

**BLACK
BY
GOD**
THE WEST
VIRGINIAN

ON PAGE 4:
HAPPY JUNE
HOLIDAYS
Plus list of
Juneteenth events

ON PAGE 18:
Phat Daddy's:
First in a series of
Black on the Map



ON PAGES 21-28:
BLACK POLICY DAY
PREVIEW PULLOUT
SPECIAL SECTION

**CHECK OUT OUR
NEW ANNOUNCEMENT
PAGES, 43-45**

MOVING FREEDOM FORWARD

This issue highlights
the plight and
progress of Blacks
in West Virginia as
we move toward a
better future

**DREAM
LIKE
KING**



MOBILE FUN FITNESS PARTY & EVENT RENTALS

WV'S ONLY FUN FITNESS BUS

- » SOFT PLAY ZONE
- » FUN FITNESS BUS
- » OBSTACLE COURSE
- » 360 PHOTO BOOTH
- » BUMPER CARS
- » INFLATABLES



@FUNFITNESSKIDSClub

Fun Fitness Kids Club LLC provides mobile fun fitness party and event rental equipment to help decrease the obesity rate in WV. With West Virginia leading the country in adult and childhood obesity, their goal is to encourage and promote healthy and active lifestyles through FUN with FITNESS!

They specialize in rentals for toddler parties, kids play areas at community events, the Fun Fitness Bus into local communities and an obstacle course challenge in schools. To better assist their customers (parents, teachers and event coordinators) they deliver, set up and clean up events with event monitoring and social media promotion options as well. Fun Fitness Kids Club LLC. was named the 2020 West Virginia Minority Business of the Year by the US Small Business Administration. Follow Fun Fitness Kids Club on Facebook, Instagram, X, Tik Tok and Thread for updates!



The Fun Fitness Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Charleston, West Virginia. Their mission is to help curb the obesity rate by promoting fitness and healthy living among kids. Here are some key details about the foundation:

1. WV Kids Business Expo & Small Business Pitch Competition
2. Statewide Virtual Fun Fitness Challenge

for Families

3. Prizes for Obstacle Course Challenge in Schools & Community Events
4. Donations to local sporting teams and events
5. Maintain the Fun Fitness Bus in the Community
6. Designed the African American Heritage Night logo & Toni Stone baseball card
7. Fun Fitness 1-minute newsbreaks on WV Public Broadcasting Television



The Fun Fitness Foundation is accepting tax deductible donations to help further their mission in West Virginia. Donations can be made on PayPal or Cash App \$FunFitnessFoundation. Follow the Fun Fitness Foundation on Facebook and Instagram for updates. Contact funfitnessfoundation@gmail.com for more information.

EDITOR'S NOTE**I'm Proud of the Dream BBG Represents**

Oh my...what an absolute honor it has been to be a guest editor for this special Juneteenth edition of Black By God magazine.

When approached by Ms. Crystal Good about taking on this wonderful opportunity, I began to think of all the positive and groundbreaking endeavors by Black people in West Virginia that I encounter daily. Our people are doing big things in this state. And truth be told, we always have. West Virginia Black history has a place etched in our hearts. It's our ancestors, it's our childhood memories and it's a seed that is often overlooked by the rest of the country.

As a media and communications professional with specific experience in Black media, I am so proud of the dream this magazine represents. It is extraordinary that we have a publication in a similar vein to Ebony, Jet and Black Enterprise...but just for us Blacks in West Virginia. This statewide publication is no small feat. Controlling our media, messaging and narrative is both powerful and priceless.



Traci Phillips with her husband Justin and their children Jayli, middle, and True during the 2023 Juneteenth Celebration in Charleston.

As we remember Dr. King's dream, this issue will accentuate the plight of Blacks in West Virginia as we move forward with our freedom in the new millennium. It highlights current events while also providing actions steps to help move our people forward. As we put this edition together, it's clear the contributors are making forward movement toward a better future for African Americans in the state. From politics and agriculture to technology and black business, the future looks bright for Blacks in West Virginia, if we all collectively come together to

support the various endeavors of our counterparts.

As we all work hard to accomplish goals and live the dream, it is equally important to celebrate each other. Celebrating our victories and our joys with one another is the very essence of black culture. We show love and that's exactly what this issue intends to do. The aim is to educate, inform, celebrate and not conform to the standards of traditional media. A special thank you to all the beautiful people in the Mountain State that contributed to this issue.

—Traci Phillips

BLACK BY GOD
THE WEST VIRGINIAN

JUNE 2024

Celebrating Black West Virginians moving forward.

ON THE COVER:

Anari Marie James attends the 2024 MLK Jr. Celebration at the King Center in Charleston, West Virginia

Photo by: Leeshia Lee

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INSIDE**Happy June!****Telling our Story**

Opinion by Rev. Ron English

Juneteenth Events

5

West Virginia's Freedom Day

6

By Crystal Good

Father's Day

6

West Virginia Day

7

June is Pride Month

7

Moving Forward: Economics

8

By Rev. Matthew J. Watts

Buliding Up the West Side

9

By Rev. Matthew J. Watts

\$50 Million Approved for West Virginia State University's New Agriculture Lab

10

Moving Forward: Agriculture Must Include ALL West Virginians

11

Opinion by Deborah Stiles

Women Beekeepers Three Eye Bee; Meet Nicole Biffle

12

Farm-to-Table Event Celebrates Juneteenth

13

Black Farmer's Index

13

BBG SPONSORED CONTENT**What is the Natural Resources Conservation Service?**

15

Moving Forward: Tech Marshall's Cybersecurity Center Breaks Ground

16

By Aiden Satterfield

Community Profile: Organizer Dr. Shanequa Smith

17

By Joe Severino

Black on the Map: Phat**Daddy's on Da Tracks**

By Jamar Dunnigan

18

Citizen Lobbying 101

28

Support Candidates in November

29

By Karen Williams

Henrietta Dismukes Hospital: A McDowell Legend

31

By Jen Steiner and Tylah Cline

Book Review: Blueberry Ice Cream

32

By Jayli Phillips

Jefferson County Almuni Speak

35

By Vanta E. Coda III

Sumthin' Good Soul Food: Laughter and Good Eats

32

By Leeshia Lee

What's Black on the Map?

38

African American Heritage Night

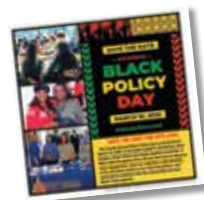
39

Summer Fun Events

40

BBG Announcements

43

**SPECIAL SECTION BLACK POLICY DAY 2025 PREVIEW, 21-28****Engage in the Fight Against Racism**

22

By Dr. Shanequa Smith, Crystal Good and Katonya Hart

Overview and Agenda

23

Get In Where You Fit In

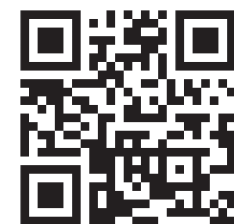
25

Black Infant and Maternal Health in West Virginia

26

What is the CROWN Act?

27



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CELEBRATING JUNE Juneteenth

June 19

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, formally declaring the end of slavery in the United States. However, this monumental change did not happen overnight. It was nearly two and a half years later, on June 19th, 1865, that enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas, finally received the news of their freedom, delivered by Union army troops.

The following year, the people of Galveston commemorated

June 19th as Juneteenth, celebrating their newfound freedom. Over the years, Juneteenth has been observed in various communities and states as a holiday, and in 2021, it was officially recognized as a federal holiday.

The name “Juneteenth” blends “June” and “nineteenth,” marking the day the news reached Galveston. It is also known as Emancipation Day or Freedom Day.

OPINION

“Until the Lion has his own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best stories to tell.” -- African Proverb

Telling Our Own Story

By the Rev. Ron English

*Originally published in the
Charleston Gazette-Mail June 17, 2023*

In 2022, Juneteenth was officially declared a national holiday. Yet before Juneteenth was awarded its due respect, the Charleston Branch of the NAACP had sponsored Juneteenth celebrations on Charleston’s West Side in 2021 and 2022.

Juneteenth is now recognized as a federal holiday by all 50 states as celebrations have multiplied across the country. The celebration of Juneteenth tells the story of how and why its impact overwhelms the celebration of the Fourth of July for people of African descent.

The holiday commemorates the date of June 19, 1865, when Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston Texas and proclaimed freedom for slaves in Texas. However, it’s most likely that the Black Telegraph, the medium of secrets exchanged among slaves by ingenious means of communication, had already alerted slaves in Texas before General Granger’s announcement officially arrived.

The Rev. Paul Anthony Dunn, pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston and a proud native



Rev. Ronald English was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1944. He grew up in the community surrounding the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Atlanta and his family was close with the family of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

of Texas has described the back story of Juneteenth as he recently defined the four original pillars of Juneteenth which included the following:

1. The reunification of the family which had been violently separated by slavery.
2. Commitment to deal with the problem of mass illiteracy among slaves who were not allowed to read.

3. Ex-slaves were encouraged to get involved in the political process by identifying Blacks who could run for office.

4. Ex-slaves were prompted to sue their former owners whose fortunes were derived from the brutalities that slaves had endured. This was the initial stimulus of the demand for Reparations.

Finally, the color red is a dominant symbol of Juneteenth because it symbolizes bloodshed and lives lost in the quest for freedom as seen in red cupcakes, watermelons and red punch.

The meaning of Juneteenth is grounded in a pattern of persistent resistance that emerged from the souls of Black folks in Texas, where freedom was delayed but never denied. As such, Juneteenth appropriately comes before the Fourth of July to certify the truth that America has yet to face concerning the reality of racism woven into the fabric of the American experience.

May the force of the celebration of Juneteenth be with us now.

Rev. Ron English is President of the Charleston Branch NAACP and former Ministerial Assistant to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

2024 WEST VIRGINIA JUNETEENTH FESTIVALS

NORTHERN WEST VIRGINIA



Wheeling

Wheeling Juneteenth Ceremony and Celebration

Wednesday, June 19

6 p.m.

Wheeling Heritage Port

Free

Join us at 6 p.m. at Heritage Port as we honor and celebrate African American history, music, faith, family, and freedom! The event will begin at 6 p.m. with a short ceremony. After the ceremony, music, entertainment and food trucks will follow at the south end of the Plaza.

wheelingheritage.org



Morgantown

2024 Juneteenth Community Cookout

Saturday, June 15

11a.m.-7 p.m.

White Park Pavilion, Morgantown

Free

Look for the event on Facebook

EASTERN PANHANDLE



Martinsburg

Black Owned in Berkeley County Gala and Juneteenth Celebration

Saturday, June 15

7-11 p.m.

Free

Holiday Inn Martinsburg

Join us for our annual Gala as we celebrate the accomplishments of minority owned businesses and shine a spotlight on Juneteenth!

RSVP at Eventbrite

Charles Town

Jefferson County NAACP

Saturday, June 22

Noon to 4 p.m.

Evitts Run Park, Charles Town

Free

People of Worth Juneteenth Celebration

June 22

10 a.m.- 3 p.m.

Martin Street

Free

WESTERN WEST VIRGINIA



Charleston

Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs and FestivALL Juneteenth Celebration

Saturday, June 15

Noon to 5 p.m.

WV State Capitol Complex

Free

minorityaffairs.wv.gov



City of Charleston Juneteenth Celebration

Wednesday, June 19

11 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

City Center at Slack Plaza

169 Summers St.

Free

events.charlestonwv.com



Huntington

4th Annual Juneteenth Celebration

Saturday, June 22

Noon to 7 p.m.

Ritter Park

Free

We apologize if we missed your Juneteenth event this year. Please reach out so we can add you to our comprehensive Juneteenth 2025 Festival list.
crystal@blackbygod.org

NOT IN JUNE, BUT...

February 3, 1865: West Virginia's Freedom Day

By Crystal Good

It is important to remember the significance of specific historical dates and their impact on our understanding of history. While Juneteenth is widely recognized as a significant day of emancipation in the United States, it's crucial to acknowledge February 3, 1865, as West Virginia's authentic Freedom Day. This date commemorates the liberation of enslaved individuals in West Virginia, marking a pivotal moment in the state's history.

Despite entering the Union as a slave state in 1863, West Virginia began a process of gradual emancipation through the Brown/Lane/Wiley Amendment. On February 3, 1865, the legislature ratified the Thirteenth Amendment and enacted the immediate abolition of slavery within the state, declaring all enslaved persons free. This day symbolizes the end of slavery and the state's

commitment to freedom and equality.

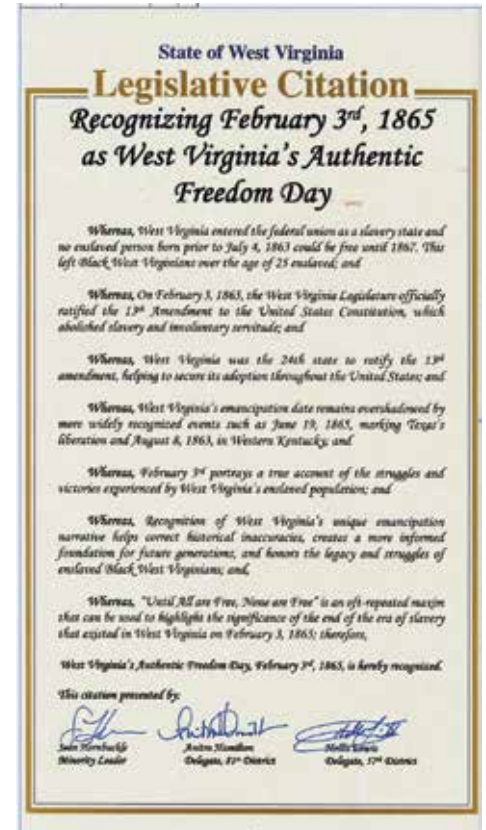
Black By God has been pivotal in highlighting the importance of West Virginia's Freedom Day. Last year, we published "West Virginia's Authentic Freedom Day: A Call for Governor Justice's Accountability to Genuine History," leading to a proclamation by the West Virginia Legislature. Delegate Sean Hornbuckle, Minority Chair, presented the proclamation officially declaring February 3, 1865, as Freedom Day, emphasizing the power of local activism in shaping historical narratives.

During the recent legislative session, Delegate Larry Rowe introduced House Bill 4254, intending to establish February 3 as a recognized state holiday. While the bill did not pass, its consideration was a significant acknowledgment of the African American community's resilience and triumphs in West Virginia's history. Black By God furthered the cause by hosting a webinar with Scott A.

