

THE POLYPHARMACY SUPER BOWL! - p. 8

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Mental Health & the Elderly! - p. 4

Friday

January 2, 2026

Vol. 12, No. 18

ValleyWeeklyllc.com

SALUTE!

Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Mrs. Mary Lanier Curry

The Valley Weekly

"The place in which I'll fit will not exist until I make it." — James Baldwin



New HBG Program Joins Book/Nature Lovers

There's an innovative new program for book lovers and nature enthusiasts alike!

Join the staff at the Huntsville Bo-

tanical Garden for "Botanical Bookworms," a recurring series that combines lively book discussions with enriching educational experi-

ences and guided walks through the Garden (Thursday, January 22, or Saturday, January 24). Each book selection is offered

on two dates, so interested persons can choose the one that best fits their busy schedules! For more info, visit hsvb.org.

Valley Conservatory Jam Session Set

The Valley Conservatory will hold its monthly "Jam Session" on Sunday, January 25, 2026, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. (\$5)

The activity will be held at 5732 US Hwy. 431, Brownsboro, Ala.

Interested persons are invited to listen or bring their own

instruments to join in the jam session.

Valley Conservatory is a music service center with programs designed to develop all as-

pects of a student's mind, body and character. It is located in Huntsville and Brownsboro.

Visit valleyconservatory.com.

Harrison Center to Honor Departing Director

The public is invited on Wednesday, January 8, at 11 a.m., for a special farewell lunch to celebrate Deitrick Smart and his time

as Director of the Robert "Bob" Harrison Center.

Attendees will reflect, share memories, and express gratitude for Smart's

leadership, dedication, and the lasting impact he has made on the center and its members.

His passion for service, commit-

ment to community, and genuine care for others have helped shape the welcoming environment at the Center, say staffers.



MLK Parade 2026 Set

The Delta Theta Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., in partnership with WHNT News 19, will host the 11th Annual Huntsville Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade.

The event will be held on Saturday, January 17, 2026, beginning at 12 noon.

Members of the Tennessee Valley community are invited to come together to honor and celebrate the enduring legacy, leadership, and vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Come out and be a part of this powerful tribute!



Huntsville Museum of Art

HMA Readies for Gala Art Exhibition

The 2026 35th Gala Art Exhibition (January 31-February 22) is the centerpiece of the Huntsville Museum of Art's largest annual fundraiser.

This highly anticipated event showcases over 100 exceptional works of art in a wide variety of media and styles, generously donated by leading artists

from across the country.

On view in the Museum's galleries, the Gala art installation offers collectors and art enthusiasts a rare opportunity to view and bid on original works—ranging from contemporary paintings and sculpture to photography and mixed media.

All works will be auctioned to the

highest bidders during the Museum's Gala event, with proceeds directly supporting the Museum's education programs, exhibitions, and community outreach initiatives.

Celebrate creativity while supporting the arts in our community—don't miss this dynamic and inspiring presentation of contemporary art.

The Valley Weekly

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Valley Weekly Washington One Minute

by Ron Hamm

Here are the latest top issues and events in Washington, D.C.:

1. CONGRESS. The House and Senate are adjourned and will convene as the 2nd Session of the 119th Congress next week. According to the House Press Gallery website, as of Dec 23, a significant 46 Members of the House (26 Rs and 20 Ds) have announced they are retiring from the House, with potentially more to come after the holidays. In the Senate, 6 Rs and 5 Ds are calling it quits. When Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) resigns from Congress on Jan 5, the ratio will be down to 219 Rs to 213 Ds (with two Democratic seat vacancies in TX and NJ).

2. EXECUTIVE BRANCH. On Monday,

the President met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Mar-a-Lago, his Florida club, to discuss next steps in the Gaza peace deal, following a recent meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the Russia-Ukraine war. The President will remain at Mar-a-Lago through Jan 4.

The Washington Post reported that the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), a 12-member panel currently headed by White House staffer Will Scharf, will hold a hearing on the new White House State Ballroom construction project on January 8. U.S. District Judge Richard J. Leon ordered the White House last week to submit its plans

to the NCPC and the Commission of Fine Arts, another federal review panel, by the end of December.

3. SUPREME COURT. The Supreme Court has completed hearing arguments for 2025 and will next hear cases on Monday, Jan. 12. In the last 10 days, the Trump Administration has lost 2 cases it appealed to the Court's emergency docket - the most recent being the Court's 6-3 vote on Dec. 23 to bar the President from deploying National Guard troops to Chicago, and the other on Dec. 19, when it denied the administration's request to overturn a lower court's ruling on the administration's new policy requiring federal immigration judges to obtain clearance for speeches they make in their personal capacity (which the judges contend is an assault on their First Amendment rights).

