

The Weekly Press

SERVING BAKER, CENTRAL, AND ZACHARY

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STATE & LOCAL PG 2
CITY OF BAKER INFRASTRUCTURE, ECONOMIC PLANS MOVES FORWARD

NATIONAL PG 3
LAWMAKERS TEMPORARILY AVOID GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Gov. Edwards extends COVID mask mandate for at least four more weeks

Gov. John Bel Edwards extended Louisiana's statewide indoor mask mandate for another four weeks, until October 27, as the state's overall COVID-19 outlook improves following the state's worst COVID-19 surge of the entire pandemic. The statewide mask mandate includes K-12 schools and college campuses.



Gov. John Bel Edwards

"There is no doubt that our COVID-19 situation in Louisiana has improved since the peak of our fourth surge, which was largely driven by the Delta variant, and for that I am deeply grateful," said Gov. Edwards. "Even so, the amount of COVID in Louisiana is still incredibly high, at 243 cases for every 100,000 people, as it is disproportionately driven by transmission in those five to 18 years old. This is why to support continued decreases in COVID-19 hospitalizations, cases and deaths,

See MASK, on page 2

Mayor Broome releases statement on Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021

BATON ROUGE, La. — The U.S. House of Representatives is set to vote Monday on the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA). Washington has long talked about the need for major investment in America's infrastructure system. We are now on the



Mayor Sharon Broome

See JOBS ACT, on page 2

MORRIS DAY AND THE TIME TO HEADLINE 19TH ANNUAL GALA ON THE BLUFF



Heading this year's 19th Annual Gala On The Bluff is performer Morris Day. Morris Day is best known as the lead singer of The Time, a group associated with Prince. The Time's most prolific and visible period came in 1984 when Day played the antagonist to Prince in his film Purple Rain, which helped establish Day's playboy stage presence.

Over the past 18 years, the fundraiser has been awarded to incoming freshmen and existing students with over \$650,000 in support. The semi-formal event challenges elite's to put on their best attire while enjoying live performances.

BATON ROUGE, La.— Southern University is well known for putting on some very prestigious events for its students, alumni, and supporters. Every year the university's School of Business holds its Gala on the Bluff (GOTB) Fundraiser which is a signature event and is the college's primary scholarship fundraising initiative. Over the past 18 years, the fundraiser has been awarded to incoming freshmen and existing students with over \$650,000 in support. The

semi-formal event challenges elite's to put on their best attire while enjoying live performances. This year's performers are sure to get the crowd moving with the popular music sounds of Morris Day and The Time. Attended by more than 600 guests each year, the GOTB acknowledges deserving students who demonstrate the need for assistance to help pursue their dreams of earning a college education. The success of the annual Scholarship Gala is driven by

the generosity of our community partners and friends. We encourage sponsorships to make a difference for current and future generations by helping to sponsor this event and/or attending. This event was derived by members of the College of Business Advisory Council in 2002 as a way to build institutional awareness. The Gala on the Bluff Fundraiser will be held on October 22, 2021, at 7:30 PM

See GALA, on page 7

Rep. Carter urges federal agencies to include DBEs in post-Ida recovery contracting

BY RYAN WHIRTY, The Louisiana Weekly, Contributing Writer

Small business advocates and economic-improvement organizations focusing on economic development within disadvantaged New Orleans communities echoed the thoughts of Congressman Troy Carter, who wrote a letter to the heads of FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers pressing the federal agencies to include small, local, disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) in the post-Hurricane Ida rebuilding process.



Congressman Troy Carter

In a September 8 letter, Carter stressed the importance of including DBEs in the process of awarding federal recovery contracts as the southeast Louisiana region rebuilds from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Ida late last month.

Carter cited the Stafford Act of 1988, which outlines the requirements for federal disaster-response efforts, in his Sept. 8 communication.

"I write today to urge you to ensure that your contracting efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida include full participation of minority-owned, women-owned and veteran-owned small businesses," Carter wrote in the letter to FEMA and the USACE. "Any contracting done pursuant to the Stafford Act or related to disaster recovery efforts in affected areas should fully comply with any applicable small, local or disadvantaged business enterprise requirements. I hope you will consider not just meeting these statutory requirements but setting goals that exceed them."

Carter added in the letter that President Joe Biden has stressed the importance of providing opportunities to DBEs since Biden took office earlier this year and has already directed federal agencies to increase contracting with DBEs by

See RECOVERY, on page 5

WEATHER

MON. 10/04
Scattered tstorms
High 83.

TUE. 10/05
Sunny
High 87°.

WED. 10/06
Sunny
High 82°.

THUR. 10/07
Mostly Sunny
High 82°.

INDEX

- State & Local 2 & 3
- Religion 4
- Church Directory 4
- Business 5
- Business Directory 5
- Classifieds 5
- Sports 6

READ OUR DIGITAL INTERACTIVE EDITION ONLINE @ BRWEEKLYPRESS.COM

R. Kelly Found Guilty in New York of Sex Trafficking, Racketeering

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire
Senior National Correspondent

He has sung, performed, and wrote many hit songs, but Robert Sylvester Kelly will now sing a new tune: convict — perhaps for the rest of his life.