Mackenzie, author of "The Fifth Border State."

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, did not apply to border states like West Virginia. These states, including Maryland, Missouri, and Tennessee, abolished slavery independently before the Civil War's end. West Virginia's 1863 constitution initiated a gradual emancipation process, culminating in complete emancipation on February 3, 1865.

Recognizing February 3 as West Virginia's Freedom Day offers a more accurate account of the struggles and victories experienced by the state's enslaved population and corrects historical inaccuracies, creating a more informed foundation for future generations.



Happy Fathers' Day

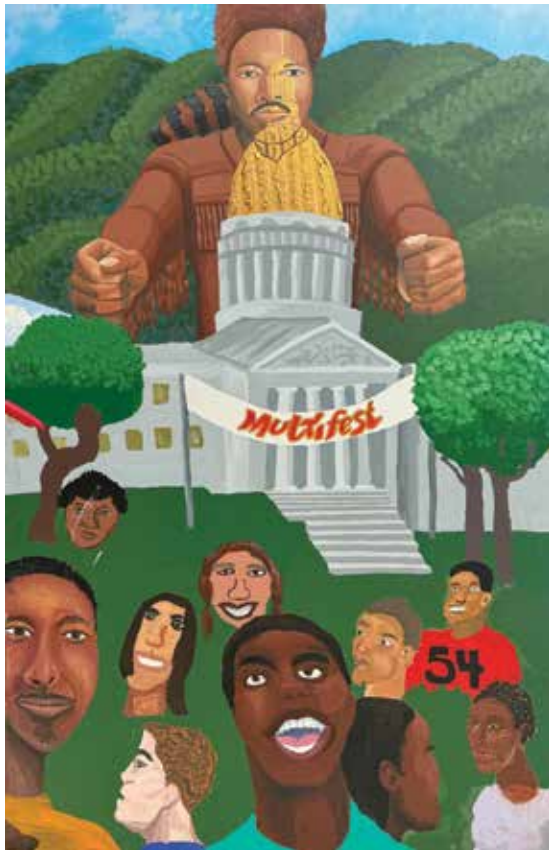
June 16

As we celebrate Father's Day 2024 it is important to recognize the importance of fathers in children's lives. Studies suggest that children who have loving and involved fathers or father figures in their lives have an easier time developing language skills, have higher self-esteem and self-confidence and perform better academically.

We salute the fathers in West Virginia for their role in the future of our state.

Marshall Football Coach
Charles and Jessica Huff
with their family.

See the Summer Fun section on page 40 for more events



WEST VIRGINIA DAY

June 20

Almost 20 years ago, BBG founder and publisher Crystal Good and Philadelphia artist Cavin Jones, partnered with Hope Community Development and the Clay Center to paint a Black History mural. The mural was lost for more than a decade but has been recovered and is being prepared for exhibition and possible travel. The mural consists of three panels, each depicting Black history through the imagination of the children who painted them. One panel represents “The Black Mountaineer,” above, a re-imagined police officer and now realtor Duke Jordan, and features self-portraits of the children at Multifest. Rarely do we see iconography of the mountaineer as a Black man, an important symbol for West Virginia that should be celebrated in all its diversity. Let’s go!

HAPPY PRIDE MONTH!

Did you know West Virginia is home to the highest rate of transgender teens in the country? Additionally, West Virginia hosts a Black-led organization centering the unique needs of the Queer Black Community and their Neighbors and Allies, called West Virginia Black Pride. This Pride month, BBG especially wants to shout out the Black Pride organization and the many Queens who entertain us, fill our hearts with laughter, and whose memories we cherish. LGBT Pride Month, typically celebrated in June, is dedicated to celebrating and commemorating lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender pride. It began after the Stonewall riots, a series of gay liberation protests in 1969.

*Please donate to
West Virginia Black Pride Foundation.
Learn more about them here:
wvbpfoundation.com*



Alexis Karmichael



Akasha Karmichael



Ahje the mirage



Olivia Knowles



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS NEEDHAM
Jette Gray



Kevin Swafford and
Michael Barnes

MOVING FORWARD: ECONOMICS

Juneteenth – a Time to Celebrate Our Freedom and Navigate Our Economic Future

By Reverend Matthew J. Watts

For the Tuesday Morning Group

After the first Juneteenth celebration in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, the newly freed slaves immediately confronted a dilemma. They had to pivot away from the celebration to face the harsh realities of the new responsibilities and burdens of freedom. What would they do, where would they go, and how would they manage this new freedom? How would they survive economically? The newly freed slaves were at a critical crossroads and their survival hung on the fragile thread of their ingenuity to navigate their way through the post-Civil War Economy. Similarly African Americans in West Virginia today are at a critical crossroads and the future survival of our families, children, and communities hangs by the fragile thread of our ability to navigate our way through the post-COVID-19 pandemic economy.

It behooves us as African Americans in West Virginia to use the Juneteenth observance as an occasion to not merely celebrate our freedom but to also come together, work together, find common ground to together, develop a plan together, and plot and chart a course for a prosperous economic future for African Americans in West Virginia. It is wonderful to celebrate Juneteenth with a festival. However; a celebration is not going to secure a prosperous future for African Americans in West Virginia. We need a vision and a shared comprehensive economic plan.

It is the position of the Tuesday Morning Group (TMG) that the Coalfields Comeback Communities Initiative provides an ideal and unique framework for several African American lead Advocacy Groups to come together and unite around a common agenda to lead, coordinate, and navigate a state-wide effort to promote a political, economic, education, environmental, health and housing justice movement across West Virginia. The CCCI provides a unique opportunity in that it strategically connects African American and low-income Caucasian communities that face similar challenges in the same geographic locations. The CCCI highlights that the disparities confronting residents who live in the Coalfield



Rev. Matthew Watts, along with the Tuesday Morning Group, believes that the Coalfields Comeback Communities Initiative provides a unique opportunity by strategically connecting African American and low-income Caucasian communities that face similar challenges in the same geographic locations.

communities are placed-based and are directly connected to the decline in the coal industry in these communities.

Furthermore; a careful review of history reveals that for decades the coalfield communities and their residents were the victims of systematic political, economic, social, and cultural exploitation and oppression at the hands of coal, railroad, and timber barons. These barons controlled the economies of the southern West Virginia Coalfields in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These barons also controlled the political, economic, social, cultural, and religious systems along with the land and the resources in these communities. History also documents that West Virginia's legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government were complicit with this exploitation and oppression and that they allowed the southern West Virginia Coalfields to be ruled unabated as an industrial police state by the coal

barons and their goons well into the 1940s.

Most of the families currently residing in the southern West Virginia Coalfields are the descendants of the early immigrants who were recruited by the railroad and coal barons to construct the railroads and tunnels through the treacherous Southern West Virginia mountains and to mine the coal out of the bowels of the earth. Many of the Caucasian immigrants were brought in from southern and eastern Europe. Most of the Blacks who migrated to West Virginia in the late 1800s and early 1900s were former slaves and their children from the South. The current residents of the southern West Virginia Coalfields — both Blacks and whites — are having to cope with the bitter consequences of the economic exploitation and oppression of their foreparents. It will require major investments for decades in the coalfield communities to correct these past injustices.

Outline as to how the Coalfield Communities Comeback Initiative links communities and issues:

Coalfields Communities Comeback Initiative Benefits

1. It is a Republican-initiated initiative with bipartisan support
2. It has broad community input and buy
3. It has a detailed plan with 80 specific ideas to promote community and economic development
4. It has a legislative framework
5. It only needs funding

Coalfields Communities Comeback Initiative strategically connects the African American and low-income Caucasian communities across West Virginia

The 13 major Coalfield Communities/Counties Comeback initiative provides framework in the following areas: Black policy, economic justice, poverty reduction across races, voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout.

1. Nearly 40 percent of West Virginia's total population (702,000 residents)
2. Nearly 44 percent of all West Virginia's population living in poverty. (132,720 residents)
3. Nearly 75 percent of West Virginia's Black population (48,000 residents)

If you include Berkley, Cabell, Jefferson, and Greenbrier counties with the 13 Coalfield Counties, they collectively represent:

1. Nearly 57 percent of West Virginia's total population (1,012,000 residents)
2. Nearly 59 percent of West Virginia's population living in poverty (175,000 residents)
3. Nearly 85 percent of West Virginia's total Black population (55,000 residents)

Coalfields Comeback Communities have similar challenges in Black and low-income white communities

The 13 Coalfield Communities/Counties (plus four) lag behind more affluent counties in almost every social indicator which includes the challenges delineated below which can only be addressed through place-based people people-focused local initiatives:

1. High poverty rates
2. Low labor force participation rates
3. Low educational attainment
4. High students school suspensions
5. High juvenile and adult incarceration rates
6. High rates of children in the child foster system
7. Poor community and population health outcomes
8. High infant and maternal mortality
9. Low life expectancies

Coalfield Communities Comeback Initiative has the existing state and local networks in place to develop and coordinate local plans

1. West Virginia Baptist and local Black and Caucasian churches
2. West Virginia state and local NAACP Chapters
3. State and local fraternities, sororities lodges, and Divine Nine
4. Local community-based groups and organizations
5. Black by God newspaper
6. Mountain State Bar Association

The Tuesday Morning Group extends an invitation to these groups and others to be a part of the CCCI State Action Group.

Building Up the West Side: Cooperation is the Way

By Mavery Davis

“Cooperation is the way we build ourselves, our children and our communities into what we know they have potential to be. So why are cooperative business models important for us to apply here on the West Side?” said Ed Whitfield, the co-director of the Fund for Democratic Communities. “The short answer is that investing in worker-owned small businesses and community owned assets focused on solving the problems that meet needs unique to this community can have the effect of creating many forms of wealth that remain accessible and in the hands of the people who live here.”



Davis

Cooperative business models and mindsets may just be that self-help force we need.

Our community's history is important context to today's circumstance. Charleston's African American population began to grow in the early twentieth century, as people escaped the Jim Crow south or when coal employment in nearby areas went bust. When Black people arrived in Charleston, they clustered in certain areas of the city — not because they

wanted to, but because of rigid state-endorsed segregation. The Triangle District, for example, became an entertainment and commercial center for white and Black people alike, as music, whiskey by the drink, and other temptations brought people from near and far. Black professionals and Black-owned businesses operated in the Triangle and the nearby “Block” area on Shrewsbury Street. Today, this area would be Downtown surrounding the Charleston Town Center mall and the areas near the Capitol Market. The Block was more than just a street of businesses — it was a mindset, a deep sense of community and togetherness that made The Block special and solidified the community's foundation (Nathan Tauger, 2021). A 2019 article by Stan Bumgardner in the West Virginia Daily Mail states “Prior to the 1950s, this area was bustling with restaurants, stores and hotels — run by African Americans for African Americans.... The people who lived in The Block formed personal bonds that seem almost nonexistent in today's technologically connected but interpersonally disconnected world.” At the same time, segregation and the broader systems of racism it upheld, held back wealth-building opportunities for Black community members. Still, Black people in Charleston pooled resources and made the best out of what was available.

At the peak of local organizing for neighborhoods, the city, state, and federal governments demolished the Triangle

Continued on page 10

\$50 Million Approved for West Virginia State University's New Agriculture Lab

On May 23, 2024, West Virginia State University President Ericke Cage announced that lawmakers approved a \$50 million appropriation for a state-of-the-art agriculture lab. This funding, first revealed by Governor Jim Justice in January, will significantly boost WVSU's agricultural research and development. The new facility will include lab and classroom spaces for WVSU and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, fostering collaboration and innovation. This comes after federal officials highlighted an \$853 million underfunding of WVSU over three decades. The investment honors WVSU's historical commitment to agricultural research and supports the creation of the new School of Agriculture, Food, and Natural



Resources, driving future advancements in West Virginia's agricultural sector.

Read \$853 Million story on BBG: [BlackByGod.org](https://blackbygod.org)

WEST SIDE from page 9

District, uprooting people who had lived there for their entire lives. Some people received relocation services; some didn't.

This lack of people-centered policies and actions stripped families and our community of decades of hard work and savings, and to date they have not been compensated for what was taken from them. While it cannot right the wrongs of the past, programs and policies that pave the way for cooperatives can empower people to meet their economic and social needs and reap the profits generated by their dedicated work and services.

Cooperative businesses have lower failure rates than traditional corporations and small businesses. About 10 percent of cooperatives fail after the first year while 60-80 percent of traditional businesses fail after the first year. After five years, 90 percent of cooperatives are still in business, while only 3-5 percent of traditional businesses are still operating after five years. This is often because of the many people involved in starting a cooperative and the high level of community support for cooperatives (World Council of Credit Unions study in Williams 2007).

This November
vote for
Deborah Stiles
Commissioner of Agriculture
Let's Grow West Virginia's Future!



Paid for by Stiles for WV Agriculture, Carol Culveyhouse, Treasurer

**CALL FOR
BLACK FARMERS**

WHERE ARE THE BLACK
FARMERS IN WV?

.....

**BLACK
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THE WEST
VIRGINIAN

EMAIL: TRACI@BLACKBYGOD.ORG

OPINION

The Way Forward in Agriculture Must Include ALL West Virginians

By Deborah Stiles

Candidate for West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture

Walk along any country road in West Virginia, and the natural world — and its diversity, beauty, colors, and majesty — can be seen. Walk or drive these same places and the marvelous diversity of West Virginians — Indigenous, Black, white, Asian, Mexican, on and on — an also be seen, but that diversity has historically been made invisible by forces readers of BBG are all too familiar with.



Stiles

The invisible was made visible, though, by historian Dr. Ancella Radford Bickley. She uncovered the lives and contributions of poet Bessie Woodson Yancey (1882-1958) sister of Carter G. Woodson, organizer Memphis Tennessee Garrison (1890-1988), and rural healer Mary Elizabeth Johnson (1853-1957), who was also known by the name of Mollie Gabe.

According to Dr. Bickley, Mary Johnson was enslaved at birth in Braxton County and then sold for \$650 away from her family into Clay County when she was just four years old. Her maternal uncle brought her back home, as the family who had purchased her before the Civil War had not informed her at war's end that she was now free. After her uncle returned her to her family in Braxton County, she lived in Falls Mills, later married Alexander "Gabe" Johnson (hence her nickname of Mollie Gabe), and in later life lived near Sutton. She was a healer, farm laborer, homemaker, midwife, and parent.

