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A PEOPLE'S PUBLICATION

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U.S. Postal Service honors the late civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis with a stamp



The U.S. Postal Service said on Tuesday that the stamp "celebrates the life and legacy" of the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis. USPS

Civil rights giant and former U.S. Rep. John Lewis, who spent decades fighting for racial justice, will be honored with a postage stamp next year.

In a Tuesday announcement, the U.S. Postal Service said the stamp "celebrates the life and legacy" of the leader from Georgia, who risked his life protesting against segregation and other injustices in the violent Jim Crow-era South.

"Lewis spent more than 30 years in Congress steadfastly defending and building on key civil rights gains that he had helped achieve in the 1960s. Even in the face of hatred and violence, as well as some 45 arrests, Lewis remained resolute in his commitment to what he liked to call 'good trouble.'" USPS said in a news release.

In March of 1965, then-25-year-old Lewis led a march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge from Selma to Montgomery alongside other civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. The peaceful protest calling for equal voting rights came to be known as "Bloody Sunday" after Alabama State Troopers descended on the non-violent demonstrators in a brutal attack that left Lewis with a cracked skull.

His public service career spanned nearly 60 years. As a young student he joined lunch-counter protests; later, he became a member of the Freedom Riders; and at 21, he was the youngest speaker at the March on Washington. After serving on the Atlanta City Council, Lewis was elected to Congress where he spent more than 30 years representing the Atlanta area in the House of Representatives.

He died at age 80 in 2020 after suffering from advanced-stage pancreatic cancer.

USPS said the stamp features a portrait of Lewis taken by Marco Grob for Time magazine.

WEATHER

MON. 01/09
Mostly Cloudy
High 64°.

TUE. 01/10
Partly Cloudy
High 70°.

WED. 01/11
Mostly Cloudy
High 77°.

THUR. 01/12
Thunderstorms
High 71°.

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Gov. Edwards Proclaims January as Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Louisiana



Gov. Edwards holds news conference on Office of Human Trafficking

"Louisiana has taken a bold stand against this crime, and over the last several years we've seen tremendous impact from our efforts that are now being recognized nationally and internationally," said Gov. Edwards.

BATON ROUGE, La. – Governor John Bel Edwards has joined a host of national and state leaders to declare January as Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Louisiana. Human Trafficking has a global impact affecting the lives of more than 28 million victims around the world.

"Louisiana has taken a bold stand against this crime, and over the last several years we've seen

tremendous impact from our efforts that are now being recognized nationally and internationally," said Gov. Edwards. "That's thanks to a wide array of partners including state lawmakers, law enforcement community and faith organizations. I also could not be more proud of my wife, Donna, for her leadership with hundreds of partners statewide. Donna has established a national coalition of

first spouses focused on this issue, and last year, they held their first in-person public awareness campaign event in New Orleans during the NCAA Men's Final Four Championship tournament. That was in addition to the numerous virtual global summits she has held over the past few years to shine a light on this issue. Those sum-

See **TRAFFICKING**, on page 4

U.S. House GOP backs McCarthy as speaker after a tense and chaotic late-night session



U.S. House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-California, gives a thumbs-up after being elected Speaker of the House in the House Chamber at the U.S. Capitol Building on Jan. 7, 2023, in Washington, D.C. After four days of voting and 15 ballots McCarthy secured enough votes to become Speaker of the House for the 118th Congress. (Win McNamee/Getty Images)

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ASHLEY MURRAY
Louisiana Illuminator

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House elected Kevin McCarthy speaker early Saturday after most of the chamber's Republicans finally gathered behind him, ending a four-day stalemate that led to the most rounds of voting for a speaker since before the Civil War.

The California Republican was able to clinch the gavel on the 15th ballot by turning many

of the 20 conservative GOP lawmakers who voted against him to his side through a combination of rules changes and promises that his leadership will be different from recent House GOP speakers.

McCarthy received 216 votes to 212 for Democrat Hakeem Jeffries of New York, with six Republican members voting present.

The agreement and the vote allowed the 434 current members of the chamber to be sworn in for the 118th Congress. They will enable other essential steps for the

House, like adopting the rules, officially forming committees, and passing bills to move forward.

McCarthy's campaign to become the nation's 55th speaker ran into a significant roadblock Friday just before midnight on the 14th ballot. Verbal disputes among Republicans that nearly turned physical broke out on the floor when McCarthy fell just short of gaining enough votes.

Tensions surrounding McCarthy's efforts to clinch the gavel he's been working towards

for years led to a chaotic scene in the chamber as the California Republican walked from his seat to where Lauren Boebert of Colorado and Matt Gaetz of Florida were seated.

The two dissenters had voted present in what initially seemed like a goodwill gesture to help lower the threshold of votes McCarthy needed to become speaker without the two having to vote for him.

See **SPEAKER**, on page 4

New state porn law has people weighing in

BY CHRIS ROSATO

BATON ROUGE, La. - Louisiana is attempting to set an example for other states to follow by requiring people to verify their age on porn sites. And an expert says many whose job pertains to mental health are recognizing the effects these sites are having on kids.

Lisa Thompson is the vice president of research for the National Center of Sexual Exploitation. She and her colleagues say they're happy to see more people recognize how addictive these sites can be, and the risk that comes with being exposed at an early age.

"I really want to commend the Louisiana legislators for passing it because they're really the tip of the spear. There's a wide body of literature that shows a wide range of harms occurring in children. Mental health harms, behavioral harms, lower self-esteem, there's a higher propensity to engage in predatory and harmful sexual behaviors among each other," said Thompson.

According to Thompson, research shows, like other addictive things, people escalate their use over time.

"If you've been consuming for 2 years, 5 years, 10 years, that's going to take people to some really dark places over time. A significant number of individuals who are consuming adult pornography migrate over time to child sexual abuse material," Thompson added.