A federal jury in New York convicted the R&B superstar — better known as R. Kelly — on multiple counts of racketeering and sex trafficking charges.

The singer, 54, faced nine counts and 14 underlying acts, including sexual exploitation of a child, kidnapping, bribery, and sex trafficking charges.

See KELLY, on page 2



The singer was convicted of federal racketeering and sex trafficking charges for a decades-long scheme to recruit women and underage girls for sex. Once one of the biggest names in popular music, he could face decades in prison.

Ida disaster food stamp application extended in La.

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Inundated by calls from people struggling to buy groceries after Hurricane Ida, Louisiana's social services agency received federal approval to stretch out the application period for disaster food stamps by three additional days to work through the backlog.

The state Department of Children and Family Services said Thursday that the application period will run through Oct. 13, under the approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Disaster food stamps for low- to moderate-income households that don't currently receive the assistance were approved for 25 southeastern Louisiana

parishes with damage from Ida, a Category 4 storm that struck Aug. 29.

Callers have jammed the state's food stamp phone line, which has received as many as 350 calls per second, according to the Department of Children and Family Services.

"I know that we've been overwhelmed with calls," said agency Secretary Marketa Gerner Walters. She added: "People are hungry, and this has been a big disaster."

More than 109,000 disaster food stamp requests have been processed so far, with about 81,000 approved, according to

See FOOD, on page 3



STATE & LOCAL

Mayor Broome Launches 'Citizen Data Academy: On Demand' Video Series

BATON ROUGE, La. — Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome announced the launch of the Citizen Data Academy: On Demand self-paced video series designed to educate and engage residents in the City-Parish's open data program.

to open data and other focused on tools, maps and resources involving community planning, land development and blight. Future modules will include topics such as "living in Baton Rouge" and City-Parish government, among others.



The on-demand series builds on the success of the live Citizen Data Academy, which Mayor Broome launched virtually in 2020 as a resource for Baton Rouge residents to better understand and navigate the City-Parish's various open data platforms and tools.

"Our inaugural Citizen Data Academy was a tremendous success, as our City-Parish open data experts helped empower numerous residents with hands-on training to use the vast resources publicly available through our Open Data BR and GIS programs," said Mayor Broome. "This on-demand video series takes the same information and distills it into short, convenient segments that residents can use to navigate these data resources — regardless of their technical expertise."

The City-Parish is introducing two training modules: one providing an introduction

to help cities use data and evidence more effectively to tackle their most pressing challenges. Programs like the Citizen Data Academy play a key role in the City-Parish's ranking and continued success in open data.

For more information and to view the on-demand video series, visit the City-Parish's YouTube page. To learn more about the Citizen Data Academy, visit brla.gov/dataacademy.

KELLY from page 1

Kelly also faced eight additional violations of the Mann Act, a law that punishes predators for taking minors across state lines for sexual purposes.

When Kelly receives his

sentence, scheduled for May 4, 2022, he could get life in prison.

He still faces trial for similar accusations in Chicago and Minnesota.

His lawyers said he would appeal the verdicts.

Stay tuned for more details.

JOBS ACT from page 1

cus of what will be the largest increase in infrastructure funding since the dawn of the interstate system.

In recent years, the residents of Baton Rouge voted to fund the MOVEBR Program, the largest infrastructure program in Baton Rouge history, and earlier this year, the legislature voted to increase recurring state funding for

the first time since the 1980s. Both of these actions took bold leadership and courage.

It's time for Washington to put partisan politics aside and do its part to ensure America's infrastructure system is not only maintained, but enhanced for future generations. I encourage Louisiana's congressional delegation to join Senator Bill Cassidy in sending this historic legislation to the President's desk next week.

MASK from page 1

I am extending Louisiana's state-wide indoor mask mandate for another four weeks, including in our K-12 schools and on college campuses," Gov. John Bel Edwards said. "Masks have been proven to help slow the spread of COVID-19, with recent federal data from the Centers for Disease Control showing that schools without masking requirements are 3.5 times more likely to have a COVID-19 outbreak than schools where children and staff members are masked. We must do everything we can to protect ourselves and those around us who are vulnerable, including wearing masks indoors and getting the safe, effective and totally free COVID-19 vaccine."

"On August 4, the day that the mask mandate was put back into place, only 37 percent of Louisianans were fully vaccinated against COVID-19. As of today, that is up to more than 45 percent. While that improvement is something to be proud of, it

is not enough. Currently, our hospitalizations are down, but they are still roughly four times the pre-Delta surge baseline. In the month of September alone, Louisiana reported that 1,470 people died of COVID, which is tragic, as we know that the vast majority of these deaths were likely preventable. We have to get Louisiana's vaccine rate up even more so that we have strong vaccine protection in our communities. Just over half of all people in Louisiana who are eligible for the vaccine are fully vaccinated. That's why masking right now is important still."

