

HOME AGAIN: Honoring Our Denine Matthews - p. 3

FREE

PRESTON: 'Buckle Up!!!' - p. 4

Friday

October 9, 2026

Vol. 13, No. 6

ValleyWeeklyllc.com

Scenes from 2026 WOW Conference: "Metamorphosis" - p. 10

SALUTE!

Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK

Dr. Arthur L. Walker

"Doubt is an uncomfortable condition, but certainty is a ridiculous one." — Voltaire

OUC to Host Two Health Events

Oakwood University Church (OUC) Health Ministries will hold two impactful events during the weekend of October 10 and 11.

The free **Disability Awareness Concert** featuring vocalists, instrumentalists and special presentations will be held Saturday, *October 10*, at OUC at 7 p.m.; doors open at 6:45 p.m.

On Sunday, *October 11*, at 7:30 a.m., OUC will host the 3.5K **Breast Cancer Awareness Walk** around the Oakwood campus. The event is free, but donations are encouraged. To register, visit <https://oucda.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/3890597>.

For additional information, contact Patti Conwell at (256) 714-3822 or at communication@oucda.org.

TU Becomes Only HBCU Designated DMC

Tuskegee University has been designated as a Distinguished Military College (DMC) by the Department of War. Tuskegee is the nation's only Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to receive the prestigious designation.

The historic milestone honors more than a century of service to the United States while positioning Tuskegee for the continued growth of a full Corps of Cadets and expanded leadership development opportunities for future generations.

Currently, 197 students are training in Tuskegee's ROTC program in five branches of the U.S. Armed Services.

IMS 2026 Awards Dinner Set

The Interfaith Mission Service will hold its annual Celebration & Awards Dinner on Thursday, October 8, at the Huntsville Country Club, located at 261 Oakwood Avenue NW, Huntsville, Ala., from 6-8 p.m.

The guest speaker will be Mr. Joe Nathan Lampley, who will address the theme: *"Your Faith, Your Vote."*

The Interfaith Mission Service (IMS) is a cooperative of congregations, individuals, and organizations that work together. As it reaches its 50th year, the Interfaith Mission Service remains committed to its vision: Become leaders in creating a Beloved Community.

For additional information, visit www.interfaithmissionservice.org.

Drake State, Alfred St. Church Opens Blue Eagle Market

Drake State Community and Technical College recently celebrated the grand opening of the Blue Eagle Market, a student food pantry created to help address food insecurity and support student success on Thursday, October 1

The Blue Eagle Market was established with support from Alfred Street Baptist Church (Va.) through its Tithe the Tithe (T3) initiative. Representatives from Alfred Street



Drake student visits Blue Eagle Market

Baptist Church joined Drake State leadership, students, faculty, staff and community partners for the opening.

The Blue Eagle Market will provide

Drake State students with access to food and essential resources that support their academic success and overall well-being, officials said.

Among the activi-

ties were the formal ribbon cutting, a video presentation and other related events.

For STORY and more photos, visit Page 9.

HMCPL Offering 'AI in Excel' Online Class

The online class "AI in Excel" is scheduled for Monday, October 19, at 6 p.m. via the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

The course will show how attendees how to use the



power of the AI platforms Chat-GPT and Microsoft Copilot to help create functions and perform other challenging tasks in

Excel.

According to staff, a reminder with the materials and *Go To* invitation will be sent a few days before class.

For additional registration and information, call (256) 851-7492.

The Valley Weekly

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Here are the top issues and events in Washington, D.C., for this week:

1. CONGRESS. The House and Senate are in recess until November 9. Before adjourning Wednesday at 11:24 p.m., the Senate confirmed Keith Sonderling's nomination as Secretary of Labor by a 47-41 vote. The Senate also failed to advance a bill banning stock trading by Members of Congress and the Data Centers bill, which would prevent residential and small-business utility customers from paying for the electrical grid and power-generation upgrades triggered by large data centers. When Members return in November, they will have a long list of legislation to tackle, including FY2027 appropriations, the Farm Bill, the Defense Authorization bill, WRDA 2026, the Surface Transportation Authorization bill, FISA Section 702 reauthorization, and Reconciliation 3.0 to add money to

the Pentagon and provide aid to farmers ...

2. EXECUTIVE BRANCH.

The President will continue campaign stops this week, starting with a trip Monday to Nebraska and returning to Texas for the 2nd time in a week for a stop in San Antonio on Wednesday. On Saturday, he will be in Alabama to attend the Georgia-Alabama football game. Last Friday, the President announced that 20 million Medicare Part B enrollees will receive a one-time \$90 check, funded by the \$2 billion Medicare Improvement Fund established in 2008 to improve the Medicare fee-for-service program. Last Wednesday, the President announced that 1 million Americans who are Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") enrollees — who live in one of the 30 states that use the federal HealthCare.gov platform rather than a state-run exchange — will receive a one-time payment of \$500, along with a letter

from the President (the other 18 million enrollees won't get a refund check, either because they're in a state that runs its own marketplace or because they received a premium subsidy for their 2026 coverage). The 30 states are: AL, AK, AZ, AR, DE, FL, HI, IN, IA, KS, LA, MI, MO, MS, MT, NE, NH, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, SC, SD, TN, UT, WV, WI, and WY.

