

Huntsville's Black Suffragists, pp. 8-9

"Bradford's Motorcade!" p. 10



Friday
October 29, 2021
Vol. 8, No. 8
ValleyWeeklyllc.com

FREE

SALUTE!
Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Minister La Vern Spearman

"Every election is determined by the people who show up." - Larry J. Sabato

Human Relations Commission Chair Named

Willie Love, a retired Equal Opportunity Specialist for NASA who now works part-time at Alabama

Looking ahead, Love has several goals for the coming year. In addition to prepping the next set of HRC leaders,



HRC also plans to spend more time prioritizing and understanding the community's needs and educating the public about its mission.

Love, also a member of the Huntsville Police Citizens Advisory Council (HPCAC), said HRC will continue to evolve as the City's needs change.

- HuntsvilleAL.gov

For Love, a four-term board member, the group is also about creating a more welcoming environment where people from different walks of life feel seen and heard.

"It doesn't matter who you are or what you're about," he said. "If you have something you would like to share with us, then we want you there because we are an inclusive community. We believe all social groups should have an outlet to be able to talk about either the great things or the challenges that are going on in the community."

Commerce Addressing Chip Shortage

U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo is addressing the semiconductor chips shortage in particular and the supply chain disruptions overall, including support of the bipartisan CHIPS for America Act to incentivize domestic semiconductor investment. In September, the Commerce Department launched a voluntary Request for Information to understand and quantify where bottlenecks may exist, and earlier this week, the Department launched an early alert system to coordinate U.S. government resources to help resolve supply chain bottlenecks.

TVJS to Feature Curtis Lundy and Bobby Watson Oct. 29

Tennessee Valley Jazz Society-Huntsville is presenting some of the World's leading jazz musi-

quality **Education** and world-class **Entertainment** that positively impacts the **Economy**.

Without any question, due to the pandemic, the last few years have been the most challenging of TVJS 40 years. So, unfortunately, the organization was unable to celebrate its 40 years of community service as planned.

Through the many years TVJS has formed strong relationships with many jazz greats. Some of these multi-talented individuals include: Freddy Cole, Jimmy Heath, Roy Ayers, Houston Person, Marian McPartland, Richie Cole, Ken Watters, Devere Pride, Eric Essix, Bob Baldwin and Curtis Lundy. These artists are some that help make Jazz-the Only True American Art Form.

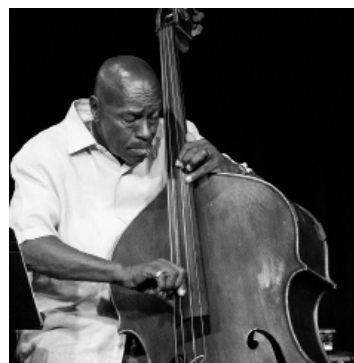
TVJS is honored that world-class

musicians, Curtis Lundy and Bobby Watson, are partnering with TVJS to celebrate the jazz society's 40th-year Anniversary.

The Tennessee Valley Jazz Society requests the support of jazz lovers to present this historical project and to help it achieve its goals.

To continue the 40th-Anniversary Celebration throughout 2022 and to prepare for the future of TVJS, TVJS aims to raise \$50,000 to fund the TVJS Future and Jazz Education Initiative.

For more information, visit www.tvjs.webs.com or call (256) 604-8172.



cians. The organization will feature Curtis Lundy (above) and Bobby Watson (bottom) with the UMOJA Quartet, Friday, October 29, at The Cooper House. The entire Tennessee Valley community is invited to join in this experience.

At the end of December 2021, the TVJS fiscal year, TVJS will have celebrated 40 years of community service.

For four decades, the Tennessee Valley Jazz Society has presented the 3E Initiative including:



The Valley Weekly

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Washington in One Minute



Here are the happenings in Washington, D.C., this week:

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-26).

3. COVID VACCINE FOR KIDS. On Oct. 26, a Food and Drug Administration advisory committee met to discuss data from Pfizer's vaccine trial among children aged 5 to 11, which could allow authorization for children under 12 by early November. According to the Pfizer study, the children who received doses that were one-third the size of the adult doses developed a robust immune response (reportedly with a 91% efficacy rate) after receiving the regimen of 2 shots 3 weeks apart.