"Our COVID-19 indicators continue to move in the right direction and that is critical, but we are still wading in COVID," said Dr. Joseph Kanter, State Health Officer at the Louisiana Department of Health. "All 64 parishes are currently at the highest possible level on our community risk scale. With the highly transmissible Delta variant circulating throughout the state, masking indoors is how we stay safe and protect our loved ones."

City of Baker Infrastructure, economic development plans moves forward



Architectural renderings of Baker Transit Oriented Development. A joint project between The City Of Baker, CATS, and CRPC

BAKER, La. — As a preface, every thriving community is built on a solid foundation. Infrastructure is that foundation when community leaders develop and implement a plan for the community. Infrastructure promotes economic growth, and economic growth brings about changes and expansion in infrastructure. As leaders look ahead where future growth or redevelopment is planned, they identify needs such as water, sewer, gas, broadband, etc., and work to improve or add these services.

The City of Baker, which provides utility services, is uniquely positioned to serve the public best and attract new investment as a utility provider because they are community-owned, locally operated, and regulated, which means they are serving the public interest. They are doing this are by offering highly competitive rates for service and, last but certainly not least, serving as a means for re-investing in the community. The dollars you spend as a business or resident remain here, and they

create local jobs, which are direct reinvestment in the City of Baker and the North Baton Rouge area. Some of Baker's local initia-

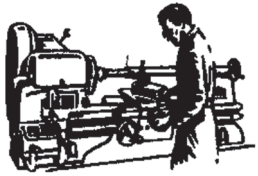
tives around utilities are focused on the City's west side, where we see rapid growth and redevelopment. A few projects underway on the west side: water distribution system improvements to Groom Road, La Hwy. 964 and Heck Young Road, a new 1,000 GPM water well on Groom Road, a further 300,000 elevated water storage tank (tower) on Groom Road. All these items will significantly improve water pressure for the entire City as it adds a new point for providing service to the west side and alleviates the need for the service to be pumped from the east side of the City to the west side. In addition, a new Fire Station will be built alongside the new water tower to provide emergency services more rapidly on the west side of the City.

These items are known as critical, complex infrastructure. Critical infrastructure is essential to the functioning of a society and economy, and Hard Infrastructure is the physical system necessary to run a modern, industrialized city. These are foundational keys to the success and future economic growth of a community.

Across the City, Baker has many other infrastructure projects underway, all of which are a part of the City's long-term plans for growth. Another exciting project is the CATS transit center, which resides within the Plank Road

See CATS, on page 7

READER INFORMATION



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The office is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday and located at 4910 Monticello 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

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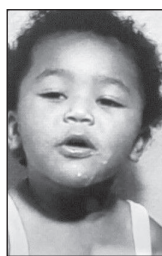
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Mother, stepfather of Baton Rouge toddler Nevaeh Allen charged in child's death

BATON ROUGE, La. — Lanaya Cardwell, the mother of 2-year-old Nevaeh Allen, and the woman's boyfriend are now both charged with second-degree murder in connection with the little girl's death.



2-year-old Nevaeh Allen

The boyfriend, Phillip Gardner, had previously been arrested on lesser charges in the case.

A law enforcement source told WAFB Wednesday, Sept. 29 they are still uncertain who allegedly committed the killing and that the investigation continues.

A probable cause report, which should provide more details on the police investigation, is expected to be released Wednesday evening.

Allen, age 2, was found dead Sunday in a wooded area in Hancock County, Mississippi after she was reported missing from her home in Baton Rouge last Friday.

An autopsy revealed the death was a homicide. However, investigators said a specific cause of death was not determined and results of more tests, including toxicology tests, are still pending. Investigators have declined to say whether there were any signs of trauma to the girl's body.

Baton Rouge Police Chief Murphy Paul announced the arrest of the mother Wednesday afternoon. The chief said it saddens him that "this beautiful, innocent angel is no longer with us."

The little girl's name, Nevaeh, is the "Heaven" spelled backward.

The little girl's stepfather, Phillip Gardner, was charged in the case earlier this week for allegedly disposing of her body. He was charged with unlawful disposal of human remains and obstruction of justice. A warrant was issued late Wednesday afternoon adding second-degree murder to his charges.

NATIONAL

Lawmakers Temporarily Avoid Government Shutdown

Without the bill, the government faced a midnight Friday shutdown. The temporary measure keeps the government open through December 3.

Lawmakers voted to prevent a government shutdown — temporarily, at least.

Both chambers of Congress passed a stopgap funding bill that came just hours before the deadline, avoiding a costly shutdown.

After the House voted 254-175 to approve the bill, Senators followed with a 65-35 vote in favor of the measure which now heads to President Joe Biden's desk for his signature.

