

The Weekly Challenger

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VOL. 52 NO. 36

JANUARY 7 - JANUARY 20, 2021

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IN THIS WEEK



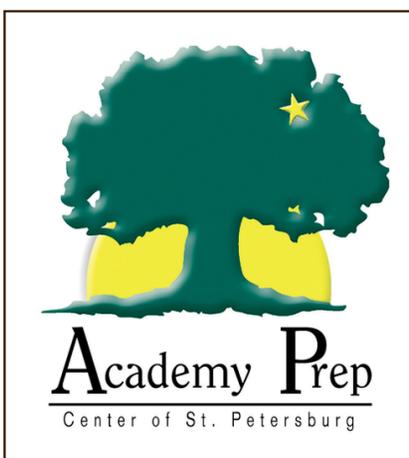
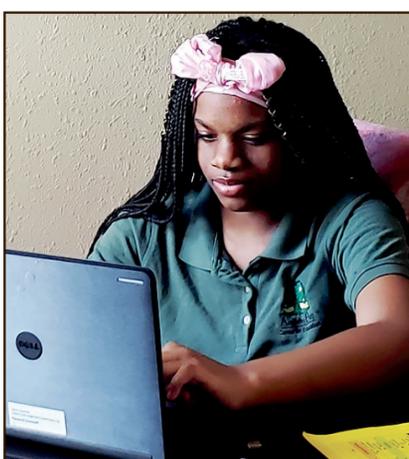
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Academy Prep is now enrolling students entering the fifth and sixth grades for the 2021-2022 school year. All are invited to attend the upcoming Virtual Open House this Sunday, Jan. 10, from 3-3:30 p.m. or Tuesday, Jan. 27, from 6-6:30 p.m.

Academy Prep scholars thrive during the global COVID-19 pandemic

ST. PETERSBURG — It is well known throughout St. Petersburg that the south side community has long endured disadvantages and hardships historically associated with generational poverty, racial injustice and inequitable educational opportunities. Perhaps lesser known is the resilience, perseverance and unity of its residents collectively building a legacy of strength, determination and success for its next generation.

The resolve of south St. Petersburg has been tested this year to an unprecedented degree. No community in the greater Tampa Bay area has been harder hit by COVID-19 than south St. Pete, amplifying significant hardship for many who call this neighborhood home.

Residents here have contracted the virus at rates up to four times higher than residents living in other areas of Pinellas County, with the majority of infections centered in the same neighborhood Academy Prep Center of St. Petersburg has served for more than 20 years.

Since its founding in 1997, Academy Prep has worked with the south side community to transform the lives of middle school students by providing a local, private and tuition-free option. As a nonprofit school, Academy Prep aims to inspire and empower students qualify-

ing for need-based scholarships to become future community leaders through a rigorous middle school program coupled with ongoing graduate support.

In March of 2020, every school, business, and community faced the uncertainty and fear of the sweeping COVID-19 pandemic. Amid this global crisis and before the effects on south St. Petersburg were fully known, the Academy Prep administration took swift and appropriate action to protect its students and families while intensely preparing for the shift to virtual learning.

The school made significant improvements to their online systems, and through the generosity of the St. Petersburg community, every Academy

See **ACADEMY**, page 2

Academy Prep is now enrolling students who will be entering the 5th and 6th grade for the 2021-2022 school year. If you would like to learn more about Academy Prep and how its unique model can transform your child's future, you are welcome to attend an upcoming Virtual Open House on Sunday, Jan. 10, from 3-3:30 p.m. or Tuesday, Jan. 27, from 6.-6:30 p.m. Please R.S.V.P. to Admissions and Scholarship Coordinator Anita Reece at (727) 322-0800 ext. 2105 or areece@academyprep.org.

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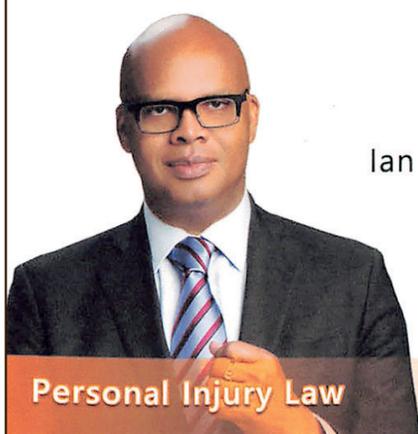
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Academy Prep now enrolling students entering the fifth and sixth grades for next school year

ACADEMY, from front page

Earlier this school year, Academy Prep took swift action to protect their students and families during the pandemic by intensely preparing for the shift to virtual learning. As a result, Academy Prep is now serving more students than ever before and experiencing record-high retention rates. Students are continuing to receive the personalized attention and dynamic learning environment that are hallmarks of an Academy Prep education leading to high levels of engagement, consistent attendance, outstanding standardized test results, and positive academic outcomes.

Prep scholar was provided a Chromebook and a supply pack to enhance their online learning experience.

Chikara Parks, the mother of an Academy Prep graduate and two current students, shared how "Academy Prep wanted to make absolutely sure students and families were safe. However, they didn't make decisions without listening and considering the opinions of the par-

ents. The teachers, staff, and administrators always do what they have to do to make sure the students are successful and supported. That's everything to me. I truly admire the outstanding leadership at Academy Prep."

Together, the Academy Prep family persevered through extended virtual learning by maintaining high expectations, increasing communication and enhancing sup-

port for the entire school community.

As a result, Academy Prep is now serving more students than ever before and experiencing record-high retention rates. Students continue to receive the personalized attention and dynamic learning environment that are hallmarks of an Academy Prep education, leading to high levels of engagement, consistent attendance, outstanding standardized test results and positive academic outcomes.

Even through a global crisis, Academy Prep's mission and outstanding results did not and will not falter. Dedicated faculty and staff have worked tirelessly to uphold these standards and support the scholars who have proven they are resilient, driven, and committed.

Academy Prep scholars:

- Sustained an average of 98 percent attendance throughout the online learning program

this school year.

- Saw increased MAP standardized testing scores in reading and math. Test results show that scholars did not experience learning loss during the pandemic.

- Showed strong GPA averages compared to previous years.

Under "normal" or pre-pandemic circumstances, Academy Prep may appear to be a typical private middle school. Students wear uniforms and are offered a college preparatory curriculum with value placed on structure, critical thinking, communication and hard work. It's not until you visit campus and meet the students when you will start to see, and feel, the Academy Prep difference.

Starting from enrollment in the fifth or sixth grade, students attend Academy Prep up to 11 hours a day, six days a week, 11 months a year, on full scholarships provided by individuals, busi-

nesses and foundations in the St. Petersburg community. Besides a rigorous academic experience, students are offered a wide variety of exciting and unique experiences through extracurriculars, athletics, weekend field trips and service projects.

Academy Prep students are taught in small, gender-separated classes, facilitating one-on-one support that provides each student with dedicated and individualized attention. Through this intensive nurturing and guidance, Academy Prep aims to help students learn to see education as a way to a bright future and to move students toward a life of success.

Academy Prep's Graduate Support department closely monitors each student's progress fostering successful transitions and outcomes. Through this ongoing support, nearly all Academy Prep graduates have earned scholarships to advanced high school programs and

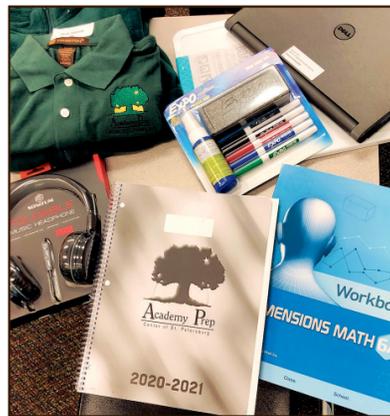
have graduated on time.