4. SUPREME COURT EXPEDITES ABORTION CASES. Last Friday, the Supreme Court granted an unusual "certiorari before judgment," — i.e., a review before the court of appeals issues a final ruling — in a pair of cases challenging the Texas law that bans nearly all abortions after the 6th week of pregnancy. In two orders — setting the date for oral argument on Nov. 1 — the court granted requests by the Biden Administration and a group of Texas abortion providers to leap-frog proceedings in the

court of appeals, but it refused a request from the Department of Justice to reinstate a decision by a federal district judge, later overruled by the Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, who declared the law unconstitutional and temporarily blocked it. According to the SCOTUS blog website, the two orders suggest that the court will not directly weigh in on whether the Texas law, known as S.B. 8, violates the constitutional right to obtain an abortion. Instead, in the case brought by the Biden Administration, the court will consider whether the federal government has the right to sue in federal court to block the law's enforcement. And in the case brought by the abortion providers, the court will assess the law's unusual private-enforcement structure, which deputizes private individuals to bring lawsuits against doctors, clinics, or anyone else who aids or abets an abortion. On Dec. 1, the court is scheduled to hear a Mississippi abortion case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, that directly challenges *Roe v. Wade*. Under *Roe*, states cannot ban abortion prior to the point of viability, or around 24 weeks of pregnancy. Texas' law bans nearly all abortions after about 6 weeks and Mississippi's law (which was blocked by lower courts before it took effect) would ban nearly all abortions after 15 weeks.

5. FIRST TESTIMONY ON JANUARY 6 CAPITOL RIOT. CNN reported that former Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark will testify on Friday before the House Select Committee to Investigate the

January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, becoming the first Trump administration official to comply with a subpoena for an interview with the panel. The Senate Judiciary Committee said last week that there was credible evidence that Clark was involved in efforts to interrupt the peaceful transfer of power, citing his proposal to deliver a letter to state legislators in Georgia and others encouraging them to delay certification of election results and his urging that the Justice Department hold a news conference announcing it was investigating allegations of voter fraud. In related news, the full House voted last week to hold Trump Administration aide Stephen Bannon in contempt of Congress for failing to comply with a committee subpoena to appear for a deposition.

6. HUNGER. On Thursday, Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Senator Corey Booker (D-NJ) planned to introduce legislation that would start the process of convening a national White House confer-

ence on food nutrition hunger and health. Last month, Rep. McGovern held a round table focused on hunger on college campuses to highlight food security in America and estimated that as many as 59% of college students will confront food insecurity at some point threatening their ability to graduate and achieve their professional goals. According to a press release, the first and only White House conference focused on hunger and nutrition was convened in 1969. The conference helped spur the creation and expansion of programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for

Women Infants and Children, and the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program.

Hamm Consulting Group
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 840
Washington D.C. 20001
T: 202-596-8384
rhamm@hammconsulting.com
www.hammconsulting.com

*Dreams don't
work unless
you do."*

— John C. Maxwell

NAAACC Meetings

The North Alabama African American Chamber of Commerce (Huntsville) meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday at 12 noon.

The meeting location varies. Call (256) 564-7574.

