

The Weekly Press

SERVING BAKER, CENTRAL, AND ZACHARY

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4-10, 2021

A PEOPLE'S PUBLICATION

VOL. 43 • NO.41 • FREE

STATE/LOCAL PG 2

'WE TOLD YOU SO. RICHMOND OUT'

STATE/LOCAL PG 3

56 WALMART LOCATIONS TO RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINE

RELIGION PG 6

OH, THE DAZE OF MY LIFE

Baton Rouge Doctors Concerned About Coronavirus Variants

BATON ROUGE, La. - Several new, more contagious, variants of the Coronavirus have health officials in Louisiana worried the state could see a fourth, large surge in cases.

The U.K., B.1.1.7, variant is already in Louisiana according to the Department of Health. Dr. Catherine O'Neal, the Chief Medical Officer at Our Lady of the Lake said we need to fight against COVID fatigue and double down on protective measures to prevent these new variants from sweeping the state.

"It's very concerning for our country because we know it's here and it's circulating in our communities and as we're looking to find it through sequencing,

See **DOCTORS**, on page 2

BLACK HISTORY

February 3

- Geraldine McCullough wins Widener Gold Medal for Sculpture, 1965
- 15th Amendment (Black suffrage) passed 1870

February 4

- 24th Amendment abolished Poll tax, 1864

February 6

- First organized emigration of U.S. Blacks back to Africa, from New York to Sierra Leone, 1820
- Peabody Fund established to promote Black education in South, 1867

February 7

- President Truman appointed Irwin C. Mollison judge of the US Customs Court, 1945
- Eubie Blake, famed pianist, born in Baltimore 1883-1983
- Freedman's Aid Society, founded to promote educa-

WEATHER

MON. 02/08
Sunny High 56°

TUE. 02/09
Partly Sunny High 59°

WED. 02/10
Mostly Sunny High 66°

THUR. 02/11
Mostly Cloudy High 75°

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AMANDA GORMAN Graces The Cover Of Time Magazine



The 22-year-old literary phenom spoke about being thrust into the national spotlight and connecting her poetry to Black History.

Michelle Obama Interviews Inaugural Poet Amanda Gorman For TIME Magazine

She garnered acclaim after her recitation of 'The Hill We Climb' at President Joe Biden's inauguration, and became an overnight sensation, and we can look forward to hearing more from Amanda who will recite an original poem ahead of Super Bowl LV on Sunday, February 7.

If there was any doubt that yellow is her colour, the poet graces the cover of Time Magazine wearing the golden yellow Greta Constantine Spring 2021 gown which was photographed Awol Erizku.

Not only did she get to grace the cover, but she was interviewed by the former First Lady Michelle Obama.

We were very excited about this Greta Constantine Spring 2021 collection when it was presented last year.

I had this dress on my wish list for Ava DuVernay, who is very fond of this type of silhouette. The connection here is that both women are styled by Jason Bolden.

The dress has been modified with a modesty panel, which takes nothing away by how radiant she looks in this dress.

And I don't miss her signature headband, as it was fittingly replaced with a tiara on this occasion.

I'm sure the headband will be back on Super Bowl Sunday.



Cover credits: photograph by Awol Erizku for TIME taken on Jan. 29; fashion styling by Jason Bolden; makeup by Autumn Moultrie—The Wall Group; dress by Greta Constantine

Mayor Broome Launches Neighborhood Engagement Hub

Baton Rouge, La. - February 3, 2021 - Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome launched Safe, Hopeful Neighborhoods Engagement Hub today as part of the Safe, Hopeful, Healthy BR Initiative from her Office of Community Development in partnership with Mid City Redevelopment Alliance and Build Baton Rouge.



Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome

The digital hub will allow residents to connect with resources, leadership training, community improvement funding, civic association support, community event sponsorships, and blight elimination efforts.

"There are two key investors in 'quality of place' public-private partnerships: the city-parish government and our residents," said Mayor Broome. "My Neighborhood Engagement Hub will bring critical funding and resources to areas that have been traditionally disinvested. We are excited to offer residents five opportunities to move from ideas, to action and impact."

The Programs

1. Operation Cleanup - Operation Cleanup will consist of four quarterly service projects, starting April 17th, that are hosted by Community Support Leaders, existing Civic Associations, residents, and community partners. Anyone participating in these projects will have access to our tool lending program to include trash bags, grabbers, gloves, water, ice chests, tents, chairs, DPW support, and marketing tool kits.

2. Tool Lending Program - Throughout the year, residents and partners will be able to access an online tool lending program to ensure service projects, community improvement projects, community events, and blight remediation efforts are a success.

3. Community Leadership Training - The Community Leadership Training will be made up of 25 emerging resident leaders who show a demonstrated interest in leading neighborhood change. In order to increase impact and sustainability, the program's goal will be to equip residents with the skills and resources to combat blight across the city.

4. Civic Association Support - Mayor Broome and her Office of Community Development is committed to supporting the formation and development of organized civic associations across East Baton Rouge Parish. Any civic association in a low-income or disinvested neighborhood that can demonstrate both a clear need and the presence of a committed group of residents, can apply for one of two programs:

- a. A grant to have their annual Sec-

See **HUB**, on page 2

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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STATE & LOCAL

BLACK HISTORY

tion among Blacks

■ **February 9**
 • Paul Lawrence Dunbar, 1st poet to use Black dialect in his verse, died 1872-1906
 • Leroy "Satchel" Paige elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame, 1971

■ **February 10**
 • Southern Christian Leadership Conference founded, 1957
 • Andrew Brimmer, the first Black person to serve on the Federal Reserve Board, [born?] 1966
 • Leontyne Price, world renowned soprano, born 1927