Johnson's story of rural life in a county where I lived briefly as child — Braxton — is one that I feel is vitally important to all West Virginians, in terms of understanding our collective rural past and the potential of all West Virginians to live lives of self-sufficiency. This would logically include lives that involved agriculture, forestry, and other segments of the rural economy, provided that the forces of racism and sexism are not permitted to have the upper hand.

In certain ways, Mary Elizabeth Johnson's life story, in its details of her rural working life, resembles the



PHOTO FROM WVU LIBRARIES

Rural healer Mary Elizabeth Johnson (1853-1957)

life stories of my Stiles and Spessert ancestors who lived during the same period. But with one important distinction: Mary Elizabeth Johnson's early life was stolen from her because of white families who practiced enslavement. One might ask why bring up Johnson's story. Beyond the fact of Johnson's story being part of our rural past too often overlooked — even actively discouraged from being shared — my partner and I are rural working-class and working toward self-sufficiency. Past and present, however, many, many Black families in this state have either lost access or never had full access or control over lands they worked.

Before retiring, I worked in rural and agriculture policy research, and as a rural studies and humanities professor at Nova Scotia Agricultural College (later, Dalhousie University). While at Marshall University, I studied the work of Zora Neale Hurston, who was a rural writer by birth, but who made her name through New York City's Harlem Renaissance and her work with Franz Boas. While I had a comprehensive education at Marshall, one that set me up for success in masters and doctorate programs at the University of Maine, I did not know about Mary

Elizabeth Johnson, whose working life resembled that of my ancestors and resembles as well the life that I am, in part, living now. And that is why the story of Mary Elizabeth Johnson is important to me — it is a story of self-sufficiency, and of prevailing. Her story touches me, because the challenges faced by Johnson in the mid-19th and 20th centuries were mountainous compared to those I face as a 21st century white woman.

On the theme of self-sufficiency, two key issues are clear. First, farmers, large and small, need West Virginia's arable land protected and to be able to make a profitable living. Second, West Virginians need healthy, affordable, food produced by our farmers to help grow our state's future by growing our agricultural economy. Vital inroads have been made in addressing food insecurity through, for example, urban agriculture efforts underway by Mary Booker, Robert Haley, Dural Miller, Larry Moore, Reverend Watts, and many, many others in Charleston and elsewhere. BBG's February issue opened my eyes to how much as yet untapped potential there is in West Virginia's agriculture economy, and part of that is clearing away barriers and preparing the next generation in the broad and expansive field of agriculture. The historic underfunding of WVSU must be placed high on the priority list of changes that need to be made now to ensure we can grow West Virginia agriculture.

The Commissioner's job is to protect plant and animal health. There's also a role for the Commissioner in food safety and human health and nutrition, while also advancing the interests of West Virginia agriculture. That's what I want to do. What do YOU think should be focused on, to get the job done right? My website will be up in mid-June and continually updated as I learn more. Until then, get in touch, please, by email or phone, and share your ideas on how we can grow West Virginia's future — this time, including ALL West Virginians.

Deborah Stiles, Democratic candidate for Commissioner of Agriculture
 limestonemtnfarm@gmail.com
 681-264-3223

Stiles for WV Agriculture
 PO Box 4023, Martinsburg, WV 25402
 Let's Grow West Virginia's Future!
<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/stiles-for-wv-agriculture-1>

A 'BEECON' OF SUSTAINABILITY AND HERITAGE

Black Women Beekeepers and
an Appalachian Bee Company:
Three Eye Bee

By BBG

Deep in the heart of Appalachia, in McDowell County, West Virginia, the Three Eye Bee Company (3iB), founded by Nicole Biffle, Chantay Harris, and Crystal Good, is a testament to sustainable agriculture, community engagement, and Black excellence with their world-class honey. They affectionately call each other “The charmed Thriae.”

The company’s name, Three Eye Bee, is inspired by the biological fact that bees have three “simple” eyes on their heads. The mythological bee goddess Thriae symbolizes unity and foresight. The name reflects the founders’ deep connection to nature and commitment to sustainable, community-centered practices.

Biffle, a master beekeeper and berry farmer, and Harris, a Human Resources executive, are both daughters of farmers who established the historic T&T Organic Farm, a beekeeping and agriculture business that has become a beacon of sustainability and heritage in McDowell County. Good, BBG’s publisher, poet, and advocate, makes a hive to continue the legacy of Black women in West Virginia agriculture and entrepreneurship.

“Like the Thriae, we harmonize the power of three—transforming our dreams into honey and our unity into strength,” said 3iB part-owner Harris.

Historical Roots and
Educational Mission

Located in McDowell County, a former bustling Black coal camp, Three Eye Bee draws from the deep historical layers of Black Appalachian life, resonating with the resilience of its past communities.

Three Eye Bee goes beyond selling delicious honey. It produces monthly



**Join a conversation about
beekeeping and the Black
community**

June 27, 2024

7:30 p.m. EST

Register:

crystal@blackbygod.org

educational webinars and community events with the hope of a sustainable agriculture future for generations to come.

Taste the legacy of heritage, community, and prosperity in every spoonful.

Join Three Eye Bee in celebrating the sweet success of West Virginia’s Black women beekeepers. 3iB asks you to sign up for their email announcement to pre-ordering a jar of their spectacular honey. They expect to harvest and bottle the samples by October 2024.

www.threeeyebec.com



Meet Nicole Biffle

Nicole Biffle is a proud advocate for her heritage and a steward of the land as a beekeeper and berry farmer. Nicole Biffle's passion lies in specialties like beekeeping and berry production, reflecting her rich ancestry that spans Native American and Black Appalachian roots. Born in Shelby County, Tennessee, Biffle now calls McDowell County, West Virginia, home, proudly representing the third generation of Black farmers in her family.

Biffle's lineage is steeped in agricultural wisdom, with her father, Sylvester “Sky” Edwards, a Black Native American war hero known for his foresight and knowledge. Raised in a tradition of Black farming excellence, Nicole carries forward her family’s legacy with grace and determination. As the owner and operator of Heritage Mountain Farms and a founding partner of the Three Eye Bee Company (3iB), she embodies a commitment to community sustainability and Black excellence.

Biffle’s journey is guided by the spirits of her ancestors, blending the wisdom of the past with the promise of the future. With unwavering pride and a dedication to her craft, she is poised to make a lasting impact on her community and beyond.

“The world can be comforting and terrifying when looking through polarized lenses. The key is to look at everything with a monochrome thought process,” Biffle said, “Life is sweet, but honey is sweeter.”

www.threeeyebec.com

CAPITOL MARKET CELEBRATES LOCAL AGRICULTURE

Inaugural Black-Owned Farm-to-Table Event Celebrates Juneteenth

By BBG

Charleston, West Virginia, is set to experience a culinary revolution with its inaugural Black-owned Farm-to-Table event, poised to coincide with Juneteenth. Promising an unparalleled gastronomic journey, this event celebrates the rich heritage and flavors of Black agriculture.

The sold out event features a four-course meal showcasing Black businesses, farmers and chefs, led by Chef Ke, head chef at Charleston's Dem 2 Brothers & A Grill. The dinner is Friday, June 21, from 6-8 p.m at Capitol Market.

Against the vibrant backdrop of the market vendors, Ashley Monique Wright of Dem 2 Brothers & A Grill, alongside Dural Miller and Alecia Allen of Keep Your Faith Corporation, and Evan Osborn of Capitol Market, are collaborating on the four-course meal. Featured dishes include fried green tomatoes, salad with fried oysters and braised short ribs with grits and collard greens, and watermelon sorbet.

This feast not only tantalizes taste buds but also pays homage to the legacy of Black farmers. This milestone event underscores Charleston's evolving culinary scene, spotlighting the transformative potential of locally sourced, fresh produce while honoring Black traditions.



Chef Ke is bringing the first Farm-to-Table experience featuring Black chefs and farmers to Capitol Market in June.

PHOTO FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

As conversations surrounding food justice and equitable access to nutritious food gain momentum, initiatives like this pave the way for a more inclusive and sustainable food system. In anticipation of this groundbreaking event, we reached out to Black West Virginia farmer Jason Tartt, from T&T Organics in McDowell County since he has been representing the forefront of this movement. "Truthfully, black farmers are underrepresented in West Virginia because there is no real education in our community as to what agriculture is in Appalachia or any access to land to do any impactful farming projects."

Tartt also went on to say, "I think this event is just

as important for building education and awareness within our own community as it is for getting the powers that be to extend the proper support. Black people have done amazing work in agriculture throughout history, far beyond the plantation and we need to be connected to that heritage and building upon it. Integration turned us into a consumer community and severed any ties to us producing and creating for ourselves. This event shows that we are doing that and can do more. We need to understand these health statistics that are plaguing our communities across the U.S. and how agriculture plays a part in that."

West Virginia extends a warm embrace to the Black Farmer's Index (BFI)

In May, BBG proudly supported BFI's inaugural visit to the state, inspired by the compelling stories of local champions like Jason Tartt and T & T Organic. After reading BBG's articles featuring these inspiring figures, BFI was eager to explore West Virginia's agricultural landscape firsthand. BFI is spearheaded by Ark Republic, and stands at the forefront of combating food insecurity and systemic disparities in agriculture, with a particular focus on uplifting Black farmers and growers nationwide. Originating in response to the heightened shortages during the global pandemic, BFI has swiftly evolved into a multifaceted platform, connecting over approximately 1,300 Black agriculturalists with consumers and essential resources.

blackfarmersindex.com



The Black Farmer's Index is the largest, free, most comprehensive directory of Black Farmers. The website is a guide connecting people to traditional and non-traditional growers across the country, from row crop farmers, ranchers, vegetable and fruit producers to beekeepers, fisherfolk, foragers, vintners, and more.

NRCS *Helping People Help The Land*



NRCS provides local technical and financial assistance to agriculture and forestry operations for:

Conservation Planning
Grazing Management
Nutrient Management
Forest Stand Improvement
Wildlife Habitat
Invasive Species Control
Urban Agriculture
Small Scale Farming



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

BBG SPONSORED CONTENT

NRCS/USDA PHOTOS

Conservation is the work of many—no one can do it alone. The NRCS relies on many partners from both the public and private sector to help set conservation goals, work with people on the land, and provide services.

What is the Natural Resources Conservation Service?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary Federal agency that works with private landowners to help them protect their natural resources. NRCS provides America's farmers and ranchers with financial and technical assistance to voluntarily put conservation on the ground, not only helping the environment but agricultural operations, too.

The strength of the NRCS is its workforce. Most NRCS employees work in USDA's network of local service centers at the community level, the rest work at state, regional, and national offices, providing technical, strategic, and administrative support. NRCS's dedicated employees are highly skilled in many scientific and technical fields including soil science, soil conservation, agronomy, biology, range management, forestry, engineering, geology, hydrology, wetland science, cultural resources, and economics.

Seventy percent of our nation's land is privately owned. The NRCS pride themselves in being on-the ground and closely connected with the landowners and communities they serve. The majority of their technical assistance is to help farmers and producers develop conservation systems uniquely suited to their land and individual needs. The agency introduces people to simple conservation practices and federal conservation programs that can improve water quality and maintain healthy and productive lands. Together they develop a conservation plan that leads to wise stewardship resulting in benefits we



all enjoy—cleaner air and water, improved soil and abundant wildlife habitat. Local, state, and Federal agencies, policymakers, and special-use districts also rely on NRCS expertise.

Conservation is the work of many—no one can do it alone. The NRCS relies on many partners from both the public and private sector to help set conservation goals, work with people on the land, and provide services. Their partners include conservation districts; resource conservation and development (RC&D) councils; local communities; state and Federal agencies; NRCS Earth Team volunteers; agricultural, conservation, and environmental groups; agribusiness; universities and

professional societies.

The NRCS's conservation efforts on private land take many forms. The overriding goal is to ensure a healthy and productive land—sustaining food and fiber production, protecting watersheds and natural systems, enhancing the environment, and improving urban and rural landscapes. The NRCS is committed to “helping people help the land” and ensuring that cleaner air and water are enjoyed now and for generations to come.

Contact your local NRCS office to learn more about how we can help you help your land:

www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov

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BBG TECH

Marshall University's Cybersecurity Center Breaks Ground

By Aiden Satterfield

As I am starting my Internship in Washington with Senator Manchin during his last summer on Capitol Hill, I found my home state doing something amazing in cybersecurity. Marshall University, my older brother Myles' alma mater, is taking a significant step toward becoming a national cybersecurity education and defense leader.

Myles was a part of one of the first graduating classes of their well-known digital forensics and information assurance program. On May 17, 2024, school administrators, state officials, and members of the public gathered to break ground on the university's new cybersecurity center. The event was marked by a row of people in formal attire, each holding a green-handled shovel, symbolizing the university's colors, and scooping dirt from a miniature trough as onlookers applauded according to a WCHS live stream I was able to watch.

Backed by \$45 million in state funding, the new building on Marshall's Huntington campus will be home to the Institute for Cyber Security and the



Artist rendering of the proposed ICS building on 4th Avenue in Huntington, West Virginia.

National Center of Excellence for Cyber Security in Critical Infrastructure. This initiative, supported by the United States Cyber Command, the Joint Force Headquarters Department of Defense Information Network, and "rival" West Virginia University, aims to prepare students to tackle emerging national

security and infrastructure issues.

Established in 2021, the Institute for Cyber Security focuses on providing top-tier cybersecurity education and research. The new center will enhance these efforts by offering state-of-the-art classroom and lab spaces designed to foster innovation and practical skills among students. Additionally, the collaboration with federal and state entities will provide a unique opportunity for students to engage in real-world cybersecurity defense activities.

"This center will bolster our cybersecurity workforce, both now and in the future, making West Virginia a hub for cybersecurity protection of our country's most critical assets," said Senator Shelley Moore Capito, who delivered remarks during the groundbreaking ceremony.

Toney Stroud, Marshall's Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, emphasized the center's importance in addressing the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats. "Not only will this lay the ground to start protecting the national critical infrastructure of our country, but it will also help with emerging threats

Continued on page 20



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Dr. Shanequa Smith and the importance of Restorative Practice

PHOTO BY KYLE VASS

Community Organizer is passionate about connecting people, bringing joy, and educating her community

By Joe Severino

Healing people before they reach crisis is just some of the important work done by a restorative practitioner. Dr. Shanequa Smith has grown awareness around her profession, which focuses on the importance of internal healing in breaking the

cycle of generational poverty and trauma. While many people focus their life's work on external factors, like opening food pantries, procuring grant money or running after-school programs, Smith goes a step further to tackle the internal issues that stunt mental and emotional growth.

