

The Weekly Challenger

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY

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50¢

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Mayor Ken Welch

Welch's first 100 days

ST. PETERSBURG – Mayor Ken Welch celebrated his 100th day in office on April 18, the 103rd day, on the steps of City Hall. The milestone was an opportunity to reflect on his administration's early accomplishments, evaluate how his actions align with his pillars for progress, and continue to look forward to the next steps in office.

"This is an important time for our city. It is an important opportunity to reflect on who we are as a city — to understand our history and culture, develop a clear-eyed consensus on the opportunities and challenges facing us, and to develop impactful plans or opportunity agendas, to build a path to progress for every St. Pete resident, worker, visitor and stakeholder," said Mayor Welch.

"The first 100 days have been enlightening. We confirmed just how much progress can be accomplished when we come to-

See **WELCH**, page 9



ACT celebrates 10 years of enriching lives

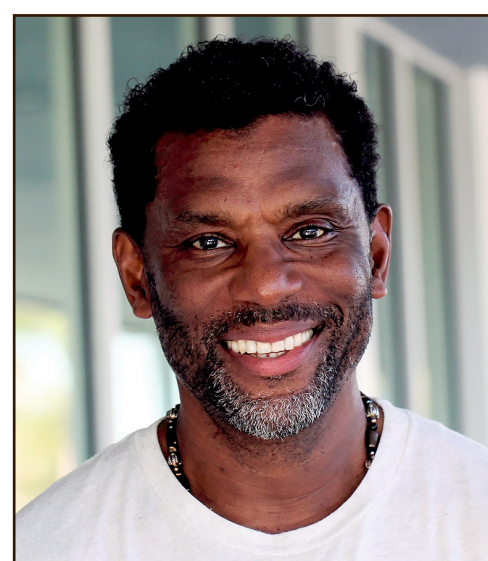
BY GYPSY C. GALLARDO
The Black Media Alliance

ST. PETERSBURG — The Arts Conservatory for Teens (ACT) team could not have chosen a more picturesque location for its 10th-anniversary celebration.

The breakfast event, held April 21, was staged against a backdrop of the wind-swept waters of Tampa Bay at the St. Pete Pier's Spa Beach Park. Music and mingling welcomed the audience of 250 sponsors and well-wishers, who were later regaled with live performances by a talented troupe of ACT's current student artists.

The organization was founded in 2012 by visionary

See **ACT**, page 8



Clayton Sizemore

Mental health in the Black community: Clayton Sizemore, Mindful Movement Florida

BY J.A. JONES
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG - Clayton Sizemore is the founder and senior instructor at Mindful Movement Florida (MMF). Mindful Movement uses a holistic approach to help adults and youth become "their most well-balanced, educated, and healthy selves."

See **MINDFUL**, page 7



Special Agent Dominique Ellis

Special Agent Ellis speaks at his alma mater

BY DEXTER MCCREE
Feature Writer

ST. PETERSBURG – In high school, Dominique Ellis was the typical student who participated in school activities. He played on the Northeast High School varsity football team and thrived in the culinary program, which is where he developed a passion for hard work and attention to detail.

As a 2011 graduate, he embraced the motto, "Once A Viking, Always A Viking." Now 11 years later, Ellis' discipline and attention to detail is a matter of national security. Special Agent Ellis is an officer with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, United States Secret Service. As a recruiter for the department, he returned to his alma mater

See **AGENT**, page 11



Pastor Martin Rainey

Pastor Rainey: Remembering a life well-lived

ST. PETERSBURG – Husband, father, spiritual leader, educator, Pastor Martin Rainey transition to his heavenly reward on April 9, 2022. Friends and family said goodbye April 23 at Word of Life Fellowship Church, where Dr. Ellis R. Hodge is pastor.

Pastor Rainey was born Sept. 20, 1931, in Harlem, New York City, to James and Rosa Hickson Rainey. His mother passed away when he was just a toddler, and at an early age he was prone to delinquent behavior. He learned to mug drunks in the subway station, shoplift whatever he could, and even recalls stealing money from his brother David as he worked in his tailor shop.

Eventually he arrived in St. Petersburg,

See **RAINEY**, page 12



Tequilla and Tiffany McGlorthon

NFL Flag Football League for special needs children

BY KARIN DAVIS-THOMPSON
Staff Writer

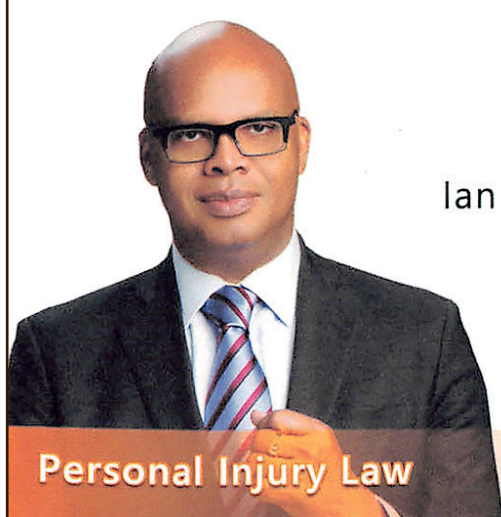
ST. PETERSBURG – Tiffany McGlorthon said she needed a way to channel her grief. McGlorthon and her daughter Tequilla were involved in a school bus accident that paralyzed her daughter. Then, just one month before her ninth birthday, she passed away.

"Her body just couldn't take it anymore," she said. "Her organs began to shut down."

After Tequilla's death, McGlorthon struggled with what to do or how to make sense of things after losing her only daughter.

See **DREAM**, page 6

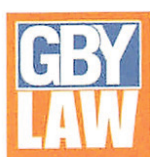
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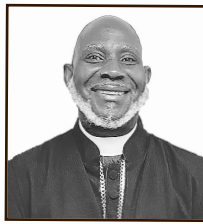
Personal Injury Law



Princess Denise Parker Wright

Are you interested in being a radio guest?

Radio Personality Princess Denise Wright of Matters of the Heart Radio Ministry is looking forward to you being a guest on her global radio broadcasting network on 99.1 FM JAMS. Matters of the Heart Radio Ministry has been broadcasting for the past 16 years locally and internationally, all the way into Jamaica. For additional information about scheduling a guest interview or promoting your business, book, music CD or non-profit organization, please call 727-488-8818 or email princessdenise.8818@yahoo.com



Breaking the Cycle

REV. DR. ROBERT L. HARRISON, PH.D.
Men of S.T.E.E.L. Ministries
www.menofsteelministries.com

Praise the Lord. I first learned of Pastor Rainey from Lyn Johnson, Senior Editor and Co-Owner of this newspaper back in 2013.

She told me I needed to meet and talk with him and I said to her, "who this crazy pastor that believes he can get black parents to get involved in their kids lives by 100%?" I said there is no way anyone can get 100% they would be lucky if they could get 25-30%."

As sad a statement as that was I knew that it was true and probably less than that.

However, I agreed and she gave me his contact info and we set up a meeting at my then office at Toriano's Parker Financial Office located on the Deuces.

It was set up to be a 30-minute meeting that ended some two hours later. The

both of us were pleasantly surprised and shocked that we both were so close and on point in our thoughts and beliefs as it related to changing the narratives of the disappointing school system and several other societal issues plaguing South St Pete for decades.

In my fellowship with Pastor Rainey, I discovered that there was no other clergy that was more connected and, in the trenches, as he was and the beauty of it was that he walked the walk and thru PSFEC, Parent Support for Education Council, the ONLY Faith-based non-profit in the area that dealt directly with the school board and was instrumental in moving the needle.

Yeah, I hear some claiming that they supported the school system and blah blah blah, but where were you when it counted? Our

monthly meetings were structured, organized and mission driven and goals were constantly changing as they were being achieved.

You see, I remember the all-day workshop that was headed by Dr. Karen Mapp, Harvard School of Education, as she and her team road mapped step by step instructions for changing our failing elementary schools, which were the worst in the state, Melrose at the absolute bottom. Then, PSFEC held a Parent Teacher Forum at JHop where again, Dr. Mapp and her team encapsulated a strategic road map to succeed in victoriously reversing St Pete's infamous "Failure Factories".

Pastor Rainey was dynamic in harnessing and implementing a collection of several local organizations whose sole purpose was to

achieve victory thru collaboration and the power of prayer and Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, success was achieved thru the tireless efforts and willingness of Principal Nikita Reed funneling and filtering efforts thru Pastor Rainey when it came to those interested in joining and lending their support.

While I could throw shade here to pin point those that you would think should have played a major role by those to sit by the wayside and watch as the miraculous unfolded, I won't. I want to instead continue to honor the man I know was the major cogwheel that help propel Melrose from worst to First. I won't even mention the fact that when we had the celebration of this momentous miracle with the March For Melrose, there were several prominent individuals that were not in at-

tendance. Oh, my bad, I guess I did. Well, I didn't mention any names.

I personally place Pastor Rainey and Sister Myrtle Williams as some of South St Pete's Unsung Unmentionables and I'm forever grateful that the Lord brought them into my life and I know I'm a better man having known them and actually fostering a personal friendship with them.

I mention Sister Myrtle because I had to explain to many who she was and her great impact on the lives of hundreds if not thousands that went to SPC Gibbs campus.

She, just like Pastor Rainey were ones that didn't waste time rushing to get in front of a mic or camera because there was work that needed to be done. I relate to this mantra so much because it's my life.

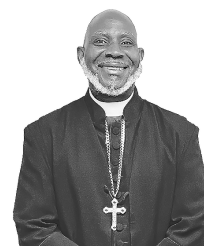
Another one of the great ones is peacefully resting waiting to receive those beauty words from the Lord, "Well Done Thou Good and Faithful Servant".

I take great pleasure in writing these kinds of articles because it gives others amore deeper insight of those that you may not have known or their accomplishments.

Many could take a page out of his Books of Life on how not to just talk the talk but get into the trenches and fight for something or someone other than yourselves.

Till next week, Blessings,
Bishop Dr. Robert L. Harrison, Jr.

PS - For the record, you know I'm bringing that FIRE next week so be prepared. Bishop Buzzkill



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A tribute to my parents' memory: Charlie & Mamie L. Walker

BY CHARLOTTE L. WALKER BROWN

ST. PETERSBURG - A seminal moment is usually described as an event so powerful and unplanned that it changes your life instantly; sometimes good, and sometimes not. It's like going from zero to 1,000 in a flash!

On May 3, 1972, that seminal moment happened to my big brother Freddie, big sister Joanne, our younger siblings Michael, Sharon, my brand spanking new-to-the-world three-year-old baby sister, LaQvenda, and myself. Six of us in total, ranging in age from three to 17.

Our parents left this earth for greener, more heavenly pastures; God had plans for them that preempted ours. This tribute by us, the eldest surviving siblings, serves as an education, enlightenment, and encouragement for our youngest siblings who did not fully understand the impact of that seminal day, May 3, 1972.

Tragedy visited us twice, and we were kind of prepared for any fate that could befall us, we thought. No amount of training, experience, or seminar can prepare you for the sudden deaths of both parents.

