

A Few Breast Cancer Fighters from the Past - p. 8

FREE

PRESTON: Stand for Righteousness - p. 4

Friday
October 3, 2025
Vol. 12, No. 5
ValleyWeeklyllc.com

SALUTE!
Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Mrs. Ruby Ford

"Grab the broom of anger and drive off the beast of fear." - Zora Neale Hurston

Successful Aging Initiative 2025 Set for UCMBC

Individuals aged 65 and older now outnumber children in 11 states, and that number is climbing. The Alabama Co-operative Extension System's Successful Aging Initiative (SAI) Conference is the ideal event to get the latest resources for older adults in the state.

The SAI Conference is being held on Thursday, Oct. 2, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at its tradition-

al location, Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. The church is located at 315 Winchester Rd. in Huntsville, Alabama.

Admission is free and lunch is provided, but participants are encouraged to pre-register at aces.edu/go/SuccessfulAging25.

This year's SAI Conference theme, Bloom! Don't With-er - Aging Means Living, celebrates



the vitality, beauty and growth that come with aging. Rather than viewing growing older as a time of decline, the conference shows how to embrace aging as a season to

flourish.

"SAI 2025 will address issues relevant to aging, health, financial, personal care and legal education—all topics impacting how one ages successfully," said Danielle Rudolph, event coordinator and site director of the Virginia Caples Lifelong Learning Institute (VCLLI). "We invite older adults, their families, and caregivers

to spend the day with us."

The keynote speaker is Alabama State Rep. Laura Hall, a long-time supporter of the SAI Conference and the VCLLI. Hall is an active and influential older adult who embodies this year's theme.

The Alabama-based motivational speaker Ole Pete Key is also expected to deliver a captivating presentation.



BOLLYWOOD! The AUM Foundation will hold Bollywood Night 2025 on Saturday, October 18, at the Von Braun Center, 700 Monroe Street SW, Huntsville, Ala., at 6 p.m. Proceeds from the festive evening of dinner and dance will help support the AUM Foundation, established in 1970 as a non-profit empowering girls through education. For additional information, visit www.aumfoundationusa.org, (256) 988-3999 or (334) 603-5919.

HPD, Parks & Rec Ready for Annual Halloween Event

A popular fall tradition is returning to Huntsville this October.

The Huntsville Police Department (HPD) and Huntsville Parks and Recreation invite the community to the fourth annual Halloween Party and Haunted House on Saturday, Oct. 18, from 3-8 p.m. at the Jaycee Building

at John Hunt Park, 2200 Jaycee Way. Admission is free and open to all ages.

"We love hosting events that bring our community together, and this one has quickly become a favorite," HPD Chief Kirk Giles said. "Our officers look forward to greeting kids, handing out candy and building con-

nections with the community in a safe and fun environment."

Attendees can enjoy an evening of family-friendly fun, featuring:

- Trick or treat
- Bounce houses
- Family-friendly entertainment and carnival games
- Food trucks
- Haunted House

(opens at 5 p.m.)

Parks and Recreation Director James Gossett said the Halloween Party has grown into one of the City's most anticipated events.

"Each year, more families turn out to enjoy the activities, and the energy just keeps building," Gossett said. "Together with Hunts-

ville Police, we're able to give people a positive Halloween experience they can count on year after year."

Costumes are encouraged but not required. Local vendors and non-profit organizations will also be on site with candy booths, adding to the festive atmosphere.

The Valley Weekly

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Washington One Minute

by Ron Hamm

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

1. CONGRESS. The Senate returned to session Monday and turned back to the \$1 trillion National Defense Authorization bill, with two unrelated votes scheduled for 5:30 p.m. The House was not expected to be in session this week, but that could change depending on the outcome of a bipartisan meeting that was set to take place at the White House at 3 p.m. Monday to determine if the federal government will shut down beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday (October 1). On September 19, the House narrowly approved an appropriations measure on a 217-212 vote to keep the government open through Nov. 21, which the Senate failed to pass on a 44-48 vote (60 votes were needed). The Senate also turned away the Democrats' alternative measure on a 47-45 vote that would have funded the government through Oct 31, but also would have restored Medicaid cuts, renewed the COVID-era Obamacare

enhanced subsidies, unfrozen federal foreign aid funding, and barred OMB from rescinding funds in the future. Senate Democrats held a virtual meeting Sunday to discuss the upcoming shutdown, and the House recess notwithstanding, House Democrats returned to DC Monday to hold a caucus meeting.