4. STUDENT LOAN GARNISHMENTS TO

RESUME. Last Monday, the U.S. Department of Education announced that it would resume wage garnishments for the 6 million student loan borrowers in default, starting Jan 7. The Washington Post reported that the Department can withhold up to 15% of a borrower's after-tax income. In May, the administration resumed seizing tax refunds and Social Security benefits to recoup past-due student loan debt. Borrowers had been given a 3-year pause on their payments due to the COVID pandemic, which ended on Sept 30, 2025.

5. INTERIOR TO

HALT WIND ENERGY PROJECTS. After a federal judge this month struck down the President's January 2025 executive order halting new leases and permits for wind energy projects, the Interior Department announced last Monday that it would cite national security concerns to halt 5 offshore wind projects in MA, RI, NY, and VA (representing \$25 billion in investments), including Vineyard Wind 1 off the coast of Massachusetts, which is already operating half of its 62 planned turbines.

6. CORPORATE BANKRUPTCIES HIT 15-YEAR HIGH.

The Washington Post reported on Sunday that corporate bankruptcies surged in 2025, reaching 717 - the most since 2010. The lion's share of bankruptcies were in the manufacturing, construction, and transportation sectors, which cited inflation, interest rates, and uncertainty around tariffs as the main problems with the economy.

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12-24





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A Fun Evening with Jazz McKenzie

Some evenings remind you why community matters. I recently had the pleasure of spending a warm, joyful evening at the Lake Forest home of Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Etheridge, Sr., who graciously



Jazz (2nd, left) with The Etheridges

opened their doors to family and friends to celebrate an extraordinary young woman — Jazz McKenzie. What made the night special wasn't just the laughter or the fellowship; it was the shared pride in witnessing talent, discipline, and possibility come together in real time. Some of her church members from historic St. Bartley Church and alums from Alabama A&M University enjoyed some karaoke style fun with her!



Rodarius McKinney, Rodney Milton, Jazz, Shirley Moore & Courtney



JaLissa Cothorn, Jazz & Keba Parker

Jazz's remarkable run on The Voice during Season 28 captured national attention and deserved praise, culminating in a Top 6 finish — no small feat among thousands of hopefuls. From her first performance, when all four coaches turned their chairs for her soulful rendition of Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do With It," it was clear we were watching something rare. Week after week, through the Battle and Knockout rounds and into the live finale, Jazz delivered powerful, confident performances, including a memorable take on Journey's "Don't Stop Believin,'" that showcased both her vocal strength and her emotional depth.

Coaches and fans alike called her one of the standout vocalists of the season, and some even described her as the best singer they had heard. Sitting among friends that evening, it struck me how important it is for our communities — especially diverse communities — to pause and celebrate excellence when it rises among us. Her journey is more than a television success story; it is a reminder of what happens when talent is nurtured, supported, and allowed to shine. Moments like these affirm why we must continue telling our own stories and lifting up our own voices.

All of us at *The Valley Weekly* are wishing you a fun and productive New Year!

Until next week ...



Josephine Robinson & Jazz McKenzie



Rodney & Sybil Penneywell & Jazz



Tunisha, Edward, Sydney Myles & Jazz (2nd)



Ayana Lampley, Jazz, Rochelle Hendricks, Jeanette Lampley

Dorothy

JANUARY 2 - CUBA GOODING JR. - Cuba Michael Gooding Jr. is an American actor and comedian. He gained his breakthrough role as Tre Styles in *Boyz n the Hood* (1991), he appeared in *A Few Good Men* (1992), *The Tuskegee Airmen* (1995), *Outbreak* (1995), and *Jerry Maguire* (1996), for which he won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. He gained later attention for his roles in *Men of Honor* (2000) as Carl Brashear, and in Michael Bay's WWII epic *Pearl Harbor* (2001) as Doris Miller. His other notable films include *As Good as It Gets* (1997), the ensemble farce *Rat Race* (2001), *American Gangster* (2007), *Lee Daniels' The Butler* (2013), and *Selma* (2014), playing civil rights attorney Fred Gray.

- Blackcelebritybirthdays.org



THE VALLEY WEEKLY

VALLEY DEATHS



NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

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www.nelmsmemorial.net - (256) 539-8189

Funeral services will be announced at a later date for the following: **MR. CHARLES EDWARD THURMAN, SR.** (b. 1937); **MRS. LUCY EZELL EDWARDS** (b. 1956); **MR. PERRAR A. JOSEPH** (b. 1975); **MR. TRACY ERVIN** (b. 1962); and **MR. SAMUEL HOLLOWAY** (b. 1956).

