

# THE Anchor NEWS

FREE! | JANUARY 2024 VOLUME 21, NUMBER 6

## A MAN'S WORLD? VIVIANA RUIZ-SMITH PROVES IT'S NOT

Known for her business genius and "no non-sense" mentality, Viviana Ruiz-Smith has three businesses, Texas Star Properties LLC, Heart of Waco Home LLC, and Castle Heights Bijoux Event Center LLC. Texas Star Properties LLC is a five-star property management company, created in 2001 and has been in business for 22 years.

During that time, her husband, Dr. Randy Smith, worked long hours at the hospital, but he did not want his wife burdened with that same responsibility, so long before anyone heard of the "work from home" concept, Viviana worked from home, learning all she could about investments and real estate. Over the years she acquired both residential and commercial properties, renovating them, and then leasing them. Viviana came face-to-face with many properties that were excellent but in the process of her searches, she found a commercial building that was not up to par, so she bought it.

After she renovated the



VIVIANA RUIZ-SMITH

building, it became one of Waco's most beautiful event/wedding venues; Castle Heights Bijoux Event Center LLC was established in 2014. In January 2024, the business will celebrate 10 years. Over the years, families and friends have made precious memories of weddings, quinceañeras, anniversaries, corporate parties, family reunions, birthdays, Baylor fraternity and sorority parties, and much more. Five years ago, when one of

the Smiths' historic homes was not renting well, they created a short-term vacation rental. Thus, the Heart of Waco Home LLC was established in 2019, and this 100-year-old downtown house became a five-star hospitality destination for Waco visitors.

"We enjoyed hosting our guests so much that we added four more vacation homes to our business. Now we have six, five star vacation homes," said Viviana.

The Sturgis Inn is a 136-year-old Texas State Historical home, built in 1887. The Historic Landmark Preservation Commission awarded Texas Star Properties LLC with a City of Waco Historic Landmark Award in recognition of Sustained Excellence.

Viviana Ruiz-Smith received her bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas, and a Master of Science degree in Counseling Psychology and Marriage Family Therapy from

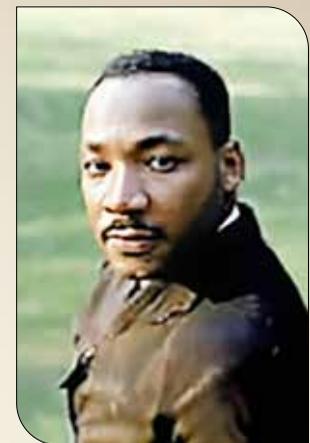
SEE SMITH, PG. 2

## ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. PEACE MARCH AND OBSERVANCE

Waco, Texas- The Waco chapters of Zeta Phi Beta and Phi Beta Sigma invite the Waco community to join their Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Peace March and Observance. Attendees will meet on January 15th at 8:30 AM in Indian Spring Park (101 N University Parks Drive). Beginning at 9:30 AM, the march will cross the Suspension Bridge marching down to Bridge Street where appointed speakers will honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. After the march, there will be a free lunch and an educational program with various community entertainers taking place at the Multi Purpose Center (1020 Elm Ave).

For more information about this free event: Call 254-265-8604 or Email [duzsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:duzsecretary@gmail.com)

About Dr. King: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister and social activist who played a key role in the American civil rights movement from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968. He was born on January 15,



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, as Michael King Jr. and later changed his name to Martin Luther King Jr. in honor of the German Protestant religious leader. King led the civil rights movement in the United States, which aimed to end the legal segregation of African Americans in the South and other parts of the country. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his efforts in promoting nonviolent tactics to achieve civil rights

## FORMER KILLEEN RESIDENT LAUNCHES WORLDWIDE MINISTRY

Officially recognized by the State of Texas in August 2023, Fanny Minnitt World Ministries, Inc. later received 501(c)3 status in October. The Board of Directors include Fanny Minnitt, Founder/President, Theodore Minnitt Jr., Treasure, Violetta Butler, Secretary, Wanda Gunter, Historian, and Earlene Franklin, Health Consultant.

