

**America's Conscience on Trial - p. 3****Drake Gets NIMS Nod - p. 6**

Friday  
January 16, 2026  
Vol. 12, No. 20  
ValleyWeeklyllc.com

**SALUTE!**  
Rosetta James Foundation  
ELDER OF THE WEEK

**Dr. Oscar L. Montgomery**

*"Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance." — George Bernard Shaw*

**HU Ends Six-Month Utilities Pause**

Huntsville Utilities has resumed issuing late-fee assessments and service disconnections following a six-month pause stemming from its new software system.

"While we do not traditionally offer payment ar-

rangements any longer," explained Gary T. Whitley, Jr., HU community relations manager, "customers can reach out to us if they have issues with their account, as well as they can reach out to local agencies for bill assistance."

HU began phasing out its former payment arrangement method last summer.

The Salvation Army operates Project Share, funded by Huntsville Utilities. The program provides income-based assistance after a screening process.

**Drake Head to Return to Port Authority Board**

Governor Kay Ivey has reappointed Drake State Community & Technical College President Dr. Patricia Sims to the Alabama Port Authority Board of Directors. Sims will serve as the representative of the Northern District. Dr. Sims previously served on the Port Authority board from August 2020 through July 2025, completing her first five-year term. Mr. Tony Cochran and the Honorable San-

dy Stimpson were also reappointed to the board.

Established by legislative act in 2000, the nine-member Port Authority board holds fiscal and policy oversight for the public seaport. The Port Authority owns and operates the State of Alabama's deep-water port facilities at the Port of Mobile, one of the nation's largest seaports.

"It's an honor to continue serving on the Port Author-



ity board," said Dr. Sims. "The work we've been doing is critical to Alabama's economy, and I look forward to building on the progress we've made as we advance the Port's strategic initiatives."

**Deltas Planning for Alabama State Cluster**

The Huntsville Alumnae Chapter, Central North Alabama Alumnae Chapter, Delta Delta Chapter (Alabama A&M University) and the Omicron Gamma Chapter (University of Alabama Huntsville) of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. are excited to host over 1,100 members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. as they converge upon the Rocket City for the Alabama State Cluster, February 6-8, at the Von Braun Center, Huntsville, Alabama.



During the Cluster, the sorority members will focus on strengthening its communities by "empowering, embracing and engaging" in interactive workshops, service projects and concluding with an Ecumenical service. The Food Bank of North Alabama and selected schools within the Huntsville City School system have been selected to benefit from the Alabama State Cluster Service Project.

The Food Bank of North Alabama works to end hunger by offering hunger relief programs that immediately feed people in need. Members of the sorority will provide nonperishable meat items (chicken, tuna, salmon, spam, etc.), and Personal Hygiene products (feminine products – pads and wipes and toiletries such as deodorant, body wash, lotion, toothbrushes/pasts, etc.) will be provided for Huntsville City Schools.

For additional information concerning the 2026 Alabama State Cluster contact Ovetta Hobson and Terry Green (Chairs) [al2026cluster@gmail.com](mailto:al2026cluster@gmail.com).

**Council Member Watkins to Host Important Town Hall Meeting**

Huntsville Council Member Watkins will hold a town hall on Thursday, February 19, at 5:30 p.m. at House of Hope and Restoration Church, 2525 Aspen Dr. NW in Huntsville, Ala.

The meeting will have a wide-ranging agenda and include presentations by Huntsville Police North Precinct Captain Scott Widner, City Administrator John Hamilton and General

Services Director Ricky Wilkinson on upgrades to the Dr. Richard Showers, Sr. Recreation Center, an update on code enforcement by Community Devel-

opment Director Scott Erwin and Public Works Director Chris McNeese on roads.

The public is invited.