"For this moment, this is one of the biggest problems that has faced us in the last while, making sure the government stays open, and now we can be sure it will," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) stated.

Without the bill, the government faced a midnight Friday shutdown. The temporary measure keeps the government open through December 3.

Senate Democrats Reportedly Near Deal on Voting Rights Legislation

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

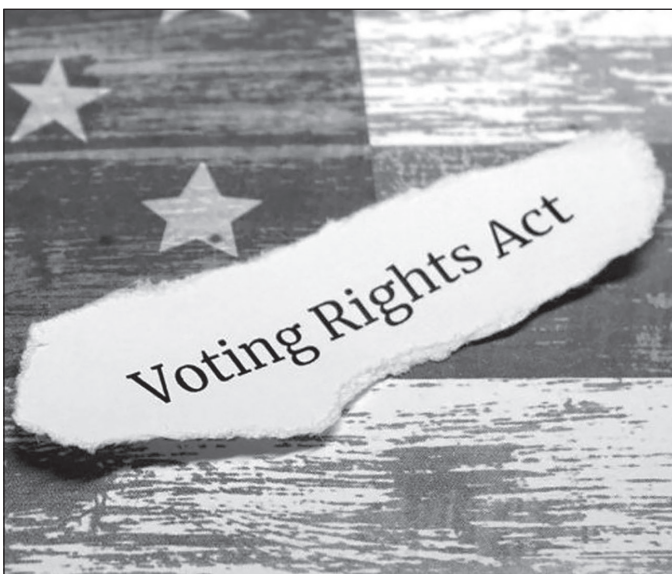
Senate Democrats reportedly are expected to agree as early as Tuesday on an updated version of voting rights legislation the party believes will have the full support of all Democratic senators.

"The member-level discussions are complete," a source told NBC News, adding that staff members "are going through the text to fix technical issues."

Democrats have continued to seek avenues to blunt the myriad of voter oppression laws introduced or passed in many Republican-led states like Georgia, Texas, and Florida.

The For The People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act were introduced in Congress in 2019 and 2021, respectively, but Republicans have united against both measures.

The White House on Monday declined to give credence to a report in Rolling Stone that said President Joe Biden told



Sen. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) that he stands ready to push for filibuster reform.

"We keep those personal conversations with congressional leaders private," White House Spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre responded.

Sen. Joe Manchin (D-West Virginia) has remained opposed to revamping the filibuster, which most point out is a racist

tool to help maintain crippling laws that harm African Americans and other minorities.

He stubbornly asserts that he's still speaking with "quite a few different Republicans who are very interested in doing something that makes sense."

The Senate is evenly divided, with Vice President Kamala Harris holding a potential tie-breaking vote.

La. schools chief scraps COVID quarantine suggestion

BATON ROUGE, La. — Going against health guidance, Louisiana's education department announced Wednesday it's no longer recommending that public school systems quarantine asymptomatic students who have come into close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

Louisiana's 69 local school districts already had the ability to determine whether they want to send the students home for days because of exposure to the coronavirus illness. But most of the districts had been following the state education department's recommendation that those students should be quarantined, even if they don't show symptoms of COVID-19.

The new guidance issued by Superintendent of Education Cade Brumley suggests districts could instead choose to notify parents of the exposure and let the parents decide whether to keep the child in school or isolated at home — with parents offered a free COVID-19 test for the student.

The announcement comes as Louisiana is emerging from its fourth surge of the coronavirus illness, with infection rates and COVID-19 hospitalizations falling. Louisiana has dropped to among the nation's lowest per capita rates for new cases, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But Brumley's changed quarantine recommendation is at odds with the advice of state and federal health officials. Gov. John

Bel Edwards also doesn't support the change, with his administration pointing to the larger rate of COVID-19 infections among children in the most recent spike.

Brumley called the updated state recommendations a "common-sense" approach that focuses on local control of schools and that could help students avoid being sent home multiple times across the school year and missing needed days of class. He said schools haven't proven to be super-spreader environments for COVID-19.

"One of the things I continue to hear is just frustration among educators with the amount of quarantines taking place for students, and I'm certainly hearing that from parents," Brumley said in an interview. "There are unintended consequences of these quarantines."

The Louisiana Department of Health did not back the policy change suggested for the state's 700,000 public school students and wasn't consulted, said agency spokesperson Aly Neel. Brumley said he told the department about his decision Wednesday, shortly before releasing it publicly.

"We strongly recommend that school districts follow public health guidance and parents quarantine unvaccinated children who may have been in close contact to someone with COVID. Doing so is critical to slowing the spread and protecting children, families, school staff and communities at large," Neel said in a statement.

FOOD from page 1

the department.

Applications for the program — formally known as the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or DSNAP — are being handled in phases, with people assigned specific days to submit their requests based on their home parish and the first letter of their last name. More details about the schedule and eligibility requirements are available online

at defc.la.gov/DSNAP or by texting LADSNAP to 898-211.

