

EGO-AKA Mother-Daughter Brunch - p. 11

FREE



Justice Tolbert and Tiffany Tolbert

Bible Lessons from Super Bowl - p. 5

Friday
February 21, 2025
Vol. 11, No. 25
ValleyWeeklyllc.com



SALUTE!
Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Mr. Freeman Holifield

"History is a light that illuminates the past, and a key that unlocks the door to the future." - Runoko Rashidi

Kidney Patient Chair Announced

The Alabama Kidney Foundation (AKF) has announced Raven Perry-Beach, Esq., as the 2025 Huntsville Kidney Patient Chair.

The founding member of The Beach Law Firm and a kidney donor



herself, Perry-Beach brings passion and firsthand experience

to this vital role. Her dedication to kidney health advocacy aligns with AKF's mission to improve the quality of life for kidney patients through education, financial assistance, and community support.

Continued on p. 6



Wims to Address Harrison Center BHM Program Feb. 27

The Robert "Bob" Harrison Senior Wellness and Advocacy Center will host its annual Black History Month program on Thursday, February 27, from 11-12:30 p.m. The Center is located at 6156 Pulaski Pike NW, Huntsville, Ala.

The inspiring program will feature Dr. Daniel K. Wims, president of Alabama A&M University, as the 2025 BHM speaker.

Come and celebrate the rich heritage, achievements, and contributions of African Americans through an activity of reflection, empowerment, and unity.

All are welcome to attend this special event.

For more information, visit the front desk or call (256) 519-2040. Space is limited, so RSVP at the front desk starting Friday February 21.

The Inspirational Choir Announces Final Concert

After 50 years of spirit-filled gospel music in the Tennessee Valley and throughout the U.S., The Inspirational Choir, under the direction of Cleveland "Murphy" Wilson, will sing its last note on February 22, at First Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1303 Evangel Drive, Huntsville, Ala. The free performances will be at 11:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

During its 50-

year tenure, the choir has shared stages with renowned singers like Darryl Coley, Shirley Caesar, Larnelle Harris, and many others. In 1989, the choir was featured on the Kenny Rogers album "Something Inside So Strong," providing rousing background vocals for the title track, and received a Gold Record for 500,000 units sold.

In addition to singing every 4th Saturday for church service, the choir was known for their worship-filled performances at Big Spring Jam, Panoply, WEUP Black Arts Festival, The Festival of Spirituals, "I Love America," and various other churches and events throughout the valley.

For additional information, contact Danita Jones at (256) 289-4493.

Artists and Resources to Meet

Arts Huntsville, in partnership with Huntsville Revisited and the City of Huntsville's Office of Multicultural Affairs, announces "Arts for All: Community Conversa-



tions," a series of open conversations designed to connect Huntsville artists and arts organizations with valuable community resources and partners.

The activity will be February 25 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Dr. Richard Showers, Sr. Recreation Center, 4600 Blue Spring Road in Huntsville, Ala.

MLK Basketball Clinic Scheduled

The Tennessee Valley community is invited to the third annual "Hoop Dreams" Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Basketball Clinic and Canned Food Drive on Sunday, February 23.

The three-hour event will be held at 1 p.m. at the Optimist Recreation Center, 703 Oakwood Avenue NE, Huntsville, Ala.

This free event is for boys and girls ages 8-13, but

REGISTRATION is required. Non-perishable canned food donations are encouraged to help support the community. Develop your skills and give back!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

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Drake Prez Selected for DoD's Joint Civilian Orientation Conference

Dr. Patricia Sims, president of Drake State Community and Technical College, has been selected to participate in the Department of Defense's (DOD) esteemed Joint Civilian Orientation Conference (JCOC 96). Established in 1948, JCOC is the DOD's oldest and most prestigious public liaison program, offering American business and community leaders an immersive experience with the U.S. military.

The JCOC program aims to increase public understanding of national defense by enabling participants to directly observe and engage with U.S. military personnel and operations. Participants are fully immersed with the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard, gaining firsthand insight into the dedication and expertise of service members.

"I am thrilled to share that I have been selected to participate in the Joint



Civilian Orientation Conference," Sims said, expressing her enthusiasm about the upcoming conference. "JCOC is the only Secretary of Defense-sponsored outreach program that offers American business and community leaders a fully immersive experience with our military. Through this program, I will engage directly with all branches of the military, gaining firsthand insight into the dedication, expertise and sacrifice of

the men and women who serve our nation."

Dr. Sims thanked the Department of Defense and the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command for the opportunity.

"I am eager to learn, experience and share!" she exclaimed.

