather to the current king, and father to King Hassan II with uncle Abdullah, remains a fierce tourist attraction in Rabat. Visitors queue on stairs onto a lavish marble courtyard waiting their turn for a glimpse at lost nobility.

Yet it's the scene six blocks down the road, along the opulent villas owned by the country's elite that speaks to the economic reality of the average Moroccan. A procession of university students make camp in front of the Parliament building, holding placards, chanting demands for jobs and an end to corruption. The police surround the protesters to make their presence felt. *Inshallah* there won't be any use for the guns in their holsters. No sparks of revolution here. So what if Rabat is home to most of the country's universities, most recent graduates can't find work. So what the city is home to the country's most modern hospitals, average folks have no health insurance. So what if the Euro remains currency of choice while the local currency, the dirham, has no real value outside its borders. And so what if the cost of living makes it nearly impossible for the majority *not* to live from hand to mouth? There's no doubt that a simmer is slowly coming to a boil. Change maybe? 6



Nikol Payen

LIVING

LIFE'S CHALLENGES

OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT



Dr. Sweets S. Wilson is a Christian life purpose coach, motivational speaker and CEO of Inspire ME, LLC. wilson.sweets@gmail.com or 860-869-8067

FROM HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Have you, at times, been so discouraged you've said, "I have had enough" and told yourself that you did not care any longer? We have all felt this way. Sometimes it comes from depression, which is a medical condition that requires the help of a medical doctor. However, more often than not, discouragement is the result of not getting our long-term wants met. Most of us can bounce back from dissatisfaction, but when disappointments pile up or there is no sign of hope, it is easy to feel sad and low in spirit and that is when doubt gets a foothold.

Here are some suggestions on how you can overcome discouragement:

- **Spend time with someone who is not discouraged** – Time in that person's positive presence will naturally make you feel better yourself.
- **Get guidance from a life purpose coach** – If your discouragement has become so deep that you are struggling to overcome it, share your concerns with a life purpose coach who can give you advice about how to move forward.
- **Refill your energy tank** – Identify what is causing your energy levels to run low. Write down the problem, form partnerships with a few people you trust who can join you in establishing hope, develop a clear strategy for solving the problem, take action, and make yourself accountable to the people who are

By Dr. Sweets H. Wilson

supporting you.

- **Take care of your physical health** – Giving your body the care it needs will help you feel less discouraged. Eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly and get enough sleep.
- **Give to people in need** – Reaching out to help other people will prove encouraging for you because it will give you the joy of knowing that you can be used in significant ways.
- **Simplify your life** – Base your schedule on your priorities. Do not waste time and energy on activities that do not reflect what is most important to you. Freeing yourself from unnecessary tasks will encourage you.
- **Choose faith over fear** – Recognize that a Higher Power is always with you, even in the middle of the most discouraging circumstances.

Whenever you feel afraid, choose

to trust this Higher Power despite your fear. He may not change your circumstances when you'd like Him to, but He will always give you the encouragement you need to deal with them as long as necessary.

- **Use the talents you have** – Letting your talents lie dormant will only increase your sense of discouragement. Ask the Higher Power to lead you to specific situations where you can put them to full use and to help make the world a better place.

Often discouragement comes because we want something very much and cannot seem to get it. Notice I did not say need. From our limited perspective, we often get our wants confused with our needs. Many of the things we want are not a necessity in our life. 6

INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS

WAKE UP, SLOW DOWN, AND SMELL THE COFFEE!

By Willette H. Johnson

those plastic cards while shopping at Macy's, Target, Wal-Mart or the Holyoke Mall? No doubt, I've touched upon some reality that you are busily working out – or not.

I hope you've taken some time to examine your life and reaffirm your personal values. Winter in New England often gives us an opportunity to "slow our roll" and pay closer attention to Home. For years I've heard advisors trying to convince advisees that it's important to wake up and smell the coffee (figuratively referring to a ritual of preparing and enjoying a freshly brewed cup of coffee at the start of the day while relaxing our minds and savoring the moment). Since retirement has afforded me some uncommitted time during the week, I find myself thinking more deeply about what is really accomplished when we push to exhaustion to fill self-imposed obligations that sometimes go above and beyond livelihood requirements.

I observe from a distant the life patterns of friends and acquaintances and attempt, with a strong desire, to understand why in heaven's name they

are always so busy. I'm amazed at the minutia we attempt to crowd into each day under the pretense that these things just must be done. Folks, the "get a clue" phone is ringing. Answer it. Could it be that if we allowed ourselves to wake up, slow down, and smell the coffee, we might be forced to deal with realities about our lives that we tend to bury under the stuff we spend our time doing? I conclude that maybe an imagined sense of satisfaction manifests at the end of a busy day that catapults people into going back for more day after day or, possibly, at the end of a busy day people are just too physically and emo-

tionally exhausted to even consider any dysfunctions or imperfections that could sideline an up-and-running life.

One of my resolutions, to Make No Assumptions, is still intact. Busy probably isn't going anywhere any time soon. With the widely utilized Keurig coffee machine and k-cups, Dunkin and Starbucks, coffee is usually on the go anyway while cell phones and iPads store and direct daily activities. Sometimes, I, too, have busy days just like you, but I'm grateful I've learned to wake up, slow down, and smell the coffee (literally), taking time to thank God for blessing me with another day. 6

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Willette H. Johnson a Retired Springfield Public Schools Educator



Now that you have your feet planted firmly in 2012 and you've finally moved beyond writing "11" in the dateline of your documents, how's it working for you? Are the New Year resolutions still playing out in your head or have you actually put them to action? Are you finding any displays of niceness or acts of kindness, residuals left behind from the past holiday season, or have family, colleagues and strangers returned to their former road rage, grunting a good morning, schmoozing up to the boss, and finding ways to make sure the attention stays focused on them?

Have you already worn and tired of those sweaters, shirts, scarves and trinkets you found so beautifully wrapped under the tree sporting your name? Did you appropriately handle those credit card bills that have arrived and are threatening to steal the cash you forgot you committed when you were wielding

EDITORIAL

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER IS HERE!

MY POINT OF VIEW

Frederick A. Hurst



I can't quite recall why I resisted it. And I can't recall what changed my mind. But, I am happy to report that *Point of View* has recently launched an online community newspaper on our new website, which was launched in January, although parts of the new website are still in the developmental stage. Because our entire paper can now be read online page-by-page just like an e-book, it not only becomes an alternative to those who prefer the web to paper, but it is now available to readers around the world! Which means, of course, that anybody who advertises in our newspaper now automatically gets exposure on our website through the online paper.

For an additional fee, our website also offers online advertising opportunities from the front page of our website to the last page. The rate sheet for this new web advertising will be posted soon. You'll not want to miss the opportunity.

We are excited and proud! Excited because we have entered a whole new world that offers limitless opportunities for growth. Proud because we are doing it ourselves through our colleague, Marie Del Rio Zanazanian, whose expertise and ability to learn is reflected in everything *Point of View* has ever done. She designed and launched our new website and is currently working the kinks

out while waiting for the editor and publisher to provide her with updated information, which we are feverishly developing.