Restorative practice is also a type of preventative care that seeks to limit further hardship in a person's life that's rooted in childhood trauma. Smith said she learned this as an adult who returned to school and reflected on being that neglected child who lacked support. Through her studies, she learned there could be a different way to fight systemic oppression and discrimination.

"My work focuses on joy, education, and connecting people to their desired opportunities," Smith said in an interview. "When people

feel better, they'll do better. They can sustain themselves."

Originally from Harlem, New York, Smith has lived in West Virginia for more than 20 years now. In that time, she earned degrees from Marshall University, West Virginia University and West Virginia State University, launched civic engagement initiatives, and cultivated individual and organizational relationships across the state that have spurred legislative action.

Smith also puts in the legwork to fight these external factors. She's worked for decades to foster civic engagement in marginalized communities that goes beyond the voting booth. She helped create Black Policy Day and the Black Policy Agenda

Continued on page 20

BLACK ON THE MAP PROJECT



Welcome to part one of my series with BBG for the Map project, as I travel to spotlight outstanding Black-owned businesses in Kanawha, Fayette, Berkeley, Cabell, Jefferson, Marion, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, and Raleigh counties.

By Jamar Dunnigan

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — After spending the last twenty years in Harlem, New York, affectionately known as one of the mayors, that time has ended. I, Wild and Wonderful, Jamar Dunnigan, moved back home to Charleston, West Virginia.

Life has a way of “LIFING.” Let’s just say it was time for a mental, physical, and spiritual reset. After accomplishing my goal of moving to NYC and pursuing my dreams in advertising and marketing, it was time for the next chapter.

For 20 years, while living in NYC, I marketed and supported many of your favorite Black-owned Businesses in Harlem, such as Red Rooster, Melbas, The Shrine, BLVD Bistro, Harlem Haberdashery, The Row, Harlem Hops, and more.

My mouth waters thinking about all the amazing food and memories created in these Harlem staples.

Now, back home in Charleston, it’s time to make many more memories. My mouth waters again, and it’s time to explore Appalachia and all the Black culture and food I have been missing while north.

Phat Daddy’s on Da Tracks gives me my first taste of NY since moving home

The Story

First, Phat Daddy’s on Da Tracks is located on the West Side. The best side.

Phat Daddy’s is a welcoming American soul food-fusion restaurant in Charleston. It was founded by the dynamic trio of Cameron Cordon, Octavia Cordon, and their daughter Azelah.

Originating from New York City, this family has lived in West Virginia for two decades and opened Phat Daddy’s in 2021. “Our menu is a symphony of flavors, featuring the finest BBQ meats, including succulent beef brisket, irresistible pulled pork sandwiches, and the juiciest ribs that will leave you craving more,” says General Manager Ebony.

I had the privilege of attending the Grand Opening on April 9, 2024, and Phat Daddy’s did not disappoint. You can see the love, joy, happiness, and relief in these ribbon-cutting pictures provided by Leeshia Lee. Lee is Charleston’s hometown local and lovely photographer. We love and appreciate you.



Team Phat Daddy: Raina, Eddie, Cameron, and Ebony.

The Vibe



How does the customer feel upon entering /leaving?

- ♣ Cleanliness & Decor
- ♣ Food, Products, and/or Services
- ♣ Friendliness & Customer Service



GRAND OPENING PHOTOS BY LEESHIA LEE @ASHOTOFLEE

From when I entered to when I left, “Welcome to Phat Daddy’s, welcome to Phat Daddy’s,” was all I kept hearing. The door was on a swivel, and it was so lovely to see everyone come out and be so supportive. It takes a lot to get to this point, and Phat Daddy’s has officially opened in a more extensive and newer location. Come on, growth.

I was distracted, trying to take it all in and get some good photos for BBG. I forgot to order my food! All the seats were filled, and then here came Mayor Amy Shuler Goodwin. I worried I wasn’t going to get to order.

I waited in line, a long line, as I perused the menu. Of course, I had to start with the “Chopped Cheese,” a classic at any good deli in Harlem or New York, period.

Chopped Cheese isn’t nuttin’ but a well-seasoned hamburger with chopped onions and peppers on a

roll. Add mayo, tomatoes, lettuce, and your favorite cheese, of course, and it is on.

Phat Daddy’s delivered; it was delicious.

Phat Daddy’s on the Tracks

1634 6th Ave., Charleston, WV 25387

phatdaddyswv.com

304-982-5020

Monday-Thursday 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday and Saturday: 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Eat in, pick up and delivery

Check for daily specials on Facebook:

facebook.com/phatdaddyswv

For more on the Black on the Map project, see page 38



FOLLOW ALONG

BOBC

**Black Owned In
Berkeley County**

Support network for Black and minority owned businesses in Berkeley County, West Virginia and surrounding areas



MARSHALL from page 16

that come our way,” Stroud noted.

University President Brad D. Smith highlighted the recognition that Marshall’s cybersecurity program has received on a national level, including winning national competitions in 2020 and the appointment of Marshall professor Dr. Josh Brunty who I was able to interact with during my time at one of their GenCyber cybersecurity camps back in middle school serves as the U.S. Cyber Team coach. These achievements have drawn attention from the Department of Defense and other federal agencies, solidifying Marshall’s reputation as a leader in cybersecurity education.

The new center will also serve as a strategic location for the Department of Defense to monitor and defend against cyber threats. Lt. Gen. Robert J. Skinner, the United States Cyber Commander, pointed out the advantage of Huntington’s proximity to Washington, D.C., while also tapping into talent from outside major urban areas. “There’s a lot of talent outside of big cities, and that’s what we want to harvest and leverage,” Skinner stated.

Senator Capito, who has been instrumental in securing the funding and support for this project, expressed her enthusiasm about the center’s potential impact. “It’s much bigger than what I could’ve imagined. It’s not going to just be a beautiful building. It’s going to have top-notch creativity within it,” she said.

The construction of the cybersecurity center is expected to be completed by the fall of 2026. Once operational, it will stand at the corner of Hal Greer and 4th Avenue in Huntington, near the new business school.

“We’ve always been the first to answer the call,” President Smith remarked. “When our nation needs us, we respond, and now we need to be able to defend cyberspace. We are stepping up again as West Virginians in defending the United States of America.”

The launch of this cybersecurity center represents a significant milestone for Marshall University and most importantly the state of West Virginia, promising to create a hub of innovation, education, and national security defense.

Aiden Satterfield is a cybersecurity student and athlete at Walsh University, and a native West Virginian.

For more information or to engage with BBG Tech contact: info@blackbygod.org. Let’s continue to inspire, inform, and foster an environment where diversity and innovation thrive in the tech industry.

Dr. Smith attends to the West Virginia Black Voter Impact Initiative table during Black Policy Day at the state Capitol in February 2022. She is the head of the organization, which aims to embrace, educate and empower people to be civically engaged, inside and outside of the voting booth.

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY



SMITH from page 17

and is the head of the West Virginia Black Voters Impact Initiative.

The Black Policy Agenda fights for four main issues: closing the racial disparity for Black families in the infant mortality rate, lowering the disparity of Black children being suspended from school, codifying the CROWN Act, and addressing nutritional food disparity in Black communities.

But it’s Smith’s consistent personal outreach that builds on her external work. She volunteers as a Girl Scout troop leader in a local housing complex, mentors children of all ages, and is a fixture behind youth-centered community events. Dr. Smith consistently hosts a series of family-friendly and informational events in public housing complexes throughout Charleston. Through her passion, determination, and connections she has been able to facilitate events during the Fall and Spring seasons each year.

People know they can call Smith anytime for counseling or guidance. Maybe they missed the bus and they need an Uber to school, or they need some new shoes to work. “Building those relationships with people where they know in those intimate times that they can actually call and depend on you or get some knowledge, or wisdom, or just even a safe space,” she said. “Which, these are things that we were supposed to have gotten in our younger years as children, but a lot of people didn’t.”

Restorative practice is meant to be transformational, not transactional, Smith said.

When her daughter graduated from Capital High School four years ago, Smith co-organized a Community Graduation Ceremony at Charleston’s Magic Island. Now in its 4th year, the celebration is intended to be educational – providing postgraduate information, financial literacy, and employment opportunities – but the main goal

“Joy is not about a happy feeling. Joy is like validation. It gives you purpose. It’s like fuel for your soul. Some people have lives where they get it all the time. Others, we have to intentionally create that space to make sure we restore what was taken from us.”

is to celebrate their achievement. Smith said they hoped a community-based ceremony would ensure all local graduates receive their flowers, especially if their families cannot afford it.

Smith is also an organizer behind the 1st Annual The Big Black Joy Festival in Charleston. A new festival celebrating black joy for families with workshops, speakers, vendors, and a Joy Fest Block Party happening in June 2024.

“Joy is not about a happy feeling. Joy is like validation. It gives you purpose. It’s like fuel for your soul,” Smith said. “Some people have lives where they get it all the time. Others, we have to intentionally create that space to make sure we restore what was taken from us.”

By having such close relationships with local youth, and being one of the few adults in their lives who actually ask them their opinions, Smith said she guides kids into following their internal wisdom. She asks them about what they think their purpose is, and what they believe they’re good at.

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men,” said Frederick Douglass many years ago. It’s a quote Smith and restorative practice leans on heavily.

For more on Dr. Shanequa Smith, visit her website at www.drshanequasmith.com





SAVE THE DATE

— 4TH ANNUAL —

BLACK

POLICY

DAY

MARCH 10, 2025

www.bviiwv.com

SAVE THE DATE FOR BPD 2025

The Fourth Annual Black Policy Day is scheduled for March 10, 2025 at the State Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia. Black Policy Day brings together hundreds of Black West Virginians from all over the state to advance civic engagement, raise our collective understanding of the decisions made by our state lawmakers, and advocate for policies from the community-sourced Black Policy Agenda.

THIRD ANNUAL BLACK POLICY DAY

Direct Engagement in the Fight Against Racism

By Dr. Shanequa Smith, Crystal Good and Katonya Hart

The Third Annual Black Policy Day at the West Virginia State Capitol exemplified the profound impact of direct engagement and lobbying in the fight against racism. This event drew hundreds of students, community leaders, sororities, fraternities, and organizations from across the state, demonstrating a united front for systemic change. Such engagement is essential as an example of anti-racism work in action.

Attendees' active involvement through legislative meetings, the Crown Act Rally, and various networking opportunities showcased how crucial it is to educate lawmakers directly. By sharing their experiences and insights, participants played a key role in advancing anti-racist policy agendas. The presence of more than 100 young individuals further underscored the importance of collective action and the power of community voices in advocating for change.

This engagement at the Capitol, particularly on Black Policy Day, is a critical component of broader efforts to ensure policy-making is anti-racist from the outset. It embodies the principles of anti-racist policy-making by centering the needs of communities of color, advocating for holistic support for whole families, and ensuring universal access to services for all in need. The success of the Third Annual Black Policy Day reinforces the necessity of such events and citizen lobbying efforts to drive forward the social justice and equality agenda. Looking ahead to Black Policy Day 2025, it's evident that these forms of active participation and advocacy are among the most critical work needed across statehouses, demanding significant investment to truly achieve equality and justice.



Above, West Virginia Sen. Patricia Rucker, R-Jefferson, meets with Black Policy Day high school attendees in 2024.



Left, a CROWN Act Rally in the lower rotunda at the Capitol sought to drive change to end race-based hair discrimination.

Below, Crystal Good, from left, Bobby Robinson, Leeshia Lee got a lot of networking in.



ABOVE PHOTO BY RENEE L. FERGUSON

BLACK POLICY DAY OVERVIEW AND AGENDA

Not Just a 'Day' at the Legislature

The West Virginia Black Policy Agenda is community-rooted and community-driven — a roadmap to a thriving West Virginia where every person can live a happy, healthy life in safe and flourishing communities. It is also a living document that we are continually refining and adding policies to based on input from BIPOC+ West Virginians.



You can tell us what else you'd like to see prioritized in the Black Policy Agenda by visiting bit.ly/Blackpolicysurvey.

Empowerment

At its core, Black Policy Day provides a platform for historically oppressed and ignored Black individuals to have their voices heard. It emphasizes the significance of unity in driving positive change and advocates for the active involvement of Black West Virginians in shaping policies that impact their lives.

Comprehensive Engagement

The event spans three years and includes a variety of activities such as webinars, focus groups, training sessions, and culminates in a pivotal "Day" at the West Virginia state Capitol. During this Day, attendees have the opportunity to interact with policy experts and speakers who share their experiences on crucial matters affecting Black communities.

Key Policy Issues

The issues discussed during BPD are wide-ranging and touch on various aspects of Black West Virginians' lives. All these issues are interconnected and centered around the concept of social determinants of health.

Social Determinants of Health

The Black Policy Agenda framework is developed through a comprehensive survey, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. It mirrors the community's knowledge, gaps in understanding, needs, wants, and opportunities. The framework is guided by the concept of Social Determinants of



Health, which recognizes that the conditions in our environments significantly impact various aspects of our lives, including where we live, learn, work, play, worship, and age.

Origins and Organizers

Black Policy Day originated from the groundwork laid by Black By God's 2020 questionnaire. It evolved into a prominent event and now represents a powerful movement. The key organizers driving this initiative are Crystal Good (BBG), Katonya Hart (Partnership for Furthering Art and Education), and Dr. Shanequa Smith, an organizer with Black Voter Impact Initiative. These visionary leaders believe in the strength of shared power and are dedicated to creating inclusive spaces for marginalized groups. They envision a future where Black West Virginians can actively participate in shaping their destinies through policy change and collaborative efforts.