A Private Family and Friends Viewing for **MR. ERICK ALLEN ROBERTS** (b. 1971) will be held on Sunday, January 4, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MR. JEFFREY D. COLEMAN** (b. 1976) will be held Saturday, January 3, 2026, at 11 a.m. at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MRS. ALICE CAMPBELL RICE** (b. 1947) will be held on Saturday, January 3, 2026, at 12 noon at Fountain of Life Ministries with Rev. John Clay officiating.

Celebration of Life for **MRS. SANDRA EL-AMIN** (b. 1956) will be held on Saturday, January 3, 2026, at 2:30 p.m. at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MRS. JANIE ALEXANDER TIBBS** (b. 1942) was Saturday, December 27, at Lakewood Church of Christ, 2813 Mastin Lake Road NE, Huntsville, Ala.

Funeral service for **MR. WILLIAM DOUGLAS FAILS** (b. 1945) was Saturday, December 27, at First Missionary Baptist Church with Pastor Carlos Williams officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. EMMA JEAN FLAKES** (b. 1950) was Saturday, December 20, at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church with Pastor O. Wendell Davis officiating.

Funeral service for **MR. RICHARD HALL** (b. 1932) was Saturday, December 20, at Center Grove United Methodist Church with Pastor R. Seth Shamery officiating.

Spiritual Game Plan

PRESTON BROWN'S



Today's Spiritual Game Plan:

"Replacing Bad with Good"

Romans 7:19–21 says, *"For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do this I do...Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me."*

Sometimes I wonder if most people want to do good. These days, it seems they can't. It's not enough to rid ourselves of evil desires and thoughts; we have to replace them with good thoughts and good desires.

In Romans 12:2, it says, "Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." There is no way to have good thoughts and desires without a complete renewal of our minds. It is important to read God's word on a daily basis.

Remember, just because the devil leaves you alone one day doesn't mean he won't come after you and your family another day. In order for us to defeat the evil desires of life, we need plans. We need spir-

itual game plans. Look at the parable that Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:43–45 about an "evil spirit." The evil spirit was driven out, but nothing good was added. Remember that it's always a spiritual battle as well as a physical one.

That's why I believe anytime we try to break a bad habit, like smoking, overeating, pornography, or anything else that is not good for us, we have to replace that bad habit with something good. We can't be negative all the time without an equal balance of positive reinforcement.

Trust me, there are people around you who want to hear something positive every once and a while. That's why I believe we can all learn to overcome any evil we are doing by learning a simple principle: you can't



take something bad out without replacing it with something good.

May God grant you spiritual success with overcoming bad thoughts with good ones.

Question: Do you think that most people want to do good? Why?

Stay encouraged, my

brothers and sisters, and make sure you purchase a copy of my books, *Spiritual Game Plans For A Successful Life* and *A Champion Game Plan for Life*, at amazon.com.

NEXT WEEK:

"Looking Forward, Not Behind"

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Milennia

by Gloria B. Caldwell

Do What's Right ...

Even when you don't want to, do what's right! I know it is hard.

When people are blatantly pushing your buttons. But here's the thing, think of how rational you are when you are simply an onlooker, and you see someone trying to get another person's "goat."

You know how that is. You have no emotion involved, and you say to them, "Don't pay attention to that or them; they are acting silly!"

That also applies to you. Anything allowed can bring you into a part of your "character" you want to keep suppressed. The portion you have "grown past."

Oh yes, we all have it in us.



The sweetest person can curse you out. You may not have heard it. It may be in their head, but trust me, we all can do and say harmful things; we are human. So, with that, we all have to practice self-control!

There's that phrase ... "selfcontrol." You are responsible for you. You have to make yourself do right.

There are laws put into place, we know this, rules to follow, but you can choose to follow them. YOU alone

control your actions and responses. You're accountable. You cannot blame anyone else.

So, do what's right! Make yourself proud. It is a beautiful feeling when you think back on it days later—the maturity and strength in making the correct decision. You may not feel it at the time, but trust me; the reward comes in the restraint.

Listen to the voice of God! Position yourself to hear him. Control yourself.

You've got this!

Make today phenomenal; you have the ability to do so!

God loves you, and so do I.

He has given you a gift; *open* it.

Happy New Year, 2026! God's Original Leadership Tool: The Strategic Pause

In a world that measures success by how much we do and how quickly we do it, we've lost sight of a counterintuitive truth: sometimes slowing down is what allows us to go farther, smarter, and stronger.

As the September 10, 2025 Fast Company article "Slow Is the New Fast" puts it,

"This isn't about moving slowly for its own sake — it's about moving at the speed of insight rather than the speed of anxiety." LinkedIn

Rest, according to the article, isn't only about physical recovery — its purpose is cognitive and emotional renewal, "the space where your subconscious continues to process complex challenges while your conscious mind recuperates." - *Fast Company*

What leaders once intuitively understood is now being rediscovered in the boardrooms of modern business: strategic pauses produce better decision-making, creativity, resilience, and leadership presence.