Essentially, we will be updating and refining our website in public throughout 2012. You'll notice that we are also moving into the social networking arena with plans for Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and more. All will be gradually activated on our website in the near future as soon as we have put the management structure in place. We are excited to be moving in the direction of the future.

Join us. 6



LETTERS TO THE PUBLISHER

Dear Friends of Head Start,

I am writing to bring you up to date on federal budget developments that took place during the holidays that affect Head Start and Early Head Start. On December 16, 2011, the House and Senate announced a 2012 funding proposal for the federal government that included a \$409 million dollar increase for Head Start and Early Head Start. It passed both the House and Senate and President Obama signed it into law Friday, December 23. This means that the 1.5% across-the-board expenditure reductions that were widely expected will not occur. The Office of Head Start will soon release guidance for programs that made accommodations for the expected reductions.

The increase for Head Start and Early Head Start ensures that no children added through recent expansion will be cut and all of their slots will be made permanent in the overall Head Start funding formula. In a time of deep and painful cuts, Head Start has emerged as a priority of Congress and of the President. And it's all because of you!

This outcome would not have been possible without your hard work. Since last summer, you've hosted members of Congress and their staffs at your centers, attended town hall meetings, signed petitions, sent letters, and made phone calls to Congress. In the last weeks of 2011, you sent more than 10,500 emails to your elected officials! You have our deepest thanks for all your efforts, and while our Head Start children may be too young to understand what this funding decision means, as adults they will find that the Window of Opportunity that was opened for them shaped their lives.

Thank you again for all your hard work and your willingness to raise your voice for children!

Sincerely,
Yasmina Vinci
Executive Director

I want to thank you so much for your support and coverage in the *Point of View* this month! (POV, January 1, 2012, "Project Rebuild: Restoring Our Communities and Revitalizing Our Economy") I am bringing a copy with me to DC next week where I have meetings at the Rebuilding Together national office with Gary Officer. Thanks again and Happy New Year!

Best regards,
Colleen S. Loveless
Executive Director
Rebuilding Together

It's never too late to say thank you . . . We thank you very much for the story in *Point of View* about the Uhora presentation (POV, October 1, 2011, "Uhora Award and Ahadi Youth Award Recipients Honored")

Your newspaper gets better and better.

Love,
Albert & Gerry Garner

I want to take the opportunity to "**THANK YOU**" "**THANK YOU**" for an absolutely amazing article. (POV, January 1, 2012, "Springfield, Meet Bridgeport") It's the buzz about City Hall. I must admit that I killed myself laughing at your quote about the Mayor being the most racially unaffected White guy!! That was hilarious!! Your passion for our great city is overwhelming.....you have truly captured the Bridgeport Spirit.

Deborah Caviness
Senior Program Administrator
Small & Minority Business Resource Office
Bridgeport, CT

COMMUNITY

LEADERSHIP: PIONEER VALLEY

THE RICHNESS OF DIVERSITY



Marla Michel

I had my first corporate diversity training in 1984 at AT&T Bell Laboratories.

Fresh out of college, I was given the training required by my company's policies related to affirmative action and, of course, diversity awareness was a key component. The benefits of embracing diversity were so obvious, not only because I felt it was wrong that people were being treated unfairly in the workplace but, as much research and experience has shown, better products were developed when teams rich with diversity were behind them.

So it is with Leadership Pioneer Valley (LPV) more than 25 years later. When an amazing, diverse set of people came together as a steering com-

mittee more than a year ago, there was a lot of discussion about the values we wanted for this program. There was a wide range of values because of our diversity. Those values were incorporated into the LPV culture, brand and marketing materials but, more importantly, into the curriculum. A better LPV organization and program has been created because of the richness of the team behind it.

It turns out that understanding one's own values and how they are used to motivate is a core skill of leadership. All you need to do is think about the leaders you admire and this will be obvious. Those leaders inspire you to want to follow them whether at work or in your community. They understand who they are, what's important to them, and get you to feel the same way.

That is one of the skills our inaugural class is honing. I say "honing"

instead of "learning" because most of the participants in LPV are natural leaders. They are also focusing on inclusion: learning how to maximize the value of diversity. LPV is fine tuning these skills and giving them the environment—our Pioneer Valley—to develop. The projects the LPV class is working on were seeded by our region's aptly named, "Plan for Progress," a set of broad strategies for growth assembled by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. What's great is that our future leaders in the lower valley are becoming acquainted with our future leaders in the upper valley (east and west, too) and that can only mean good things for the entire valley going forward. Our communities and businesses will benefit from this talent for generations to come. Start watching for people to introduce themselves as a LPV alum. You'll know to have confidence in their leadership

abilities. You'll know they are connected to all of the communities in the Pioneer Valley. You'll know they want our region to reach beyond what it is today for a prosperous future.

LPV is now another item on the long list of Valley assets. As an organization, we're planning for our future—strategic planning, fundraising (please be generous!), marketing, and continuously improving our program. We're almost ready to start recruiting our second class, so if you're interested or know of a good candidate, visit LPV's website at www.leadershippv.org. I have no doubts that our Valley's future will be better because of the people participating in LPV, made richer because of the diversity that went into making it what it is today. 6

THE ARTS

INHALE MUSIC < EXHALE LIFE

LEAVING FOOTSTEPS TO FOLLOW



Heshima is an internationally recognized vocalist, multi-instrumentalist and songwriter/composer whose music can be heard at www.myspace.com/heshimaia and face-book.

African American Artists

Creating Legacy in Springfield

As I have often said, in an ideal world children would be learning about the history of African diasporic peoples both at home from enthusiastic parents, as well as at school as part of a curriculum reflective of all people as well as their contributions both here and throughout the larger diaspora. An important part of this curriculum would focus on the contributions of African Americans/Latinos in the Pioneer Valley. So, in honor of those who make history every day, here is a list of just a few of those who continue to make contributions in the world of music: regionally, nationally and internationally.

ALVIN ABU CARTER SR: An internationally recognized percussionist and teacher, Abu has been a part of the community in Western MA since 1973 when he gathered a group of young men at the Dunbar Community Center and formed The Uhuru Drummers. (Jo Sallins, Rick Marshall, Tyrone Blanton and Marcus Pitts all worked together and all become incredible musicians in their own right.)

BILLY ARNOLD: William Arnold has had an extensive career as a drummer having recorded and toured with artists from Motown records (most notably Jr. Walker and the All-Stars). He later went on to work with renowned jazz greats such as Jimmie Smith, Dave Liebman, Kenny Burrell and Teddy Wilson. He continues to tour the world with the Young at Heart Chorus and serves on the faculty of the Community Music School of Springfield.

By Heshima Moja

AVERY SHARPE: Bassist/composer Avery Sharpe has spent the past 30 years touring the world and recording with some of the biggest names in Jazz, including Dizzy Gillespie, George Benson, McCoy Tyner, Wynton Marsalis, as well as having seven albums to his credit as a leader.

JO SALLINS: Acclaimed multi-instrumentalist Jo Sallins was born and raised in the city of Springfield and aside from more than 30 years of touring internationally, he has developed music education programs that have touched the lives of young people from Springfield to Senegal, West Africa.

KEVIN SHARPE: Drummer, songwriter, bandleader and part of the generation of musicians who was fortunate to learn from master musicians like Yusef Lateef, Archie Shepp and Dr. Horace Boyer. Kevin currently leads his own group in addition to working with

Archie Shepp and Jasmine Guy.