3. SUPREME COURT.

On Monday, the Supreme Court reconvened to begin its 2026-27 term. The first case argued will be *Suncor Energy v. Commissioners of Boulder County*, a lawsuit in which a Colorado county seeks millions of dollars from oil and gas companies for their alleged role in worsening climate change. Last Tuesday, the Supreme Court granted the administration's request to allow, for now, rapid deportations of illegal immigrants to third-party countries. It also announced that it will hear argument Dec. 9 on the legality of third-country removals and whether a lower court had the authority to put the removals on hold.

4. SEPTEMBER JOBS REPORT.

Last Friday, the Labor Department announced that only 29,000 jobs were created in September, disappointing forecasters who had predicted a more robust

90,000. The unemployment rate ticked up to 4.2% from last month's 4.1%. Additionally, the Labor Department revised the July and August job reports downward by 60,000 jobs.

5. EDUCATION. The U.S. Department of Education has formally rescinded the Title VI regulations that allowed federal officials to challenge school policies that appear neutral but have disparpor-

tionate effects on students of a particular race or national origin, known as "disparate impact." Going forward, the Department says it will pursue only intentional discrimination, consistent with President Trump's executive order directing agencies to eliminate disparate-impact liability wherever possible. Supporters ... call the change a correction toward equal treatment and expect little practical shift ... Civil rights

advocates counter that the change removes a long-standing tool for addressing discipline policies, school closures, and other practices that disproportionately harm students of color ...

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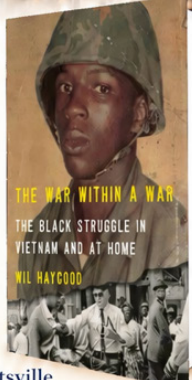
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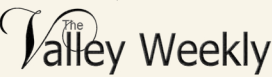
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Bringing a Lifetime of Educational Legacy Back Home

Denine Matthews

In my continuing series highlighting people who are Making Impact and Building Legacy in our community, I am pleased to recognize Denine Matthews, a longtime Huntsville educator whose newest chapter reminds us that retirement does not necessarily mean the end of service. Sometimes, it simply means answering a new call.

After a distinguished career with Huntsville City Schools, where she served as a teacher, principal, administrator and most recently in school improvement, Matthews has retired from the public school system. But she certainly hasn't retired from education. She has accepted the position of Headmaster of the Julius Scruggs Christian Academy at First Missionary Baptist Church. This appointment is especially meaningful because Denine is coming home. First Missionary Baptist is the church where she grew up—the community of faith that helped nurture and shape her. Now, after spending decades educating children and providing leadership in Huntsville City Schools, she has returned to that same church to help shape another generation of young people. That is legacy.

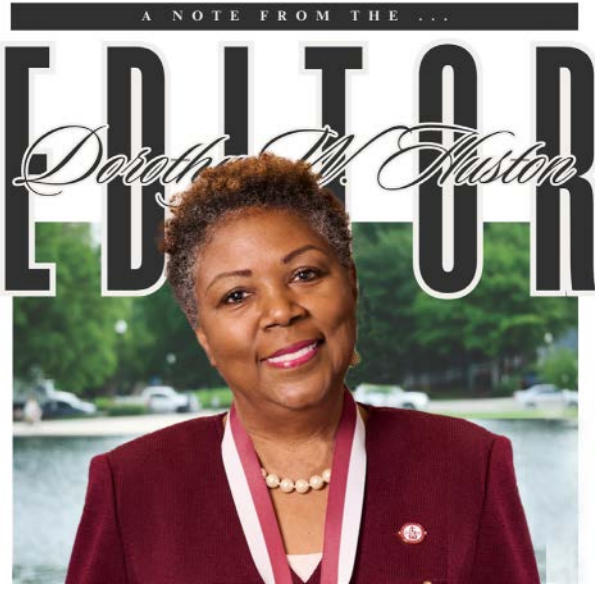


There is something beautifully full-circle about bringing a lifetime of knowledge, experience and leadership back to the place that helped prepare you for the journey. Denine Matthews could have viewed retirement as an opportunity to step away. Instead, she has chosen to step into another place where her gifts are needed. Her new role is also significant because the academy bears the name of the late Rev. Dr. Julius R. Scruggs, whose ministry at First Missionary Baptist Church was deeply rooted in faith, education, service and the development of people. Matthews now has the opportunity to help carry that educational legacy forward while creating one of her own.