She also says the type of content on these sites glorifies rough behav-

See **LAW**, on page 4

BREC asks public to vote on Scotlandville Greenway Trail names



BATON ROUGE, La. - The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) is seeking the greater EBR community's help in naming sections of the Scotlandville Greenway located in north Baton Rouge.

BREC's Greenway and Trails, a division of Planning and Engineering, has divided the roughly 10 total miles of greenway into three defined sections. BREC Greenways has been working with local partners, organizations, and the community of north Baton Rouge for over a year on the master plan for the Scotlandville Greenway. BREC, along with the project stakeholders, determined that naming specific portions of the greenway would help visitors differentiate the distinct areas the trail covers.

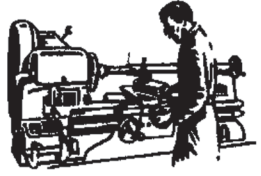
BREC Greenways has released a survey for the community to learn about the cultural significance of each

See **BREC**, on page 2



LOCAL & STATE

READER INFORMATION



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Weekly Press

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Governor announces new and returning higher education board members



Michael Adams, left, swears in Lola Dunahoe, left, Julie Stokes, Al Perkins and Elizabeth Pierre for new terms on the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors at its Jan. 4, 2023, meeting in Baton Rouge. (UL System Photo)

BY: PIPER HUTCHINSON
Louisiana Illuminator

Gov. John Bel Edwards announced a round of new appointees and reappointments Friday to Louisiana's higher education governing boards.

The University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors is

comprised of 15 members who serve staggered six-year terms and one student member who serves a one-year term. Edwards reappointed Lola Dunahoe, Al Perkins, Elizabeth Pierra and Julie Stokes. All four were sworn in for another six-year term at Wednesday's board meeting.

The UL System, which counts the largest number of students out

of the state's three university systems, includes Grambling State University, UL-Lafayette, UL-Monroe, Louisiana Tech, McNeese State, Nicholls State, Northwestern State and Southeastern Louisiana University.

UL System President Jim Henderson described Edwards' decision to reappoint four of the members as a vote of confidence in the work the board does.

Edwards named new members Zazell Dudley, Maple Gaines and Paul Matthews to the Southern University System Board of Supervisors. Christy Reeves and Ann Smith were reappointed to the 16-member board

Dudley is the director of economic development for the Caddo-Bossier Parish Port of

See MEMBERS, on page 3

SU Law Center to host expungement intake event



BATON ROUGE, La. — The Southern University Law Center has partnered with other groups to host an expungement intake event on Tuesday, Jan. 10.

The event is for residents of East Baton Rouge Parish and is set to take place at the Dr. Leo S. Butler Community Center located at 950 E Washington St. in Baton Rouge. Residents can receive assistance between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Organizers said residents will get the opportunity to have their criminal records reviewed to determine their eligibility for expunge-

ment. The hope is to pave the way for more people to get a job and make a better life for their families.

Attendees will need to bring a valid driver's license along with a background check from Louisiana State Police, a certified copy of minutes, and a certified bill of information.

The East Baton Rouge Mayor-President's Office, Louisiana State Senator Regina Barrow, and EBR Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman are sponsors for the event, according to organizers.

BREC from page 1

trail section and then cast their vote for the name of that specific trail section. Each segment of the trail has unique community and historical significance from which the naming options have been determined. The trail names the community can select from highlight Southern University elements that reflect the natural landscape, the Civil Rights Movement, and the role that major industries have played in developing Baton Rouge.

The community has until Jan. 31 to cast their vote for each section of the greenway trail. To learn more about the Scotlandville Greenway names and to cast your vote, go to <https://bit.ly/3Ct1f57>.

The Scotlandville Parkway was built in the 1970-1980s within the Interstate 110 right-of-way. The goal of the parkway was to serve as a linear park to minimize the interstate impact on the community and provide recreational opportunities such as walking and biking. It was constructed with major funding through the Federal Highway Administration and designed in concert with the expressway.

Along the 3-mile parkway route, there are many other recreational amenities including basketball, tennis, and disc golf. The parkway also boasts over 130 acres of park land and 8 miles of trails. To learn more about the Scotlandville Parkway master planning process, go to brec.org/Scotlandville.

THIS MONTH
 [JANUARY]

@ BREC

ADULT ASTRONOMY COURSES
 Highland Road Park Observatory
 Jan. 7 + Jan. 28 | 3:30-7:30 p.m.

SCIENCE ACADEMY
 Highland Road Park Observatory
 Jan. 7 + 14 + 28 | 10 a.m.-noon

ZOO + ME MORNINGS Baton Rouge Zoo
 Jan. 10 | 9:30-11:30 a.m.

LITTLE PICASSOS
 Zachary Community Park
 Jan. 10 + 17 + 24 + 31 | 4:30-5:30 p.m.

SWAMP ART SOIREE
 Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center
 Jan. 12 | 5:30-7:30 p.m.

PLUS NIGHT Highland Road Park Observatory
 Jan. 14 | 7-10 p.m.

SUNSHINE SOCIAL: PAJAMA-RAMA
 Jefferson Highway Park
 Jan. 20 | 6-9 p.m.

FAMILY GAME NIGHT Cedar Ridge Drive Park + North Street Park
 Jan. 20 | 6-7:30 p.m.



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Photo Opportunity at Select Events

SOLAR VIEWING
 Highland Road Park Observatory
 Jan. 21 | noon-2 p.m.

COMMUNITY BONFIRE
 Highland Road Community Park
 Jan. 21 | 4-8 p.m.

GLOW IN THE PARK - VOLLEYBALL
 Highland Road Community Park
 Jan. 23 | 6-7:30 p.m.

ARCHERY 101
 Milton J. Womack Park
 Jan. 25 | 6-7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY MORNING STUDIO: PARTY TIME PRINT MAKING
 Milton J. Womack Park
 Jan. 28 | 10:30 a.m.-noon



BREC.ORG/THISMONTH



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EBR leaders give update on ongoing drainage efforts



BATON ROUGE La. — Leaders in East Baton Rouge Parish updated the public on Sunday, Jan. 8, about ongoing drainage efforts.