SARAH CHARLES: Having the privilege of studying under renowned bassist Vishnu Wood and Sheila Jordan, Sarah moved to New York City four years ago and has developed into a formidable composer and a mainstay on the NYC jazz scene.

CHARLES LANGFORD: Another Springfield native, saxophonist Charles Langford studied with jazz great George Coleman in Boston and then set out to conquer the world. And he is well on his way with a Grammy-nominated album last year.

Space does not allow for me to list all of those who are making history every day with the great work they labor to produce. But I will do my best to find a way. **My question to you is: Will you find a way to support us? Will you give us our flowers, while we yet live? 6**

RELIGION

RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW

Pastors, Ministers, Professors and Theologians, please submit your articles for this page to Dr. Brett Snowden at progressivecbc@comcast.net

A CRY FOR CREATIVITY

By Rev. Dr. Atu White, Pastor Mt. Zion Baptist Church



Rev. Dr. Atu White

Perhaps, the answer to this debate is really a challenging question for self. Where is my creation? What if I reconnected with my creative genius? What if I engaged my imagination to solve critical issues in my community? What if I became engaged and focused on creating businesses and employing young people within my community? What if I baked the mouthwatering, fluffy biscuits or tantalizing cookies and consumers who frequent popular eateries begin to beat a path to mine?

Not only must I reconnect with my creative genius, but also place things in motion. Our wonderful ideas are often held captive by our lack of faith. Businesses fail due to insufficient research, planning and a lack of adequate capital. Hastily, businesses are launched with the fire, aim, ready approach. It's tantamount to running a marathon without the necessary preparation. Promote an environment and the desire to achieve one's goals by sur-

rounding yourself with like-minded people. Ask people you admire to share their story. You should engage a mentor or person who has traveled the road you wish to journey.

In my youth, my mother and I drove by a beautiful home. My mother quipped, "This is the house that straw built." She told me the story of a man who would go to people's homes and into the forest to gather straw that fell from loblolly pine trees. It was a task nobody wanted to do but by doing so, it increased his capacity. He saw an opportunity and did something that no one addressed in his community. Through his entrepreneurial endeavor,

he employed people and built a massive enterprise. Not to mention, he lived in a house that straw built.

Where are the answers to our failing schools and communities? They are laying fallow within us. What would happen if we moved from the sidelines and decided to provide a needed service to the local economy? Let us make moves and not excuses.

My prayer for you is that the Lord increases your capacity to create! 6

Dr. Brett Snowden,
Editor
Pastor, Progressive
Community
Baptist Church
599 State Street
Springfield, MA
01109



While pinning this missive, there is a massive debate ranging amongst intelligentsia and in the halls of Congress. This debate centers on the "job creators." Who are the "job creators"? Can they afford a slightly higher tax rate? If they were taxed at a higher rate, would it prohibit them from hiring more workers? Why protect the incomes of the top 1% earners at the expense of 99%? While pondering the essence of this debate, a profound question emerged in my imagination. Where are the creators?

Black History Month celebrates the contributions made by African Americans. These contributions improved the daily lives of all Americans. Their ingenuity, critical thinking, and creativity led to numerous, innovative creations. These inventions provided and continue to provide economic growth and stability to all communities.

CALL TO THE CAUSE



continued from page 1

Where is the outrage when it comes to our failing education system? Where is that level of ambition when it comes to our children's futures? Why do so many remain silent about this issue that is impacting the lives of thousands of families in our community?

I'm proud to say that the YMCA of Greater of Springfield, and so many of our community partners that share our mission, are helping to provide opportunities for our youth to succeed in school and beyond. In Springfield, where the high drop-out rate and poor MCAS scores persist, the Y remains one of the largest providers of educa-

tional programming outside of the public school system. As such, we will continue to focus on literacy; tutoring; college preparation and access; and job and life-skills training through our learning centers in the 14 cities and towns we serve. In the communities where educational achievement is not a glaring problem, we will continue to focus on leadership skills, teambuilding, and conflict resolution that support all youth regardless of race or socio-economic status. Of course, none of this would be possible without the encouragement and financial support of businesses, leadership and community members in our region. They are as passionate about the future of our youth as we are, and for that we are very grateful.

But our voice remains too quiet. We need more outrage. We need more passion. Answer the call to the cause. Be a part of our mission. Our youth are depending on you. 6

RELIGIOUS DIRECTORY

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Rev. Angelo S. Danson, Pastor

Rev. Donald A. Thomas, Associate Minister

Rev. Amelia Eddy, Associate Minister

James D. Bullock, Minister of Music

Pastor's Bible Study
Sunday 8:50 am
Church School
Saturday 11:00 am

Sunday Morning Divine Worship
10:00 am
Bible Study/Prayer & Class Meeting
Wednesday 7:00 pm

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RELIGIOUS DIRECTORY



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Rev. Peter T. Sylvester

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 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Ephesians 3:20

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	Morning Worship	10:00 am
Tuesday	Prayer	6:30 pm
	Bible Study	7:00 pm

Wesley United Methodist Church



Rev. Joyce Whetstone

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 413-734-3233

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 Wednesdays 7:00 a.m.

"And They Where all One on Solomon's Porch" Acts 5:12b



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 Community Service Center - Mon. & Tues. 10:00am - 1:00pm
 Prayer Meeting - Wednesday - 7:00pm
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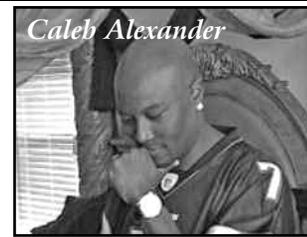
LET'S TALK URBAN - BRIDGEPORT, CT

Felisha Bradshaw



CALEB ALEXANDER: THE MAN BEHIND THE BOOKS...NOT THE CONTROVERSY

By Felisha Bradshaw



!IT'S ALL LOVE AND PASSION!

If you are an avid reader then you're certainly no stranger to the iconic novels, *True To The Game I, II & III*, and the unforgettable saga of America's most infamous African American crime family, the Reigns family, of *Deadly Reigns I, II, and III*. These books are as memorable as the ground-breaking novel, *The Coldest Winter Ever*, which paved the way for Urban Fiction in its early stages in the literary industry.

Caleb Alexander is the literary genius behind the brilliantly written, New York Times bestselling novels *True to the Game II & III*, as well as the trilogy, *Deadly Reigns I, II, and III*. He was also the pen behind Vickie

Stringer's novels, *The Reason Why*, *Dirtier Than Ever*, *The Boss*, *Red's Revenge* and *Forever*. His writing is acknowledged unknowingly by millions, and now Caleb desires to be respected for his craft in his own name. He has begun his journey of carving out his own path, with a fresh start and a clean slate, and some brand new works: "*Eastside*," which was hand-picked by none other than New York Times bestselling author Zane, to launch her Strebor on the Streetz street lit line. "*Two Thin Dimes*," which was also published by Zane, and "*Belly of the Beast*," which he used to launch his own publishing company, Golden Ink Publishing. He has also just released a new novel titled, "*Just Another Damn Love Story*," and is currently working on another new December release called "*Baby Baller*." This, while work-

ing on a collabo with none other than New York author Erick S. Gray. Can you say busy?