2. EXECUTIVE BRANCH. After abruptly canceling a meeting scheduled for last Thursday with House Democratic Leader Jeffries (D-NY) and Senate Democratic Leader Schumer (D-NY), the President later invited them to the White House for a meeting Monday, along with GOP leaders, to discuss the imminent shutdown of the federal government on Tuesday night.

The White House's Office of Management and Budget sent out a memo last week instructing federal agencies, in the event of a federal shutdown, to use the opportunity to conduct mass layoffs of federal employees—except for the War Department and

Homeland Security Department. On Tuesday, the President was set to attend a meeting with all War Department personnel in command positions holding the rank of one-star general or rear admiral and above, as well as their senior enlisted leaders, who have been summoned from around the world to the Marine Corps University at Quantico, VA, by War Secretary Hegseth. On Sunday, Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek sued the Trump administration to halt the planned deployment of 200 Oregon National Guard troops to the City of Portland for 60 days to protect federal property in areas where protests are happening or expected.

3. SUPREME COURT. In another victory for the administration, on Friday, the Supreme Court allowed the administration to withhold nearly \$4 billion in foreign-aid funding, pausing a ruling by a federal judge in Washington, D.C., that would have required the government to commit to spending the funds by Sept. 30, the end of the government's fiscal year. It was the third time the administration had come to the Supreme Court seeking temporary relief in the challenge to the funding freeze. Also on Friday, the administration petitioned the Court to allow the govern-

ment to carry out its ban on birthright citizenship, which is on hold due to injunctions issued by lower courts. The Supreme Court will begin its 2025-26 term next Monday (October 6).

4. NEW TARIFFS. Last Thursday, the President announced a new 100% tariff starting on Wednesday (October 1) on imported patented pharmaceutical products unless their manufacturers are actively building plants in the U.S. According to the Associated Press, the U.S. imported \$233 billion worth of pharmaceutical and medicinal products in 2024.

5. DOMESTIC TERRORISM TASK FORCE. Last week, citing the shooting of Charlie Kirk and violence

against ICE officers, the President announced that he was directing the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force to develop a national strategy to investigate, disrupt, and dismantle all stages of organized political violence and domestic terrorism, including all entities and individuals involved in political violence and intimidation aimed at to suppressing lawful activity or obstructing the rule of law.

Hamm Consulting Group
1717 K Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20006
T: 202-596-8384
rhamm@hammconsulting.com
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Council Meetings

Huntsville City Council's regular meetings are held on the 1st floor of the Municipal Building.

The meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

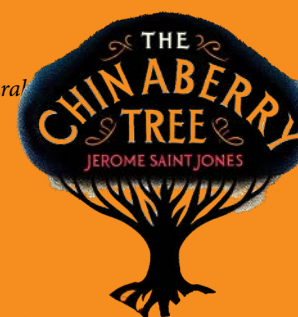
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**Editorial Consultant/
Senior Editor**
Jerome Saintjones, Ed.S.

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Linda Burruss

Advertising Associate
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- Contributing Editors -
tim allston
Minister Preston Brown
Gloria B. Caldwell
Ron Hamm
Gary T. Whitley, Jr.
-and-
“Aunt Irma”

Photographers
Anthony “Gip” Gibson
Jerome Saintjones

Website Administrator
Calvin Farier

Mailing Address:
The Valley Weekly
P. O. Box 893 - Huntsville, AL 35804
(256) 651-9028
www.valleyweeklyllc.com
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The Valley Weekly
Ad Rates Single Issue

Back Cover	10x10-inches	\$1,500
Full Page	10x10 inches	\$1,200
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Half Page	Horizontal	
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Sixteenth Page		
	2.5x2.5	\$75
Classified	1 col.x1 inch	\$100/Flat Fee

Laughter, Legacy and Advocacy: A Night to Remember for CAJA of Madison County

On Thursday evening, September 25, 2025, the Stone Event Center at Campus 805 was filled with community leaders, friends, and advocates united for a powerful cause: supporting the Court Appointed Juvenile Advocates (CAJA) of Madison County. The evening’s spotlight was on the Honorable Mac McCutcheon, who—after decades of service in law enforcement, the Alabama House of Representatives, Chairman of the Madison County Commission, and leadership across our state—was honored in a way few could have predicted: by being roasted. The Honorable Frank Barger, Probate Judge of Madison County (left), presided over the program and the Live Auction.