Also, the majority of Academy Prep graduates have gone on to post-secondary education or have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Academy Prep believes that every child deserves an equitable education, and every child has the potential to become a future leader in their community. The journey begins here.

Academy Prep is now enrolling students who will be entering the fifth and sixth grades for the 2021-2022 school year. If you would like to learn more about Academy Prep and how its unique model can transform your child's future, you are welcome to attend an upcoming Virtual Open House on Sunday, Jan. 10, from 3-3:30 p.m. or Tuesday, Jan. 27, from 6-6:30 p.m.

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PICK OF THE WEEK!
45 10 30

CASH 3
598
158
207

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All news items, advertising copy and related art submitted for publication on Thursday must be received no later than 4 p.m. Monday.

COLUMNIST'S DISCLAIMER
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The pandemic wasn't stopping Leotte Harrell's graduation dance

BY KARIN DAVIS-THOMPSON
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG – When Leotte Harrell learned her college graduation would have to be virtual because of COVID-19, she was heartbroken.

"I was devastated," she said. "It was literally my one motivating thought from the time I re-entered college, and it took me 26 years to finally go back!"

When her husband saw how much walking across that stage meant to his wife, he came up with a plan.

Leotte Harrell was anticipating what her big day would be like in the days leading up to graduation.

"My goal, my vision, my dream was to walk across the stage, do my little dance

and get my bachelor's degree," she said.

The 48-year-old said the news of going virtual was especially tough to take since the school, St. Petersburg College, hosted a live ceremony just two weeks before telling her group that they would not be able to have the same experience.

Her husband, Bryant Harrell, said he hated to see his wife disappointed and began researching what he could do to lift her spirits. He found inspiration on the Internet – where a father created a graduation experience for his child. He was convinced he could make something similar for his wife.

"It took about eight weeks to put it all together, contacting friends and family, getting help from the

community," Bryant Harrell said.

The end result? An actual graduation ceremony, complete with outdoor seating for guests, a speaker, and most of all, the stage for his wife's graduation dance. Thanks to her husband, Leotte Harrell got the chance to dance across a graduation stage.

Bryant Harrell said his wife's reaction was all the thanks he needed.

"She was in shock and overjoyed," the 55-year-old said.

Leotte Harrell said she couldn't believe all her husband had done to make her graduation memorable and what she dreamed about.

"I was stunned," she said. "He built a complete stage across our yard, complete with decorations,



chairs for the audience, and the yard was completely decorated."

Along with planning the ceremony with close family and friends in attendance, Bryant Harrell also arranged a drive-by parade.

"I almost fainted," she exclaimed.

Bryant Harrell said plan-

ning the ceremony and parade was his way of letting his wife know how proud he was of all she had accomplished.

"I love my wife," he said. "She worked very hard for the past four years, spending late nights pushing into the dawn of morning and then getting up to go work."

Hearing his wife cry as the school announced in-person graduation wouldn't be possible, he knew he had to act.

"I just had to make one [a graduation] just for her."

Leotte Harrell said knowing that her husband loves her enough to plan something this detailed just for her means more than she can say.

"This was the kindest thing anyone has ever done for me," she stated. "It just made me fall in love with



him all over again. I can't believe I am blessed enough to call him my husband."

Leotte Harrell graduated from St. Petersburg College and danced across the stage with a bachelor's degree in Educational Studies and Community Leadership.

To reach Karin Davis-Thompson, email kdavis-thompson@theweeklychallenger.com



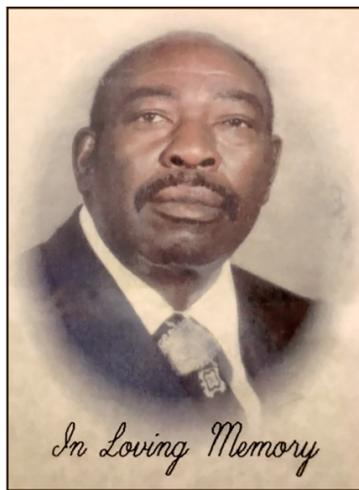
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JOSEPH LOVETT, JR.

We grieve the loss of missing you over the past 27 years. However, we rejoice in celebrating your 100th Birthday with you in Heaven, on December 29th, 2020. With Much Love, your Eldest Daughter the Rev. Dr. Dee Lovett Sconiers, on behalf of ALL of your 7 Children, your 13 Grandkids, and your 9 Great-Grandchildren.

In Loving Memory

‘The Color of Wellness’ magazine aims to close the wellness gaps within communities of color



ST. PETERSBURG — Michelle Greene Rhodes, founder of Michelle Rhodes Media LLC in Tampa, has created an outlet for nurses to share their wellness expertise while helping the vulnerable communities they serve.

“The Color of Wellness” magazine will launch Jan. 20 and aims to educate communities of color in a more impactful way.

“The problem is that we can no longer work silently, or not make time outside of work to educate our communities,” explained Rhodes.

According to Americanactionforum.org, recent estimates attribute 10 to 20 percent of health outcomes to medical care, 30 percent to genetics, 40 to 50 percent to behavior and 20 percent to the social and physical environment. That means most of the work in terms of wellness happens outside of the hospital by social determinants (non-medical factors).

These social determinants include factors such as where individuals live, learn, work, and age, in addition to socioeconomic status and race. These social determinants of health have gotten a lot of attention recently, as research continues to show a person’s health can depend heavily on their zip code and circumstances in life.

Concerns on health equity and health inequality must continue to be raised. Although the healthcare industry is attempting to address these issues, it continues to go mostly unnoticed. The trend of increased spend-

ing on healthcare yet decreased wellness across the entire population, especially members of vulnerable demographics, must be brought to the table.

We have seen this magnified during the pandemic, during which this concept was born. Blacks have died at a substantially higher rate during this pandemic, and the question is why. Because in many of our vulnerable communities, our health lacked wellness, which has been linked and influenced by multiple socioeconomic factors.

A native of St. Pete, Rhodes decided to utilize her 20 plus years as a registered nurse who specialized in managed care (insurance) to see gaps in preventive education and chronic disease from a high level.

“By putting the pieces together, I recognized that the lack of wellness education was most often not in the equation within the lifestyles of communities of color,” she said.

On top of that, most of the healthcare dollars spent, Rhodes noticed, was being spent on chronic disease at end of the spectrum and not the former.

“Wellness is often missed and put into play a little too late most times when it comes to the Black community.”

Speaking from personal experience, Rhodes said she has struggled with bad nutritional habits all her life. When she thinks of good times growing up, eating soul food always played a large part.

“It has made it that much harder to establish

healthier habits as an adult,” she stated. “It is my prayer to break these unhealthy cycles and that our communities can embrace healthier habits earlier in life.”

Rhodes called upon some of her best and brightest colleagues to help formulate the magazine. In her Facebook group of 4,000 nurse entrepreneurs — Nursepreneur Nation — she selected 12 executive contributors of various nursing backgrounds.

“They are the core engine of this historical publication,” Rhodes asserted. “It is because of them that we can now disseminate and discuss topics of wellness that concern people of color the most. By taking wellness concepts and well-being education into our hands, we can hopefully save lives by establishing healthier habits earlier in life.”

Rhodes said their goal is to decrease healthcare spending, help others establish healthier lifestyles and lay down the foundations of well-being as soon as possible.

“This is urgent; the time is now,” Rhodes said. “Our magazine breaks into zip codes and sets up shop wherever we are along this journey. We are ecstatic to elevate nurses and help our corporate partners disseminate cultured wellness information to elevate some and give hope to others.”