In Higher Ed, . . .

We see this principle play out in places we may not even notice: In academic circles, distinguished faculty are granted extended time away from regular duties — sometimes six months or even a full year — for research, restoration, and renewal. This time honored tradition is called a **sabbatical**, literally a season of deliberate rest so the scholar can return to work refreshed and more effective.

In Pre-K, . . .

Long before that, as children in pre-K, we all learned the value of rest. After playing hard and studying our letters and numbers, we'd lie down for a nap — a built-in pause in our day that gave our young minds and bodies renewal before moving on.

. . . And in Country Living!

Even the land itself models this wisdom. Living in the country, my wife and I see the fields across from our home planted in corn, soybeans, and other crops. After harvest, that ground is left to rest and be rotated — a necessary pause so it doesn't burn out from producing the same crop over and over again. Farmers call this **crop rotation**, but the principle applies to us: without strategic rest, soil — or soul — is depleted.

What happens when we stop insisting that rest must be earned and start treating it as a **leadership requirement**? What kind of leaders, organizations, and communities might flourish if we honored both work and renewal?

Perhaps the most radical leadership act today is not doing more — but **knowing when to stop and breathe.**



Tim Allston

Leadership Player-Coach and Four-time Amazon Best-Selling Author

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The Valley Weekly

VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

December 31

Noon Year's Eve Party
Madison Public Library
142 Plaza Boulevard
Madison, Ala.
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

New Year's at Noon
Orion Amphitheater
701 Amphitheater Drive
NW
Huntsville, Ala.
10 a.m.

New Year's Eve at Dave &
Buster's
950 Makers Way NW
Huntsville, Ala.
4-7 p.m.

New Year's Party at Field
Day
6123 University Drive NW

Unit 110
Huntsville, Ala.
7 p.m.-1 a.m.

New Year's Eve at The
Camp
5909 University Drive NW
Huntsville, Ala.
7-11:59 p.m.

"A Symphonic Toast"
Huntsville Symphony
Orchestra
700 Monroe Street
Huntsville, Ala.
7:30 p.m.

Skating in the Park
Rink Hours: 11 a.m.-10
p.m.

New Year's Eve Lil' Ball
Drop
Huntsville Museum of Art

300 Church Street NW
8:30 p.m.

2026 POP!NYE Party at
The Electric Belle at Stove-
house
3414 Governors Drive SW
Suite 310
Huntsville, Ala.
9 p.m.

"Lights, Glamour, Garden"
A New Year's Eve Premiere
Huntsville Botanical Gar-
den
4747 Bob Wallace Avenue
SW
Huntsville, Ala.
9 p.m.-1 a.m.

New Year's Eve 2026
Topgolf Huntsville
MidCity
Huntsville, Ala.
9 p.m.-1 a.m.

The Final Act
One Eleven
111 Washington Street NE
Huntsville, Ala.
9:30 p.m.

January 16-17
Harry Potter and the Pris-
oner of Azkaban

Mark C. Smith Concert
Hall
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.
7 p.m.

January 25
*Fantasia with Anthony
Hamilton*
Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.
8 p.m.

January 27-February 1
The Sound of Music
Mark C. Smith Concert
Hall
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.
7 p.m.

February 1
Harlem Globetrotters
Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.
3 p.m.

February 6
Diana Krall
Mark C. Smith Concert
Hall
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 7:30 p.m.

February 22
Heart
Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 7 p.m.