JCOC alumni include CEOs of Fortune 100 companies, nonprofit organizations, presidents of colleges and universities, and public administrators from metropolitan cit-

ies. Selections are based on the nominee's qualifications and are determined by an inter-service selection panel.

Sims' selection for JCOC 96 underscores Drake State's commitment to community engagement in North Alabama and nationwide. Previously, she was appointed by President Biden to the National Infrastructure Advi-



sory Council, where she advised on improving the security and resilience of critical infrastructure. She also serves on the Tennessee Valley Authority's Regional Energy Resource Council and was appointed by Governor Kay Ivey to the Board of Directors for the Alabama Port Authority.

- Daniel Owen

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ON THIS DAY

On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X, a 39-year-old civil rights leader and minister, was assassinated in New York City in the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. His home was firebombed a week before his assassination.

- Google.com



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Eighth Page	5x5 inches	\$300
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Classified	1 col.x1 inch	\$100/Flat Fee

Celebrating Identity and Creativity: A Reflection on an Inspiring Conversation



On the evening of February 13, I attended the Huntsville Museum of Art (HMA) exhibition and powerful and thought-provoking discussion in honor of Black History Month. Organized by the HMA Black History Month Committee and sponsored by Sasha and Charlie Sealy, the event, titled "An Inspiring Conversation," brought together some of the most esteemed voices in contemporary art and culture.

This discussion, held in conjunction with the exhibition Alicia Henry + Fahamu Pecou, featured the celebrated artist Dr. Fahamu Pecou, distinguished art historian Dr. Cheryl Finley, and curator Michael J. Ewing, associate curator at the Frist Museum. Moderated by the accomplished scholar, author, and curator Dr. Bridget R. Cooks, the panel engaged attendees in an exploration of identity, creativity, and cultural resonance.

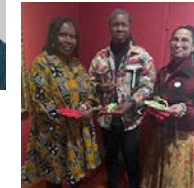
As the panelists shared their insights, the audience was captivated by the depth of the conversation. Dr. Pecou, known for his thought-provoking works addressing Black identity and representation, spoke passionately about his artistic journey and the themes that drive his creative process. Dr. Finley, whose expertise in African American art and visual culture is widely recognized, provided a historical and cultural context that enriched the dialogue. Meanwhile, Ewing's curatorial perspective offered a behind-the-scenes look at how exhibitions like Alicia Henry + Fahamu Pecou come to life and foster meaningful engagement with audiences.

Moderated by Dr. Cooks, the conversation seamlessly wove together personal narratives, historical reflections, and contemporary discourse. The discussion emphasized the role of art in shaping and reflecting cultural identity, as well as the importance of representation in the broader art world.

Following the discussion, we gathered for a reception hosted by the Huntsville Museum of Art Guild, where we had the opportunity to continue conversations over wine and refreshments.

The event not only highlighted the impact of Black artists but also underscored the museum's commitment to fostering inclusive and engaging dialogues through art.

For those who attended, "An Inspiring Conversation" was more than just an event—it was an experience that resonated deeply, leaving many with a renewed appreciation for the power of art to challenge, inspire, and connect us all. As Huntsville continues to grow as a hub for artistic expression, events like these remind us of the importance of celebrating diverse voices and stories in our community.



Dorothy

February 21 - JOHN LEWIS - John Robert Lewis was an American politician and civil rights leader. He is the U.S. Representative for Georgia's 5th congressional district, serving in his 17th term in the House, having served since 1987, and is the dean of the Georgia congressional delegation. His district includes the northern three-fourths of Atlanta. He is a member of the Democratic Party. On July 17, 2020, Lewis died at the age of 80 of pancreatic cancer in Atlanta, on the same day as his friend and fellow civil rights activist C.T. Vivian. Lewis had been the final surviving "Big Six" civil rights icon.

- BlackCelebrityBirthdays.org



THE VALLEY WEEKLY
**VALLEY
DEATHS**



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Funeral service for **MS. JULIA OLIVER** (b. 1941) will be Saturday, February 22, at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, 315 Winchester Road, Huntsville, Ala., at 11 a.m.

Funeral service for **MS. TAMEKA CONLEY** (b. 1974) was held Saturday, February 15, at Serenity Funeral Home Chapel.

NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

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Funeral services for **MR. DARRYL SULLIVAN** (b. 1966), **MS. SHARON D. DARWIN** (b. 1959), **MRS. DEBORAH M. LOLLAR** (b. 1953), **MRS. MARY SMITH** (b. 1928) and **MR. ONREE JACKSON** (b. 1947) will be announced at a later date.