So, I spoke to his heart and as usual, he answered with great passion. His pathway to respect and acknowledgement has started out paved in gold.

Let's Talk Urban:

I am a great fan and admirer of Erick S. Gray. Your clean slate of the past has started out with a bang! Your collabo with Erick is called *Boyfriend #2*, right?

Caleb:

Boyfriend #2 is crazy! That book is off the chain! I think readers will be talking about that book all year! I can't give it away but Tameka, the lead character, is scandalous. However, she just needs to watch out for *Boyfriend #2*!

LOL That's all I'm saying about that one! But the readers are in for a real treat.

And as far as Erick and I hooking up, it was just a natural process. I met Erick years ago, through K'wan, and we had been cool ever since. And then I was talking about heading to New York to do a signing at Sexy's in the summer and Erick walked in while I was on the phone, and he and I got to chopping it up, and you know Sexy's mouth. She was shouting in the background, telling us we need to do a collabo. And so, the rest is history. Oh, and before I forget, the title came from Ms. Toni Doe of OOSA. I needed a hot title, and she gave me the title. She made me promise to do a twenty-five page dedication to her in the beginning of the book, so y'all can just skip the first twenty-five pages! LOL 6



Lynnette Johnson

I have not sucked in my stomach in four months. I consume carbohydrates with no regret. My waistline has completely disappeared and I have never felt cuter. Despite the fact that my eyes are my most striking feature, no one looks me in my eyes anymore. Now that my bra cups runneth over, my lifetime membership has been officially revoked from the I.B.T.C. But no one is staring at my bust line. My body has become fascinating to strangers and passersby. I surprise

myself by welcoming uninvited touches. Some ask, "Can I?" before placing palms on the taut swell of my belly. I always say, "Yes." Women who never spoke to me at work ask me how I am feeling. They nod and smile when I say "tired but good." It is not unusual to find a gift of cake or cookies on my desk. "Stand up. Turn around. Let me see you!" is my greeting each morning by a friend at my job. "It's a blessing honey," was whispered to me by every woman who hugged me at church. I went to church for the first time on Christmas Day, the first time since I have begun to show. There was no need to make an announcement. My body speaks for itself. These women all know about "The Flutter."

Every bodily urge must be satisfied immediately. Hungry turns to ravenous within minutes. A need to use the ladies' room is an emergency even if I was just there a half hour ago. Perfume and cologne is disgusting; please stand down wind. Any response

to an invitation to socialize is decided after I calculate whether or not I have time to take a nap first. Sleep is a priority. I am easily offended when I used to be indifferent. My feelings are almost a burden because now I feel everything. My mother bought me a pair of the biggest draws I had ever seen for Christmas. I almost cried when I opened them. And then I remembered this is fine. I am allowed to be bigger and I am still cute. I am lovely.

There are also the not-so-lovely lumps. Advanced Maternal Age or AMA is written at the top of my file at my ob/gyn's office. At every exam and blood test I am reminded just how old and miraculous my ovaries are. I considered telling the doctor that I still get carded, can run a mile without getting winded and can dance for hours in four inch heels. But that would not change the fact that my uterus is 35. So I listen. He presents a soliloquy which includes, what seemed

like a 20-minute diatribe on the risk of Down's Syndrome, the need for genetic testing, how the flu would most certainly suffocate me if I am not inoculated, and *I am much too old to be doing this for the first time*. So he did not say the last part but that is what it felt like.

There are other lumps. It is difficult to navigate through the stockpiles of personal questions, horror stories and unsolicited advice I have been getting. I reacted sharply to a well intentioned friend after a name suggestion. He responded with love: "I wish there were something like a wedding registry for advice, so friends who want to give you something can know what you have already been given." I thought that was brilliant. This is what has been given to me thus far:

Back away from the microwave! Don't eat the sushi! Do not drink wine! You can have a little wine. You have not gained much weight. You're continues to page 30

MY LOVELY LADY LUMPS

By Lynnette Johnson

THE ARTS

PEN & INK



BRENDA'S CHILD has made it her life's mission to inspire people through poetry and stories and through leading by example with courage, confidence, and integrity. In April 2007, she self-published her first book of poetry, "A Piece of My Mind...Poetic Confessions of a Self-Proclaimed Diva." Since then she has published four more titles. For more information, email: brendaschild@brendaschild.com

EVOLUTION

By Brenda's Child

They say relationships used to last,
Because everyone knew their place,
Position and role.

While that may be so,
It still didn't mean a woman wasn't betrayed,
Cheated on or deceived,
And maybe she *did* stay because it was love,
But probably more so
because she knew "her place."
Her man was her provider,
so she had no other choice.

It still didn't mean she wasn't abused
It just wasn't anyone's business,
And maybe she needed to be reminded
of "her place."
And of course she stayed.
Her man was her provider,
so she had no other choice.

They say women knew how to be women,
Cooks and mothers,
Nurturers and baby makers.
Five or more was the norm,
Not the exception.
Conception
Wasn't a *choice*,
It was a duty.

Balance was unnecessary,
Because a career outside the home,
Multiple college degrees,
Goals
Were unthinkable,
Untouchable, not a part of the routine.

They say things have changed,
many think for the worse.
Women are too independent;
they won't let men be men.
What's really so different from back then...
Is today we have choices and OPTIONS.



JUANITA TORRENCE-THOMPSON Nominated Woman of the Year 2009 by American Biographical Institute Board for International Research. *Breath-Life* (2009, Scopraeft Press) nominated for Pushcart Prize. She is Editor-in-Chief and Publisher of *Mobius, The Poetry Magazine*, which was "best pick" 2007, 2008, 2009 by Small Magazine Review. *New York And African Tapestries*, (2007, Fly By Night Press) "best pick" by Small Press Review. *Reads U.S. & abroad*. See her Youtube videos: <http://www.Youtube.com/poetrytown>. Website: www.poetrytown.com

IF I HAD A CELLPHONE

By Juanita Torrence-Thompson

If I had a cellphone, I would have called Adam and said, "Adam, don't eat that apple! Think of the havoc. The men will have problems buttoning their shirts over their protruding lump."

If I had a cellphone, I would've shouted into the speaker when the Trojan Horse entered the gates, "Beware of Greeks" – Oh no, that was said before. I would've warned, "Don't let that Trojan Horse in. It teems with soldiers who bear ill will." And not Will Shakespeare.

If I had a cellphone, I would've called Hamlet and said, "Beware Hamlet, behind that curtain stands your friend Polonius. A kind man. Do not smite him."

If I had a cellphone, I would have called Othello and said, "Othello, Iago is NOT your friend. Do not believe his lies about Desdemona. She is your faithful wife."

If I had a cellphone, I would've called Tolstoy's Anna Karenina to say, "Don't kill yourself, Aleksei Vronski is not worth it! Better still, Don't get involved with Vronski. He'll tire of you."

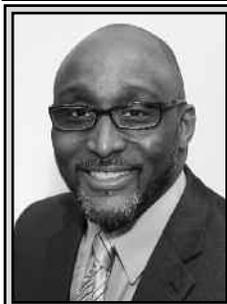
If I had a cellphone, I would've changed things in Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, A la "A Place in the Sun" film version with chiseled Montgomery Clift whom I would gladly have cellphoned and urged his character to lift a finger to save Shelley Winter's pathetic character. Better yet, I'd say, "Shelley, Don't get on that boat. Monty's in love with Liz Taylor's wealthy debutante."