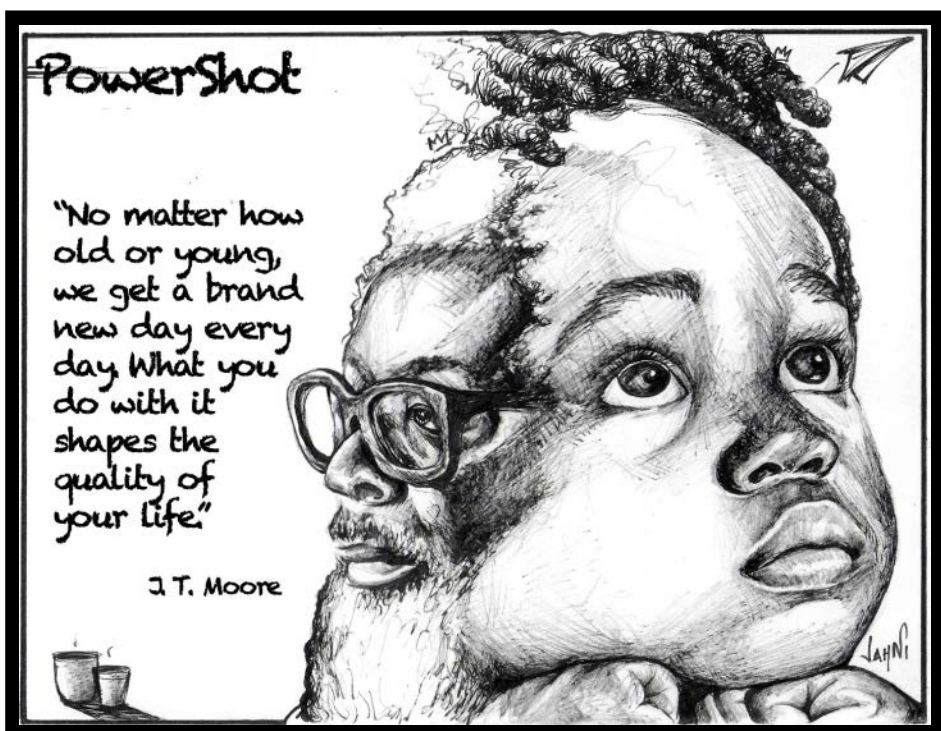
February 28-March 1
Disney on Ice

Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.

March 5
KC and The Sunshine Band
Mark C. Smith Concert
Hall/Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 7:30 p.m.

March 27-29
The 6th Annual Women's
Expo Conference
The Westin Hotel
Huntsville, Ala.
www.thewomensexpohsv.com

April 10
The R&B Lovers Tour
Featuring Keith Sweat, Joe,
Dru Hill and Ginuwine
Propst Arena



"The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance;
it is the illusion of knowledge."

— Stephen Hawking



Rosetta James Foundation "Spotlight on Our Elders" ... Featuring

Mrs. Mary Lanier Curry

Mrs. Mary Amanda Lanier Curry was born and reared in Huntsville, Alabama, the only daughter among four children born to Mr. and Mrs. Felix (Georgia) Lanier, Sr. At an early age, her mother recognized her love for music. As a youngster, she would pretend to play the piano on the top of a metal fan. She had a wonderful family who nurtured her musical curiosity. Her Uncle Willie Lanier bought Mary her first piano when she was eight years old; piano lessons followed. At age eleven, Mary began accompanying the Senior Choir at her church, Progressive Union Missionary Baptist, and continues that work.

The William Hooper Councill High School alum was very involved in activities other than academia, i.e. band, choir, cheerleading, drama, and she also was homecoming queen in 1959. After graduating from high school, she entered Alabama A&M University (AAMU) with an academic scholarship. She earned a bachelor's degree in business education with a minor in music education. She later earned a Master of Education degree in trade and industrial education from AAMU.

While completing her undergraduate degree, Mary was recommended by Mrs. Fannie Pulley Thompson for employment as a technical typist for a

newly integrated company, Northrop Corporation. She became one of its first four African American employees. Upon graduation from AAMU in August 1966, she was employed as a music specialist with the Madison County Board of Education and was assigned to Toney Junior High School in Toney, Alabama, where she taught through August 1971.

In September 1971, she was hired at J. F. Drake Technical College by the late President S. C. O'Neal as a learning manager for a pilot program: Individualized Prescribed Instruction – a concept facilitated through PACE Learning Systems. As a staff member in the Related Instructions Department, she also taught business mathematics, communication skills, industrial psychology, and typewriting in the Business and Office Education Department. She worked closely with the counselor in administering and scoring entrance and placement tests. During her tenure in the Related Instructions Department, she obtained Rank IV – post secondary instructor state certification, the highest rank for state instructors.

In May 1988, after having taught at Drake State for 17 years, this educator sought advancement and acquired the staff position as Career Center Coordinator with the newly funded Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Title III program at Drake State – under the



administration of President Johnny Harris. Mary continually widened her range of professional contributions and responsibilities, such as serving as administrator of entrance, placement, and exit tests; coordinator of registration and new student orientation; Federal Compliance Officer; severe weather campus liaison; United Way campaign coordinator; and chairperson of Graduation Committee, which re-formalized graduation. In addition, Mary initiated Honor's Day and the first alumni organization meeting. She served on several other college committees as needed, coordinated and planned special music for most college-sponsored functions. She also served as the pianist and accompanist for soloists and groups.

Mary retired from J.F. Drake State Technical College in August 2000 after having contributed 34 years of instructional and administrative service to the Alabama College System.

"Spotlight on Our Elders" is a weekly feature sponsored by the Rosetta James Foundation to promote **volunteerism** and activism in our community among those who are 70-plus. The Foundation also provides scholarships. Learn more about us at www.rosettajamesfoundation.org. Know an outstanding elder (70+) that you would like to see featured? Send us a photo and 250-word write-up to info@valleyweeklyllc.com.