According to a spokesman with the EBR Mayor-President's Office, approximately 3,700 tons of debris have been removed from the Claycut Bayou and Ward Creek areas. Overall, about 22 million pounds of debris have been removed from more than 80 miles of drains and pipes in East Baton Rouge Parish.

In addition to the clearing of debris, crews have been able to repair 680 sinkholes and dig 42 thousand feet of roadside ditches.

The efforts are part of East Baton Rouge Parish's Stormwater Master Plan. Visit <https://stormwater.brla.gov/> to learn more.

EBR Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome also announced on Wednesday, Jan. 4, that she will implement a new Stormwater Advisory Committee. The goal will be to bring EBR more in line with state



MAYOR SHARON WESTON BROOME

Locals get ready for Spanish Town Mardi Gras as carnival season kicks off



Spanish Town Mardi Gras

BATON ROUGE, La. - Robert King has been part of Spanish Town Mardi Gras for 40 years. "Just like 'Man, I love flamingos' and that's Spanish town," King said.

Every year when carnival season starts on the epiphany, he starts getting excited about the upcoming parade and ball.

"It's a day after a year where we have judges, lawyers, doctors, people who must toe the line all year long. They can let their hair down, they become something they're not, they can dress up, they can party," King said.

This year the parade theme is "man, I love flamingos" in honor of Doug Cossman, a member of their organization who passed away last year.

"If it wasn't for him, the ball wouldn't be where it's now because he took it, and when it was just a small little thing with 100 people, 200 people. Now it's grown to 3000-something people and he's brought in some great music, and we're trying to follow in his footsteps," King said.

Spanish Town Mardi Gras



brings people together and brings business downtown.

"With all the people down here, people are always coming into the store trying to get everything pink, everything flamingo, everything, purple, gold, and green. It brings a clientele Downtown that normally wouldn't be here," Luke Lognion, co-owner of Brass and Circa 1857 said.

Lognion also lives in the Spanish Town neighborhood,

and even he is already starting to prepare.

"We are making sure that we have all of our parking down, we're making sure that we have food because once the once the festivities begin, we won't be able to leave our house, all the streets are shut off going to and from our house so we are here making sure that you know we have all the preparations we need plus we have a huge party every

year," Lognion said.

He said he loves this parade because of how it brings people from all over Baton Rouge.

"The Spanish town market, the capital grocery, which is like a nice little center hub of Spanish town life. It is a very friendly neighborhood where people always know each other, and we love being able to share that with everybody at Baton Rouge," Lognion said.

DOTD announces planned Acadian Thruway closures

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana transportation officials are planning several closures along part of Acadian Thruway.

The closures are expected to take place on the weekend of Saturday, Jan. 7, and Sunday, Jan. 8, as well as on Saturday, Jan. 14, and Sunday, Jan. 15.

Cars and trucks will not be able to drive along Acadian Thruway at the railroad crossing between 12 a.m. and 2:30 a.m. each day.

There will also be a rolling closure on S. Eugene Dr., Valley St., and Perkins Rd., according to transportation officials. They added those closures are expected to last about two hours on each street.

During the closures, traffic will be detoured to I-10, Perkins Rd., and College Dr.

Drivers are being encouraged to plan ahead and to use caution around work crews. The public can also get real-time traffic updates by dialing 511 or by going to the website 511la.org.

MEMBERS from page 2

Commission. Gaines is a retired judge who previously served on the Louisiana 4th Circuit Court of Appeal. Matthews is CEO of the Port of South Louisiana.

New and returning SU System Board members were sworn in at Friday's meeting.

The governor added new members to the Louisiana Board of Regents, which oversees all four state college and university systems, and reappointed five others. David Aubrey, a regional vice president with AT&T, is the new addition. Christian Creed, Blake David, Wilbert Pryor, Jay Seale and Terrie Sterling were reappointed to the 15-member board.

Aubrey and the returning members will be sworn in at the next Board of Regents meeting Monday.



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Louisiana oil, gas sector to shrink or pivot to clean fuels this year

BY: WESLEY MULLER
Louisiana Illuminator

Louisiana's oil and gas industry is expected to shrink slightly this year due to a combination of economic and geopolitical factors, experts who follow the sector say, though they also forecast potential growth in the new energy and industrial sectors.

Most analysts are predicting some kind of economic slowdown during the first half of 2023. Oil and gas companies saw record-high profits in 2022 from a surge in demand as most of the world recovered from the coronavirus pandemic and nations shifted their energy policies to address Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Exxon earned a record \$20 billion in profit for the third quarter of 2022. Shell and TotalEnergies reported their profits more than doubled in the third quarter from the same period the year before.

While refineries have increased production to meet demand, many drilling and exploration companies are investing cautiously. According to the professional service firm Deloitte's "2023 Oil and Gas Industry Outlook," many companies have prioritized paying their shareholders and saving up cash as economic uncertainty grows and energy prices continue to swing.

Gasoline prices, which peaked at \$5 per gallon in June, have since fallen across the U.S. and remained below \$3 per gallon in Louisiana as of Thursday, according to AAA's gas price tracker. Also Thursday,



(Canva image)

U.S. natural gas prices reached their lowest mark in more than a year as unusually warm winter weather continues to dampen demand.

Continued downward pressure could cancel drilling plans for areas

such as the Haynesville Shale play in northwestern Louisiana, LSU energy sector economist David Dismukes said.

"It's looking like we'll see some kind of economic slowdown in the

first and second quarter, which is going to dampen what small amount of drilling interest is out there," he said.

Instead, Louisiana's oil and gas companies will likely pivot their

investments to the clean energy transition with the help of federal incentives, Dismukes said.

President Joe Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has a wide variety of tax breaks for companies to invest in energy initiatives such as clean hydrogen fuel and carbon capture.