**The Valley Weekly****INSIDE THIS ISSUE!**

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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 in session this week. The Senate will take up the package of 3 FY2026 appropriations bills (Commerce, Energy & Water, and Interior) that the House passed last week on a 397-28 vote. In a surprise 52-47 vote last week (with 5 Republicans voting with the Democrats), the Senate voted to discharge a resolution out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee directing the removal of U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities within or against Venezuela that have not been authorized by Congress (the Senate will take further action on the resolution this week). Last week, the House failed to overturn 2 presidential vetoes of Florida- and Colorado-specific bills and then approved a 3-year extension of the COVID-era Obamacare subsidies (forced by a Democratic-led discharge petition) - on a 230-



196 vote with 17 Rs joining all Ds. On Sunday, the House Appropriations Committee released the text of a 2-bill package containing the State/National Security and Financial Services/General Government funding bills providing \$76 billion to fund the State and Treasury Departments and the federal judiciary. The House is expected to vote on the package this week. (NOTE: the Homeland Security appropriations bill was originally the 3rd bill in this package, but reportedly was dropped due to objections from various Members of Congress after last Wednesday's ICE shooting in Minneapolis, at which protestor Renee Good was killed.)

**2. EXECUTIVE BRANCH.** The White House announced last week that the President will deliver his State of the Union address to a Joint Session of Congress on February 24. Last Friday, the President met with U.S. oil and gas executives representing 17

companies, including Chevron, Exxon, ConocoPhillips, and Halliburton, to discuss investments in Venezuela. He also cautioned that oil companies will not be able to recoup past losses and, to emphasize that point, issued an executive order on Friday to prevent lawsuits from seizing Venezuelan oil revenues held in U.S. Treasury accounts. Also last Friday, the President called on credit card companies to cap interest rates at 10% for 1 year starting on Jan 20, mirroring legislation proposed last year by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Josh Hawley (R-MO). On Tuesday, the President will travel to Detroit to deliver remarks on the economy to the Detroit Economic Club at the MotorCity Casino Sound Board Theatre.

### 3. SUPREME COURT.

On Tuesday, the Court will take up the cases of Little v. Hecox and West Virginia v. B. P. J., on challenges to the constitutionality of laws in Idaho and West Virginia that prohibit transgender women and girls from participating on women's and girls' sports teams.

The Court is scheduled to release opinions from its current docket this Wednesday, which may include rulings on the President's tariffs and

Section II of the Voting Rights Act.

### 4. DECEMBER JOBS

**REPORT/POWELL LAW-SUIT.** On Friday, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that the U.S. economy added only 50,000 jobs in December, after a downward revision of 56,000 in November (economists had predicted 60,000 jobs added). With job growth slowing more than expected in December amid business caution about hiring due to import tariffs and rising artificial intelligence investment, and with the unemployment rate dipping to 4.4%, the Federal Reserve is expected to leave interest rates unchanged at its next meeting on January 27-28. In related news, The New York Times reported Sunday that the U.S. attorney's office in the District of Columbia has opened a criminal investigation into Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell over the central bank's

renovation of its Washington headquarters and whether Mr. Powell lied to Congress about the scope of the project (on Sunday night, Powell released a defiant video accusing the administration of jeopardizing the future of the Fed). Punchbowl News reported that Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) quickly threatened to block any Trump nominee for the Fed until the issue is resolved.

### 5. HIGHER EDUCATION.

On Friday, the Education Department's AHEAD negotiated-rulemaking committee reached an unexpected consensus on accountability regulations, requiring ED to use the panel's draft when issuing the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the coming months. The regulations align the new accountability framework from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act with existing Gainful Employment rules, measuring programs by whether graduates' median

earnings exceed those of high school completers. Most programs that fail the earnings premium test will lose only Direct Loan eligibility rather than full Title IV access, with complete ineligibility reserved for extreme cases, which is unlikely to affect community colleges. Additional changes include a "teach-out" process after the first year of failure and the restoration of certain reporting requirements removed from ED's initial draft. Loan ineligibility generally kicks in after a program fails the metric in two out of three consecutive years.