Our community needs experienced educators who understand that educating children involves more than test scores and textbooks. It is also about developing character, confidence, discipline, compassion and a belief in what is possible. Denine Matthews has spent her professional life doing that work. Now she is bringing those years of experience back home.

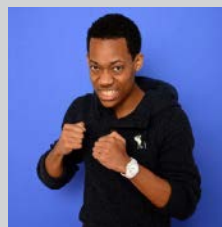
Sometimes legacy is not about where you go next. It is about what you bring back home.

Congratulations, Denine Matthews, on a career of service to Huntsville City Schools—and on beginning another chapter of Making Impact and Building Legacy in the community that helped make you who you are. Until next week ...



Dorothy

OCTOBER 9 - TYLER JAMES WILLIAMS - Tyler James Williams is an American actor, hip hop recording artist, martial artist, musician, music video director, film director, and graphic designer. He is most recognizable for having played the Chris Rock-inspired sitcom title character. Everybody Hates Chris and songwriter Cyrus DeBarge in the Disney Channel movie Let It Shine. He has also had a supporting role as Noah on AMC's The Walking Dead and Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders. Williams began his acting career at age four. He later starred in Little Bill as the voice of Bobby, briefly replacing Devon Malik Beckford in 2000, and played himself (or an eponymous character, "Tyler") on the children's show Sesame Street from 2000 to 2005. He rose to fame in 2005 by playing the main character in the hit series Everybody Hates Chris, which finished in 2009. He won a Young Artist Award in 2007 for his work on the show. - BlackCelebrityBirthdays.org



Spiritual Game Plan

PRESTON BROWN'S



Today's Spiritual Game Plan:
"Buckle Up!"

there should provide us the security that we need.

Matthew 8:25-26 says, The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

When we look at the seatbelts in a car, we don't necessarily notice how nice they look or what kind of fabric they are made of. We look at them and value them for the security that they provide. When we put our seatbelts on, we expect them to protect us in the case of an accident. This is how it should be in our spiritual lives. When the disciples got into the boat with Jesus, they should have been sure in knowing that they were safe and secure as long as Jesus was with them.

We as Christians should be the same way. When we put our hope and trust in God, we should be secure in knowing that God will take care of us. So when the storms of life are raging, like they were with the disciples, we should have this blessed assurance that God is with us. But remember, He didn't say that He would always save us from the storms; He said that He would be with us in the storm. And knowing that He is always

You see, when God sent His one and only son to die upon a cross for the whole world, He became our security in the midst of trouble. All we have to do is accept Him and believe in Him, and He will bring security to our lives—just like that seatbelt when we get into our cars.

So, it's time to "buckle up" with Jesus and put our faith and trust in Him and let Him provide the peace and the security that we



need for our lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to put our trust and faith in You when difficult times come in our lives.

Question: How secure are you in your faith in knowing that Jesus is with you whenever we face the trials and disappointments in life?

Are you not sure, somewhat sure, sure or very

sure?

Why?

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 TODAY!

NEXT WEEK:
"Take Another Step"



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Funeral services for **MRS. MELODY MALONE** (b. 1958) and **MR. GEORGE W. SANDERS** (b. 1949) will be announced at a later date.

Funeral service for **MR. PRINCETON CRU'SHUN AL-EXANDER** (b. 1991) was Saturday, October 3, at Syler Tabernacle, 904, Oakwood Avenue NW, Huntsville, Ala.

Funeral service for **MR. LEONARD WATKINS** (b. 1954) was Tuesday, September 29, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Funeral service for **MR. LEO TURNER, JR.** (b. 1934) was Monday, September 28, at First Missionary Baptist Church, 3509 Blue Spring Road NW, Huntsville, Ala., with eulogy by Pastor R. L. Turner of Destiny & Legacy Ministries, Birmingham, Ala.

Graveside service for **MS. LIELIA MORRIS** (b. 1964) was Sunday, September 27, at Big Cove Cemetery.

Funeral service for **MR. CHARLIE BROWN** (b. 1944) was Sunday, September 27, at Blackburn Chapel CP Church, 507 Plummer Road, Huntsville, Ala.

Funeral service for **MS. EULA MAE SLEDGE** (b. 1959) was Sunday, September 27, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home with Minister Bernard Parharm, Sr., of Chattanooga, Tennessee, officiating.

Funeral service was Saturday, September 26, for **MR. CHARLIE J. EUTSEY** (b. 1965) at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Funeral service for **MR. JOHN D. MARTIN** (b. 1951) was Saturday, September 26, at Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church, 292 Cemetery Road, New Market, Ala.