Attend Huntsville City Council Meetings

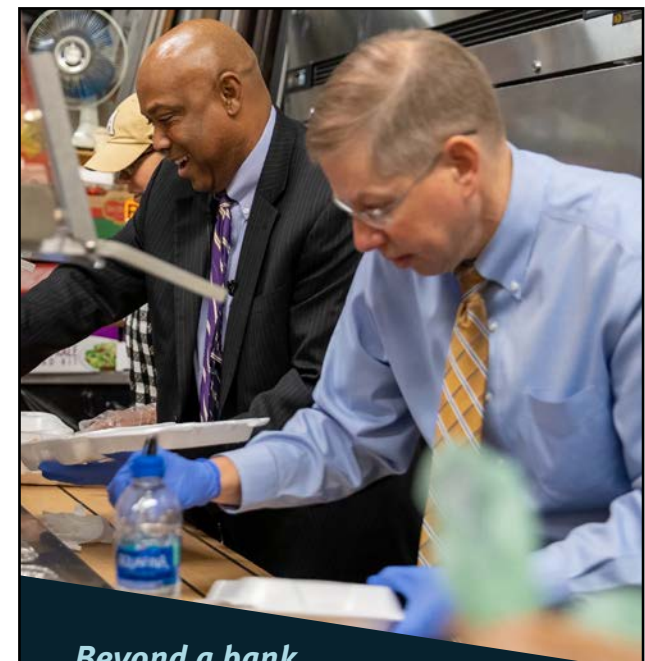
Huntsville City Council Regular Meetings are held in the City Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on the 2nd and 4th

Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m., Downtown Huntsville.

Watch the meetings live via HuntsvilleAL.gov/HSVTV or on the

City of Huntsville Facebook page (@huntsvillecity).

For more information, call (256) 427-5011.



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THE VALLEY WEEKLY

CHAMPION GAME PLAN

PRESTON BROWN

Finding Favor With God

Genesis 6:8 says, "But Noah Found Favor in the eyes of the Lord."

According to the Bible, during the days of Noah the entire human race had become wicked and evil. So God decided to destroy all the people on earth. Genesis 6:5 says, "Because every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil" and yet God found favor in Noah.

We should all be thankful for God's grace and favor, because where would we be without it and how can we be successful in our lives without the presence of God in our lives. Noah found favor in God's eyes and because of it he was successful in completing the task that God had for him.

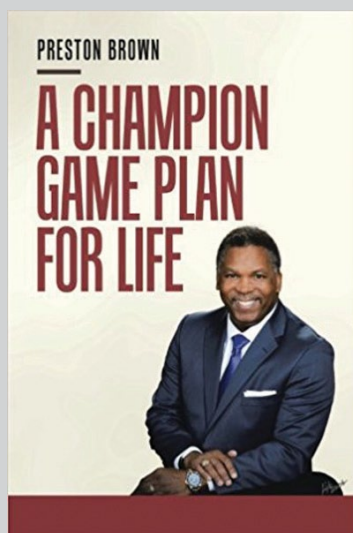
So, how do we find favor in the eyes of God in a wicked and evil world? Let us consider the characteristics of Noah.

In this scriptures, we find that he was a righteous man. Now the word *righteous* means that he was in right standings with God. Being in right standings with God means that you are *obedient* to his word. It also says that he was blameless among his people. Now it doesn't say he was perfect, it says he was *blameless*. Now blameless means innocent of wrong doings. And then the bible also tells us that Noah walked faithfully with God. Now to be *faithful* means you have to be patient and wait on God's timing.

If we are in right standings with God and if we are blameless among our people and if we walk faithfully with God, just like Noah, we will find success and favor in the eyes



of God as well as man, even in a wicked and evil world Stay encouraged, my brothers and sisters, and make sure you purchase a copy of my book, *A Champion Game Plan For Life*, at amazon.com.



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October 30

Universal Cheerleaders
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Von Braun Center
www.varsity.com

Magic City Classic
Legion Field
Birmingham, Ala.
2:30 p.m.

November 2

Huntsville Rotary Luncheon
East Hall 3
Von Braun Center
11:45 a.m.

Summit on Philanthropy
North Hall 1-3
Von Braun Center

November 5

Alabama A&M University
Alumni Hall of Fame
www.aamu.edu/alumni-halloffame

November 6

High School & Community College Day 2021
Louis Crews Stadium
8:30 a.m.

November 10

AUSA Veterans' Day Dinner
North Hall 1&2
Von Braun Center

November 20-21

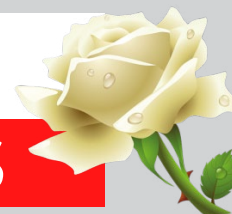
Exotic Pet Expo
Jaycee Community Building
Airport Road SW
Huntsville, Ala. - 4p.m.

December 11

Retirement Banquet
AAMU President Andrew Hugine, Jr.