WE BELIEVE IN A WEST VIRGINIA THAT:

Ensures economic dignity and opportunity for all through:

- **Creation of a state Child Tax Credit** to increase economic security for families with children
- **A Small Business and Minority Populations Economic and Workforce Development Task Force** to empower small businesses and promote economic opportunities for minorities
- **Tax Credits for Diversity and Inclusion** to incentivize businesses to hire, promote, and develop women and minorities into leadership roles
- **Passage of the CROWN Act** which makes it illegal to discriminate based on hair texture or style
- **Reparations** to West Virginia's African American population

Invests in an equitable and well-funded public education system through:

- **A Youth Advisory Council for Civic Engagement** to encourage civic engagement among young people
- **Increased access to high-quality early childhood education** in all communities
- **School suspension disparities among Black students are eliminated** through restorative practices, increased access to diverse educators, and investments in student support service

Shrinks the criminal legal system through:

- **Reductions in the number of West Virginians incarcerated** in prisons and jails
- **Second Look Sentencing** to allow those with lengthy sentences to petition for

Continued on page 24

AGENDA from page 23

reconsideration after serving a significant portion of their time

■ **Reducing technical parole and probation violations** that drive overcrowded jail conditions

■ **Ending the privatization of jail and prison services** that increases the financial burden on loved ones of incarcerated people

■ **Investments in the reentry supports needed for those leaving the justice system to succeed** including affordable housing, access to health care, and jobs

Builds healthy communities, housing, and environment through:

■ **Giving all West Virginians access to clean drinking water**

■ **Creation of a WV Community Development Equity Fund** to support equitable community development projects

■ **Dilapidated Property Assessments** investing in and marking dilapidated properties

Prioritizes the health of its people through:

■ **School-based mental health supports and substance use treatment** to increase access to supports for young people

■ **Enactment of West Virginia Bridge Plan** to maximize available federal dollars by instituting a Basic Health Plan option that builds on

WV Medicaid's administrative and provider networks

■ **Improving Black Infant and Maternal Health** through improved data collection and increasing access to culturally-appropriate care

■ **Establishment of a Minority Health Advisory Team** to improve Black health and well-being

■ **Protects and expands access to Medicaid and CHIP**

Has abundant food security through:

■ **A Food Desert Produce Pilot Program** to increase access to quality, accessible, affordable food in food deserts

2024 BLACK POLICY DAY WEBINAR SERIES

The West Virginia Black Policy Day team is excited to announce our 2024 Webinar Series, where we will highlight important Black policy issues, learn from partner organizations, and prepare to amplify our Black policy priorities.

Register today at bit.ly/2024BPDwebinars

BLACK POLICY DAY

2024 WEBINAR SERIES

Register at bit.ly/2024BPDwebinars

September 3 | 7:00pm | Legislative Advocacy

November 12 | 7:00pm | Democracy

January 14 | 7:00pm | Policy Priorities

March 18 | 7:00pm | Black Policy Day Recap



YOUR HOSTS



REGISTER HERE >



BLACK POLICY DAY

GET IN WHERE YOU FIT IN



1 Wear a Black by God or Black Voter Impact Initiative Tee

Show your support for the “Get in Where You Fit In” campaign with these t-shirts.

Visit: blackbygod.shop

2 Social Media Sensation

Be a social media champ and spread the word about the campaign’s goals and events.

3 Word-of-Mouth Wizard

Let’s talk about Black Policy Day (BPD) and Black Policy Agenda (BPA) with friends and fam.

4 Stay in the Loop

Follow BBG and BVII for all the latest updates, events, and actions.

5 Local Tour Explorer

Join the campaign’s events in your neighborhood to support and learn more

6 Interims, the Interactive Forum

Engage in exciting discussions on civic engagement and policies

7 Webinars for Wisdom

Tune into webinars to become a BBG and BVII expert. The next webinar is Sept. 3.

See past webinars at: blackpolicydaywv.org/#web

8 Host the Action

Organize a “Get in Where You Fit In” community meetup and get talking.

9 Join the Engagement Committee

Make a difference by joining the Building Civic Engagement through Black Policy Day Committees around the social determinants of health.

Are you ready to dive into the world of civic engagement?

Explore the power of social media, the joy of supporting Black-owned businesses, and the thrill of attending town hall meetings. From virtual webinars to lively local tours, we’ll show you how to stay informed and engaged year-round. So, whether you’re enthusiastic about policy advocacy, voting rights, or building inclusive communities, this list is for you. Let’s embark on this exciting journey together, igniting positive change and making our voices heard in the democratic process!

10 Power of the Ballot

Register to vote and shape your future in local and national elections.

Register online: ovr.sos.wv.gov/

11 Community Changemaker

Volunteer with local organizations to drive positive change.

12 Contact Your VIPs

Reach out to elected officials and share your

opinions for a better tomorrow.

13 Peaceful Protest Pro

Join protests and be a voice for important issues and change

14 Support Black-Owned Biz

Boost your community by backing Black entrepreneurs.

15 Town Hall Explorer

Attend town hall meetings — let leaders hear your voice.

16 Educate and Elevate

Share resources on civic engagement and social justice.

17 Voting Duo

Team up and bring a friend to the voting booth for a stronger democracy.

18 Civil Discourse Champ

Have respectful conversations, even with different views.

19 Youth Empowerment

Inspire young ones to join civic engagement activities.

20 Run for the Challenge

Make change from within ... run for local office.

21 Community Project Pro

Volunteer for projects promoting equality and inclusivity.

22 Workshop Warrior

Attend workshops for civic engagement and policy advocacy.

23 Advocate with Dollars

Support social justice through donations to advocacy organizations.

24 Vote Smarts

Educate others about voting and its impact on society.

25 Stay Engaged, Always

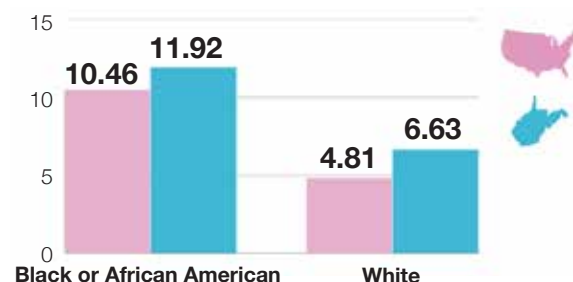
Civic engagement is a year-round adventure for lasting impact.

Civic engagement can be both impactful and enjoyable!

Black Infant and Maternal Health in West Virginia

Infant and maternal mortality rates are often considered an indicator for the overall health and well-being of a community. In West Virginia, we have a great opportunity to improve infant and maternal health.

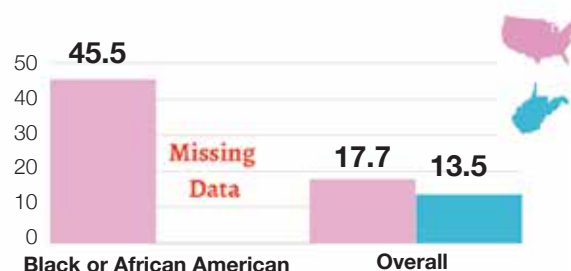
West Virginia's infant mortality rate exceeds the national average for Black and white infants



In 2016 and 2017, the most recent years of data publicly available, nearly one-quarter of infant deaths in West Virginia were due to Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID). Other prominent causes of infant death were birth defects, prematurity, and medical-related issues.

Researchers found that about one-third of infant deaths were preventable.

West Virginia is missing critical data for Black maternal mortality



In 2018 there were 15 pregnancy-associated maternal deaths in West Virginia. Five were related to drug use, three were suicide deaths, and others were due to medical issues. Nationally, researchers believe two-thirds of maternal deaths are preventable.

Proactive policy can strengthen data collection and improve infant and maternal health in West Virginia

Collect stronger data by empowering West Virginia's infant and maternal mortality review panels to increase supportive resources for families

- Disaggregate data by race;
- Incorporate family member interviews into investigations; and
- Complete timely reviews, which preserve certifier memory and ensure accuracy.

Increase access to culturally appropriate care

- Recognize Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) as healthcare professionals by giving them a path to licensure;
 - CPMs can be licensed in 34 states and the District of Columbia.
- Allow doulas to be reimbursed by Medicaid and PEIA; and
- Implement population-focused recruitment policies that create a pipeline of diverse health care workers.
 - When providers represent the diversity of the communities they serve, barriers to care are reduced and all providers report more cultural competence.

Increase supportive resources for families

- Increase state funding to evidence-based home visitation programs; and
- Ensure all new parents have access to paid family and medical leave.



Overall infant mortality in West Virginia exceeded the national average according to the most recent data available. Black West Virginia infants were twice as likely as white infants to die before turning one year old.

2.5x

Nationally, the maternal mortality rate is about 2.5 times greater for Black mothers than white mothers.



Mortality is the tip of the iceberg. For every maternal death, there are an estimated 75-100 cases of life threatening complications during or after childbirth.

BLACKPOLICYDAYWV.ORG

WHAT IS THE CROWN ACT?

The CROWN Act stands for "Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair."

- Black and brown people — especially Black women — regularly face discrimination in schools and the workplace based on the texture and style of their hair.
- Recent data from the West Virginia Department of Education shows that Black students are suspended at twice the rate of their white peers, in some cases due to hair-based discrimination.
- CROWN Act legislation does not interfere with OSHA standards or workplace safety rules.



172,000

West Virginians have affirmed CROWN ordinances.



24

States have passed the CROWN Act

2/3

of Black women have changed their hair for a job interview

20%

of Black women 25-34 report they've been sent home from work because of their hair

2.5x

Black women's hair is 2.5 times more likely to be perceived as unprofessional

Citations can be found at bit.ly/WVCrownAct



CITIZEN LOBBYING 101

As part of our ongoing efforts to increase our civic engagement and provide educational opportunities to our community partners, we are excited to host a Black Policy Day Citizen Lobbying 101 webinar. The webinar will be held on Thursday, July 11 at 7 pm. Attendees will learn how to engage with lawmakers at interims meetings and in district, the key components of a successful legislator meeting, and how to get traction on your policy idea.

Register for the webinar at bit.ly/BPDjulywebinar or the QR code below

THE BLACK VOTER IMPACT INITIATIVE
AND BLACK POLICY DAY PRESENT:

CITIZEN LOBBYING 101

Thursday, July 11
7:00pm

Register at bit.ly/BPDjulywebinar
with a presentation from Seth DiStefano,
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

SIGN UP FOR THE BLACK POLICY DAY NEWSLETTER!

The Black Policy Day team publishes a monthly newsletter with upcoming events, learning opportunities, and timely stories and articles about Black West Virginians.

Stay in touch with Black Policy Day West Virginia by signing up for our monthly newsletter at bit.ly/BPDnewsletter or our QR code:



BVII IN THE COMMUNITY

The Black Voter Impact Initiative purpose is to embrace, educate and empower Black and marginalized community members to be civically engaged, inside and outside of the voting booth. We are a community that focuses on the importance of learning, connecting, and accompanying one another as we grow politically in our communities. We are looking forward to seeing you at the following community events:





GENERAL ELECTION 2024

We need to support candidates in November

By Karen Williams

The May West Virginia State Primary is over and nonpartisan candidates have been elected. Magistrates, judges, and school boards are now in place for to serve new terms. We trust that people have been elected that have our best interest represented.



Williams

Many questions arise after the votes are counted such as:

- Do we as a minority community see people who represent our concerns now in office?
- Did we show up to the polls and vote?
- Did we help to elect any minority candidates?
- Are we going to hold our newly elected officials accountable to serve minority

and unserved communities?

Throughout West Virginia minority candidates have finished primary races successfully and are now running in the General Election.

Statewide: House of Delegate candidates

- **Hollis Lewis** (D-Kanawha, 57), incumbent
- **Anitra Hamilton** (D-Monongalia, 81), incumbent
- **Sean Hornbuckle** (D-Cabell, 23), incumbent
- **Thomas Jones** (D-Preston, 52)
- **Tony Martin** (D-Webster, 44)
- **Osmund Anderson** (D-Jefferson, 99)

Statewide: Auditor

- **Mary Ann Roebuck Claytor** – State Auditor

City Council Candidates

Around the state several minorities won their primaries and are now running for city and county offices in several cities.

- In Huntington, incumbents, **DuRon Jackson** is running for City Council at Large, and **Teresa Johnson** is running for District 5

- **Gregory Epps** is running for City Council in Star City, West Virginia
- **Connie Cain** is running for City Council in Wheeling's Ward 3
- **Janine "Fee Fee" Bullock** is an incumbent running for City Council Beckley's Ward 5
- **Mark Jackson** is running for City Council in Clarksburg

Magistrates

Several candidates in the Eastern Panhandle won their nonpartisan races and are now seated as Magistrates:

- **William "Bill" Norris** – Berkeley County
- **Michelle Barnes Russell** – Berkeley County
- **Arthena Roper** – Jefferson County

Candidates who are well endowed financially are elected and common people in minority communities may not have the fiscal resources to compete.

The major questions that I have include:

- Where do we go from here and what do we have to lose?
- How can minority communities gain political representation in government to present our concerns and have a voice in the improvement of social issues that plague our community. Social issues like poverty, school suspension, health disparities, slum and blight, educational concerns, environmental inequity, and trauma.

■ Together we need to educate our community on political candidates, engage our communities on the political process, and donate to candidates with our time, talents and money to help minority candidates to be successful in their political races.

The General Election will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024.

We need to create candidate forums, make calls to promote candidates, text friends and family with names, schedule Stroll and Soar to the Polls, and take your friends, family, church members to the poll to vote.



Lewis



Hamilton



Hornbuckle



Martin



Claytor



Norris



Russell



Roper

STORIES FROM THIS SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN

Uncover the traditions and innovations that define Appalachia today and imagine the Appalachia of tomorrow.

Hear stories from this side of the mountain on Inside Appalachia—an audio project produced by West Virginia Public Broadcasting. It's more than journalism; it's in-depth storytelling from folk reporters who connect you directly to the culture, history, and people that shape us.