The roast, led with good-natured ribbing and heartfelt admiration, featured longtime friends and colleagues including Mr. Blaine Galliher, Principal with Windom Galliher & Associates; Mr. Mike Hill, Superintendent of the Alabama State Banking Department; and Mr. Cam Ward, Director of the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles. Together, they shared laughter, stories, and gentle jabs that reflected more than 50 years of Chairman McCutcheon’s public service. A few surprise roasters added even more warmth and humor to the night, ensuring that the honoree was both celebrated and lovingly teased.

Beyond the laughter and camaraderie, the evening served a greater mission. Every dollar raised goes toward empowering CAJA’s work of training and supporting volunteers who serve as advocates for children navigating the complexities of the juvenile court system. These children, often from vulnerable and underrepresented backgrounds, need voices of care, protection, and justice.

In a city as diverse and growing as Huntsville, it is vital that organizations like CAJA thrive. The safety and well-being of our children, particularly those who may lack stability or support, is a shared responsibility. Events like this remind us that while public service deserves recognition, it also calls us to step up collectively for the next generation.

Chairman Mac McCutcheon’s roast was more than an evening of fun; it was a reminder of the legacy of leadership and the power of laughter to bring people together for a cause greater than ourselves. The blend of storytelling, service, and solidarity made it an unforgettable night for Madison County. Until next week ...



Dorothy

SEPTEMBER 26 - SERENA WILLIAMS - Serena Jameka Williams is an American professional tennis player. The Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) ranked her world No. 1 in singles on eight separate occasions between 2002 and 2017. She reached the No. 1 ranking for the first time on July 8, 2002. On her sixth occasion, she held the ranking for 186 consecutive weeks, tying the record set by Steffi Graf for the most consecutive weeks as No. 1 by a female tennis player. In total, she has been No. 1 for 319 weeks, which ranks third in the “Open Era” among female players behind Steffi Graf and Martina Navratilova. She won the ‘Laureus Sportswoman of the Year’ award four times (2003, 2010, 2016, 2018), and in December 2015, she was named Sportsperson of the Year by Sports Illustrated magazine.

- Blackcelebritybirthdays.org



THE VALLEY WEEKLY

VALLEY DEATHS



NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

2501 Carmichael Avenue NW - Huntsville, AL 35816
www.nelmsmemorial.net- (256) 539-8189

Funeral service for **MS. BARBARA ANN TOWNSEND** (b. 1961) was held Saturday, September 27, at the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Robery Peavy officiating.

Funeral service for **MR. RANDOLPH THOMAS** (b. 1960) was Saturday, September 27, at First Church of God in Christ.

Memorial service for **MR. GARY D. BAILEY** (b. 1956) was Friday, September 26, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MR. RONLY J. PARRISH** (b. 1960) was Thursday, September 18, in the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel with Elder Dr. Larry Smith officiating.

ROYAL FUNERAL HOME

4315 Oakwood Avenue NW - Huntsville, AL 35810
www.royalfh.com - (256) 534-8481

Funeral service for **MR. JEROME KEITH GARNER** (b. 1969) will be held at 12 noon, Saturday, October 4, at the Apostolic True Temple Church, 3000 Stringfield Road, Huntsville, Ala., with Bishop Jerry Townsend officiating.

Funeral service for **MR. KENYON LOVELL PATTON** (b. 1967) was Saturday, September 27, at the Royal Chapel of Memories with Elder Dr. Maurice Childress officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. SHIRLEY WOODS GILSTRAP** (b. 1953) was Wednesday, September 24, at the Syler Tabernacle, 904 Oakwood Avenue, Huntsville, Ala., with Elder Richmond Malone officiating.

Funeral service for **DR. ALEXANDER WESLEY SEAWOOD** (b. 1953) was Sunday, September 21, at the New Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, 3912 Pulaski Pike NW, Huntsville, Ala., with Pastor Nelson Stokes officiating.

SERENITY FUNERAL HOME

2505 University Drive NW - Huntsville, AL 35816
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Funeral service for **MR. JAYDEN "DEUCE MAN" McClain** (b. 2009) was Saturday, September 28, at Fellowship of Faith, 3703 Memorial Parkway NW, Huntsville, Ala.