Traditional wedding vows say, "In sickness and in health...till death do us part." Those sacred vows

came way too early for us! We were children, but this event — this seminal event — had now mentally aged us into adulthood, we thought, while still "youngins." Trying to grieve, we had no choice; we had to accept the inevitable fact that was facing us: they're gone.

It was a mystery to many how they perceived us to move on so quickly; adjust to this new life change. First, we didn't. We're still grieving to this day. My brother Freddie and I are more vocal about it than the younger ones. But we all grieve.

We managed to adapt quickly to our new environment like a chameleon, a creature who changes his colors to fit into the scenery. Our parents, especially our mother, had psychologically prepared us for independence. We adapted quickly to our fast-changing scenery and learned skills and education to survive.

Mothers, in their brilliance, are teaching their children lifesaving, independence, and survival skills to do for themselves and others who are in need.

We groaned. We moaned. We said, I mean, whispered (no back talking to her!), "Taskmaster lady." Eventually, we all caught on.

As a single guy, my brother Freddie truly gets it and thanks her profusely. What she taught us for free requires most to earn a



four-year degree. They were our college, and they schooled us well!

Our parents also taught us to respect all, be kind, and give to less fortunate people. They taught us honesty, responsibility, and the love of the Lord.

I know they've been looking down on us, guiding us, and leading us spiritually. This tribute is just mere words to acknowledge the legacy of the two who not only gave us life but an unbridled love and education that even Shakespeare couldn't describe!

To our parents, every May 3, we miss you and love you!

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THE BLACK PRESS
believes that America can best lead the world from racial antagonism when it accords to every man, regardless of race, creed or color, his human and legal rights. Hating no man, fearing no man... the Black Press strives to help every man in the firm belief that all men are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

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**PINELLAS COUNTY CONSORTIUM AND URBAN COUNTY
2022-2023 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN
Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Solutions Grant, and
HOME Investment Partnerships Programs**

The Pinellas County Consortium has in place a Five-Year (FY2020-FY2024) Consolidated Plan that identifies housing and community development needs, priorities, objectives, and strategies. A one-year Action Plan (FY 2022-2023) has been prepared to address needs identified in the Consolidated Plan. This notice provides a summary of proposed FY 2022-2023 (FY 22-23) projects and funding and locations for reviewing and providing comment on the Action Plan. The Action Plan is subject to final approval by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Pinellas County Consortium consists of the Urban County and the City of Largo, with Pinellas County serving as administrator of the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) program. Currently, the Urban County includes all the unincorporated areas and nineteen cities cooperating in Pinellas County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Funding sources of proposed projects are the Pinellas County CDBG and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs, and the Consortium's HOME program.

Funding projections expected to be available are as follows (the City of Largo is advertising their CDBG funding and proposed projects separately):

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| \$ 2,551,626 | CDBG Entitlement |
| \$ 1,322,893 | HOME Entitlement |
| \$ 214,845 | ESG Entitlement |
| \$ 50,000 | CDBG Program Income |
| \$ 95,000 | CDBG Available Prior Year Funds |
| \$ 800,000 | HOME Program Income |
| <u>\$ 5,034,364</u> | Subtotal |

Entitlement allocation amounts identified above are estimated amounts based on current year (FY 21-22) entitlement funding levels. At the time of this notice, HUD has not announced FY 22-23 entitlement allocation amounts.

FY 2022-2023 funds are proposed to be allocated as follows:

Target Area, Public Facility and Public Infrastructure Improvement Programs

- PARC - Bert Muller Facility Rehabilitation - Phase 2 (\$298,507 CDBG)
- Lighthouse of Pinellas Facility Rehabilitation (\$440,000 CDBG)
- St. Vincent de Paul Facility Rehabilitation (\$184,165 CDBG)
- PEMHS Facility Rehabilitation (\$189,230 CDBG)
- YMCA of the Suncoast Greater Ridgecrest Facility Rehabilitation (\$54,967 CDBG)
- Mattie Williams Neighborhood Family Center Expansion (\$385,000 CDBG)
- Operation Par Facility Rehabilitation - Phase 1 (\$34,285 CDBG)

The proposed projects and award amounts listed above are based on an estimated FY 22-23 CDBG allocation that is equal to the current FY 21-22 CDBG allocation. The proposed projects are listed in priority order based on application review scores. Should the actual CDBG allocation decrease, funding will be provided to the projects in the above order, until funds are fully allocated. Should the actual CDBG allocation amount increase, alternate projects identified below may be funded.

The following proposed projects will be funded at the stated funding level regardless of the final CDBG allocation and may, if necessary, also receive funds available from prior fiscal years:

- Target Area Code Enforcement (\$80,750 CDBG)
- Target Area Community Enhancement Program (\$65,000 CDBG)
- Demolition and Clearance (\$40,000 CDBG)
- Target Area Land Acquisition/Site Development (\$15,000 CDBG)
- Activity Delivery (\$3,063 CDBG)

Public Services Program

- Pinellas Opportunity Council Chore Services Operations (\$50,000 CDBG)
- YMCA of the Suncoast Omni Center Operations (\$235,200 CDBG)
- Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay Operations (\$30,289 CDBG)
- Hope Villages of America Grace House Operations (\$49,914 CDBG)

The proposed projects and award amounts listed above for Public Services Program projects are based on an estimated FY 22-23 CDBG allocation that is equal to the current FY 21-22 CDBG allocation. The proposed projects are listed in priority order based on application review scores. Should the actual CDBG allocation decrease, funding will be provided to the projects in the above order, until funds are fully allocated. Should the actual CDBG allocation amount increase, additional funds may be made available for projects listed as alternates and/or the Target Area Community Enhancement Program Community Clean-ups activity identified below.

The following proposed project will be funded at the stated funding level regardless of the final CDBG allocation:

- Target Area Community Enhancement Program - Community Clean-ups (\$20,931 CDBG)

Homeless and Homelessness Prevention Services Program

- ESG Program Components: Homelessness Prevention/Rapid Re-Housing (\$85,938 ESG)
- ESG Program Component: HMIS/Data Collection (\$1,000 ESG)
- Homeless Leadership Alliance Homeless Management Information System (\$86,707 ESG)
- Hope Villages of America Grace House Operations (\$25,086 ESG)

The proposed Homeless Homelessness Prevention Services projects and award amounts listed above are based on an estimated FY 22-23 ESG allocation that is equal to the current FY 21-22 ESG allocation. Should the actual ESG allocation increase or decrease, the ESG Program Components projects will increase or decrease proportionally or as required by program regulations. Any additional available funds may be made available for the Hope Villages of America Grace House Operations activity.

Housing Preservation, Housing Production, Homeownership Promotion Programs

- City of Largo Affordable Housing Programs (\$246,794 HOME)
- Affordable Housing Development Programs (\$1,663,810 HOME)
- Housing Programs Activity Delivery

The proposed Housing Program amounts listed above are based on an estimated FY 22-23 HOME allocation that is equal to the current FY 21-22 HOME allocation. Should the actual HOME allocation increase or decrease, the City of Largo Affordable Housing Programs activity will increase or decrease as required by program regulations.

In addition, an estimated \$7,000,000 in allocation and program income from the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program and approximately \$200,000 in program income from the local Housing Trust Fund program, less administration, will be used towards meeting affordable housing goals.

Administration

- \$748,728 Federal Grants

Alternates: If additional funding becomes available, alternate projects are proposed based on the amount of additional funds received and readiness of projects to proceed.

- Community Action Stops Abuse Family Justice Center Parking Lot (\$90,000)
- Community Action Stops Abuse Facility Rehabilitation (\$150,000)
- Directions for Living Clearwater/Largo Facility Rehabilitations (\$180,113)
- Homeless Empowerment Program Multi-Facility ADA Door Installation (\$18,000)
- Pinellas County Sheriff's Police Athletic League Facility Rehabilitation (\$90,575)
- WestCare GulfCoast-FL A Turning Point Facility Rehabilitation (\$58,658)
- WestCare GulfCoast-FL Davis Bradley Facility Rehabilitation (\$60,409)

Approximately 98% of Pinellas County CDBG funds are allocated to activities which principally benefit low- and moderate-income households.

Availability for Viewing

A draft of the Pinellas County Consortium 2022-2023 Action Plan is available for viewing and public comment from April 29, 2022 to May 28, 2022. The draft Plan will be available on the Community Development website at www.pinellascounty.org/community and at the following locations between April 29, 2022 and May 28, 2022.

- Pinellas County Community Development Division, 440 Court Street, 2nd Floor, Clearwater, FL 33756
- City of Largo Community Development Department, 201 Highland Avenue, Largo, FL 33779
- Lealman Exchange Community Center, 5175 45th Street N, Lealman, FL 33714

Additionally, a draft of the plan is available in paper format or .pdf by request by contacting the Pinellas County Community Development Division at 727-464-8210 or by email at cdplanning@pinellascounty.org. Public comment on the Plan is invited and should be emailed to cdplanning@pinellascounty.org or mailed to the Pinellas County Community Development Division at the address above.

Community development and housing programs are administered in a nondiscriminatory manner, consistent with equal employment opportunities, affirmative action, and fair housing requirements. Questions, concerns, complaints, or requests for information in alternative formats should be directed to Community Development Division staff at 727-464-8210.

The long and the short of urban gardening

BY JOYCE WOODSON
GARDEN ENTHUSIAST



Joyce Woodson loves gardening and sharing what she knows. The founder of "Straw Hat Gardening," she has taught classes on basic organic gardening and provided garden consultations.

Zen: a state of calm attentiveness in which one's actions are guided by intuition rather than by conscious effort

Getting started: Focus on light

This column is a beginner's guide to organic vegetable gardening. In this series, you will find the basics – light, moisture, soil/nutrients and climate – as well as tips to create your first garden, diseases and bugs we encounter here, and resource links for more information or services from experts.

I have been gardening for decades and today grow most of the vegetables we eat. I hope Garden Zen will prepare you to start your own garden, even if it's just one pot on your patio.

Light is our first focus because it's one of the basics we cannot change, the other being climate. We can water during dry spells and amend poor soil, but if we have insufficient light, our garden will be limited to only plants that can tolerate low light levels, primarily herbs.

Too often, new gardeners select an area because it's a convenient location in their yard, but your ideal spot may have poor light. When you scout out your yard for the perfect garden loca-

tion, consider where the sun is in the morning, mid-day and afternoon.

Watch it at different times of the day to see if a building or tree canopy casts shadows. Our best growing season here is fall and winter, when the sun is lowest in the sky. Trees, buildings, and even privacy fences that don't create a shadow during the summer may in winter.

You may find the only adequate light is in your front yard, so why not mingle vegetables with traditional landscaping? I have five garden areas, the largest of which is in my front yard. This bed is mixed with enough landscape plants to defy recognition as a vegetable and fruit tree garden from the street.

How much light is enough – how much is too much? Yes, it's "light" outside during the day, but vegetables produce the energy they need to live from direct sunlight, so they all need some exposure to sunlight every day.