THE VALLEY WEEKLY

VALLEY DEATHS



NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

2501 Carmichael Avenue NW - Huntsville, AL 35816 - (256) 539-8189

Graveside service for MR. CURTIS EUGENE NANCE (b. 1951) was held Sunday, October 24, at Valhalla Memory Gardens.

Funeral service for MR. CHASIE THOMPSON (b. 1970) was held Saturday, October 23, in the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Funeral service for MR. TYSON GREEN, SR. (b. 1976) was held Saturday, October 23, in the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Graveside service for MR. WILLIE LEWIS HAMMONDS, JR. will be Friday, October 22, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. at Valley View Memorial Gardens with Elder Dennis Green officiating.

Funeral service for DR. RICHARD SHOWERS, SR. (b. 1945) was held Thursday, October 21, 2021 at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church with Reverend Dr. O. Wendell Davis officiating.

ROYAL FUNERAL HOME

4315 Oakwood Avenue - Huntsville, AL 35810 - (256) 534-8481

Funeral service for DEACON DEWEY CHARLES SHAW (b. 1935) was held Friday, October 29, at Little Indian Creek Primitive Baptist Church (884 Indian Creek Road NW, Huntsville, Ala.) with Dr. Jerry L. Crutcher officiating.

Funeral service for MOTHER SALLIE TOWNSEND HOBBS (b. 1935) was held Sunday, October 24, at Saint James Primitive Baptist Church (1093 Fairbanks Street NW, Huntsville, Ala.) with Elder Billy Jones officiating.

Graveside service for MR. BOBBY JOE MARTIN (b. 1949) was held Saturday, October 23, at Arnett Cemetery (Arnett Road Madison, Ala.) with Pastor Roderick Stallworth officiating.

Funeral service for MR. TRENTON LAMAR THOMAS HOYT (b. 1990) was held Saturday, October 23, at the Royal Chapel of Memories with Pastor Juanita Battle officiating.

SERENITY FUNERAL HOME

2505 University Drive NW - Huntsville, AL 35816 - (256) 539-9693

Funeral service for MRS. PATSY PRISCILLA MILLER COBB (b. 1959) was held Sunday, October 24, at Big Shiloh Baptist Church, 133 Maple Street, Madison, Ala.

THE VALLEY WEEKLY
**ALL FOR
 THE FAMILY**

Four soul-piercing words-- YOU HAVE BREAST CANCER--will be an overwhelming reality realized by approximately 13% of women, and less than 1% by men during their lifetime.

Three courageous women surmounted the seemingly insurmountable BC. Read their experiences.

I was a wife, mother of two boys, ages six months and 18, and a three-year-old daughter. When diagnosed with BC in 1986, we prayed fervently, asking God to let me defeat BC. I read repeatedly Psalm 91:7, and a book given to me by a family friend titled "Precious Bible Promises." Meditating and comforted by both, a peace that surpassed all encompassed me, and my fears disappeared. I strongly believed that God would bless me to be victorious over BC again. After undergoing several rounds of treatments, I was pronounced BC free. Six years later, BC was found in my other breast.

Standing on the promises of God, I strongly believed that almighty God would bless me to conquer BC a second time. I am delighted to report that I am a 35-year BC THRIVER!

- Wanda Nall

When I was diagnosed with BC, my husband was struggling with lung cancer (LC). I had double mastectomy. We endured all of the treatments prescribed. As a couple who believed in God, we prayed, leaned and depended on God, and were comforted by the words in Jeremiah 29:11. Sadly, my husband succumbed to LC. Fortunately, I have been a grateful BC THRIVER for 15 years.

- Patricia Murdock

In 1996, I was diagnosed with an invasive, metastatic BC, and given 2-5 years to live, even if I underwent prescribed treatments. I am a woman of faith. God gave me guidance to make critical decisions about my



Dr. Margaret J. Kelly

treatment, and how to make healthier lifestyle choices. Praise God! I have been a BC THRIVER for 15 years. My husband and I are now co-owners of Lifestyle Therapeutix, a Physical Therapy/Wellness Center

- Donna Green-Goodman, MPH

www.lifestyletherapeutix.com.