Funeral service for **MRS. MARTHA ADAMS HEREFORD** (b. 1934) was Wednesday, September 23, at Trinity Congregational Church UCC, 722 Brownsferry Street, Athens, Ala., with Minister Charles Harris, Jr., officiating and Minister Dana Harris eulogist.

Funeral service for **MR. FREDERICK HAYGOOD** (b. 1963) was Saturday, September 19, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home with Rev. Walter Peavy officiating and eulogist.

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Second Acts Require First-Day Ears

I recently came across an article about Whole Foods co-founder John Mackey, <https://cnb.cx/4yiLd7t>, and the lessons he has learned while launching his “second act.”

Those two words stopped me: **second act - why?** - because I’m living one.

Caution: Danger

And I’m discovering that perhaps one of the greatest dangers of a second act is entering it convinced that everything we learned during the first one qualifies us to skip orientation.

It doesn’t.

A second act is not simply Act One with a new title. It is another opportunity to become a freshman.

These days, several doors are appearing before me—church historian; perhaps accepting pastoral ministry; and possibly becoming a doctoral student in theology. Each opportunity intersects with things I have done before.

That may be precisely the danger.

At a Crossroads?

Experience can become an asset—or an ego.

My instinct could be to walk into these rooms announcing what I know, what I have accomplished and how many years I have been doing it.

Instead, I am learning something different:

Lead with Your Ears

That is increasingly how I understand Step Three of my *Seven Steps to Transform Your Leadership*: Lead with Your Ears.

Before changing something, listen.

Before demonstrating what you know, listen.

Before telling people where they should go, listen long enough to discover where they have already been.

And sometimes, before moving at all, wait.

That last lesson may be the most difficult for leaders accustomed to making things happen.

Right now, there are conversations I am waiting to have, meetings I am waiting to attend and possibilities I am deliberately refusing to push.

I’m learning that waiting is not necessarily inactivity. Sometimes waiting is leadership discipline.

My Seven Steps also include “Dig Deeply” and “Grow Up to Be a Child,” #s 2 and 4, respectively. Both seem particularly appropriate for a second act.

Dig deeply enough to discover what your first act taught you.

Then become childlike enough to admit how much your second act still requires you to learn.

At 72, I find that strangely exciting.

I’m not mourning what I’m no longer doing. I’m becoming increasingly grateful for the space to discover what comes next.

Perhaps that is the real gift of a second act:

You don’t have to erase the first one.

You just cannot allow yesterday’s experience to drown out tomorrow’s instructions.

So I’m showing up for freshman orientation.

And this time, I’m bringing my résumé—but keeping my ears open.



Tim Allston
Leadership Player-Coach and Four-time Amazon
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Contact: (256) 212-0949 - <https://bit.ly/4aB9Lwm>
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Website: www.timallston.com



Millennial Moment

by Gloria B. Caldwell

Why Wait?

“I’m just going to wait.” Something we tell ourselves often. That is not a problem when it concerns planning finances, especially if you’re in a bind and splurge spending crosses your mind.

Let’s be reasonable.

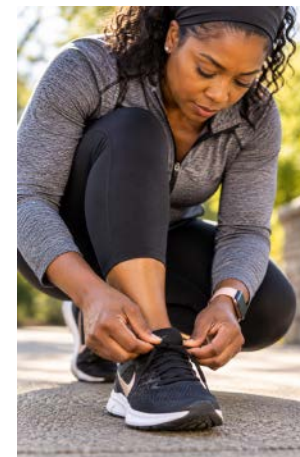
But let’s take a look at accomplishing your goals/dreams. It doesn’t matter what area you decide to enhance or advance. You can’t wait forever.

Let’s ask the question ... Every good solution starts with a question.

What are you waiting on? What opportunity needs to pose itself before you take a leap and get moving? A handout.

Come on!

SMH, What about fitness? What “feel” are you waiting on to decide? THIS is the day I will start my fitness journey.



Nutrition, how about this one? What needs to take place for you to say, “That’s it, I’m going to start being mindful of what I am eating!” Is it a near-death situation that needs to occur? Does a sickness need to set in?

What are you waiting for?

Are you waiting for some magical moments

(which you have the luxury of changing) to occur? Guess what? It’s all in your head.

You can start today. That moment can be right now!

Start planning, writing, running, making connections, and putting those sweets down.

Think back on some thing you have accomplished. Think hard about that moment you decided to start. Grab that feeling and create an updated version of it today! Why wait?

Start right now!

Lace Up!

Let’s Go! Life is waiting for you!



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VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

October 7

Five Finger Death Punch,
Cody Jinks & Eva Under
Fire

The Orion Amphitheater
Huntsville, Ala.

7:30 p.m.

October 8

Interfaith Mission Service
2026 Annual Celebration
and Awards Dinner
Keynote: Atty. Joe N.
Lampley

Huntsville Country Club

Oakwood Avenue
Huntsville, Ala.

6-8 p.m.