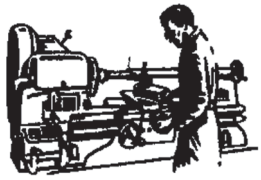
■ **February 11**
 • Nelson Mandela, leader of movement for democracy in South Africa, released from prison after 27 years, 1990
 • Clifford Alexander, Jr. first Black Secretary of State, confirmed 1977

■ **February 12**
 • NAACP founded after riot in Springfield, Ill., 1909

■ **February 13**
 First Black pro Basketball team, "The Renaissance," organized 1923

■ **February 14**
 • Frederick Douglass, Abolitionist, born 1817 - 1895
 • Morhouse College, founded in Atlanta, 1867

READER INFORMATION



How to Reach Us
 General Information 225-775-2002
 Email brweeklypress@yahoo.com

The office is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday and located at 4910 Montecello Blvd. Baton Rouge, LA 70814

Correction Policy

The Baton Rouge Weekly Press strives to be fair and accurate. The newspaper corrects any significant errors of fact brought to the attention of the editor. If you think an error has been made, call 225-775-2002

The Weekly Press

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 Closed Saturday, Sunday

'We Told You So. Richmond Out': New Orleans Congressman Remarks During Second Impeachment Debate



Rep. Cedric Richmond in final floor speech before joining Biden administration

NEW ORLEANS - In his final floor speech before joining President-elect Joe Biden's administration as Senior Advisor, New Orleans native Rep. Cedric Richmond said "we told you so" as President Donald Trump faced his second impeachment.

More: Scalise votes against 'rushed, impractical impeach-

ment' of President Trump

"Some of my colleagues, some of which may be co-conspirators," he began. "Let me suggest to them; stand up. Man up. Woman up. And defend this constitution against all enemies both foreign and domestic including Donald J. Trump."

"In the first impeachment, Republicans said we didn't need to impeach him because he learned his lesson," he continued. "Well, we said if we didn't remove him, he'd do it again. Simply put - we told you so."

"Richmond out," the congressman concluded.

BREC Celebrates Black History Month with Councilwoman Erika L. Green

"Celebrating Black History: Honoring Past Pioneers and Present Heroes in Medicine"

BATON ROUGE, La. - The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) and Exxon Mobil in partnership with Councilwoman Erika L. Green will celebrate Black History Month in a two-part event on February 18 and February 20. The theme for this year is "Celebrating Black History: Honoring Past Pioneers and Present Heroes in Medicine". This event is free and open to the public.

This year, in light of Covid-19 restrictions, Part I will be a Virtual Program airing on Facebook and Channel 21. The Outdoor Virtual Viewing will be held in the parking lot of Independence Park Theatre at 6 p.m. and viewers can watch from their vehicles and receive complimentary refreshments. The program will include performances from Forest Heights Academy of Excellence, McKinley Middle Magnet School and Louisiana



Councilwoman Erika L. Green

Leadership Institute Band.

Part II continues the celebration with a Day of Health and Service on February 20 from 9 a.m.-noon at Charles R. Kelly Community Center's back lawn area located at 3535 Riley Street. Community members are asked to come exercise, view the Walking

Art Museum honoring medical presented by local artists, and donate for Our Lady of the Lake Covid Unit and Children's Hospital.

This year's celebrations will curate artistic expression by celebrating African American medical professionals and frontline workers. We will honor Dr. Leon Kraft, Dr. Irene Evuleocha and Dr. Janet Cook for their relentless work in the medical field and being present-day heroes in the community. This event is also sponsored by Imagination Leads, City of Baton Rouge, and Bonton and Associates.

To preregister, visit webtrac.brec.org. For more information, contact BREC at 225-272-9200 or recreationevents@brec.org or Councilwoman Erika Green's office at 225-389-4831 or tmerridy@brla.gov. Public Notice: Draft Environmental Land Assessment for FEMA Group Housing Site

CATS to Comply with Federal Orders Mandating Masks on Public Transportation

Baton Rouge, LA_ The Capital Area Transit System (CATS) will comply with the recent Executive Order from President Biden on promoting COVID-19 safety in domestic and international travel by requiring customers to wear face masks when they are on CATS vehicles.

CATS will also conform to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Emergency Order requiring that individuals wear masks on CATS vehicles and at transit centers.

"CATS is committed to ensuring we do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19," said CATS CEO Bill Deville. "We recognize that we must refocus our efforts as the number of positive cases continues to climb. We will continue to prioritize the safety of both our employees and customers and require that everyone on a CATS vehicle wear a mask or face covering," Deville continued.

According to the CDC Order, face masks should cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides without gaps. Masks can be either manufactured or homemade and should be a solid piece of material without

slits, exhalation valves, or punctures. While medical masks and N-95 respirators fulfill CDC requirements, face shields and/or goggles are not an acceptable substitute for the use of a mask; however, they may be used in addition to an acceptable mask.

Exemptions include travelers under the age of 2 years old, those with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask because of the disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Customers boarding a CATS vehicle should wear a face mask that covers both their nose and mouth for the duration of their trip. Customers who refuse to comply with the requirement will be asked not to board the vehicle; likewise, those who remove their mask during their trip will be asked to disembark as soon as it is safe to do so.

CATS is the regional transportation provider for the Capitol region and provides essential trips on 25 fixed routes seven days a week. More information about CATS can be found by visiting brcats.com, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

EnrollBR is Now Accepting Applications

Enroll Baton Rouge is accepting applications for the 2021-2022 school year! EnrollBR is an easy-to-use website that empowers families to learn more about local charter schools and submit an application to multiple schools in one place. Our goal is to ensure that families know they have a choice when it comes to their child's education. Click the

button below to learn more about school options in Baton Rouge.

Please also like, share, and follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more updates about EnrollBR in the community!

Together we can ensure every child in Baton Rouge has access to an excellent education. EnrollBR is a project of New Schools for Baton Rouge.