Usually, seeds and seedlings list specific sunlight requirements on their packaging, using terms such as full sun, direct sun, part sun, or part shade. Few provide the number of hours to define what those terms mean. And to complicate

things even more, the same seeds and seedlings are sold all over the country, but the sunlight in Michigan is less intense than in Florida. Full sun here may scorch a plant that grows well in full sun in Michigan.

So many questions about such a simple thing: sunlight. Here are a few answers:

- Full sun is all day long sun. Direct sun means there is no shading but doesn't define the amount of sun. Part sun or part shade reflects all exposure to the sun; these plants do not tolerate direct sun all day. No vegetable grows in full shade.

- Most vegetables require about six hours of direct sunlight every day. This sunlight could be the first-morning sun to 1 p.m., 10-4 p.m., or noon to dusk. Even three hours in the morning and three hours in the late afternoon with dappled sun/shade in between would be fine.

- If you are growing in containers, you "could" move the containers to catch the light at different times of the day. But be honest with yourself! Are you really going to do that every day? No judgments here, but most of us will not remember.

- If your garden bed is in all-day sun, try planting taller full sun plants so they can cast afternoon shade on plants that need it. For example, collards are happy with all-day sun, and they grow tall enough to provide shade for vegetables that can grow with less intense afternoon sunlight, like green beans and carrots.

- Many herbs will do well with 4-6 hours of sun. Herbs generally pre-

fer morning sun, and many will struggle with full exposure to the all-day sun.

Here is a chart with sunlight recommendations for a few essential vegetables and herbs*

*Not all vegetables and herbs grow at the same time of year.

The following key shows when the vegetables are best grown here: F/fall, W/winter, S/spring, and SM/summer.

Here is a chart with sunlight recommendations for a few basic vegetables and herbs*:

| Plant | Direct sunlight in our area | Comments |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Carrots (FWS) | As few as 4-6 hours to as much as all day sun | Can grow in full sun behind or under a taller plant |
| Collards (all year) | All day sun | Will not do well without all day sun |
| Green beans (FWS) | 6 hours of direct sunlight | Needs protection from mid-day sunlight. |
| Lettuce (FWS) | 4 to 6 hours | Needs protection from mid-day sunlight. |
| Kale (FWS) | 6 hours of direct sunlight | Protection from mid-day sunlight is best |
| Watermelon (S/SM) | All day sun | Will not do well without all day sun |
| Okra (S/SM/F) | All day sun | Will not do well without all day sun |
| Tomatoes (FWS) | All day sun | Will do well with 6 hours of full sun and some mid-day shade |
| Parsley (all year) | 4 to 6 hours | Morning light is best; needs protection from mid-day sun |
| Basil (S/SM/F) | All day sun | Protection from mid-day sunlight is best |
| Rosemary | All day sun | Protection from mid-day sunlight is best |
| Cilantro (FWS) | 6 hours | Needs protection from mid-day sunlight in warmer weather |

*Not all vegetables and herbs grow at the same time of year. The following key shows when the vegetables are best grown here: F/fall, W/winter, S/spring and SM/summer.

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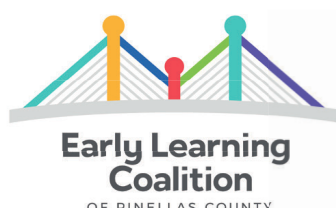
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Becoming a hero for children: Three qualities early childhood educators must have

BY LINDSAY CARSON
CEO, ELC of Pinellas County

PINELLAS COUNTY – When our children succeed, our whole community benefits! Recognizing that 90 percent of brain development occurs before a child starts kindergarten, these years are critical.

The foundation built during the first five years of a child's life can put them on a path to success. Childhood heroes, or, as many call them, early childhood educators, can make the difference. Smiles, hugs, and adoration from little fans are just some of the perks of becoming an early childhood educator.

Early educators might be the first adult outside of their family with whom they interact, and that's a BIG responsibility! It's not always

easy, but the rewards are pretty awesome! A successful career in early learning might start with a love for children, but these professionals offer so much more.

Do you have the qualities of an early educator?

You are dedicated, responsible, and passionate

Early education is more than a job; it is a passion. Your dedication to serving will help children prepare for success in school and life. Your career will come with a lot of responsibility to nurture, teach and protect children. This commitment doesn't stop with the children. You will attend continuous training and possibly free college courses to help advance your skills and career.

You engage, inspire,

and elevate

Enthusiasm and motivation go hand in hand and are essential qualities of an educator. Engaging children in lessons that will develop their cognitive and social-emotional skills requires patience, creativity, and energy. It's almost an art form to think quickly, keep the focus on the lesson, and remain calm in every situation. Creating a positive and nurturing environment builds self-esteem and elevates a child's confidence. Ultimately, you'll inspire a love of learning that will last a lifetime.

You understand each child's unique needs

Every child is different. Their learning style, life experiences, and interests all vary considerably. It's fundamental for an early child-

hood educator to understand and embrace these differences. This understanding environment celebrates differences to give every child an opportunity to thrive.

Get a front-row seat to children's success! As an early childhood educator, you will be able to experience children learn and thrive under your care. It is a rewarding experience to watch babies begin to crawl or toddlers build a block tower. You'll see preschoolers start to identify the letters of their names. You'll help children understand their emotions and how to get along with others. Also, you'll experience their happiness seeing you every morning because they connect with you. Nothing beats knowing you have



changed a tiny human's life for the good!

ELC Pinellas provides programs to enhance early childhood professionals' knowledge, skills, and professional advancement through various training courses, conferences, and college scholarships. If you are thinking of pursuing a career as an early childhood

educator or establishing a licensed family childcare home, ELC can provide the training, coaching, and curriculum support you need.

If you have questions, please call ELC's Quality Specialist Coach Brandi Crosby at (727) 914-3720 or chat with a representative online at ELCPinellas.org.

NFL Flag Football League for special needs children

DREAM, from front page

"After she passed, I asked the Lord what He wanted me to do with my life," she stated.

The answer has taken her on a journey – finding ways to support families with children with special needs, including an upcoming NFL Flag Football League for children with special needs.

The seed was actually planted before Tequilla's passing; it happened when she had to spend a few weeks at a local resort while the home she was staying in was being tented.

"We had to move closer to the hospital," she said. "The resort they sent us to had no accommodations for Tequilla. No place for her equipment, no activities for her, nothing."

"God told me to build a resort," the mother of two said. "He gave it to me in a dream."

She decided to call her organization Tequilla's Twin Tower Mini Camp.

As she began to put her plans in motion, she became more and more involved in understanding just how many aspects of

life don't consider the needs of the special needs community, including sports.

She learned through her networking tree that the NFL was possibly looking to partner with organizations like hers that worked with the special needs community. So, she got in touch with them, but she was surprised by what she learned.

"They told me they didn't have any leagues for special needs families — anywhere," she said. "Our league would be the very first."

So McGlorthon got to work, finding a way to become the first NFL Flag Football League for special needs children.

After securing a field with the city's Parks and Recreation Department, she began soliciting volunteers, including teenagers, to work with the students and help them on the field.

So far, the new league has signed up 28 children, with room for a total of 100. Participants must be between the ages 5-13. Each season lasts 10 weeks, with a new season

starting every three months. The league will begin in October, but sign-ups are happening now.

She said she is excited about the chance to order the NFL affiliate jersey for the kids.

"I feel like I'm on cloud nine," McGlorthon said. "I love seeing the expression on the children's faces. I never imagined it would be this big."

Along with the special needs football league, McGlorthon said she is still working hard to ensure that special needs families

get the support they need and that activities like this give the caregivers a few hours of rest while someone else they can trust works with their child or loved one.

"It's that word respite; families need respite," she said.

For more information on how you can sign up a child or to become a volunteer, email contact@tt-trespiteretreats.com or tequillastwintowerresort@gmail.com.

You can also call 407-549-6004.



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Mental health in the Black community: Clayton Sizemore, Mindful Movement Florida

MINDFUL, from front page

Sizemore's belief — and constant refrain — is, "Health is wealth."

"Mindfulness basically means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings or bodily sensations, and our surrounding environment; and we want to try and do that from a gentle nurturing awareness," he shared.

Mindfulness plays a significant role in mental health because it also involves acceptance — which means paying attention to our thoughts and feelings without judgment. Without judgment, explained Sizemore, means without believing that there may be a right way or wrong way to think or feel in a given moment.

Practicing mindfulness means only tuning into what it is you're sensing in the present moment, "rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future," he added.

A large part of practic-

ing mindfulness is learning how to use meditation to support our mental wellness. For Sizemore, meditation is an essential tool in learning how to self-regulate or gain control over our thoughts, feelings, and, ultimately, actions.

Psychiatry Review published a study that found that individuals with a generalized anxiety disorder who participated in a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program had a more significant reduction in stress markers than those who didn't.

Sizemore said teaching people how to meditate is "probably one of the most important things we try to do for people. Meditation is a very simple but life-transforming skill to help you relax, enhance your understanding of yourself, and develop your inherent potential."

While he acknowledged that meditating can be challenging in the be-

ginning, the network-TV-producer-turned-certified yoga instructor insisted that meditation is "a life-transforming skill."

"The first time I meditated, I was like, 'oh my God'... just trying to slow the brain down," he relayed, admitting it wasn't easy.

But there are some simple and basic steps to help prepare for meditating. The first, Sizemore said, is carving out the time to do it — which, in our fast-paced and hectic lives, is challenging enough.

Carving out the time to do it goes hand in hand with finding the perfect place, which will be different for everyone. Right in their own home may be ideal for some people, while others may find fewer distractions in a quiet area in a nearby park.

Next, it's figuring out the most comfortable position — some may want to



lie down, while others may find it easier to sit while meditating. The important thing, Sizemore noted, is to be in a place where you can "just be still, not have any outside distractions — and just connect with your breath."

Among the many benefits of meditating, Sizemore said gaining a sense

of inner peace is at the forefront; additionally, an increased sense of self-awareness comes from slowing down and centering on oneself and the breath in the moment.

This leads to other huge benefits — including helping us feel more calm, present, and aware in our daily life. Calling it a sense of being "grounded," Sizemore noted, "When you're grounded, you're more present to your reality."

Another plus that meditation brings is increasing our ability to live in a state of consciousness: being aware of what we are doing, saying, feeling, eating, and all the behaviors we can easily act upon without thought. "Meditation is an important tool in living consciously," he relayed.

Sizemore noted that meditation could also help us feel rejuvenated by helping us sleep better.

"A lot of folks have issues with insomnia, and

one of the primary reasons for insomnia is the bombardment of thoughts," he relayed. But meditation brings self-awareness — "a sense of who you are and what you're about" — that Sizemore said helps alleviate anxiety and aids one in better managing the stressors that come with daily life.

Meditation can also increase our spiritual connection, becoming a source of inspiration.

"The most important thing I think meditation does is increase your fulfillment of life. It just really helps you live a better life," Sizemore stated.

