

The Valley Weekly

Volume 3, No. 14

www.valleyweeklyllc.com

Friday, December 16, 2016

FREE

"You've got to learn to leave the table when
love's no longer being served."
- Nina Simone



HPAC Officers: (l-r) Erskine Valrie, Brenda Mallard, Dr. Verlindsey Stewart (president), Mildred Blackshear and Rev. Theotis Acklin. Not Shown: Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff.

HPAC Installs Officers at Year-End Ceremony

The Huntsville Progressive Alumni Chapter of the Alabama A&M University Alumni Association, Inc., (HPAC) recently installed a new slate of officers for a two-year 2017-19 term.

The program was held in the VIP Room of the Ernest L. Knight Center on the AAMU campus Tuesday, December 6.

Immediate Past President Carla Clift presided over the program, introducing program participants and Huntsville Municipal Court Judge Sybil Cleveland, who conducted the oath of office. Other program

guests included Georgia S. Valrie, a chapter member and former president; Dr. Theodis Acklin, member and pastor of Briar Fork CPCA Church; along with Ann Erskine, chairperson of social committee and member Marvin Williams.

The new slate of officers include the following: Dr. Verlindsey Stewart, president; Mildred Blackshear, vice president; Brenda Mallard, secretary; Erskine Valrie, treasurer; Rev. Theodis Acklin, parliamentarian; and Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff, chaplain.

"This is truly a moment to be honored and

cherished," said President Stewart. "I accept this appointment with pride and will give my best efforts to make you proud."

Stewart said her administration will focus on increasing membership, using technology to stay connected to members, and building generational diversity among the chapter's membership roster.

HPAC was chartered by the Alabama A&M University Alumni Association, Inc., on October 27, 2000, in Birmingham, Ala., with 46 chartered members. Currently, the chapter has over 60 active members.

Chamber Hosting 'State of the County' Event

The 2017 'State of the County' Address featuring Chairman Dale W. Strong has been scheduled for January 5, at the Von Braun Center North Hall from 12-1 p.m. The program also will highlight Grammy-winning artist Lee Greenwood.

Contact the Huntsville

Madison County Chamber of Commerce website for details about the third such address by Madison County Commission Chairman Dale Strong.

This annual event provides Chairman Strong an opportunity to update the business community on critical issues facing the

county.

Moreover, the address will include Strong's views on the past year's progress and the issues that impact the region, as well as his outlook for the year ahead.

Visit <http://www.huntsvillealabamusa.com/> for details on deadlines and registration.



FALL COMMENCEMENT: Nearly 450 undergraduate, master's degree and doctoral students participated in Alabama A&M University's fall commencement exercises on Friday, December 9, 2016, at the Von Braun Center. Graduates received sound advice from Andre Taylor, president pro tempore of the AAMU Board of Trustees. Professor Emeritus citations were presented Dr. Barbara A.P. Jones, retired AAMU economist and former dean of the College of Business and Public Affairs, and Dr. Chukudi Izeogu, former chair of the Department of Community and Regional Planning.

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 Progressive Union Missionary Baptist
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 Rocket City Barber Shop
 Sam and Greg's Pizza
 Sav-A-Lot
 Sneed's Cleaners
 St. Bartley PB Church
 St. Luke Christian Church
 Starbucks (Governors Drive, N. Parkway at
 Mastin Lake Road/University Drive)
 Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church



The Hamm Consulting Group

Your Washington Recap

Here are the top issues in DC this week:

1. The House and Senate adjourned the 114th Congress last week and will not reconvene until January 3, 2017. Before the Members left town, Congress passed 3 big items: (1) a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government at FY2016 levels through April 28, 2017; (2) the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which funds Army Corps of

Engineers' projects; and (3) the FY2017 Defense Authorization bill. Notable provisions in these bills include:

- o Dropped a provision to require women to register for the Selective Service (DoD bill);
 - o Authorized \$170 million for the City of Flint's (MI) drinking water system (WRDA bill); and
2. According to published reports, President Obama is considering issuing several
- major executive orders before he leaves office, including:
- o An executive order requiring federal contractors to disclose their political donations;
 - o A pardon for all immigrants in the country illegally;
 - o An executive order directing federal employees to quickly process applications for immigrants who came into the United States illegally as children; and
 - o An executive order closing the prison for suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay.
3. President-elect Trump will meet with Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV), who is rumored to be a candidate for Energy Secretary. ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson was reportedly offered the job of Secretary of State over the weekend. The Trump/Pence team will continue their "USA Thank You Tour" with a stop in Mobile, AL this week.
4. The Washington Post

reported that President-elect Trump's transition team transmitted a 74-page questionnaire to the Department of Energy asking it to compile a list of employees, including career civil servants, who have worked on international climate agreements or on domestic efforts to cut the nation's carbon output.