Dismukes said some of the proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminals in Louisiana might incorporate carbon capture technology in an effort to leverage federal incentives.

"A lot of spending opportunities in the IIJA will help facilitate that," Dismukes said. "Clean hydrogen initiatives will be something else that will take off and probably be pretty big."

Deloitte made a similar prediction in its report, noting that the volume of natural gas certified as "low carbon" increased 100 times in the last year. LNG exporters have

signed contracts with suppliers to deliver cleaner gas, and at least three proposed U.S. LNG projects have announced plans to build carbon capture facilities to produce lower-carbon LNG exports, the report said.

As for renewable energy sources such as offshore wind, Louisiana could see some interest in lease agreements but will likely not see any major projects begin this year as the sector remains hampered with supply chain woes and inflated costs for parts, Dismukes said.

Overall, the situation may even help the oil and gas industry achieve its climate goals, he added.

"I think we'll see healthy progress on reducing emissions," Dismukes said. "How much and how fast is what I can't tell you... but this next year is going to be an important year."

LAW from page 1

ior in the bedroom more than in the old days, leading young men to believe certain abusive behaviors are normal and young women to believe it's what's expected of them.

"I get like not wanting kids to look at porn like yea, makes sense, but like...it's just not gonna work. I ran into that exact same thing, and I don't have a driver's license for the state of Louisiana. So, like I'm an adult that's of age, I fought for this country, and I can't look at it because I don't have a Louisiana

license," said one Baton Rouge resident who opposed the idea.

"As a parent, privacy and safety is most important for our children. We have young girls, and I would want any extra restrictions to be put in place for the safety of our children. And with Christmas coming, different devices and things we were looking at purchasing for our kids, we had to be very cautious and protective of what we wanted to purchase," said a local mom on Friday.

The governor also proclaimed January as Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Another thing experts say is linked to the porn industry,

TRAFFICKING from page 1

mits have collectively convened over two thousand international, national, and state leaders and professionals in the field. She has engaged and inspired several first spouses from other states to join her in using their platforms to address the issue and raise awareness."

"I thank God every day for the opportunity to be in this role and to be able to use my platform to educate those around me about human trafficking and what we can all do to help survivors regain control of their lives," said First Lady Donna Edwards. "We can never underestimate the power of being a voice for the many survivors across this state and country."

This month, the Office of First Lady Donna Edwards, the Office of Human Trafficking (HT) Prevention and several key stakeholders have joined together to recognize HT Prevention month. On January 11, 2023, state leaders and professionals all over the state will participate in #WearBlueDay. First Lady Edwards and other international, national, and state leaders will convene at the annual Mid-

South Summit which will be held at L'Auberge Casino in Baton Rouge. Additionally, the Governor's Mansion, Caesars Superdome and Four Seasons Hotel in New Orleans, La will be lit blue in recognition of Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

"We've witnessed growing synergy in our state among leaders and professionals of all sectors stepping forward to partner with us in ending human trafficking," said Dr. Dana Hunter, executive director of the Governor's Office of Human Trafficking Prevention. "I want to acknowledge and thank BMF, Beuerman Miller and Fitzgerald a public relations firm, for their longstanding support and assistance in promoting Louisiana's first statewide public awareness campaign Stop Trafficking La: Human Trafficking is R.E.A.L. Innovation and Collaboration among key partners continues to be a game changer here in our state."

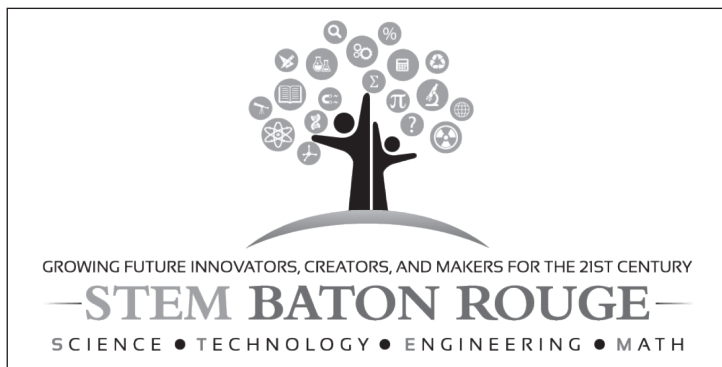
Click here for a copy of the proclamation. For more information on human trafficking efforts in Louisiana visit humantrafficking.la.gov.

Aeronautical Engineering Workshop Scheduled for City of Baker

Baton Rouge STEM providing opportunity for STEM exposure

BATON ROUGE, LA – Baton Rouge STEM (BRSTEM) announced this morning the scheduling of its aeronautical engineering workshop for youth in the City of Baker and surrounding communities. BRSTEM established a partnership with the City of Baker earlier this past year to hold a number of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) workshops at the city's Workforce Development Center. BRSTEM, launched in August 2019, is working in partnership with the City of Baker and Mayor Darnell Waites to utilize the City of Baker Workforce Development Center as a hub for STEM programming for the town north of Baton Rouge.

"Individuals working in STEM professions helped to build a thriving City of Baker years ago. We are committed to ensuring that the next generation can take advantage of these



opportunities and are prepared to utilize STEM-based learning to create an even brighter future for Baker," stated Mayor Waites earlier this year.

BRSTEM's aeronautical workshop will provide students in grade K-12 with the opportunity to be introduced to basic aero-space concepts

and practices. Students will have the opportunity to build prototype airplanes and rockets, run flight simulation software, and launch rockets into the unknown as part of this workshop.

Aeronautical Engineering Event Details

January 21, 2023 - 9am to 11am
City of Baker Workforce Development Center
3262 Baker Blvd
Baker, LA 70714
Pre-Register
www.batonrougestem.org
225.286.7225

Families interested in attending must register prior to January 19th. Registration is available online at www.batonrougestem.org or by calling 225.286.7225.