MMF offers classes that teach beginning and advanced yoga postures, meditation, breathing techniques, and positive affirmations. For more information on mindfulness and mental health, visit mindfulmovement-florida.org.



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Mental Health in the Black community: Dr. Katurah Jenkins-Hall

BY J.A. JONES
Staff Writer

ST PETERSBURG – Born and raised in St. Pete, Dr. Katurah Jenkins-Hall is a licensed clinical psychologist who has practiced in Tampa Bay for over three decades. She was the first African-American woman to be awarded a doctorate in psychology from the University of South Florida, where she taught for 30 years.

She is also an ordained pastor, serving at New Dawn Restoration Center, and is the founder of the Greater Reach Alliance of Christian Counselors and Educators (G.R.A.C.E.), through which she supports competent professionals in becoming trained in spiritually and culturally relevant mental health approaches.

Currently, Jenkins-Hall is an instructor at Eckerd College, teaching a course called Health Equity and Social Justice, which focuses on “the nature of health (bio/psycho/socio/spiritual), structural racism, gender, and religious biases, and human rights to equal resources that lead to a healthy life.”

April is Minority Health Month, and Jenkins-Hall shared some of her thoughts on what she’s observing in the current mental health arena.

Foremost on her mind is mental health stigma, which she called a deadly issue harming families across the country. She noted, “Not just for African Americans but for many BIPOC populations, there’s a cultural stigma

about acknowledging mental issues versus physical issues.”

While teaching the class at Eckerd, Jenkins-Hall noted that they’ve been reviewing Latinx, Black, and Asian cultures, and she commented on the occurrence of mental health and stigma as an issue in many cultures. Pointing to the rising rate of suicide in Asian Americans, she relayed, “It’s all about the cultural taboos to respond to mental illness, and the child or the young person’s sense of shaming the entire family if they are not mentally fit.”

Stating how important it is to alleviate the stigma that keeps people in bondage and keeps people hiding problems that can be easily addressed through medicine and therapy, Jenkins-Hall said destigmatizing is necessary and includes making it as common to examine and respond to our mental health needs as our physical needs.

“If I tell you that you need an annual checkup for physical reasons, you’d say, ‘fine,’” she noted, adding that we should have the same willingness to get professional help when we’re suffering from mental disease. Thankfully, she stated, “more and more physicians are included in some type of mental health screening in their physical examinations.”

Everything from race-related violence to political turmoil and ongoing economic inequity has caused even greater stress on Black communities in the last few years. And then, there’s the impact of COVID.

A recent study on African Americans’ risk of COVID-related PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) stated that among African Americans, the negative impact of the disease on our communities’ mental health “is compounded by high rates of previous trauma due to personal and family adversity. African Americans are more likely to be victims of or witness violence and to have friends or relatives who become victims of violence. They also have experienced more traumatic childhood events, and levels of current PTSD are higher than whites. Previous trauma predicts responding to a new disaster with PTSD.”

Jenkins-Hall acknowledged that “COVID has raised new conversations in certain issues, such as stress, anxiety, grief. Those issues are prominent, and people are beginning to speak out about them. In my experience clinically in practice, it’s been an increase of people who will say, ‘Yeah, I’m among those who are reaching out for help.’”

Considering how mental health is being addressed in the church, she commented that locally there has been progress in Black church leaders coming to grips with understanding more about the fact that “mental health issues are real and there are people who are trained to deal with them beyond what pastoral care trains you to do.”

Jenkins-Hall noted that both she and Dr. LaDonna Butler had done a lot of work communicating the need for profes-

sional mental health treatment to local clergy. But she also acknowledged that the stigma in the church is not tied to one community and is found throughout the church as a whole.

“Religion says that your first reliance ought to be on God and faith, and the cause of issues of any kind, at its root, is sin. There are strong counseling approaches that are designed to see your issue as some type of sin issue. And therefore, the way we got diagnose it is the way we respond to it.”

Jenkins-Hall said this leads to an attitude of “if it’s a sin issue, we pray about.” This universal church-type response is one she’d like to see change.

She said she’d also like to see more conversation separating “mental health” from “mental illness” because that will allow for a model of health that aligns with how we look at physical health.

“You do things that keep your physical health [in order]: you eat right, you sleep right, you exercise, etc. So those things are good for your mental health as well. So, I want people to begin to think of their mental health in the same way that they do physical health, and in ways of actually preventing illness.”

Jenkins-Hall said this kind of “preventative” mental health care includes considering, addressing, and working towards improving the things that we can in our relationships and with our own habits before we get to the point that we’re “stressed beyond the point of being able to be to



Dr. Katurah Jenkins-Hall

bounce back.”

Additionally, Jenkins-Hall said she would like to see mental illness destigmatized in the same way physical illness is – but maybe even more successfully. The practitioner noted that people will still judge people with physical health conditions, such as diabetes – “You got that? You aren’t even that fat!” – and says that this lacks awareness that the condition is often genetic.

She noted that judgmental and inaccurate comments and advice are even greater when it comes to mental health.

“If I say I’m depressed, people will begin to minimize that: ‘Girl, you need to go shopping or give yourself a bubble bath’ — minimizing the disorder when it [might be] a chemical imbalance. If so, it’s probably related to the lack of serotonin in your brain and your brain’s inability to produce that in a certain amount. And

there are things that I can tell you to do behaviorally that will increase your brain’s production of certain hormones.” Sometimes, Dr. Jenkins-Hall noted, “a pill works as well, as a replacement of the hormone or chemical that’s missing.”

She feels people are less trusting of medicine for mental health because they “can’t see it working; so, people think you’re messing with their head or trying to drive them crazy.” While all medicine is not suitable for every person, Jenkins-Hall noted that “antidepressants are replacing something that your brain isn’t producing at the right amount. Just like insulin, for diabetics.”

If you’d like more information on Dr. Jenkins-Hall’s work with G.R.A.C.E., Greater Reach Alliance of Christian Counselors and Educators, or to reach out for counseling, call 813-220-3148.

WE ENCOURAGE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ACT celebrates 10 years of enriching lives

ACT, from front page

Dr. Alex Harris and co-founders Herbert Murphy, Derek Berset, and Shelia Reilly with a mission to educate, empower, and enrich the lives of youth and teens to foster healthy, productive, and responsible citizens.

From its humble beginnings as an after-school performing arts training program for 30 at-risk teens, ACT has blossomed into a world-class incubator for the creative workforce in a city now recognized as a beacon of the arts.

More than 13,000 young people have participated in ACT’s intensive development programs, such as its Summer Intensive, taught by Broadway performances, chart-topping recording artists, industry dance professionals, and the Young Artist Alliance, an advanced program for students exploring careers in the performing and visual arts.

Thousands more have taken part in ACT events and opportunities, including clinics, master classes, advocacy campaigns, live performances, and travel experiences.

ACT also manages school-based programs in partnership with Pinellas County Schools at four locations year-round. The early morning Character Essentials initiative focuses on building character and personal skill-building. It operates

in the county’s Title 1 middle schools, including John Hopkins, Tyrone, Oak Grove, and Largo Middle.

The organization has never left its home base of operations in south St. Petersburg, where 75 percent of the city’s African-American community resides. ACT programs are available at several City of St. Petersburg community centers, including Enoch Davis Center, the Thomas “Jet” Jackson Center, Childs Park, and Lake Vista Recreation Centers. ACT’s Arts Magnet Program operates after school at the Factory St. Pete.

Yet, ACT’s impact is felt and seen across the globe as more and more of its alumni make their mark in diverse fields.

From the Broadway stage and creative business ventures to local careers in the corporate and non-profit sectors, ACT graduates are among its biggest fans and best ambassadors.

One such is minister and entrepreneur Shanoah Washington who shared her testimony at last week’s gathering.

“I was abandoned by both of my parents who were in the streets and caught up in drugs and gang life. I was left to be raised by my grandmother, who struggled to make an adequate living while secretly dealing with her own mental

health issues and depression...and amid trying to navigate the woes of middle school, I was sexually abused.

“Needless to say, I was screaming on the inside for the dealer of life to immediately reshuffle the cards in my hand.

“As cliché as it may be, my prayers were answered by two of the unlikeliest and most unassuming people, Dr. Alex and Mr. Murphy.

“The conservatory for teens was being piloted, and upon meeting me, they recognized, even though all my broken pieces, there was something inside of me. They introduced me to a family of artists who nurtured my literary abilities.”

Today Washington holds four post-secondary degrees and is a partner in two business enterprises while operating the Sista2Sista Young Ladies Mentoring Program, which she created to reach young women from backgrounds similar to hers.

Murphy has since transitioned to a position with Business Advancement Solutions as its CEO and remains connected to the organization’s work. His son, Anthony Murphy, is one of several ACT alumni who have graced Broadway stages. The younger Murphy’s latest triumph is a new Broadway show that is scheduled to be announced this summer. In the tradition of “giving



back,” he also now serves as artistic director of ACT’s Creative Workforce Summer Intensive.

Harris remains at the helm of the organization as its CEO. Unlike its early years, when the founders were a lone driving force, the ACT of 2022 has earned the backing of more than two dozen corporate partners and philanthropists, supporting a staff of 10 professionals, almost all artists themselves.

When asked to reflect on the 10-year milestone, Harris credited widespread community backing as a critical ingredient to ACT’s growing portfolio.

“I am so grateful for the embrace and support of our community,” said Harris. “Both the private and public sectors are critical to our organization’s forward move. We cannot do what we do without communal support.”

Local sponsors honored ACT’s decade of community impact with contributions totaling \$150,000 for this year’s fundraiser (including \$50,000 pledged during the April 21 breakfast).

St. Petersburg Deputy Mayor Stephanie Owens opened the event with accolades for ACT’s singular position in the city’s growing landscape of creative institutions.

This year’s title sponsor was First Home Bank, a BayFirst company, represented by Senior Vice President Valerie Fulbright, co-chair of ACT. The co-title sponsor was Heritage Insurance, with Ernie Garateix, CEO, present for the festivities.

“As the ongoing annual sponsor of ACT, we’re proud to support future creators and leaders at every stage of their artistic, personal, and financial journey,” said Ful-

bright. “We can’t wait to see what’s next for these and future talented artists in this community and beyond. At BayFirst we believe in the mission of ACT.”

“I believe in Alex and his vision, and I see the impact every time I give,” said Craig Sher, local real estate developer, and investor. He and his wife, Jan, are cornerstone supporters of ACT.

Looking ahead to the next decade, Harris said, “My team and I are inspired more than ever to continue the work of transformation for our young people by preparing them for the workforce, particularly the creative workforce, through our interdisciplinary curriculum.”

To learn more about ACT and its student artists, visit www.artsconservatoryforteens.org.

Welch's first 100 days

WELCH, from front page

gether with common goals, unified in purpose, to address the challenges before us.”

The Welch administration utilizes six principles for accountable and responsive government: in-touch, inclusive, innovative, informed, impactful and intentional equity.

These principles are applied to five pillars for progress including housing opportunities for all; environment, infrastructure and resilience; equitable development, arts and business opportunities; youth education and opportunity; and neighborhood health and safety.