5. Last Friday, Vinz Koller, Chair of the Monterey County (CA) Democratic Party, has become the 10th presidential elector - joining 8 other Democrats and 1 Republican - opposed to the Presidential electors electing Donald Trump on Dec. 19. His lawsuit seeks to overturn a California statute that requires California's 54 members of the Electoral College to support Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

6. Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Chuck Grassley (R-IA) announced late Friday

that hearings for Attorney General nominee Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) will be held Jan. 10 and 11, 2017.

7. On Saturday, Republican state Treasurer John Kennedy won the Louisiana Senate runoff election beating Democrat Public Service Commissioner Foster Campbell by a margin of 61-39%, giving the GOP a 52-48 majority in U.S. Senate.

8. Donald Trump, who is 70, will be the oldest incoming president in American history when sworn in next month.

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Huntsville Happenings



Fiber Expansion Plus Google Fiber

In February 2016, Huntsville Utilities' announced the expansion of its fiber optic system for its own purposes to keep pace with the need for faster data connections to operate the electric, natural gas and water utility systems. While increased operational efficiency for Huntsville Utilities is important, the other part of their announcement garnered more attention from the local community.

Since the city-owned

utility planned to build out a fiber network, the ability to lease excess (dark) fiber to a broadband service provider was an attractive appeal to Huntsville Utilities' first tenant - Google Fiber, making Huntsville a "gig city."

Tasked to complete the fiber expansion and provide the excess (dark) fiber capacity to its first client, Google, Huntsville Utilities designed and installed 76 miles of fiber backbone around the city limits of Madison County. This fiber backbone ring serves as the connection points for the fiber optic system. The first of the six connection points will serve the residents of Northwest Huntsville. The "Chase HUT" as it is known, will consist of

163 miles of distribution fiber optic cable - 26 miles of underground and 137 miles overhead fiber cable to reach the customers in Northwest Huntsville. Huntsville Utilities' will complete the fiber installation for Northwest Huntsville in early Spring 2017 and Google Fiber will be able to offer



service to the residents simultaneously.

The excitement for becoming a "gig city" is not without its construction growing pains. Huntsville Utilities' awarded the fiber construction contract to Bear Communications. As Bear Communications is working with Huntsville Utilities, you will likely see their trucks in Northwest Huntsville accessing the

utility poles, digging in the utility and drainage easements and using heavy equipment throughout your neighborhoods.

Daniel Martin, Fiber Operations Manager for Huntsville Utilities stated,

"We take great pride in keeping our construction areas as safe, un-congested and clean

as possible." He asked that the community remain patient during this infrastructure improvement. Additionally, Martin provided a telephone number, if residents need to address any concerns during the fiber construction process - (256) 535-1300.

While Northwest Huntsville will be the first community to have Google Fiber, Huntsville Utili-

ties will build and install approximately 1,000 miles of fiber optic cable by 2019 to provide access to all city residents inside of Madison County. Being a "gig city" further expands the economic development possibilities for Huntsville and will first yield dividends to the Northwest Huntsville community. As bandwidth demands steadily increase, fiber will continue to be the dominant means of transport and delivery of big data. Although Google Fiber was the first to lease from Huntsville Utilities, other broadband service providers may join in the future as well as offering fiber outside the city limits of Huntsville in Madison County.

PHOTO CREDITS: Amanda Kemp, Huntsville Utilities

by Gary T. Whitley, Jr.
 Public & Governmental Affairs Liaison
 Huntsville Utilities

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The Valley Weekly

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SPECIAL:

Charles Edward (Chase) Henderson II

33rd Beautillion Ball, 2016

1st Place in Essay Scholarship Competition

From the Editor



The term "my brother's keeper" is a biblical reference found in Genesis 4:9. God asked Cain where his slain brother Abel was, and Cain replied, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" Far from being his brother's keeper, Cain was actually his brother's killer. Instead of caring for his brother, Cain did not value his brother's life. He was dishonest and unconcerned even when God confronted him about his missing brother's whereabouts. Cain's huge



Chase with mom, Vanessa Downing Henderson

mistake was in failing to realize that each person is spiritually accountable to God for the well-being of others. Being our brother's keeper is part of what it means to be human.