“The Color of Wellness Magazine will launch on Jan. 20 and has raised almost \$10,000 in presales. Grab your subscription today at www.ColorOfWellness.co

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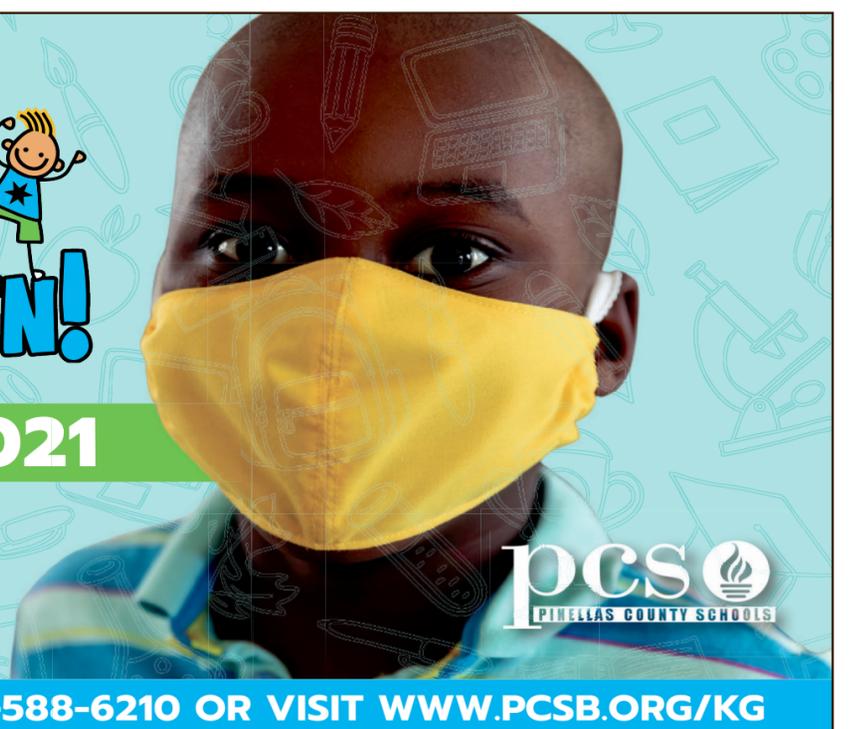




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St. Pete builder Kori Monroe plans affordable housing project for vets with wrap-around services

BY J.A. JONES
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG – Builder Kori Monroe has a vision for offering homeless veterans in St. Pete a better life.

His nonprofit organization, Veterans Excelling Towards Success, Inc., is embarking on revamping the former Glenoaks Elementary School at 1900 12th St. S into a brand-new affordable housing complex for veterans, aptly called “Place of Potential for Independent Living.”

According to Monroe, many veterans who enter into career military service straight out of high school lack knowledge on many of the life skills the military handled.

This means that career military personnel might go from high school to leaving the military decades later without knowing how to pay rent or mortgage, purchase necessary insurance, or even be fully prepared to enter the job market.

This kind of gap in knowledge and life skills can hinder and sometimes ultimately hobble a vet’s successful re-accli-

mation to civilian life.

Monroe’s vision was personally inspired by his father, a vet who struggled with alcoholism after leaving the military. While he didn’t see his father much during his younger years, they re-established a relationship after Monroe’s children were born.

During a conversation in those later years, “One of the things that came up was that he was, for lack of a better term, homeless. He spent a lot of time couch surfing – staying here, staying there,” shared Monroe. “When he got out of the military, he didn’t have many skills.”

Monroe said that conversation made him realize that his father’s story – and their relationship – might have been repaired much earlier if his father had the support and a place to turn.

This revelation made him want to help other military families in reconciling with their loved ones through providing a supportive re-entry experience for them. He knew he had the building skills, and after consulting his

wife, Twanna, Monroe decided to embark on finding a place where he could carry out what he now believes is a God-given mission.

Now that they’ve purchased the abandoned school building and it has received its historic building designation from the city, Monroe plans to begin the renovations within the next six months.

Recently, VETS, Inc. had a celebratory open house to honor several area vets and bring together community leaders, partners, and organizations that will be instrumental in the programs and services that Place of Potential will offer.

Monroe envisions Place of Potential as not only a place where vets can find transitional housing up to 24 months but a hub for the wrap-around services ex-service members need. Vets will be offered benefits application assistance for social security, food stamps, Medicare, GI Bill, VRAP, VA housing, VA compensation and other federal benefits programs.

Additional services



will include re-entry counseling and life coaching, group therapy, job prep and job search support, and homeownership assistance, including landlord certification courses.

Monroe started his career with a degree in construction engineering and technology from Florida A&M University before building homes for larger companies such as US Homes. After years in building led to supervising sites, and progressing to the level of project manager, he opened his own company, IROK, some 20 years ago.

However, the message his father shared with him

after reconnecting about not having any skills reset the course of Monroe’s life.

“If he could have been somewhere stable to get his life together, we could have had a relationship 20 years ago when he got out while I was still young,” Monroe observed.

But realizing he had the skills to make a difference in the lives of other vets and their families is Monroe’s new mission.

“I could do something as simple as housing, where they can have some stability and get some reconciliation with their families, I’m like – OK, yeah that that’s what

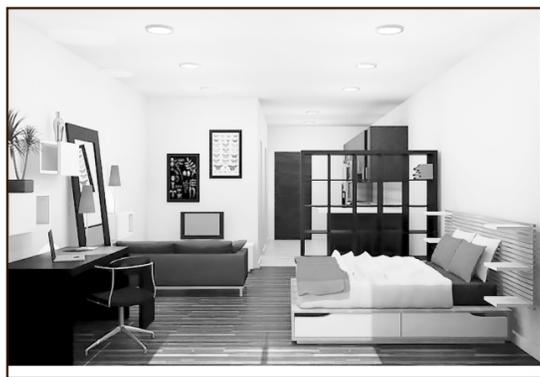
I need to do. I’m still building, but now it’s with a purpose.”

For more information, visit vets-success.org.

To reach J.A. Jones, email jjones@theweekly-challenger.com



Kori and Twanna Monroe



AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY FRONT AND CENTER

Recollections, reflections, remembrances and racial reconciliation in St. Pete - now is the time

BY JACQUELINE WILLIAMS HUBBARD, ESQ.
ASALH President

In the coming weeks, Pinellas County citizens will acknowledge the history of lynchings of Black Americans in our community with a ceremony led by the Community Remembrance Project Coalition (CRPC). This Coalition is also called “Pinellas Remembers.”

A lynching memorial marker, tall and strong, will soon be erected at the actual site in St. Petersburg, where one known lynching occurred. On Nov. 12, 1914, a crowd of at least 1,500 people watched the lynching of John Evans, a Black man.

Evans was accused, but never tried or convicted, of murdering a white Pinellas County resident and assaulting his wife. The crowd watched excitedly as he hung from a light pole with a rope around his

neck. Before his death, his body was riddled with bullet holes. He died hanging on that light pole.

Parker Watson, also a Black man, was lynched on May 9, 1926. His body was found on a county road near Clearwater. He had been forcibly removed from police custody by a group of armed, masked men as he was being transported to the county jail.

His body was later found with five bullet holes and what appeared to be acid burns on his face. No one was ever arrested or charged in Watson’s murder. Other lynchings include those of John Thomas in 1905 and J.O. “Honey Baby” Moses in 1937.

BACKGROUND: The CRPC was formed out of the efforts of many different groups. One early group included Andrew Walker, Cheryl Tinsdall, Drs. Julie Armstrong and Thomas Hallock, Attorney Yate

Cutcliffe and myself, all members of St. Augustine’s Episcopal Church.