HUB from page 1

retary of State registration fees paid for

b. A grant to pay for a professional's services in the development of by-laws, organizing documents, neighborhood code of conducts, blight remediation, tax preparation, consulting real estate agent, etc.

c. Grants for neighborhood-led community improvement projects

5. Community Improvement Projects - Neighborhoods and resident leaders will receive grants ranging from \$1,000-\$5,000 to support community improvement projects that are as diverse as the ideas and imagination of the residents who create them. Each project submitted for the grant will be for the benefit of their identified neighborhood. In order to compete for a grant, their neighborhood must success-

fully graduate from the training program.

6. Community Event Sponsorship - In addition to hosting several signature community events in coordination with Mayor Broome's Office, the Office of Community Development, and Build BR, this program will serve as a centralized place for all community organizers and neighborhood leaders looking for sponsorship for events that provide a direct community benefit to community members. Sponsorship decisions will be made by the Community Action Center's partners and sponsorship rights will also be given the partners.

Residents interested improving the community's Quality of Place can sign up on the Neighborhood Engagement Hub at www.safehopefulneighborhoods.com

DOCTORS from page 1

we really have to double down on our measures otherwise this is going to become the dominant strain and could see a surge greater than anything we've ever seen," Dr. O'Neal said. O'Neal said the new UK vari-

ant is 40-80% more contagious than the strain of Covid the U.S. has already been battling. She said even those who have had the virus already may become infected again.

"It looks like the previous infection is not as protective as we thought, especially with the variants," she said. "We really need to wait for the vaccines. We can't consider ourselves safe if previously infected."

O'Neal said the best defense against the new variants of the virus are the tried and true measures, masking up, social distancing, and getting the vaccine. The vaccines, while having diminished effectiveness against the new strains, do offer protection she said.

"When you look at the flu shot, it's 40-60% efficacious," she said. "When we look at the Pfizer and Moderna Covid vaccines they're in the 90% efficacy, that's awesome. If you decrease that efficacy a little bit to 60% you're still talking about a great shot."

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Upcoming Black History Month Event in Baton Rouge



• My colleague and I have planned a Black History Event called The Black Market. This event is a pop-up shop which we plan to have 30 vendors. It's a fast GROWING event dedicated to Black Small Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, small business resources, and those who are dedicated to supporting black businesses and ensuring that they THRIVE.

• This event will be filled with great networking opportunities, shopping, great food, and entertainment. WE NEED RESOURCES, and LOUISIANA'S most dedicated community leaders to help promote our cause and attend. This event is FREE AND THIS EVENT IS OPEN TO ALL!

• We have helped businesses ALL month long with websites, setup online payment, and find new revenues of income by providing them with DBE resources introduce them with businesses that abide by certain DBE percentages.

We are businesses owners that are taking action and bridging gaps to help minorities business during a time that is difficult to obtaining business resources and haven't progressed to online purchases. If you know any vendors, resources or would like to help promote our cause please contact us at helpdesk@the-chemisttable.com or call Kenyata Fountain at (225)678-3790. Thank you for your time and ongoing consideration.

56 Walmart Locations in La. to Receive COVID-19 Vaccine, 7 in Baton Rouge Area

BATON ROUGE, La. - People in Louisiana will soon have another option to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. As 56 Walmart locations across the state will be receiving the vaccine, including seven locations in the WAFB viewing area.

It's part of a partnership between the state and the federal retail pharmacy program to make the vaccine more accessible.

Beginning next Thursday, Feb. 11, several local stores will start administering doses.

Locations surrounding the Capital City are listed below:

- Ascension Parish
 - Walmart Pharmacy #5056/ Prairieville
 - Livingston Parish
 - Walmart Pharmacy #4679/ Denham Springs
 - Walmart Pharmacy #2822/ Walker
 - Pointe Coupee
 - Walmart Pharmacy #1196/ New Roads
 - Tangipahoa
 - Walmart Pharmacy #489/ Hammond
 - Walmart Pharmacy #4129/



Ponchatoula

- West Baton Rouge
 - Walmart Pharmacy #1136/ Port Allen

It's not clear how many vaccines the pharmacies in will receive.

Health department officials say because of Walmart's prior participation in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, officials hope it will be an easy transition while other pharmacies continue administering doses.

It comes as Louisiana's Health Secretary testified Tuesday before a congressional commit-

tee on the need more vaccines in Louisiana.

Dr. Courtney Phillips says the state does have enough supply to ensure people get their second dose.

COMPLETE LIST OF VACCINE SITES STATEWIDE

Meanwhile, Senator Bill Cassidy, who was a part of group of Republicans to recently meet with President Biden on COVID-19 relief and vaccine distribution, says he agrees with the administration on spending on vaccines but says the issue isn't with money.

Public Notice: Draft Environmental Land Assessment for FEMA Group Housing Site

BATON ROUGE, La. - FEMA has posted a Public Notice regarding the availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for a proposed group housing site for survivors in need of housing as a result of Hurricane Laura.

FEMA has prepared a Draft EA for a proposed group site known as the Pine Shadows Golf Course Group Housing Site (CU-5). The proposed action includes developing an approximately 130-acre site for up to 275 transportable temporary housing units (TTHU) to be lo-

cated in Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish. Activities may include, where necessary, site clearing, grading, road construction, the placement of concrete pads, utilities (electricity, water and sewer), and the transport and installation of TTHUs to the site.

FEMA is required to provide a Public Notice for the Pine Shadows Golf Course Group Housing Site Draft EA. This notice provides instructions regarding how to access the Draft EA and how to provide comments. The Public Notice for the Draft EA can be viewed

here: FEMA Public Notice Pine Shadows.

Due to the emergency nature of this action and need to provide temporary housing solutions for survivors of Hurricane Laura, the public comment period will be limited to three days.