I learned the lesson of being my brother's keeper and looking out for others from my aunt, the late Mrs. Geraldine Williams. She was a completely unselfish, caring person who was always thinking of others, sacrificing herself and sharing whatever she had--her time, her advice, her money, her home--for the good of others. My aunt devoted her time to serving others and making sure they were comfortable, well-fed, and had their needs met. She did all that she was humanly able to do for others, and then, if there was still a need, she prayed and trusted that God would do what she was not able to do.

Most people are satisfied to look out for the people who look out for them. But I learned from my aunt, to treat everyone as if they were my brother. Through her life, I learned that one of my first duties in life is to treat everyone with kindness and compassion as if they were my own flesh and blood. My aunt did not treat people differently based on who they were, what they had to offer her or where they came from. In all the years I knew her, I never saw her being unkind to anyone.

My aunt was a college-educated woman with good friends, a good job, a luxury car and a very nice home. But regardless of her accomplishments and possessions, she never, ever bragged or made anyone feel that what they had was inferior or less than what she had. When her parents (my grandparents) got older and needed more advanced care, my aunt bought a second home, moved her parents in and made arrangements for them to be well taken care of. When my family moved to Huntsville from Charleston, S.C., my aunt welcomed us to live with her for more than a year while our house was under major renovation. She never made us feel like we were guests or visitors. She was always her brothers' keeper.

This past summer, our family was shocked when my aunt died unexpectedly. Her life impacted me in so many ways and her example inspired me to want to be a better person - the kind of person she was. She showed me what it really means to really be your brother's keeper. Even in death, she sacrificed her organs so that several other people could continue to live.

During the month before she died, my aunt not only suggested, but signed me up to participate in the Beautillion. At the time, I did not understand the significant value of participating in a unique program of this caliber. Now, I am deeply honored and grateful for the opportunity to participate. In honor of my aunt, I am giving this endeavor my full effort and enthusiasm, and hope that I will fulfill all of her best wishes and highest hopes for me as a young man.

Because of her, I not only want to be the best person I can be, but I want to do as she did--I want to be my brother's keeper. I have committed myself to uplifting my fellow brothers with positive words and encouragement. I have committed myself to encouraging young men I meet by living a life that is a strong example for others to follow. I have committed myself to pursuing excellence - first challenging myself academically and personally so that I can inspire my brothers to improve themselves and their lives. At Sparkman High School, I am enrolled in advanced placement classes not just for my own benefit, but to give motivation and proof to my brothers that anyone can take these classes and that academic success is within the reach of anyone who will dare to pursue it. I am also a student leader involved in the Student Government Association and a member of the Crusaders for Cancer Awareness.

In a time where young black males are dying from the guns of those sworn to protect us, I often warn and encourage my brothers to be vigilant and respectful in all their encounters with law enforcement officers, to always watch the attitude that they give these officers. I promote life and peace because the most important thing is not being right or having the last word, but living another day. I never want to see a brother arrested, hurt or gunned down. Because I have decided to be my brothers' keeper, I speak up, watch out and do all that is within my power to keep every brother safe and alive. I live as a peacemaker, and openly discourage brothers from fighting each other, because physical fights and wars of words don't solve problems, they only create bigger ones.



Vanessa Downing Henderson (mom) and aunt Dorothy Downing

I sing in my church choir because it is a blessing to others and it allows me to connect to another circle of brothers. At church, I am committed to helping build a foundation for others who are my age, and being a brother that younger ones can look up to and be inspired. I work hard on being faithful, setting goals for my life, being respectful of others, taking pride in my appearance, never sagging my pants or wearing or doing anything that would cause people to doubt my effort to be the best brother I can be. I am committed to living a life that would never cause a brother to stumble because of my words or actions. And like my aunt, when I have done all I can do, I pray that God will do for others what I cannot

do, because I know that "the Lord is a keeper" (Psalm 121:5).

I am young, but I'm following hard in the footsteps of my aunt and others. I am very thankful because long before I even realized it, God Himself and many good people in my life were busy on the job, even to this day, being this brother's keeper - protecting me, helping me, guiding me, lifting me and saving me. And, like them and because of them, I too, am my brother's keeper.