This group wanted to embody the teachings of Bishop Michael Curry, Prelate of the American Episcopal Church. In 2017, Bishop Curry called for racial reconciliation.

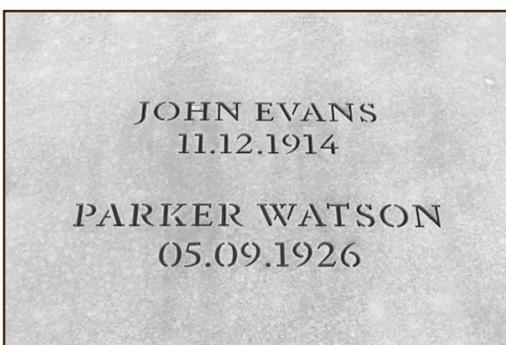
The St. Petersburg Branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc. (ASALH) joined to support this effort. Early on, the congregational group and ASALH met with Episcopal Church leaders and the City of St. Petersburg.

In 2018, Bryan Stevenson’s Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) was contacted. Shortly after that, EJI sent a list of other people and groups who had expressed an interest in a lynching marker or memorial. All on the EJI list were contacted and invited to a meeting held at St. Augustine’s.

By April of 2019, a wide array of Pinellas County individuals and organizations came together to form CRPC, chaired by Gwendolyn Reese, president, the African American Heritage Association, Inc and myself. The Community Remembrance Project Coalition’s mission is to bear witness to the legacy of racial terror, epitomized by lynchings in America.

The Coalition generally meets twice a month and operates through committees. This method has led to high efficiency and highly involved volunteers.

To date, the CRPC has more than 80 members. The St. Pete community response to this project has been absolutely inspiring and overwhelmingly positive. A \$16,000 donation came from the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, Inc., a \$10,000 donation came from the Tampa Bay Rays and two local



individuals gave personal contributions.

In addition to erecting the lynching marker, with the support of EJI, the Coalition is sponsoring an essay contest for St. Petersburg High School students this spring. The winners will receive scholarships. The truth-telling must never stop.

RACIAL RECONCILIATION: With knowledge of our history, we can hope for understanding. With understanding, we can seek acknowledgment of our failures and successes. With acknowledgement and truth-telling, we can

seek forgiveness. With forgiveness we can seek racial reconciliation.

Due to the pandemic, the CRPC plans to have a small initial unveiling of the Lynching Memorial Monument and a larger unveiling ceremony later in the year. For more information, visit www.pinellasremembers.org.

Author Jacqueline Hubbard graduated from the Boston University Law School. She is currently the president of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc.

CHURCH NEWS



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Sunday School.....9:00 a.m.
Wednesday Mid-Day Bible StudyNoon - 12:30 p.m.
Wednesday Prayer Service6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study6:30 p.m.

Youth Chapel Services - 921 20th Street South
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Wednesday Small Group Bible Study6:30 p.m.

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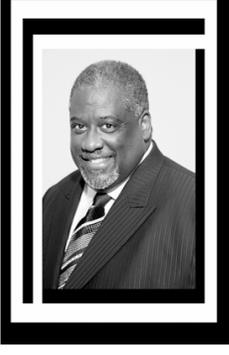


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St. Petersburg, FL. 33712
(727) 866-2567

SERVICES
Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service: 10:00 a.m.
Mid-Week Worship: Wednesday 7:00 p.m.



Rev. Dr. Manuel L. Sykes

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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

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1800 18TH AVENUE SOUTH
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MATTHEW 28:18-20, JOHN 15:4-5



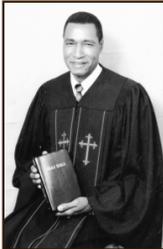
REV. ROBERT A. VINSON, JR.

FAITH IN ACTION
FAITH MEMORIAL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
EST. 1909

SUNDAY PRAYER SERVICE 9:00AM
SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL 9:30AM
SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE 10:45AM
TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY 7:00PM

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

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Victory Christian Center Church
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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.

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CHURCH

Sunday Worship Service 10:00 A.M. *

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INSPIRATIONS
BY DIERDRE DOWNING-JACKSON

Understanding

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To have a heart that yearns to know the wisdom of our LORD above.
Remembering that our lives are blessed because the Holy One shed His Blood.
A sacrifice no other man has made, to express a precious and eternal love.
We walk this life and must believe that there is a great reward;
When our hearts choose to give to one another, our trust and unconditional love.
The wisdom of our Heavenly Father must be the desire of our life journey.
Understand the Holy gift of JESUS, blesses us with His grace deliverance and amazing mercy.
So seek the wisdom of GOD, in all you say and do;
And know that your understanding of JESUS, the Holy One, will always see you through.

AMEN

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”



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new testament
Survey

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (EST) and

**The ministry/work
OF A DEACON**
7 PM - 9 PM (EST)

DR. DORAL R. PULLEY
Instructor and
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For More Information Contact
SHEPHERD MOTHER RENET DENNARD COLE
Tampa Bay MOC Registrar
cotektoday@gmail.com

CHURCH NEWS

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

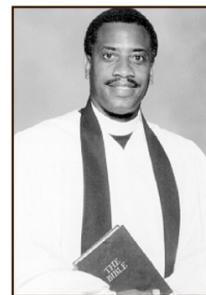
SUNDAY SERVICES/WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

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.fmbctheship.net
Email: fmbc3300@verizon.net
YouTube: TMBC 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.

white stone SUNDAY
JANUARY 10, 2021

8:45 AM
1100 - 22 Avenue South, St Petersburg Florida and You Tube
10:30 AM
Today's Church Tampa Bay Facebook Page

2:00 PM - 5107 N. Central Avenue, Tampa Florida, Live with Social distancing and on Today's church Tampa Bay's Face Book Page

CHURCH NEWS

St. Mark M.B. Church

A Gift in Egypt – Matthew 2:13-23

The text gives the aftermath of Jesus' birth. We see that Jesus, who, was an Israelite, was from the line of David, and was entitled to all the rights of Jew, had to flee into Egypt for his safety. Christ was not only a gift to the Israelites but the entire world. In Genesis 12:12 and 13 God promised Abram that he would bless all the families of the earth and the fulfillment of the promise was through Jesus. God's will is that no one should perish but all be saved. God wants the world to know the gift of Jesus is still offered to the entire world.

So, what was significance of the gift of Jesus being placed in Egypt (the world)? Pastor Brown presented three points to answer this question. First, from Matthew 2:15,17, 18 and 23 the first point was that the gift of Jesus was placed in Egypt to affirm God's word can be trusted. With everything that's going on in the world there has to be something that is constant and stable, that's factual and stable, and can stand on during these trying times. God wants us to know he's given us Jesus Christ is our stability. As a baby God allowed Jesus to go to Egypt to affirm what he said in the old testament, he will make a reality in the new testament. What was concealed in the old testament was revealed in the new testament. God is showing us that we can trust him, that he will do

what he says, which lets us know that if God be for us, who can stand against us. God's word will help us, heal us, hope us and be assured that God will fulfill his word in the earth.

The second point from Matthew 2:13, 19 and 22 was Jesus was placed in Egypt to affirm God's will can be trusted. Some of us are wondering why we are still here, and others have passed on. In other words what is my purpose and what plan does God have for me. We don't have to go through life guessing where we should go., what we should do, or where we should be. If we trust God's word, we will begin to discover God's will for our lives. We may start in one place, go to another but the good news is that God will never leave us to figure things out by ourselves. While we don't understand all that we're experiencing, Christ the gift of God, is here to affirm that his word can be trusted, and his will will be followed. In all of this we can trust that God's will will lead us in the right way.