The public comment period begins Feb. 6 and ends at 5 p.m. Feb. 8. If no substantive comments are received, the Draft EA and Finding of No Significant Impact will become final and no further public noticing will be conducted.

'All Options on the Table' to Control Large Mardi Gras Crowds, Officials Say



NEW ORLEANS - City of New Orleans officials are warning tourists that Mardi Gras will be different this year.

Beau Tidwell, city spokesman, says New Orleans remains in an unsafe environment regarding large gatherings due to COVID-19 and several new strains. Officials say they are still working on a plan to limit large crowds during Carnival, and several options are on the table.

"Mardi Gras is different this year. It's unsafe for any large gatherings especially with a new variance around," said Tidwell.

Over the weekend, large crowds gathered on Bourbon Street, causing health experts to warn of possible super spreader events.

"We're going to have to be more vocal on restrictions and they're going to have to be more enforcement on the business side," said health educator Eric Griggs, M.D.

But with Airbnb's and some hotel rooms booking up, the city says a plan to control carnival crowds, is still being developed.

"Chief Ferguson and the public safety team are actively working on their operations plan and what it is going to look like for Fat Tuesday itself and for the days leading up to it," said Tidwell.

Tidwell was asked specifically about whether or not there

might be limits on takeout drinks or possible street closures. He said plans are still being worked out.

"I will say all options are on the table and that is certainly something that's being discussed," he said.

While plans are still in the works, the city spokesman says visitors are expected to abide by the rules.

"It's important to bear in mind that as you talk about large gatherings during a time of contagious disease, that means more people in the hospital," said Tidwell.

By Sunday night in New Orleans, police officers were seen monitoring crowd sizes on Bourbon Street, which could be a key element in the carnival crowd control plan moving forward.

However, in a city that's limiting outdoor gatherings to just 25 people, there is still no announced plan to keep hundreds, if not thousands of people from crowding onto Bourbon Street as they do every Fat Tuesday, and the days leading up to it.

"I'm not able to give you operational details as to what Fat Tuesday will look like right now because Chief Ferguson is still working that out," said Tidwell, who adds they will be revealing details about the carnival crowd control plan in the days ahead.

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BUSINESS

Louisiana Chef Brings Culinary Creativity to Food Network

BY FRANCES Y. SPENCER,
The Drum contributing writer

BATON ROUGE, La. — The world was recently introduced to the Baton Rouge area's newest television star. He's been involved in some hot, steamy scenes and then created quite a stir. Brandon "Chef B" Williams has expanded his brand to the Food Network after his debut appearance on "Supermarket Stakeout: Greeks, Sweets, Open-face Eats."

The popular cable channel, formed in 1993, has been the backdrop to stardom for cooking legends Bobby Flay, Guy Fieri, and Paula Deen so, when talent scouts came sniffing for the talented Baton Rouge native, he had one idea: this must be a joke.

A Food Network casting agent sent a direct message to Williams and he avoided the inquiry like a piece of gas station sushi. "They first reached out to me at the beginning of March of last year," Williams said. "I didn't respond until the end of April, because I really didn't believe it was them, right?"

A year fraught with a pandemic and tragedies was the opposite for Williams. Good things were happening and when doors closed, even better opportunities were waiting immediately. After months of COVID restrictions, the "Food Network prank" came knocking two more times. "They reached back out to me again in August of last year asking me if I still interested because they had plans to start filming the show again," he said.

Williams felt the heartache of a failed restaurant venture and landed a chef's position with L'Auberge Casino that was quite promising. When the cards lined up in his favor, he had to choose between the L'Auberge position and television stardom. He took the gamble and agreed to become a contestant on Supermarket Stakeout.

The cooking show mixes one-part cooking skill with one-part luck. Celebrity chef Alexandra



Brandon "Chef B" Williams competes on the set of Supermarket Stakeout that aired on January 19 on the Food Network

Guarnaschelli hosts the show that pits four chefs in a competitive pop-up kitchen outside a grocery store. Each round is assigned a theme and the chefs "stalk" shoppers as they left the store and made attempts to buy ingredients from the strangers' grocery bags.

The skill challenge was easy. Williams trained in his nanny's kitchen before his classic gourmet training at the Louisiana Culinary Arts Institute. Lady luck was not as kind when the chef was left to create a fruit-theme dessert with Fig Newtons and a box of Fruity Pebbles.

Williams showed the artistry of his gourmet training in the first round themed "It's Greek to Me." He took a bag of mystery and created honey roasted baklava. All the shopping and cooking was done in the parking lot and even when

the ingredients were unfriendly, Williams got very high marks from the judges for presentation and creativity.

Life's ups and downs prepared Williams, a private chef, caterer, and culinary arts instructor, for his moment in a Los Angeles park-

ing lot. The Culinary Arts Institute has opened some notable doors for his craft from Louisiana-based ventures to the celebrity diners of the Augusta National Golf Tournament.

When he was a very young man, he helped an aunt with a cat-

tering business. He stepped out on his own in 2008 and established Big B's Barbecue, a food truck on a busy corner on Airline Highway. It was a new concept and helped pave the way for similar business models. "That was how that whole thing started," he said. "And I never

turned around. I just said that I wanted to keep going."

Honing his skills and developing successful business models can't hold a candle to the rewarding efforts of teaching and passing on the craft. Williams finished culinary school in 2018 and secured a position at Broadmoor High School as a Culinary Arts instructor. The ProStart program offers classes and a certification program for high school students that prepares them for the workforce immediately after graduation. "Once they graduate, they can go straight to the industry, and they don't have to get minimum wage jobs," Williams said.