Funeral service for **MRS. CORA B. KING** (b. 1928) was Wednesday, February 19, at Center Grove United Methodist Church with Rev. Michael Freeman, Eulogist, Pastor Seth Shamery, Officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. SARAH DAVIS BELL** ("Granny") was Friday, February 14, at Saint John AME Church with The Reverend Maurice Wright officiating.

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Funeral services are currently incomplete for **DEACON JAMES A. RANSOM** (b. 1940), **MR. DARYL DEGRAFFENRIED** (b. 1962), **MRS. VENIS HART** (b. 1936), **ELDER ROBERT JAMES JONES** (b. 1939), **MR. DAVID DONNELL PARKER** (b. 1951), **MRS. ERLINDA VILLEGAS WILLIAMS** (b. 1949), **MRS. LAURA FORD** and **MRS. WANDA JEAN SUMMERS MCDANIEL**.

Funeral service for **MRS. ORA LEE HODGES LANGFORD** (b. 1949) was Saturday, February 15, at Pentecostal Lighthouse Church, 6107 Blue Spring Road, Huntsville, Ala., with Bishop Reginald Burrell officiating.

Spiritual Game Plan

PRESTON BROWN'S

Today's Spiritual Game Plan:

"The Power of Forgiveness"

Job 42:10 says, "After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before."

The Bible tells us to pray for our enemies and care enough about them to want to see them go to heaven. But it's interesting to me that so many Christians today are angry and upset over people who have hurt them.

But we need to remember that "hurting people" hurt other people. They hurt others due to the pain they have in their own lives. So, it's time to forgive those who have hurt you.

There is a song that goes, "I want a heart that forgives, a heart full of love, one with compassion like yours above, one that overcomes evil with goodness and love, like it never happens, never holding a grudge." I think this says it all.

You see, the promises of God come with

conditions. We can't be blessed and also be mad at everybody at the same time. Remember that love gives and forgives.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to forgive those who have hurt us, even when we don't feel like it.

Question: Is there anybody in your life that you need to forgive today?

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:
"Good Fruit"

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Super Bible Lessons from Super Bowl LIX

"... but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling ..."

– Philippians 3:13-14

The Kansas City Chiefs, favored to win, were completely outplayed and, at one point, trailed 34-0 against the underdog Philadelphia Eagles, who emerged as Super Bowl champions.

This game reinforced a crucial lesson: while you're celebrating, your opponents are preparing to bring you down.

History proves it—after winning in 2023 and 2024, the Chiefs were stunned in 2025. Similarly, the Eagles lost to the Chiefs in 2023 but came back stronger two years later. Our biggest defeats often follow our greatest victories because success can lead to complacency.

Biblical Parallels

The Bible offers similar examples:

- Joshua & Ai: After the miraculous victory at Jericho, Joshua's army became overconfident and failed to seek God's guidance before attacking Ai. The result? They were defeated and humiliated.

This mirrors the reality in sports—and life. Overconfidence often leads to downfall.



The Disease of Me

Pat Riley, a nine-time NBA champion as a player, coach, and executive, coined the term "The Disease of Me" to describe how success breeds entitlement. He outlined a champion's journey:

1. The Innocent Climb – A united team fights for success.
2. The Disease of Me – Egos grow, priorities shift, and teamwork suffers.
3. Getting What's Mine – Individual recognition takes precedence over team goals.

Many dynasties fall due to internal strife, not external competition.

David vs. Goliath

Malcolm Gladwell, in David and Goliath, argues that underdogs often have hidden strengths while giants possess unseen weaknesses. The Eagles, much like David in 1 Samuel 17, seized their moment against a seemingly invincible opponent.

What's Next?

Even when the game was out of reach, Patrick Mahomes remained on the field. Why? He was already preparing for next season—a mindset echoed by Denzel Washington, who, when asked about his best role, replied:

"The next one."

Win or lose, the key to lasting success is relentless preparation for what's next.



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Millennial Moment

by Gloria B. Caldwell

When Morning Comes ...

Every single morning, God shows His true works. The sun rises. Despite the former day's circumstances, it rises. It gives off its effervescent light to shine down on us. It exposes what was "once before" in darkness. It gives off heat that produces new things. That same heat can kill off old things. It radiates energy and gives life.

That's its job!

But, yet *God*.

He allows you to rise each morning. He allows you to shine your light. He allows you to produce new works and decide to do away with old things that don't work for you or glorify Him. He allows you to radiate energy and give



life, whether you are the holder or the seed giver. You have a divine purpose. Just as bright as the sun is ... you can be. If He allows you to rise daily, why do you dim your light and lay down? Why do you decide to quit ... on you? Why do

you give off negative energy or take your day's blessing for granted? How would you like it if the sun decided to quit shining? (As if)

You are in control of yourself. So, when God gives you the ability, choose to rise!