By focusing on these key areas and utilizing these important principles, our administration has already increased affordable housing stock, improved internal policies to benefit city employees, reinvigorated community relationships, established new programs to boost equity, and so much more.

First 100 days accomplishments:

Housing Opportunities for All

– Down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers: In early February, just over a month into his administration, Mayor Welch signed off on a policy change increasing the amount of down payment assistance available to first-time homebuyers to \$60,000. The city also expanded its loan forgiveness policy for the assistance, allowing full-forgiveness to those earning at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) after 10-years of continued occupancy in the home. For those earning above 80 percent AMI, full repayment was previously required. Under the new policy, those individuals could qualify for half loan forgiveness.

– Homeowner Rehabilitation Assistance Program: The city also expanded its program for existing homeowners to make needed improvements to their homes, ensuring residents are able to stay in the homes they already own. Under the previous policy, homeowners in the extremely low-income to moderate-income range could receive up to \$45,000 for home repairs and improvements, with up to 50% reimbursement required over 15 years. The new policy increased the funding available to qualifying homeowners to \$60,000 and is now offering full-forgiveness of the loan to households earning at or below 80% AMI after 10-years of continued occupancy in the home.

– South St. Petersburg CRA Developer Incentive Program-Land Acquisition Incentive: Also implemented in early February, the city expanded the amount available to developers constructing affordable single-family homes within the South St. Petersburg CRA. Previously, developers could tap into a direct \$10,000 incentive for homes constructed within the CRA targeting buyers at or below 120 percent AMI.

The city added a new reimbursement of up to half of the land acquisition cost to developers, up to \$40,000, if the developer sells the new single-family home to a buyer at or

below 80 percent AMI. The city also increased its standard incentive from \$10,000 to \$15,000, with the existing 120 percent AMI threshold still in place if the buyer is already a resident renter within the CRA.

– Delmar 745: In early March, residents began moving into the Delmar 745 affordable housing project in downtown St. Pete. The project provides access to affordable and workforce housing within a 12-story, 65-unit apartment community.

Half of the units (33) are targeted for individuals and families who were formerly unhoused. The city partnered with developer McCormack Baron Salazar on the project, with Boley Centers providing on-site access to social services for renters.

– Emergency Rental Assistance: In partnership with Pinellas County government, the St. Petersburg City Council approved in mid-March expanding access to Emergency Rental Assistance funding from the County.

Due to increased demand for assistance, the city exhausted all of its \$16 million available for rental assistance. The County agreed to make \$18 million from its portion of the American Rescue Plan Act available to St. Pete residents, which was previously only accessible to residents residing within the county.

The deal also included expanding access to those who reside in motels and other short-term housing who were previously ineligible for the assistance.

Under the agreement, qualifying households will receive assistance for up to 120-days, subject to fund availability. The expanded access is crucial for St. Pete residents. More than 43% of the county's low- and moderate-income residents reside within the city, despite only 27% of the county's residents living within city limits.

– Harvard Kennedy Affordable Housing Study: This comprehensive affordable housing study completed by a team of graduate students from the Harvard Kennedy School evaluated existing challenges the city faces with affordable housing, possible solutions and future information-gathering needs. The study sought to answer four questions: What does affordable housing mean for St. Pete; what factors have caused St. Pete's current housing crisis; what policies are most effective/ineffective for addressing housing affordability; and who do various policy options serve, and who do they exclude?

The study found the price of new rentals in St. Pete jumped nearly 25 percent in 2021, the third highest increase in the nation. One reason for the increase in prices is that, as demand for housing has increased, supply has not caught up. The study found that from 2020 to 2021, investor purchases of residential land increased by 79 percent. From 2011 to 2021, investor residential purchases increased 520 percent.

Environment, Infrastructure and Resilience

– Transportation leadership: Mayor Welch has been a leader in the

transit and transportation space for well over a decade, including 10 years of service as a board member for the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority with various stints as the board's chair. He served and continues to serve as a relentless advocate for all modes of transportation including quality public transportation that serves all citizens and visitors of Pinellas County and St. Pete.

This robust resume provides the administration with experienced leadership to continue progress in the transportation space within our city.

– New rapid flashing beacon-equipped crosswalks in south St. Pete: Part of the City's Complete Streets Plan, City Council approved, and Mayor Welch supported adding five new high-emphasis crosswalks in South St. Pete. The new crosswalks will increase safety by better alerting motorists to crossing pedestrians and cyclists.

– Skyway Trail connection: The city completed in March a new trail connection from 34th Street to the Skyway Trail along 30th Ave. South, called for in the Skyway Marina District Improvement Plan. The new connection links the Skyway Trail to the Clam Bayou Trail, the Bayway Trail and the Pinellas Trail, providing a safe pedestrian and cyclist corridor to benefit local residents, workers and visitors.

Mayor Welch supported adding a new high-emphasis crosswalk serving the connection at 30th Ave. South and 37th Street to allow residents in surrounding neighborhoods to have safe, convenient access to various trails. Mayor Welch approved moving forward with funding the design and construction of the new crosswalk as well as four others in South St. Pete.

– Safe Streets Pinellas: This month, the administration agreed to sign onto the Safe Streets Pinellas Vision Zero approach to traffic safety. Initially launched by Forward Pinellas, the agreement augments the City's Complete Streets Program to guide the city toward safer streets for all roadway users. The administration is also seeking a sidewalk masterplan to ensure safe pedestrian corridors.

– 2022 Regional Resilience Summit participation: Mayor Welch joined other area Mayors and City Council Vice Chair Brandi Gabbard for the leadership summit, including in a panel discussion with other area Mayors to better collaborate on regional sustainability and resilience.

The Summit tackled issues including affordable housing, stormwater infrastructure, electric vehicle accessibility, multi-modal transportation and funding, including targeting federal funding, and the need for increased cooperation on ways to adapt to climate change.

– Federal funding opportunities for our Integrated Sustainability Action Plan: Congress approved \$1.2 trillion in its Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act to provide competitive funding opportunities for states, cities, towns and municipalities for various infrastructure programs

including \$73 billion to update electric grids, \$65 billion for broadband, \$47 billion for climate resilience, \$21 billion for environmental projects, \$15 billion for removing lead service lines and \$7.5 billion for electric vehicle charging stations.

The administration is pursuing grants under this program, prioritizing projects within the Integrated Sustainability Action Plan. The goal is to pursue funding for projects that fit within the federal framework, but that also fit within the city's plans to position St. Pete as a sustainable and resilient location. Our Office of Sustainability and Resilience, Public Works, Engineering, Capital Improvements and city administration are working with the city's grant team to identify attainable funding opportunities.

Equitable Development, Arts and Business Opportunities

– Tropicana Field site redevelopment: City officials this month sent a list of 15 questions to two prospective Tropicana Field site developers — Midtown Development and Sugar Hill Community Partners. As he pledged on the campaign trail and in the early days of his administration, Mayor Welch is committed to ensuring the eventual developer's plans for the city check all five of his administration's pillars for progress and principles for accountable and responsive government.

The additional questions seek to provide further clarity on how plans can adapt to changes that have occurred since the proposals were first developed, including new supply chain challenges and labor shortages resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and new projections for office space as more and more businesses have adopted work from home and hybrid office models.

The questions also address developers' knowledge of the city's structural racism study showing Black residents are disproportionately prone to lower wages and higher mortality.

One key component of the latest round of inquiries involves developers' commitments to honoring the community that was displaced by Tropicana Field's initial construction, then known as the Gas Plant district. Mayor Welch is demanding equity for that community in any redevelopment plan.

– Implementation of the CBA: In 2021, City Council approved the Community Benefits Agreement program as a major step toward more equitable economic growth. It creates a process that considers the social and community impact of major development plans.

The city launched the program last month by requesting applications for the newly created Community Benefits Advisory Committee (CBAC) — a non-partisan board that advises the Mayor, City Council and the citizens of St. Pete on implementation of the City's Community Benefit Agreement Program (CBA Program).

Internal milestones
– \$15 minimum wage for ALL city employees: St. Petersburg City Council approved a

\$15 minimum wage for City employees in 2015, but it left some employees behind through a carve-out for part-time employees with fewer than five years' experience with the city.

The Welch administration believes all its employees should have access to a livable wage and eliminated that loophole by expanding the \$15 minimum wage to all employees, regardless of hours worked or experience on the job.

– Structural racism: Following up on a structural racism study, Mayor Welch has moved forward with funding for a new Equity Office within city government, a recommendation that is now being fulfilled.

The city commissioned the University of South Florida to conduct a structural racism study in 2021, which found increased mortality rates among Black residents fueled by reduced access to healthy food, health care, affordable housing and stable job opportunities.

Work on additional recommendations is underway, with plans to workshop next steps with a facilitator and a meeting with the administration to update action plans in the coming weeks.

– Implementation of disparity study recommendations: The city commissioned in 2019 a Women-and Minority Owned Business Enterprise Availability and Utilization Disparity Study to examine the extent to which disparities exist in the city's procurement practices and use of qualified minority and women-owned enterprises as contractors and subcontractors.

We are beginning the process to create equitable economic opportunity by increasing our contracting with diverse suppliers and vendors for professional services, construction, and other goods and services. The city has begun to implement recommendations from the disparity study, starting with selecting David Malone as the City's new Director of Procurement. With a new leader to helm the city's procurement procedure changes, we intend to eliminate historic barriers to city contractor participation.

In addition to city policies, feedback from our local women- and minority-owned businesses has guided our decision to launch programs that will build and nurture a pipeline of certified diverse suppliers with skills and services accessible to the City and all businesses.

We are in-touch
– Reestablishing relationships with Rays, community partners: Mayor Welch knows that success is a team effort, and progress is best accomplished when we work together. That's why he's made rebuilding relationships a top priority in his first 100-days in office, including with the Tampa Bay Rays, County Commissioners, members of City Council and community stakeholders and residents.

Mayor Welch has met with Rays leadership several times to discuss the team's future in the region. Talks have been positive, and the Rays' executive team has renewed its commitment to

working with the city and other partners on plans moving forward.

Conversations about the future of Major League Baseball in St. Pete also include open dialogues with County Commissioners, many of whom Mayor Welch served with during his two decades as a County Commissioner.

– Community Conversations: Partnering with the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, the Downtown Partnership and the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, Mayor Welch held three Community Conversations Dec. 10-13, two in-person and one virtual, to hear from members of the St. Pete community about their opinions on five areas: housing opportunities for all; equitable development and business opportunities; environment, infrastructure and resilience; education and youth opportunities; and neighborhood health and safety.

Residents and stakeholders were later asked to rank themes identified into their top-three areas of concern. The results are being used to further develop priority issues.

Looking Forward
– New affordable housing: Construction is currently underway on The Shores, located at 31st Street South and 26th Avenue, which will include 51 affordable units, and at Jordan Park, which includes a new 60-unit affordable housing building and the renovation of 206 affordable rental units.