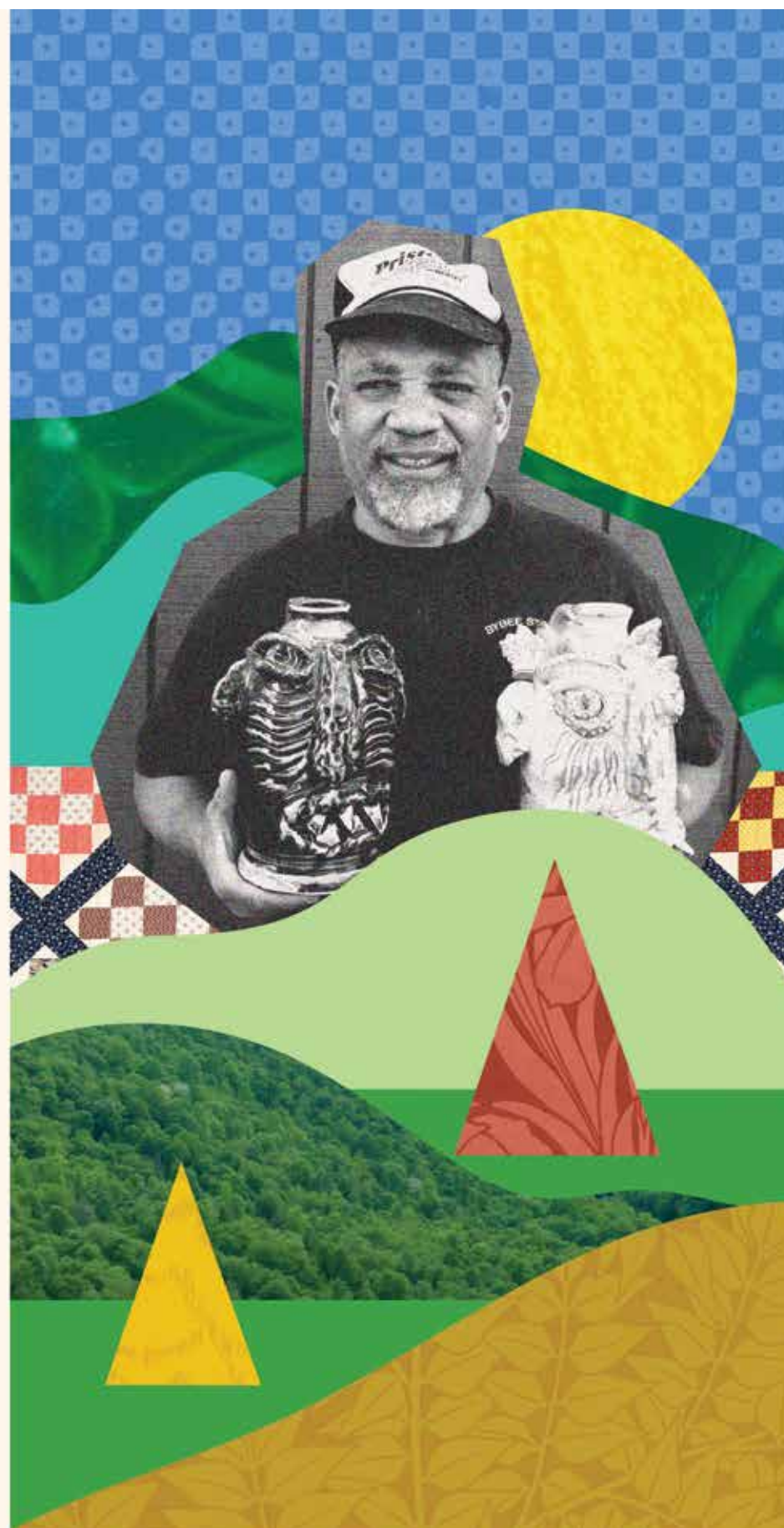


Follow now and never miss an episode of **Inside Appalachia**.

INSIDE
APPALACHIA

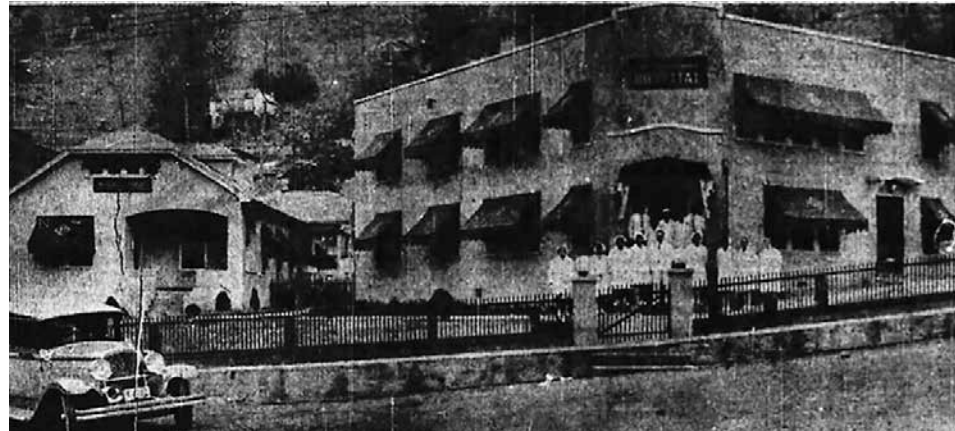


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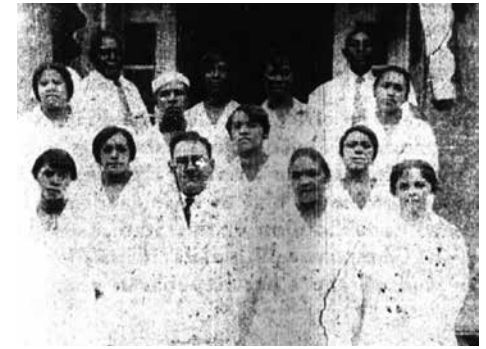




The nurses' home next to the hospital, shown in 2021.



The Henrietta Dismukes Hospital operated from 1929 to 1932.



Dismukes and nursing staff, 1929.

PHOTOS COURTESY MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (MCC) GREAT LAKES

HENRIETTA DISMUKES HOSPITAL

Honoring a McDowell Legacy

By Jen Steiner and Tylah Cline

When Kristin Overstreet first visited Kimball, West Virginia in February 2020 in her new role as Appalachia program coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Great Lakes, she didn't realize she was stumbling into forgotten history.

Overstreet, a former history teacher, found that land recently purchased for MCC's Appalachia Build (formerly known as Sharing With Appalachian People or SWAP) program was once the site of Henrietta Dismukes Hospital and Nurses' Home.

Overstreet first became curious about the history of an old building that she later found was the Nurses' Home. Local residents referred to the area as the old Bralley Apartments, but there was speculation that it once served as a hospital. However, the name of the hospital and any details related to its historical context were unknown until Overstreet began her research. Through her research findings, she has uncovered the life story of Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes, a prominent African American physician who had multiple paramount historical achievements.

Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes was born on Aug. 11, 1889, in Troy, Alabama. His mother was Henrietta Dismukes, and his father is unknown. Dr. Dismukes graduated from Selma University in 1915 and earned his medical degree at Howard University, graduating on June 10, 1921. He graduated with highest honors and won every prize offered during his four years there.

After his time at Howard, he was appointed assistant surgeon at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. for four years. He received the news of Dr. Roscoe Harrison's death and the vacancy left by him at Harrison Memorial Hospital in Kimball, West Virginia. Dr. Dismukes quickly filled this position and moved to Kimball in 1924 to work out of this hospital.



Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes, circa 1921

Shortly after taking over the Harrison Memorial Hospital, Dr. Dismukes was asked to build a bigger hospital by Bluefield Sanitorium of Bluefield, West Virginia. He entered into a contract with Bluefield Sanitarium in which he was promised payment of \$3.50 per day for each African American patient he treated.

Dr. Dismukes named his new hospital Henrietta Dismukes Hospital after his mother who died one month prior to its opening. The Henrietta Dismukes Hospital operated from Aug. 16, 1929, to Aug. 7, 1932. It served African American coal miners and their families in the Kimball-Norfolk area in McDowell County, West Virginia. According to the *Pittsburgh Courier* (1930), the hospital was the largest privately owned African American hospital in the country at the time, with the latest technology and 50 beds for patients. Next door was the nurses' home that served as a residence for the nursing staff.

Bluefield Sanitorium did not follow through with

their promised payment to Dr. Dismukes for his work. He took the hospital as a corporation to court for breach of contract on March 30, 1931, where he demanded \$150,000. As reported by the *Pittsburgh Courier* (1931), Dr. Dismukes was the first African American man in the United States to challenge a white corporation in court for a breach of contract. The court ruled that Dr. Dismukes would be awarded \$4,070 because the jury saw the contract between Dr. Dismukes and Bluefield Sanitorium as not viable.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is working to honor the legacy of Dr. Dismukes and bring attention to the injustices he and other African Americans in the region faced. A local committee was formed and successfully worked with Kimball mayor Adam Gianato on a proclamation declaring Aug. 16 as Dr. Dismukes Day. There are also historical markers being created to honor both Henrietta Dismukes Hospital and Harrison Memorial Hospital. These markers will be at each hospital location in Kimball, West Virginia.

"As an organization committed to anti-racism, Mennonite Central Committee holds this story as a sacred trust," said Eric Kurtz, MCC Great Lakes executive director. "We celebrate the legacy and the incredible resilience of people like Dr. Dismukes, Dr. Harrison and the African American nurses who worked here. At the same time, we lament Jim Crow segregation that prevented Black people from getting treatment in other medical facilities and the racist treatment of Dr. Dismukes that led to the closure of the hospital. We hope that shedding light on this story can lead to a better future for all people."

BOOK REVIEW: BLUEBERRY ICECREAM

Kid's Story Has a Powerful Message

By Jayli Phillips

When I first looked at the book cover, I had no idea this story would be so inspiring. This book is really good and I loved all the illustrations. It's clever because the book uses ice cream characters to talk about discrimination and racism. The book also talks about how it feels to not fit in because of your skin color, your religion, or your weight.

Another reason I like this book is that the main characters, Hope and Annie, looked so different but were best friends. I loved that a black girl with curly hair and a white girl with red hair were friends no matter what they looked like. They didn't discriminate!

I found myself thinking that that this book could really teach kids and even adults about how it feels to be discriminated against or how it feels to be a victim to racism. It could teach that everyone is different and unique and that's what makes our world so fun and exciting.

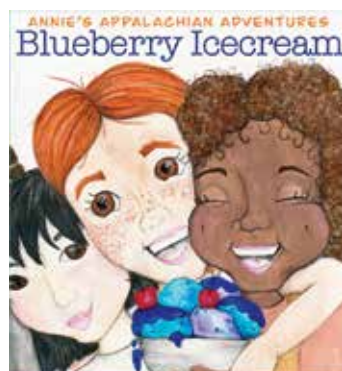
So here is a little summary. First, two best friends, Hope and Annie were eating blueberry ice cream before bed. When they went to sleep Annie had a dream. She dreamt about everyone being the same except for herself and Hope. They were laughed at for being chocolate and vanilla flavored instead of

blueberry flavored, like everyone else. When she woke up Annie and Hope talked to Annie's grandma

about discrimination. Her grandma told them that everyone is different. She also said if everyone was the same, then there would be no spice in the world. She also told them that it is OK to be different from other people and that "Embracing our differences make us grow and try new things."

To be honest, as an 11-year-old Black girl living in the heart of Appalachia, this book really hit close to home. Sometimes,

I look around and see that I'm the only Black person in a place, and it makes me feel alone. This book helped me to remember how beautiful and special we all are. Annie and Hope are both beautiful and special, just the way they are, just like you and I.



Annie's Appalachian Adventures

Blueberry Ice Cream

Published by Curious

Kiddos

www.curiouskid.org



Jayli Phillips is a young BBG contributor.

**WE THINK OUR READERS ARE
"SOME KIND OF WONDERFUL"**

We want to celebrate the many creators that have paved the way for the song and story of Black West Virginians, like native West Virginian John Ellison, who wrote the famous song "Some Kind of Wonderful" and is the creator of this delicious seasoning.



READ ON BBG:
A Some Kind
of Wonderful
Adventure with
John Ellison and
the Carpenter Ants

FACEBOOK SHOUT OUT



From Berkeley County Schools

Join us in celebrating Sydney Bostic from Spring Mills High School!

Sydney competed at the National Junior Science and Humanities Symposium in Albuquerque, New Mexico, securing 3rd place nationwide in the Math and Computer Science Category with her presentation, "Bridging the Gap using EdTech and AI."

NJSHS promotes research and experimentation and supports students' future STEM pursuits through scholarship and recognition.

We would also like to thank Governor Jim Justice for coming out to the Martinsburg Boys and Girls Club and congratulating Sydney!

#BCSInvested #NJSHS24

Dismukes Fundraising Gala



Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes was an African American physician in the early 1900s who founded the largest privately-owned Black hospital in the country for its time. At the opening of his hospital in 1929, Dr. Dismukes held a gala. This current gala will honor his legacy as well as fundraise for the rehabilitation of the Henrietta Dismukes Hospital Nurses Home located in Kimball, West Virginia.

WHEN: October 12th, 6pm-9pm.

WHERE: Jack Caffery Arts and Cultural Center
143 Wyoming St. Welch, WV 24801

PRICE: \$50 a ticket.

ATTIRE: Semi-formal.

Live music by performed by John Ellison and catering from Latin Appalachia at the event.

If you would like to attend the Dismukes Fundraising gala or donate to the Dismukes Project, please contact Kristin Overstreet or Tylah Cline at kristinoverstreet@mcc.org, tylahcline@mcc.org, or call 606-634-4418.

MCC Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) will be hosting the Dismukes Gala.

SOARWV

**WEST VIRGINIA'S LARGEST
OVERDOSE PREVENTION GROUP,
POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS LIKE YOU**



SOARWV.ORG

SOAR WV's goal for West Virginia is reducing overdoses to zero.



Presents

Telling Black Women's Stories in WV

This storytelling endeavor aims to amplify the experiences of Black women who call West Virginia home.

Meet our episode hosts



Crystal Good



Anitra Hamilton



Royce Lyden



Jennifer Wells

Justice & Jubilee is a movement for liberation, rooted in progressive Christianity and born in West Virginia. We work to dismantle systems of oppression, speak truth to power, and move beyond acts of charity to practices of solidarity with people who have been historically excluded by Empire.

ACCIDENTAL
TOMATOES
finding faith beyond the fences



This four-episode series will air in September 2024 on the Justice & Jubilee YouTube Channel and the Accidental Tomatoes podcast.

**Want to share your own story?
Use the QR Code to tell us:**

What does Black joy mean to you?



COMMUNITY PROFILE



The Jefferson County Board of Education is now in the building that once housed the historic high school.

Jefferson County Alumni Speak

In 1866, Page Jackson High School became the first publicly funded school for African Americans students in Jefferson County.

The school was symbolic for African Americans before integration.

Story and photos by Vanta E. Coda III

“It was like a family when we got off the bus,” said Delores Jackson, Page Jackson Alumni President, reminiscing with other Page Jackson alumni at the site of their former school. Before school integration in Jefferson County in 1966, Page Jackson High School was one of the last black schools in West Virginia. Jefferson County stalled integration of their schools for 11 years — from 1955 through 1966.