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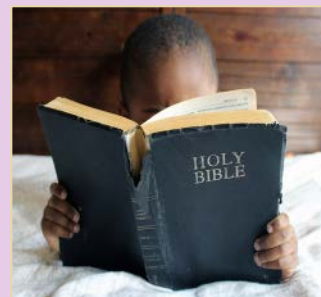


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This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, January 4, 2026

Second Sunday after
Christmas Day



(Track 2, Year A)

First Lesson:

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalms 84:1-8

Second Lesson:

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

GOSPEL:

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

"POWERSHOTS"

John 'Jahni' Moore

TRUTH 2 POWER

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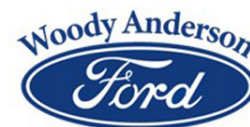


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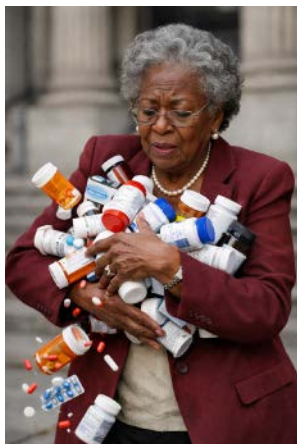


AUNT IRMA MAKES IT PLAIN...

Missing Quarterback: The Polypharmacy Super Bowl

In modern American medicine, many senior citizens find themselves playing in what can only be described as the Polypharmacy Super Bowl—a high-stakes contest where the field is crowded with elite specialists, each executing precise plays, each confident in their own playbook. Cardiologists, nephrologists, neurologists, pulmonologists, psychiatrists—all stars in their respective positions. Yet despite the talent on the field, the game often goes sideways. The reason is simple: there is **no quarterback**.

Each specialist enters the game to do exactly what they were trained to do—optimize outcomes for a *single* organ system. The cardiologist tightens blood-pressure control. The endocrinologist fine-tunes glucose. The neurologist adds medication for neuropathy. The psychiatrist adjusts mood or sleep. Individually, the decisions



are defensible. Collectively, they can be dangerous.

The scoreboard tells a familiar story. By the third quarter, the patient is on eight, ten, sometimes twelve (or more) medications. Side effects begin to look like new diseases. Dizziness is mistaken for aging. Confusion is mislabeled as early dementia. Fatigue becomes depression. Falls become “frailty.” Instead of pulling a player off the field, another drug is sent in. The crowd applauds clinical action, not realizing the team is losing yardage with every snap.

In this Super Bowl, guidelines call the plays, but guidelines were written for single-disease games—clean fields, young bodies, one opponent at a time. Seniors, however, are playing in weather, with injuries, with overlapping conditions, and with a shortened clock. The playbook does not account for reduced kidney clearance, slower metabolism, or the cumulative burden of medications interacting in unpredictable ways.

Pharmacists try to throw flags, but alerts are frequent and often overridden. Electronic health records promise coordination but deliver fragmentation. Specialists assume someone else is watching the whole field. Primary care physicians, overwhelmed by time constraints and documentation demands, are often relegated to the sidelines rather than placed under center.

And so the game continues—technically sophisticated, statistically impressive, yet strategically unsound.

What’s missing is not expertise but leadership. The system needs a **quarterback**: a clinician empowered and expected to see the whole person, not just the part. This role is best filled by a strong primary care physician or, ideally, a geriatrician—someone trained to weigh benefit against burden, to ask not only *Can we prescribe this?* but *Should*

we? and At what cost to function, cognition, and quality of life?

Until medicine reinstates the quarterback, seniors will continue to play in championship-

level games without anyone calling audibles, managing the clock, or protecting the player most at risk—the patient.

And, no matter how talented the roster, that is a game no team can win.

- TVW Staff



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Getting Older Adults to Speak up about Their Mental Health

(BPT) - Connie

Thomas, a 77-year-old woman from Altamont, Illinois, has navigated a long journey with her mental health. Decades ago, Thomas was diagnosed with breast cancer. Living with her diagnosis and its results was not only physically challenging but it also brought mental struggles, including depression. She managed her mental health with medication for many years. But after retirement and feeling a loss of purpose, Thomas once again experienced symptoms of depression.

It's not unusual for older adults like Thomas to struggle with mental health issues. In fact, ac-



cording to the National Council on Aging, 20% of people aged 55 and older suffer from some kind of mental health

concern. After a lifetime of caring for families, raising children and serving their communities, many seniors put their own needs last, including their mental health. This can mean suffering in silence, sometimes for years.