If I had a cellphone, I'd scrap my diet. Order pizza with anchovies from Mario's, turn on my Time machine, phone Adam and the Trojans, Hamlet and Othello – If Shakespeare would give me poetic license.

I'd call Anna Karenina and tanned Monty Clift for a grand pizza party while watching "Jeopardy". I'd win the game, of course, because my ancient guests would try to figure out how Alex Trebek got into the TV set or what the heck was pizza. Monty would know, but he would let me win "Jeopardy."

FOOD AND FASHION

A GENTLEMAN'S FASHION SENSE



Jeffrey S. Clemons Sr., Clothier, Owner and Proprietor, Jeffrey's Suit Rack, 287 East Street, Ludlow, MA 01056 (413) 583-3200

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES: THE PROS OUTWEIGH THE CONS

By Jeffrey S. Clemons Sr.

The topic for discussion for this month is how do you determine who you will do business with? This is an interesting topic for many reasons. This conversation came up recently in my shop and it was quite a discussion! Being in business myself, I tend to do business with people who do business with me, and I think that is just a fundamental principle of being in business.

But what about those of you who are not in business. What is your formula? Maybe, being convinced, good service, a good deal, what is it? Well, as you may know, all of the big chain stores make offers to you, but are you really getting what they offer? I can tell you that I have done business with the big chain stores and did not get the good deal or the good service and I still spent money in those places of business because they convinced me I would! I do think that it is a motivating factor for many of us.

Well, consumers, please be advised that these big businesses are killing our economy. How many of you supported "Support Small Business Saturday" in December? Please understand that the pros outweigh the cons when it comes to supporting small businesses for

many different reasons. I frequent this small plumbing supply place in my area and I just feel good when I go in there. I do not know much about hardware; it's just not my thing. However, when I go into the two major hardware stores in my area, I tend to be confused, and then I ask for help and I'm more confused because that part-time high school student could not help me! That's just me! I could very well be the only one who feels this way at times.

Anyway, some of you may have had an unpleasant experience with a small business and I would ask that you do not put all small businesses in the same box! Yes, you can get a good deal with small businesses. We want your business so most small businesses will make it worth your while, especially if you keep coming back! Customer service is a big one. I do not know of any small businesses who can afford not to offer great customer service; it's the heartbeat of small businesses. I get disgruntled consumers who went to the big chain stores first. They come to tell me about their experiences at those places and from that I develop a preferred customer!

Are there cons to small businesses? Yes, stock/inventory can be challenging at times. I do a good amount of special orders; it keeps costs down. Most small businesses cannot afford to have an overload of stock or in some cases, don't have the room to store it. The thing to having overstock in small businesses is that you have to sell it! If it is not moving, it is costing money!

I ask that you please support small businesses. The pros outweigh the cons and it is a very rewarding experience, especially for you, the consumer! 6

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MY LOVELY LADY LUMPS

continued from page 28

getting big. Why would you do this without a husband? Are you breastfeeding? Switch doctors. Stay with your doctor. Is it a boy or a girl? What are the names? I don't like that name. First pregnancies go long. Take the epidural. Your nose is going to spread. I've never seen you eat so much. That's a lot of salt. Is your boyfriend happy? Was this a surprise? I didn't know you were seeing anyone. I miscarried when I was two weeks farther along than you. Grease up that belly twice a day. Choose a nice Biblical name. Don't run from God. Don't pick that up! You're going to need a bigger car. Is that all you're eating? This is going to be hard? I hope you're strong. You will be a great mother. I hope you're writing everything down. You won't be able to go back to school. Your boobs will never be the same, enjoy them now. Stop bouncing like that! I'm disappointed. This is a huge mistake. You should not have it. I'm so happy for you. Are you going to loc his hair? Do not cut your hair...

There is a miracle happening beneath my heart and above my hips. I know women do this every day but this is new for me. And it is amazing. I have never felt so important or frightened or interesting. Every glance in the mirror is a shock to my system. I am so grateful to God for this opportunity. I am just a little surprised that He trusts me enough with something so precious. There is a little boy growing in my stomach. He needs me for everything. He goes where I go. He eats what I eat. He hears what I listen to. He is mine. He is the reason for this loveliness. He is my only resolution this year. Right now I am calling him Optimus Tupac Barack Michael Jackson-Johnson. Oprah is first choice as the godmother and I am waiting for Erykah Badu to respond to my doula request. Some of this may or may not change by April when he gets here. And I am still open to advice, and answering some questions, as long as it looks like love. 6

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BLACK SPORTS

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COOKIE GILCHRIST

A MAN OF PRINCIPALS WHO STOOD AGAINST RACISM

By Reginald Grant



Are you now asking yourself; who the heck was “Cookie Gilchrist”? If you don’t know I will gladly tell you; in a moment.

John Madden once said that Gilchrist and Jerry Hill of the Colts were the two best blocking backs he’s ever seen.

Upon his death, Bills owner Ralph C. Wilson Jr., released this statement: “The Bills were very lucky to have procured the services of Cookie Gilchrist who was one of the greatest fullbacks I have ever seen in all of my years in professional football. ... He was the greatest extemporaneous speaker that I have ever heard. At a banquet, he could get up and talk on any subject no matter what it was. I had the opportunity last week to speak with Cookie by telephone and we had a good conversation. Today is a sad day for me, the Bills and all of the community that Cookie is no longer with us and I want to offer my deepest sympathies to his family and friends.”

For all his on-field accomplishments, Gilchrist should best be remembered for his roles in the boycott of the A.F.L. All-Star Game after the 1964 season, and rallying all of the high profile athletes of the time in support of Muhammad Ali’s reinstatement into professional boxing.

He was born in Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, and was destined for greatness, but he grew-up during a time where overt and legal racism affected every facet of people’s lives. Fact is, he is the only player I know of who was a MVP in two different professional football leagues the old AFL and the CFL. He played eight seasons in Canada and six years in the AFL just before its merger with the NFL. He was an All-Star for ten straight years in the two leagues combined.

In high school he was such a super athlete and outstanding football player at 6’3” and 250 lbs, he was a god like specimen. The legendary Paul Brown of the Cleveland Browns illegally rushed to sign him to a bogus adhesion contract for \$5,500 before anyone else. He was signed to a contract in the 11th grade at Har-Brack High School. It was against NFL rules to sign anyone whose college class had not graduated and Paul Brown denied it for years to save face in public. Cookie was being recruited by over 108 colleges before Brown illegally signed him to that contract. The contract was voided by the NFL but the damage was done, he could not accept a college scholarship offer. So, off to Canada he went to set records, win championships and become possibly the greatest player to ever put on a uniform on either side of the Canadian - U.S.A. boarder.

“Cookie Gilchrist, to my way of thinking, was one of the greatest professional football players who have ever played the game, either NFL or AFL,” said the late Jack Kemp, in an interview with *The Buffalo News* in 2002.