The final point from Matthew 2:13, 20 and 23 Jesus was placed in Egypt to affirm that the way can be traveled. For Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus, there was a lot of traveling (from their own city to Bethlehem to Judea, the manger and a house. We don't have to know where God is leading, we only have to know that where he's leading, we will follow



Rev. Brian K. Brown, Pastor

and where he leads will be for our good. Our lives are pitted with highs and lows, but God is still saying the same thing, if we will trust his word, his will then we can trust his way. Even if the way does not seem clear, we can trust that he knows where we are, and he will provide what we need and bring his plan for us to completion. God is telling us to look around every day and know that Christ is still here. Though it's not always easy, it's always going to work for our good.

This has not been an easy year. It has been constantly changing, we should not look at what man has done or not done but look at the fact that God is still on the throne he still has us in his sight and while he may move us here and there, it's for our betterment.

Reminder: Parking Lot Communion will be served on the first Sunday @ 9:00 a.m. You are invited to join our live streaming service on YouTube @ St Mark MBC each Sunday @ 10:45 and Wednesdays @ 7:00 p.m.

St. Mark M.B. Church

Starting Over – Exodus 13:17-20

While we didn't meet in the traditional way for 'Watch Night' Pastor Brown did give us a message entitled 'Starting Over' with the text coming from Exodus 13:17-20 and on the first Sunday of January he continued to preach on this subject from the same text. On Watch Night we were given five questions to ask ourselves concerning starting over: 1. How's your faith? Faith is the driving factor in our starting over. We must be willing to be led by faith. 2. How's your fitness? Fitness will drive our ability to fight the challenges we will face. 3. Who are you following? Those who lead you into a personal relationship with Christ or those who would lead you away. 4. Where is your family? We cannot have victory without individuals connected to support us. We cannot fight alone. 5. What is your foundation? The foundation is the support that our start over is built upon. A firm foundation provides stability. Like Israel in the text,

we have been met with a year pitted with strains, stresses, sickness and sorrow that has flooded our lives. But through it all the Lord gave us a portal to go through as he did with them. This new year gives us possibilities of a better year and new hope but still obstacles and challenges are possible. God joins us in 2021 and will show his favor in our lives.

Continuing on the first Sunday we were asked: With starting over, what challenges will we experience? Pastor Brown suggested four possibilities. 1. It can be a struggle from people who don't want it. Some may seem to be with you, but they aren't. Behind the scenes, they will try to stop your forward progress. In the text Pharaoh had finally allowed the Israelites to leave but after they left, he changed his mind and wanted them to return. 2. It can be stressful in the process of trying to start over. It may seem to not go the way we want it. God may not take us the easy way but have us go the long

way because it is the best way. We want everything we want but are not willing to let God show and help us through a process that may not be easy. 3. It could be saddened because of people who won't make it. Are we looking back and remembering those who died? It's hard to go forward when we're holding on to those who didn't make it. 4. It can be scary on the pathway to starting over. There will be things in 2021 that will scare us, but God says be not dismayed by what we see, we will get to where God wants us to be. We are like the Israelites asking how long until we get to the promise land. The challenge for us is to look not with the eye of the natural but with the eye of faith. Remember we're not starting over alone. God who has been with us continually is still with us.

May God continue to bless and keep you. We pray that you will join our live streaming service on YouTube @ St Mark MBC each Sunday @ 10:20 and bible study on Wednesdays @ 7:00 p.m.

Faith Memorial celebrates Christmas and helps families in need

BY LYNN GORDON

Faith Memorial Missionary Baptist Church celebrated Christmas with some very special guests and in a special way on Saturday, December 19. The First Annual Faithland Christmas Praise and Angel Tree Worship Service was hosted as a partnership with the Faith Music Ministry, the Brotherhood Ministry, the Hospitality Ministry, and the Decorations Ministry.

Several families from the Angel Tree Christmas program joined the Faith congregation for the drive in worship service held on Faithland, the church's vacant lot on 18th Avenue South. The Angel Tree Christmas program is a part of the Prison Fellowship ministry that helps strengthen relationships between incarcerated parents and their children. The Angel Tree Christmas program

helps provide Christmas gifts to the children of incarcerated parents. Faith has taken the Angel Tree Christmas program on as a project headed by the Brotherhood Ministry for the past two years. The Brotherhood has embraced this effort with strong support from the Faith congregation. In 2019, the church congregation provided gifts to

more than 20 children. In 2020, more than 40 children were recipients of gifts to make their Christmases a bit more brighter in their parents' absence.

Keeping social distance safety protocols in mind, the service was viewed and heard from the attendees' vehicles using a radio transmitter like that which is used at drive-in movie theaters. Music performances were rendered by the Faith Ensemble, Jordan Bolds, Maiya Stevenson, and Natasha Cash.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues Pastor Robert A. Vinson, Jr. and the Faith family continue to look for ways to reach the surrounding community by making the Church's presence known outside of the church walls whenever possible.



white stone SUNDAY
JANUARY 10, 2021

8:45 AM
1100 - 22 Avenue South, St Petersburg Florida and You Tube
10:30 AM
Today's Church Tampa Bay Facebook Page

2:00 PM - 5107 N. Central Avenue, Tampa Florida, Live with Social distancing and on Today's church Tampa Bay's Face Book Page





Experts In Life-Changing Care

By LaShante Keys, Empath Health Community Outreach Specialist

Suncoast PACE Supports Healthy Living

Making changes for a healthier lifestyle is something relevant at every age. For older adults, it's a crucial part of aging well. In the African-American community, this is especially important.

The U.S. Department of Health's Office of Minority Health reports that non-Hispanic Blacks are more likely to be diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure – as well as experience more severe complications from these conditions – than non-Hispanic whites.

However, in combination with medications, lifestyle intervention can help people reduce their risk and live longer. One study of diabetes prevention programs demonstrated that such interventions could reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes development by 58 percent over three years and reduce the risk of other health issues.

Suncoast PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly), a member of Empath Health, aims to fully support seniors facing chronic illness and aging as they seek to stay active, socially connected and live safely and independently at home and in the community.

Participants in Suncoast PACE's Healthy Living Diabetes Prevention program have the opportunity to take part in a variety of activities that focus on improving overall wellbeing. With the support of lifestyle coach Shaneena Holland, they can work towards reaching their own unique goals.

"It's each participant's choice to be a part of the program," explained Holland. "As a lifestyle coach, I'm supporting their decision by providing the tools for change."

Holland, who has a background in nutritional science and massage therapy, focuses on promoting overall health and wellbeing. Specific offerings help individuals reach goals related to physical and mental wellness, such as exercise, stress management and relaxation.

"These are people who want to live healthier,"

said Holland. "This program provides access to the resources they need, especially for those with limited mobility who need workarounds."

Each activity is designed with participant feedback in mind to reflect their interests and needs. Providing access to activities they may otherwise not be able to do is a priority for designing programming. Bingo, morning exercise, and meditation are a few of the options participants have been via Zoom while the day center is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

Whatever an individual's goal may be, Holland is ready to help.

"Older adults are concerned with being healthy, too," she added. "We are finding ways to help them reach their goals and improve their quality of life."

Suncoast PACE is currently enrolling residents of Pinellas County who are age 55 or older, able to live safely in their home and the community, and want to remain independent. At this time, staff is bringing services to participants through daily in-person or telephone visits, craft supply delivery and daily virtual reality programs and Zoom classes, like those hosted by Holland. Services also include telehealth or visits to the on-site clinic with transportation.

To learn more about how Suncoast PACE can help you or a loved one live a healthy life in older age, visit Suncoast-PAACE.org or call (727) 289-0062.