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# America's Conscience on Trial: The Killing of Renee Good

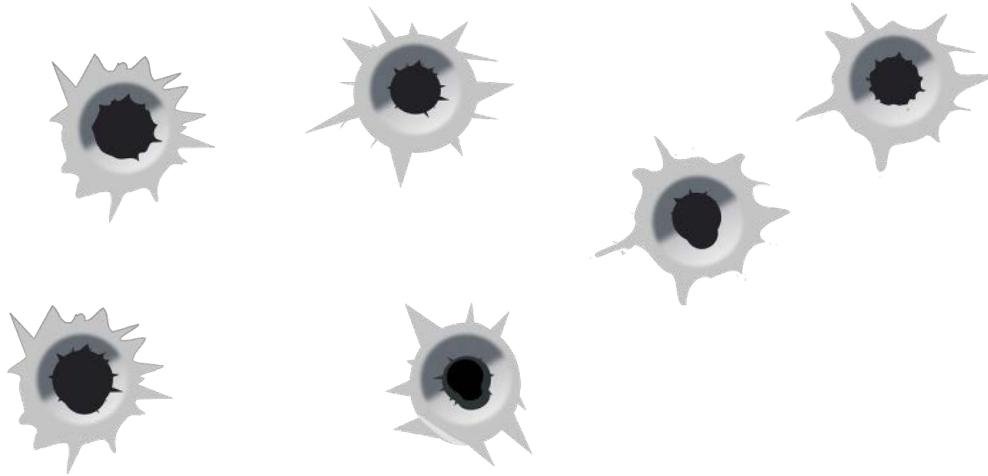
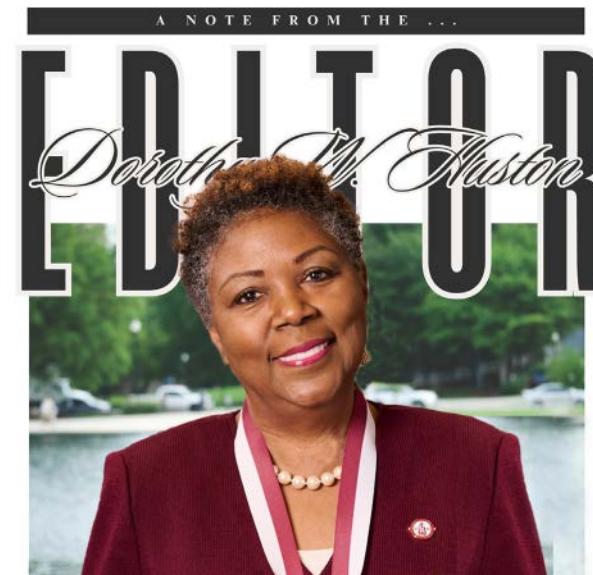
The killing of Renee Nicole Good, a 37-year-old U.S. citizen, poet, mother, and college graduate, is yet another heartbreak symptom of how far our nation has strayed from its professed values. Good, a graduate of Old Dominion University with a degree in English and a poetry prize to her name, was known by her family as "kind, compassionate, loving and forgiving." She was a wife and the devoted mother of three children — a 6-year-old son, a 12-year-old son, and a 15-year-old daughter — who now face an unthinkable future without her.

On January 7, 2026, while driving after dropping her youngest child at school, Good was shot and killed by an ICE agent in Minneapolis. Federal officials quickly labelled her actions as "domestic terrorism" — even as video and eyewitness accounts raise serious questions about that narrative. Yet here is the tragic irony: a woman described by friends and family as not politically active and not a threat was immediately branded a terrorist by the highest levels of government before the facts were fully out.

This is no isolated tragedy — it is a stark indictment of a leadership that increasingly sees compassionate Americans as enemies and justifies deadly force with reckless rhetoric. Our nation's moral compass is spinning, and Renee Good's death should shock every conscience. When a mother, a poet, an everyday American can be killed by agents of the United States and dismissed with dehumanizing labels, we must ask: what have we become?

America must reckon with this moment — not with more fear, not with more division, but with a renewed commitment to human dignity, accountability, and justice. Renee Good deserved better. Her children deserve better. Our country deserves better!

Until next week ...