October 9

Huntsville Havoc vs. Pen-
sacola Ice Flyers
Exhibition Game
Polaris Ice at Propst
Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.
7 p.m.

October 9-11

Annual Gem, Jewelry &
Mineral Show
Huntsville Gem & Min-
eral Society
Jaycee Community Build-
ing
2180 Airport Road SW
Huntsville, Ala.
10 a.m.-6 p.m.

October 13

Concert
The Doobie Brothers
The Orion Amphitheater
Huntsville, Ala.
8 p.m.

October 15

AAMU Homecoming
Golf Tournament
Hampton Cove Golf
Course
7 a.m. Registration
8 a.m. Shot Gun Start
\$600 Foursome/\$150
<https://mp.gg/23yc17khq>

October 15

AAMU Homecoming
Alumni Pep Rally - 6-8
p.m. | Mixer 6-11 p.m.
The Orion Amphitheater
701 Amphitheater Drive
Huntsville, Ala.

October 16

Alumni Homecoming
Affair
Stovehouse
DJ Nakidfine and Element
XI with BigTim da DJ
3414 Governors Drive
Southwest, Huntsville,
Alabama

"Back on the Yard: The

Reunion"

20 Years of Ivy & Influ-
ence
Sands of Sahara
1426 Paramount Drive
Huntsville, Ala.
2-7 p.m.
(256) 441-5818

October 17

Pastoral Installation
Service for Pastor-Elect
Maurice Lee
Fletcher's Chapel P.B.
Church
Speaker: Elder Dr. Ken-
neth Duke
30592 Hardiman Road
Madison, Ala.

10 a.m.

Bulldog Football
AAMU vs. Grambling
State
Louis Crews Stadium

October 23

"Illuminating the Path to
Excellence in Music Edu-
cation"
The Bradford Scholar-
ship Foundation, Inc.
Fundraising and Awards
Luncheon
Church Street CPCA Fel-
lowship Hall
228 Church Street NW
Huntsville, Ala. | 11 a.m.

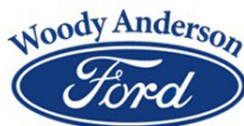


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John 'Jahni' Moore
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have to be the
leader and show
the world who
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or worse!"*
- Tim Allston

*"There's more
than others think
possible. Expect
more than others
think possible.
Care more than
others think you
can."*
- Howard Schultz

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J. T. Moore

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

Dr. Arthur L. Walker

Dr. Arthur L. Walker is a former president of the 6,000-student Motlow State Community College in Moore County, Tenn.

During his 18-year tenure with the college, he progressively advanced through the academic ranks from instructor to becoming the first African-American to hold the position of president. Walker moved Motlow College forward in areas of student access, capital projects, and fundraising.

He spearheaded a \$2.3 million fundraising drive to construct the first free-standing building for the Motlow College Smyrna Teaching Center, a building that was named in his honor in October 2017. As Director of the Fayetteville Center, Dr. Walker facilitated the construction of the Fayetteville Center and the Sundquist Center for Advanced Technologies, all while directing enrollment growth, program development, marketing and community relations.

Prior to his tenure at Motlow College, Walker served 26 years in the



U.S. Air Force (USAF), including two tours in Alabama.

After retiring from Motlow College in 2006, Walker launched a third career: president of his own company—Empowerment Concepts, Inc.—a professional development firm. In this capacity, he consulted and provided training for a wide variety of organizations.

Walker earned his associate degree at Okaloosa-Walton Junior College

(FL), his bachelor's degree at Athens State University, the master's at Troy University, and the doctorate at the University of Memphis.

Dr. Walker was married to the late Rosa Rice Walker, a retired school teacher. They have one adult daughter, Angela, and joined the historic Saint John AME Church in Huntsville, Alabama.



"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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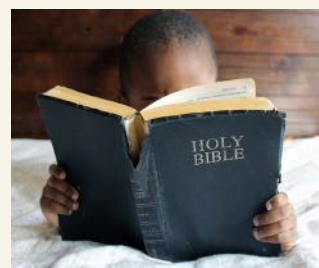
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This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, October 11, 2026
Twentieth Sunday
After Pentecost



(Track 2, Year A)

First Lesson:

Isaiah 25:1-9

Psalm 23

Second Lesson:

Philippians 4:1-9

GOSPEL:

Matthew 22:1-14

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AAMU Bulldogs Take Shakespeare Beyond 'The Hill'

The Alabama A&M University Bulldog Bards took Shakespeare from The Hill to stages across Huntsville last week with the fifth annual "Bard in the Yard."

This year's production, "Shakespeare in Love & War," brought together some of William Shakespeare's best-known characters and scenes in a fast-paced performance featuring romance, comedy, drama and stage combat.