I first met Cookie almost thirteen years ago in Philadelphia and even at 62 he was an imposing figure both physically, mentally and spiritually. I was mesmerized by his stories and insight into the workings of professional sports and American history. His story reflects the types of problems and negative depiction of African-American males in America’s media. During my research I found so much misinformation about Mr. Gilchrist, that it became clear to me that racism, classism, entitlement and control played important factors in how he was portrayed in the main stream media. He was gruff, often painfully direct, and opinionated, but he stood strong for what was right.

Often misunderstood and feared, he made a difference. “Cookie” was a real innovator and agent for change in America and Canada. He was a legend beyond football with business enterprises ranging from concerts with Marvin Gaye to mining operations.

When most people think about the legends of professional football, they think about the guys we see on places like ESPN Classic. Well, Cookie doesn’t appear because he stood up to the NFL, CFL and ESPN years ago and demanded they compensate him for airing any footage on him. Of course they didn’t want to pay him, so he remained on the shelf. He has stood up to owners, management, coaches and even commissioners with unflinching integrity during the past fifty plus years. He even refused to be enshrined into the Canadian Football League’s (CFL) Hall of Fame because of the racism he experienced as an active and retired player,

“Cookie was better than Jim Brown,” Kemp said, referring to the Cleveland Browns’ runner widely considered the greatest player ever. “Jim Brown is a good friend of mine, but Cookie in my opinion was better all around. He could block. He could catch passes. He could tackle. He could kick field goals. Jim Brown was the greatest runner. Cookie was greater all-around.”

During the 1950’s there was the swell of the modern civil rights movement — The Supreme Court ruled segregation in schools unconstitutional, Rosa Parks stood fast, Emmett Till, a black teenager, was lynched for whistling at a white woman in Mississippi, and Martin Luther King became the head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The FBI openly made up stories about people they wanted to attack. What a trying time for Blacks in American. Can you imagine what it was like for a young Black man growing up in that era? Well, “Cookie Gilchrist” did, and he was to become a Black man who would stand up for what he knew was right and stood on his principals to the end. He played for six teams in 12 professional seasons. “Cookie” was more than a great athlete, he was the first to be represented by an attorney when he renegotiated his second contract as a

professional football player in the fifties. He was considered a problem athlete or code for “a Black athlete who dared to think and speak his mind.”

He was instrumental in the boycott of the AFL’s All-Star game that was to be played in New Orleans. But, because of his leadership and the courage of others the game was moved to Houston and that was an important element which forced the AFL and NFL to merge. You see most of the great black players of the time had signed with the AFL, forcing the NFL to recognize that real competition was at hand. He was also an important leader in the fight by high profile black athletes of the time to support the reinstatement of Muhammad Ali into professional boxing.

The American Football League (AFL) All-Star game, after the 1964 season, was originally scheduled for Tulane Stadium in still-segregated New Orleans. Hall of Fame offensive tackle Ron Mix explained: “The Black players were having a hard time getting cabs from the airport. Cab drivers wouldn’t pick them up. Then, when they went out to try and get food, they were turned away from all the restaurants.” Ron told me that most of the White players didn’t understand or support the position at the time. (Ron’s law firm represented one of my companies and we talked about the events in a brief but insightful conversation.)

All 21 black players who were scheduled to play in the game met at the Roosevelt Hotel. These were some of the biggest names in football at that time, including Bobby Bell, Willie Brown, Winston Hill, Clem Daniels and Ernie Ladd. Ron Mix told me that he urged them to play the game in New Orleans to bring national attention to the situation, but they refused. “No, it’s gone too far,” Gilchrist said. “We’re not going to play in this town. Time to take a stand.” Ron said that “Cookie” was adamant about not playing and his usual stubborn self. Dave Grayson, Sr. also told me that “Cookie was the loud voice, but the players were united in their stand to boycott the New Orleans site.”

The game would be moved to Jeppesen Stadium in Houston. Ron Mix believes that the boycott helped

continues to page 32

BLACK SPORTS

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COOKIE GILCHRIST

A MAN OF PRINCIPALS WHO STOOD AGAINST RACISM

continued from page 31

desegregate New Orleans, paving the way for the N.F.L. to expand there in 1967. "They knew they weren't (going) to get an N.F.L. franchise unless they desegregated the city," Ron Mix said. "That's what they did. It was desegregated ahead of schedule."

"Of all the football players I've seen over my years, he'd be in the top five, there's no question about that," said Joe Collier, a former Bills head coach and one of the most respected defensive minds in football.

It's been said that African-Americans were bred to be faster, stronger and better athletes, but that they could not think. The reality is African Americans survived because of their very ability to think. The fact of the matter is that history has shown that whatever segment of American society was the most overtly oppressed began to dominate in two areas – entertainment and sports. Since racism has been institutionalized for so long, these fields have allowed the down-trodden the opportunities denied in other arenas. But, these arenas have in the past and continue to have their unique race—related challenges. People forget or just don't know that Jews were the

basketball stars of the 20, 30s and 40s and we know what the Nazis did to them. Like other oppressed minorities, they followed the path of opportunities.

Mr. Gilchrist became the first true Super Star of both the CFL and the fledging AFL. When he started playing for the AFL Buffalo Bills, he immediately gave the entire league credibility. "If he had played his whole career in the NFL, absolutely, he'd have been a Hall of Famer, no doubt about it," said former Bills tight end Ernie Warlick.

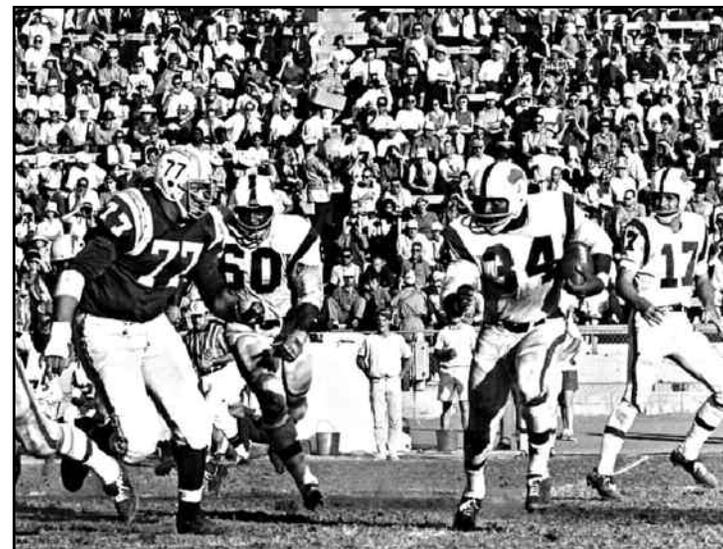
At Buffalo he led the team, which included former presidential candidate Jack Kemp. He spearheaded the win of the AFL Championship in 1964.

Mr. Gilchrist was loved by the fans and respected by his peers, but despised and loathed by the owners and upper echelons of professional football. He was one of the first football players to take his civic duties and social responsibility to heart. He is also one of the major factors why the current professional athletes earn such big bucks; he truly understood the importance and power of the players. He stood up to management more than once and was a fearless negotiator who dared to ask to be paid what he was worth. Today, they talk about revenue sharing and salary caps, well "Cookie Gilchrist" invented

and introduced the concepts to professional sports. He negotiated with owners with the same power, confidence and tenacity he displayed on the football field.