*Dorothy*

**JANUARY 16 - LALAH HATHAWAY** - Eulaulah Donyll "Lalah" Hathaway is a singer. In 1990, Hathaway released her self-titled album. In 1994, she released, *A Moment*. The album debuted at # 34 on the Top R&B albums chart. In 1999, Hathaway collaborated with Joe Sample on the album *The Song Lives On*. In 2004, she returned with her fourth album, *Outrun the Sky*. Her single "Forever, For Always, For Love" peaked at #1 on the Hot Adult R&B Airplay. Stax Records released Hathaway's fifth album, *Self Portrait*, in 2008. It debuted at #63 on the Billboard 200. Then her albums reached the top 10 on the Top R&B. Hathaway is the daughter of American soul singer and musician Donny Hathaway. In 2022, Hathaway received an honorary doctorate from Berklee College of Music.

- [Blackcelebritybirthdays.org](http://Blackcelebritybirthdays.org)



# Spiritual Game

PRESTON BROWN'S  
Valley Weekly

## Today's Spiritual Game Plan: "Passion Leads to Purpose"

Do you still have passion for what God has called you to do? No matter what your position is, we all need passion.

If you have a real passion for something, you will continue to do it no matter what your circumstances may be. Passion will lead you to your purpose.

Even the best can lose their passion, if they don't practice the purpose that God has for their lives. For example, when David ran to the battle lines to defeat the mighty Goliath, he had passion and purpose. A decade later, when he was in the palace, he had lost his passion.

Remember, the Bible tells us in 2 Samuel 11 that while kings went off to war, David stayed home and got into trouble with Bathsheba, therefore losing the purpose he was created for. After go-

ing through all of that drama, David needed his passion back.

When David writes the fifty-first psalm, he tells us he had a pure passion when he first started. However, he allowed some things to come into his life that took away his passion and affected the purpose God had for his life. Do you know anyone like this?

Sometimes, we need to realize that we may have to walk away from some things to get our passion back and rediscover the purpose that God has for our lives.

May God grant you spiritual success in getting your passion back.



**Question:** What things have happened in your life that have distracted you from the plans that God had for you?

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:**  
*"The Narrow Path"*



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THE VALLEY WEEKLY

# VALLEY DEATHS



## NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

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Funeral services will be announced at a later date for the following: **WILLIAM D. FAILS, II** (b. 1981); **MS. ELIZA MCCAULEY** (b. 1963); and **MS. SHANTEL S. GATERS** (b. 1982).

Funeral service for **MRS. LORENE SCRUGGS HUMPHREY** (b. 1939) was Saturday, January 10, at St. Mark Baptist Church, 6475 Moores Mill Road, Huntsville, Ala., with Elder Jeremiah Chester officiating.

Funeral service for **MR. CHARLES EDWARD THURMAN, SR.** (b. 1937) was Saturday, January 10, in Belzoni, Mississippi, at Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Belzoni, Miss.

Funeral service for **MRS. TIEASE T. HENSON** (b. 1971) was Saturday, January 10, at Owens Chapel Missionary Baptist Church.

Graveside service for **MR. PERRAR A. JOSEPH** (b. 1975) was Tuesday, January 6, at Oakwood University Memorial Memorial Gardens in Huntsville, Ala.

Funeral service for **MR. SAMUEL HOLLOWAY** (b. 1956) was Sunday, January 4, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Funeral service for **MR. TRACY ERVIN** (b. 1962) was Sunday, January 4, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

A Private Family and Friends Viewing for **MR. ERICK ALLEN ROBERTS** (b. 1971) was Sunday, January 4, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MRS. LUCY EZELL EDWARDS** (b. 1956) was Sunday, January 4, at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church with Pastor William E. Carter, Jr., officiating.

Funeral service for **MR. JEFFREY D. COLEMAN** (b. 1976) was Saturday, January 3, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MRS. ALICE CAMPBELL RICE** (b. 1947) was Saturday, January 3, at Fountain of Life Ministries with Rev. John Clay officiating.