Performances began Wednesday, Sept. 30, at Fantasy Playhouse Children's Theater & Academy before moving to The Orion Amphitheater on Thursday, Oct. 1.

For the AAMU students involved, the production offered more than an opportunity to take the stage. The Bulldog Bards participated through the Creative Workforce Development Program, a partnership between AAMU and Fantasy Playhouse that allows students to earn University credit while gaining professional theater experience. Students are also paid as professional actors for their performances.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed being both a teach-

ing artist and an actress," said senior communications media major Shyla Wade. Wade, a Nashville, Tennessee, native who portrays Juliet and Ophelia, returned for her second year with the group. She was among students from academic programs across the University that brought this year's production to life.

Senior English pre-law major Daniel A. Ware of Atlanta returned for his fourth year with the group, portraying Othello, Romeo and Macbeth. Junior communications media major Jayla Tillman of Huntsville returned for her second year in the roles of the Nurse, Joan of Arc and Sylvia, while senior communications media major Rickayla Whitelaw of Holly Springs, Mississippi, also returned for her second year as an actor swing and ensemble member.

Several students made their Bulldog Bards debuts. Sophomore biology major Chizitelu Justin of Abuja, Nigeria, portrayed Lady Macbeth and

Julia; sophomore political science major Trinity Golden of Byram, Mississippi, played Adriana and Beatrice; sophomore visual arts major Cailyn Alexander of Bessemer, Alabama, portrayed Portia and Luciana; and freshman mechanical engineering major Elija Cooper of Decatur, Alabama, took on the roles of Iago, Benedick and Hamlet.

Anijah Gilbert of Chicago, who studies mechanical engineering and communications media, portrayed Mercutio and Cleopatra.

"This has been a phenomenal experience as both a teaching artist and actress," Gilbert said. "I'm

grateful for the opportunity to portray Cleopatra and Mercutio on my first tour, and I hope young girls who see Cleopatra recognize that they, too, are strong,

third year with the group as Desdemona and Tybalt.

"Shakespeare in Love & War" was the Bulldog

brilliant and beautiful."

The company also included freshman computer science major Ryan Wade of Nashville and junior political science major Alivia Morris of Clarksville, Tennessee, who worked backstage. Helen Moyer of Huntsville, a Fantasy Playhouse employee and care coordinator, returned for her

Bards' first production of the 2026-27 academic year.

Performances were scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 30, at Fantasy Playhouse; 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 1, at The Orion; and 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Friday, Oct. 2, at AAMU's Johnson Little Theatre.

The Orion performances were free. The production was family-friendly but included staged sword combat.

Back row, from left, are Jayla Tillman, Anijah Gilbert, Shyla Wade, Helen Moyer and Chizitelu Justin. Front row, from left, are Daniel Ware, Cailyn Alexander, Elija Cooper, Rickayla Whitelaw and Maddison Qualls. Photo courtesy of Elise Walker, content coordinator, Fantasy Playhouse Children's Theater & Academy.



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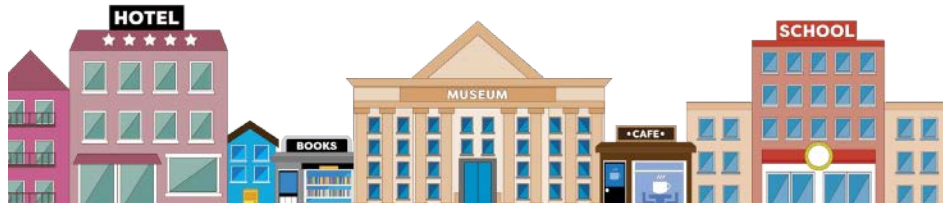
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AROUND TOWN

The Valley Weekly LLC



Drake State, Alfred Street Bapt. Church Open Blue Eagle Market
Drake State Community and Technical College

Thursday, October 1, 2026

Photos and Text Courtesy of Drake State



Drake State Celebrates Grand Opening of Blue Eagle Market, a Food pantry made possible through support from Alfred Street Baptist Church's Tithe the Tithe initiative

Drake State Community and Technical College celebrated the grand opening of the Blue Eagle Market, a new on-campus food pantry designed to provide students with access to food and essential resources.



Students visit new Blue Eagle Market.



DRAKE STATE
COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE



Drake President Patricia Sims (c) with (l-r) church administrator Bryan Bonner and Rev. Marcia Norfleet.

The Blue Eagle Market was established with support from Alfred Street Baptist Church through its Tithe the Tithe (T3) initiative, which invests in organizations and programs serving communities and creating opportunities for individuals and families.

The grand opening took place Thursday, October 1, 2026, at 11 a.m. in the Drake State Bookstore on the first floor of the S.C. O'Neal Library. Representatives from Alfred Street Baptist Church joined Drake State students, faculty, staff and community partners for the celebration.