Last week, we received support from City Council for a new 264-unit apartment development near Gibbs High. All the units will be affordable and workforce housing, some to families making 50 percent of the Area Median Income (or about \$12/hr.). This is the first development of its kind in the state under HB 1339, which allows municipal governments "to approve development of affordable housing on any parcel zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial use." This is how innovation, collaboration and common purpose move us to success.

Work is currently underway to expand zoning for Accessory Dwelling Units and Neighborhood Traditional Multi-Family (NTM) zoning districts to create opportunities for more affordable housing options.

– Youth Opportunity Agenda: Economic mobility and the opportunity to create wealth is what every individual and family in St. Pete deserves. Learning skills, critical thinking, and even how to pay bills and manage finances is part of a lifelong continuum. It begins with youth engagement and education by reimagining how we put them on a trajectory for success.

As technology takes hold in every industry, we must be innovative in our approach for providing resources and opportunities for young people to master these skills.

Our administration is taking a deep dive into existing infrastructure — our city internship program, after school programming and mentorship opportunities — to identify areas where we can expand, build and excel.

A grave situation: Part 3

BY JAMES A. SCHNUR
The Gulfport Gabber

A disturbing pattern
TAMPA BAY – The practice of disturbing individual gravesites is nothing new. Neither is the wanton neglect of burial grounds. Questions about the stewardship and conditions at historically Black cemeteries have attracted renewed interest on both sides of Tampa Bay.

The recent discoveries of forgotten graves at the Robles Park Village and King High School sites in Tampa, along with two locations in Clearwater, have left many wondering how such neglect could happen at those former solemn grounds. Surveys for possible unmarked graves at another historically Black burial ground in Tampa, Memorial Park Cemetery, have also started.

Forgotten graves revealed by ground-penetrating radar (GPR) have shocked many. Similar reactions occurred a few years ago after investigations found unexpected bodies at the former Dozier School for Boys in Florida's Panhandle.

Early patterns of disrespect

While GPR surveys at former burial sites in Tampa and Clearwater focus on historically Black cemeteries, Pinellas County's history shows a larger pattern of disrespecting burial sites. This shameful legacy began long before Lincoln Cemetery was established in 1926, long before Pinellas separated from Hillsbor-

ough County in 1912, and even long before any African Americans lived in lower Pinellas.

By most accounts, the earliest recorded burial in present-day Pinellas County took place in 1853 on grounds that later became the Sylvan Abbey Cemetery along Sunset Point Road in eastern Clearwater. This does not mean, however, that the first person ever to perish in Pinellas did so in 1853. Potter's fields, often known as paupers' graves, certainly existed. These unmarked sites offered a place where people buried their dead without any permanent marker. Any simple wooden posts or crosses that may have existed deteriorated over time.

Beyond these forgotten pioneer burial plots, other bodies were placed in the highly saline soils of Pinellas long before the first Europeans arrived in the New World. People have lived and died here for thousands of years.

Archaeologists and historians investigating the First Floridians have few archives to examine. These Native American cultures left no written records. Their populations quickly declined when they interacted with Spanish conquistadors and pirates in the 1500s.

Expeditions led by Pánfilo de Narváez in 1528 and Hernando de Soto in 1539 skirted along and probably passed through the Pinellas peninsula as these Spaniards sought gold and wealth. They left behind smallpox and other illnesses that wiped

out the original indigenous populations in this area by the 1700s.

Early white pioneers began to settle in Pinellas in the 1830s. The first documented permanent settler, Odet Philippe, took up residence in the shadow of the large Native American mound near Safety Harbor. Philippe and other settlers searched and sometimes scavenged mounds and smaller middens left by the Tocobaga and other Native American cultures. They looked for treasures and sometimes desecrated skeletons.

Not all mounds have burials. Most do not. But successive waves of settlers and residents picked through every mound they could find, from the large one at Safety Harbor to smaller ones at Maximo Moorings and everything in between.

Oldtimers may even remember when the St. Petersburg medical complex, now known as Bayfront Health, was called Mound Park Hospital to honor a large indigenous mound nearby. The mound disappeared in the 1950s. The hospital changed its name about a decade later.

A nightmare way to sell the 'Florida Dream'

Eugene M. Elliot was an entrepreneur who helped George S. Gandy finance the construction of the first bridge to connect Tampa and Pinellas County. The original Gandy Bridge opened in November 1924 as a private toll road.

Aware of the potential traffic on this bridge, El-



Indian Mound Park is home to one of St. Petersburg's many historic Indian Midden. You can walk on the mound as well as read the history behind the mound. Located at Mound Place South and Bethel Way South

liot bought much of Weedon Island in 1923 and planned to develop luxurious home sites. Knowing Weedon's history as a place with middens and earlier Native American settlements, Elliot schemed of a way to increase his investment's value.

Elliot placed some bones, trinkets, and pottery pieces on his property near St. Petersburg's future gateway with Tampa. He then contacted the Smithsonian Institution, expecting that the "discovery" of these fake relics by scientific authorities would encourage newcomers who wanted to buy land and build homes alongside the small mounds.

A team of archaeologists led by Jesse Walter Fewkes came from the Smithsonian. They began to conduct excavations at Weedon Island in Novem-

ber 1923. They bypassed the items Elliot had planted, digging deeper to find a burial mound and other significant items.

Elliot ran full-page advertisements in local newspapers encouraging people to watch the Smithsonian excavations and consider purchasing land from him. At one point, he even offered to give visitors pottery fragments as a gift.

The land boom's decline and Fewkes's findings killed Elliot's plans in the mid-1920s. Years later, he looked back with a sense of regret – not because of the damage he did to actual Native American sites, but for the financial losses of promoting a failed development. He allegedly told a friend, "To think I spent all that money to plant those phony bones!"

An old story writ new

Long after Elliot's failed plans came to an end, others continued to search for Native American bones. Areas of the Bayshore Homes site near Abercrombie Park and the mouth of Long Bayou in western St. Petersburg have yielded skeletons of early Floridians. Homes and businesses in the area where Tyrone Boulevard crosses Park Street occupy some of these sites.

Archaeologists also found remains around Joe's Creek in western Lealman. After professional surveyors left, amateurs scoured the area. A librarian received a telephone call nearly 10 years ago from a woman living in Oregon with an important reference question. Her father had passed away after the family had moved from St. Petersburg to the Pacific North-

west. See **GRAVE**, page 11

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Special Agent returns to NEHI

AGENT, from front page

to speak to students about a potential career with the Secret Service.

His job is to travel the country talking to students at colleges, military bases, and high schools to inform them of job opportunities with the United States Secret Service.

"I have the freedom to recruit in certain areas, and Pinellas County is one of the areas that I thought was particularly important to come to," said Ellis. "I get to give back to my community and reach out to the kids where I'm from."

Ellis has a special connection to Northeast High School. Not only is he a graduate, but he has developed a special bond with Anita Gerhart, a staff member at the school from his days as a student.

While training with a strength and conditioning coach for football, Gerhart joined in the workouts. She has stayed in contact with him through his college days and into his professional development.

Ellis is grateful that Gerhart took an interest in his life through some of his challenging days. He cherishes their relationship as she continues to encourage him.

Agent Ellis arrived in the Tampa Bay area on Wednesday, April 20, and



Officer Ellis with Anita Gerhart

spoke to students at the University of Tampa. On Thursday, his schedule included visits to Northeast High and Kaiser University. Friday was Ellis' final recruiting visit at Eckerd College before returning to his headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The return to Northeast High felt great for Ellis since it gave him a chance to spread the word about career opportunities with the government and catch up with old friends. He told the students to work hard and be dedicated.

He challenged the students to have self-awareness and to monitor everything they do. Ellis spoke on handling peer pressure, warned against

being involved in questionable activities, encouraged them to stay clear of negativity on social media, and told them to cultivate healthy relationships with teachers, coaches, and administrators.

"I had challenges in life, but I never gave up nor succumbed to peer pressure," explained Ellis. "I have been around people who were doing wrong. You must follow your heart and know right from wrong."

One thing Ellis did forget from his culinary arts days at NEHI was how to make pizza! Of course, a student was all too happy to teach a United States Secret Service member a trick or two.

A grave situation: Part 3

GRAVE, from page 10

While going through her father's belongings, she found a human skull in a box with a note that he had retrieved it from Joe's Creek in the early 1950s. The librarian directed her to the proper authorities so it could be handled in accordance with the law.

The practices of disturbing, collecting, and sometimes displaying indigenous remains have obviously angered members of the Native American community. Indeed, when evidence of a largely undisturbed Tocobaga site near St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport became known about 30 years ago, members of the American Indian Movement guarded this sacred space while professional surveys took

place. They were there to protect the location from thrill-seekers and collectors. Fieldwork at this site, now called "Yat Kitischee," was done respectfully.

Legislation has helped. The federal government enacted the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in November 1990. This act applies to cultural items, human remains, and sacred objects found on federal lands or within institutions that receive federal funding.

Although NAGPRA does not generally apply to privately owned or state lands, other statutory provisions now discourage or prohibit the violation of aboriginal sites at these places as well. Some regu-

lations include legal consequences.

Similar to the desecration of indigenous sites in Pinellas, the historic problems at Lincoln Cemetery have roots in a system that has treated some people as inferior because of their racial ancestry. Lincoln became a second-chance burial site for people who were considered second-class citizens during the years of mandatory racial segregation.

In our next installment of "A Grave Situation," we visit the Tropicana Field site when parts of it were a potter's field rather than a "Field of Dreams."

Exhuming the Past of Lincoln and Forgotten Cemeteries in Pinellas: An eight-part series originally in Gabber

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Pastor Rainey: Remembering a life well-lived

RAINEY, from front page

which he labeled a “hick town” and an “unpaved mud hole,” to live with his dad and stepmom. But while attending Gibbs High School, he had a falling out with his father, started flunking his classes and chose to quit school and join the U. S. Army.

Pastor Rainey earned the rank of Platoon Staff Sergeant in the 82nd Airborne Division, and after completing a tour, he returned home, mended his relationship with his father, earned his GED and headed to Bethune-Cookman College, now University.

After receiving a bachelor’s degree in science education, he continued his studies at the University of South Florida,

earning a teaching certification and master’s degree in elementary education.

Years later, Pastor Rainey earned a master’s degree in theology from St. Petersburg Theological Seminary.

As an educator, Pastor Rainey served Pinellas County Schools as an elementary classroom teacher, a resource teacher, and countywide science supervisor. He also served as an adjunct professor at St. Petersburg Junior College and the University of South Florida. Later, he became headmaster of Mt. Zion Christian Academy, and a regional science consultant for Rand McNally Publishing Company for the State of Florida.

After hearing the call, Pastor Rainey became a minister, serving as an interim pastor of Faith Memorial Baptist Church, Leonard Street Church of God in Brooksville, and Bealsville Church of God in Plant City. He also served as president of the Florida State Association of Church of God Men’s Organization, and as minister of Christian Education at Trinity Presbyterian Church here in St. Pete.