Henderson with Belle Nadia Stewart



Geraldine Williams (late aunt)



FPC Honors Noted Educators with Scholarship

FAITH Initiative, Incorporated, announces two \$1,000 scholarships to be awarded in April 2017.

The Bobby Bodiford Memorial Scholarship and the Dr. Constance Dees Memorial Scholarship honor these two educators and late members of Fellowship Presbyterian Church (FPC).

The scholarships are open to deserving students from the Tennessee Valley who have been accepted to an accredited university or technical school and who demonstrate the potential

to become a productive member of the community.

Recipients are not required to be enrolled or accepted in an institution of higher learning in Alabama to receive the scholarships.

Applications and requirements have been mailed to area high school counselors. The awards will be formally presented at the organization's event, "An Evening of Jazz with FAITH," April 21, 2017.

In 2012, the Session of FPC, 3406 Meridian Street, initiated formation of the FAITH Initiative. After

due process, the Internal Revenue Service accorded nonprofit status to the organization. Mary Mitchell serves as the president of FAITH Initiative.

Information for donating to both scholarships as well as requests for scholarship application packages may be mailed to FAITH Initiative, Inc., The Bodiford and Dees Memorial Scholarships, P.O. Box 3858; Huntsville, AL 35810.

by Dr. Joyce Pettus Temple

Champion Game Plan for Life

by Preston Brown

Just because we had a bad start in life doesn't mean that we can't have a strong finish. No matter where you are right now, or what you have done, or what's been done to you, God has a great plan for your redemption. If you allow God to go to work in your life, He will walk you out of your mess and into the promised land. We can

all come out of whatever bondage that we are in, travel through our wilder-



ness, and be delivered--just like the Israelites in the Bible. And, our wilderness can be defined as our selfish ways and our selfish desires. You see, it's our own fleshy desires that keep us in our wilderness. Remember: it is up to us to believe that God can turn our circumstances around ... Stay encouraged, my brothers and sisters!

Team Redstone Honored in DC

Team Redstone Honored at Pentagon with Army Community Partnership Award

The City of Huntsville, surrounding Tennessee Valley communities, and Redstone Arsenal were honored recently during a ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., where they received the Army Community Partnership award.

The event, hosted by the Honorable Patrick Murphy, Undersecretary of the Army, recognizes communities and installations who work together to enhance readiness, cost savings and quality of life.

"Huntsville has always considered itself an Army



Battle

town and is extremely proud of the ongoing work at Redstone," said Mayor Tommy Battle. "They are our community partner and a major employer. Whatever we can do to support Redstone helps our

community, our nation, and the free world."

The Army noted Huntsville's work to improve Redstone's infrastructure through improvements to Goss Road, Martin Road and Gate 9, the EUL public-private partnership, and officer housing.

The Huntsville and Tennessee Valley - Redstone Arsenal partnership is one of five communities honored in the Army's 2016 awards program.

For more information, contact Kelly Cooper Schrimsher, director of communication, City of Huntsville, (256) 427-5006 or e-mail kelly.schrimsher@huntsvilleal.gov.

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On This Day - Friday, December 16 - WILLIAM PERRY - Former NFL defensive lineman for the Chicago Bears William "The Refrigerator" Perry was born in Aiken, South Carolina. He is a Super Bowl Champion (XX). - BlackinTime.info

Valley Weekly Awarded by Coalition



Row 1: Bernice Lockett, Councilwoman; State Representative Laura Hall, Leadership; Yolanda Denson, Advocacy; **Row 2:** Toni Terrell, Economic Empowerment; Speaker Liz Nunn; Michele Watkins, Education; **Row 3:** Mary Hurt, accepting for Dorothy Huston on behalf of *The Valley Weekly*, Public Policy; Edna Fails, Health.

The Valley Weekly was honored by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women with one of the organization's "Women of Change" awards. The Valley Weekly received the honor due to its "time and dedicated service to our community and the outstanding work ... to promote a sense of connection, pride and appreciation in communication. Your efforts have helped bring about greater awareness in the community and have notably shed light on

the many important achievements." The organization is headed by Dr. Deidra Willis, president. Ms. Valerie Burrell serves as vice president for membership. The Valley Weekly earned the award for its positive, inspirational and educational work in the community. "When someone else decides that the work you are doing is worthy of recognition, that is one of the greatest honors one can receive," stated Dr. Dorothy

W. Huston, founder and editor-in-chief. "That's pretty darn good for a group of volunteers who decided over two years ago that we could publish something that represents the positive in our community." NCBW further recognized women who are making a difference in the Valley in the areas of advocacy, economic empowerment, education, public policy, health and the government sector.