"Students come to Drake State focused on building a

better future for themselves and their families. Basic necessities can have a direct impact on their ability to stay focused on that goal," said Dr. Patricia Sims, president of Drake State Community and Technical College. "The Blue Eagle Market gives us another way to support our students beyond the classroom. We are grateful to Alfred Street Baptist Church for investing in our students and helping us remove barriers that can stand between a student and their ability to learn."

The Blue Eagle Market will serve Drake State students experiencing food

insecurity by providing convenient access to food and other essential items on campus. The initiative is part of the College's broader commitment to create an enabling environment for student success.

"The Alfred Street Baptist Church seeks to put our resources to work in ways that create a meaningful and lasting impact," said Bryan Bonner, church administrator of Alfred Street Baptist Church. "Supporting the Blue Eagle Market means supporting students as they pursue their education, prepare for careers and strengthen their commu-

nities. We are pleased to partner with Drake State in helping ensure students have access to the resources they need to support students."

The partnership demonstrates how colleges, faith-based organizations and community partners can work together to address students' basic needs while supporting educational attainment and economic opportunity.

The opening followed a commitment from the Alfred Street Baptist Church to the Downtown Rescue Mission to support transitional housing.

AROUND TOWN

The Valley Weekly LLC



4th Women of Worship (WOW) Conference

AC Hotel | Downtown Huntsville

- Saturday, September 26, 2026

Photos Submitted by Minister Toni Savage, Ph.D., President/Founder, Daughter of Zion Ministries, Inc.
<https://dzministries-hsv.org>





"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
 Romans 12:2 KJV

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REGISTRATION REQUIRED



HOST
DR. TONI SAVAGE
DAUGHTER OF ZION MINISTRIES, INC.



PASTOR NEISSA SIMON
PASTOR,
 FRESH START CHRISTIANS MINISTRY



BRANDON PAIR
PALMIST,
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'Metamorphosis' WOW Conference 2026 Theme

Daughter of Zion Ministries, Inc. (DZM) presented its 4th Women of Worship Conference (WOW). The conference theme was "Metamorphosis" based on Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The guest speaker for the morning session was Pastor Neissa Kirby-Simon (first, left), Kingdom Love Ministry. Her sermon title was "Renew, Revive, and Rise" based on the conference scriptural reference, Romans 12:2.

Dr. Toni Savage (r) was the keynote speaker. Her sermon title was "Divine Metamorphosis." Her sermon text was taken from Matthew 17:1-5.

Immersed in an envi-

ronment of love, unity, sisterhood, and spiritual excellence, the conference participants experienced a powerful worship encounter. The sisters in the faith departed feeling renewed, empowered, and transformed.

Daughter of Zion Ministries, Inc., a qualified IRS Section 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, was founded by Dr. Toni Savage and is committed to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and making a difference in the community. For more information on the ministry, call DZM at (256) 797-3017.

Special thanks to Pastor Neissa Kirby-Simon, Brother Anthony Gibson, Brother Brandon Pair, Sister Nikki Strickland, and The Valley Weekly.

-VOLUNTEERS-
 Stewardess Bertha Anderson

Deacon Razak Arunaogun
 Minister Marie Corbett
 Mother Betty Craighead
 Sister Sherri Drake
 Minister Linda Earle
 Sister Brooke Erskine
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 Sister Donna Robinson
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 Minister Julian Savage
 Sister Danielle Tyler
 Minister Carolyn Walker
 Deacon James Walker
 Deaconess Renata Walker
 Sister Kiana Wilson

TARCOG Issues 'Winter Wishes' for 2026



TARCOG

As it settles into the fall season, the TARCOG staff is already thinking beyond pumpkins and turkeys to what can be one of the loneliest winter holidays for its aging and disabled clients. That's why TARCOG is working on its annual drive called Winter Wishes and asking the community for help.

This will be the 24th year the TARCOG holiday campaign has been used to provide joy to the aging community. Since the beginning, generous sponsors have helped fill thousands of wishes for TARCOG clients in DeKalb, Jackson, Limestone, Madison and Marshall counties. TARCOG serves more than 1,000 clients in the region, including a small percentage of veterans.

TARCOG is currently seeking sponsors for this year's Winter Wishes campaign. At the same time, case managers are collecting up to three wishes from clients.

Sponsors range from interested individuals to churches, social groups, clubs, neighborhoods, and more.

Most provide gifts wrapped in colorful holiday paper bags. Some people provide gift cards or financial donations, which staff uses to complete any unfilled wishes. To participate, all it takes is an email or phone call to TARCOG.

Starting in October, the Campaign Coordinators Kaleka Jones and Sanfunee Edwards will begin sharing those wishes with interested sponsors.