Rise above hurt!
Rise above pain!
Rise above confusion!
Rise above rejection!
Rise above chaos!
Rise above disappointment!

RISE, AND SHINE!!!
LITERALLY!

....and give God the glory. Thank Him for your gift! Then ... open it!

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The Valley Weekly

VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

February 21

Concert
Mitch McVicker
Huntsville, Ala.

February 22

Black History Trivia
Veterans of Foreign Wars
(VFW) Post 2702 & Auxiliary
2900 U.S. 72 East
Huntsville, Ala. - 12 p.m.

“Box of Chocolates - Black-out Part II”
B3 Event Center
7809 Fair Cir SE, Huntsville, Ala. - 7 p.m.

February 23

Strings of Pearls
Huntsville Botanical Garden
4747 Bob Wallace Avenue

SW
Huntsville, Ala.

February 28

Heritage Entertainment:
The 2nd Annual Rocket City Blues Festival
“Blues Is Alright”
VBC Propst Arena
Huntsville, Ala.
Ticketmaster - 8 p.m.

February 28-March 2

“Tony Rock”
Comedy Standup
Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.

March 7

15th Annual Black & White Charity Ball - Harlem Nights
Von Braun Center
7 p.m.

Kidney Patient Chair Announced (from Page 1)

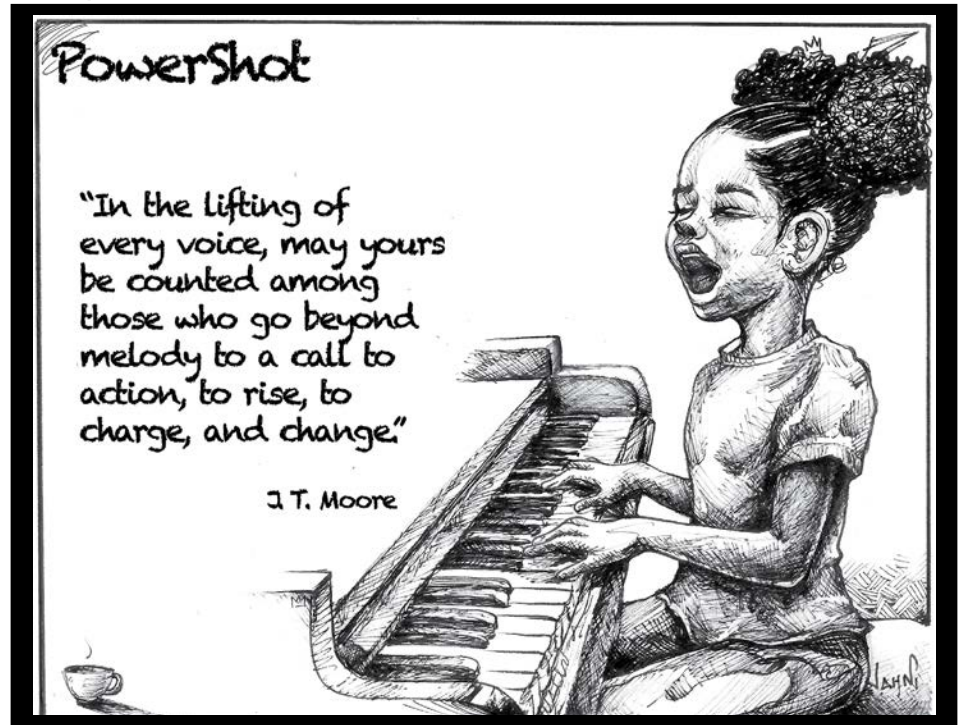
This announcement comes as the Alabama Kidney Foundation celebrates its 50th Anniversary in 2025—a milestone highlighting five decades of service and commitment to the kidney community. “As someone who has experienced the journey of kidney donation, I am deeply honored to serve as the 2025 Huntsville Kidney Patient Chair during this momentous 50th Anni-

versary year,” said Raven Perry-Beach, Esq. “I look forward to working alongside the Alabama Kidney Foundation to amplify its mission and to inspire our community to take action for those affected by kidney disease.”

The Huntsville Kidney Walk & Celebration promises to be a day of inspiration and community spirit, featuring live entertainment, educational

booths, children’s activities, and a ceremonial walk. The 2025 Huntsville Kidney Walk & Celebration, scheduled for Saturday, March 29, at Shurney Legacy Center Gym and Trail.