When Williams looked into the camera, he realized how many of his current and future students would be looking at him and being inspired to seek their own success. Chef B might give them their start, but he knows his students make him better in return. "Even though I went to culinary school, even though I'm classically trained, by me teaching it, it reinforces everything that I learned," he said. "I learn something new every day because I have to sit with the information. I have to study the information, because in order for me to teach the information, I have to literally absorb information, which makes me a better chef."

ONLINE: ChefBFoods.com
Recasts of "Greeks, Sweets, Open-face Eats" can be found on Amazon Prime Video

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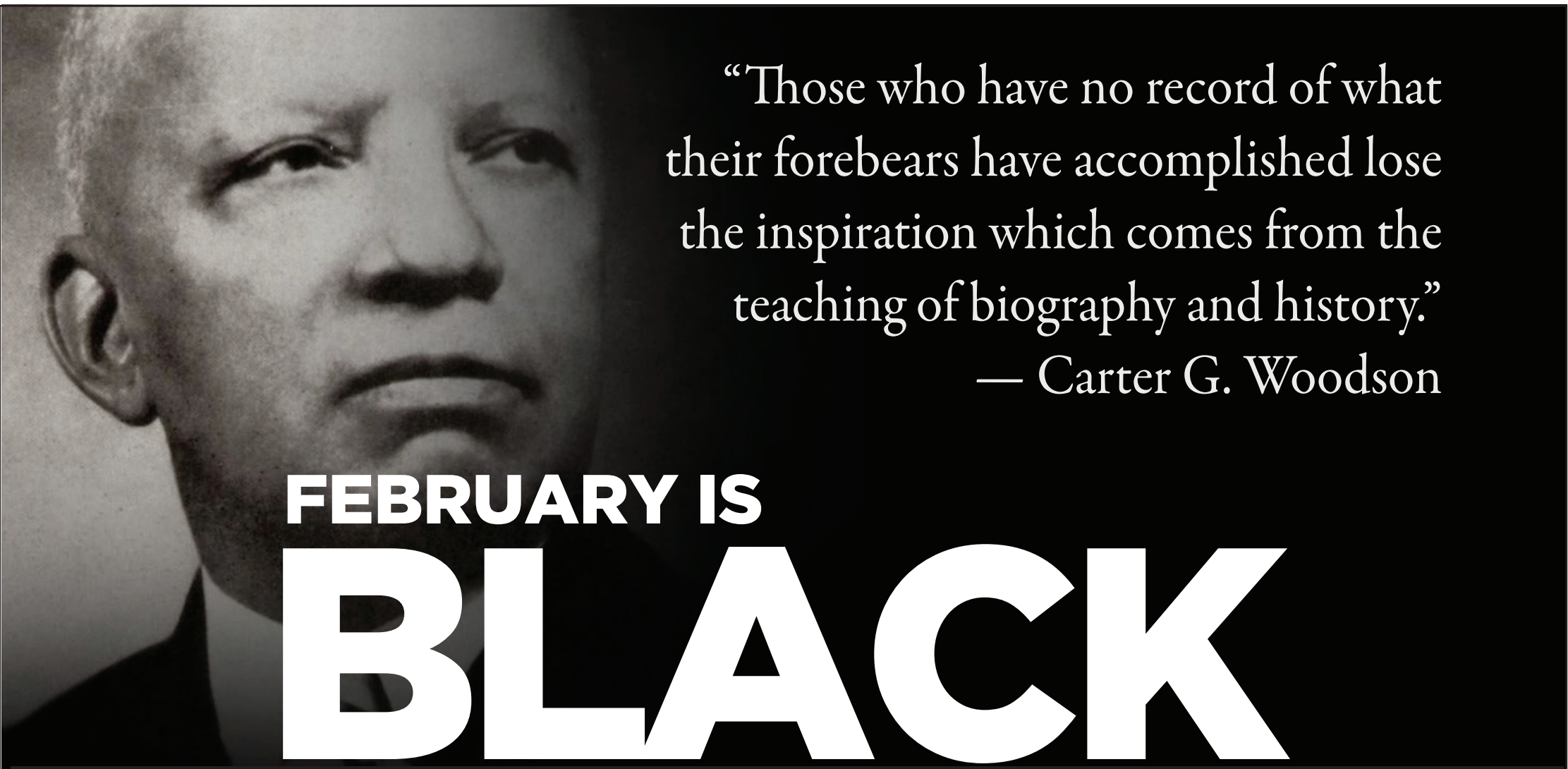
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“Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history.”

— Carter G. Woodson

FEBRUARY IS

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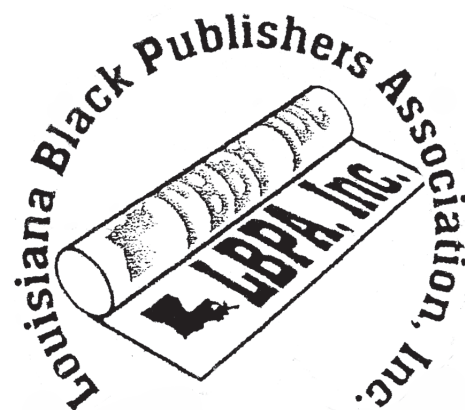
HISTORY MONTH



Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans. The event stems from Negro History Week, the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans, according to history.com. Every United States president since 1976 has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

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RELIGION

Oh, the Daze of My Life

DR. JAMES L. SNYDER

When I was young, my mother was quite a fan of a soap opera called "The Days of Our Lives."

As I was thinking of it, I felt that I should remember the days of my life. But, instead of "days," I need to put in the word "daze," which more clearly represents my life.

It occurred to me this past week. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage asked me a ques-

tion when I came in the door from a day at the office.

"Have you seen how much my pineapple tree has grown?"

I did not know where to start with this one. I just muttered something like, "that's really amazing, isn't it."

When I said that, she stared at me with one of "her stares."