"In this campaign, we ask interested sponsors to fill at least one of the wishes on a

person's list," said TARCOG Executive Director Michelle Gilliam Jordan. "In the past, we've had amazing sponsors who have fulfilled every wish and then some. It is always a beautiful and uplifting time of year to see how giving our communities are to those who truly may not receive any other type of gift during the winter holiday season."

Sponsors begin dropping off their donations in November at TARCOG. This year, drop offs will be at the agency's new and permanent home in the MidCity District at 4976 Corporate Drive NW. Gifts are delivered by case managers during client visits throughout December.

Anyone can be a sponsor.

Jordan encourages anyone interested in participating in Winter Wishes 2025 to provide their contact information and how many clients they are interested in sponsoring by email to Medicaid.Waiver@tarco.org, or call 256-830-0818.

Arts Huntsville Begins Self-Guided Tours of Downtown

Arts Huntsville, in partnership with the City of Huntsville and Downtown Huntsville, Inc., has launched three free self-guided tours of public art in downtown Huntsville. Each tour is available as an interactive map on the Public Art Archive and as a downloadable guide. Free printed pocket guides for two of the tours are available at the Huntsville/Madison County Visitor Center.

The tours are built for different audiences and amounts of time. The interactive maps show a visitor's location as they walk, and both the online and printed materials include information about each artwork.

The Downtown Art Essentials Tour is a one- to two-hour route through downtown's most recognizable public artworks. It's made for first-time visitors and anyone hunting for the right photo backdrop.

The Downtown Art Discovery Trail, created in partnership with Downtown Huntsville, Inc., is the most comprehensive tour, with 30 stops. It runs from

the Dan Burch's sculptural work at the Huntsville Madison County Veterans Memorial on the north end of downtown to the restored Cosmic Christ mosaic on First Baptist Church. Along the way are murals by local artists, the rotating sculpture exhibition on Courthouse Square, and The Little Lion of Big Spring Park, a sculpture dating to about 1900 that was recovered from the bottom of the spring in 1990. Most stops are in the walkable downtown core. The final five stops are best reached by car, including Cosmic Christ, the Dr. William Hooper Council sculpture and Glenn Dasher's Moon Gate.

"Downtown Huntsville already gives people so many reasons to explore, and the Art Discovery Trail adds another fun way to experience our city," said Karla Palacios, Director of Partnerships at Downtown Huntsville, Inc. "Public art encourages people to slow down, discover something new and explore the businesses, restaurants

and spaces around them. It's another great way to create connections while supporting the vibrancy and economic vitality of downtown."

The Amazing Space Race is a family tour for children in grades K-5. Kids follow the Artonians, a group of curious aliens visiting Huntsville, from artwork to artwork. The tour is aligned with Alabama state education standards and connects with the Huntsville/Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau's Lucky Duck Scavenger Hunt, with bonus "Duck Alert!" clues included in the guide.

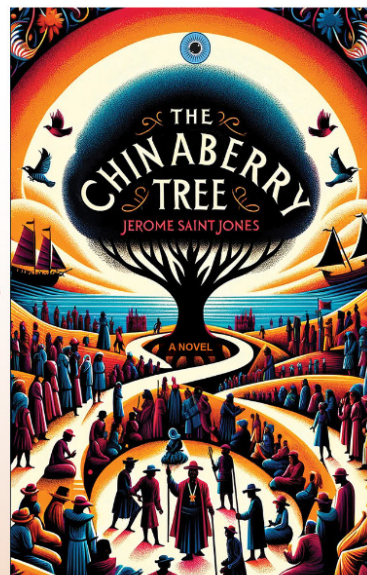
The tours are part of the Downtown Huntsville Public Art Engagement Initiative, a project funded in part by the Alabama State Council on the Arts. The initiative built upon Arts Huntsville's free, do-cent led First Friday Public Art Tours at City Hall and added additional artwork records to the Public Art Archive, a national public art database run by Creative West. The initiative also added QR code signage

at most of the artworks. Each code links directly to that artwork's page on the archive.

"We often get requests for public art tours, but previously the City Hall collection and the Public Art Archive were the main options we could offer," said Jennifer Moore, Director of Public Art at Arts Huntsville. "Now we have three new resources to help people engage in our downtown art in a more meaningful way."

First Friday tour still take place the first Friday of each month from 4:30 to 6:00 PM. Each tour is limited to 50 participants. Registration opens about one month before each tour.

Tour maps, downloadable guides, and First Friday registration are available at www.artshuntsville.org/public-art-tours. Printed pocket guides for the Downtown Art Discovery Trail and the Amazing Space Race are available at the Downtown Huntsville/Madison County Visitor Center while supplies last.



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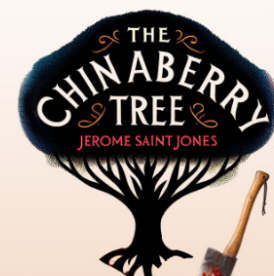
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