Registration is now open at www.huntsville-kidneywalk.org. For Team or additional information, contact Nicole Balthazar at (256) 957-2220 or nicole@alkidney.org.



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“Plutocracy too long tolerated leaves democracy on the auction block, subject to the highest bidder.”

- Bill Moyer



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

Mr. Freeman Holifield

Freeman Holifield, Sr., retired in 1998 from the U.S. Missile Munitions Center and School, Redstone Arsenal, as supervisory instructional/educational systems specialist (Emeritus). He received the Commander's Award (1983) for his outstanding managerial and supervisory accomplishments.

One of six children born in Bessemer, Ala., to the late Fred B. Holifield, Sr., and Essie L. Holifield, he attended Dunbar High School and then joined the U.S. Army, where he proudly served as an administrative specialist, both stateside and in Korea. Upon receiving his Honorable Discharge in 1962, he pursued and earned a B.S. degree in secondary education at Alabama A&M University (AAMU) in 1966 and completed his master's degree in education administration and supervision in 1972 while working full-time.

During the early 1960s, the modern Civil Rights Movement was bringing about great social change in the U.S. and change was coming to Huntsville, Ala., as well. In late 1964, Holifield became the first African American police officer to be promoted to the position of traffic officer in the elite traffic division. Within a few months he trained and was promoted as the first black motorcycle officer.

After leaving the Huntsville Police Department in 1966, he began a new career

with the U.S. Ordnance Missile & Munitions Center and School (USAOMMCS) at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., as an electronics instructor. The Civil Rights Movement had extended to Redstone Arsenal, and minorities were employed to work in many of the different agencies. Desegregation was difficult, but over the years many minorities who faced the hardship of working in a hostile environment became outstanding employees.

During his 33 years of employment with the federal government, Holifield held numerous positions at USAOMMCS, where he served as a training instructor/developer in missile electronics. He was the first developer to complete a course of instructions under the new guidelines of Systems Engineering. Throughout his career with USAOMMCS, he also served two tours overseas in West Germany. Upon his return from the second tour to USAOMMCS in 1983, he was assigned as a Senior Evaluator, and later promoted as the first black Supervisor as Chief of Internal Evaluation Division at USAOMMCS, served as Acting Director, Directorate of Evaluation and Standardization and Chief of Staff and Faculty Development Division at USAOMMCS.

Holifield has been affiliated with numerous organizations in the communities. Over the years, he has been recognized for his job related duties as well as



for his volunteer work. He and the late Charles Winslow were the host and co-host of "Talkfest," a community affairs talk show that aired on WAFF-TV 48 (NBC) for 14 years.

He has headed the AAMU Alumni Association, Inc.; the Alabama A&M University Community Resource Group; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (#292), Past Basileus (3 times) of Xi Omicron Chapter; Ancient Egyptian Arabic Nobles of Mystic Shrine (AEANOMS); Honorary Past Imperial Potentate; Past Imperial Deputy of Desert Alabama; Past Imperial Deputy of Oasis Huntsville; Past Potentate Al Azhar Temple 195; Past President of Deep South Shriners; and many others.

Married to the late and former Janie Adams of Sheffield, Ala., Holifield's union was blessed with two children, Dr. Quintaniay Holifield of Baltimore, Md., and Lt. Colonel Freeman Holifield, Jr., Kessler AFB, Miss. He is also the proud grandfather of Freeman Holifield, III.

"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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This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, February 23, 2025

Seventh Sunday
after the
Epiphany



(Track 2, Year C)

First Lesson:

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalms 37:1-12, 41-42

Second Lesson:

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

GOSPEL:

Luke 6:27-38



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November-March: Tuesday - Saturday: 10am - 4pm & Sunday: noon - 4pm

AAMU Teams Secure Wins at Annual Hackathon

Two Alabama A&M University teams brought home prizes at the 2024-25 Innovate Alabama Entrepreneurship Hackathon. In its second year, the event centered on addressing critical challenges in Alabama's rural areas, such as limited access to STEM resources, the digital divide, and the lack of mentorship for youth in communities with populations under 50,000.

Students tackled these

issues head-on with innovative, actionable solutions aimed at creating lasting change.

Organized by The Alabama Collective, Alabama Power Foundation, and Innovate Alabama, the competition highlights the role of innovation in transforming underserved areas.

"This hackathon demonstrates Alabama's commitment to nurturing young minds while solving real-world

problems in our rural communities," said Chris Blake, a representative of the Alabama Power Foundation.

