As far as I can determine, our Congressman, Richard Neal, is not corrupt. I write this because of the responses I have received from normally fair-minded people over my comments on a Boston Globe article by David Daley in which the author outlined Neal’s increasing influence over a political financing system that under most other circumstances would be considered corrupt. Daley’s article was damning and factually accurate.

A subsequent article, written by a Neal defender, explained how the political financing system works in Washington and Neal’s growing role in it. It was also accurate, though limited in coverage, and just as damning.
Poll Workers Needed

The Springfield Election Commission Needs You!

We need poll workers and bilingual poll workers who are fluent in English and Spanish to serve as election officials and assist voters in the 2019 Elections. Call 413–787–6120 if you are interested. Or download the Poll Worker Application and mail (DO NOT FAX) the application to the Election office.

The minimum requirements to serve as a poll worker are as follows:

- Must be fluent in English.
- Be a registered voter in the state of Massachusetts.
- Be available to work 6:30 am – 8:15 pm on Election Day.
- Must be able to attend a MANDATORY paid training annually.

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EMBRACING TRUTH

“T”rump may be the first president to openly side with white supremacists. But (Ronald) Reagan began his campaign for the presidency with a speech praising “state’s rights” near the site of the most infamous civil rights murders – that of civil rights activists Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman, in Neshoba County, Miss. He began his presidency by firing air traffic controllers, seriously weakening organized labor’s established ability to strike for better wages and working conditions. His embrace of supply-side economics and deregulation began the erosion of the social safety net that Franklin Roosevelt built to save the country from disaster in the Depression. And his administration’s refusal to confront AIDS marked what was arguably the government’s first response to a public health epidemic with moral condemnation rather than an attempt to arrest it.” (By Charles Taylor, The Boston Globe, June 14, 2019)

EMBRACING TRUTH

“B”ut the conservative figures who have become prominent in the media as anti-Trumpers–William Kristol, director of Republicans for the Rule of Law, MSNBC host Nicole Wallace, former White House communications director for George W. Bush; the columnist George Will; and Steve Schmidt, the often stirringly articulate senior strategist to John McCain’s 2008 presidential campaign – are engaged, perhaps unconsciously, in the dislocation of historical memory. Just as Reagan wanted to sell the notion of a glorious and unsullied past (“It’s morning again in America”), these conservatives want to sell the last 40 years as a golden age of principled conservatism instead of deliberate and thorough destruction of the social contract so radical that even the man who inspired it, Barry Goldwater, eventually described himself as liberal in relation to the rest of the party.” (By Charles Taylor, The Boston Globe, June 14, 2019)

EMBRACING TRUTH

“T”rump will not end with the exit of . . . Trump, and defeating it will necessitate recognizing its poisonous roots instead of celebrating those beginnings as an honorable past.” (By Charles Taylor, The Boston Globe, June 14, 2019)

EMBRACING TRUTH

“T”here’s no shortage, I realize, of ways of detecting falsity in contemporary politicians, but I’ve come upon one that I find most helpful. The more politicians use the phrase “the American people,” I believe, the less they are to be trusted.” (By Joseph Epstein, The Wall Street Journal, June 10, 2019)

EMBRACING TRUTH

“I” feel confident that as far as this American person and most of the rest of us are concerned, the politicians in both parties could not give a flying you-know-what about what we want, need, deserve or are really interested in….What each of our two parties is chiefly concerned about, and has been over the past two years, is putting down, degrading and humiliating the other party.” (By Joseph Epstein, The Wall Street Journal, June 10, 2019)

EMBRACING TRUTH

“P”olitics, which Aristotle defined as the practical science for making citizens happy, just now are about little more than intramural squabbling, and appeals to the “American people” are little more than a cover, a shield, a phony justification blithely used by both parties to keep this dreary game going.” (By Joseph Epstein, The Wall Street Journal, June 10, 2019)

EMBRACING TRUTH

“I”t’s strange how we form different opinions of people based upon our individual experiences. Having read the article in The Springfield Republican regarding the unveiling of the portrait of retired Hampden County Superior Court Judge C. Brian McDonald and the lovely comments by his colleagues and relatives, I could only reflect on my first encounters with Judge McDonald when there were far fewer Black lawyers and he substituted his judicial power for his knowledge of discrimination law and attempted to deny my three Black clients’ right to a fair trial. Had I been any less street savvy, he would have succeeded. I’m sure, however, that through the years, as with most of us, his on-the-job learning curve increased and that the unveiling of his portrait was aptly deserved.

EMBRACING THE TRUTH

“C”onstruction workers represented roughly 25% of all fatal opioid overdoses among Massachusetts workers from 2011 to 2015, a state department of Public Health report found last year. They’re also six times more likely to fatally overdose on opioids than other workers…” (Boston Herald, June 6, 2019)

EMBRACING THE TRUTH

“U”nder a Boston Globe article headlined “The Chernobyl President (June 5, 2019),” one of my favorite columnists, Renee Graham, wrote of Donald Trump, “This presidency is focused on amassing unprecedented power, ignoring account-

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FROM LESS TO LESSON

By Renay Intisar Jihad

See yourself in Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Minister of human and civil rights.
He talked the talk and walked the walk.
His message is a beacon of light.

See yourself in Malcolm X,
(El-Hajj Malik Shabazz)
His no-joke rallying claim,
Framed a fearless, powerful struggle
for the lost, stolen and strayed.

See yourself in Frederick Douglass,
He pushed for freedom when he spoke.

See yourself in Marcus Garvey,
His “Back-to-Africa Movement” gave us hope.

See yourself in Harriet Tubman,
Leader of the railroad, underground.
Tubman lead slaves to freedom,
Risking her life, she was northward bound.

See yourself in Thurgood Marshall,
He fought for Supreme Justice through
The courts of the divided land,
He reformed education laws and knew
His work would benefit every man.

See yourself in George Washington Carver,
Scientist, educator, chemist and inventor.
He pioneered products to help farmers
Who were struggling and in need of a mentor.
His agricultural mind and hands
Changed the way farmers toiled the land.

See yourself in Shirley Chisholm,
Founding member of the Black Congressional Caucus.
Educator, politician and prolific author,
She ran for president.
First African-American woman in Congress.
There was nothing she would not attempt.

See yourself in Adam Clayton Powell,
Politician with vision and finesse.
See yourself in Madam C.J. Walker,
Her beauty products helped us look our best.

See yourself in Sidney Poitier,
Bahamian-American with a stately style.
An actor, author, director,
He broke through barriers
With his talent and smile.

See yourself in Harry Belafonte,
Jamaican-American, Calypso King.
Songwriter, dancer, humanitarian,
He could sure raise his voice and sing.

Life is a Road

By Nylan Xavier Baldwin

Life is a road
We are the cars

We drive on and on.
Seeing new cars and conversing with drivers
Discovering new landmarks with countless poses and pictures.

The Memories
Remembered, never forgotten
As inevitable as the road itself

The Memories
Loved and cherished
But not all
Not the rust build ups and newly discovered dirt stains
Not the empty gas tanks and flat tires
Not the dead batteries and car stops.
The road, a place of uphills and downhills
A motto to remember
A motto instilled since youth

All those on the road are going somewhere
Some taking shortcuts and side roads.
Others making mistakes and taking long routes

However
There are those that never make it to their destination
There are those who forgot what their destination even was.
There are those
Who do not even have a destination at all.

But
Lost cars come in many forms
The small cars who stick to what they know and do not stray
The brave jeeps who are not afraid to go off-road
The travel vans who know their journey will have stops during their trip.
And the rusted junkers, rusted by chance or choice but can find their way.

Life is a road.
A place of right turns and left turns.
A place of main roads and side streets
A place of fulfillment and a place of hope
The road is a place of endless possibilities waiting to be discovered.
Normally I start considering article topics at least a month in advance of publication. But since I have been battling pneumonia for the past two weeks, my mind is foggy and unfocused. Ironically, this daze is what led me to this topic…

My husband Lee was gone for the full week of my initial diagnosis. And though several friends and neighbors pitched in to help with meals and rides during my incapacitation, my role as mother of two active teenagers and as a counselor for a school brimming with year-end responsibilities and celebrations had to prevail. There was no other choice.

Some would say that rest was the other choice. But for this stubborn Italian girl who is dedicated to making the best life for her family and her students, taking time to heal was not an option. Our lives are full and fast. And joyful. The blink and you might miss it kind of living.

And this is where the article comes in…

When I was sickest, I relied on television to keep me distracted. When I was recovering and determined to work, I relied on internet to keep me connected to my job. And when I was feeling well enough to work, I relied on social media to update family and friends of my progress.

With all this, I realize I am totally dependent on technology. Addicted to a drug that is not a drug. But is used as a sedative, speed, and cocktail per the situation. As someone who has lived a life without unhealthy vices or any addictions, this dependency makes me sad.

I know I need to change. But I wonder how.

Perhaps a Summer resolution. I could resolve to use technology less. I could set time limits and curfews for my technology usage. I could put my phone away at night, instead of on my bed stand. I could read a book while relaxing instead of cruising Facebook. I could call a friend instead of texting. I could impose those same expectations on my family. Strike a strength in numbers or misery loves company type deal.

I could. I could. I could. But I am scared that I won’t. I know myself. I am too habitualized. Too trapped in my daze. What is my incentive to change? I could look for inspiration from family and friends who manage
Parents, You are Your Child’s First Teacher

By Sally Fuller

Parents, you are your child’s first teacher, and every moment with you is a nurturing, loving, teachable moment.

Let your child see you reading. You are their role model.

Send your child to school every day. Beginning in preschool. Good attendance habits begin early and carry through life. Every minute they spend in the classroom is a teachable moment.

Set routines for your child. They thrive with established bedtime, reading-together time, family meal time, homework time.

Take your child for walks in the park and talk about what you see. Talk about the importance of fitness and exercise.

Take your child grocery shopping and talk about healthy eating. Talk about the foods that they see. What color are they? What letter do they begin with?

Engage your children in enriching summer activities at home or in the community. There are lots of free summer activities, like the Springfield City Library Summer Reading Club.

Parents, you are your child’s first teacher, and every moment with you is a nurturing, loving, teachable moment.

Do Not Be Afraid To Shine

By Sally Fuller

“Do Not Be Afraid To Shine” Resolution

to disconnect even for short periods of time to do all sorts of outdoor, unplugged family activities. I could look there. But the irony is that where I find inspiration from these sources is on Facebook. Still plugged in.