Delores Jackson Foster
Page Jackson High School Class of 1955

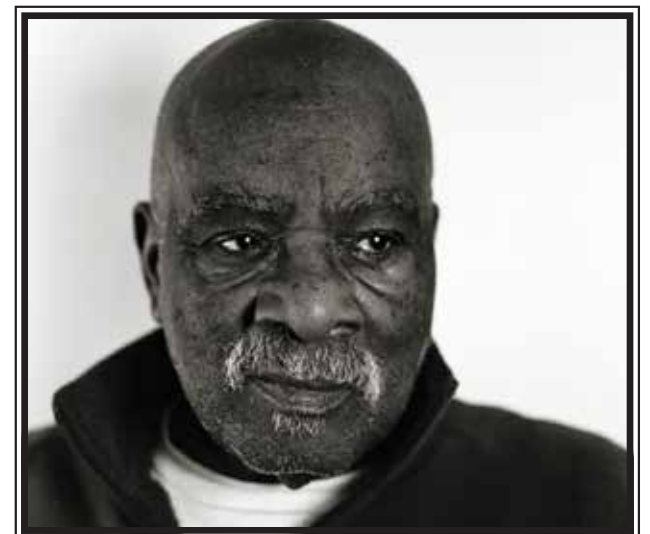
the education and the kids,” said Delores, “separate is never equal and even if a school has the facilities equal to another school, it’s just not the same.”

Delores is the President of the Page Jackson Alumni Association; she graduated in 1955 and was a teacher at the high school before she moved to New Jersey in 1961. She eventually moved back to Harpers Ferry, where now she and her brother Daniel, who is also an alumnus, started making their voices known in a community with a troubled past of segregation.

“I was very fortunate to be raised into the Page Jackson family when I was growing up, but that family atmosphere and comradery all went away as soon as I went to Shepherdstown College,” said Delores. “It was like I was being thrown to the fire every single day at that college, but with the guidance I was given growing up I persevered and pushed my way through the racist vulgarity that was thrown in my face every day.”

Before integration in the late ’60s, Jefferson County was a hotbed of segregation throughout the community, especially in Charles Town. “I remember the days where we couldn’t go to the front of the restaurant in Charles Town and we had to go around back to pick up our food, but just down the road in Harpers Ferry we were allowed to walk in the front door,” said Jackson. “I believe that I wouldn’t be the person I am today without the influence and teaching I learned from the Harpers Ferry community and Page Jackson.”

graduated in 1959, accounts for the isolation Black student-athletes felt outside of their school grounds not only in Jefferson County but the entire eastern panhandle of West Virginia. “We played very few teams over the years in the eastern panhandle, we mainly would play teams that were near D.C or in Virginia or Maryland,” said Daniel. “I do remember though playing Shannodale, and they were extremely nasty towards us, I don’t think there was any sort’ve quiet time during that game, if it wasn’t a cheap elbow that you got hit with it was a slur.”



Daniel D. Jackson Jr., Page Jackson High School Class of 1959

“I’m not sure they knew what was happening to

Delores’s Brother Daniel Jackson Jr., who

Continued on page 36

PAGE JACKSON from page 35

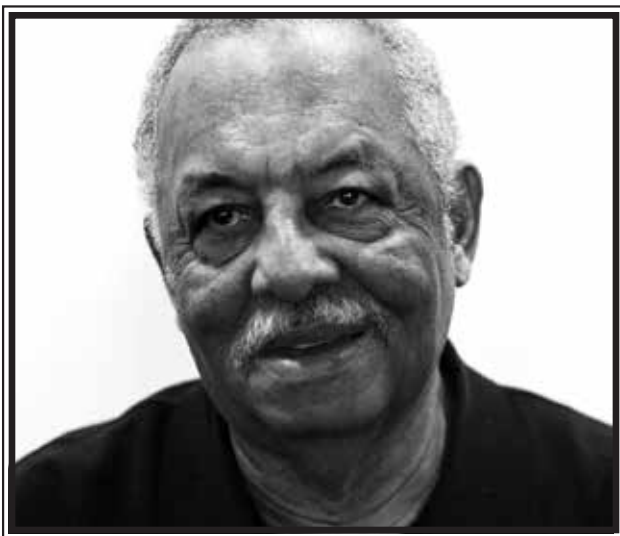
Since Charles Town had two Black schools that were right near white schools in the area, many Black students taking the bus to Page Jackson High School or Eagle Avenue Elementary had to go past white schools.

“It was an experience knowing that you had to drive past the white school, before coming to the black school,” said Daniel, “but we learned how to take it all in stride.”

And stride they did, since the last graduation class in 1966, alumni have banded together to create an account of experiences they faced during their schooling— in hopes of allowing this part of West Virginia history not to be easily forgotten.

Many of the Page Jackson High School alumni who still live in Jefferson County have gone on to be public figures in the community. Larry Togans, who once was the Jefferson County School Board President, still reflects upon his school years and his teacher and coach, Jim Taylor, who made an impact on him as a student.

“Jim Taylor was a big part of my experience at Page Jackson,” said Togans, “he took us all under his wing and took us through each year until we graduated, either it be coaching or in the classroom.”



Larry Togans
Page Jackson High School Class of 1965

For a lot of students that went to Page Jackson High School the things that they remember the most were the teachers and the many life lessons they gained from them.

“Our teachers taught us to cherish what you got, and we took advantage of what they gave us,” said Daniel, “We got doctors, lawyers, veterinarians, and

all kinds of scholars that live here who went to Page Jackson and who are what they are now because of our teachers.”

Many students stayed behind while other students integrated into the late Charles Town High School. Alumni such as Jeanette Dozier stayed until the last graduating class in 1966.

“It was always different every year getting to the end, every year the classes would be much smaller, because of kids integrating into Charles Town High School,” said Jeanette, “even though people were leaving it seemed like we weren’t missing out on a lot at Charles Town High School and we didn’t feel a need to leave.”



Jeanette Dozier
Page Jackson High School Class of 1965

Just like their teachers who taught the Page Jackson alumni, generations of Black West Virginians will look for the same guidance from Black community elders— on ways to combat present-day racism.

“I never had that sense of family that they had,” said Jeanette’s daughter, Chrischele, “but I learned from their upbringing through these schools and I was very fortunate to have them as my parents for many reasons.”

Even though the fight against racism might seem a little bit less than what it was when Jeanette attended school Chrischele says that is simply not the case.

“Whenever I walked into a new classroom it didn’t matter what year or class, I could always feel eyes on me,” said Chrischele. “Even though I would take classes in AP programs, I would feel like I would be held aside from my other classmates because I was the only Black in the class. It wasn’t until I went to Westfield State, a black college, did I understand the connection that my mother had with her classmates at Page Jackson.”

Believing in the fact that racism never really goes away, it only changes for every generation, Chrischele has made it a priority to not only tell the stories of what her mother experienced at Page Jackson High School but to also tell her accounts of systematic racism in the school systems. She tells these to her daughter, Brogan, in hopes of keeping the history of what the alumni went through alive for future generations of Black West Virginians.

“Their stories gave me strength because I would say if they could do it then the least I can do is be successful,” said Dozier, “my daughter respects their journey and my journey doesn’t compare to theirs but we can learn from it.”



Sylvia Gregory,
Page Jackson High School Class of 1959



The Hope Dealer Project

is a grassroots recovery advocacy organization in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia Support recovery and spread awareness and hope with a Go Purple tshirt.

 Follow the The Hope Dealer Project for ordering information

hopedealerprojectwv.org

ENTERTAINMENT

Sumthin' Good Soul Food: Laughter and Culinary Delight in Our Community

By Leeshia Lee

Sumthin' Good Soul (SGS) food provides our area with the perfect combination of laughter and good food. The "sumthin' to do" we have all been waiting for is here. It's a relaxing, Black family-owned and operated restaurant in South Charleston, West Virginia. I had the pleasure of attending a comedy show at the restaurant in April with Black by God, one of the event sponsors.

The SGS hospitality was no joke. I was greeted kindly at the door, and as I stepped inside, I saw a room full of tables filled with couples, siblings, coworkers, and families. Everyone else was probably as grateful as I was to have entertainment locally instead of driving out of town, for the experience was a pleasure. I was immediately impressed with the overall vibe; the food smelled great, the music provided by DJ Big L captivated the crowd as many nodded or snapped their fingers to the beat, and the patrons anticipated something funny.

Sumthin' Good Soul Food has been in business since 2017. The venue has managed to book some highly talented comedians. As a family business, one of the owners, Jay Harris, says "we all need to laugh — laugh at each other and laugh at ourselves." Hosting comedy shows at his establishment infuses the community with a much-needed dose of entertainment and joy. Watching people laugh and smile was nostalgic.

The eatery became a vibrant hub of laughter and connection as the audience laughed at relatable jokes from comedians. The crowd was a constant part of the show, as the main headliner frequently used audience members as comedic material. He even turned on the DJ. Comedian Steve Brown delivered quite a show on MacCorkle Avenue that showed exactly why he was able to appear on Bad Boys of Comedy, BET's Comic View, HBO's Def Comedy Jam, and Martin Lawrence's 1st Amendment Stand Up!

By blending delectable soul food with the raw, live energy of stand-up comedy, the restaurant has crafted a one-of-a-kind, inclusive atmosphere that unites people from all walks of life and adds a new layer to our social scene. The audience was a vibrant mix of all demographics, but the common thread of a shared sense of humor prevailed.



PHOTO BY LEESHIA LEE



By blending delectable soul food with the raw, live energy of stand-up comedy, Sumthin' Good Soul Food has crafted a one-of-a-kind, inclusive atmosphere that unites people from all walks of life and adds a new layer to Charleston's social scene.

The establishment also serves as a platform for local musicians, hosting live shows that further enrich our cultural fabric. Sumthin' Good is not just great for the soul, it's a testament to the vibrant local talent and a refreshing and entertaining option for all to enjoy.

Sumthin' Good Soul Food
4837 MacCorkle Ave SW,
South Charleston, WV 25309
(304) 768-0968

sumthingoodsoulfood.com

Follow them on Facebook and Twitter

Black By God proudly announces the launch of the Black on the Map project!

Please share information about your Black-owned business or any Black-owned businesses in your town. BBG is creating an online and print directory to support Black businesses across West Virginia.

Your participation is vital to our mission of shining a spotlight on exceptional Black-owned businesses in Kanawha, Fayette, Berkeley, Cabell, Jefferson, Marion, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, and Raleigh counties.

From catering to software design, we're on a mission to showcase the brilliance of Black entrepreneurship. We are partnering with Jamar Dunnigan from Dunn It Again Creative to highlight Black businesses, so keep an eye out for Mr. Wild and Wonderful in your neighborhood.

Let's work together to put Black businesses on the map!

FILL OUT THE FORM ON BBG



BBG THE WEST VIRGINIAN

BBG BLACK OWNED BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Black By God is creating a directory that will list businesses and entrepreneurs that identify as BLACK OWNED in West Virginia.

By creating this list we hope that the Black dollar can circulate back into our communities.

This is a crowd sourced document and listing is on the honor system. BBG will publish the Black Business Directory and Black business map in June, 2024 and this will be a living document open to additions, edits and updates.

~ BBG
info@blackbygod.org



Meet Jamar Dunnigan

Introducing Jamar Dunnigan, the vibrant mind behind "The Wild and Wonderful Report." Known as @WildandWonderful, Jamar is the creative force driving this exciting venture, covering everything from Black Lifestyle, Arts, Culinary, Culture, to Fashion — affectionately termed BLACC AF. With a playful play on words, Jamar's mission is to ignite conversations and instill a sense of pride in being Black, embracing every aspect of culture and history.

"I AM BLACC AF," declares Jamar, ready to dive into the rich tapestry of stories surrounding Black-owned businesses in and around West Virginia. Jamar eagerly anticipates connecting with audiences and sharing the vibrant narratives that define Black excellence. Stay tuned for an exploration of culture, creativity, and community through the lens of "The Wild and Wonderful Report!"

Read the first Black on the Map story about Phat Daddy's on Da Tracks on page 18

ENTERTAINMENT

Experience the Rich History African Americans Have with Baseball

The purpose of African American Heritage Nights is to promote cultural sensitivity and awareness of different cultures. Expose children in the Kanawha Valley to the rich history of African Americans and baseball as a long-term positive impact on their lives. African American Heritage Night began as a casual conversation between friends and has evolved significantly over the years. In 2023, there were 4,218 spectators in attendance, the most on a Tuesday night at the ballpark. This year, we're celebrating African American Heritage Night's 5th anniversary with flare and grandeur by extending it to a two-day event.

The first evening is planned as an After 5 Affair, which will take place at the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association (WVSSPA) building, 1610 Washington St. E., Charleston, WV 25311, on Monday, Aug. 5, starting at 6 p.m. Tickets are required for this event, which features special guest speaker Roberto Clemente Jr. and a musical performance by Maya Belardo, the Princess of Jazz. Chef Paul, a two-time finalist for the James Beard award, will prepare the menu. Meet-and-greet opportunities with Dirty Birds players and Toni Stone items will be live auctioned.

Our Family Night is scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 6 at the Go Mart Ballpark, 601 Morris St. Charleston, WV, 25301. Gates open at 5 p.m. You can get free tickets at the Dirty Birds/African American Heritage Night table at Multifest and participating locations. This year's headline performance is no other than Kida the Great. Kida has graced the stage and screens alongside industry heavyweights such as Offset, Usher, Chris Brown, Busta Rhymes, and many more. Recently wrapping up a 39-worldwide tour with Kendrick Lamar. In addition, there will be a commemorative ticket giveaway for the AAHN's fifth anniversary, local talent performances, family-friendly activities, and food vouchers for the first 600 children.

We have more information and tickets for the After 5 Affair available on our website, aaheritagenight.com.

AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE NIGHT 5TH ANNIVERSARY

Aug. 6
Kida the Great



Maya Belardo
Princess of Jazz



Aug. 5

Roberto
Clemente Jr.



Website <https://aaheritagenight.com/>

Like, Share and
Follow Us On
Facebook



Family Fun
for
Everyone!



Summer

FUN IN WEST VIRGINIA



Juneteenth celebrations
listed on page 5

❖ 20th FestivALL

A City Becomes a Work of Art
June 14-23

Downtown Charleston and
nearby venues

Many events free

Ten days of art, music, theater
and dance.

festivalcharleston.com



❖ D-1 Nation Presents The Blue And Gold In Between The Lines Tournament In Between The Lines All-Star Showcase Event

June 14-16

Noon – 7 p.m.