The day began with the Entrepreneurial Exchange Workshop, where participants engaged in expert-led discussions, received valuable mentorship, and refined their venture plans. The Top 10 teams advanced to the Pitch Finale, where the Top 5 delivered electrifying presentations to a panel

of esteemed judges. The following Alabama A&M student teams won second and third prize:

Second Place: \$3,000, PlaySmart
Third Place: \$3,000, BamaPath

For more information about the Innovate Alabama Hackathon and upcoming opportunities, visit www.thealabama-collective.com.



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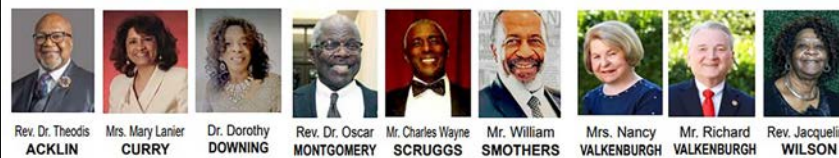
2500 Jordan Lane, Huntsville, AL



Introducing ...



The Rosetta James Foundation
19th Annual "Honoring Our Elders" Gala



Rev. Dr. Theodis ACKLIN Mrs. Mary Lanier CURRY Dr. Dorothy DOWNING Rev. Dr. Oscar MONTGOMERY Mr. Charles Wayne SCRUGGS Mr. William SMOTHERS Mrs. Nancy VALKENBURGH Mr. Richard VALKENBURGH Rev. Jacqueline WILSON

The Rosetta James Foundation is a registered 509(a)(2) Public Charity and educational organization founded for the sole purposes of providing scholarships to deserving students and recognizing the contributions of the elderly in the community while promoting volunteerism and community outreach.

Saturday, March 8, 2025

The Jackson Center
6001 Moquin Drive (Cummings Research Park)
Huntsville, Alabama
12 Noon

CLICK HERE

(for Tickets/Sponsorship)

<https://rosettajamesfoundation.swell.gives>

GUEST EDITOR/Brandon Brown: BHM and Pushing for the Changes We Seek

As we observe Black History Month, we're reminded that the political climate today feels deeply divided. Tensions around issues of race, justice, and equality are palpable, and it's easy to feel disillusioned by the seeming slow pace of progress.

Yet, as we reflect on the sacrifices and triumphs of Black leaders like Dr. William Hooper Councill, Adam Clayton Powell, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Coretta Scott King, we're also reminded that change requires faith, resilience, and a commitment to staying the course—especially

in challenging times.

Throughout history, Black leaders have faced enormous opposition, yet they remained steadfast in their pursuit of justice. They taught us that enduring change doesn't happen overnight—it's a long, difficult road, filled with setbacks and victories alike. Staying the course is about continuing the work even when the path seems unclear or the obstacles insurmountable. It's about showing up day after day, knowing that the fight for justice is far from easy, but it is always worth it.

Staying faithful, as these



leaders demonstrated, means more than holding onto hope; it means committing to action even when the outcome

feels uncertain. Faith isn't passive—it's active, and it drives us to keep moving forward, even when it seems like the political

climate is pushing us backward. It's about believing in the power of small, consistent efforts to create lasting change, even when the

larger world seems chaotic or indifferent.

This Black History Month, as we honor the legacies of those who paved the way, let's take their example to heart. Our charge is to stay the course and remain faithful to the work of justice, equality, and community building. We may face challenges, but through perseverance and faith, we can continue to push for the changes we seek, just as those who came before us did.

Brandon Brown
Guest Editor
The Valley Weekly

Slim Majority of Americans Confident about Reaching Financial Goals

(BPT) - Retirement is a journey, and every milestone counts: New Empower research shows that Americans across generations are making progress toward retirement, from building emergency funds to paying off debt. While each generation faces unique financial challenges, many share a strong sense of optimism about their financial futures.

Key takeaways

* *Optimism prevails:* 60% of Americans feel confident about reaching their financial goals, with Millennials leading at 63%.

* *Money moves:* Nearly half of Americans (47%) have successfully paid off their debts, 40% have achieved homeownership, 39% have established an emergency fund, and 32% have started securing retirement savings.

* *Retirement reality check:*

Americans aim to retire at 62 but expect they may work until 70. Rising living costs (70%), insufficient savings (50%), inflation (48%), and unexpected financial emergencies (39%) are among the common factors contributing to adjusted timelines.

* *Through the ages:* Americans aim to purchase a home by 38, build an emergency fund by 40, pay off debt by 42, achieve financial independence by 46, and accumulate retirement funds by 47.