About Baton Rouge STEM
Baton Rouge STEM is a STEM development program for youth and professional educators with the mission of integrating STEM into classroom learning in alignment with college and career readiness standards.



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SPEAKER from page 1

McCarthy and Gaetz appeared to disagree strongly, yelling at each other as North Carolina's Patrick McHenry tried to intercede to cool tensions and work toward getting McCarthy elected, as he had been for days.

North Carolina's Richard Hudson had to hold back Alabama's Mike Rogers from possibly getting into a physical altercation with Gaetz in a tumultuous moment for the House Republican Conference, which has been in charge of the chamber since Tuesday.

McHenry then called for the

House to adjourn until Monday at noon. Republicans initially voted for adjournment, only switching their votes at the last seconds when McCarthy cheerfully led them in moving to stay in session for the 15th and previous ballot.

The last of the Republican holdouts — Andy Biggs of Arizona, Eli Crane of Arizona, Bob Good of Virginia, and Matt Rosendale of Montana — voted present on the final ballot, lowering the threshold McCarthy needed to become speaker but not giving him their full support. Boebert and Gaetz also voted present on the last poll.

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INJURED BY AN 18 WHEELER OR TRUCK?
INJURED IN A MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT?

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RELIGION

Jesus Our Intimate Friend

BY DR. CHARLES STANLEY

Matthew 26:47-50

Jesus Arrested

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him."

49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

50 Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

Judas expected Jesus to establish His kingdom on earth and drive the Romans out of Israel — anyone who could calm a storm at sea could easily remove an oppressive government! But Judas's interest in Jesus was more personal and political than spiritual. In fact, John reported that his fellow disciple stole from the money box (12:6). Today the man's name is synonymous with those who betray others for personal gain.

In spite of Judas' greed, blind ambition, and betrayal, Jesus never stopped loving him; He still used the word "friend" to address the one-time disciple. The Lord does not place conditions on His love or reject people who fail to meet certain standards. He simply cares for us as we are.

People cannot earn Jesus Christ's love and friendship. He takes the initiative, reaches out, and draws into fellowship those who are willing. We are not worthy, but we are privileged to live in His love anyway. In the Lord, we find a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).



DR. CHARLES STANLEY

The Balance Of Love And Discipline

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same. - (Romans 13:3)

God's kingdom government works in such a way that it balances love and discipline.

Hebrews 12:6 says that God loves us but He disciplines us. Parents are to love their children enough to discipline them (see Ephesians 6:4). If you do not love your children enough to discipline them, you really do not love them at all. Church leaders are called to love their flock, but they are also called to correct the flock—even to the point of excommunication of unruly members (see 2 Thessalonians 3:11-15).

The civil government is to honor

and praise people who do what is right (see Romans 13:3). But the government also has the responsibility to discipline and judge citizens who break the law (see v. 4).

All of God's institutions marry love with discipline. The method of discipline for the family is the rod. The method of discipline for the church is the Communion table,

accountability, and excommunication. The method of discipline for the government is imprisonment, fines, and capital punishment. God has given each governmental institution a disciplining mechanism that people might be led to self-government under Him or else suffer the appropriate consequences.

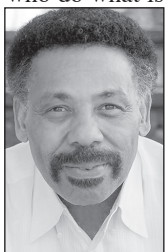
Love without discipline or accountability is not love at all. The definition of love is righteously and passionately pursuing the well-being of another. To allow someone whom you care about to continue in a lifestyle that is personally destructive to themselves is to not exercise love.

God's covenantal principles carried out within the institutions of government ensure the productivity and peace for all involved.

Reflection: Why should we honor and respect authority? Think of the areas where you are an authority. How do you balance gentle love and discipline? Where have you gotten out of balance?

Lord, I pray for peace in our nation. I pray for peace in our communities.

I pray for peace in our schools. Bring order and peace to each of us individually and to all of us collectively.



DR. TONY EVANS

Powerful Confessions

BY CREFLO DOLLAR

(Hosea 4:6).

We live in a world of broken promises. It has become commonplace to hear someone make a promise they either can't keep or have no intention of honoring. The ability and willingness to follow through on what they say indicates their character and ethics, and signals whether others can trust and believe them. God is not only willing, but able, to follow through on His promises.

The vows God made are trustworthy and rock-solid concerning the believer. Uttering them in faith unleashes power to move mountains. Our words are spiritual containers carrying either faith or fear. We must be careful to avoid the world's "What you don't know can't hurt you" mindset, because not knowing any better and confessing the wrong thing can defeat us in life. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."

What we believe impacts what we say. Studying and meditating on the Word until we have complete faith in it makes us righteous in God's eyes. Righteousness has a voice—it actually speaks. "But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way... But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:6, 8-10, NKJV). Letting what God declares guide what we declare puts us in a strong position.

The real power of confession is seen when we say what we believe. It's the result of the Word being deposited in our hearts, meditating on it,

and finding rest from it. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13). When we're full of the Word, it will come out of our mouths. Conversely, when we're full of fear, we speak fear-based words.

We've been given the authority to declare God's Word and bring about change. We therefore must be careful what we say so as to bring about positive, not negative, change. "Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways" (Job 22:28). The ability to get results is in our possession when we understand the power of our words; we simply need to be sure to decree the right thing. Our confessions bring things that don't even exist to a place where they're established in our lives, for either good or bad.

For our words to bring about the desired effect, what we say must match up with what God says. Most people say what they have and wonder why nothing happens in their lives. By comparison, the believer has the authority to have what he says by opening his mouth and speaking it. If we're encountering static from the enemy, we can change the situation through our confessions. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" (Psalm 107:2).


We have the power to make things happen by opening our mouths and speaking in faith. We didn't earn this power and we don't deserve it; we receive it by God's grace. Basing the promise we make to others, and to ourselves, on His promises brings supernatural success.