Nitro High School, Nitro

Free

Football showcase and
community event with pool party,
vendors, food, inflatables, Fun
Fitness Bus and facepainting

❖ Art at Broadway Park

Inner Sunshine Arts

Saturday, June 29

2-5 pm

2024 Broadway Park, Beckley

Free

Inner Sunshine Arts, a youth arts
initiative based in Beckley hosts
its first event. Artists and parents
can drop in from 2-5 p.m. and
work on a fun take home craft

Inner Sunshine Arts on Facebook



❖ **The Jungle 3 on 3 Basketball and Community Event**

June 30

Time: Noon – 7pm

2nd Avenue Center

1411 2nd. Ave, Charleston

Free

A one-day 3 on 3 basketball tournament with local live performances, community resources and giveaways
Facebook Event



❖ **4th annual Bill Withers Festival**

July 6

All day

Beckley Intermodal Gateway
501 Neville St., Beckley

Free entry and all ages event.
Celebrating all things Bill Withers to help raise money

to complete the sculpture that will be placed in downtown Beckley.

raleighcountyevents.com

❖ **The Norman Jordan African American Arts & Heritage Academy**

July 8-13

WV State University, Institute

The Norman Jordan African American Arts & Heritage Academy offers students 12-18 years of age, one week of concentrated study in the artistic discipline of their choice. Workshops focus on vocal music, instrumental music (strings, horns, percussion including steel drums), theater, dance, creative writing (including hip-hop and basic song writing), visual arts, and arts technology. Classes are supplemented by historical and cultural knowledge associated with students chosen art form. The Norman Jordan African American Arts

and Heritage Academy
normanjordanaaaha.com



❖ **Charleston Sternwheel Regatta**

July 3-6

Haddad Riverfront Park in Charleston

Free

Wednesday, July 3 is Reggae artist Shaggy; Saturday, July 6 Love the 90's Tour featuring Treach from Naughty By Nature, Young MC, Tone Loc and Vanilla Ice

charlestonregatta.com

❖ **Our Kids Count Summer Camp**

Sponsored by The JC Parent Hub

Continued on page 42



SUMMER FUN from page 41

July 29-31

10 a.m. – 2 p.m

Wainwright Baptist Church in Charles Town

Free

Grades K012; three days of Black history, Black music, arts and crafts, games, STEM activities and more



❖ **34th Multifest**

Thursday, Aug. 1 – Sunday Aug. 4

Haddad Riverfront Park Charleston

Free

Four days filled with performances, vendors, kids zone, food and live national acts such as Ginuwine, Monie Love, The Rude Boys, Petey Pablo, Brian McKnight, Kelontae Gavin, Pall Wall and the Original Lakeside Band.

multifestwv.org

❖ **5th Annual African American Heritage Nights**

After 5 Affair, Monday, Aug. 5 6 p.m.

West Virginia School Service Personnel Association building,

1610 Washington St. E., Charleston

Family Night, Tuesday, Aug. 6

Go Mart Ballpark

601 Morris St., Charleston Gates open at 5 p.m.

See story on page 39

THE JC BTA PARENT HUB PRESENTS:

FREE!

Our Kids count

SUMMER CAMP

GRADES K-12

MORNING SNACK & LUNCH PROVIDED!

10AM - 2PM

JULY 29 - 31, 2024

@ WAINWRIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH!
413 W Avis St. Charles Town, WV 25414

3 DAYS OF:

- Black History
- Arts & Crafts
- Math/Reading/Phonics
- Afrocentric Folk Tales
- Leadership skills
- Hands-on/Minds-on Learning
- Knowledge of Self
- Black Music/Dance
- Indoor/Outdoor games
- STEM activities
- Togetherness!

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

Scan QR code to Register!

FREE!

SPONSORED BY THE JEFFERSON COUNTY BLACK TEACHER ASSOCIATION PARENT HUB



❖ **State Fair of West Virginia**

Aug. 8-17

West Virginia State Fair Grounds, Lewisburg

Save the dates for these fall events

❖ **West Virginia Black Heritage Festival**

Sept. 6-8

Clarksburg

Free

Annual community event with national acts and vendors

❖ **Bluefield State University Homecoming (HBCU)**

Sept. 28

Bluefield

❖ **WV State University Homecoming (HBCU)**

October 12

Institute

❖ **Dismukes Fundraising Gala**

October 12

6-9 p.m.

Jack Caffery Arts and Cultural Center

143 Wyoming St., Welch

\$50 a ticket.

Live music by performed by John Ellison and catering from Latin Appalachia.

See story on pages 31,33



❖ **Tina — The Tina Turner Musical**

Wednesay, Oct. 16

7:30 p.m.

The Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences, Charleston

theclaycenter.org

Have an event you'd like to advertise on the Black by God website?

Crystal@BlackByGod.org

BBG ANNOUNCEMENTS

BBG Announcements feature events, happenings, good news, and information. This follows the tradition of old print newspapers that announced guests, victories, comings and goings, and everyday happenings. Today, we carry on this tradition by printing these updates and keeping our community informed and connected. BBG welcomes you to join us in celebrating our community. If you are interested in a listing, please get in touch with us.

DR. T FORD AHMED LEADS HISTORIC MURAL CELEBRATION

Professor Emeritus (WVSU) Dr. T Ford Ahmed of the hamlet known as Ward, a town that was, near Rand, West Virginia, takes the helm of a groundbreaking event for The Mount Zion Black Cultural Center on June 19 at 6 p.m., located at 32 West Carpenter Street in Athens, Ohio. The event will unveil a mural, a tribute to ancestral heritage, that promises to reshape the narrative of history through public art, commemorating the journey from the church's 1872 inception to the late 1990s, highlighting the revered "Gospel Voices of Faith" choir.

Fueled by a generous \$7.3 million grant from Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's Appalachian Downtown and Destination Funds, this endeavor underscores a commitment to preserving cultural legacy. Notable dignitaries including Mayor Steve Patterson, University President Dr. Lori Steward Gonzalez, and Director of the Governor's Office of Appalachia, John Carey, Poet/publisher Crystal Good, will lend their presence to this momentous occasion, joined by former Mount Zion member Rev. Kimberly Gonxhe.

Book Release



Gladine Bruer formerly of South Charleston, West Virginia now of Houston, Texas has released her second book, *Through the Eyes of My Joy* gladinereflections.com/

Race to End Racism

On April 27, 2024, YWCA Charleston sponsored its 8th annual Race to End Racism on Kanawha Boulevard, the historic Luna Park neighborhood and Magic Island. More than 700 people registered to walk, run and to show support for racial equity

and the YWCA Charleston's Racial Equity & Inclusion work. More than 60 community partners sponsored, donated and volunteered for the event. The Black National Anthem opened the event, and following the race, the audience enjoyed performances by a Japanese storyteller and the Shiloh Baptist Church Children's Choir.

More than 300 people joined a cultural celebration during the race packet pickup event on Thursday, April 24. Participants enjoyed Caribbean food, learned how to play Mancala, played international flag trivia, got a henna tattoo and learned how to write their names in Japanese.

As race was wrapping up, word came to the community that a hate group was marching in town. Organizers quickly finished the event and made sure that all volunteers, partners and performers were safely on their way.

Hate Group Shock to Many

The appearance of a hate group that day in Charleston was a shock to many and in stark contrast to the celebration and harmony that was demonstrated during the Race to End Racism.



YWCA of Charleston's CEO Jennifer Goddard and Director of Racial Equity & Inclusion Programs Shante Ellis

Community Response to Hate

Following the events of April 27, 2024, community conversations were facilitated. The YWCA received supportive comments, calls and calls for action. As a result, on May 13, "A Community Response to Hate" forum was held in collaboration with many community partners.

The goal was to bring diverse community leaders together so that the community could understand what happened, address questions directly to community leaders about the response by law enforcement, and to learn more about what can be done to recognize hate groups.

More than 60 people participated in the forum. Kitty Dooley, The Dooley Law Firm and NAACP of Charleston facilitated the forum. The panelists were:

The Honorable William Thompson, United States Attorney Southern District of West Virginia,
The Honorable Amy Goodwin, Mayor, City of Charleston
Tony Rausa, Supervisory Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation
Chief Scott Dempsey, Charleston Police Department
Delegate Mike Pushkin, West Virginia House of Delegates
Reverend Marlon Collins, Shiloh Baptist Church

NOTICE

At BBG, we celebrate the significance of the Black press in honoring Black lives. If you're looking to publish an obituary, please submit to Black by God. Verification from a funeral home is required.

ANNOUNCEMENTS from page 43

New WV Hip Hop Album



New album from West Virginia Hip Hop artist MONSTALUNG titles An Appalachian Hip Hop Story Pt.1 was released June 10.

Monstalung calls his music Appalachian Boom Bap Hip Hop. The style is rooted from summers in the late 1970s when his cousins from New York would visit him in Ansted, West Virginia and teach him about the different elements of hip hop culture that was happening in the city.

Monstalung has been creating and releasing hip hop music as a producer, songwriter, and independent label for 35 years. You may know him from songs he has produced and co written over the years for his Soundvizion crew which includes artists like 6'6 240 & 304 Reconz, and songs such as the WVU football anthem "The Gold and Blue," and West Virginia music anthems such as "WV Clap, Welcome to WV, Knock Knock, and his most successful song "Fresh Like Dougie."

This is MONSTALUNG first vocal album since 1991, during the 2000's he concentrated on producing. It is available at monstalung.com

BLACK BY GOD CONCERT TICKET GIVEAWAY CONTEST

Black By God is hosting a contest with the prize of two tickets to Gardenn's Charleston concert on June 29. To participate, keep an eye out on BBG's Instagram page (@blackbygodwv) for a post about

the giveaway. Individuals will be able to enter for a chance to win by commenting on the post with the name of their favorite Black-owned business. BBG will choose one winner at random and direct message them for contact information to exchange the tickets!

Pop Artist Gardenn says she is "gearing up for a huge summer" and looks forward to what big moves will come next.

Born and raised in Charleston, Gardenn is a talented music artist, songwriter, and creator. Displaying her unique style on social media, she is often seen embracing neon pink, purple and blue hairstyles, nails, and outfits. Through her lyrics, voice and signature style, Gardenn is an example of the artistry that comes out of the Mountain State.



Also known as the "Capital City Pop Princess," she describes her new single "Nutritious" as "another high vibrational, energetic song for the books." Gardenn kicked off her tour in her hometown at Uncle Woody's "15th Annual Aries Do It Better All White Affair" in March. Since its release on March 26th, Gardenn has been touring the cities of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Athens, Ohio; Parkersburg and Morgantown, West Virginia.

"Nutritious" can be heard on the "Woody Wood Radio Show" which airs on WRVZ 107.3 "The Beat" daily at 3pm. It is also available on Amazon Music, Apple Music, Deezer, Pandora, Spotify, and Tidal. More information about future show dates and single releases can be found by following @Gardenn._ on all platforms (Instagram, Facebook).

— Amanda Barber



Milestones



KJ Chadband and Savannah Grant
South Charleston High School Prom 2024



A FIRST



Kyra Poore with her mother Taneisha Poore.
Kyra is the first Black valedictorian at
Charleston's Capital High School.

Wedding Bells



Justin and Krystle Adams
May 4th, 2024
Maranatha Fellowship Church
St. Albans

The wedding party, above, and the cutest
flower girl and ring bearer.
Ever.



HONORS



Zychus Jermaine Dobbs
Fairmont Senior High School, High Honors
Graduate
Attending Fairmont State University majoring
in Exercise Science as a path to Physical
Therapy

Prom Queen



Elliana Mosby
Martinsburg High School prom queen,
Summa Cum Laude and top 10 of her class
radiates joy and elegance.



Lariah Jackson, 14, is now a proud member of
South Charleston High School after excelling
in cheerleading and track South Charleston
Middle School.

CLASSIFIED

Reporters
Wanted

CONTACT

CRYSTAL@BLACKBYGOD.ORG

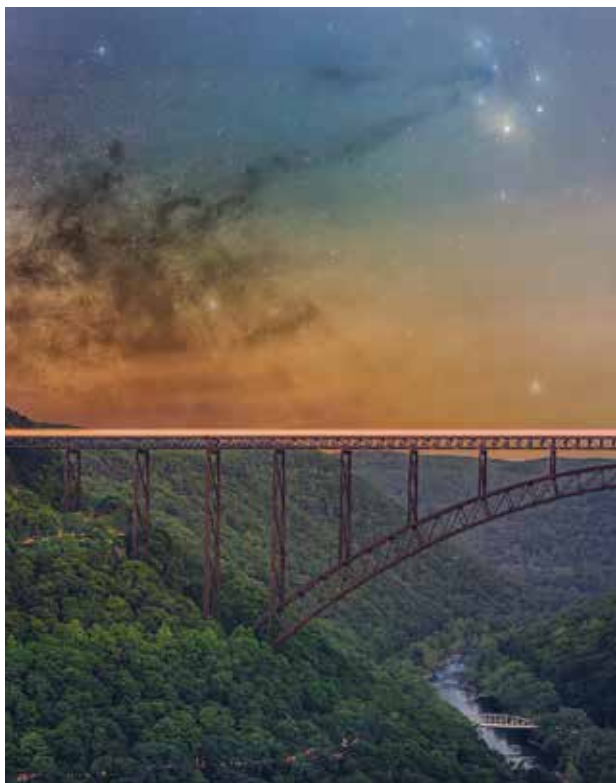


PHOTO BY PIA AND SHAWN LONG

Embracing and Preserving Appalachia's Dark Skies

West Virginia natives Pia and Shawn Long, George Washington high school sweethearts who married and left West Virginia after the West Virginia water crisis, to Denver, Colorado.

Influenced by the natural beauty of West Virginia, Pia, a full spectrum doula and Shawn share a passion for the night skies. "Growing up in West Virginia, we always admired the stars," said Pia Long. This dynamic couple travels the country in their Airstream camper.

We are excited to have them as our BBG Dark Skies Reporters and look forward to their dark sky photos and adventures!

BBG MORE FASHIONABLE

Our one-stop destination for BBG logo merchandise! When you shop with us, you get stylish and trendy products and contribute to a meaningful cause. Every purchase you make goes towards supporting BlackByGod., an independent Black-owned news and storytelling organization that centers Black voices in West Virginia and central Appalachia.

SHOP BBG



Help us keep publishing stories that center Black stories and life in all their manifestations.

Your support helps keep our content free and innovative.



Mama Knows Best



Appalachian Gold is proud to offer your family Mama's Sauce, featuring hints of tomato, lemon and spice.

Read more about our sauce with a story & order yours today!

APPALACHIANGOLD.COM





WE THANK YOU!



Community
Education
Group

30
YEARS

CEG is committed to addressing the syndemic of HIV, virtual hepatitis, and substance use disorder in West Virginia and across the Appalachia Region. Thank you to everyone who joined us at The Syndemic Summit in May 2024.

See you next year!

Scan the QR code to follow us on our socials!