You know the pictures I’m talking about… Families looking fresh and windblown having just climbed a mountain together; kids romping in the sun on the beach and in the waves with cousins and besties; soccer teams and spectators by the dozen lining plush green tournament fields; ski trips; birthday parties and graduations; or portraits backdropped by flowers blooming and sunsets blazing along hiking trails and rippling ponds. All glorious.

Because I most often know the people in the pictures, I appreciate and celebrate their joy; but I also sometimes wish that I had the time and energy and motivation to create similar experiences with my own family. I also sometimes feel inadequate in that maybe I am jipping my kids from these special moments. But now as I am writing this, I am realizing that the reason I am able to share in other people’s moments is because they captured them with some form of technology and have shared on some form of social media. Plugged while unplugged. And I don’t feel so bad.

But I do need to set some technology usage goals for myself this Summer – to guide me from my haze and bring clarity to the resolution of my resolution… ■
Baystate Academy Graduates Its First Class

Springfield, MA — On June 8, 2019, family members, faculty, board members, and community partners came together at Esther B. Griswold Theater at American International College to mark a milestone in Baystate Academy Charter Public School’s (BACPS) history and an unprecedented achievement. Forty-three students walked across the stage to receive a diploma: the school’s first class to do so. The pride and excitement of all in attendance at this momentous occasion heralded the realization of a dream come true for Baystate founders, teachers and students — all 43 graduates are going on to a two-or-four-year college; some have already earned college credits through dual enrollment. Founding Board President Dr. Frank Robinson, Vice President Baystate Health, named the class the “Bold, Audacious Class of 2019.”

Executive Director Timothy Sneed along with Principal Joretha Lewis proudly conferred a diploma to each of the students. “I ask that you never forget this day. This is the day that you all worked so hard to reach. In 2015, we were the unknown. In 2019, we are legendary…you have taken heed of the value of education and ended this year with a 100 percent graduation rate and acceptance to two-and four-year colleges. Through all the ups and downs, every single challenge you faced, you remained resilient and trusted that Baystate Academy would provide you with everything you needed to be successful in every stage of your life,” Lewis said in her speech to the graduation class.

The keynote speaker, Jimmy Pereira, who grew up in Springfield and Brockton supported by the Department of Youth Services, spoke of how his personal experience informed his leadership and inspired him to empower troubled youth to use their life experience as motivation to step into leadership roles and advocate for change. Pereira told the class, “It’s not easy being a person of color in America today; it’s not easy being poor and disenfranchised through social inequality and socioeconomic disparity.

But if we continue this journey together and support one another, we will get a little further ahead than if we were alone. If you want to make change, you need to take action and lead the charge to change. I want you all to come back to your city and give back to your city and its people.”

Other speakers included Senior Class President Zarria Shider-Washington, who will be attending Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans majoring in biology and chemistry. Shider-Washington told her fellow graduates, “When I look at out at each one of you I see the leaders of the future, each with a distinct goal to make this world a better place...set forth on your own destiny...it’s up to you to achieve it. Take what you have learned in the last four years and put it to good use.”

Valedictorian Sophia Abril Bossano, who will be attending Western New England University, plans to major in engineering. Abril Bossano said, “My wish for you is that you make mistakes...make glorious, amazing mistakes, mistakes no one has made before...don’t freeze, don’t stop, don’t worry that it’s not good enough...make the kind of mistakes that force you to grow, to change yourself, to change your world.”

Baystate Academy Charter Public School was founded in 2013 in partnership with Baystate Health as a 6-12 grade college preparatory school that provides an interdisciplinary curriculum with enriched experiences in health sciences. Sixty-three percent of the graduating class are members of the school’s original first class. BACPS is committed to providing a culture that results in high-achieving students with the character, habits of scholarship, and the ethical foundation to be inspired leaders in our changing world. The school’s 500 students’ ethnicity mirrors the demographics of the student population in Springfield.

See photos on page 39
Graduation season is by far my favorite part of being a Springfield Public School (SPS) school committee member. There is such a good feeling associated with watching the young people of our city walk across the stage and receive their high school diplomas.

When I was first elected in 2009, we had four graduations to attend. Since that time the number of high school graduations has doubled and we now have eight high school graduations to attend!

Every commencement ceremony was very special. Congratulations to all of the graduates of the Class of 2019!

First up to kick off SPS Graduation season: **John J. Duggan Academy** where 20 students graduated, 16 are college bound and one will serve in our Armed Forces. This class secured a total of $270,000 in scholarships!!

- **The High School of Commerce** graduated 176 students —133 are off to attend college this fall and 12 will join our Armed Forces. This class has secured more than $3.8 million dollars in scholarships.
- **The Renaissance School** Class of 2019 consisted of 77 graduates. The class had a 100% college acceptance rate. This fall 65 will go on to attend college, 5 will join our Armed Forces or begin careers.
- **Roger L. Putnam Vocational Academy** graduated 307 in total; 221 of them are planning to attend college this fall, 68 will transition into a career and 9 will join our Armed Forces. The class of 2019 has secured more than $7.2 million dollars in scholarships.
- **The Springfield Alternative High Schools** graduated 42 resilient young people, many who have overcome extreme hardships in order to sit in those seats. We applauded them all. Nineteen will go on to college in the fall and nearly $10,000 was secured in scholarships.
- **My Alma Mater, Central High School**, the home of scholars and champions, graduated 380 students. 90% are attending 2 & 4 year colleges in the fall and 10% are entering our Armed Forces! This class secured over $9 million dollars in scholarships and had the highest number of students of color taking Advanced Placement courses in the state!!!
- The largest graduating class in the history of the **High School of Science & Technology** consisted of 292 graduates; 169 are off to college and 14 are entering our Armed Forces. This class has secured $4.5 million in scholarships.

Graduation season concluded with the **Conservatory of the Arts** and their 42 graduates, 34 who plan to attend college in the fall. The class secured $1.2 million dollars in scholarships!

**Congratulations to Our Graduates!!**
CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES
SPRINGFIELD, MA – Springfield Technical Community College held its 52nd Commencement Ceremony on May 30 at the MassMutual Center, where approximately 965 students in the Class of 2019 received diplomas or certificates.

Welcoming the class, John B. Cook, president of STCC, noted that many of the graduates put in long hours working jobs and raising children while pursuing their associate degrees or certificates.

“To the class of 2019, please note that we are very proud of you, proud of your determination, your will and the hard work you have invested to arrive here tonight after two years – and for many of you, after four, five, six years of persistence,” Cook said. “Your effort is a credit to this institution.”

Geraldine de Berly, vice president of Academic Affairs at STCC, presided over the ceremony. After the presentation of the Colors by the Roger L. Putnam Vocational-Technical Academy Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corp (JROTC) and the playing of the National Anthem by Coffee House Brass, de Berly asked the audience to recognize the 52 graduates who are veterans.

She also highlighted the student families who have provided support to help them graduate from STCC.

“The support they provided has in most cases made all the difference,” de Berly said.

The Class of 2019 at STCC included graduates ranging in age from 18 years old to 74 years old. About one-half of the students graduating are older than 26. Of those graduating, 57 percent of the graduates are women; 43 percent of the graduates are men. This year’s class reflects the diversity at STCC. Fifty-two percent of the graduates are white; 23 percent are Hispanic; 14 percent are black; 11 percent identify as coming from other backgrounds.

Graduates Karolyn M. Burgos Toribio, of Springfield, offered an invocation. She recited John Lennon’s “Imagine.”

Student speaker Erica A. Keeley, of Hampden, said she is following her dream to become a nurse. Her journey has not been easy, she noted.

“I didn’t graduate from high school. I left during my senior year and prioritized work over my education so I could have the independence most teenagers crave,” she said. “I got a GED and left college on the back burner. When my mother died unexpectedly in 2016 it was a wake-up call that reminded me how short life is. I knew it was time to follow my dreams and become the woman my mother already thought I was.”

Keeley enrolled at STCC with the goal of earning a nursing degree. “If I can do it anyone can … and that’s the beauty of STCC. You don’t have to come from a wealthy family … or have been valedictorian of your high school to be successful here,” she said.

Commencement speaker Christopher C. Johnson, chair of the...
HCC Celebrates Gateway to College Graduates

“We stand before you today wearing a cap and gown, symbols that we overcame the bad, powered through and prevailed.” – student speaker Caitlyn Paul of Holyoke

“Every person graduating today is on this stage for a reason,” said student speaker Caitlyn Paul of Holyoke. “The reason we are here, the reason we are so proud to be here, is because traditional high school didn’t work for us, but we still made it. We stand before you today wearing a cap and gown, symbols that we overcame the bad, powered through and prevailed.”

The 36 students from Holyoke, Springfield, Westfield, West Springfield, Hampshire Regional, Palmer and Belchertown represent one of HCC Gateway’s largest graduating classes since the program started in 2008.

Collectively they earned a total of 287 college credits and have a combined GPA of 3.1, “the highest we’ve ever had,” said Gateway to College coordinator Vivian Ostrowski. Twenty of them will be continuing their educations as HCC students in the fall, 90 percent of them are “college ready” in English, meaning they will not have to take any pre-college, developmental English courses, and five of them have already completed their general education English requirements for their associate degrees.

“These are remarkable numbers,” she said. “I bow my head to the students and to their remarkable instructors.”

Those remarkable instructors include Gaylord Saulsberry, who is retiring from HCC after a 51-year career as an educator. In his speech, Saulsberry reminded the graduates about “what we have learned” in the classroom and in the Gateway program.

“We have learned, he said, that courage is the most important virtue we possess.”
HEALTH

GOT H.E.R.S.

Sex Is H.E.R.S

By Latoya Bosworth

Let’s talk about sex. Okay, not so much sex as much as sexual empowerment. Female empowerment is political, psychological, spiritual, and physical. As a matter of fact, the older I get, the more strongly I feel about the physical. Before we reach puberty, women are bombarded with rules about respectability. Eleven-year-olds are told to “cover up” when men are in the house without really understanding why. Black girls specifically are objectified at earlier ages within and outside of our community. We are taught our value is dependent upon gender specific body parts and what we do with them.