~Think It Over

All three of the BC Thrivers sought God as they dealt with BC. While a positive attitude, meds and support from family and friends can help one triumph over BC, our relationship with and faith in God to do what is impossible for man to do, is paramount.

Sources:

American Cancer Society
 Mayo Clinic
 National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.

Active A&M Videographer is 'Councill-Driven'

Before the ink had dried on his diploma, Alabama A&M University communications media alumnus Howard Melton began working at a Huntsville television station as a production assistant. But, he just wasn't feeling it.

As the world was dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the young Fayetteville, N.C., native returned to his beloved A&M, where he enrolled in master's level courses leading toward a communications specialist degree, which he completed in 2021.

This time, he landed a short-term independent contract to work in the Dallas area for an ethnic hair product firm. Howard was in charge of video production and editing for the company's advertising, web pages and digital marketing. He also served as one of its models.

Also while in Dallas, Howard landed an independent project shooting video for a Maker's Mark bourbon grand opening.

Soon, he became the impetus behind a video production of a Dallas-based Juneteenth festival. He later hosted a car show on the fairgrounds in the downtown of one of the nation's Top 10 largest cities.

organizations, including All Def Digital and even the Thurgood Marshall College Fund.

While he has become adept at navigating the Dallas scene, Howard said he also is able to see it for what

it is. He noted that African Americans appear to be making a lot of progress when one looks in from a distance. However, he has noted a number of systemic and cultural barriers that seem to keep black success to a minimum.

And, because some people in other spaces have such primitive preconceptions about Alabama, Howard said they miss out on the fact that a place like Huntsville is light years ahead. In fact, when that day comes,

Howard, who has several relatives with the Council surname, said he believes a feeling will emerge for his return to settle in the Rocket City.

by Jerome Saintjones



Howard also has landed several assignments through the Los Angeles-based media-tech firm Culture Genesis, known for remixing digital technology for multicultural audiences and doing so for numerous companies and

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**“... with a little help from my friends”:
Fighting Diabetes (Part 2 of 3)**
Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety” - Proverbs 11:14, NKJV.

Last week’s “My Ego-holism’s New Roommate: Diabetes,” paired my new-found disease with my ongoing recovering from ego-holism.

A life-threatening illness, diabetes affects one out of every 10 Americans, one of seven Alabamians, and one of every four persons over 65 years old. Could you be one?

Here’s my first “Diabetes 101” lesson, in hopes that you too can benefit: “Counselors,” both professional and non-professional, are closer than you think!

Starting with “Dr. J”

A longtime friend Julian sobered me, counseling, “Be compliant with what your health professionals tell you. You and I have two good Chicago friends - one who died last year, and the other who last month became an amputee - due to non-compliance with their diabetes instructors.” Wow! Those two victims were my former Chicago church basketball teammates.

I recalled then the widow of a childhood friend, a 2007 diabetes fatality, revealing, “he ate and drank whatever and whenever he wanted.”

Scheduling counseling appointments with local health-care professionals was next for me.

Eating to Live, or Living to Eat?

After assessing my routine breakfast of oatmeal (or raisin bran cereal) topped with raisins and cranberries (dried), blueberries and bananas, Crestwood’s Diabetes Educator Roberts quipped, “So, you like oatmeal with your fruit!” then she advised, “You’re eating the right foods, . . . just too many of them at one time!” Roberts then instructed me on “portions control.” Finally, she waived off monitoring my blood glucose levels - “too soon for that”.

Conversely, medical herbalist/naturopath Curtis Eakins advised: “Too much emphasis is placed on counting carbs; focus instead on the Big Four:

1. Diet - “... yes as Crestwood said, starting reading those food nutrition labels”, AND CLOSE THE KITCHEN BY 6 PM!
2. Exercise - while watching your nightly news shows
3. Sleep - strive for seven to eight hours nightly, and
4. Stress - “will counter-attack those other three, . . .