In his waning years, Cookie wanted to use his gifts to inspire others, especially children. He formed a foundation to distribute his "U" Are "A" Super Star! "2" poem. He wanted to send a positive message to children around the world. He firmly knew the concepts of teamwork and that "we" and "us" should take the place of "me" and "I". We are all aware we live in a "me first" society and Cookie wanted to inspire with his poem's words. He wrote the poem in 1964 to change the minds and lives of young people.

Many who saw him play think that "Cookie Gilchrist" was the greatest professional football player of all time? But, we know that those types of things are subjective, and personal favorites or biases affect one's opinion. Well, a strong argument for that can be made. He was named as one of the 300 great-



est in the encyclopedia of professional football "Total Football" published by Harper Collins. Gilchrist was voted the AFL's all-time fullback in 1970.

He never totally recovered from the inoperable throat cancer, which finally took him this year. We all owe him a round of applause for not only his sacrifices and success on and off the football field, but for his sacrifices and success as a leader, innovator and mentor. I will never forget my last in person visit with "Cookie" in Brackenridge, PA, just outside Pittsburg in December of 2008; he was still passionate, articulate and grumpy as ever. Thanks "Cookie" and you will be missed, "Cookie Gilchrist, the Cookie that Wouldn't Crumble." A Man of Principals Who Stood against Racism. *Re-print permission and photos courtesy of www.bstmllc.com.* 6

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FOR RENT:

FOR RENT: One week at the largest timeshare in the world. Orange Lake is right next to Disney and has many amenities including golf, tennis, and a water park. Weeks available are: Mar. 18-25, Mar. 25-Apr. 1, Apr. 1-8, Apr. 8-15 & Apr. 22-29, 2012. (Sun. to Sun.) \$850 inclusive. Email: carolaction@aol.com

WARM WEATHER IS YEAR ROUND In Aruba. The water is safe, and the dining is fantastic. Walk out to the beach. 3-Bedroom weeks available in May 2012 and more. Sleeps 8. \$3500. Email: carolaction@aol.com for more information.

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FEBRUARY 2012

EVENTS

ON-GOING

Meetings of Bay Area Neighborhood Council are held on the first Tuesdays of each month

When: 4:30pm
Where: AIC, 1000 State Street, Springfield, MA
Info: 413.205.3396

THRU MONDAY—FEBRUARY 11

City of Hartford, iQuilt and Champions Skating present Hartford Winterfest FREE public skating

When: 11am—9pm
Where: Bushnell Park Rink, Hartford, CT
Info: Go to www.hartford.com for calendar of events and more specific skating times

WEDNESDAY—1

26th Anniversary of Flying of Black American Heritage Flag

When: 10am
Where: City Hall, Court Square, Springfield, MA
Info: FREE and Open to the Public; 413.733.4481

THURSDAY—2 THRU MARCH 10

Exhibit: Abolished Memories, Stass Shpanin

When: Artist Reception February 2nd from 5:30—8pm
Where: Downtown Art Gallery, Westfield, MA
Info: FREE and Open to the Public; westfield.ma.edu
 (See ad on page 20)

FRIDAY—3

9th Annual National Wear Red Day

Info: Sponsored by American Heart Association's Go Red For Women®. Get involved by going to: GoRedForWomen.org or Facebook.com/GoRed

The Amy H. Carberry Fine Arts Gallery Spring Opening Exhibit: Radiant: Women of Color curated by Rosemary Tracy Woods

When: 4m—7pm
Where: STCC, Lower Level, Building 28, Springfield, MA
Info: FREE and Open to the Public; February 3—March 2, Tuesday—Friday from 12:30—4:30pm; Saturday from 10am—2pm; fmiddle@stcc.edu or 413.755.5288

SATURDAY—4 & SATURDAY 11

Springfield Partners for Community Action First Time Homebuyer's Workshop

When: 9am—1pm
Where: 721 State Street, Springfield, MA
Info: FREE; Refreshments; RSVP to 413.263.6500; www.springfieldpartnersinc.com

SUNDAY—5

St. Peter's Church, Rev. Dee Willington Bright, Sr., Rector, welcomes Rt. Rev. Gordon Scruton who will conduct the Solemn High Mass, which will be the Bishop's final official visit before his retirement

When: 9am
Where: 45 Buckingham Street, Springfield, MA
Info: Public is invited. A special invitation is extended to all Anglicans and Church of England members who are from the Caribbean and other countries.

Emmy Nominee and HBO Def Poet Jon Goode will present a program of "Spoken Word" as part of Black History Month

When: 4pm
Where: Elms College, Elms Library Theater, 291 Springfield Street, Chicopee, MA
Info: FREE; Public is invited; 413.265.2211 or TOLSONJ@Elms.edu

TUESDAY—7

Muhammad Mosque No. 13 Soup and Coat Giveaway

When: 6:30—8pm
Where: 727 State Street, Springfield, MA
Info: 413.827.7691

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day Program

When: 4:30—8:30pm
Where: Progressive Community Baptist Church, 599 State Street, Springfield, MA
Info: 413.794.5620 or 413.794.8362

SATURDAY—11

CHD Cancer House of Hope presents Sweets, Treats & Eats, a Valentine's Dinner Dance

When: 6—11pm
Where: Storrowton Tavern Carriage House, 1305 Memorial Avenue, West Springfield, MA
Info: \$2 Admission; Children under 12 FREE; Trees will be raffled off on December 18; 413.786.1272; 413.246.8958.

SUNDAY—12

African Koras (with Salieu Suso), flutes, and djembe drums will be the featured musical program as part of Black History Month

When: 7pm
Where: Elms College, Elms Library Theater, 291 Springfield Street, Chicopee, MA
Info: FREE; Public is invited; 413.265.2211 or TOLSONJ@Elms.edu

TUESDAY—14

Magdalena Gómez and Rosemary Tracy Woods present First Annual Soul & Vida Celebration

When: 5:30—8:30pm
Where: Artist Square Group Gallery, Tower Square, 1500 Main Street, Springfield, MA
Info: FREE; Open to the public; Refreshments, Raffles; Poetry Performances & Surprises

FRIDAY—17

Springfield Technical Community College's "Black History Month Celebration" featuring Springfield's own Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Roderick L. Ireland

When: 11am
Where: STCC, Building 2, 7th Floor, Springfield, MA
Info: RSVP by February 1 to 413.755.4468

SATURDAY—18

Springfield Ward 5 Democrats will hold Caucus to elect 2012 Convention Delegates

When: 9:30am
Where: 91 Old Acre Road, Springfield, MA

Info: All registered Democrats in Ward 5 are eligible to participate; Leon Moultrie 413.626.6661

TUESDAY—21

This month at Westfield: "Women and Holy War in World History," David J. Hay, Associate Professor

When: 7pm
Where: Scanlon Banquet Hall, Westfield State University, Westfield, MA
Info: FREE and Open to the Public; westfield.ma.edu
 (See ad on page 20)

FRIDAY—24

3rd Annual Go Red Pajama Party presented by The Springfield Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. in collaboration with Baystate Heart & Vascular Program

When: 6—10pm
Where: Cedars Banquet Hall, 419 Island Pond Road, Springfield, MA
Info: FREE; RSVP required to 413.386.6619 or goredpjparty@dstspringfield.org