I remember valuing my virginity as a teenager because I was socialized to equate being a virgin with being virtuous. Many women are made to feel that their value is somehow lessened by the number of men they’ve slept with, casual or not. Even worse, they are socialized to be classy in the streets and a (insert derogatory word) in the bedroom. For generations our streets and a (insert derogatory word) are bombarded with rules about respectability. Eleven-year-olds are told to “cover up” when men are in the house without really understanding why. Black girls specifically are objectified at earlier ages within and outside of our community. We are taught our value is dependent upon gender specific body parts and what we do with them.

1. Proclaim it – Women are sexual beings and should not be ashamed of being so. Proudly proclaim your wants and desires. Polyamorous? Cool! Be honest with your partner about what you desire. If your partner can’t give it to you, perhaps you can give it to yourself. People will judge you no matter what, so you may as well own it. And more importantly, don’t judge other women’s choices, support them.

2. Protect it – Your life and body are much to valuable to put it at risk. Get tested for STD’s and demand your partners do, too. In 2017, about 4,000 heterosexual African American women were diagnosed with HIV. No one wants to think their partner is unfaithful, but are you willing to risk your health?

3. Provide for it – How magnificent it would be if all men cared about birth control? Whether you continue a pregnancy or not, it will be your life and your body that changes forever. FOREVER. So, while it would be ideal to have a partner who is equally invested in taking precautions against unwanted pregnancies, you must be prepared to provide prevention for yourself. Furthermore, if you have to do it by yourself, then consider being by yourself.

Reevaluating how you were socialized about women and sex can be scary. There is fear of judgment and rejection, and change is just hard. But your self-worth, empowerment (and pleasure) can be amplified when you are willing to face the uncomfortable despite your fears.

HEALTH MATTERS

So What’s Your Addiction?

By Anika C. Thrower, PhD

They say we all have an addiction or weakness for something. Seemingly, some addictions are more serious than others. For some it has been drugs, retail therapy or maybe food—more specifically, certain types of foods like carbohydrates (i.e. breads and pasta). Many times we downplay our overindulgence in sweets, chalking it up as having a sweet tooth.

Can you relate?

Not all foods that we think fit the category as addictive foods are so obvious. This includes foods such as pizza, nachos and cheese, cheeseburgers, macaroni and cheese, lasagna, grilled cheese and cheese-cake. Did you see one of your favorite comfort foods in this list?

As you may have guessed, dairy products—like cheese—is the common ingredient in each of these food items. The average American consumes over 30 pounds of cheese each year with the most popular cheese being swiss, cheddar and mozzarella. According to a government-based report, fluid milk consumption has fallen from 0.9 to 0.5 cup per person per day, while cheese consumption has doubled (USDA 2018). This information is particularly interesting as most minorities are lactose intolerant.

In other words, many of us do not have the enzymes in our bodies to properly break down the ingredients in dairy products. Yet many of us have cheese-based items on our list of favorites and with good reason. Also, cheese contains addictive ingredients.

Before I share some of the facts, I must say I have had an addictive relationship with cheese since my formative years. During that period, government issued American cheese was a staple in my family’s home. This surplus cheese was used to make everything from grilled cheese sandwiches to piling shredded cheddar cheese high on a heaping plate of warm pasta.

On to the facts!

Cheese is addictive because it contains an ingredient called casein. Casein is an animal-based protein found in dairy based product like ice cream, pudding, sour cream, butter, creamy soups, as well as the cheese-
based products previously mentioned. Though all these foods contain casein, cheese contains much higher doses of casein. Another fact about cheese is the amount of saturated fat it has. Saturated fat is the worst type of the fat that we can consume. Simply put, cheese products have been linked to clogged arteries, heart disease and even death.

Learn how we can tame our cheese/dairy addiction:

- **Eating less is more** – Consider requesting less cheese when ordering the next pizza. Did you know the average medium pizza contains about a half of a pound cheese?

- **Try vegan alternatives** – Try cheese substitutes. It may take some time to find a brand you will like but it’s worth the effort. Join a vegan-based social media group to learn what others are using as a substitute. Or simply forgo!

- **Consider other changes** – Alternatives to milk products include almond milk and coconut milk products.

- **Tell your circle of friends** – Gain support from others by sharing your new health goal of less dairy. You may be surprised at the level of support and admiration.

So what's your addiction?
Declan O’Connor, the 3rd transgender principal to come out in Massachusetts and the first in the City of Springfield, has my full support. In fact, Declan coming out as transgender should be nothing but a teaching moment, especially for the Springfield Public School District. After all, that is the business that it is in.

Declan’s courage exemplified the type of leadership that Springfield and our public schools are in dire need of. He forced the hand of our city leaders to embrace difference and do so publicly. For some, it was extremely difficult, mostly because their “privilege” has allowed them to stay in their safe space entirely too long. Others handled the situation more professionally and immediately saw this as an opportunity to stand in solidarity not only with Declan, but with so many who have yet to find the strength that Declan exhibited.

Mayor Domenic Sarno was surprisingly one of those leaders and deserves a tremendous amount of credit. Days after Declan came out to his students and parents, Mayor Sarno honored him at the LGBTQ flag raising, which sent a strong message that Springfield is an accepting city. In addition, he recently signed on to an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in support of employment nondiscrimination protections for the LGBTQ community. I’m hopeful that others will follow the Mayor’s lead.

Credit also must be given to the leaders of the Empowerment Zone who are responsible for overseeing Chestnut Tag, the school that Declan leads. They never waivered in their support and provided Declan with a sense of safety, since he knew that his new journey could potentially jeopardize everything that he has worked so hard for.

It also must be noted that Declan’s body of work in the school district made it much easier for everyone involved to accept him as the first transgender principal in Springfield. He has been an exceptional teacher, coach, mentor, colleague, director—all in Springfield—and now is one of, if not the best, principal in the district. He will soon be a superintendent and what a fairy tale ending it would be if it was right here in Springfield.

Declan’s public struggle for acceptance in mainstream society has only just begun and I promise you it will be far greater than those of you struggling with Declan’s new name or what pronoun to call him. And if you find yourself tripping over your tongue, then know he responds just the same to Dr. or O’Connor.

On another note, my son Justin Jr. now has two god-fathers and at seven years old, I look forward to yet another teaching moment that will most certainly shape his perspective on life as he navigates the world we live in.
I see the many tentacles of outreach by the Springfield Cultural Partnership (SCP) in a positive light as a sound, viable effort in increasing local arts and cultural expressions that benefit our community.

So far, an array of artistic programs promoted or sponsored by SCP have included events such as Painted Pianos, Art Stops, Utility Box Murals, and Fresh Paint Springfield which, along with many other offerings, serve to enhance the economic base of downtown while providing opportunities for local artists to showcase their talents.

Karen Finn, the Executive Director of SCP, the 501(c)3 parent organization of the Springfield Central Cultural District (SCCD), has been instrumental in her busy role of spreading the word concerning local resources, overseeing activities, and working in collaboration with local artists, the community, and legislative bodies to highlight Springfield’s cultural attractions.

To even fathom the magnitude of Karen’s responsibilities with respect to SCP, consider the Springfield Cultural District with its 50 member organizations representing artists, culture, and businesses. SCCD is only one of 45 designated cultural districts in the commonwealth of Massachusetts. These districts were formed to display attractions such as art, music, theatre, dining, historic architecture, and more.

Karen is not just a spokesperson for SCP in the organization’s ongoing mission to sort, gather, and help spread the word about the vast number of events and projects, she also works with the city’s Office of Planning and Economic Development and local officials to emphasize the significance of arts and culture in making Springfield vibrant and attractive with walkable streetscapes, fine galleries, and cultural landmarks. Her energy and time are also spent in advocating for arts and seeking funding for SCCD programs by way of ongoing grant writing, member retention, and partnerships with local businesses.

When I inquired about performing at the Art Stop 2019 last May with my various puppets, I learned that event was just a fragment of what is offered on a yearly basis. Karen and the SCP are continuously organizing, planning, and implementing a yearly calendar of community engagement events in the cultural district.

Even before Karen and her family moved to the Springfield area in June of 2018, she already saw the potential in the city for economic growth with the fusion of artistic capabilities from local artists. She knew SCCD was a terrific way to unify the community and shape the city’s cultural identity.

The Springfield Central Cultural District was founded in 2014 and with Karen’s leadership, community programs have been established to strengthen, inspire, and engage the community. The organization strives to create and continue a creative economy through individual expression which is essential for cultivating cultures and arts. With Karen’s previous work background in advocating, she plans to proceed with getting the word out about SCCD and how it not only promotes Springfield’s Arts and Cultural events, but also plays a vital role in creating and sustaining a powerful and creative economy.

For more information about the SCCD and to get involved, check out its website at http://springfieldculture.org/takeaction. Follow me at https://pvpeduc.wixsite.com/arts.
Leadership Pioneer Valley Honors the Region’s Next Leaders During Their LEAP Class of 2019 Graduation

HOLYOKE, MA — Leadership Pioneer Valley (LPV) is hosted a graduation ceremony for their nine-month regional leadership development program called LEAP. They engage the Pioneer Valley’s most promising emerging leaders through learning and exploration. Participants are trained in leadership skills by experts in a classroom setting. They also attend in-depth field experiences across the region where they meet with local leaders and explore the region’s economy and culture.

Leadership Pioneer Valley LEAP graduates broke into teams during the program and presented their project results on issues facing our region during the LPV Class of 2019 Project Presentations and Commencement Ceremony on Wednesday, May 15th in the Smith College Conference Center. Each team devised a project to tackle a local or regional challenge. The projects are designed to be in-depth, hands-on experiences that put the LPV curriculum into action, for the benefit of communities in the Pioneer Valley.

“We’ve had amazing class of leaders in the class of 2019,” said Lora Wondolowski, Executive Director of LPV. “It’s amazing how each year our class is diverse from the last,” she added. “We’re thrilled to see the growth these individuals have had over the course of the nine-month program,” she concluded.

“Leadership Pioneer Valley became a safe space for me to evaluate myself and tap into my true potential as an emerging leader in my community. The exposure to great thinkers, community advocates, and passionate professionals, throughout the LPV ‘process served as motivators for me to take on more personal and professional LEAP!’ said Ashia Alexander, graduate of the LEAP, Class of 2019.