I'm quite familiar with that stare, and so I knew I was in trouble, but I did not know the trouble I was in or why.

I just flashed a smile in her

direction and tried to walk past her, but nothing of the sort happened that way.

"You didn't know," she said with both hands on her hips, "that I planted a pineapple tree in our front yard. Did you?"

Well, she got me there. I could not tell a pineapple tree from a tomato plant when it comes right down to it. That's how much of a daze I am in.

With that information, she took me outside to where the pineapple tree was and showed

it to me.

"See," she said, pointing at the pineapple tree, "there is the pineapple tree."

Now my daze is getting cloudier.

I need to understand what to do when my wife catches me in such a dazed position. How in the world do I get out of such a predicament?

"That's a pineapple tree," I said with as much glee in my voice as possible. "That is an amazing tree. You've done a great job with

that tree. You must be thrilled."

I stopped to catch my breath because I didn't know where to go from there. I had no idea what I was saying and no idea if she understood what I was saying.

I paused and glanced in her direction and got my answer.

She said, "That is my favorite plant that I've ever planted. It looks so wonderful. I can't wait to see it grow even bigger."

With that, she smiled one of those smiles that told me I was out of trouble, at least for this moment.

We then walked back into the house, and both of us were happy but for different reasons.

I'm not sure how long she had that pineapple tree planted in our

front yard, and I was afraid to ask because it may have been weeks or months. I wasn't going to spoil a moment by expressing the level of my amazement.

If I could learn once a month what I don't know, I think my life would increase in a positive direction.

In my Bible reading for the evening, I read what David said. "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am" (Psalm 39:4).

If I know myself from God's perspective, that will be one step in receiving from God what he wants

See LIFE, on page 8

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22nd Annual Super Bowl Gospel Celebration Returns Saturday, February 6th At 8/7c On Bet

NEW YORK, NY - For the eighth consecutive year, the 22nd Annual Super Bowl Gospel Celebration will air on BET during Super Bowl LV week on Saturday, February 6th at 8/7c.

The theme "Nothing Can Stop Us" is the inspirational message for this highly anticipated night of praise and worship during Super Bowl LV. This year's event will be hosted by national radio and TV personality Rickey Smiley and feature performances by The NFL Players Choir, Erica Campbell, Voices of

Fire presented by Pharrell Williams, PJ Morton, Kierra Sheard, Koryn Hawthorne, Zacardi Cortez, and an exclusive performance by gospel music pioneer and living legend John P. Kee. Additionally, the show will feature appearances from NFL players Deshaun Jackson-Philadelphia Eagles WR and Dak Prescott - Dallas Cowboys QB.

The Super Bowl Gospel Celebration will present Houston Texans QB Deshaun Watson with this

See GOSPEL, on page 6

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. - Hebrews 10:25

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Bible Study Wednesday 7:00pm
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Worship Service 10:55 a.m.
Youth Sunday & Contemporary Worship 2nd Sun. 8:00 a.m.
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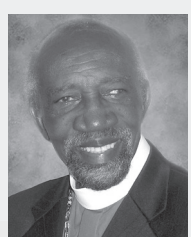
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CHURCH SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning Worship 10:45 AM
Lord's Supper 3rd Sundays
Sunday School 9:30 AM
Prayer Service Wed. @ 6:00 PM
Bible Study Wed- @ 7:00 PM

Mission Statement: New Hope Baptist Church is a family of baptized believers who worship the Lord our God in spirit and in truth, teach the saved to reach the lost and minister to the needs of others, while encouraging one another through acts of love and living in obedience to Gods Word

Radio Broadcast 1st and 3rd Sunday WXOK at 8:00am

HEALTH

Mask Mandates can Work, CDC Researchers say

Mask mandates can work, according to research released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Friday.

One new study showed that, in places where state and local governments required mask use, fewer people ended up in the hospital with coronavirus. A second showed college students, at least, will overwhelmingly wear masks if there's a mandate in place.

Researchers from the CDC and University of Nevada, Las Vegas examined 10 sites in states that implemented mask mandates between March and October. They found the hospitalization rates fell in places where local leaders requires mask use.

Hospitalization growth rates declined by 5.5 percentage points among 18- to 64-year-olds in sites across California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Ohio and Oregon, the team said in the CDC's weekly report.

The sites began to see a significant decline in hospitalization rates among 40- to 64-year-olds less than three weeks after the mandates were implemented. Beyond three weeks, the declines were seen across 18- to 64-year-olds.

"Because COVID-19 can lead to prolonged illness and require long-term treatment, the expected savings associated with the decline in hospitalization rates could be much higher than these reduced hospital costs associated with COVID-19," they wrote.

US Rushes to Catch up in the Race to Detect Mutant Viruses

NEW YORK — Despite its world-class medical system and its vaunted Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. fell behind in the race to detect dangerous coronavirus mutations. And it's only now beginning to catch up.

The problem has not been a shortage of technology or expertise. Rather, scientists say, it's an absence of national leadership and coordination, plus a lack of funding and supplies for overburdened laboratories trying to juggle diagnostic testing with the hunt for genetic changes.

"We have the brains. We have the tools. We have the instruments," said Ilhem Messaoudi, director of a virus research center at University of California, Irvine. "It's just a matter of supporting that effort."

Viruses mutate constantly. To stay ahead of the threat, scientists analyze samples, watching closely for mutations that might make the coronavirus more infectious or more deadly.

But such testing has been scattershot.

Less than 1% of positive specimens in the U.S. are being sequenced to determine whether they have worrisome mutations. Other countries do better — Britain sequences about 10% — meaning they can more quickly see threats coming at them. That gives them greater opportunity to slow or stop the problem, whether through more targeted contact tracing, possible



Clinical lab scientist Selam Bihon processes upper respiratory samples from patients suspected of having COVID-19 at the Stanford Clinical Virology Laboratory on Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Palo Alto, Calif. Viruses mutate constantly. To stay ahead of the threat, scientists analyze samples for genetic changes, watching closely for ones that might make the virus more infectious or more deadly.

adjustments to the vaccine, or public warnings.