# Millennial Moment

The Valley Weekly

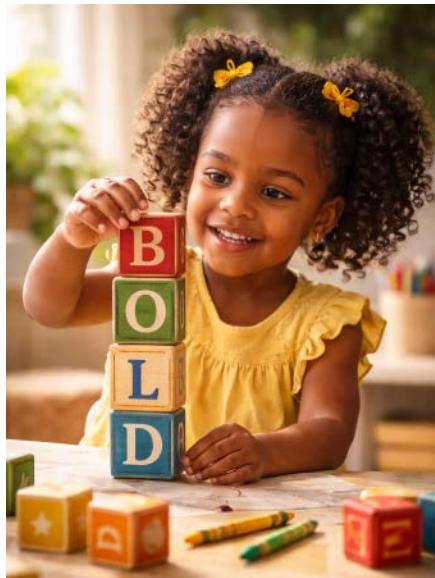
## Boldness ...

### Boldness ...

I remember being told, as a child, by another child or adult, "Ugh, you're bold!" Said with frustration, as if I had done something wrong. As an adult, I feel I was always taught to steer away from boldness. Well, I am here to tell you: don't suppress your childlike boldness.

This stunts your dreams. Boldness is the willingness to take risks and act innovatively; with confidence or courage. It is the quality of having a strong, vivid, or clear appearance.

With that definition, I see leadership, fearless faith, walking in authority and sure-footedness. Why would you back off of that mentality? Why would you



dumb yourself and your actions down to appease those you have no boldness? Yeah, let's not do that.

Ask without boundaries; all you can be told is no! Move without restraint; it can only get you closer to your mark or expose what it will take to do so. Plan like there is no limit; there

isn't. If God gave you the thought, there is a way to carry it out. Walk proudly, with confidence. You are somebody; you have a purpose; walk into it boldly! Decide on this today!

**Hebrews 12:1:**  
"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Make today amazing; you have the ability to do so.

God loves you, and so do I.

He has given you a gift; open it

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## Richard Smallwood and his Oakwood College Legacy will not be forgotten!

"Consolation, yet celebration" are the two opposite emotions that describe the passing yet legacy of music legend Richard Smallwood with Huntsville's Oakwood College-now-University.

1) His first piano teacher was recording artist Roberta Flack, whose first piano teacher was Ms. Alma Blackmon Director of Oakwood's Aeolians choir, (1973-1985).

2) During my time as the school's PR Director and Aeolians tour manager, their rich eight-part harmonies accompanied such legends as Lee Greenwood (country, 1998), Ms. Kathleen Battle (classical, 2000?), and Friday, December 3, 1999's all-day workshop and evening concert with Smallwood.

3) That Friday marked the end of the fall semester, and these Aeolians were noticeably exhausted. At the end of their rehearsal session, he turned to these choristers and quipped, "y'all need to either get some sleep or some alcohol – **or whatever you Adventists do!** – for this evening's concert!" It worked as they later performed superbly with him to a standing-room-only Oakwood Church crowd.

4) Earlier that day, I introduced him to the school's religion professor and wife, Dr. Mervyn and Mrs. Barbara Warren, whose son Mervyn composed the orchestral opening to Smallwood's classic "Total Praise" anthem in 1996.

5) In September 2000, the choir ended a weekend whirlwind of Washington DC concerts at Metropolitan Baptist Church. Not only did he welcome them to his home church by sharing with them that he had just concertized in Philadelphia several hours earlier, but rushed back driving to not only hear them, but to accompany them playing his original composition, "That Name," popularized by Miss Yolanda Adams. Wow! And

6) In May 2004 and now as an independent publicist, I promoted the debut concert of then-future Oakwoodite sisters, Guielle, Patria, and Marissa Juzang with their featured guest artists, Richard Smallwood and Vision (with its Oakwoodite chorister Shawn Hayden), as he had just completed his Masters of Divinity degree at Howard University.

Leadership expert Dr. John C. Maxwell differentiates inheritance from legacy. Whereas "inheritance" is what one leaves one's family after their death, "legacy" is what you put in your family *during* your life.