* *Planning for success:* Nearly half of Americans (49%) have a clear financial plan to meet their money goals.

Progressing toward financial goals

Unretired Americans are making headway on key financial goals, with nearly half (47%) having paid off debt and 40% achieving homeownership. Many are also building a financial cushion - 39% have established an emergency

fund, while 32% have started securing retirement savings.

For those still working toward these milestones, optimism is high. Sixty percent believe they will reach their goals, with Millennials (63%) being the most confident. On average, Americans aim to accomplish their financial milestones at specific ages: purchasing a home by 38, building an emergency fund by 40, paying off debt by 42, achieving financial independence by 46, and securing retirement funds by 47.

Nearly half of Americans (49%) have a clear financial plan to meet these targets, including 49% of Millennials and 50% of Gen Z. Still, 32% recognize they need a structured plan, particularly among Gen X (37%).

Planning for retirement

Some 73% believe they'll retire at the age they envision, although 27% still express concerns about timing. This sentiment varies slightly by generation, with Gen Z (28%) and Millennials (27%) most likely to feel this uncertainty, followed by Gen X (26%) and Baby Boomers (11%).

To bolster their retirement plans, most Americans (67%) are focusing on reducing or eliminating debt, and many (63%) are supplementing their income with multiple jobs. Among younger generations, 68% of Gen Zers have taken on side hustles to help save for retirement, while 24% of both Millennials and Gen Zers are considering job changes for higher salaries.

Almost half of Americans (48%) are confident they'll maintain their

current lifestyle in retirement, with Gen Z (51%) being the most optimistic. Setting realistic goals and making intentional financial decisions - like minimizing debt, pursuing additional income, and securing higher wages - can empower Americans to retire on their own terms and enjoy the lifestyle they envision.

Navigating retirement setbacks

Most Americans (54%) are on track to retire as planned, though some feel they have to delay an average of 6 to 8 years due to economic factors like rising living costs (70%), insufficient savings (50%), inflation (48%), and unexpected financial emergencies (39%). On average, Americans are targeting an average retirement age of 62 but anticipate they may

work until around 70.

For those concerned about the potential impact of job instability, 49% are mindful of how an unexpected layoff might affect their retirement plans. This concern is shared across generations, with Gen X (52%), Millennials (48%), Gen Z (47%), and Baby Boomers (26%) reporting varying degrees of worry.

Building an emergency savings fund, regularly reviewing your retirement plan, and adjusting your budget as needed can help you stay on track. Seeking advice from a financial planner can also offer extra security and flexibility to navigate unexpected challenges.

Methodology

Empower commissioned a survey of 1,006 Americans in September 2024.

NOTES OF A NATIVE SON

THE HIGH COST OF HIDDEN INVENTORY

by afroblastik [John 'Jahni' Moore]

Years ago, while still a college student, I worked at Toys R Us. Every so often we would have to do inventory. This allowed us to see how much stock we had on hand, how much we had to sell, and what was needed to continue to do business with the public. One particular season, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNTs) were all the craze. I remember climbing high in the rows of TMNTs to find that precise turtle a customer was looking for. Yes, we had a boatload of them. At some point, however, we found ourselves short on Donatello, one of the turtles. Then, there were no Donatellos at all. Even still, I would climb the turtle wall and pour through the turtles just for customer satisfaction. For weeks, we turned away customer after customer looking for Donatello. One particular day, I was in the stockroom making some space and noticed a couple of large boxes turned on their sides. I boosted myself onto the shelf and pulled the boxes forward. Popping them open with my trusty boxcutter, I found gold. Or rather I found what

we had been needing -- Donatellos. Somehow, during inventory, someone had failed to see the boxes. For weeks, Toys R Us had been losing money on what we already had because no one recognized we had them.

Recognition, like taking inventory, is a way of taking stock. It has a way of offering us a moment of pause, a rare opportunity to reflect on what we have and the journey we've traveled. A couple of weeks ago, I had the privilege of being honored by two organizations at a local ceremony. As the announcer read through my accolades, I found myself momentarily detached, almost as if I were hearing about someone else. For a brief moment, I had to glance at the screen and remind myself that they were speaking about me.

It wasn't until later that I truly internalized the significance of that moment. How often do we take inventory of our accomplishments, truly



measuring the depth of our impact and the level we have attained? It is easy to get caught in the constant momentum of striving for more without ever assessing the full weight of what we have already achieved. Yet, taking inventory of our journey allows us to recalibrate our valuation of both our efforts and our worth in the marketplace.