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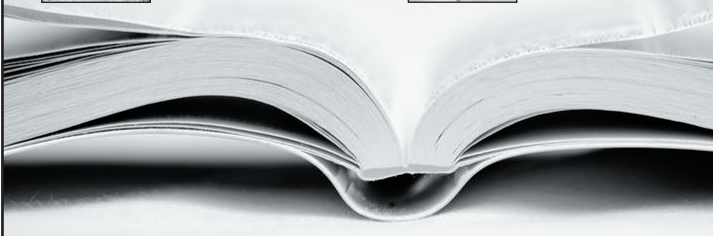
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BUSINESS

Milford business helps keep financial dream alive for Black business owners



Tia Woods at her ITS the Room store at the Connecticut Post Mall in Milford, Conn. on Thursday, Jan. 5, 2023. Woods focuses on exposing Black brands and giving designers an opportunity for legacy and wealth building.

MILFORD — Tia Woods dreams of helping bring exposure to Black brands and helping those in her community build and keep wealth.

With her business, ITS The Room, Woods, an author, small business owner and elected official in her hometown of East Hartford, now shows off the latest Black brands in a new space inside the Connecticut Post Mall.

"ITS The Room was started with a common goal — to help other creative professionals begin and establish their own successful ventures," said Woods, who started the business in 2019 with her daughter, Tiana Allman.

ITS The Room is a retail business focused on expanding and exposing Black brands, while also giving designers an opportunity for legacy and wealth building, Woods said.

"We give people a chance to build wealth and leave a legacy," she said. "The goal is to attract people to come in and buy and help keep money in our community. I want to help people in our community build wealth."

ITS The Room offers black business owners of all kinds — from clothing brands and beauty products to artwork — an opportunity to sell

their products year-round in the storefront and online. The store features a large selection of ever-changing local, small, or independently designed products showcasing the best of Connecticut and beyond, she said.

The free show will feature about 10 designers who will be taking the stage for ITS the Room to showcase their designs. There also will be a VIP after-show event at the store. For information about the show or after show visit itstheroomct.com or email info@itstheroomct.com.

Woods said the show is dedicated to bringing together different

designers of all skill levels. These designers will display their work across five categories — urban wear, high fashion, evening elegant, urban active and night life casual.

The event will also feature two award-winning poets, T'challa Williams and her daughter, Tiana, plus comedian Micha Jean.

"I found my purpose. My heart is with my community, and I want to see all of us flourish," she said. "It is scary, it is. But if dreams don't scare you, you're not dreaming big enough."

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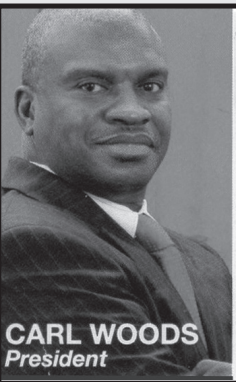
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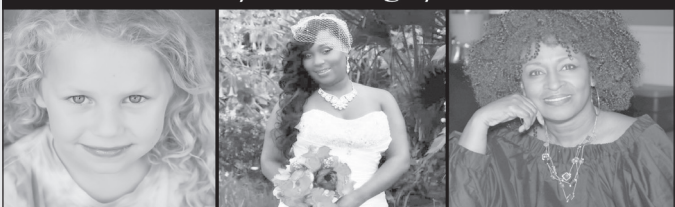
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Ochsner Hospital for Children emphasizes importance of AED, CPR training

More than 200 lives saved by Project ADAM, a national organization dedicated to helping prepare schools and communities for sudden cardiac arrest

New Orleans - Last Monday night, we joined the millions of others across the world who watched in disbelief as Damar Hamlin went into sudden cardiac arrest and collapsed during an NFL game. While the scene was shocking, the rapid response of medical personnel was amazing — and undoubtedly gave Mr. Hamlin a far better chance at survival.

While Mr. Hamlin benefitted from the world-class medical care provided by the Buffalo Bills, Cincinnati Bengals and National Football League, that kind of quick, life-saving action should be available to anyone, anywhere. And with Project ADAM, it can be.

Project ADAM is a nationwide initiative that has saved the lives of more than 200 children, adolescents

and adults who went into sudden cardiac arrest. It was started in 1999 with three primary goals:

1. Raise awareness about sudden cardiac arrest in children and adults
2. Create safety nets across communities to prepare bystanders to respond confidently to a sudden

cardiac arrest

3. Serve as a resource in the establishment of cardiac emergency action plans within schools, community centers, youth sports and beyond, to create more Heart Safe spaces

Out of this tragic event we know that positive action must emerge. Help us apply the lessons learned to ensure our communities are

equipped to respond to cardiac emergencies like Mr. Hamlin's. Right now, as the world's attention is tuned to heart emergencies, we want to encourage every single person to learn CPR and how to use automated external defibrillators (AED). On average, if someone has a sudden cardiac arrest outside of a medical setting, they have approximately a 10 percent chance of survival.

As a pediatric health system, we believe that every school, athletic field, health club, community center — in fact, anywhere youth tend to gather — should have a cardiac emergency action in place that is practiced regularly. This approach can, and will, continue to help save lives as was so beautifully demonstrated on the football field in Cincinnati last Monday night.