Thomas knew better. She knew from her experience how important it is to talk about mental health, whether it's with friends, family or your doctor. That conversation can open the door to new options. In Connie's case, her primary care clinician offered her the GeneSight® test, a genetic test that provides additional insights into how her genes may affect medication outcomes with certain mental health medications. These results gave her clinician more informa-

tion to consider when developing her treatment plan.

Finding a mental health medication that works: A frustrating process

It's fairly common for medications that once worked to manage mental health issues like depression to stop working. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, "symptoms return for up to 33% of people using antidepressants."

Finding a medication for depression or anxiety that works can be a frustrating game of trial and error. Medications work differently for everyone, and there are many reasons why one may be effective for some but not for others.

Your genes may

hold a clue, as they can play a role in affecting medication outcomes. A simple cheek swab can help clinicians understand which medications may require dose adjustments, be less likely to work, or have an increased risk of side effects based on your genetics.

Informed Choices

That's why resources like the GeneSight® test are so important. The GeneSight test is a genetic test that shows health care providers how your genes may affect your outcomes with certain mental health medications, including medications that treat depression and anxiety. This information may help clinicians make more informed decisions about medication selec-

tion or dosing.

Thomas' GeneSight test results helped her doctor decide that a lower dose of her medication may be helpful. With that adjustment, she says she is feeling better than she has in many years.

Feel empowered to take care of your mental health

Thomas shares that in her older adult community, she sees many people struggling with depression and yet unable to talk about their mental health.

"I see how unhappy they are, inwardly and outwardly," she says. "I try to reach out, to acknowledge that they are suffering and to encourage them to talk to someone."

She hopes telling her story will encourage others like her to talk about their mental health and then take the next step in reaching out to a health care provider. As Thomas learned, any prescribing clinician treating mental health, like her primary care clinician, can order the GeneSight test.

To learn more about the test, talk with your clinician or visit GeneSight.com.



AAMU Ag Dean/1890 Research Director Retires after Three Decades

Dr. Lloyd Walker was a rising Ph.D. candidate and researcher at Texas A&M University – deep in poultry science, publishing widely and contributing to innovations that helped make poultry the nation's leading meat – when a phone call changed everything. Alabama A&M University had seen his work and asked him to visit.

In 1992, the young scientist with an undergraduate and master's degree from Prairie View A&M and a new Ph.D. from Texas A&M made his way to The Hill.

Walker's early research focused on solving a major challenge for the poultry industry: how to rapidly increase production without expanding expensive aging facilities. His team helped refine electrical stimulation techniques to accelerate tenderization, moving poultry more efficiently into the market.

He describes himself simply as “on the team” that helped bring poultry to the top of U.S. meat consumption, though colleagues credit his contributions as foundational.

Not long after Walker arrived at AAMU, tragedy reshaped his path.

His colleague and friend, Dr. Barat Singh – who had recently returned from a trip to Africa – fell ill with malaria and died shortly after. Walker remembers seeing him in the hallway that Friday evening, coughing and urging him to go home and rest. By Monday, Singh had passed.

Soon after, Walker walked past a group of students standing outside a classroom without an instructor. They stopped him and asked, “Dr. Walker, can't you come and teach us?” He said yes. That moment, he often says, is how his life as a teacher truly began.

Walker went on to teach chemistry for years and later stepped into leadership roles including department chair, interim associate provost, and dean.

His administrative portfolio grew to include the registrar's office, admissions, University College, the State Black Archives, programs, and eventually the Office of Sponsored Programs.



In 2014, he returned fully to the field he loved when he became dean of the College of Agricultural, Life and Natural Sciences and director of 1890 Research.

Through every role, family remained central. Walker, originally from Port Morant, in Saint Thomas Parish, Jamaica, has been married to his wife, Faye, for 44 years. She retired from Huntsville City

Schools after a long career of her own. Their son, Kibwe, an AAMU biology graduate, now works as a regional training manager in Arlington, Va.

Their youngest daughter, Karlene Walker-Shirley, fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a pediatrician.

“That’s the one I couldn’t convince to attend Alabama A&M,”

said Walker. “I brought her here, put her in the lab, put my lab coat on her, gave her projects, she earned some state awards, but she was dead set on going to UAB ever since she was a kid.”

Another daughter, Carol has also built a successful career of her own. Walker says he is looking forward to spending time with them and the rest of his family. “We want to do that, spend a little bit more time with the present and future grandkids.”

As he prepares for retirement – his last day at work was set for December 19, 2025, with his official retirement beginning Jan. 1 – Walker says he will miss his students most. He is so proud of the many former students who have gone on to distinguished careers, including academic leaders he once coached and mentored.