CDC officials say variants have not driven recent surges in overall U.S. cases. But experts worry that what's happening with variants is not clear and say the nation should have been more aggressive about sequencing ear-

lier in the epidemic that has now killed over 450,000 Americans.

"If we had evidence it was changing," said Ohio State molecular biologist Dan Jones, "maybe people would've acted differently."

U.S. scientists have detected more than 500 cases of a vari-

ant first identified in Britain and expect it to become the cause of most of this country's new infections in a matter of weeks. Another troubling variant tied to Brazil and a third discovered in South Africa were detected last week in the U.S. and also are expected to spread.

The British variant is more contagious and is believed to be more deadly than the original, while the South Africa one may render the vaccines somewhat less effective. The ultimate fear is that a variant resistant to existing

See **VIRUSES**, on page 8



SLEEVES UP

to help heal our communities

To end the pandemic and its toll on our communities, we all need to work together. And that begins with everyone getting the two-dose COVID-19 vaccine. We know you have concerns like if the vaccine is safe and if it will be distributed fairly? We hear you and are committed to giving you the facts and making sure you have equal access to the vaccine. **To find out when and where you can go sleeves up and get the vaccine, visit our website or call 211.**



COVIDVACCINE.LA.GOV



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LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

SPORTS

Southern Rolls Past Alcorn State, Behind Saddler's 19 points



Junior Jayden Saddler led Southern with a season-high 19 points, all in the first half. He also finished with eight assists and six rebounds.

LORMAN, MS—Coming off a three game road swing, Southern (4-6, 4-2 SWAC) men's basketball team got back in the win column as they rolled past Alcorn State (3-7, 3-2 SWAC) with a 76-59 victory Saturday in the Davey Whitney Complex.

Junior Jayden Saddler led Southern with a season-high 19 points, all in the first half. He also finished with eight assists and six rebounds. Saddler was 8-of-9 (88.89%) from the field, 2-of-2 (100%) on 3-pointers and was 1-of-1 (100%) from the free throw line. Four other Jaguars landed in double digit scoring. Junior Samkelo Cele came off the bench to finish with 16 points and six rebounds in 29 minutes of play. Senior Ahsante Shivers added 15 points, junior Isaiah Rollins finished with 11 points and redshirt freshman Terrell Williams Jr. contributed 10 points and eight rebounds. Graduate transfer Harrison Henderson led the Jaguars

with 13 rebounds.

"Jayden Saddler really set the tone tonight and made sure we weren't going to lose this game," SU Head Coach Sean Woods said. "Also, give a lot of credit to Samkelo as he gave us a big lift and some big energy off the bench. Our focus was coming out of the locker room and not be complacent, I felt our guys stepped up and we did what we needed to take care of business today."

SU started the game on a 3-0 run off back-to-back free throws from Henderson and Rollins before the Braves scored of Joshua layup with 17:47 in the first half. On the next possession Saddler made jumper with 17:33 on the clock started the Jaguars 10-2 run giving SU the 15-4 advantage with 12:35 remaining on the clock. Alcorn got as close as 24-16 after Troymain Crosby scored two of his game-high 21 points, but SU came back with another 13-1 run. Southern finished the first half on a

25-17 advantage and took a 40-21 lead into the locker room. SU led by as much as 20 points at one time during the first half.

The start of the second half was very similar to the first as both teams were trading baskets early. Isaiah Rollins three point basket with 18:22 left in regulation started SU 19-6 run capped off by another Rollins made three pointer extending the Jaguars lead 59-27 with 12:25 remaining. Southern's largest lead was 66-33 (33 points) and it led 74-48 with less than two minutes to play. Cele scored 12 of his 16 points in the second half helping secure the victory over the Braves.

Southern outrebounded Alcorn 39-33 and SU shot 51.0% from the field (26-51), 39.1% from behind the arc (9-23), shot 71.4% from the free throw line (15-21) while Alcorn State was 31.0% from the floor and SU defense held the Braves to only 7.7% from behind the three point line.

VIRUSES from page 7

vaccines and treatments could eventually emerge.

Potentially worrisome versions may form inside the U.S., too. "This virus is mutating, and it doesn't care of it's in Idaho or South Africa," Messaoui said.

But the true dimensions of the problem in the U.S. are not clear because of the relatively low level of sequencing.

"You only see what's under the lamppost," said Kenny Beckman, director of the University of Minnesota Genomics Center, which started analyzing the virus's genetics last spring.

After the slow start, public health labs in at least 33 states are now doing genetic analysis to identify emerging coronavirus variants. Other states have formed partnerships with university or private labs to do the work. North Dakota, which began sequencing last week, was the most recent to start that work, according to the Association of Public Health Laboratories.

The CDC believes a minimum of 5,000 to 10,000 samples should be analyzed weekly in the U.S. to adequately monitor variants, said Gregory Armstrong, who oversees the agency's ad-

vanced molecular detection work. And it's only now that the nation is hitting that level, he acknowledged.

Still, it is a jumble of approaches: Some public health labs sequence every positive virus specimen. Some focus on samples from certain outbreaks or certain patients. Others randomly select samples to analyze.

On top of that, labs continue to have trouble getting needed supplies — like pipette tips and chemicals — used in both gene sequencing and diagnostic testing.

President Joe Biden, who inherited the setup from the Trump administration, is proposing a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package that calls for boosting federal spending on sequencing of the virus, though the amount has not

been detailed and other specifics have yet to be worked out.

"We're 43rd in the world in genomic sequencing. Totally unacceptable," White House coronavirus response coordinator Jeff Zients said.