Suncoast PACE Lifestyle Coach
Shaneena Holland

St. Pete NAACP 2021 mantra: Reenergize, reclaim and recruit



Torey Alston, first vice-president of the Florida NAACP State Conference



St. Pete NAACP President Esther Eugene

BY FRANK DROUZAS
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — The NAACP St. Pete Branch 5130 held its official installation of officers via virtual ceremony on Jan 1. The new slate includes President Esther Eugene, First Vice President Trenia Cox, Second Vice President Harry Harvey, Secretary Lydia Brown, Assistant Secretary Lawrence Clermont and Treasurer Dell Brown.

Several past members of the organization's executive committee sat in on the ceremony, as well as community leaders, including mayoral candidate Ken Welch, Pinellas County Commissioner Rene Flowers, City Councilpersons Lisa Wheeler-Bowman, Deborah Figs Sanders and Gina Driscoll, Senator Darryl Rouson, School Board member Caprice Edmonds and former branch President Maria L. Scruggs.

Shortly after being sworn in, Eugene said the one word that has always defined St. Pete for her was "connectivity."

"We stand here today connected by our desire to see a change," she said. "We recognize that in order for our community to really achieve elimination of racial disparities, we must work together. We must ensure that no one person and no organization are operating in a silo. We are all on the same page, reading the same book titled, 'We Love the People of St. Petersburg.'"

The branch's mantra for this year and beyond, Eugene pointed out, would be the "three Rs" — reenergize, reclaim and recruit. That is, reenergize the branch and the community, reclaim the respect of the community and recruit powerful

leaders in the community to join the NAACP and "begin to do the work that's needed."

Outlining her "Vision 2021," Eugene stressed the need for NAACP membership to grow and create a true "one community" mindset. She also underscored the importance of holding the city accountable to the demand for good workforce housing and aims to ensure that the community has a true buy-in, engagement and participation in the development of Tropicana Field.

The new president also plans to encourage the school system to implement an evidence-based social, emotional learning curriculum for Black children and wants to create a spirit of "prevention versus punishment" for the city's law enforcement agencies.

Pastor Robert Vinson of Faith Memorial Missionary Baptist Church offered some background and history of the NAACP, noting that its national office was established in 1910.

"The mission of the NAACP is simply to secure political, educational, social, economic equality of rights to eliminate race-based discrimination," he explained, "and to ensure the health and well-being of all persons."

The movement continued to grow throughout the country, adding branches and organizing generations of members that strived to make a difference in national matters such as elections and segregation.

Torey Alston, first vice-president of the Florida NAACP State Conference, swore in the new officers and called for the St. Pete branch to be strong, active and vibrant. Drawing upon his

story, he noted that between 1939 and 1940, a loose confederation of nine chapters throughout the state saw a need to coordinate branch activities to eliminate segregation and discrimination against Florida's black citizens.

"On October 17-19, 1941, those branches met at Bethel Metropolitan Baptist Church there in St. Petersburg and formed the first State Conference in the nation," he said.

As Alston looked forward to 2021, he reflected on the events of 2020, noting the ravaging pandemic sweeping through Florida and the nation, the loss of civil rights giant Rep. John Lewis and the first African-American woman elected to the office of Vice President of the United States.

"The NAACP is the nation's largest civil rights organization," he said. "The boldest, baldest, most cussed at, talked about. When there is something going on in your town, who do folks call? The NAACP! When there is a shooting in your town when there is an issue with diversity, inequities, inclusion — who do they call? The NAACP!"

Alston encouraged executive branch members to read the NAACP Constitution and by-laws and commit to bringing five new memberships each month for the next six months. He also urged members to engage with the State Conference.

"We are here to support you, assist you and guide your local efforts," he said. "Share with us the great things that are happening there in St. Petersburg."

To reach Frank Drouzas, email fardrouzas@theweeklychallenger.com

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JANUARY 17, 2021

4:00 - 5:00 PM

Interfaith Tampa Bay
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Presenters

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- Mayor Rick Kriseman
- Deputy Mayor Dr. Kanika Tomalin
- Dr. Doral Pulley, President of ITB
- Rev. Kenny Irby, St. Pete Police Dept. and Pastor of Bethel AME
- Bridget Siegel, Temple Beth-El
- Martha Nailah Abdullah, Tampa Bay Area Muslim Association
- and
- Introducing the winner of the 2021 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest



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Clearwater MLK Jr. Neighborhood Coalition hosts Christmas Toy and houses the homeless

BY J.A. JONES
Staff Writer

CLEARWATER – The gift-giving season got off to a rousing start immediately after Thanksgiving in North Greenwood at the Clearwater Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood Coalition Center. The center hosted the outdoor ULOC of Tampa/Feeding Tampa Bay “Christmas Toy & Feeding Giveaway” on Nov. 28.

Mounds of new toys were divided up among children from two to 17, provided by Pastor Samantha Brown’s ULOC of Tampa, Inc. (Unique Ladies of Character). The organization, which provides housing and recovery programs to women recently out of prison or jail, in drug treatment, or experiencing homelessness, was

founded in 2003.

Brown’s housing programs have helped women throughout Pinellas recover their lives, and this year brought her annual Christmas giveaway to Clearwater.

The Clearwater MLK Jr. Neighborhood Center has also offered shelter to the homeless when temperatures have dipped below 45 degrees so far this winter, through a partnership with the organization Learning Empowered (LE), the lead Agency for the Pinellas County Cold Night Shelter Program.

For the 2020-21 cold-weather season through March 15, the MLK Center will offer their building at 1201 Douglas Ave. in Clearwater as a backup shelter site. Homeless members of the Clearwater community are offered a warm

location with pallets and blankets to sleep inside off the streets.

Learning Empowered was founded in 1975 as United Methodist Cooperative Ministries/Suncoast, Inc. (UMCM Suncoast) by the United Methodist Church to support Pinellas families’ needs and offers a variety of programs including Early Learning, Citizenship, and ESOL programs. The “Ready To Rent” class offers education in homeownership, including budgeting, repairing credit and dealing with prior evictions on one’s record.

The North Greenwood Neighborhood Center Coalition runs the Clearwater Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood Center. Board president Carmen Lundy shared, “The Center is a

refuge right in the middle of the neighborhood,” and offering shelter to the homeless during the cold season continues that commitment to the community.