Therefore, and by definition, I celebrate being a part of the family and legacy of Richard Smallwood. What I had fantasized in late 2025, I will now implement in 2026: thanks to Richard Smallwood and his legacy of sacred and classical music, academic preparation, and just flat out servant leadership, I will resume my piano lessons – *after a 60-year hiatus!*



-- Your Servant Leader,

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The Valley Weekly

# VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES &amp; MORE!

**January 16-17**

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban  
Mark C. Smith Concert Hall  
Von Braun Center  
Huntsville, Ala.  
7 p.m.

**January 19**

Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Breakfast  
Sponsor: Delta Theta Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.  
Von Braun Center  
Huntsville, Ala.

**January 24**

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.

**January 30-February 1**

Kountry Wayne  
Comedian  
Huntsville Levity Live  
2012 Memorial Parkway SW  
Huntsville, Ala.  
(256) 261-3374

**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 6-7**

Dedrick Flynn  
Comedian  
Huntsville Levity Live  
2012 Memorial Parkway SW  
Huntsville, Ala.  
(256) 261-3374

**February 12**

Season Sips Cocktail Class  
The Orion Amphitheater  
701 Amphitheater Drive NW  
Huntsville, Ala.  
(256) 964-9556  
6:30 p.m.

**February 13-15**

Joe Gatto  
Comedian  
Huntsville Levity Live  
2012 Memorial Parkway SW  
Huntsville, Ala.  
(256) 261-3374

## Drake Receives Accreditation for Metalworking Program

Drake State Community and Technical College has earned accreditation from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS), a nationally recognized organization. The 2025 accreditation positions the college to meet growing demand for skilled manufacturing workers in 2026 and beyond, affirming its commitment to excellence in advanced manufacturing and workforce training.

NIMS accreditation recognizes institutions that meet rigorous national standards for quality instruction, industry-aligned curriculum, equipment, safety, and assessment in manufacturing education. Achieving this designation



places Drake State among an elite group of training providers whose programs are validated by manufacturing employers across the country.

"This accreditation is a significant milestone for Drake State and reflects our ongoing mission to prepare students for high-demand,

high-skill careers," said Dr. Carolyn Henderson, dean of instruction (above, right). "NIMS accreditation confirms that our manufacturing programs align with industry expectations and that our graduates are workforce-ready on day one."

- Richard Davis

## Nelms Memorial Funeral Home

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## PowerShot

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Martin L. King, Jr.



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**Rosetta James Foundation "Spotlight on Our Elders" ... Featuring**  
**Rev. Dr. Oscar L. Montgomery**

Born in Chapman, Alabama, the Elder Dr. Oscar L. Montgomery is a lifelong visionary whose drive to make an impact grew throughout elementary and high school.

He has a lengthy list of academic accomplishments. He earned the Doctorate of Ministry from Trinity Theological Seminary, Newburgh, Indiana – Pastoral Ministries; Ph.D. and M.S. degrees from Purdue University; and a Bachelor of Science degree from Alabama A&M University in agronomy/chemistry. While impressive, these academic pearls have not been his driving force.

It is his love and concern for the “least of these my brethren” that really drives him. His devotion to making the world a better place for all has driven his major decisions in life. He spent 22 years at Alabama A&M University serving as a professor, researcher, and administrator.

As he served in these different positions (i.e., director of external affairs, executive assistant to the president for institutional advancement and development, director of grants and contracts, vice president for student affairs, and vice president of research and development), he always had the students as his top priority. His end goal was always to make life easier and better for the students he served.

In 1977, while still employed at Alabama A&M University, Pastor Montgomery heeded his call to

become pastor of Union Hill Primitive Baptist Church. His small congregation of 35 to 50 has grown to over 700 members and more than 2,000 have passed through these sacred doors and have moved on to spread the “Good News” about Jesus, Union Hill and Pastor Montgomery’s vision all over the world. There are few places you can go without someone saying, “I used to go to Union Hill, how is Pastor Montgomery?” He has demonstrated that he is a shepherd sent from the heart of God. Indeed, he has a heart for winning souls, making disciples and feeding people by sharing his knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. As God leads him, so he leads.