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Rosetta James Scholarship Foundation

#94612

The Rosetta James Scholarship Foundation provides financial scholarship to undergraduate students who demonstrate sound academic principles; commitment to community volunteerism, civic engagement and unselfishness to assist others in Huntsville/Madison County.

The Rosetta James Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization with a 0% Administrative and Fundraising Rate (AFR). For additional information, contact (256) 536-9717 or write P.O. Box 17452, Huntsville, AL 35810.

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Valley Deaths

Funeral service for **Mrs. Rosie Nwaimo** (b. 1942) was held Tuesday, December 13, at Mount Zion P. B. Church (2350 Wall Triana Hwy-Madison, AL 35758) with Elder Myron Burwell officiating.

Funeral service for **Mrs. Pearline P. Battles** (b. 1938) was held Monday, December 12, at Hopewell M. B. Church with Rev. Gary Battle officiating.

Funeral service was held Saturday, December 10, for **Mrs. Polly Haywood** (b. 1910) at Indian Creek P.B. Church with Rev. Johnny Clay officiating.

Funeral service for **Mr. Alanda "Lestell" Stewart** (b. 1952) was held Saturday, December 10, at 12 noon at Saint Bartley P. B. Church with Reverend Dr. Theodis Acklin officiating.

Funeral service for **Mr. James "Bubba" Wherry** (b. 1932) was held Tuesday, December 6, at Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church with Reverend Larry Davidson, Jr., officiating.

Funeral service for **Mr. James Earl "Fuzzy" Moore** was held Monday, December 5, at St. Luke Christian Church with Pastor T. C. Johnson officiating.

-Nelms Memorial Funeral Home

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"I am the greatest. I said that even before I knew I was."
-Muhammad Ali



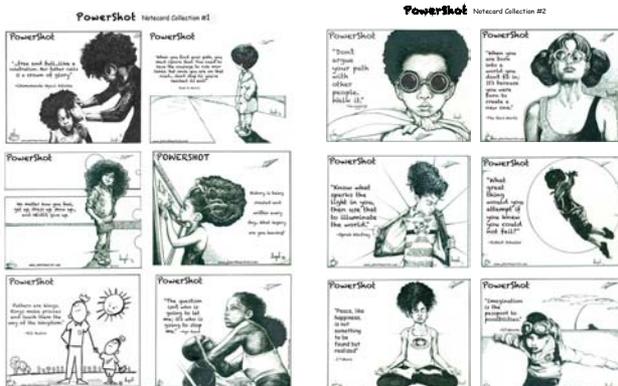
Muhammad Ali Ten Keys To Success

1. Believe in yourself
2. Psyche out the competition
3. Be more than common
4. Work from your strengths
5. Rewrite the rules
6. Give them something to see
7. Trust in a Higher Power
8. Think big
9. Train hard
10. Develop and use your strategy

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FOODLine in Need of Volunteers

Interfaith Mission Service's FOODLine emergency food pantries cooperative desperately needs volunteers to answer phone calls and direct FOODLine clients to area food pantries.

Volunteers must: enjoy people and ready to help those in need; have good listening skills; possess

basic computer skills (familiar with use of mouse, keyboard and printer); have confidentiality/willingness to protect clients' personal information; and be available to volunteer 2-4 mornings or afternoons per month.

FOODLine is sponsored by IMS member congregations. It has been in opera-

tion since 1994, providing emergency food assistance to area residents.

Moreover, it is staffed by volunteers who answer phone calls and direct clients to nearby pantries. Hours are M-F, 9 a.m.-12 noon and M-Th, 1 p.m.-3 p.m. For more information, contact Sue Duthie at (256) 881-3081.

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Calendar of Events

December 17

A Blue Christmas with You (Married Couples Date Night)

Sponsor: Marriage More Abundantly

4705 Mastin Lake Road
6:30-9 p.m.

17th Annual 100 Black Men of Greater Huntsville Holiday Gala

Von Braun Center North Hall, 7-11 p.m.

Contact: (256) 536-8050

December 21

Basketball
University of Alabama vs. Arkansas State
Von Braun Center Propst Arena, 8 p.m.

January 14

Alpha Phi Alpha MLK Unity Parade
Downtown Huntsville
12 Noon

Friends of the Bradfords (Dr. Henry Bradford, Jr. and Mrs. Nell Lane Bradford Scholarship Foundation, Inc.)