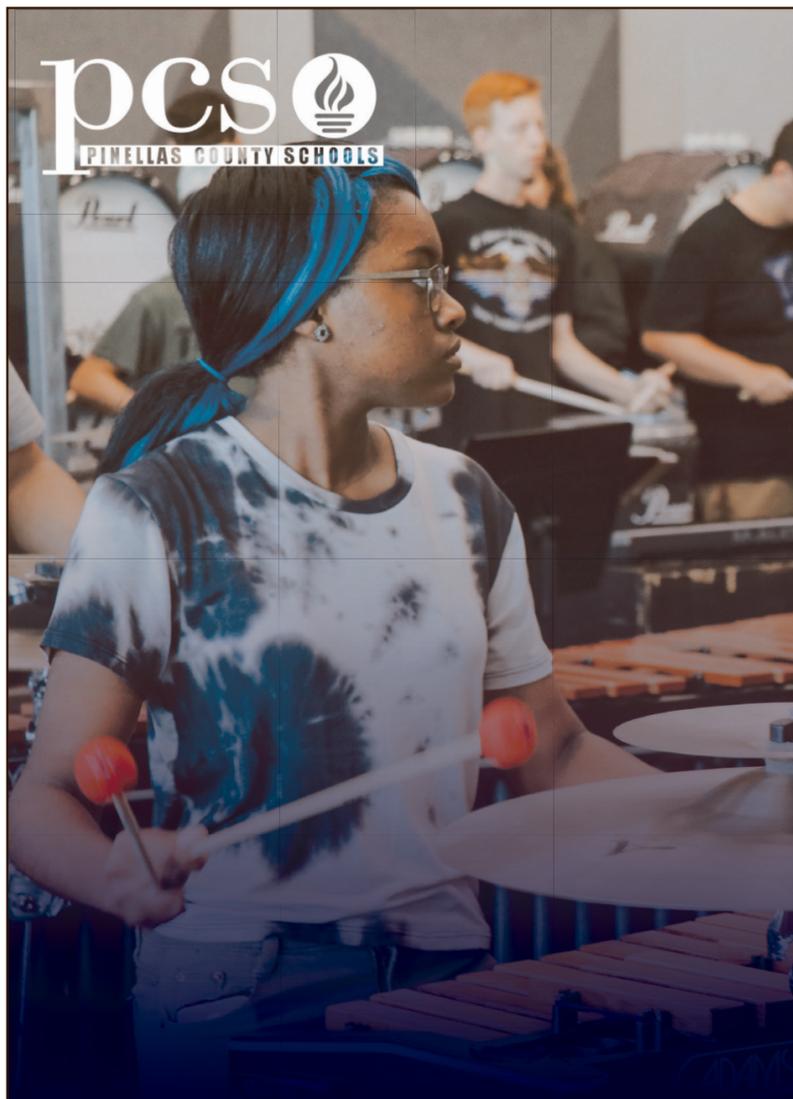
Since 2013 the center has been run entirely by volunteers from the North Greenwood and surrounding communities, offering space for everything from political and cultural education classes to weddings, NAACP Youth Flea Markets, and Daddy-Daughter dances.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the center had continued to offer feedings through partnerships with Feeding Tampa Bay, The Upper Pinellas County Ministerial Alliance, and Simply Healthcare.

Visit <https://clearwatermlkcenter.org/> for more information.



www.TheWeeklyChallenger.com



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Contact Lena Mooday or Sheana Binns for more information.

www.bethelcommunityfoundation.com

Native son pays it forward for Christmas

BY GABRIELLE SETTLES
Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG – A number of children in St. Petersburg are celebrating this Christmas with new BMX bikes, high school diploma scholarships and more, thanks to one young man's thoughtful generosity.

Frank Gilliam, 19, better known as Tre, partnered with local organizations and businesses to put on the Tre Gilliam Inaugural Christmas Giveaway on Dec. 23.

"I've always had a heart to give back to the community," Gilliam said. "God gave me a vision to do something for the community, and I thought what better way to do then give out some bikes?"

Families who signed up on tregilliam.com were selected as recipients of the giveaway at the David T. Welch Center for Progress and Community Development, where social distancing and masks were required. The Pinel-

las County Sheriff Department provided safety equipment to go along with the new bikes.

Women's advocacy and anti-trafficking group Zonta Club of Pinellas provided food and drinks, and Gentleman's Quarters Barber Shop gave away haircut vouchers. In addition, kids received high school diploma scholarships from the Tre Gilliam Academy.

Yes, you read that last sentence correctly.

Gilliam isn't just providing bicycles - he wants to give back through education as well. Right now, he and his team are selecting a location for the private school and working with the state. Come Aug. 2021, Tre Gilliam Academy will open as a K-3 grade school and then grow to become a K-12.

As a former student of Gibbs High School, where he graduated earlier this year, Gilliam said he understands the importance of schools in the community.

"I just had a vision in mind, and it was something that was put on my heart," Gilliam said about the school. "It's important because there's a lot of kids out there that went through the regular school system with amazing gifts and just weren't able to hone in on those gifts. I feel it's important that it starts early and we're able to help some kids reach their full potential."

Gilliam's potential made him excel at Gibbs. As a Business, Education and Technology Academy student, he took dual enrollment college classes and graduated with a 4.2 GPA, college credits, and industry certifications.

He also tutored ninth graders in the AVID program, was a star point guard on the varsity basketball team all four years, and at age 17, he rose in the music industry as a producer called Tre Made This Beat (TMTB), creating songs with famous rap artists like Moneybagg Yo and RodWave.

"I see me being able to use my music to do a whole lot of different things as far as entrepreneurship, and I'm working on a lot of stuff, especially more community-based work," Gilliam explained.

Assistant Principal and Athletic Director at Gibbs High School, Michael Machado, has known Gilliam since he first came to Gibbs and said he couldn't believe Gilliam's work ethic.

"I can't tell you how many hours he spent in the gym shooting hoops. Sometimes he'd spend two hours after school just shooting and shooting," Machado said. "He had this humbleness about him, even though he was the best basketball player and he was making beats for famous people while he was in high



Super music producer Tre Gilliam helped out Santa Claus this year by giving away bikes to those in need on Dec. 23. Pictured here (left) with his uncle and mayoral candidate Ken Welch. a

school."

Machado remembers that Gilliam scored 46 points in one game - comparable to the likes of NBA giants Anthony Davis and Pau Gasol. But Machado said you'd never have known it by Gilliam's demeanor.

"He never celebrated," Machado chuckled. "He just felt like if you work hard, success should come."

In his senior year, Gilliam - who had Ivy League schools courting him - had shin fractures, causing him to have surgery and sit out most of the year. Normally, Machado said, any athlete would be devastated. But not Gilliam.

"He said you can't control injuries, and you just gotta make the best of it," Machado remembers. "He said, 'I'm going to concentrate on my academics.'"

Machado shares that Gilliam's academic focus and selfless attitude made him an asset to the school and a friend to his fellow students. According to the Tampa Bay Times, nearly 40 percent of children in south St. Petersburg live in poverty. As a

St. Pete native, Gilliam understood his friends' and fellow students' needs and wanted to help.

"Tre cares about all the kids, not just the kids that are doing well but the kids that weren't, the kids that got into trouble," Machado stated. "He didn't want them to make mistakes, and he wanted to help them, and they really listened to Tre."

Machado said one of the ways that Gilliam helped was by bringing in peanut butter and jelly to Machado's office, where students could come at any time to make a sandwich.

Gilliam was a member of the school's leadership team, run by the late principal Reuben Hepburn as a way for students to communicate their needs and concerns with staff. Machado said he, Hepburn and Gilliam spent a lot of time together talking about ways to improve the school.

Sadly, Hepburn passed away earlier this month from Systemic Lupus Erythematosus.

"Tre was doing work in Orlando the day of Mr. Hepburn's funeral. He drove from Orlando all

the way to Clearwater to attend the funeral and then back to Orlando. I can't think of too many people who would do that to pay their respects. That's just the kind of kid he is," Machado averred. "He didn't do it for any other reason but to pay his respects and to say goodbye to the principal that he really liked and admired."

Gilliam said once COVID-19 abates, he will select a university to continue his college career, which may include basketball as well as music. He said he'd do whatever God leads him to do, which is his advice to other young people - keep God first in everything.

"If you have a dream, chase that dream and don't let anything discourage you, whether it's a situation or circumstances," Gilliam asserted. "Always have hope and try to be the best version of yourself every day, and try to grow and get better every day in all aspects of life."

If you'd like to partner with Gilliam for future giveaways and community work, contact him at info@tregilliam.com.



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Fla. State Coalition of NCNW Inc. installs officers

TAMPA — Tempress “Tee” Solomon of Tampa recently was installed as the first president of the Florida State Coalition of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

The event comes more than two years after Florida members of the National Council of Negro Women Inc. (NCNW)

began the journey toward a more cohesive organization. Therefore, the 21 community and collegiate sections in the Sunshine State operated semi-independently under the umbrella of their national leadership headquartered in Washington, D.C.