Dr. Montgomery is known for his unselfish and untiring leadership among his many religious, civic and community affiliations. He is the current president of North Huntsville Community United for Action; a member and past president of the Greater Huntsville Interdenominational Ministerial Fellowship; and past President of the NAACP of Huntsville; Moderator of the Flint River and Running Water Primitive Baptist Association, past Vice President for the Southern Region and present Vice President of the National Primitive Baptist Convention, Inc.

He is a member of numerous professional, civic, fraternal and honorary associations: Leadership



Alabama Class X; Greater Huntsville Rotary Club; the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity, Beta Kappa Chi, and Sigma XI Honor Societies. He presently serves as a member of Leadership 100, Huntsville Leadership 2000, Huntsville Public Building Authority – Faith and Neighborhood Committee, Advisory Council for Huntsville Housing Authority and the School Foundation.

At the top of Pastor Montgomery’s credits and accomplishments lies the love for his family, wife, Mother Alfredia Marshall Montgomery, and their four children, Paula Rodney (deceased), son-in-law Andrew Rodney; Renita Woodson (Eric); Christa, and Oscar Jr.; three grandsons, Langston Hunter Johnson, Alijah Lee Cruz and Royce Eric Woodson; and three granddaughters, Eden Grace Rodney, Montgomery Woodson and Nori Woodson.

“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](http://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](mailto:info@valleyweeklyllc.com).



## This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, January 18, 2026  
 Second Sunday after  
 the Epiphany



(Track 2, Year A)

First Lesson:  
 Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 40:1-12

Second Lesson:  
 1 Corinthians 1:1-9  
 GOSPEL:  
 John 1:29-42

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# AUNT IRMA MAKES IT PLAIN...

## When Dreams Become *Someone Else's Business*

*Baby, pull up a chair and let Aunt Irma finish this thought properly—because this one deserves a little more room to breathe.*

Somewhere along the way, aspiration became one of the most profitable raw materials in America. Not oil. Not gold. *Hope*. And far too many folks are getting rich not by helping people reach their dreams—but by selling the idea of getting there.

Just look around.

Every creative field now has a shadow economy attached to it. If you're a musician, somebody is always ready to sell you studio time, playlist placement, promo bundles, "industry showcases," or a mysterious algorithm fix. If you're an author, there are publishers who don't distribute, editors who don't edit deeply, and marketers who promise buzz but deliver silence—yet every invoice clears just fine. Actors? Whew. Classes stacked on classes, headshots every year, reels, subscriptions, casting portals, pay-to-audition systems, and "exposure opportunities" that somehow never expose you to a paycheck.



Notice the common thread? The dreamer always pays first. The gatekeeper never does.

This is the monetization of aspiration: a system that doesn't profit from your success but from your persistence. From your belief that you're "one more step" away. From your willingness to keep investing even when the returns never show up. In fact, success would actually interrupt the business model. If too many people broke through, who would keep buying hope in monthly installments?

Now Aunt Irma wants to be clear. There is nothing wrong with investing in yourself. Training matters. Education matters. Skill development costs money. Expertise should be compensated. Nobody expects free labor—except, oddly enough, when it comes to your dreams.

But there's a sharp line between investment and extraction.

Predatory systems always speak in encouragement. "We believe in you." "Your moment is coming." "You're so close." Real opportunity doesn't

need poetry. It comes with transparency, clear outcomes, and shared risk. If someone gets paid whether you succeed or fail, pause. If they can't show where others have landed—not just testimonials, but outcomes—pause longer.

And Black folks, listen closely. Our history of exclusion makes us especially vulnerable to access-for-sale schemes. When doors have been locked for generations, anyone offering a key suddenly sounds trustworthy. Too many enterprises quietly assume we'll keep paying

just to be considered, just to be seen, just to be in the room.