“... And yes, tim, start those daily ‘finger-pricks’ to monitor your glucose levels - otherwise, how else will you know?”

ultitude of counselors” was a great help for me. Please join them.

Q: What’s your counsel for this rookie diabetic? Reach me at info@timallston.com.



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Publisher
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Editor-in-Chief
Dorothy W. Huston, Ph.D.

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

Editorial Assistants
Linda Burruss
Phyllis Chunn
William Huston, Sr.
Gary T. Whitley, Jr.

Advertising Associate
Phyllis Chunn

- Contributing Editors -
tim allston
Minister Preston Brown
Robert Drake
Ron Hamm
Pastor Michael D. Rice

Website Administrator
Calvin Farier

Mailing Address:
The Valley Weekly
415A Church Street - Suite 100
Huntsville, AL 35801
(256) 651-9028
www.valleyweeklyllc.com
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THE VALLEY WEEKLY

CALLLED 2 PREACH

REV. MICHAEL RICE

Everything Else Is Secondary

Romans 8:28; 32

to *all things* was the Holy Spirit's way of reminding us through the pen of Paul



This verse follows the preamble verse of assurance that is often quoted when confronting situations that are anything but good and yet by faith and fact, hindsight and history, believers have come to "know" that *all things* do work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

This repeated reference



that there is nothing in this life that can hide or hinder believers from the love of God.

That same love moves God to *freely give* to believers *all things*; but it is incumbent upon believers to understand that the "things" from this list is secondary to salvation that has been provided through the ultimate sacrifice of

Jesus. To reverse this order is not only an affront to the One who made this promise, but it also affects the

spiritual progress that leads to a mature faith. That list of possible scenarios that life can confront believers

with found in the verses that follow is no match for the love of God and the purpose that He has for every believer.

The enemy of the souls of believers would have them think that a lack of "things" is an indication of a lack of love; not so.

He who did not spare His Son ... shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

The answer is yes. Case closed.

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OCTOBER 29 - GABRIELLE UNION - Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Union is an American actress and activist who began her career in the 1990s. She is known for her performances in the romantic comedy films *The Brothers* (2001), *Deliver Us from Eva* (2003), *Daddy's Little Girls* (2007), *Think Like a Man* (2012) and others.

- BlackCelebrityBirthdays.com





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

Minister LaVern Spearman

Minister LaVern Spearman has served the scouting community in various capacities for more than 30 years. For three decades, he has served as Scoutmaster (SM) of Troop 102, sponsored by First Missionary Baptist Church, Blue Springs Road, Huntsville, Ala.

Over 75 Scouts have earned Boy Scouts of America's highest achievement award, the rank of Eagle Scout, under his tenure. Over the years and along with other scout leaders, SM Spearman has seen over 6,000 scouts across Madison County and the surrounding Huntsville area become physically strong, morally straight and mentally awake.

He has served in various roles in the church as Deacon, Minister of Church School Education, and as teacher of various Church school classes. He is the president and founder of Body of Christ Ministries, which is a ministry designed to encourage men and women to take their rightful and God-given places in the church, family and workplace. This ministry orchestrates trips to various Christian retreats, conferences and spiritual outreaches. He teaches an inner-city Monday Night Bible Study to men and

women across social, racial and denominational lines. He works with the Neaves-Davis Youth Detention Center to deter all youth from becoming a statistic in the criminal

justice system and to show them that "you cannot walk with God and run with the Devil."

Before his retirement in 2012, he taught and shared in a weekly mid-day lunch Bible class with men and women at Redstone Arsenal for over 15 years. In addition, he works extensively with the Kairos Prison Ministry International in strengthening the spiritual lives of prisoners in Limestone and other surrounding counties. He also serves with the Alabama Walk to Emmaus Community to inspire, challenge, and equip leaders for Christian action in their homes, places of work, and in their local churches and communities and has served as Lay Director of the Huntsville Emmaus Cluster.