FRIDAY—24 & SATURDAY—25

S.T.E.M. Conference: Closing the Achievement Gap Through Education Reform featuring Dr. Tricia Rose, Dr. Tavis Smiley, Dr. Steve Perry, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, Dr. Cornell West

When: 9:30am
Where: The Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, 729 Union Avenue, Bridgeport, CT
Info: \$75 adults; \$35 students with ID; 203.366.5824 or 203.330.1467; prayagape@aol.com; www.cathedraloftheholyspirit.com

SATURDAY—25

St. John's Congregational Church Sisters in the Spirit Women's Ministry partners with C.H.A.I.N. Fund, Inc. to present "Breakfast and a Movie" featuring Tyler Perry's "Good Deeds"

When: Doors open 8am; Breakfast 8:30—9:30am; Movie begins 11am
Where: Entertainment Cinemas, Springfield Plaza, 1250 St. James Avenue, Springfield, MA
Info: Tickets available online at www.breakfastandamovie.com or at St. John's Congregational Church, 643 Union Street, Springfield (See ad and article on page 17)

MARCH

SATURDAY—3

Sphere Diversity Hiring Fair

When: 10am—12 noon
Where: Watkinson School Arts & Athletic Center, 180 Bloomfield Avenue, Hartford, CT
Info: SPHERE@Renbrook.org or 860.738.1629
 (See ad on page 14)

WEDNESDAY—7

STCC Diversity Council welcomes Actress, Activist, Role Model, Humanitarian America Ferrera

When: 11am
Where: STCC, Scibelli Hall, Bldg. 2, Springfield, MA
Info: 413.755.4414 or www.stcc.edu/diversity
 (See ad on page 35)

CONGRATULATIONS CORNER



Welcome to *Kris Allard* who comes to the YMCA of Greater Springfield as their new Vice President of Development & Communications from two Ys located in southern Maine – the Northern York County Family YMCA and the Sanford-Springvale YMCA, where she served as Marketing & Public Relations Director.



Congratulations to *Ayanna Crawford* on her appointment as the new Executive Assistant ("Chief of Staff") to Kirk Smith, the president and chief executive officer of the YMCA of Greater Springfield. She serves on the Board of Directors of the American Red Cross and recently graduated from Emerge Massachusetts Program, which is designed for women who want to run for political office.

ST. JOHN'S CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS

photos by Leonard Underwood



photo by Ed Cohen



THE ARTS

CHILDREN'S BOOK CORNER

"CHOCOLATE ME!"

By Taye Diggs, Illustrated by Shane W. Evans
c.2011, Feiwel & Friends \$16.99 / \$18.99 Canada 40 pages

Reviewed by Terri Schlichenmeyer



The Bookworm is Terri Schlichenmeyer. Terri has been reading since she was 3 years old and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

different skin, too, and they wondered if the little boy's dark skin hurt when he washed off the dirt. Why was his skin darker, anyhow?

Johnny and Mark and Timmy sometimes teased the little boy about his hair. It was curly and poufy, like a wig. Didn't it tangle and hurt to brush it?

And then there was the little boy's nose. It was HUGE! It was nothing like Timmy's nose. The little boy's hair was not like Mark's hair. His skin didn't look like Johnny's skin. And his super-white teeth weren't like *anybody's!*

It made him sad. It made him cry.

But when he told his mother why he was so sad, she said something important: his skin wasn't just dark, it was like "velvet fudge frosting mixed in a bowl."

His hair was like cotton candy or rows of tall corn. And just seeing his

white-white teeth made her smile, too.

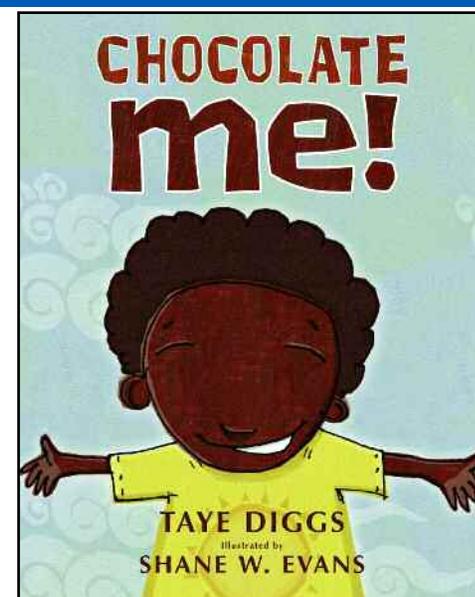
She showed the little boy a mirror. For real, he was just perfect.

Suddenly, Johnny and Timmy and Mark didn't seem so special. They were his friends, that's true, but they were missing something that was too sweet not to notice...

Wanting to be like everybody else is a big thing when you're a little person. But then again, so is self-acceptance and "Chocolate Me!" can help.

With a charming, not-quite-rhyming story, author and actor Taye Diggs – who used his own childhood as the basis for this book – tells the tale of a boy who isn't at all like his friends, and hates it.

Anybody who's stood out from the crowd can identify with the child in this story, but kids who are keenly aware of differences will find it even more personal. I liked the good-naturedness of



Diggs' main character, despite that he's heartbroken for being singled out. For her wisdom, I liked his mother even more.

Add Shane W. Evans' illustrations – pictures kids will want to look at again and again and again – and you've got a winner of a book.

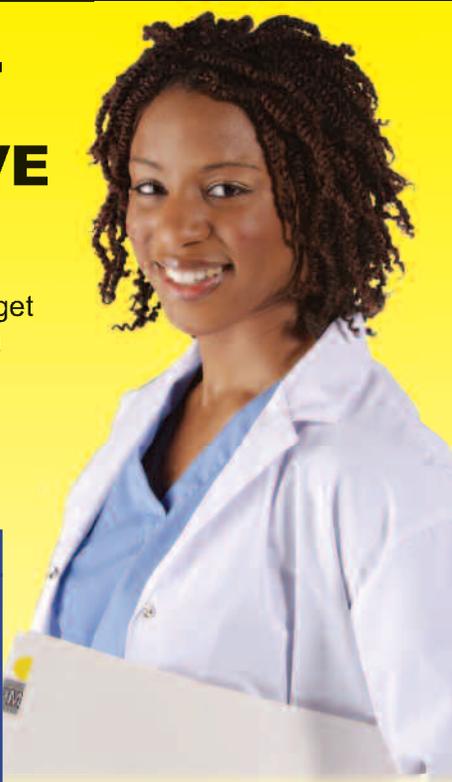
Meant for preschoolers, I think this book is also good for both bully and bullied because it could change their lives. For them, and for any child who's different, "Chocolate Me!" is yummy. 6

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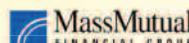
America Ferrera

March 7, 2012 at 11:00am
STCC Scibelli Hall/Bldg. 2

FREE and Open to the Public!

Come hear this **Emmy Award** winning actress speak about her TV and film roles and her **humanitarian work** championing women, children and education. In 2010, Ms. Ferrera was awarded the **Hispanic Heritage Foundation's Inspiration Award** for her work as a role model, activist and actress.

www.stcc.edu/diversity
For more info contact:
Myra Smith at
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