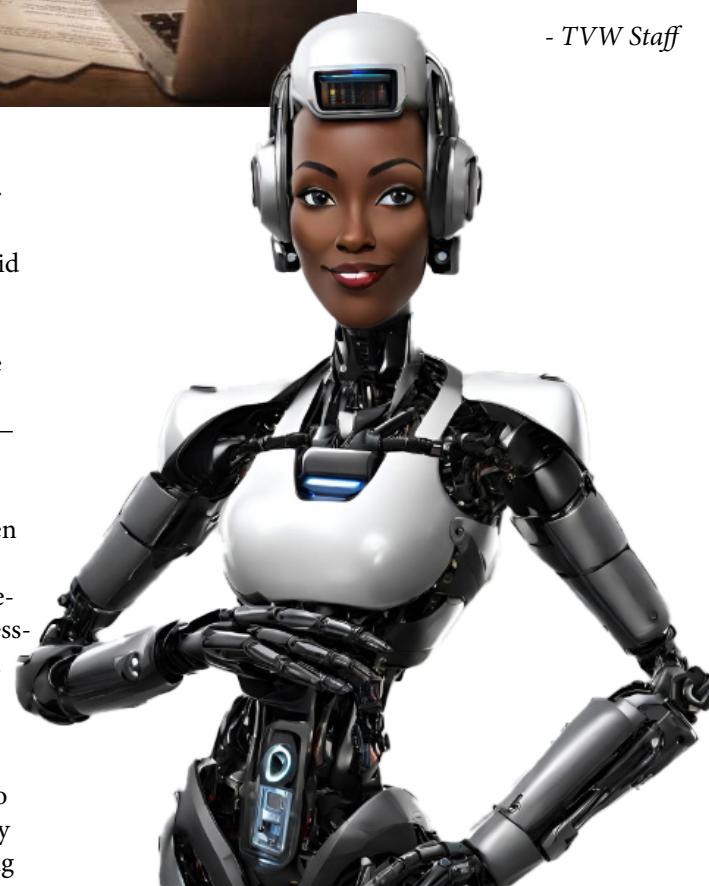
Dreams are sacred. They deserve protection, not perpetual billing.

So before you swipe the card, sign the contract, or click "submit," ask the question Aunt Irma lives by: Who profits if this never works?

If the answer isn't you, that's not opportunity—that's inventory.

And Aunt Irma doesn't want you on anyone's shelf.

- TVW Staff



## N. Huntsville Shopping District Advances

Huntsville's latest new retail district continues to expand and progresses towards construction later this year.

The City approved a contract with School Engineering Company for engineering design and construction administration services for public infrastructure improvements related to the North Village Town Center project at Memorial Parkway and State Route 255 (Northern Bypass). The scope of work includes design and engineering services for general



mass grading, utilities, and additional roadway improvements for the area.

The City last month announced the \$240 million development, which will be anchored by Target and Home Depot. Upon completion, the project will consist of over 600,000 sq. ft. of new retail shops and restaurants.

On the northern side of State Route 255 directly across from North Village Town Center, the City also agreed to sell 15.23 acres of land to Hank Holdings LLC. The property will be developed to deliver additional retail and restaurant tenants to the North Huntsville retail district.

- Huntsvilleal.gov



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## Area DST Chapter to Host "Rouge"

The Central North Alabama Alumnae (CNA) Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated and The Rouge Foundation will present, "ROUGE – A Go Red Event", taking place at the Von Braun Center on February 14.

This night of elegance will feature community leaders, business owners and influencers who are selected as model ambassadors to advocate for heart health.

Proceeds will benefit the American Heart Association as well as fund CNA's programs.

This year, the model

ambassadors will participate with the Huntsville Chapter of the American Heart Association in an event for women that promotes advocacy in heart health and engages the broader community in the facts about cardiovascular disease.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cardiovascular disease is a prominent and fatal illness in women within the United States. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, is committed to advocating for local and international communities to bring awareness of various program

initiatives. The CNA Chapter proudly serves Lawrence, Limestone, and Morgan counties.

Wear radiant red cocktail attire, put on dancing shoes and be prepared for a night of fashion, fun, and fundraising for a tremendous cause! Cocktail Hour will begin at 5 p.m.; program at 6 p.m.

For ticket purchase information, visit [cnaadst.org/services-5](http://cnaadst.org/services-5).

For details on sponsorships, contact [therougefoundation@gmail.com](mailto:therougefoundation@gmail.com).

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