Eligible parishes include: Ascension, Assumption, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Washington, West Baton Rouge and West Feliciana parishes.

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RELIGION

LEGENDARY GOSPEL TRIO THE RANCE ALLEN GROUP DAY Drops New Release, "Love Makes the World Go Around."

The legendary GRAMMY® Award nominated gospel trio, The Rance Allen Group, has released a new retro-soul styled track, "Love Makes the World Go Around" (Tyscot) - its first offering since its charismatic front man passed away last October. Allen's brothers and group co-founders, Steve Allen and Tom Allen, recently met in their adopted hometown of Toledo, Ohio with Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz who proclaimed September 24, 2021, as Rance Allen Group Day throughout the city in celebration of the new song.

"We recorded it years ago and it was never released," Steve Allen told news reporters in the mayor's office. "The song is about bringing people together. There's a line in the song that says, 'When I look through Love's eyes, things don't look so bad,' and it gives us hope. The Bible says, a house divided against itself will not stand. There's so much division in our country. There's a way to have differences without being angry. We've got to find a way to bring it back to love."

In related news, Stax Records' parent company Concord Records recently pledged a million dollars to establish the Concord Stax Scholarships which

will provide full tuition to at least 20 students each year for the next five years to pursue musical careers. Each of the scholarships are named for a prominent personality in the history of Stax Records such as Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, and Rance Allen. Visit <https://staxmusicacademy.org> for more information.

Over the course of their career, the Rance Allen Group has earned five GRAMMY® Award nominations and amassed over 250 million digital streams. Launching their career with Stax Record's Gospel Truth imprint circa 1972, they scored with soulful message songs such as "Ain't No Need in Crying" and "Lyn' on the Truth." They've also enjoyed six R&B chart singles, including the 1979 Top 25 gem, "I Belong to You." From the 1980s on, their music was more church, and ministry oriented. The reached No. 1 on Billboard's Top Gospel Albums chart in 1992 with the album, Phenomenon, which featured the radio smash, "Miracle Worker." In 2002, they signed to Tyscot Records where they had hits such as "Do Your Will," "Closest Friend," "You That I Trust," and "Something About the Name Jesus." Most

See RANCE ALLEN, on page 7

Training Your Mind For The Battle

By CREFLO DOLLAR

Our minds are tremendously powerful. Most people don't realize that their thinking can cause them to either succeed beyond their wildest dreams or crash and burn in miserable failure. Therefore, most people slide through life at a mediocre level and never realize their true potential. However, God wants much more for us than we realize; everything starts with the way we think.



Dr. Creflo Dollar

Whether we know it or not, we're in a spiritual battle with Satan and the fight is taking place in our minds. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). First and foremost, the enemy doesn't want us to be aware of what's going on. If we don't think he even exists, he can fool us, sneak into our lives, and take over. His method of operation



is to suggest that maybe we can't trust God and that God can't do what He promised.

Thankfully, God's Word alerts us to the attack and tells us how to neutralize it. Our response should be based in our faith in what God says and our willingness to submit to it.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rul-

ers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the

wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:11-17).

God has already won the battle and defeated Satan; all we need to do is believe this. We maintain the victory that Jesus obtained by standing in faith in His finished works.


When we clothe ourselves in God's Word like a soldier clothes himself in armor before a battle,

See BATTLE, on page 7

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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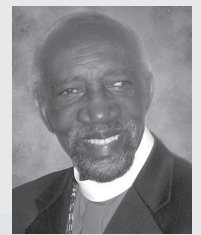


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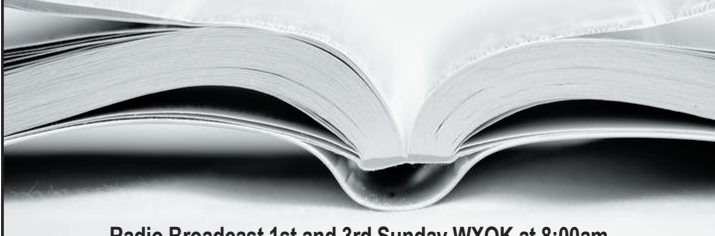
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HEALTH

Walmart, large employers launch virtual care service to tackle Black health disparities

Walmart and a group of other large employers including Accenture, Best Buy, Genentech, Medtronic, State Farm and Target are spearheading a new initiative called the Black Community Innovation Coalition in partnership with the virtual care company.

Combined, the group employs more than 500,000 African American workers.

The companies say it's the first dedicated care concierge and healthcare navigation platform focused on improving the healthcare experience and advancing health equity for Black Americans. The goal is to create a culturally specific concierge service to engage workers of color on their health.

"Health disparities in the Black community have been a known problem for decades, and the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the inequities around access and advocacy that have been driven by a pattern of structural and interpersonal discrimination. The time is now to deliver solutions that drive meaningful change," said Ian Tong, M.D., chief medical officer of Grand Rounds Health and Doctor On Demand and executive leader of the coalition, in a statement.