The ministry was organized to teach and preach the gospel to all people, conduct evangelistic and humanitarian outreaches, license and ordain ministers of the gospel,



FAN MINNITT

and engage in activities that are necessary, suitable, and convenient for the accomplishment of that purpose.

The Hebrews 11:1 - (11-day) Launch Celebration is planned for January 11 through January 21. The ministry starts its social media launch with a video called, "Are You Wondering in An Internet Wilderness?"

"Then, we discuss a few of the Fruits of the Spirit, and our Avatars share a message about self-control. We also ask additional thought-pro-

voking questions throughout the 10-day online period and wrap up with an in-person celebration on the 11th day. The launch and what we asked you to plant evolved from Hebrews 11:1. We have stepped out on, NOW faith."

Minnitt says "The ministry is based on the powerful words of Hebrews 11:1, which say now faith is at the core of our hopes and the proof of the unseen. Additionally, Hebrews 11:6 teaches us that 'without

faith, it is impossible to please God,' emphasizing the significance of believing in His existence and diligently seeking after him."

Minnitt kindly invites you to consider supporting the ministry with a cheerful donation/seed of \$111 or more to help the ministry accomplish its purpose. "Your contribu-

SEE MINNITT, PG. 5

**J.L. & LINDA CRAWFORD**

A co-owner of The Anchor News, J.L. Crawford is the director of operations for the paper. He is also an instructor at McLennan Community College, a Bible teacher, and a LegalShield Senior Manager. Linda Crawford is co-owner and editor of The Anchor News. She is an instructor at McLennan Community College, a Bible teacher and a conference, workshop and motivational speaker.

## BUILDING CONNECTIONS: NAVIGATING PARENTHOOD WITHOUT ISOLATION

BY LACRESHA DUFFEY

Entering parenthood is an exhilarating yet challenging journey, often accompanied by unexpected hurdles, with isolation being a prevalent concern. Despite meticulous planning for pregnancy and childbirth, the demanding first years of parenting infants and young children can catch new parents off guard. Recent insights from postpartum doulas shed light on the widespread issue of isolation, prompting a search for accessible and diverse support systems.

The experiences of most families underlining the common thread of isolation due to factors like relocation, limited local connections, and a lack of familial support underscore the need for a more widespread and accessible support system. While postpartum doulas have played a crucial role in providing as-

sistance, it's evident that a broader support network is necessary.

Recognizing the importance of a supportive community during this challenging phase, a group of parents in a similar age range initiated a dinner exchange. Making attendance optional and eliminating any cleaning obligations, the exchange aimed to foster flexibility, connections between families, and a supportive environment to alleviate the challenges of parenting alone.

However, accessing initiatives like a dinner exchange, mom support groups, or baby yoga classes can be overwhelming for new parents. The isolation issue is not only prevalent among new parents but extends into the broader cultural context. In traditional societies, built-in supports and structures exist, contrasting with the current scenario where parents are required to forge their own path. The lack of a systematic support system contributes to a significant happiness gap reported among parents in comparison to their childless counterparts, particularly in the United States.

While policy changes, such as paid leave and extended job protection, could ease the transition for new families, there's also a need for a cultural shift. The current emphasis on independence and resilience sometimes hinders the acknowledgment of the challenges new parents face.

In the meantime, here are some practical tips to help new parents stay connected and combat isolation:

1. Find a Parenting Buddy:

**LACRESHA DUFFEY**

Connect with another parent who shares similar interests, whether it's running, shopping, or exploring local trails. Share responsibilities, such as taking turns running or babysitting.

2. Brave Breastfeeding in Public: If nervous about breastfeeding in public, find a friend to accompany you, or choose locations with comfortable dressing rooms for privacy.

3. Consider Postpartum Doula Support: If in need of personalized assistance and guidance, hiring a postpartum

doula can be a valuable resource.

4. Host a Potluck: For social and extroverted parents feeling lonely at home, organize a potluck gathering. Make it easy by having everyone bring something to share.

5. Get Comfortable Asking for Help: In a culture with limited support systems, asking for help is crucial. Most offers of assistance are sincere, and accepting help may even contribute to changing the culture to one where mutual care is prioritized.