As all of our thoughts remain with the health of Damar Hamlin —

See TRAINING, on page 7



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HEALTH

What Seniors 50+ Need To Know About Latest Vaccine

BY MAXIM ELARAMSISY
California Black Media

Physicians and public health officials are raising alarms about a “triple-demic” happening as the holiday travel season approaches. Communities around California are susceptible to infection by new COVID-19 variants, the seasonal flu, and the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

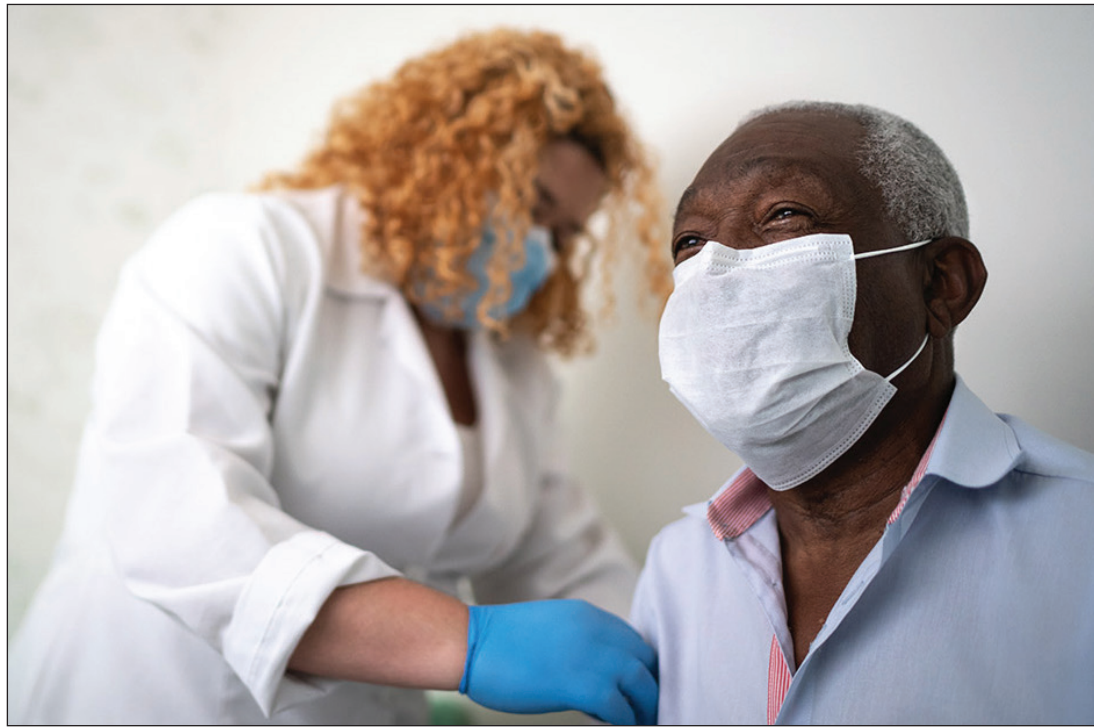
People who are vulnerable to serious infection, especially those over age 50, are encouraged to get the updated bivalent COVID vaccine and this year’s flu vaccine.

“Young babies, our older patients, and of course people who have complications from things like diabetes or heart disease, or people who have obesity, people who have immuno-compromised symptoms, these people are very vulnerable,” said Dr. Sharon Okonkwo-Holmes, a Kaiser Permanente family practice physician during an informational event at the Yvonne B. Burke Senior & Community Center in Los Angeles. “The CDC is really recommending that you get your flu vaccine at the same time as your COVID vaccine.”

The flu vaccine, which changes every year to protect against the flu strains most likely to circulate in the coming season, appears to be “a very good match” according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky.

However, data shows fewer people are getting vaccinated, including fewer pregnant women, seniors, and children.

RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild cold-like symptoms. Although it is not dangerous for most people, it can cause serious problems, especially in infants and seniors. No vaccine is



currently available for RSV.

COVID-19, flu and RSV share many of the same symptoms, leading to confusion about which course of treatment to take.

The first action people should take if they are not feeling well is to isolate, and do a home test for COVID. An infected person may test negative on the first day of symptoms.

“In early infections, the home test may not pick it up right away, but it will pick it up on day two or day three,” said Okonkwo-Holmes. “Keep your mask on, try and stay in your room... On days one to five, you really do want to avoid exposure with everyone else because you are shedding virus... By day five, you’re considered to be okay. If you’re not

having fever for two days, go ahead and put your mask on and you can go out into the community, but we’re still asking you to keep your mask on until day ten.

People over 50 should strongly consider getting vaccinated for Shingles, a viral skin condition causing blisters and a burning or tingling sensation that can last for weeks.

Shingles and associated inflammation can cause complications, including long term nerve pain, vision loss, and has also been linked to increased risk for stroke and dementia. The two-dose shingles vaccine, Shingrix, is recommended for all people over the age of 50 and people who are 19 and older with a weakened immune system due to disease or medication.

“If you’ve ever had chickenpox as a kid, when you’re 50 you should ask your doctor for your shingles shot,” said Okonkwo-Holmes.

Doctors know that three shots at the same time can be too much for some patients. But due to the urgency of the situation, doctors are recommending getting the flu and COVID vaccine together.

“Right now, we’re seeing more COVID, number one, flu, number two, then shingles. So, if you want to put off that third one, then go ahead and put off the shingles one... Get your COVID and flu shots at the same time,” Okonkwo-Holmes said.

Communities of color have been hit especially hard by the pandemic because of “social determinants of health,” like where we live,

the types of jobs we have, and our level of the stress hormone cortisol.

“The stress that we endure in America, it has an impact on our cells,” said Okonkwo-Holmes. When society treats you differently, when you are profiled, when the police are following you, when you hear bad news in the media about another person who has been killed who looks like us... It raises our blood pressure; it also raises a [stress] hormone in our bodies called cortisol... It makes us more susceptible to things like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, [and] stroke... So, I would argue that a lot of the systemic racism and microaggressions in our society are directly impacting our DNA and impacting our health... The racism is making us sick.”

For our communities to stay healthy, we must take action. “For me, action means trying to sleep well, avoiding alcohol, avoiding smoke [including] marijuana, trying my hardest to eat well.”

As for stress, Dr. Okonkwo-Holmes recommends laughter. “Go

ahead and laugh out loud and have some enjoyment, go on long walks 30 minutes a day and spend time with people who make you feel good.”

As Black communities continue to navigate the pandemic, it is important to use the tools available to keep us as healthy as we can.