“The thing that really makes me tick is after you teach, you mentor, you guide students... and you see they go out and end up in these very high-profile positions. That really gets me,” he said. “It’s always the students for

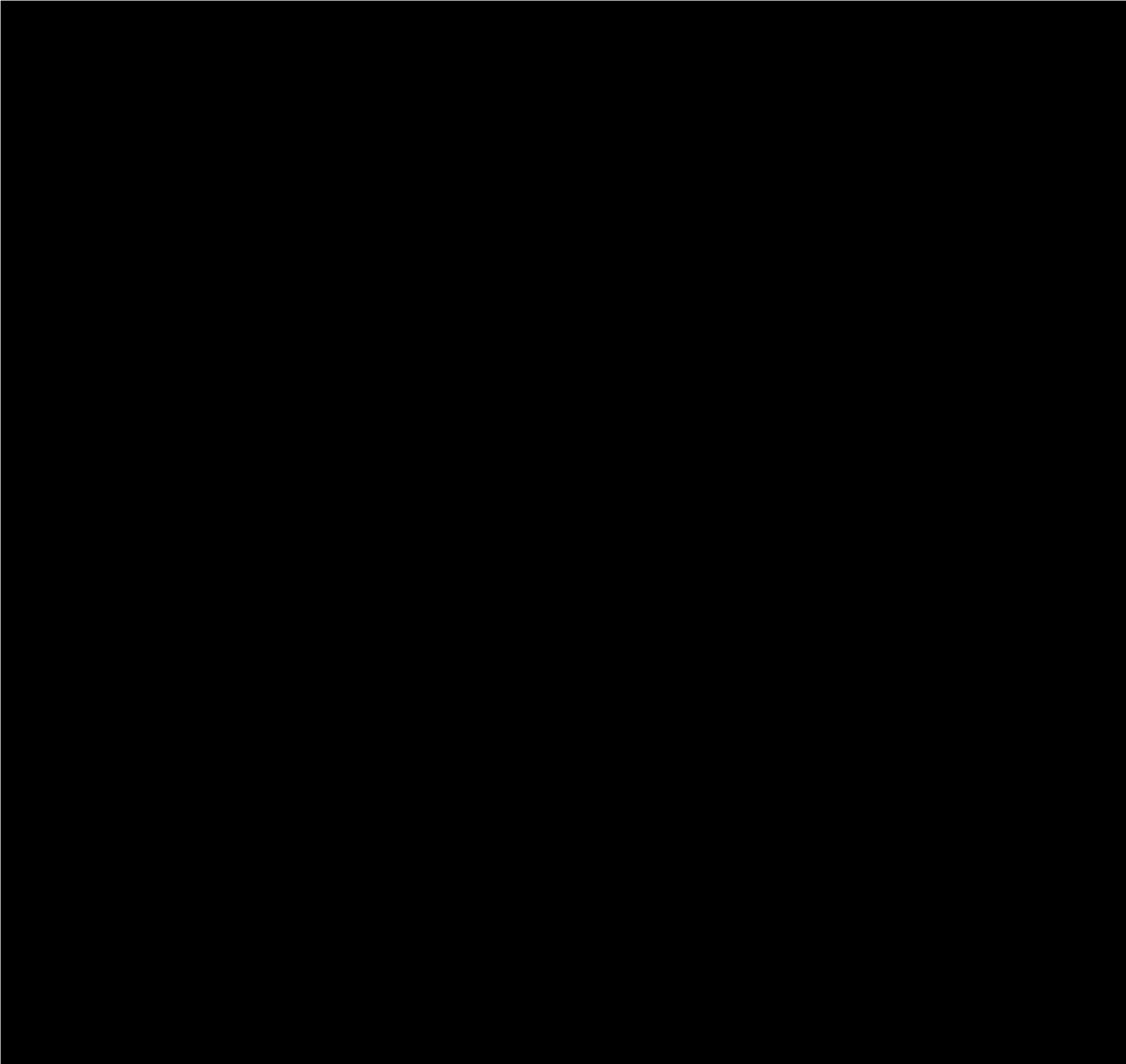
me.” He often reminds colleagues to “never, never, never lose sight of the fact that students are the center of what we do.”

Walker plans to stay connected to AAMU, offering to teach or speak when needed, and hopes to continue writing – including a more student-friendly food chemistry text and a book capturing the Jamaican sayings of his mother, Remella Nesbeth.

Dr. Walker also plans to travel with his wife to places neither has yet explored together.

Looking back on more than three decades of service, Walker sums up his philosophy with the message he has carried throughout his career – one he hopes the University continues to hold close.

“Students must remain at the center of all decisions. Real education means teaching them how to be both bright and smart... so they go out and use the knowledge that they have earned and learned.”





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