Community Doulas of Waco recognizes the challenges new parents face and offers free postpartum doula support to clients in the Waco area. To qualify, clients must be receiving government assistance and register between 27-34 weeks pregnant. Contact the office at 254-307-0377 or email [info@comdoulaswaco.org](mailto:info@comdoulaswaco.org). For additional information, visit [www.comdoulaswaco.org](http://www.comdoulaswaco.org).

In the journey of parenthood, let's strive to create a community where mutual care and support are not just encouraged but embraced, making the path a little less lonely for all new parents.

## FROM THE CRAWFORDS

Our family lost so many loved ones toward the end of 2023. For us, life has changed as we know it forever, but God is yet our protector and our counselor.

What about you?

Several articles this month are dedicated to last year, 2023 in Review.

Enjoy the first issue of 2024.

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## SMITH | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas. She has been married to Dr. Randall Smith for 33 years and has one son, Matthew Smith.

Texas Star Properties LLC (long-term rentals), Heart of Waco Home LLC (short-term rentals), and Casitle Heights

Bijoux Event Center LLC, all family businesses, are thriving. And in today's economy, that fact may come as a surprise to many. Although she has not been a practicing family counselor for years, she still uses her degree in many facets of her business.

# THE *Anchor* NEWS

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### PURPOSE

The Anchor News, dedicated to serving the community and surrounding areas, focuses on positive news and accomplishments of minorities.

### POLICY

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ials reflect the opinions of the editor.

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format) along with your name, address and phone number. We reserve the right to edit for grammar, space, potentially libelous material and copyright infringement. We also reserve the right to refuse derogatory, irrelevant and malicious submissions.

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## ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED...MYTH, OR TRUTH? PART 1

BY EVANGELIST  
RUBY MCCRAY

To find previous articles about other subject matters, please go to [www.theanchornews.org](http://www.theanchornews.org), click "Archives," and you'll find several years.

Once saved, always saved, by some is referred to as the eternal security of the believer. Some refer to the expression as the new birth or being born again. You will find the perfect explanation in the book of John, Chapter 3, Verses 1 through 31.

Since I'm from the old school, I still listen to Christian radio. There are some who teach that once you're saved, you're always saved; you can never lose your salvation. Some of these teachers have degrees in theology. I don't have a degree in theology, but I have thousands of hours in Kneology. Please listen to me, I'm not saying that those precious people to whom I listen have not had their born-again experience. I'm simply saying that the Scripture references that many of them use are not convincing to me. Allow me to share the main one that many of them share.

Jesus said, "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." John 10:28

Precious people, you must know that God didn't beg you to come, and He won't beg you to stay. He simply and incessantly extends an invitation by saying, "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

Please read the prayer in the Book of John, Chapter 17, that Jesus prayed to His Father, God, for you and me before we were ever born. He's constantly wooing us to come to Him; however, He won't hold us against our will. In some religions, if you ever leave, even your own parents and other family members will disown you. In one religion with which I'm acquainted, they don't only disown you, but will kill



EVG. RUBY MCCRAY

you with no repercussions.

It's true that nobody can snatch you out of Jesus' hand, but He's not holding His hand closed that you can't jump out whenever you desire. One man said that he would follow Jesus, but he first wanted to say goodbye to his family. Jesus said, "No one having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Luke 9:62

Jesus said before you decide to follow Him, you must first count the cost. "If anyone comes to Me and

does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:26, 27

You must know He made everything that was in the world, even the people; yet, the people of the world hated Him, and He said that anyone following Him would be hated. John 15:18-21

Holy Spirit tells us that in the last days—and I truly believe that we are living in the last days, that many will turn away from the faith. They will follow deceptive spirits and even teachings that come from demons. He says they are hypocrites and liars with dead consciences. Please tell me how can anyone turn away from the faith to follow demons' doctrines if they were never in the faith? 1 Timothy 4:1, 2

Let's talk about how to be born again according to the Scriptures. First, we must know that we are all born into this world as sinners, under the death penalty of sin, because of Adam. Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 But God so loved us that He was willing to send His only begotten Son

to die in our place while we were still sinners. John 3:15; Romans 5:6-11 We are not saved because we think that we are good; we are saved by grace through faith, and not by any works that we do. Ephesians 2:1-10

When the people recognized their sins on the day of Pentecost, they asked Peter what they should do to be saved, Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38 Repent simply means to change your mind and turn from sin--go in the opposite direction from the route you were going.