"We are proud to have built the capabilities to help under-resourced populations over the past decade into a solution tailored for Black Americans. The community has long deserved resources that provide agency over care direction, advocacy, and access to improve trust, care experiences and out-



Walmart is partnering with virtual care company Grand Rounds Health and Doctor On Demand on a digital health program aimed at tackling health disparities among African American workers.

comes," Tong said.

Doctor On Demand merged with Grand Rounds earlier this year to form an integrated virtual care company. The combined company expanded again in May to include a care concierge platform for the LGBTQ+ community with the acquisition of Included Health.

The company said it has built a culturally diverse care team that can help engage Black workers. About 43% of the company's doc-

tors are BIPOC, more than 60% women; 20% of behavioral health providers are LGBTQ+ and 21% are Black, a number that represents four times the national average.

The Black Community Innovation Coalition will work closely to inform the digital health program through a combination of targeted market research studies, employee-led focus groups, population health analyses and product design workshops. The

coalition's early exploration in this area has already identified potential zones of impact including maternal and fetal health, cardiometabolic disease, primary care access, behavioral health and more. These insights will help further tailor the care navigation, physician quality and coordinated care support that Grand Rounds Health and Doctor On Demand deliver to members.

"We're proud to be on the leading edge with Grand Rounds Health, Doctor On Demand, and other employers in developing a resource to help improve access to quality healthcare for the Black and African American community," said Lisa Woods, Walmart vice president, physical and emotional

well-being, in a statement.

"The effort aligns with Walmart's commitment to address disparities in healthcare access, engagement and outcomes. Together, through collaboration and innovation, we will make it easier to find good doctors and make quality healthcare attainable for underserved populations."

The program's focus groups will provide a deeper understanding of the local access and care challenges for national employers than what is available on the market today, the companies said. The Included Health coalition work will culminate with the full market launch of the product designed for the Black community in early 2022.

Blacks are at higher risk for Alzheimer's, but why?

Blacks are at higher risk for several health conditions in the U.S. This is true for heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes and stroke, which are often chronic diseases. And it is also for Alzheimer's disease, in which blacks have two times higher incidence rates than whites.

So, why do these disparities exist, especially in Alzheimer's disease, which isn't typically considered a chronic disease but a progressive one, or one that worsens over time?

Some researchers attribute the gap to both societal and systemic factors related to inequities in education, socioeconomic, income and health care access. Other factors such as stress, diet, lifestyle and genetics may also contribute. However, there's a less-explored question in Alzheimer's that could contribute to this disparity: Is the underlying biology of the disease somehow different in blacks and non-Hispanic whites?

I am a basic science researcher who studies racial disparities in

Alzheimer's disease. I have begun to uncover that the biology underlying the disease may not be the same in African Americans and non-Hispanic whites.

My laboratory is working on several projects to better understand the biology of Alzheimer's disease in African Americans and how it may be the same or different in non-Hispanic whites. We will share our preliminary find-

See RISK, on page 7

RECOVERY from page 1

50 percent, a move Carter called "a great effort that illustrates an important step toward equity for our historically and systemically disadvantaged small businesses."

"Efforts to support and recognize DBEs should always be implemented, and the need to do so is even greater in the aftermath of a disaster," Carter added.

Local DBE advocates agreed with the congressman and stressed the need to involve people of color, women and other demographics that historically have been shut out or unfairly compensated for crucial post-disaster recovery contracts.

LaVerne Toombs, executive director of the New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce, said giving business to DBEs will provide employment opportunities for local residents, thereby kickstarting the economies of disadvantaged communities.

"Contracts must be awarded to Black businesses that create jobs in their communities and help to fuel the region's economy," Toombs said.

However, she said, she remains worried that small Black businesses might again fall victim to long-held historical precedents that unfairly shun DBEs.

"My concerns are that Black businesses won't be treated equally and are continually faced with systemic racism," Toombs said. "Unfortunately, Black businesses receive a minuscule portion of the contracts doled out annually."

Judy Reese Morse, president and CEO of the Urban League of Louisiana, said the importance of involving businesses owned and run by people of color in the post-hurricane rebuilding of the local region would be far-reaching and much needed.

"It's critical that Black-owned businesses are able to equitably compete for disaster contracts in the aftermath of any event that has ravaged the very places they were created to serve," Morse said. "As established anchors in their communities, Black-owned businesses provide essential goods and services, create jobs, offer mentorship opportunities and are a vital component of helping to close the wealth gap."

Morse said the Urban League is well aware of the barriers to development and improvement that

face DBEs at all times, especially after disasters like hurricanes. She added that Hurricane Katrina provided a poor, dysfunctional model for a recovery process, and hopefully, things will be different this time around. She noted that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic surge provides even more potential obstacles.