“LPV has been educational and inspirational,” said Carmen Silvestri, graduate of LEAP, Class of 2019. “I am walking away from this experience with a firm grasp of the region’s strengths and challenges and a network of those striving to make the valley better for all. I feel empowered with the perspective to think regionally and tools to influence change collaboratively,” they added.

In its eight years running, nearly 300 individuals representing more than 100 companies, organizations, and municipalities have participated. The program has filled a critical need for a leadership program that builds a network of emerging leaders to address the challenges and opportunities of the region. Fifty-three percent of alumni have a new leadership role at work, 64% have joined a new board of directors, and 99% made new meaningful connections.

This year’s graduating class includes:

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Page eighteenaf-am point of view july 1, 2019 continues to page 19
I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately. I know that the rich, white man (landowner) accompied (made up word) by white women created this oppressive system in this country. For decades, centuries even, people of color have been in this oppressive system that continues to create laws and policies that oppress. Racism is embedded in the fabric of this country. We tried to assimilate and learn to eat the fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, and even learned how to make it even better than they did. The problem was that we couldn’t assimilate the color of our skin.

It’s time we start thinking about how this can change. I don’t think that people of color are going to be able to change the oppressive policies and practices no matter what office we might get into―as we saw with President Obama. He was in the highest office in the land and couldn’t even begin to start to change some of the policies and practices that continue to oppress people of color. And he was a community organizer!

The system was set up to benefit a group of people, specifically white landowners, and oppress everyone else. The oppression included poor white people, black people, Latino people, Asian people. No matter where you come from, if you don’t have white skin then this system is not going to benefit you. You could try to pass as white as some people did after slavery became illegal on the books but still was legal in policy. But you will never be able to BE white.

In the beginning of the 19th century, Irish people were oppressed just as much as black people. But they were made an offer they couldn’t refuse. They were told that if they “became” white, it would benefit them. They were lied to, of course. Some may have been able to gain some land and vote because as we remember, in the beginning of the 18th century, only white male landowners could vote. When they saw they were outnumbered, they recruited white Irish people to be part of their clan (no pun intended) so they could have more numbers on their side. Before this, black and white people were working together to get out of slavery and indentured servitude. When those in power saw what was happening and that they were outnumbered, they decided to do what this country does so very well: divide and conquer.

So those are the reasons I believe that it is white people’s responsibility to put an end to the racist policies and practices that are embedded in the fabric of this country. The white person is the one who is able to change the policies and practices. Whether you have a seat in the White House or at the clubhouse, you have the ability and the responsibility to be an accomplice to eradicate racist policies and racism. White people have been allies to people of color in this oppressive system and we need more allies. We need accomplices in the struggle. The civil rights struggle had white accomplices who participated and were working along with Martin Luther King, Jr. to gain civil rights for all people. They didn’t succeed to ensure civil rights for all and for that reason I seriously believe that only white people can undo racism.

We should all be in the struggle. We should all be fighting toward achieving the goal of social justice for everyone, but it is the responsibility of those who created it to put an end to it. We need you to be an anti-racist accomplice. And that’s my opinion. Happy Independence Day for some.
The Springfield 2019 Puerto Rican Parade recognitions were announced. From left: Rep. Carlos Gonzalez, Grand Marshall; scholarship recipients Kiarra Aldarondo and Jayda Aponte; Youth Ambassador, Blessyd Cotto; Sports Ambassador, Juliana Templeman; Cultural Ambassador, Maria Louisa Arroyo; Madrina, Betty Medina Lichtenstein and Padrino, Nelson Roldan.

Scholarship recipients Ijahman Morgan and Jerry Moore III, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Grand Sire Archon Dr. Gregory Vincent, Beta Sigma Boulê Sire Archon Jeff Johnson, and scholarship recipients Vaughn Rogers and Wesley Days Jr. at the recent WEB DuBois Howie Edmonds Public Policy Series.


Tye Weir (far right) presented Wesley Days Jr. with the Rhonda Swan Memorial Fund scholarship as proud parents Wesley Days, Sr. and Atty. Alesia Days pose with him.

The Center After School Program recently held their 15th Anniversary program. As part of the celebration, owners and sisters Alethea Stevenson (left) and Althea Haines (far right) honored Amanda White, a member of the program, former State Rep. Raymond A. Jordan, Minister Yusef Muhammad and Jeanette Haines.
St John’s Congregational Church Healthy Life Ministry participated in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. Participants included Tony Porter, Carol Sullivan, Tyrone Sullivan and Karon Tyler.

The Xi XI Omega Chapter of AKA Sorority, Inc. recently held their 15th Annual Hats Off. The theme was “A Step Back in Time: Harlem Renaissance.” Pictured are sorors Denise Cruse and Dr. Yolanda Johnson with scholarship award recipients Brianna Nortez, Paris Lizana, Seldine Chambers-Sutton and Alisiana Marshall, and soror Helen Caulton-Harris.

St John’s Congregational Church Healthy Life Ministry participated in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. Participants included Tony Porter, Carol Sullivan, Tyrone Sullivan and Karon Tyler.

The A Better Chance (ABC) House in Amherst held their 50th Anniversary gala at the UMass Campus Center.

Home City Development Inc. Executive Director Tom Kegelman recognized E. Henry Twiggs for his lifetime of contributions toward civil rights, housing rights and human rights at the E. Henry Twiggs Estates Ribbon Cutting. Joining Mr. Twiggs (far right) are Mayoral Aide Thomas Ashe, U.S. Congressman Richard E. Neal and Kegelman.
Eastern Alumna Salutes “Melonated and Educated” Excellence Award Winners

By Dwight Bachman, Public Relations Officer, Eastern Connecticut State University

On May 9, Eastern recognized more than 100 students with a 3.5 cumulative grade point average or higher, and an additional 11 students who have demonstrated exemplary co-curricular engagement across campus at the University’s Seventh Annual Inclusive Excellence Student Awards Ceremony. The ceremony recognized the academic, campus-wide, and personal success of African, Latino, Asian and Native American (ALANA) students at Eastern.

Eastern President Elsa Núñez said the ceremony is not just about Inclusion. It also speaks to Eastern’s other core values of academic excellence, integrity, social responsibility, engagement, and empowerment. “We are also honoring academic excellence. It is important for each of you to stand tall and be proud of who you are and what you are capable of. Never, ever, ever let anyone attempt to diminish your worth or your talents!”

Keynote speaker Dr. Kawami Evans ’97, who serves as associate director at the Center for African Diaspora Student Success at the University of California at Davis, thanked Stacey Close, associate vice president for equity and diversity, for inviting her, and the late David Carter, former Eastern president and CSCU chancellor for the key role he played in shaping her into the bold, confident, resilient and spiritual woman that she is today.

“Dr. Carter always remembered our names, and he would send birthday cards to our campus mail boxes! He was one of the most memorable leaders that had an impact on me,” said Evans, who earned her Bachelor’s degree in history and social science at Eastern, her Masters of Education in educational policy and research administration from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and a doctorate in educational management and leadership from Drexel University.

Evans encouraged the students to use their curiosity and optimism to persevere through unseen psychological struggles that can become their staunchest challenges. She said many high-achieving students fall prey to chasing individual achievements, accolades, or material gain as their goal, even confusing their self-worth with what one can accomplish.

“Beautifully Melonated and Educated”

“This is dangerous; it can lead to anxiety and depression. Don’t let this be your reality or focus. Who you are is what we are celebrating today. All the earned accolades you are receiving are but a byproduct of the brilliance within your beautifully melonated and educated self. You are the promise of our ancestors’ prayers and walk with the wisdom and swag of those who have grit, resilience, the social and emotional intelligence, curiosity, and hope.”

Evans told the students the most important element they need to resurrect in discussing their future success is their spirituality, ways in which students discover their destiny—answers to the big questions of who they are, what is their life purpose and how do they make a difference in the world.

“Learn how to recognize and celebrate that we are all—believers, non-believers, agnostics, humanists, and atheists—inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. This is essential because we will need each other and the faith and vision to respond to the ills of our world today.”

Evans continued: “Much of the world right now is relegated to systems and polices. We have to raise the bar with our vision of what’s possible. It will take hard work, community, love, bravery, unrelentless effort and celebration. I sincerely believe that we can create a world that works for ALL! When I say ALL, I mean ALL!

A total of 280 students qualified for an Academic Excellence Award with a 3.5 cumulative GPA or higher, and more than 100 of them were able to attend the May 9 event. During the ceremony, several students received service awards. Adrianna Arocho and Mayra Santos Acosta were presented the Volunteer Service Award; Aiyana Ward, the Athletic Excellence Award; Kimberly Allen and Sommer Bache, the Advisor’s Silent Warrior Award; Kimberly Allen and Vishal Jungiwalla, the Advisor’s Social Justice Advocacy Award; Ishah Azeez, the Resilient Warrior Award; Kimberly Allen and Vishal Jungiwalla, the Advisor’s Choice Award; and the Freedom at Eastern Club, the Building Bridges Award.
To many people, “bankruptcy” is a dirty word. It often represents failure and embarrassment. However, this could not be further from the truth. Bankruptcy clients are genuinely good, honest, hardworking people and families, who simply fell on hard times. In fact, there are essentially three reasons for needing to file bankruptcy: (i) the client suffered a job loss/loss of income; (ii) the client suffered a significant illness (and extensive medical bills); or (iii) the client went through a divorce. Many clients can suffer from two or more of these reasons. The reality is that most Americans have minimal savings, and live paycheck to paycheck. When you are in that situation, your economic ability to overcome job loss, significant illness, or divorce can be almost impossible. As we all know, when monthly bills are not paid on time, they become twice as hard to pay the following month. If the months continue, recovering from debt can become an impossible climb. Additionally, a person will suffer a significant drop in their credit score due to late payments, which then makes it impossible to borrow more money to get caught up. Unpaid creditors will call, write, and harass the person requesting payment. When payment is not forthcoming lawsuits, attachments, garnishments, evictions, repossessions, and foreclosures are initiated.

In addition to legal problems, debt can also create significant mental health issues, including anxiety, stress, and loss of sleep. It is often at this point people they need legal help. Bankruptcy was created as a safety net for those suffering from overwhelming debt. If a person is deemed eligible, bankruptcy allows them to permanently discharge their debts (credit cards, utility bills, personal and family loans, judgments, repossessions, etc.), while simultaneously allowing them to keep assets (clothes, jewelry, bank accounts, furniture, personal property, car, house, retirement accounts, etc.).