Spiritual Game Plan

PRESTON BROWN'S



Today's Spiritual Game Plan: "Stand for Righteousness"

Matthew 5:11-12 says, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." It goes on to say "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

We live in a time when current events motivate us to be committed to causes. Black Lives Matter was motivated by the disproportionate number of black people killed by law enforcement. Many people became committed to that cause. The "Me Too" movement addressed sexual harassment and assault of so many women. This also caused people to commit to a cause.

In Jesus's time, one motivation for commitment to a cause was life or death. Many Christians at the time were committed to Jesus and were willing to die for Him. Are we willing to stand for the things in life that really matter and can make a difference? Are we willing to stand for the things that Jesus represents, like love, peace, joy, and humility?

ter, we will always have opposition. However, whenever we commit to a cause that is long overdue, and stand firm on what we believe, our reward will be great. The

have a voice to say, "Not anymore." Remember, if we don't stand for something, we will fall for anything.

May God grant you spiritual success in realizing the things that really matter and then standing for the truth because it is the right thing to do.

Question: What cause have you needed to commit to but failed to do so?

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.



Whenever we stand for things that mat-

reward comes when lives are changed and people



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What Are You Reaping This Fall, the Season of Harvest?

This marks the first full week of autumn—a season with deep leadership lessons for us as REEL people—Recovering Ego-holics and Emerging Leaders.

Our Four Leadership Seasons

An Enemy Called Average author John L. Mason reminds us that seasons aren't just dates on a calendar, but carry leadership lessons:

- Winter is hibernation. Growth is happening underground—but growth nonetheless. Some of our best ideas are forming here.
- Spring breaks up the fallow ground, plants seeds that will one day blossom. It's uncomfortable but they need growth.
- Summer's heat refines like a furnace, separating the dross from the gold or silver.
- And then comes Fall—where we gather in the harvest of all that came before.

Leadership, like Farming, is Seasonal

You can't skip the process. Each season sets up the next.

And my question to you—and to myself—is simple:

What are we harvesting in this season?

- Did we plant the right seeds?
- Did we do the right kind of weeding—removing distractions, cutting back what was choking growth?
- Did we water faithfully—staying consistent when nobody was watching?
- Did we allow the natural sunlight, winds, and rains—the stresses of life—to grow us instead of break us?

Make no mistake: what we're harvesting now results directly from what we planted and tended earlier.

Harvesting the WHO

An old Chinese Proverb says:

If you are planning for a year, sow rice.

If you are planning for a decade, plant trees.

But if you are planning for a lifetime, cultivate people.

That's leadership harvesting. Yes, projects and accomplishments matter. But our real leadership test is the people we cultivate.

For those of us who are REEL, the harvest isn't just about what we did, but about who we've grown.

Fall isn't just about celebration. It's also about preparation.

- Preparing for the next winter of hidden growth.
- Preparing for the next spring of planting new seeds.
- Preparing for the next summer of refining heat.

So that come Fall 2026, we will reap a harvest like never before.

That's the rhythm. That's the leadership cycle.

So, again: What are you harvesting this fall?

Not just in your projects, not just in your career, but in the people around you.

Fall is not just a season to harvest—it's a season to prepare for the next winter, spring, and summer.

Until next time, Enjoy the Harvest.



Tim Allston

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

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Millennial Moment

by Gloria B. Caldwell

Love It More than You Hate It ...

Reflect on your desires and ask yourself: what would it take for you to achieve them? Truly consider this, as you may need to make significant changes in your life to get there.

Start by identifying and transforming any bad habits, shifting your mindset, re-evaluating your circle of friends, and addressing any unmanaged behaviors. Develop a clear plan for how to move forward. What steps will you take? Once you have this plan, it's time to implement it—starting now! Right now!



You know what? It's going to be tough because it's a new way of doing things for you. It will be challenging, uncomfortable, and frustrating, but you need to learn to love it more than you hate it!! You can do it. One day at a time. If you don't, you'll

fall back into your old ways. Mediocrity, laziness, procrastination, and half-benching it.

That's a cleaned-up version of half doing things. Why would you want to govern your life like that? You don't, right? Good. So let's love it more than we

hate it. Get used to being uncomfortable and embrace the change that can shift our lives into places we aspire to be.

God loves you, and so do I.

He's given you a gift; open it.

Lace Up! Let's Go!