This realization brought back a powerful statement that a coach shared with me last year. In response to my dismissiveness about my achievements, he said, "Normalizing greatness creates undervalued experiences." At the time I thought it was deep but still didn't grasp the power of the words. I refused to take inventory.

I was still too focused on the next thing. When innovation and excellence becomes our standard, we sometimes fail to recognize it as such. What was once an extraordinary feat becomes routine, and in that normalization, we diminish the very experiences that once held immense value. Also, we have to consider how our upbringing plays into this thing of humility. Perhaps we grew up in a family or environment where bragging or claiming credit was seen as a negative. To counteract this we go full tilt in the opposite direction. In actuality, it may not be humility at all but simply undervaluing ourselves by default.

This is a double-edged sword. On one hand, setting a high bar for ourselves drives continuous growth and improvement. On the other, failing to acknowledge and appreciate our own milestones can lead to an undervaluation of our contributions. If we don't recognize our own great-



ness, how can we expect others to?

Thus, it is crucial to practice intentional reflection. Take moments to acknowledge how far we've come, celebrate the impact we've made, and recognize the value we bring to the table. Understanding our worth is not about arrogance—it is about alignment. It is about ensuring that our internal perception matches the reality of our contributions.

I invite you to take inventory sometime soon. Don't hold back. Don't let them feel foreign. Own them. Let them serve as a testament to the work you've put in and the lives you've touched. Because when you truly value yourself, the world will follow suit.

FaithSearch Will Assist in OU's Presidential Search

FaithSearch Partners has partnered with Oakwood University to assist with the search for a new President. Oakwood is the only HBCU within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, with a rich history spanning more than a century.

Dr. Leslie N. Pollard is moving into a new role this summer with the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists after serving nearly 15 years, the longest presidential tenure in school history.

The next President will be a servant-leader person



who has the ability to analyze complex issues, make decisions, and manage multiple responsibilities in a high-volume, diverse working environment.

Contact Ed Fry at ed-fry@faithsearchpartners.com or Andrew Westmoreland at [\[faithsearchpartners.com\]\(http://faithsearchpartners.com\).](mailto:awestmoreland@</p>
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Interested candidates can also forward a current resume/curriculum vitae via email. All inquiries will be held in strict confidence.

To learn more about FaithSearch Partners, visit www.faithsearchpartners.com.



Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Epsilon Gamma Omega Chapter 2025 Mother Daughter Brunch Committee



“Sunday Best” Debutante Ashlyn Tibbs and Donnisia Rice Tibbs



Debutante Lauren Jordan and Mother Michelle Jordan



Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Epsilon Gamma Omega Chapter 2025 Mother Daughter Brunch chair (Mildred Blackshear), co-chair (Yawna Jones), Chapter President (Tonya Wood), Mother Daughter Brunch chair (Dr. Cheryl R. Davis)



“Exact Match” Debutante Justice Tolbert and Mother Tiffany Tolbert



Debutante Camiah Slay and Mother Calquista Johnson Slay

Scenes from EGO-AKA 2025 Mother-Daughter Brunch

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®, Epsilon Gamma Omega (EGO) Chapter celebrated its 2025 Mother Daughter Brunch on Saturday, January 25, with 47 lovely debutantes and mothers on the beautiful historically black college campus of Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University at the Ernest L. Knight Center

in Huntsville, Ala. “PEARLfect Pairings of Timeless Grace” was the theme for this year’s Brunch. Dr. Cheryl R. Davis (chair), Jillian D. Lockhart (co-chair) and the Mother Daughter Brunch committee were related to honor the beautiful mother-daughter bond with delightful tributes, gifts for the

mothers and fun-filled games featuring favorite songs to engage all guests present.

This year, EGO introduced the Mother and Daughters walking down the runway in their “Sunday Best” and dress alike attire.

New York City has nothing on our Mothers and Daughters. There

were fashions from Giorgio’s to Coco Chanel on the runway!

Following the greetings from Tonya Wood, EGO president, the occasion was given by Jillian D. Lockhart (co-chair). The entertainment was provided by local saxophonist Tommy Friend, who serenaded the guests

during the brunch with beautiful music. As the guests dined on a delicious meal prepared by Aramark, attendees enjoyed a video highlighting memories of the mothers and daughters, prepared by Veronica Collins, member of the Mother-Daughter Brunch committee.

The Debutante Pre-

sentation and Ball chair (Mildred Blackshear) and co-chair (Yawna Jones) provided remarks and announcements, as the 47 young ladies prepare to be officially presented at the 66th Debutante Presentation and Ball on February 21 at the Von Braun Center, Saturn Ball Room, Huntsville, Ala.