"When those challenges [facing DBEs] are combined with a catastrophic hurricane that also coincides with the ongoing COVID pandemic, the capacity to survive is exponentially jeopardized," Morse said. "It is very important to us to ensure that the mistakes made in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, with regard to contracting opportunities for Black-owned businesses, are never repeated again."

For their part, federal officials say they are attentive to the needs, and to the potential, of DBEs during the recovery effort. Army Corps of Engineers Office of Public Affairs Gene Pawlik told The Louisiana Weekly that the Corps was aware of Carter's letter to the military unit and that the USACE will respond to the communication with respect to the Congressman's concerns about post-disaster contracts.

He added that local small businesses will certainly be involved in the recovery process.

"USACE places emphasis on direct awards to small businesses, and we are especially sensitive to awards to local firms in times of disaster," Pawlik said in a statement to The Weekly. "We plan to transition work to local firms at the earliest practical opportunity."

"As we serve communities adversely impacted by storm events, we must consider the potential duration and severity of the disaster, the scope and structure of the existing contracts, and the potential impact(s) of a transition to the local economies."

Toombs and Morse each singled out ways that their organizations are among the several local agencies that can help local DBEs obtain federal contracts and other vital economic-development business, including right now after Ida.

"Black businesses must receive contracts to assist with rebuilding the infrastructure in the region," Toombs said. "However, my concerns are the capacity for a number of our small Black businesses. That's why the New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce (NORBCC) strives daily to provide valuable resources and

continue to be the voice for Black businesses in the 10-parish region."

She added that the Chamber "is focused on promoting inclusivity and awareness of the opportunity for local small and emerging Black Businesses within our region. Through our outreach efforts and programs, we work to connect the local business community by policing updates, contracting opportunities, financial assistance, and technical assistance on strengthening the viability of our Black business community."

Morse said the Urban League of Louisiana has partnered with the Foundation for Louisiana to establish the Black Business Works Fund to aid businesses in coming back from the hurricane even stronger than before.

She said Black-owned businesses can visit urbanleaguela.org/ida to access disaster-recovery and relief opportunities, including links to the Office of State Procurement's current bid openings and to the Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center, which works to increase the use of Louisiana businesses in meeting emergency and/or disaster-related needs.

She added that the Urban League of Louisiana's Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation can provide small business support services such as business planning, identifying funding resources, and preparation for accessing post-hurricane procurement opportunities. Toombs noted that the City of New Orleans has already made moves to allot city work contracts to local DBEs, a fact that reflects the overall movement toward building DBEs and creating employment options.

"I know the city of New Orleans has implemented a procurement process to improve supplier diversity when awarding and tracking City contracts to local businesses," Toombs said. "I applaud the Mayor [LaToya Cantrell] for making City Hall a more equitable place to do business. There's still a lot of work to build trust within the Black business community to believe there are real contract opportunities."

Returning to Carter, the Congressman concluded his letter by underscoring the thoughts of Morse, Toombs and others in the New Orleans area. "I urge you to heed the President's directive and prioritize contracting for these businesses in the coming days, weeks and months," Carter wrote. "Now is the time to

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BUSINESS

Campus Federal Breaks Ground on Siegen Lane Mortgage and Business Center



Pictured (L-R) Chief Member Experience Officer Ron Moreau; Chief Operations Officer Kristie Daspit; Chief Financial Officer Ryan Blauvelt; President and CEO Jane Verret; Chief Lending Officer Jay Noel

Campus Federal has begun construction on its state-of-the-art, 27,500 square-foot Mortgage and Business Center located at 6108 Siegen Lane at the intersection of Cloverland Avenue.

In addition to being a full-service branch, this facility will house the credit union's Mortgage, Lending Operations and Business Services departments along with roughly 50 Campus Federal employees. The Center will also include 'hoteling space' or additional offices along with



approximately 4,700 square feet for up to three tenant spaces. Upon completion, the Campus Federal branch located at 5711 S. Sher-

wood Forest Blvd will relocate to the new facility.

Similar to the Interaction Center the credit union opened in 2020, this branch will feature modern banking technology including ITMs (Interactive Teller Machines for optional live teller assistance via two-way video to assist with transactions), a technology bar with iPads for self-service and more.

"Our mission is to be your trusted financial partner for every stage of your life," Campus Fed-

eral President and CEO Jane Verret said. "To fulfill that mission, we are committed to continual investments in our digital banking technology and physical locations. This facility provides a modern banking experience while allowing us to expand to accommodate growth at our Perkins Headquarters and better serve our members' needs."

Construction on the Center should be completed near the end of 2022.