Well-known and respected in the St. Petersburg community, he answered other callings over the years and has always risen to fulfill the Lord’s wishes. He served as the president of the Florida State Sickle Cell Foundation, president of

Pinellas County Voluntary Health Association, president of the Pinellas County Black Teacher’s Association, president of Florida Association of Science Supervisors, and president of the Parent Support for Education Council, Inc.

He sat on numerous boards and committees, such as the St. Petersburg Department of Juvenile Justice and 2-11 Tampa Bay Cares. Pastor Rainey also volunteered countless hours for various organizations such as Britt Halfway House for Juveniles and was a life member of the NAACP.

“My involvement in the community, everything that folks have said, it’s all because of Jesus Christ, my savior,” Pastor

Rainey said in 2014. “From the streets of Harlem in New York, the asphalt jungle, to the pulpit, I am so thankful that the Lord waited for me to accept Him.”

At the age of 78, he decided he wanted to be a journalist. He had a weekly column in The Weekly Challenger called “Rainey’s Bulletin” where he stressed parent, teacher, and community engagement.

“We’ve been working to get our parents engaged, the community to engage, in education and the success of our children,” Pastor Rainey said in 2014 about his work as president of the Parent Support for Education Council. “So, the streets of south St. Pete are ap-

parently my church for right now.”

Pastor Rainey was a member of Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church, where the Rev. Bobby McDonald tends his flock. Left to cherish his memory is his dedicated, faithful wife of 43 years, Joanne Rainey; two daughters: Brenda Rainey of Tampa and Jayda Rainey of St. Petersburg. His son Fred Dixon, Jr. (Andrea) of Clearwater; three grandchildren: Phillip Mitchell, Christopher Joseph, both of Tampa, and Garius Goshay (Shar) of Largo. Also, six great-grandchildren, a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends.



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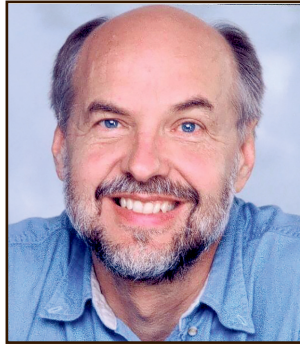
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St. Pete's CBA Policy underway; first developer meeting with community set for May 13



Gypsy Gallardo



Bruce Nissen



Jason Mathis

BY GYPSY C. GALLARDO
Black Media Alliance

ST. PETERSBURG – Implementation is underway for the new City of St. Petersburg Community Benefits (CB) Program. The Standing Community Benefits Advisory Committee (CBAC) held its inaugural meeting earlier this week. The city is poised to host its first developer meeting with citizens on the project known as “The 800 Block.”

Well over half of the CBAC meeting was devoted to process and management steps for both the CB Program and the standing committee. These included training on Florida Sunshine Law and a vote to approve CBAC bylaws (pending changes proposed by committee members).

One of the most substantial topics of the nearly two-hour session was the upcoming community meeting where 800 Block project developers will introduce their vision for the 4.59-acre site. Their development is described as follows in the CBAC meeting package:

“The H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute, Inc. (“Moffitt Cancer Center”), TPA Group, and United Insurance Holdings Corp. (collectively the “Project Development Group”) are interested in acquiring the entire 800 Block of 2nd Avenue South [encompassing 4.59 acres] from the Intown Community Development Agency and the city for the purpose of constructing a state-of-the-art outpatient cancer care facility (“Medical Building”), a mixed-use modern multi-family residential tower with a workforce housing component of at least 10 percent and activated ground floor retail (“Res-

idential Tower”), a to be determined development site (“Future Site”), a public-access parking garage (“Parking Garage”), and the retention and future expansion site of the United Insurance Holdings Corp. (“UPC”) headquarters.”

The 800 Block project team has indicated that they will request an exemption from the City CBA Policy, according to City staff who attended Monday’s meeting.

Per the policy adopted last July by a unanimous vote of St. Petersburg City Councilmembers, exemptions may be granted to projects that meet one of five conditions:

1. **Affordable and Workforce Housing** – A minimum of 30 percent of the total dwelling units developed must be designated as affordable or workforce housing. (If a multi-use project, only the residential portion would receive an exemption, and the remainder of the project would be evaluated for CBA eligibility).

2. **Annexations** – Projects that involve the annexation of real property into the city’s jurisdictional boundaries may be granted an exemption, in whole or in part.

3. **Historically Designated Properties** – A historically designated project may seek a full exemption. (If multi-parcel project, only the historically designated parcel(s) would receive exemption, and the remainder of the project would be evaluated for CBA eligibility).

4. **South St. Petersburg CRA or Qualified Census Tract** – If a project is located within the 7.4-square mile South St. Petersburg CRA or an eligible census tract, and if the developer can demonstrate a financial hardship that would prevent the project from oc-

curing, they may request full exemption.

5. **Alternative Benefits** – If the project includes community benefits that meet or exceed the value of the benefits that would be received through the CBA Program, the developer may request a full exemption.

The 800 Block project may qualify for exemption under condition 5. Citizen feedback will be important to the determination.

The CBAC members asked that the upcoming community meeting for the 800 Block project be pushed back to afford more time for marketing of the session. It was originally set for May 2. City staff agreed to the change and reset the date to May 13. They are now working to re-confirm the venue and prepare marketing materials.

If the project is not exempted by Mayor Ken Welch and city council, the development team will have to adhere to the CBA Policy’s “Tier 2” requirements, including a minimum of 10 percent participation of small and minority owned businesses in the construction phase of the project (with a goal of 20 percent), the hiring of apprentices, minimum energy performance standards, and contributions to a CBA Fund or other community and city priorities.

For those interested in attending the 800 Block project’s community meeting to ask questions or provide feedback, please save the date; this meeting is scheduled for May 13 at 5 p.m. and will be held in a downtown St. Petersburg location.

The Black Media Alliance includes the Power Broker Magazine, The Bulletin News, and The Weekly Challenger.

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Phone: 727-323-7518

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Praise Time 10:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 10:45 a.m.
Tuesday Night Live -
Prayer Service & Bible Study 7 p.m.

Come Worship With the First Baptist Family



REV. DR. WAYNE G. THOMPSON,
PASTOR

BETHEL METROPOLITAN BAPTIST CHURCH

3455 - 26th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33711
Telephone (727) 327-0554 • Fax (727) 327-0240
E-mail: bchurch5@tampabay.rr.com Web site: www.bmmbc.org

Sunday Worship Service10:15 a.m.
Sunday School9:00 a.m.
Teen Summit (Wednesday)7:00 p.m.
Bible Study (Wednesday)7:00 p.m.



Rev. Rickey L. Houston,
Pastor

“God’s House To The City”

BETHEL COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH

SUNDAY SCHOOL: 8:30am
SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES:
▪ 9:30am in the Sanctuary
▪ 10:30am Outdoors on Church Grounds
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY: 7:00PM

Follow our Facebook page for the latest church updates and live streaming.

2901 54th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33712
(727) 866-2567
www.stpetebethel.com



Come and Join Us!
Bishop Manuel L. Sykes
Senior Pastor



Welcome - Bienvenidos
ST. AUGUSTINE’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Joyful Spirit, Joyful Jazz
2920 26th Avenue South, St. Petersburg 33712
727-867-6774
StAugustine@tampabay.rr.com

The Rev. Josie Rose,
Priest-in-Charge

Sunday Communion and Worship Service 9:00 a.m.
Communion and Healing Service 11:00 a.m. Tuesdays

FAITH MEMORIAL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1800 18TH AVENUE SOUTH
ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33712
727-896-0351
FAITHMBC@YAHOO.COM
GROWING RELATIONALLY IN DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH CHRIST
MATTHEW 28:18-20, JOHN 15:4-5



REV. ROBERT A. VINSON, JR.

Please join us on our Zoom Ministry Line:
Meeting ID: 226-033-6850 Dial-in #: 1-929-436-2866
Sunday Prayer Service: 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Church School: 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service: 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday Bible Study: 7:00 p.m.



First Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church
1121 22nd Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33712
(727) 327-8708

Sunday Worship Services 8:00 and 11:00 a.m.
Sunday School.....9:30 a.m.
Prayer Meeting (Tuesday)6:00 p.m.
Bible Study (Tuesday)7:00 p.m.
Baptist Training Union (Sunday) ..4:00 p.m.

Rev. Wallace Elliott
Sr. - Pastor

“The Little Church Where Everybody Is Somebody”

First Mount Pilgrim Evangelical Missionary Baptist Church

“But for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”
Joshua 24:15
2700 5th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33715
727-320-2709
lpdavismemorial@gmail.com



Reverend
Darrel W. Davis, Sr.
Pastor - Teacher

Sunday Worship Services
Sunday School 9:30 am • Worship Service 11:00 am
Prayer Meeting (Wednesday) 7 pm
Bible Study (Wednesday) 7:30 pm

Victory Christian Center Church

3012 18th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Fla. 33712
(727) 321-0911
www.victorychristiancenterchurch.org



Donn & Jean
Freshler

Schedule of Services
Sunday Worship*
10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Bible Study* -7:00 p.m.
Friday Prayer -7:00 p.m.
Intercessory Prayer - 9:00 a.m.
(except Wednesdays)

Victory Christian Center is a Word of Faith Church.
For more information about the other services and ministries at Victory Christian Center, please call (727) 321-0911.
*Nursery and Youth Services Available

20th Street Church Of Christ

825 20th Street South
St. Petersburg, FL 33712
Home: 896-8006



Bro. Robert Smith

Sunday Bible Class (All Ages)8:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship9:45 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship6:00 p.m.
Ladies Bible Class Monday7:00 p.m.
Monday Evening Bible Class7:00 p.m.
Wednesday Morning Bible Class10:00 a.m.
Wednesday Evening Bible Class7:00 p.m.


UNITY Temple of Truth CHURCH

Sunday Worship Service 10:00 A.M. *

511 Prescott Street South
St. Petersburg, FL 33712
727-898-2457
www.unitytemplestpete.org
unitytruth1957@gmail.com

Helping People Live Healthy, Prosperous and Meaningful Lives thru Practical Christianity

* Live Streaming on our Facebook Page



INSPIRATIONS

BY DIERDRE DOWNING-JACKSON

Move Forward Toward Your Mark

It seems that when your path is clear, challenges come and things become unclear.

GOD gives you strength to carry through; even though there is so much pain that you must work through.

Trust in the LORD to open your eyes, and be reminded, that nothing in the world can stop His love, because HIS eyes are watching you.

As you pray and seek the wisdom of GOD, you will find divine counsel and guidance; GOD will rescue you from harm, and your armor will be His strength and righteous direction.

Doors will open wide as you love without condition; and GOD prepares your way to trust HIS vision for your peace and HIS protection.

Keep pressing toward the mark of GOD’s calling in CHRIST JESUS; And every step you take will miraculously reveal GOD’s divine provision.


Keep pressing toward your mark as GOD heals you with HIS precious love; Your testimony and witness will be heard from heaven above.