For more than five years, U.S. public health labs have been building up their ability to do genomic sequencing, thanks largely to a federal push to zero in on the sources of food poisoning outbreaks.

At the pandemic's outset, some labs began sequencing the coronavirus right away. The Minnesota Department of Health, for example, started doing so within weeks of its first COVID-19 cases in March, said Sara Vetter, an assistant lab director. "That put us a step ahead," she said.

GOSPEL from page 8

year's "Faith In Action Award." The son of a courageous cancer survivor, Watson is one of the NFL's youngest philanthropists and is committed to causes that support families and youth in underserved communities.

In collaboration with the Super Bowl Gospel Celebration, the American Cancer Society will highlight the need to eliminate barriers to prevention and treatment in the black community during the broadcast. African Americans have the lowest survival rate for most cancers, and the pandemic has caused a devastating drop in cancer screenings. Viewers will be encouraged to donate during the show on BET by texting HOPE to 20222 to donate \$10 to the American Cancer Society.

Originating at Super Bowl XXXIII in 1999, the annual event joins key NFL Players, top Gos-

pel/Contemporary Christian, and mainstream GRAMMY® Award-winning artists, and special guests all on one stage to bring audiences an evening of uplifting music and inspirational messages.

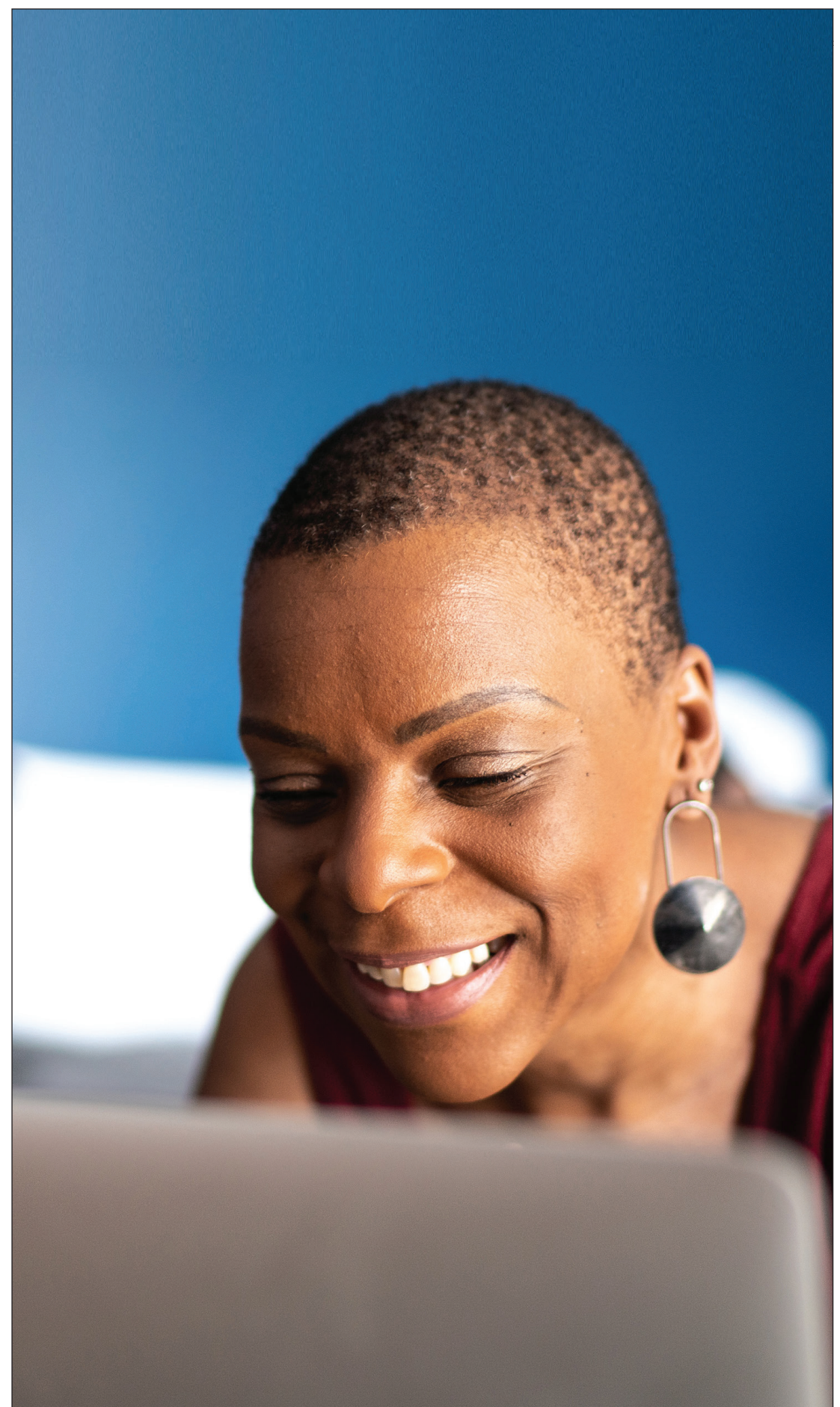
Super Bowl Gospel Celebration (SBGC) is the largest multicultural event during the Super Bowl weekend. In its 22-year run as an NFL-sanctioned event, SBGC has featured artists including Patti LaBelle, Yolanda Adams, Gladys Knight, Natalie Grant, Mary Mary, Fantasia, Donnie McClurkin, Anthony Hamilton, among many others.

For more information, visit superbowlgospel.com and join the social conversation using #SuperBowlGospel and #NothingCanStopUs.

LIFE from page 6

me to have.

Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, 1471 Pine Road, Ocala, FL 34472. He lives with his wife in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 352-687-4240 or e-mail james-snyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whatafellowship.com.



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