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The Capital Area Transit System (CATS), a political subdivision of the State of Louisiana, operating the public transit system in EBR Parish is accepting Offers for Claims Adjuster Services-ThirdParty Administrator. Sealed offers are due to CATS Procurement Department by October 29, 2021, 10:00 AM (CDT) at 2250 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70802. A copy of this RFP can be found on CATS website at: <https://www.brcats.com/page/procurement>. Written questions will be accepted through October 13, 2021, via email at: catsprocurement@brcats.com. Offerors are reminded to check CATS website often for addenda and other important dates in reference to this RFP. CATS is an Equal Opportunity Employer

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GALA from page 1

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CATS from page 2

Economic Development District. The future site for this transit center is located at the corner of Lavey Lane and Plank Road, as shown in the conceptual drawing. This transit center will connect with the CATS rapid transit system, making this an exciting addition that complements access to the BREC Zoo and Greenwood Park, offering the first of its kind park and ride site, where commuters can safely park their vehicle and take a relaxing bus ride to their rapid transit connection.

There are a lot of good things happening in Baker. Stay tuned for more!

RANCE ALLEN from page 4

recently, Allen stepped out from the group to collaborate with rap star Snoop Dogg on the track "Blessing Me Again" which peaked at No. 11 on the Billboard Gospel Airplay chart in 2018. <https://smarturl.it/8zosdt>

BATTLE from page 4

the enemy is powerless against us. Satan tries to introduce fear and doubt into our thoughts; training our minds to think according to the Word protects us. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:8, 9). The devil wants to sow seeds of unrest and turmoil in our thought lives; submitting to God lets Him give us restful thoughts and peace of mind.

We are what we think. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..." (Proverbs 23:7). We can either believe that we're unworthy of God's love and beyond all hope, or that we're His beloved, victorious people. It's our choice.

RISK from page 5

ings soon, as this work is necessary to help understand the root cause of this disparity. Even more important, this will help us to understand the disease for everyone.

I believe that many factors together contribute to health disparities in Alzheimer's disease, and biology is one very worth exploring. Even when considering clinical trials for Alzheimer's disease, blacks represent fewer than 5% of participants, whereas they represent about 13% of the U.S. population. That makes it hard to know if and how these potential therapies may work for blacks and other underrepresented groups. This makes it important to understand the biology of the disparities because it could impact the development and effectiveness of potential therapies.

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Pfizer Vaccine for Children 5 to 11 is Safe with Robust Antibody Response

BY STACY M. BROWN
 NNPA Newswire Senior
 National Correspondent

A Phase 2/3 trial conducted by Pfizer and BioNTech revealed that the Covid-19 vaccine was safe and generated a “robust antibody response” in children ages 5 to 11.

These are the first such results released for this age group for a US Covid-19 vaccine. Pfizer said it plans to submit to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for emergency use authorization soon.

The company said it hopes to have approval by the end of the



These are the first such results released for this age group for a US Covid-19 vaccine. Pfizer said it plans to submit to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for emergency use authorization soon

calendar year.

“Over the past nine months, hundreds of millions of people ages 12 and older from around the world have received our COVID-19 vaccine,” said Albert Bourla, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Pfizer.

“We are eager to extend the protection afforded by the vaccine to this younger population, subject to regulatory authorization, especially as we track the spread of the Delta variant and the substantial threat it poses to children,” Bourla continued.

“Since July, pediatric cases of COVID-19 have risen by about 240

percent in the U.S. – underscoring the public health need for vaccination. These trial results provide a strong foundation for seeking authorization of our vaccine for children 5 to 11 years old, and we plan to submit them to the FDA and other regulators with urgency.”

The trial included 2,268 participants ages 5 to 11 and used a two-dose regimen of the vaccine administered 21 days apart.

The trial used a 10-microgram dose – smaller than the 30-microgram dose that has been used for those 12 and older.

The Phase 1/2/3 trial initially

enrolled up to 4,500 children ages 6 months to 11 years of age in the United States, Finland, Poland, and Spain from more than 90 clinical trial sites.

It was designed to evaluate the safety, tolerability, and immunogenicity of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on a two-dose schedule (approximately 21 days apart) in three age groups: ages 5 to 11 years; ages 2 to 5 years; and ages 6 months to 2 years. Based on the Phase 1 dose-escalation portion of the trial, children ages 5 to 11 years received two-dose schedule of 10 µg each while children under age 5 received

a lower 3 µg dose for each injection in the Phase 2/3 study.

The trial enrolled children with or without prior evidence of SARS-CoV-2 infection

“We are pleased to be able to submit data to regulatory authorities for this group of school-aged children before the start of the winter season,” said Dr. Ugur Sahin, CEO and co-founder of BioNTech.

“The safety profile and immunogenicity data in children aged 5 to 11 years vaccinated at a lower dose are consistent with those we have observed with our vaccine in other older populations at a higher dose.”

Sharon Weston Broome
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FDA Gives Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine Full Approval
 THE WALL STREET JOURNAL | AUGUST 23, 2021

“SAFE AND EFFECTIVE”

The Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer joins a list of approved vaccines Americans have been safely using – like measles and chicken pox – to eradicate disease over the past decades. Billions of doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been administered worldwide.

To find out where you can get your COVID-19 Vaccine, go to covidvaccine.la.gov or call the Vaccine Hotline at **1-855-453-0774**.

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- ✓ **COVID-19**

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