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The Valley Weekly VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

October 3-4

Comedian Daphnique
Springs
Huntsville Levity Live

North Alabama
Huntsville Jaycee's Build-
ing
Huntsville, Ala.
11 a.m.-4 p.m.

October 4

"Fall for All"
Huntsville Park and
Recreation
Big Spring International
Park
Downtown Huntsville
10 a.m.-1 p.m.

October 11

Homecoming Football
vs. Mississippi Valley
State
Louis Crews Stadium
Alabama A&M Univer-
sity
Huntsville, Ala.
2 p.m.

Alabama A&M Uni-
versity Homecoming
Concert
JT with Jeezy, Young
Nudy and BossMan
Dlow - Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.-7:30 p.m.

November 8

BULLDOG Football
vs. Grambling State
Louis Crews Stadium
Alabama A&M Univer-
sity
Huntsville, Ala.
2 p.m.

November 15

BULLDOG Football
vs. Florida A&M
Louis Crews Stadium
Alabama A&M Univer-
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Huntsville, Ala.
2 p.m.

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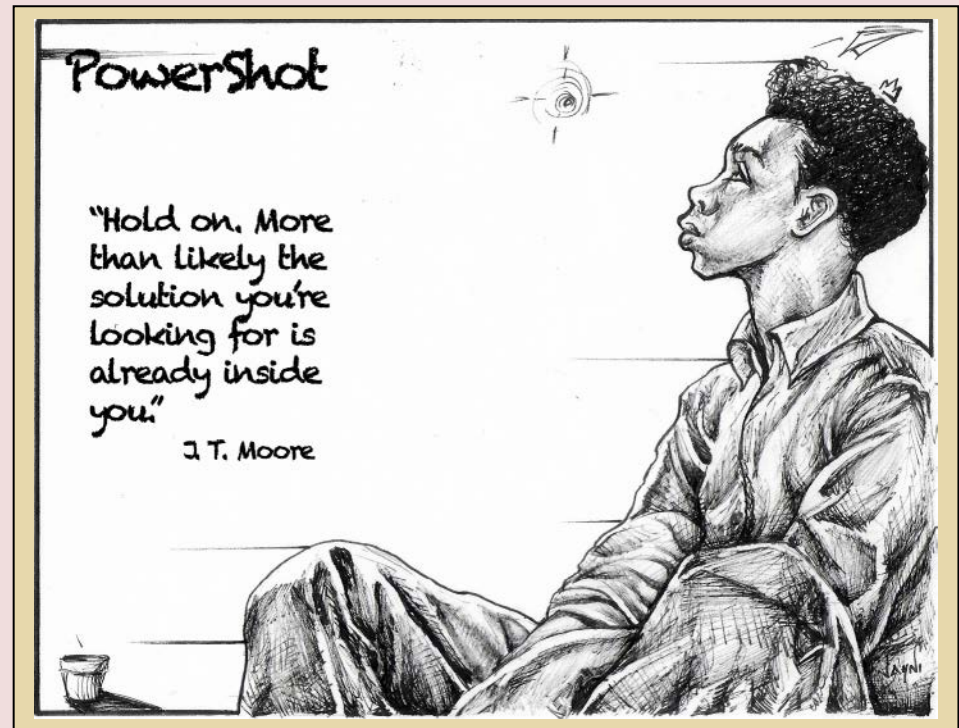
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**ON THIS DAY**

On this day in Black history, **October 3**, the nation's first Black-owned radio station, WERD, began broadcasting in Atlanta in 1949 under the ownership of Jesse B. Blayton Sr.. Also, in 1974, Frank Robinson became the first Black manager in Major League Baseball when he was named manager of the Cleveland Indians. Additionally, Nat King Cole made history in 1956 as the first Black performer to host his own TV show.



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

Mrs. Ruby Ford

Mrs. Ruby M. Ford was born in Fayetteville, Tenn., and raised in New Market, Ala. She was born to the late Alex and Ruby Adams, the eldest of 13 children. She received her elementary and secondary education in the Madison County School System. Ford enjoyed high school and participated in several school activities. While in high school, her teachers stressed striving for excellence and empowered her to do so.

Mrs. Ford successfully completed course work at University of Alabama in Huntsville, Athens State University and Calhoun Community College. In 2005, she graduated magna cum laude from Alabama A&M University with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting. She retired after serving 28 years at the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Parks Division. Most of her state service was with Monte Sano State Park in Huntsville, Ala. While at the state park, Ford managed all recordation procedures and bookkeeping processes. She also manages accounting for Mack Ford's Construction, Incorporated, which is a business

owned and operated by her husband for over 50 years.