Okonkwo-Holmes believes people should wear masks indoors, even though it is not currently a requirement in many places, we should stay up to date with vaccinations to prevent serious illness and hospitalization, and if a COVID infection is acquired, get one of the available treatments, which most seniors will qualify for and usually tolerate well.

“None of my patients have had severe complications at all from treatments,” said Okonkwo-Holmes. “You don’t want to stay really sick. If you don’t feel well and you’re having difficulty breathing. You want to get to the hospital right away or call 911.”

TRAINING from page 6

and we all take a collective sigh of relief with each bit of positive news — we are reminded of Adam Lemel.

In 1999, 17-year-old Adam went into cardiac arrest during a high school basketball game and passed away. In the wake of that tragedy, Adam’s family was determined to ensure no one else would suffer the same fate. Together with Stuart Berger, MD, and Children’s Wisconsin, they formed Project ADAM (Automated Defibrillators in Adam’s Memory). Today, there are 38 Project ADAM affiliated sites in 29 states.

While sudden cardiac arrest is uncommon in young people, it sadly does happen. And it’s exactly that — sudden and unexpected. But, immediate CPR and the availability of an AED can double or triple a person’s chance of survival. So while you can’t predict when one might strike, you can plan your response. That’s where Project ADAM is making a difference.

For more information about Project ADAM, educational resources and how to become an affiliated site, visit the Project ADAM website at projectadam.com. To make a financial donation to the Ochsner Health Project ADAM affiliate site, visit Ochsner.org/projectadam.



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SPORTS

Receiver Michael Thomas agrees to restructure Saints contract, ESPN reports



Saints wide receiver Michael Thomas was placed on injured reserve in early November because of a dislocated toe that had not responded well to rehab. (AP Photo/Tyler Kaufman, File)(Tyler Kaufman | AP)

NEW ORLEANS - Wide receiver Michael Thomas has agreed to restructure his contract with the Saints, receiving a signing bonus of more than \$900,000 and establishing a March 17 deadline for the team to decide if he remains in their plans for next season, according to an ESPN report on Saturday (Jan. 7).

Thomas, who is under contract through the 2024 season, agreed to have his base salary for 2023 reduced from \$15.5 million to \$1.165 million,

while adding a massive bonus if he remains on the Saints' roster on St. Patrick's Day. The new deal calls for Thomas to get a \$31.755 million roster bonus for the 2024 league year that becomes fully guaranteed if he remains on the Saints roster on the third day of the 2023 league year (March 17), according to ESPN's Field Yates.

The report said Thomas and the team agreed to the restructured deal Friday, and the wide receiver col-

lected a signing bonus of \$902,941 this week.

Yates reported that if the Saints decide to move on from Thomas before March 17, he would be eligible for free agency immediately. If the Saints decided to cut the injury-prone receiver before his massive bonus becomes guaranteed, it would likely do so with a post-June 1 designation, Yates reported, resulting in a total dead salary cap charge of nearly \$26 million.

If the Saints decide to keep Thomas, it would still realize the salary cap savings the restructured deal provides in 2023, before taking on the mammoth hit of the bonus payment in 2024.

Thomas, who set the NFL record for most catches in a season with 149 in 2019, has played just 10 games over the past three seasons because of a series of ankle and foot injuries.

Hamlin, still critical, continues recovery, tweets thanks

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Doctors described Damar Hamlin's neurological function as "excellent" Saturday, as the Buffalo Bills safety continued making progress in his recovery after having to be resuscitated on the field in a game at Cincinnati on Monday.

In providing their daily update on Hamlin, the Bills said the player continues to breathe on his own but remains in critical condition at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center. Hamlin took a major step forward in his recovery on Friday when he was taken off a ventilator and showed an ability to speak.

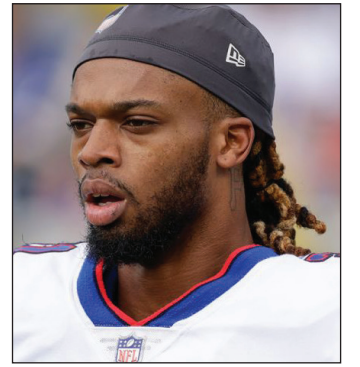
There was a tweet on the 24-year-old's verified Twitter account Saturday evening saying that any love put into the world comes back three times as much and thanking all who have "reached out and prayed." It also said that the response to his injury will make Hamlin stronger. The tweet was followed by a heart-shaped emoji and "3."

The tweet read: "Putting love into the world comes back 3xs as much... thankful for everyone who has reached out and prayed. This will make me stronger on the road to recovery, keep praying for me!"

The NFL also will show support for Hamlin during all Week 18 games, which start Saturday afternoon, including a pregame moment of support, painting Hamlin's No. 3 on the 30-yard line and pregame shirts with "Love for Damar 3." The Bills will also wear "3 jersey patches.

A couple hours after the first, there was another tweet that said, "The love is felt, & extremely real. No matter race or religion everybody coming together in prayer!"

The NFL also will show support for Hamlin during all Week 18 games, which start Saturday afternoon, including a pregame moment



Damar Hamlin

of support, painting Hamlin's No. 3 on the 30-yard line and pregame shirts with "Love for Damar 3." The Bills will also wear "3 jersey patches.

Hamlin also made a brief live videoconference appearance Friday for his teammates, making several hand signs and saying, "Love you boys."

Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and his heart stopped on Monday night after making what appeared to be a routine tackle in the first quarter against the Bengals. The game was initially suspended before officially being canceled later in the week.

The Bills are planning to pay tribute to Hamlin and the first-responders and medical staff who treated the player when they close the season Sunday by hosting the New England Patriots.

On Saturday, the Steelers paid tribute to Hamlin, who is from the Pittsburgh area, by delivering toys, books and teaching supplies to Kelly & Nina's Daycare, where the player hosts an annual toy drive. Fans, players and team owners have also made donations to Hamlin's Chasing M's Foundation, which has raised just more than \$8.2 million by Saturday afternoon.



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