For consumers, there are typically two options: Chapter 7 Bankruptcy — where your debts are discharged without any repayment and Chapter 13 Bankruptcy — where some portion of the debts are repaid. Talking to an experienced bankruptcy lawyer can help you determine your eligibility and help you decide which option is right for you based on your specific circumstances.

The process for a Chapter 7 Bankruptcy is usually completed in a few months and in most cases, the person filing bankruptcy will not need to come to court. Once you file bankruptcy, a court order immediately prevents all creditors from taking actions against you during your case. However, keep in mind, you can only file Chapter 7 Bankruptcy once every eight years. The other option, Chapter 13 Bankruptcy, can take longer, as a partial debt repayment plan is involved.

Bankruptcy should not be seen as a dirty word. Anyone could end up needing to file for bankruptcy. Instead, it should be considered a “clean word” as it cleanses your debts, and lets you live a happier and more productive life.

*Although Professor Dion is a licensed attorney, this article is written for informational purposes to the public only and is not legal advice. For questions and information about your own situation and eligibility, contact a licensed attorney or the referral section of the local bar association.
**EDITORIAL FROM THE PUBLISHER’S DESK**

**CONGRESSMAN RICHARD NEAL IS NOT CORRUPT**

continue from page 1

for its vigorous defense of a political financing system that most would rather see radically changed.

As I recall, in his article Daley called the system “pay to play” and discussed Neal’s expanded role in it since he became chair of Ways and Means. I called it “bought and caught” because I thought “bought and caught” more accurately described what made Neal more vulnerable to being exposed for playing in a game that has been accepted long ago as the political norm in Washington and in state capitals around the country, including Massachusetts.

where you can go up on the web and find out who the big players are.

Neal has been in this game for decades. His war chest has never been less than substantial by any stretch of the imagination and most of it now comes from big money contributions. That’s not new. It’s American politics. And the vast majority of those who contribute expect something in return. And at the proper time, they get something because they are on the significant donors list. It’s called pay-to-play.

Big money has always had an outsized influence on our politics. The only difference between then and now is that in the past, Neal has been able to do what most seasoned politicians have learned to do, which is to remain as low key as possible about his fundraising and the shady compromises it generates. Now that he is nationally prominent, Neal’s behavior is being scrutinized more critically by those in the media who enjoy exposing our less-than-pristine system of political financing and, I must admit, by some who simply find pleasure in associating it with Neal.

And Neal’s loyal followers are charging to his defense and teaching me a lot about the meaning of “moral equivalency.” They seem to be arguing that because Neal is a “good guy,” our system of political financing, which under most other circumstances they would consider repugnant, should be considered immune to criticism because if we criticize the repugnant system, we now risk tainting Neal.

Well, that’s a lot of hypocritical nonsense. Neal didn’t invent the system or the governing rules of political financing. He is a very good politician who understands how the game is played and he plays it as well as so many do and better than most. But that does not make him sacrosanct or immune to legitimate criticism.

So as Neal inevitably gets touched by the public taint of the privileges that his elevated political power brings him, free from the normal scrutiny of most local media, he and his loyal followers should feel blessed.

**LETTERS TO THE PUBLISHER**

**AF-AM NEWS bits**

continued from page 4

Bloody Sunday, refers to as “good trouble.” And this is a moment in our nation that cries out for more than the whispers – or civility – of allies.

**FREEDOM OF THE PRESS**

In an opinion article in The Wall Street Journal (June 20, 2019), New York Times publisher A. G. Sulzberger wrote: “America’s Founders believed that a free press was essential to democracy, and the American experience has proved them right. Journalism guards freedoms, binds together communities, ferrets out corruption and injustice, insures the flow of information that powers everything from elections to the economy. Freedom of the press has been fiercely defended by nearly all American presidents regardless of politics or party affiliation and regardless of their own complaints about coverage.”

Amen!

**MAYOR’S LOGIC**

Mayor Domenic Sarno could not be more wrong in his most recent fight with Springfield’s City Council over who should hire the new city clerk. The council’s fundamental argument is that it should hire the new city clerk because, since 2004, the law gave it the authority and power to do so. Sarno argues that the law doesn’t apply because he operates under a strong mayor charter and besides, he argued, he made the previous appointment after 2004 and, therefore, has the authority and power to make the new appointment. Can you imagine a crook making a similar argument before a judge: “Your honor, I robbed the store last year and got away with it so I should not be charged for the one I robbed this year simply because I got caught.” Something is very wrong with the logic.

**Letters to the Publisher and other content MUST be sent electronically to:**

mjhurst@afampov.com

(Please reference a subject matter or e-mail is automatically deleted.)
The violent death on August 28, 1955, of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, an innocent Black boy from Chicago, at the hands of White racists in Money, Mississippi while he was visiting relatives in a nearby town, was traumatic for most Black folks and for many sympathetic visiting relatives in a nearby town, was traumatic for most Black folks and for many sympathetic White racists in Money, Mississippi while he was there. The lynching of Southern Black adults.

Emmett was dragged from his bed at his great uncle’s house in the middle of the night and beaten unmercifully in the barn of a White man and his allies, dragged to a bridge over the Tallahatchie River, shot, weighted down and thrown into the river because he was accused of whistling at the White man’s wife over the counter of his variety store.

Emmett’s face and body were so deformed that his own mother, who had to trick authorities into giving her his body, could not recognize him. They surrendered the body only after she agreed to keep Emmett’s casket closed. To her never-ending credit, once the body was returned to Chicago, Mamie Till-Mobley had her son’s casket opened and insisted it remain open for the world to see throughout Emmett’s viewing and funeral. Most agree that the resulting public outrage at the sight of Emmett’s mangled body triggered the modern Civil Rights movement.

I was ten-years-old at the time and, like many young people, the trauma of Emmett Till’s death and the acquittal of his killers by an all-White Southern jury weighed heavily on my mind and I recall swearing not to ever travel to the South even though all of my four grandparents were migrants from Georgia.

Over the years, as I learned more and more about the details of Emmett Till’s lynching, I began to puzzle over why so many people became famous depicting his murder in many different mediums (movies, plays, skits, music etc.) and wondered why his mother received countless, well-deserved accolades and awards for her courage while the courageous behavior of her murdered son is rarely mentioned except in the context of victimhood. So in 2017, I decided to honor Emmett Till by organizing a group of like-minded people to start the Emmett Till Award.

The 2017 Emmett Till Award was given symbolically to Colin Kaepernick in honor of the NFL quarterback’s willingness to speak truth to power and to graciously accept the consequences of his actions. He essentially sacrificed his football career to protest the killing of Black men and boys by the police by kneeling during the singing of the national anthem at football games and to date, no NFL team has been willing to re-sign him.

By the time our 2018 award was given, we had established a board whose members are Emurriel Holloway, Patricia Spradley, Maxine Brown, Denise Hurst, Willette Johnson, Willie Spradley, Marjorie Hurst and myself. In her absence, the board nominated and elected Emurriel Holloway as its chairperson for two years and, after a bit of expressed trepidation, she graciously accepted. Board members were selected because of their willingness to speak their minds and to work cooperatively toward a mutual goal.

The board’s initial charter was to take as much time as needed to clarify the meaning and purpose of the Emmett Till Award. We have met monthly hammering out the details during which time we awarded the family of Helen Caulton-Harris the Emmett Till Award in honor of their late father, Lt. Robert L. Caulton, a Black police officer whose promotion to captain was rejected under circumstances that appeared to be unjust. The award was given in recognition of the family’s courage in publically revealing their pain through an article in Point of View authored by Helen and for naming those community folks who were most responsible. It was awarded in memory of their father for his courage in fighting for his right to a promotion to captain during a period in our history when African Americans were expected to go along to get along. The recognition event was co-sponsored by Point of View, and thanks to Benjamin Craft, by the Center for Human Development (CHD).

Our newly adopted mission statement is as follows: “The mission of the Emmett Till Award is to honor those individuals or groups who, without fear of consequences, demonstrate the courage to resist intimidation and to speak out and act against injustice.” Our mission statement represents a tough and somewhat different standard from the norm. After much discussion, it was decided that the award will not be given to those who are simply good at the job for which they are paid or to raise money to support worthy organizations or to people for simply being popular. Although all of the above types of awards have merit, none reflect what made Emmett Till the hero in his own death.

One Black witness to the beating of Emmett Till testified at trial that the lengthy beating to which Till was subjected would have ended any time he chose to admit to the offense he was accused of but he repeatedly refused. Right up until the end just before he was shot and thrown into the Tallahatchie River, Emmett Till maintained his stubborn Northern dignity. Few could claim the courage to do the same.

Some shy away from making Emmett Till the center of attention because they are so repulsed by the horror of his death and pictures that depict it. We prefer to focus on the memory of his courage and on the Mississippi Black man who witnessed Till’s beating and testified at the trial against the men accused of lynching him in spite of the fact that he knew he would have to leave his home state forever or be lynched himself. And on Emmett Till’s mother who defied the law to display his battered body for the world to see. All three displayed attributes the board will be looking for in future awardees.

No decision has been made on a 2019 award in line with the board’s decision to take its time to clearly define and articulate the award’s mission and to develop a long-term strategy. Although it is willing to skip a year, the board voted to try to select a 2019 awardee or awardees – local or otherwise – with the caveat that the new mission must not be compromised.

So stay tuned and keep the date of August 28, 2019 open.
Education Matters

By Kelisa Wing

Education matters. The type of education you get can be a predictor of the kind of life that you will live. However, when we think about education, we think about schools and institutions. I would like to encourage us to consider that education begins in the womb, and success should not just be about grades, but about instilling values in our children.

Because education begins in the womb, there are some critical things that also must matter in order for education to matter:

1. **Matter:** We have to be careful with the words we speak to our youth because the power of life and death is in our tongue. We are what we say we are, and if we say our children are good, then they will be good. We must remember to speak those things that are not as though they were. If we are not seeing growth in our children’s lives, we should take stock of the words that we are speaking. You can speak both cursing and blessing with your words – words matter!

2. **Awareness Matters:** If words matter, and education matters, then being socially aware of what our youth are facing each day must matter. We cannot sit back and pretend not to see what is happening socially and politically in our society because those factors are what our children are carrying with them daily. We need to understand the factors that our students are facing and the pressures they have that were not prevalent when we were growing up. Understanding this means that we have to remember that where there are struggles and problems, grace does abound. We must show grace to our children when dealing with them in order to display God’s grace, which we know is sufficient!