Minister Spearman is a Board member of Marketplace Leadership Luncheon ministry with a primary mission of empowering



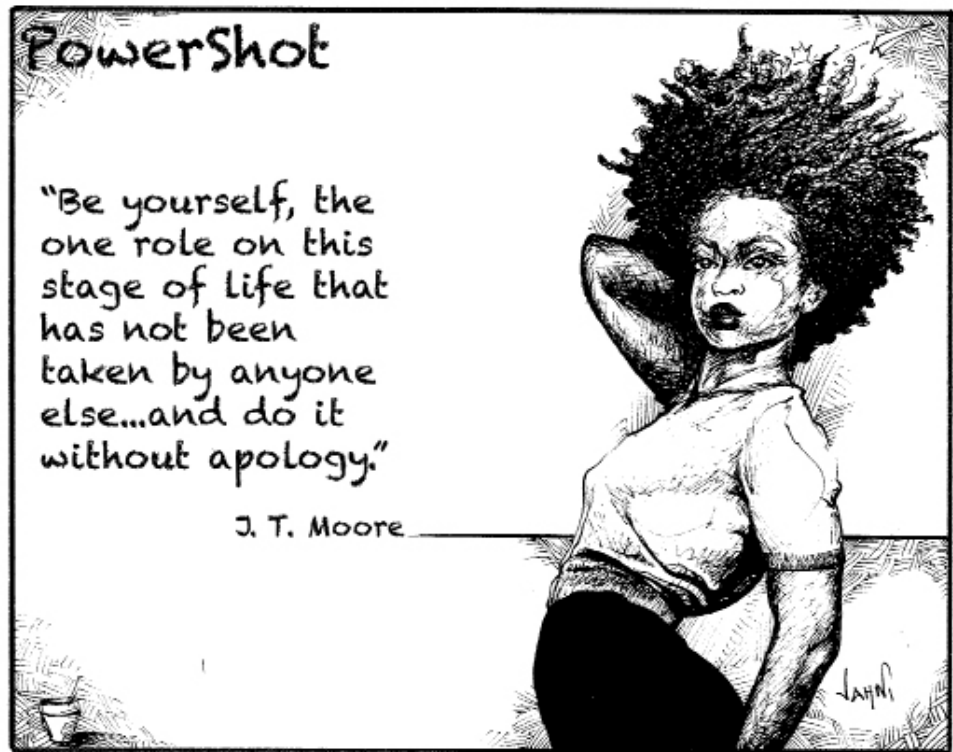
the business community to recognize and fulfill their calling in the workplace, building God's Kingdom, impacting lives, and transforming communities through

biblical principles in understanding the divine purpose for their lives.

Mr. Spearman was employed with the United States Army Aviation and Missile Command at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., as a senior physicist in the US Army Test, Measurement and Diagnostic Equipment Activity, Engineering Division. He is an honor graduate of Alabama A&M University in the physics field and has studied theology with the Liberty Bible Institute of Lynchburg, Va.

He and his wife, Lola, are members of Calvary Assembly in Tanner, Alabama, and have two adult children, Xavier and Pastor Shannel Spearman-Burrows, who pastors West Pembroke Assembly Church in Hamilton, Bermuda, and four grandsons ages 12, 11, 11 and 7, as well as one 8-year-old granddaughter.

"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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"The world is not a pleasant place to be without someone to hold and be held by."

- Nikki Giovanni

Salute to Huntsville's Black Suffragists & Marker Dedication

William Hooper Councill High Memorial Park
Sunday, October 24, 2021 (Photos by J. Saintjones)

Celebrating the Legacies of Huntsville's Black Suffragists ...



Mary Wood Binford (Jordan)
Ellen Scruggs Brandon
India Leslie Herndon
Lou Bertha Johnson
Dora Fackler Lowery
Celia Horton Love (McCrary)



Salute to Huntsville's Black Suffragists & Marker Dedication

William Hooper Council High Memorial Park
Sunday, October 24, 2021 (Photos by J. Saintjones)





Most Photos by J. Saintjones

Friends of 'The Bradfords' Hold Motorcade, Award Scholarship

Several loyal and supportive 'Friends of The Bradfords' participated in a Benefit Motorcade Parade honoring The Dr. Henry Bradford, Jr. and Mrs. Nell

Lane Scholarship Foundation, Inc., on Saturday, October 23, at Louis Crews Stadium.