“Today, my heart is filled with joy and pride.

This is a monumental and historic moment for the state of Florida,” said Solomon, a retired educator and local community activist.

Besides Solomon, the following officers were installed by Judge Barbara Twine-Thomas, Hillsborough County 13th Judicial Circuit Court:

- Rachel Oliver — Vice President
- Atavia White — Recording Secretary
- Mae Welch — Assistant Recording Secretary
- Kruzshander Scott — Corresponding Secretary
- Gwendolyn Fields — Treasurer

- Rose McKay — Financial secretary
- Sandra Jackson — Historian
- Emily Rogers — Parliamentarian
- Rosemary McKinley — Chaplain
- Nadelyn Harris — Sergeant-at-arms

“We are serious about Florida’s more forward... It was a team effort to get to this day,” Solomon said following the Dec. 6 ceremony. “This evening, we have put the icing on the cake by getting to our destination, but this is just the start of our journey.”

Among the special guest at the virtual installation was Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole, chair and 7th national president of NCNW Inc. and a Jacksonville resident.

“Each of you sisters as you step into your roles, you must be the kind of leaders that NCNW deserves—you must be of service to others,” Cole said, “and remain commit-

ted to work on behalf of Black women, our families and our communities.”

Also, participating in the event was Dr. Paulette Walker, past national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Peola McCaskill, National NCNW Parliamentarian Emerita and national Membership co-chairs Dr. Lois Keith and Diane Larche.

About National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

NCNW was founded by educator Mary McLeod Bethune on Dec. 5, 1935, as an “organization of organizations.” Today it is a powerful network of nearly three million women worldwide. NCNW is open to all persons without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. Its primary mission is advocating for women of African descent, their families and communities.



Gwendolyn Fields



Rose McKay



Rosemary McKinley

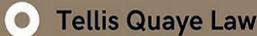


Sandra Jackson



Tempress “Tee” Solomon

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

 DR. TONJUA WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT, ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE

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Research project to recover, engage public on lost history of Black burial grounds in Tampa Bay

ST. PETERSBURG — In Tampa Bay and across the nation, a number of African-American burial grounds and cemeteries have been lost to history, neglected, abandoned, even paved over and developed on. A research project funded by a University of South Florida anti-racism initiative is seeking to recover and reimagine the forgotten history of these sacred places.

Consisting of faculty, staff, graduate students and community partners from fields such as anthropology, business, English and the arts, the African American Burial Grounds & Remembering Project will identify and preserve these cemeteries in Tampa Bay.

They will do so by conducting interviews with people associated with such cemeteries through churches, funeral homes and family connections to record oral histories, examining church records and historical archives to identify individuals buried and starting community conversations on how to best remember this traumatic history today.

“Working with communities and finding out about their heritage, I often find myself in cemeteries,” said Antoinette Jackson, professor and

chair of the USF Department of Anthropology and principal investigator of the project. “Churches and where people are buried give you a feel for what that community is about. With this project, we hope to bring in the living community to understand the heritage of place by engaging with cemeteries and their history.”

The project’s focus will initially center on Zion Cemetery, one of the first African-American cemeteries in Tampa Bay, located beneath roads, warehouses and a public housing complex just north of downtown Tampa, and St. Petersburg’s Oaklawn Cemetery complex, which consists of three cemeteries that lie under parking lots at Tropicana Field.

Based on research gathered, the team will produce the first digital story map focused on these local African-American cemeteries that combine oral histories, photographs, videos and archival information.

“The Black Lives Matter movement created greater awareness about stories that are usually overlooked that we need to be telling,” said Julie Armstrong, a co-principal investigator on the project and a professor of English at USF’s St. Petersburg

campus. “Black lives matter when they are alive and also when they are dead and recalling those who came before is important.”

Phase two of the project will actively engage the community on how these sites should be remembered and what they would like to see in these spaces, from historical markers to local history programs. An aspect of this work includes partnering with performance artists who will help tell the story of these burial grounds and the community of people who inhabited these places through art, poetry and photography to engage the public emotionally.

With additional funding and partnerships, phase three of the project will expand the focus to other lost cemeteries throughout the Tampa Bay region.

“An alliance has already formed of those working on cemetery sites in the region and sadly we are finding that there is no shortage of potential lost cemeteries,” Jackson said.

Historically segregated, African-American burial grounds from Tampa Bay to Manhattan to Tulsa were cemented over throughout the 20th century in the name of

urban development. If these sacred sites weren’t paved over, many went into disrepair as they didn’t receive the same dedicated resources as other burial grounds or were forgotten as cities grew around them and local communities were displaced.

“This was a social injustice that took place in our country,” said Kathy Arthur, a co-principal investigator on the project and a professor of anthropology at USF’s St. Petersburg campus. “By listening to those who have been impacted, by creating oral histories, we can bring some healing to this injustice and create spaces that draw people together for remembrance.”

Though some individuals and local organizations across the country have worked to identify lost burial sites, there has been a greater groundswell of support across the country to document and preserve such places in recent years due to the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and introduction of the African-American Burial Grounds Network Act in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018.

Adding to the urgency of this remembrance work is that both the historical Zion and Oaklawn



Members from the African American Burial Grounds & Remembering Project met to tour the parking lots of Tropicana field – the site of Oakmont cemetery complex. Photo courtesy of David Sheddon.

cemetery sites, now Robles Park Village in Tampa and Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, could undergo rapid redevelopment, according to city plans. Research team members hope findings from the project could influence city planning activities and development discussions.

“I want people to know that there was a there there,” Armstrong said. “There were communities of individuals, businesses, churches and a cemetery. There was something here and it is part of our shared history.”

Partners in the project include Robles Park Village and Robles Park Tenant Council Association, Hillsborough County Branch of the NAACP,

Carter G. Woodson African American Museum, Florida Public Archaeology Network, Cardno and Diamond View Studios.

Funding for the project came from the USF Research Task Force on Understanding and Addressing Blackness and Anti-Black Racism in our Local, National and International Communities. The group funded 23 projects that explore a wide range of issues in systemic inequality, economic and health disparities, Black history and contemporary challenges in order to create deeper understanding of complex issues while forging solutions and productive community partnerships.

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It’s not just adults looking at their savings accounts these days: Kids and teens are looking to kick off their own accounts, too.

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- 2. Know the fees involved.** Once you start moving your money around – taking money out at ATMs, spending with a debit card or setting up online payments – fees can add up fast. “ATM use is a common pitfall we see with young account holders,” Buchanan says. “But with a credit union like Achieva, you can easily avoid the fees just by being sure you’re using a partner ATM like the ones at Publix’s Presto locations or in our nationwide shared branch network.”



Shatavia Buchanan is Assistant Branch Manager for Achieva’s Palm Harbor branch where she has worked for the past year. Buchanan leverages her more than 20 years of experience working with credit unions to make sure that the operations of the branch are running smoothly and providing members with VIP service.

Contact Shatavia by calling 813.448.2799 or by emailing sbuchanan@achievacu.com

- 3. Get used to checking your account, regularly.** Checking your account regularly to see your balance is at the heart of managing your finances. Technology has made spending money easier, but not necessarily managing your money. “Once kids see their money and how quick it can go, they stop spending it as freely,” Buchanan says. “It teaches independence.”

- 4. Treat this as the foundation for your financial future.** Establishing credit is not as easy to start these days as it once was, so consider something like a credit card to build your credit. “Your credit score is one of the most important numbers in your personal finances as you get older,” Buchanan says. “Achieva’s ‘credit builder’ credit card allows a responsible teen to become accustomed to what having a credit card means and allows them to learn good habits.”

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