3. **Relationships Matter:** We have to be in relationship with our youth because love covers a multitude of faults. We have to have faith, hope, and love, but as the Word says, love is the greatest of these three. Making sure that relationships matter will ensure that we are loving our children in a world that is unloving.

4. **Expectations Matter:** We need to have high expectations for our youth. All children, no matter their zip code or socio-economic status, should have access to a high-quality education. We must hold our youth to high expectations, and because their learning is constant, we must have high expectations of anyone we allow to be in their lives.

5. **Commitment Matters:** We have to commit to doing all we can to give our children multiple pathways to success. We also need to commit to living a life that emulates Christ, understanding that more is caught than taught.

**Education, words, social awareness, relationships, expectations, and commitment—all matter. ■**

Making Time for Our Children

By Beverly Guerrero-Porter

Summer is in full swing! Although our children are on break from school, we can continue to support them by providing enriching opportunities that help them to retain and build on the skills they have acquired during the previous academic year, while also being intentional about strengthening our relationship with them. Here are some simple and practical ways of supporting our children’s development this summer!

1. **Eat technology-free dinners together** – The simple act of sitting at the dinner table together and engaging in conversation does wonders in helping children develop or enhance their conversational skills, which will serve them well in the Fall when they have group projects or school presentations. It also strengthens relationships among family members as they get to share the experiences of their day, knowing that they are being acknowledged and validated without having to compete with a screen. This provides an opportunity to support your children where necessary. It brings comfort to them to have a trusted adult who will listen to them and help guide them.

2. **Do something with your children that they enjoy** – You can listen to one of their favorite albums together, watch an episode of a program they enjoy or participate in an activity that they do in their spare time. It shows genuine interest in who they are and builds camaraderie.

3. **Read with them** – For younger children, set aside a daily time to read their favorite stories or introduce them to new ones. For older children, continues to page 33.
Pastors, Ministers, Professors and Theologians, please submit your articles for the “Religious Point of View” to Rev. Dr. Atu White at: atuwhite@gmail.com
Summer in the Country

By Juanita Torrence-Thompson

A dove cries. The old woman gathers red magnolias, lovingly places them in a vase.

She bakes fresh blueberry muffins, whips plump, cool strawberries to decorate Shredded Wheat and garnishes plain yogurt with crunchy almonds. As 9 a.m. approaches, the white-haired matriarch peers from her window anxiously, puts a kettle of water on the black pot-bellied stove for Postum. A familiar red mustang rounds the curve in the road, skirting honeysuckle as it turns into her driveway. A honey-toned child in blue jeans and pigtails leaps from the car with her father, calling Grandma! Grandma!

Helen, dearest, cries the woman, arms outstretched dove-like. Love floats in long embraces. See you both next week, says her son after storing Helen’s suitcase.

Don’t chase the goats, Helen, Brad says. Da—a-d! — I’ll just milk Daisy.

Brad, we’ll have our special time together Playing Chinese checkers, 20 Questions.

Yes, dad, like we always do.

OK, give me a kiss.

You ace that job interview, son. God knows you deserve it.
THE ARTS
CHILDREN’S BOOK CORNER

“The Undefeated”

By Kwame Alexander, Illustrations by Kadir Nelson
c.2019, Versify $17.99 / higher in Canada 40 pages
By Terri Schlichenmeyer

You wanted it. And you wanted it very much.

But, ah, well, you didn’t get it. You worked and you begged and maybe you even saved but you didn’t get what it was that you wanted. You were sad, but you got over it. You’ll try again, work harder, save more and, as in “The Undefeated” by Kwame Alexander and Kadir Nelson, one day, you’ll reach your goal.

This book is just for you. But it’s something you have to share because it’s “For the unforgettable,” too. It’s for those people who opened the doors to all kinds of new opportunities for everyone, but they never became famous for it.

It’s for people who did whatever it took to get to America, to thrive and find a home and happiness. This book is for people who struggled, and for those who didn’t.

It’s about people who were strong and were admired for that strength. It’s for those who believed in themselves but who also put their faith in a higher power. It’s for those who “tackle vision” and those who don’t hide their light behind anything, ever.

It’s for soldiers and dancers, marchers and players, boxers and parents and kids, and it’s for you. It’s for Black lives that matter and for the people who never got a chance to know that. It’s because of the “un-speakable.”

Share this book for those who won’t be stopped, who’ll keep dreaming and reaching and imagining and proving. It’s for the athletes we know, and for the ones we don’t know about yet. It’s for performers we sing along with, and for songs not written. It’s for those who tried and tried until the last breath they had.

You’ll have to share it, but this book is for you. It’s “for us.”

“The Undefeated” is one of those things that’s really had to nail down.

It’s a quick read that may be too quick for some kids; it’s over almost before it begins because author Kwame Alexander’s words are spare and not very attention-grabbing for the very youngest of children. It doesn’t help that the picture-book-style illustrations are attractive but they aren’t particularly colorful or active.

For gradeschoolers, none of that will matter because “The Undefeated” is a poem set to picture and it’s inspirational for them, especially if they’re just learning about African American history. But there’s a possibility for those kids that the power behind the illustrations by Kadir Nelson might be missed because the stories of the people in this book are at the end and not always with the pictures.

Adults, however, might find this book to be a treasure. Alexander’s poem pulses with strength and the artwork, from an adult’s POV, is perfectly rendered. You may recognize the people depicted – and if not, there’s always the back of the book.

The trick, perhaps, is to carefully share this book with the child you love, explain, and let it spark conversation. Once kids understand, “The Undefeated” is a book they’ll want very much.

FROM LESS TO LESSON

continued from page 5

Muhammad Ali, champion boxer.
Rose to world-wide fortune and fame.
His smarts and talent gave him a vision.
Earned “The Greatest” as his nickname.
His boxing career, a glorious story;
Exiled, fought back and triumphed to glory.

Jackie Robinson, first African-American
to play Major League baseball.
A hero to people all over the world;
Standing for racial equality for sure.
With dedication and perseverance,
He is a hero in every sense of the word.

See yourself in Jessie Owens, four Gold Medals won.
Olympic champion - ran at lightning speed,
Outshining the rest in track and field.
His long-jump record lasted twenty-five years.
He was a formidable athlete to beat.

Marian Anderson was a vibrant contralto
Who made great strides and headway.
First to sing at the nation’s White House.
First to sing with New York’s Metropolitan Opera.
Spiritual and classical music was her forte.

Aretha Franklin sang with passion and soul.
A call for “respect” became an anthem.
Many of her records went platinum or gold.
Singer, pianist and human rights supporter,
This one-of-kind talent penned
Some of the best change-agent songs ever told.

See yourself in Langston Hughes,
Poet, novelist and activist.
With his innovative style of expression,
He coined many classic literary lines.
His universal realistic messages
Will be enjoyed for the rest of all time.

See yourself in Phyllis Wheatley,
Her pen became her sword.
Her poetic words are treasured.
Her life is still studied and adored.

See yourself in literary giants…

Alice Walker, Richard Wright and
Gwendolyn Brooks.
James Baldwin, Alex Haley, and countless others
Articulated our struggle with ingenuity and truth.

See yourself in all these Gifts.
They and others were and are
Our master teachers.
In the full sense of time my friends,
They and others were and are
Our majestic keepers.

A piece of them breathe in each of us.
Appreciate their ultimate spirit.
What they’ve given will remain with us.
Their blessed lives
bear sacred fruit worth revering.

For other publications by this author
VISIT: https://renayspace.com
On Amazon.com (Search Renay Intisar Jihad)
Each year in August, The Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival transforms Court Square into a space for community and the arts. People from all walks of life, from within Massachusetts and beyond, come to enjoy the variety of music and the other community festivities. The Festival is certainly at the forefront of a revitalization effort in Springfield, propelling it forward as a cultural hub in the region. Since starting in 2014, many festivals and community events have sprung up, igniting the community and boosting business. The Festival was developed by the non-profit Blues to Green, led by the efforts of founder Kristin Neville, along with Evan Plotkin, President of NAI Plotkin, with the hope that people of many different communities could unite in Springfield to share their love for music and art, to celebrate community and culture and catalyze both social and environmental change. Neville and Plotkin are the co-producers of the Festival.

Despite rain last year, we had a great festival, with a great lineup! Here’s some of what you can expect from the 2019 Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival.

**Females front and center!**

**Fiery String Sistahs** performed this past winter at the Hartford Public Library Jazz Series. The audience was fired up from the very first tune until the very last. Founded by cellist Nioka Workman, daughter of jazz musician Reggie Workman, this string-based, all-female jazz quintet will keep you enthralled and wanting more! Fiery String Sistahs will perform on the Urban Roots Stage.

On the main stage, don’t miss saxophonist Tia Fuller! Nominated for a Grammy this past January, she also made history by being one of a very few female musicians nominated for Best Jazz Instrumental Album. Tia Fuller is a member of the all-female band touring with Beyoncé.

**Music of the Diaspora is well represented this year!**

**Samite** is a well-known musician and humanitarian. Born and raised in Uganda, he travels the world bringing his message of peace and hope through the healing power of music. “While performing, I see that people are able to forget their differences and join as one in the moment; my hope is for that moment to last. If we can make that moment last, the world will be a better place.” (from samite.com)

**Elio Villafranca and The Jass Syncopeators** is an ensemble based on The Colored Syncopators, a 1940’s ensemble created by artistic visionary Duke Ellington. His newest album is dedicated to Cinque, the Sierra Leonean who led a bloody revolt aboard the Cuban-bound slave ship, Amistad, in 1839 and later was freed by John Quincy Adams. Villafranca hails from Cuba, and adds his Latin musical heritage, and contemporary jazz musical idioms, drumming and traditional instruments to offer a full Caribbean, jazz musical experience. (from eliovillafranca.com)

**Main Stage Headliner: Cory Henry and the Funk Apostles.**

**Cory Henry**, a Grammy-winning keyboardist from the band Snarky Puppy, has performed with musicians from every genre (PDiddy, Ludacris, Bruce Springsteen, Kenny Garrett and more)! This young, talented vibraphonist has roots in the gospel tradition. And with his band The Funk Apostles, he pays homage to the music of the 60s and 70s that had a clear message in the music. “They used music as a tool to reach the world and bring about change to help make it a better place. I want to do that, too.” Their music is an intoxicating blend of blues, soul, R&B, Afrobeat, gospel, and jazz. (from coreyhennymusic.com)
India.Arie – Worthy

By Moyah Smith

India.Arie performed at the College Street Music Hall in New Haven, CT
Photo by Ed Cohen

When you get a call saying, “Do you want to go to the India Arie concert tomorrow?” The only logical answer is, “Yup! Let me rearrange some things. What time do I need to be ready?” Well, I received that call, and that was my response. (Thank you, Ed Cohen!!) I had gone to one of her concerts a few years ago. Each time I’ve heard her, India’s performance has been soul-stirring and enlightening. She is sophisticated, yet down-to-earth. There is something quite majestic about her.