A parade of enthusiastic motorists drove around the

perimeter of the Stadium complex to the site of Mrs. Nell Lane Bradford and her family on the Parkway side of the facility. Along the way were tents, art

pieces and jazz musicians who performed for passing motorists.

Mrs. Bradford fondly "waved" to her former students, guests, sorors and

elected officials.

During the motorcade, the Bradford Scholarship Foundation, Inc., awarded a \$1,500 scholarship to Davonna A. Wells.

Jacqueline McGlathery is president of the Friends of the Bradfords. For additional information about the Foundation, visit bradfordscholarship.org.

Free Services Help Vets Deal with Experience of Sexual Trauma

(BPT) - Military sexual trauma (MST) refers to a service member's experience with sexual assault or sexual harassment at any point during military service. This could be anything from inappropriate jokes or lewd comments to unwanted advances or forced sexual encounters. In the past, veterans may have struggled to find the help they needed to treat MST, but one organization - DAV (Disabled American Veterans) - is striving for change.

"In my 10 years working as a DAV benefits expert, I have filed countless claims for MST survivors and fought alongside them on their journey through the daunting claims and appeals process," said Carmen McGinnis, a DAV benefits specialist and MST survivor.

Many survivors become disheartened and frustrated when they receive a VA let-

ter indicating the types of evidence they will need to provide. Worse yet, some get part of the way through but are so traumatized by the process, they abandon their claim altogether."

An estimated one in four female veterans and one in 100 male veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system report experiencing MST. It is not, however, a woman-specific issue, as many men have also reported and are being treated at the VA for conditions related to military sexual trauma.

MST has become an increasingly prominent issue. In fact, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin himself has stated that "sexual assault and harassment remain persistent and corrosive problems" across the military. The DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) reported

20,500 service members were sexually assaulted or raped in 2018, including 13,000 women and 7,500 men, an increase from roughly 14,900 in 2016.

Survivors of MST have options for coming forward, but almost 80% of cases still go unreported, which can make filing a VA claim for care and benefits difficult. Many veterans suffer long-term symptoms and conditions related to this trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and substance abuse, as well as gastrointestinal symptoms, headaches and chronic fatigue.

One veteran's journey to find help. Navy veteran Mike Stern knows it takes strength to ask for help. He served for four years with deployments to the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. After returning from a deployment, he was raped by

a Navy officer.

Risking his military career, Stern reported the incident, which eventually led to separation from the Navy and a struggle to find treatment programs to address his MST-based PTSD. Stern was eventually able to access benefits through the help of DAV and its assistance programs.

DAV helps veterans to file VA claims at no cost and taps resources so veterans can find effective, empowering ways to cope with MST. Additionally, MST survivors are eligible to receive health care services through the VA for their related conditions, regardless of whether they have a service-connected disability rating. And every VA facility also has a designated MST coordinator who serves as a contact person for MST-related issues. This person is an advocate and can help veterans find and access

VA services and programs, state and federal benefits, and community resources.

Coping with MST

If you or someone you know is an MST survivor, here are some things that may help:

Professional counseling: Seeking a counselor or therapist who specializes in sexual trauma can be a good first step to healing.

Lifestyle changes: Exercising, eating healthfully, volunteering, avoiding drugs and alcohol, spending more time with loved ones and practicing optimism are all helpful.

Mindfulness: Being mindful is to be aware of and concentrate on the present. It can include breathing exercises or focusing on a singular thing, such as an enjoyable food or singing bird.

Practicing optimism: Being aware of and reflecting on the

good things in your life can create joy and a sense of peace or happiness.

Peer groups: Finding others who have experienced MST can help you feel comfortable talking about MST and working through the intense emotions associated with it.

Trained service dogs: If you are struggling with post-traumatic stress or other conditions related to MST, you may benefit from a service dog that is specifically trained to help manage or mitigate symptoms. VA providers can help to determine eligibility for a service dog.

Explore options and keep an open mind

For more information about MST and assistance in the VA claims process, visit DAV.org.

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