Contacts: Veronica Winston, (256) 509-4894, or Patricia Ward, (256) 350-9054

Von Braun Center North Hall, 5 p.m.

Basketball
Alabama A&M vs. Alabama State
Elmore Building, 4 & 6 p.m.

January 16

Alpha Phi Alpha Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast
Von Braun Center, 8 a.m.

February 4

Huntsville Symphony Orchestra
Free Family Concert
Mark C. Smith Concert Hall - Von Braun Center
11 a.m.

Beware IRS Impersonations and Tax Scams

Beware of IRS Impersonations and Tax Scams.

If you get a call from the "IRS" threatening you with lawsuits or jail unless you pay up immediately ... Guess what? It's a scam.

Don't be a victim.

Here are five things the scammers often do but the IRS will not do.

The IRS will *never*:

- Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.
- Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.

- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money, here's what you should do:

- If you don't owe taxes, or have no reason to think that you do:
- Do not give out any information. Hang up immediately.
- Contact TIGTA to report the call. Use their "IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting" web page. You can also call 800-366-4484.
- Report it to the Federal Trade Commission. Use the "FTC Complaint As-



sistant" on FTC.gov. Please add "IRS Telephone Scam" in the notes.

If you know you owe, or think you may owe tax:

- Call the Internal Revenue Service at 800-829-1040. Internal Revenue Service workers can help you.

Stay alert to scams that use the IRS as a lure. Tax scams can happen any time of year, not just at tax time.

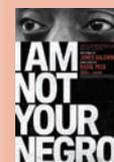
For more, visit "Tax Scams and Consumer Alerts" on IRS.gov.

by David E. Herron
DEH & Associates
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I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO



A long overdue film with African-American author, thinker and visionary James Baldwin at its center will be released to audiences in the form of the film "I Am Not Your Negro."



Using the iconic Baldwin's unfinished final manuscript ("Remember This House"), the documentary by Haitian director Raoul Peck "delves into the legacy of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Medgar Evers and their impact on what it means to be black in America," notes site RottenTomatoes.com.

The film, with voiceover by actor Samuel L. Jackson, will have a limited release in American theatres beginning February 3. The work won the Audience Award for Documentaries at the 52nd Chicago Film Festival. It is also slated to receive the Best Documentary of the Year at the 42nd Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards in January 2017.

Fantasia Brings Rising Talents on Tour

Story & Photos by Reggie Allen

American Idol veteran Fantasia Barrino recently concluded her "The Definition of" tour, but the season 3 winner did not make the 12 city-trek alone.

In October, the "Win to Lose" singer announced that she would be bringing along recent American Idol runner-up La'Porsha Renae and rising R&B art-



ist Guordan Banks as her opening artists.

The Rocket City was the tour's penultimate stop before closing out in Dayton, Ohio.

Hailing from Philadelphia, 27-year-old Banks (left) was surprised to find that a song from his 2014 mixtape "A Song for Everyone" would be the catalyst for his solo singing career. Banks got his first big break after landing a feature on fellow Philly native Meek Mill's "Heaven or Hell," alongside Jadakiss.

In 2015 Banks' breakout single "Keep You in Mind" landed him the Billboard No. 1 spot on the Adult R&B charts and was recently featured on comedienne Issa Rae's

scripted HBO drama "Insecure."

Banks might be just making his rounds as a mainstream artist, but the rising R&B singer has an impressive catalogue as a songwriter, penning lyrics for musical industry giants such as John Legend, 50 Cent, Keyshia Cole and Kanye West.

His debut album "Unpopular" was expected to be released in September but has since been put on hiatus.

A 16-year-old Renae (right) originally auditioned for American Idol's tenth season, but it wasn't until 2016 that she got her



chance to shine.

The Mississippi native landed her a spot in the final season, wowing the judges with her rendition of Radiohead's "Creep." Ultimately, Renae finished as the runner-up, with

Trent Harmon taking the title as the final American Idol winner. Shortly after the finale, she announced that she signed a deal with Big Machine and that her debut album would be overseen by Motown records.

Post-Idol, the 23-year old has been making her rounds in the music world. On the eve of the Idol finale, Renae released her first single "Battles", reaching No. 22 on the R&B Digital songs chart and was the theme for the U.S Women's Gymnastics team in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio. In late September, the Idol alum released "Good Woman", the first official single from her upcoming album.

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