Before India hit the stage, Javier Colon was the opening act. Javier is the winner of the very first season of NBC’s reality talent show, The Voice. Javier is an awesome acoustic soul singer and guitarist, performing his original Billboard-charted song Crazy as well as songs he has covered, Hallelujah and Cyndi Lauper’s Time After Time.

India’s show, which she refers to as a “Songversation,” began with a musical prayer in the song “One.” The chorus of that song set the tone for the night. “We are a human kind of seven billion. So many different races and religions. And it all comes down to One.” India encouraged the audience to listen with their hearts. Her spirituality filled the auditorium. Her repertoire includes songs that touch on social issues, spirituality and love. Within her “Songversation,” Ms. Arie has a way of making you think about the ills of the world while contemplating what you can contribute to help make a change. Non-offensive, yet extremely powerful in her delivery. The atmosphere is like she invited you over for a glass of wine and there just happened to be about 1500 other people there with you.

She performed non-stop for approximately two hours while touching on social issues with songs like Shoulda, Coulda, Woulda, Rollercoaster and I Am Not My Hair. She hit our spiritual side with songs such as This Is Our Prayer and One. For the sake of love, songs like Get It Together, Ready for Love and her latest hit, Steady Love, had us all in our feelings! India has a reputation for being socially conscious but is also known for her songs with lyrics that encourage self-love. She has quite the sassy, sexy and fun side as well. As she stated during her performance, “Yes I am smart…and kind…and intelligent. But I am also beautiful, curvy, sexy and fine! Why not be all of it?” India.Arie is truly every woman! This is something we should all embrace.

Be sure to check out her new cd Worthy. You will not regret it! ■

The 2019 Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival

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The 2019 tentative lineup for both the Main Stage and Urban Roots Stage:
Ryan Hollander • HCC Band • Billy Arnold Trio • Samite • Elio Villafanca & the Jazz Syncopators • Tia Fuller • Cory Henry & The Funk Apostles • Bomba de Aqui • Molly Tigre • Kotoko Brass • Eugene Uman Convergence Project Trio • Tap Roots • Fiery String Sistahs

Special Festival Festivities!
There are special pre and post festival events, both featuring former Jazz fest performers! Check out the Friday night Latin dance party, the festival opening concert, featuring Jesus Pagan y Su Orquesta, who performed on the Main Stage in 2014. And then on Saturday, once you have enjoyed what the festival has to offer at Court Square, make your way to the MGM Courtyard for the After Party featuring Elan Trotman. Many of you may remember Elan Trotman on stage at the Festival in 2016.

The Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival takes place August 10 from 11 am – 10 pm, Court Square, Springfield, MA. There are local food vendors, arts & crafts, kids activities, basketball clinics, our signature New Orleans Second Line Parade, and more. Our guest artists will also conduct pre-festival music workshops in the Springfield community. We support our environment with rigorous recycling onsite and by supporting local vendors and growers.

The Festival is presented by the nonprofit Blues to Green, whose mission is to use music and the arts to celebrate community and culture and catalyze both social and environmental change. Led by the efforts of executive director Kristin Neville, along with Evan Plotkin, President of NAI Plotkin, the festival was launched six years ago with the hope that people of many different communities could unite in Springfield to share their love for music and art.

Yvonne Mendez is the on the Talent Committee and serves as the Festival Coordinator for the Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival.
The first person is Charles “Pit Boss” Rawls. Charles not only could cook inside on the stove or outside on the grill, Charles was a manager. He controlled the cooking area. His specialty was gizzards, liver, and onions. Whenever he announced he was going to cook up some gizzards and liver, we were sure to have a house full and a card party. Charlie was the “Pit Boss” for the Stone Soul Picnic for many years. He would start Saturday afternoon preparing ribs, chicken, and beans in preparation for the many hundreds that would be fed for the Stone Soul Picnic. Charlie would prepare the ribs by removing the tenderloins, which were provided for special sideline on-lookers such as former State Rep. Ben Swan (retired), and Bill Clinton who knew about the tenderloin treats that would be available early. We miss Charlie the Pit Boss.

Another great cook is Jeff “Tree Top” Brace. His specialty is spaghetti, meatballs, and sausage served with crust bread and salad. Ray and Donna Jordan hosted these affairs. There would be two rooms and a front porch filled with people smiling and eating. Whenever the word got out that Tree Top was cooking over at the Jordan’s house, the place was full. There is no treat like eating good food with friends. Another of Tree Top’s specialties was grinders/submarines that he made for his fishing buddies. Some of those who went to the Quabbin didn’t even fish, they just wanted to eat the grinders.

John “Skip” Miller and the Baystate Sportsmen Club are well-known for their talented group and their specialized equipment. I will disclose a secret: Andrew Cade formulated the seasoning for them in return for a huge plate of fish. Skip and his club served hundreds of people at the Stone Soul Picnic. Just look for the long line on Sunday, September 1st after 1:00 p.m.

Bill Clinton, also known as “Clete the Meat,” specializes in “trotters” (pig feet). He has a special process for barbecuing pig feet on the grill. He needs a little incentive (“Johnny Walker Red”) to get him started, but once started, he will cook all day and into the night.

Hamilton “Hambone” Wray’s specialty is potato salad. We will put Hamilton’s potato salad up against any in New England. It is very difficult to get him to make potato salad because he puts a great deal of time and effort into it. He has captured his mother’s, my mother’s, and your mother’s potato salad. It is smooth, creamy with just enough spice and eggs to win first place in any competition. I can testify to that. However, he is very stingy about sharing his talent.

Douglas Harris, barbecue man. When I first met Doug Harris, his specialty was fish. He was from Mississippi and he believed corn meal, flour, and hot grease was all you needed, along with seasoning. One day Doug suffered a terrible burn due to hot grease. When he healed after several weeks, he stated he was going to learn how to barbecue. Doug was a determined individual. He would get up early in the morning to learn the art of building a fire, seasoning the meat, and preparing the grill/smoker all before 7:00 a.m. Doug utilized a silver trailer for his operation. He established regular customers who not only stopped in for his barbecue, but for his friendly conversation. There have been times when they ate his food right there so they could continue with their conversation. Doug Harris was an icon in the greater Springfield community. He loved the youth and as a referee in many basketball leagues, he provided motivation and direction. We miss Doug and his ribs.

Finally, I humbly present Jay Griffin as the Texas brisket man for Springfield. I have been requested to provide brisket for birthdays, housewarmings, repasts, Mother’s Days, and community events. I will reveal that I was trained in Texas in the art of seasoning, utilizing the smoker/grill, and how to maintain the fire and heat. I was not allowed to participate for nine or ten years; I just had to watch. I was very attentive. I was told to get the right wood to do the right job—oak, hickory, apple, cherry, and mesquite. I have been known to cook four or five briskets at a time. If you need a brisket done, purchase it and I will do the rest.

Jay Griffin, Stone Soul Festival Program Chairman
hayjay252@msn.com
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GOOD NEWS - JULY 2019

GOOD NEWS - JULY 2019
COMMUNITY
FEATURED ARTICLE

Soccer vs. Football: The Safer Choice for Your Kids

By Nylan Baldwin

There were 14 million soccer players globally, between the ages of 12 and 17, with just over 100,000 injuries per year. On the other hand, there are only 9 million football players globally, between the ages of 12 and 17, but more than 275,000 injuries.

So there are, by far, more people playing soccer and yet football players accumulate almost three times as many injuries. To add onto that, when interviewing parents of soccer and football players, the vast majority said that this injury statistic would affect their decision to put their child into football. In 2011, the Bleacher Report ranked ten of the most dangerous sports in the world. While soccer sat at a “one to watch” number six, football loomed over soccer at a terrifying rank of three. These evaluations can be traced to the injuries most prevalent in each sport.

When asked about the difference he saw when comparing soccer and football injuries, Pope Francis Preparatory School Athletic Director, John Goda, had something very important to say. He saw soccer injuries as more dealing with the lower body (knees, shin etc.); whereas football injuries were concentrated in the upper body (neck, head, etc.). To add to that, he notes that soccer injuries heal faster because they deal more with the lower body, while football injuries that focus on the upper body take longer to heal.

But when asked if football could be made as safe as soccer, Raymond Stewart, father of children who played both soccer and football, said that the only way football could be as safe as soccer is if tag football was implemented. However, he added that football’s playing style requires players to fully hit the person, so there really is not much that can be done to make the sport safer. Football, by design, is a more dangerous sport than soccer and, unfortunately for youth football players, they may see a lot of rough injuries in their future.

However, due to the discovery of the dangers of football, soccer is becoming more popular with parents, and more and more children are putting down their helmets and putting on their soccer cleats.

Let’s Connect

Making Time for Our Children

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Perhaps join them in reading one of the books from their summer reading list or invite them to read one of the books on your personal reading list and discuss your thoughts about the plot and characters. Not only are you promoting literacy and developing a life-long reader, you’re also connecting and sharing a common interest.

4. Be active together – The summer provides plenty of opportunities to get out and move together. Whether you go biking, hiking, swimming or play a game of basketball, moving together combats obesity and lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes and hypertension while promoting wellness and allowing an opportunity for friendly competition. It’s a win-win!

5. Travel – Whether it’s going to an area museum, taking a 1-day getaway to NYC to catch a Broadway show and walk the streets of Times Square, or taking a road trip and exploring the sights and sounds of a distant town, traveling fosters a spirit of adventure and generally draws people closer together by the end of the journey.