She is a faithful member of the Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Larry Davidson, Jr., and is currently a member of the Deaconess Ministry and serves as Sunday School Teacher in the Adult Department. She has served formally in many capacities, such as president of the Deaconess Ministry and president of the Mud Creek North Alabama Missionary Baptist Association Deaconess Ministry. She enjoys being a workshop coordinator, seminar leader, event coordinator, as well as presenting at various speaking engagements. Very active in her community, Ford is a member of the Christian Cancer Support Group of North East Madison County, Alabama Democratic Conference, Alabama New South Coalition, and Habitat for Humanity of Madison County Women's Build Guild.

Mrs. Ford has received several honors in recognition of outstanding accomplishments in her profession and contributions to her community. In 1998, she received a



Certificate of Appreciation from Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church for Educational Services rendered from 1997 to 1998. In 2005, she was honored as an Outstanding Employee from the State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. In 2009, she received the Habitat for Humanity Women's Build Guild Award for dedicated service and unselfish contribution.

Ford enjoys reading and traveling. She and her husband are world travelers who have toured six of the seven continents in the world. She is married to Mack Ford and they are the proud parents of two children Vanessa and Michael. They have four grandchildren. Michael, Mone', Ruby and Maya.



"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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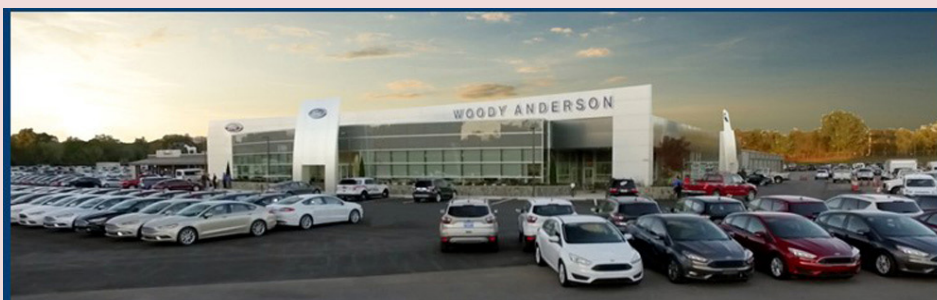
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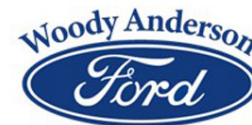
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AUNT IRMA MAKES IT PLAIN...

A Few Courageous Black Fighters of Breast Cancer

Diahann Carroll
(1935–2019)



Trailblazing actress and singer, first Black woman to star in a non-stereotypical role in her own TV series (Julia). She died from complications of breast cancer after a long battle.

Rosalind Cash
(1938–1995)



Actress known for films such as Omega Man and her work on stage and television. She died of breast cancer in Los Angeles.

Varetta Dillard
(1933–1993)



R&B singer with Atlantic Records in the 1950s, known for "Mercy, Mr. Percy." She succumbed to breast cancer.

Mfon (Mmekutmfon) Essien
(1967–2001)



Acclaimed Nigerian-American photographer. She chronicled her illness in her book Mfon: A Photographic Essay on Life before dying of breast cancer at 34.

Alaina Reed Hall
(1946–2009)



Actress best known for Sesame Street and 227. She died of breast cancer at 63.

Fannie Lou Hamer
(1917–1977)



Civil rights leader and voting rights activist. She died of breast cancer and hypertension in Mississippi.

Shirley Horn
(1934–2005)



Jazz pianist and singer celebrated for her subtle style. She died from complications of breast cancer.

Jackie Landry Jackson
(1941–1997)



Singer with the pioneering girl group The Chantels. She later became a court reporter and died of breast cancer.

Audre Lorde
(1934–1992)



Poet, essayist, feminist, and activist. She battled breast cancer for years, writing The Cancer Journals about her experience, and ultimately died of the disease.

Hattie McDaniel
(1893–1952)



Actress, singer, and radio performer; first African American to win an Academy Award (for Gone with the Wind). She died of breast cancer in Los Angeles.

Minnie Riperton
(1947–1979)



Singer-songwriter, known for "Lovin' You" and her five-octave vocal range. Diagnosed in 1976 and died of metastatic breast cancer three years later.