Your calling will bless this world, as you demonstrate walking by faith; And the prize of CHRIST JESUS will be the strength GOD gives you, and proof of His amazing grace.”

AMEN

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

“Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.”



ST. MARK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1301 - 37th Street South, St. Petersburg, FL
(727) 321-6631 • www.stmarkch.org

Schedule of Services

Church School..... 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship 10:45 a.m.
Baptist Training Union..... 5:00 p.m.
Prayer Meeting and Bible Study
Wednesday 7:00 p.m.



Rev. Brian K. Brown

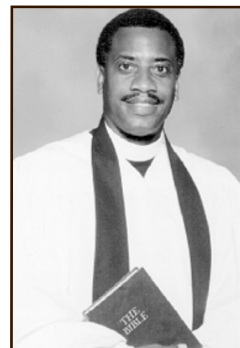
THE ROCK OF JESUS MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

SUNDAY SERVICES/WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

10:30 a.m. Worship Service
9:00 a.m. Breakfast (First Sunday only)
9:30 a.m. Sunday School (First Sunday Only)
Sunday School 9:15 a.m. / Devotion 10:15 a.m.
Praise & Worship 10:20 a.m. / Worship Services 10:30 a.m.
Saints of Prayer - Monday 12:00 noon
Weekly Bible Study - Tuesday 6:30 p.m.
Adult Choir Rehearsals - Thursday 6:30 p.m.

Van service is available by calling: (727) 327-0015

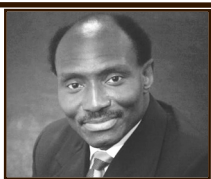
THE ROCK OF JESUS IS LOCATED AT:
3940 - 18th AVE. S., St. Petersburg, Florida
Telephone: 727-327-0015 • Fax: 727-327-0021
Email: rojmbc@knology.net
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.



Rev. Frank W. Peterman, Jr.
Pastor

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

3300 31st St. S., St. Petersburg, FL 33712
(727) 906-8300 www.friendshipstpetersburg.org
Email: fmbc3300@outlook.com
YouTube: FMBC The Ship



Dr. John A. Evans, Pastor

WORSHIP EXPERIENCES

Sunday Worship8:45 a.m. "The Hour of Power"
Sunday School.....8:00 a.m.
Wednesday in the Word
12:30 p.m. via ZOOM - ACCESS CODE: 599-819-6863 PASSWORD: 778769
7:00 p.m. via ZOOM - ACCESS CODE: 509-102-8823 PASSWORD: THESHIP

Our Mission: Friendship Missionary Baptist Church is a family of believers in Christ, reaching out to the world, preaching the gospel to the unsaved and teaching the saved to serve by demonstrating the Love of Christ.

| | |
|---|--|
| ST. PETERSBURG 2114 54th Avenue North | TAMPA 5107 N Central Avenue |
| SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP 8:45AM Drive In Centering Service | SUNDAY AFTERNOON WORSHIP 2pm Cultural Integration Worship Experience |
| 10:30AM CREATIVE EXPRESSION WORSHIP EXPERIENCE WEDNESDAY NIGHT WORD 6:30 PM - COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS PRAYER 7 PM - BIBLE STUDY | |
| WWW.TODAYSCHURCHTAMPABAY.COM ZOOM: MEETING ID 375 007 212 PASSWORD 5107 | |



Pastor's Corner

BY REV. DR. DORAL R. PULLEY,
SPIRITUAL LEADER
TODAY'S CHURCH Tampa Bay

Changing the System

"Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2)."

Have you ever been bothered by a speck of dust in your eye or by a splinter in your finger that, relative to your body size, was as small as an ant is to a dog? If you have, then you know the paradox that what affects one affects all, regardless of the size or magnitude of the effect.

Even though the splinter is only 1/16 of an inch in length, when embedded in the skin and impinging on the nerve, you can barely think of anything else except the pain that you feel. Likewise, the speck of dust

that is a persistent nuisance to the eyeball commands your full attention. If one part of the body is affected by something (no matter the size) because that part is a sub-component of the system as a whole, the entire system will be adversely affected.

Prayer does not change things. Prayer changes people, and people change things because people are a part of systems. Your family is a system, and, when you change through prayer, your family system changes. Your friendships are systems, and when you change through prayer, your friendship system changes. Your business or job is a system, and when you change through prayer, your career system changes. Your

school is a system, and when you change through prayer, the educational system changes. Your neighborhood is a system, and when you change through prayer, the community system changes. Your local assembly is a system, and when you change through prayer, the religious system changes. The government is a system, and when you change through prayer, the political system changes.

Using the Prayer Tool of Witnessing and Sharing Your Testimony with Others as symbolized by the Measuring Tape, document and share with at least one other person an experience where you have changed as a result of prayer and brought into fruition a systemic change as well.

"Father, into thy hands, I commit my spirit (Luke 23:46)."

The last recorded prayer of Jesus was, "Father, into thy hands; I commit my spirit." This statement demonstrates that Jesus, our example of what it means to fully human and fully divine, was completely turning his will and his ways over to God. Pray about it until you have peace. Once you have peace about it, allow the process to unfold, knowing the Principle of Divine Timing. Everything is happening exactly when it is supposed to happen.

The scripture is true, "the door that God opens no one can shut (Revelation 3:7)." Whenever God has a blessing to give, you will receive it when you are ready for it regardless of the thoughts and opinions of

others. God opens the doors of opportunity to meet your needs and to fulfill the good desires of your heart. The same verse says, "the door that God shuts, no one can open (Revelation 3:7)." Sometimes the shut door means "wait" because something on either side of the door is not ready for the door to open. No matter how long you knock on the door until both parties are ready, the door will remain closed.

Put it in God's hands, knowing that whenever God closes one door, God opens another, and whatever is behind the open door is always better than what is behind the closed door. Leave the closed door and find the open door of opportunity. Trust the process,

knowing that God's will for you is Absolute Good. Pray for this or something better and leave it to God. Don't function in your ego, busting the window out of closed doors to get what you want. Pray for the right and the perfect result, and let it go. Spare yourself heartache, pain, and embarrassment. Pray for the highest and the best and release your need to control it. God knows what and when is best for you to receive.

Using the Prayer Tool of Witnessing and Sharing Your Testimony with Others as symbolized by the Measuring Tape, document and share with at least one other person an experience where prayer and patience resulted in a delightful demonstration.



Dear Reader:

Functioning from the State of Brokenness – Hurting, Broken, and in Need of Repair

Dear Reader,
I'm not sure how my words will find you when you read them, but I pray that they find you well and bring you hope and perspective.

There's an abundance of brokenness in our world, and it resides within our friends and families, our nations, and communities. Our neighbors are often hurting and broken, but yet no one seems to notice because they are often well put together. Many hide their pain because of the criticism of others, and they often cover up with masks and garments the cracks within their surface. Functioning from a state of brokenness, they daily move about in a manner that eludes their brokenness, often hiding the fractures and scars that run so deep to their core.

Brokenness resides within our world, and it resides within many of our families and friends, nations, and communities. The question that we must ask ourselves is, 'what are we willing to do about it?' Do we continue to act as though the challenges of a

broken society affect some and not us all, and do we also continue to act as though we ourselves have not or will not ever be affected by brokenness? I can assure you that brokenness has an agenda in each and every one of our lives, and if we do not become intentional about the repairs and restoration that are necessary, it will only bring further harm to the generations to come. One can choose to laugh, gossip, and be a spectator, or one can choose to be someone who makes a difference.

How will you help your neighbor, Dear Reader? I pray that you will be the latter – one who chooses to make a difference, because our world truly needs those who are different. Now let us "pray for one another, that [we all] may be healed and restored; [for the heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous believer can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God – it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]" (James 5:16b-c AMP). Dear Reader, let us also pray prayers of wholeness this

week for the broken, that all that has been shattered would be restored, repaired, and made whole, and let us do so in the Name of the Lord, Amen.

Dear Reader, trust God even in the most difficult places, because He will see to it that you make it to the destination of His promises. I want you to know that you are not alone, and it is my prayer that this column will make you feel as though you have a place to belong and somewhere to call home.

Share your story and prayer requests at SenecaHoward.com/contact, and our team will be sure to keep you lifted in our prayers.

P.S., Yours Truly,
The Writer, Seneca Howard
www.SenecaHoward.com

About Seneca Howard
Seneca Howard is a pastor, author, mentor, and motivational speaker who inspires the lives of others through crisis ministry, counsel, and personal development.

Dear Reader,
I'm not sure how my words will find you when you read them, but I pray that they find you well and bring you hope and perspective.

As I pondered God's leading and commission to write about the subject matter of forgiveness, I've been considering how to write about the content of its substance in a way that is helpful and not harmful.

What is forgiveness from the cross? Forgiveness from the cross is forgiveness from a place of affliction. It is forgiveness that allows the will of God to be done in the lives of others. It is forgiveness that allows for the fullness of God's plan to come together. Jesus states in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing," and He prays this prayer of forgiveness from the cross as He was being crucified (reference Luke 23:33-49 AMP).

You see, reconciliation is something that can take place within oneself, even if it cannot take place between you and the offender, because one shouldn't allow unforgiveness to have power over them. One does not have to remain in a state of brokenness, even if the offender doesn't choose to repair what they have broken. God's intended state for our lives is wholeness, and we should embrace the fullness of it through the process of

forgiveness.

If one truly wants to achieve healing within themselves, they must allow God to heal the wounds, because oftentimes the offender will not take the necessary actions.

Freedom from debt as it pertains to forgiveness is not just for the offender but for the offended as well because there are some debts that you will have to write off, and the reason for doing this is for your own peace, your happiness, and your restoration as a whole; so, forgive, and let the fullness of its measure be from your heart (ref. Matthew 18:23-35 AMP).

Forgiveness is not a tolerance for abusive or repetitive bad behavior but should be viewed instead as a gift and currency from Heaven that should be treasured and never taken for granted; for, to know right from wrong and still do wrong is sin (ref. James 4:17). The currency of forgiveness can bring restoration to the offended and to the offender, and the power of its purpose is meant to bring about healing. Forgiveness has a purpose, so, "if possible, as far as it depends on you, [allow forgiveness to be your measure, and] live at peace with everyone. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave the way open for God's wrath [and His judicial righteousness]; for it is written [in Scripture], 'Vengeance is Mine, I



will repay,' says the Lord. 'But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome and conquered by evil but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:18-21 AMP).

Dear Reader, "be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you]" (Romans 12:2b). Trust God even in the most difficult places, because He will see to it that you make it to the destination of His promises. I want you to know that you are not alone, and it is my prayer that this column will make you feel as though you have a place to belong and somewhere to call home.

Share your story and prayer requests below and at SenecaHoward.com/contact, and our team will be sure to keep you lifted in our prayers.

P.S., Yours Truly,
The Writer, Seneca Howard
www.SenecaHoward.com



Pray for our Country

new
worlds
reading

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
LASTINGER CENTER
& SCHOLASTIC

Reading makes you, you.

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at newworldsreading.com.