6. Discuss current events – Maybe your work schedule doesn’t allow for dedicated sit-down time but as you are dropping off children to and from their programs/caretakers, you can plug in a small conversation on current happenings. You may be amazed to learn some of the profound insights your child has.

7. Let them know you love them and be intentional in showing them – Our actions speak louder than our words. This is an area where quality and quantity are equally important. Children thrive when they receive adequate support, validation and prioritization as they are growing up. LOVE is spelled T-I-M-E. We make the time for what matters to us. Let’s show our children that they matter by supporting them and being intentional around spending time with them.
Congratulations to **Chrissy Howard** who was named Manager of Reading Success by 4th Grade Initiative by the Springfield City Library, which assumed management of the initiative in March 2019 from The Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation. Howard brings with her a deep understanding of the work of Reading Success by 4th Grade. Most recently at Springfield Public Schools, Howard served as an Instructional Leadership Specialist in Literacy. She has also previously worked as a teacher, instructional coach, literacy leader and principal in Springfield and Worcester. Howard earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Wheelock College; her Master’s in Education from Harvard University; and her Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) from Simmons University, focused on urban elementary education. She is currently pursuing her doctoral degree at UMass Amherst in the Language, Literacy and Culture program. Howard was part of BusinessWest’s 40 Under 40 class of 2018.

Congratulations to **Denise Hurst**, vice president of advancement and external affairs at Springfield Technical Community College, who was recognized by the Professional Women’s Chamber as its 2019 Woman of the Year. This award is presented to a woman in Western Massachusetts who exemplifies outstanding leadership, professional accomplishment, and service to the community and is one of the most prestigious honors given to any citizen for distinguished service and selfless giving. Denise has been an elected member of the Springfield School Committee since 2009 and is currently the secretary-treasurer for the Massachusetts Association of School Committees. She is an inaugural graduate of the Leadership Institute for Political and Public Impact, Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts, a member of the League of Women Voters, the Collective Majority and a graduate of the 62nd Citizens’ Legislative Seminar of the state Senate. Denise is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the Springfield College School of Social Work.

Congratulations to **Jynai McDonald** for her recent appointment as the Family Child Care Coordinator for SEIU 509 where she oversees the family child care department which represents approximately 3,500 family child care providers and early childhood educators throughout Massachusetts. Her department provides representation, bargaining, and leadership development. And further Congratulations go to Jynai who was recently appointed by Governor Charlie Baker as a member of the Board of Trustees of Springfield Technical Community College. Jynai is also a recent 40 Under Forty Class of 2019 winner. In addition to her many community activities, Jynai serves as the editor of **POV**’s Community Calendar. A longtime community activist, she is also a candidate for Springfield City Council.

Congratulations to **Lucy Perez** of East Longmeadow, a longtime area educator, who is the recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Service Award from Holyoke Community College. The award recognizes the achievements of individuals whose dedication and outstanding service to HCC have enhanced the value of the student experience and improved the quality of life for all on campus. Perez, an HCC graduate from the class of 1987, has been a member of the HCC Board of Trustees since 2013 and also serves on the HCC Alumni Council and HCC Foundation board. She holds an associate degree in liberal arts from HCC, a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Mount Holyoke College, and a master’s degree in education and a certification in advanced graduate studies from the University of Massachusetts, where she concentrated in English language acquisition and literacy. Perez works in human resources at Mount Holyoke College as its talent acquisition manager.

Congratulations to **Courtney E. Merrick** and **McKenzie L. Quigley** of East Longmeadow High School, **Brian Fernandes** and **Danielle Goncalves** of Ludlow High School and **Samantha Nowak**, **Sam Roberts** and **Jarrett Ruggiero** of Minnechaug Regional High School who were recent recipients of the 2019 East of the River Five Town Chamber (ERC5) Scholarship. Each applicant had an outstanding resume and made significant contributions to our Towns. Winners were chosen after careful selection and scoring of factors including attendance in a business class, level of community service, GPA and acceptance to a program of higher learning. The Chamber represents the Five Towns of East Longmeadow, Hampden, Longmeadow, Ludlow and Wilbraham. The ERC5 has raised and awarded over $155,000 to local high school students.

Congratulations to the young women who graduated from the **Leadership Institute for Political and Public Impact (LIPPI)** program and the **Young Women’s Initiative (YWI)** program of the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts which held a joint graduation ceremony for the women completing the both programs. Graduates from both programs will have completed 9-months of classes that provide them with the tools, training, and confidence they need to become our region’s community leaders and elected officials. The Keynote speaker for the graduation ceremony was Yemisi Oloruntola-Coates, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at Baystate Health. She has studied in West Africa and worked in Japan to understand the role diversity plays within organizations and community. A musical performance from vocalist Alanna Alston, a student at Central High School in Springfield, opened the ceremony.
HCC—Gateway to College

to come to Gateway and think of Ida B. Wells.”

We have learned that the most important part of life is learning how to change ourselves and how to change our communities.

“So I say to you firmly and I say to you directly, dammit, vote. Know the issues. Vote for someone, vote for something, not against someone or something. Because, as Alice Paul once said, ‘A vote is a fire escape from a burning building. Without it, no one hears you and without it, you will certainly perish.’”

We have learned, he said, to choose our lives on purpose and not by accident, to leave our useless baggage behind, that kindness begets kindness.

“Think about what makes you happy, then do it,” he said. “Think of Old Saulsberry and why he taught for 51 years. Because it made me come alive. You made me come alive. You have been my teachers, and I am better, much better as a human being for having known you.”

List of graduates:

Belchertown: Angie Picardi.

Hampshire Regional: Aliyah Hall.


Palmer: Cheyenne O’Gorman, Karrin Rimbold.

Springfield: Safiyah Bey, Melina Conrow, Anthonia Fisher, Ryan Gonzalez, Mykala Guzzo, Cyrah James, Tanishka Polanco, Jacob Turner, John Vidal, Alajia Williams.

West Springfield: Aubree Guilbeault.

Westfield: Grace Cannady, Chastity Gonzalez, Kylie Morrison, Amber Plante, Samantha Vargas, Olivia White.

Five Graduate from Willie Ross School for the Deaf

L-R: WRSD Education Director Erika Kaftan; Jessica Acevedo-Viruet of Holyoke; Bruce Lussier of Easthampton; Tyler Rusciano of Holyoke; Kamal Kasimov of West Springfield; Zeng Tuo Correra of Windham, Connecticut; and WRSD President and CEO Bert Carter at this year’s Commencement Ceremony.

LONGMEADOW, MA — Five students graduated from Willie Ross School for the Deaf (WRSD) at this year’s Commencement Ceremony, held in the Foster & Constance Gleason Furcolo Student Center on the school’s Longmeadow campus.

Zeng Tuo Correra, of Windham, Connecticut, has been at WRSD since 2012, and plans to return to his hometown for another year of work study experience. Jessica Acevedo-Viruet, of Holyoke, has also been a WRSD student since 2012, and will be transitioning to Viability Inc.’s adult services. Tyler Rusciano, also from Holyoke, has been a student at WRSD since 2003 and will be attending Holyoke Community College. Bruce Lussier, of Easthampton, a student since 2008, will be joining the workforce. Kamal Kasimov, of West Springfield, has been at WRSD since 2008, and will be attending Holyoke Community College.

The ceremony included remarks from President and CEO Bert Carter; Dr. Robert Kirkwood, Chair of the WRSD Board of Trustees; a tribute from Erika Kaftan, WRSD Education Director; commencement messages from teachers Lisa Watson, Amy Fremgen and Dulce Goncales; and senior remarks from the graduating students.

According to Carter, “This time of year is always gratifying as we see our students complete their education, knowing that what they learned at Willie Ross as part of their development has prepared them for the workforce, for higher education and for life beyond our campus. We are very proud of this year’s graduates, all of whom spent many years in our classrooms and now begin the next fulfilling chapter in their lives.”

The Willie Ross School for the Deaf provides a comprehensive educational program stressing academic excellence that focuses on the development of students’ intellectual, social, and emotional growth from the early childhood level through high school. Willie Ross serves students at its main campus in Longmeadow and at its partnership campus located in the East Longmeadow Public Schools. Mainstreaming opportunities are provided at the partnership campus.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>July 1</td>
<td>East Longmeadow Summer Carnival</td>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>6PM–10PM</td>
<td>Center Field — Maple Street E. Longmeadow, MA</td>
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<td>Cruise Night at Court Square</td>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>6PM–10PM</td>
<td>Downtown Springfield, MA</td>
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<td>Salsa in the Park</td>
<td>July 3</td>
<td>6PM–9:30PM</td>
<td>Pulaski Park, Northampton</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Collaborative Project Sharing &amp; opportunity for</td>
<td>July 6</td>
<td>6PM–4PM</td>
<td>Mason Square Branch Library</td>
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<td>collaboration for child care providers</td>
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<td>Wellness for the Culture EXPO!</td>
<td>July 20</td>
<td>7AM–10AM</td>
<td>Four Square Center, Springfield, MA</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<td>Tastes and Sounds of Springfield Hosted by:Hello Neighbor</td>
<td>July 20</td>
<td>7AM–10AM</td>
<td>William DeBerry Elementary</td>
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<td>Yoga Retreat for Women of Color - Summer 2019</td>
<td>July 20</td>
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<td>Kripalu Cntr for Yoga &amp; Health</td>
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<td>Acceptance Granted Book Signing/Meet &amp; Greet</td>
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<td>July 27</td>
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<td>July 10</td>
<td>6PM–8PM</td>
<td>Deliverance Center Miniseries</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<td>Three County Fair, Northampton</td>
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CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES
Nationally recognized mural artists have transformed downtown building walls into permanent works of art in a celebration of community, creativity, and the City of Springfield.

**Top photo:** The mural image of the Underground Railroad painted by young Springfield artist Ryan Murray in Union Station in Springfield is one of the 10.

**Center photo:** The mural artists pose for a photo at the reception held at Art for the Soul Gallery in Springfield.

**Bottom photo:** The mural artists are about to board the Peter Pan Double Decker bus for a tour of the 10 murals which can be found at the following locations:

- State Street & E. Columbus Avenue
- 159 State Street
- 2 Spring Street
- 75 Dwight Street
- Stearns Square
- 24 Taylor Street
- Taylor, Main and Hampden Streets (part 1 & part 2)
- 1 Columbus Center
- Union Square