Carolyn Rodgers
(1940–2010)



Poet and essayist, widely associated with the Black Arts

Movement. Rodgers died

Margaret Walker
(1915–1998)



Poet and novelist, author of

For My People and Jubilee. She died of breast cancer in Jackson, Miss..



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AAMU Alumna Gets Four-Chair Turn on NBC's "The Voice"

When Alabama A&M University alumna Jasmine "Jazz" McKenzie took the stage for "The Voice" blind auditions last Monday night, she was praying for just one chair turn. She ended up getting four.

On the Season 28 premiere of NBC's Emmy Award-winning competition, McKenzie stunned coaches with her powerhouse rendition of Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do with It." Country legend Reba McEntire spun first, followed quickly by Niall Horan, Snoop Dogg, and Michael Bublé.

"It was overwhelming," McKenzie said. "As soon as I hit the last note, I was so overcome with emotion, I cried like a baby because I couldn't believe it."

Although Bublé turned his chair last, he ultimately won McKenzie to his team. McEntire even played her one "block" to keep Snoop Dogg from snatching the Birmingham native.

McKenzie's musical journey started early. "My mom sings. My grandmother. I come from a big music family," she said, noting that several relatives are members of

the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in Alabama. Her mother, Brenda McKenzie, is a familiar voice around Huntsville, often performing at Oakwood University. McKenzie grew up singing in church, and when it came time for college, she said Alabama A&M chose her. "They came to my high school in Birmingham for a college fair and I was accepted on site. From there, I was good. They made me their first choice, so I made them my first choice."

Once on "The Hill," she had a humorous introduction to campus life. She originally auditioned for the University Choir with "Amazing Grace," but Choir Director Dr. Horace Carney quickly redirected her. "He said, 'Amazing Grace? That's for the Gospel Choir. We're going to fix that!'" Carney accepted her after she auditioned again with the national anthem. "I ended up serving in the Gospel Choir, and that's where I grew," she said.

McKenzie also joined Sigma Alpha Iota, an international music fraternity, which helped spark her confidence as a performer



and put her on the path to pursuing music more seriously. She walked across the stage at AAMU's Spring 2018 Commencement, but her performance schedule kept her from completing a final summer class. By then, her career was already beginning to accelerate.

In 2023, she began earning attention as an opening act for headliners such as Chrisette Michele and Leela James, and even headlined at Huntsville's Panoply Festival. Those performances built her reputation as a dynamic live artist and eventually led to a life-changing opportunity.

"It all started with a DM I got on TikTok in February for this video that started gaining attention," she recalled. "At first, I thought

it was a scam. But when I got the same message on Instagram and through email, I called my friends – who are all AAMU grads – and we checked it out. It turned out to be real."

By June, McKenzie was in Los Angeles, one of 80 hopefuls auditioning for a coveted spot. When the pool was narrowed to 48

contestants, her parents flew out to cheer her on. "My mom's a singer, so it's a beautiful thing for me to carry out the legacy," McKenzie said. "She had to sacrifice for her children. Now I'm able to do the things she couldn't."

Her whole family has been celebrating the moment. "I have three brothers. They are so excited. And all my nieces and nephews saw me on the commercial and they freaked out," she said.

McKenzie said she's looking forward to returning to her alma mater soon. "I'm so excited, and I'm even more excited that I'll be home for Homecoming, because I don't want to

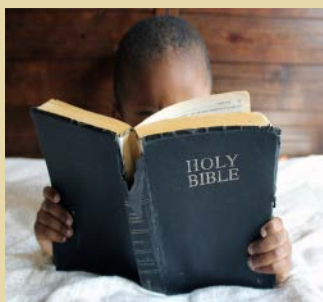
miss that."

She entered "The Voice" with one modest goal. "My thing was, if I could just get one chair turn, you know, just one. All I need is one," she said. "And to see that I got four? It blew my mind. God blew my mind. I was just so thankful, full of gratitude, and all the hard work paid off. That's what I saw. And it just felt good to finally, in a world of everybody being overlooked, including myself, to be chosen – for that one specific thing. It was beautiful to me."

You can watch McKenzie on "The Voice," which airs Monday and Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. CST on NBC.

This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, October 5, 2025
Seventeenth Sunday
after Pentecost



(Track 2, Year C)

First Lesson:

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Psalms 37:1-10

Second Lesson:

2 Timothy 1:1-14

GOSPEL:

Luke 17:5-10



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