Please join me in February, the Lord willing, as I continue this series. All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise stated. You may not believe me...just what if I'm right!

Evangelist Ruby McCray is the founder of A City of Refuge Ministries. For questions or comments e-mail [rubyacorm@yahoo.com](mailto:rubyacorm@yahoo.com) or write to: A City of Refuge Ministries, P. O. Box 2025, Waco, Texas 76703.

## IDENTITY THIEVES TARGET PCS, LAPTOPS AND DATA DEVICES

SUBMITTED BY JL  
CRAWFORD,  
LEGALSHIELD, SENIOR MAN-  
AGER

(NewsUSA) - Electronics this year are expected to be among the top-five gifts American consumers will give -- ranging from PCs and laptops to iPhones, PDAs and cell phones. This growing affinity for consumer electronics and subsequent reliance on stored data devices to place confidential data -- tax returns, client and personnel information, phone numbers, addresses and photos -- presents two mounting challenges for the American consumer: identity theft and electronic waste.

nexGren, Inc. (pronounced "hex-green"), a new technology innovation company, recently launched DiskEraser, a consumer product that completely erases data from computer hard drives, making them safe for donation, re-use or recycling. DiskEraser's patented technology -- available for both Mac and PC systems -- has been approved, used and proven effective by the U.S. Department of Defense to remove "secure" sensitive information from their end-of-life PCs and laptops.

There are currently more than 100 million computers and laptops stored in offices, attics, basements and garages throughout the U.S. And if these devices don't have



J.L. CRAWFORD

their data properly removed before disposal, identity thieves can use them to find personal information.

"Many people fall under the false assumption that by simply deleting all files or reformatting the hard drive, the computer is free of all important data," said Dr. Joe Fergus, founder and CEO of nexGren. "However, deleting files isn't nearly enough. The information remains accessible on the hard drive and can be misused if it falls into the wrong hands."

Identity thieves often prey upon lost, stolen or abandoned computers. In recent years, more than 10 million Americans experienced identity theft. It can take up to several years to correct the problem. And it reaches far beyond house-

holds. The cost to U.S. corporations over the last five years exceeded \$60 billion. DiskEraser was developed to help combat this problem.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cites consumer electronic waste as growing two to three times faster than any other waste stream. Stored data devices are constructed with lead, mercury, cadmium, barium and other compounds that represent hazards to human health and environmental safety if not disposed of appropriately.

nexGren can slow that stream of waste by offering a nationwide recycling service, which is a critical part of the company's overall green initiative. Consumers can send their

old computers to nexGren for data removal and recycling with peace of mind and the knowledge that they have disposed of their computers in an environmentally responsible way.

If you're one of the many giving someone a PC or laptop, you should consider giving a second gift -- DiskEraser.

For more information, visit [www.nexgren.com](http://www.nexgren.com). For protection against identity theft, call me about LegalShield. It's affordable and available right now.

Give me a call at 254-717-4927. Hurry. With LegalShield, "...we can help you worry less and live more." Please see the ad in this issue of the Anchor.

## PRE-VALENTINE FEST

2024, we are ready for a love pre-valentine fest hosted by Waco's very own world-renowned recording artist, Royce Montgomery, and Hewitt's, Legacy Event Center owner, Sheila Brown.

Saturday, February 3rd, for a full day of activities. Open to the public at no cost, first, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.. Come out and support local businesses. Vendors will be on location. Come and treat yourself or shop for that special person. Fun, fun, fun, a night of ex-

citing entertainment, have a great time, dance and fellowship. That evening, doors opened at 6 p.m. for a night of live entertainment, poetry, trivia games, and much more. The showtime is 7 p.m. Tickets prices: Show only \$15.00. Dinner and the show \$25.00. For tickets and more information call, 254-339-2222. Follow us on FB @Create Your Own Stage. Tickets can also be purchased at: Beauty Mart 722 N. Valley Mills Dr. Waco, TX 76710.

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*Justice Is Just The Petty Way*

# SETTING GOALS IN 2024

BY JERRY SNIDER

As the owner of All In Health and Wellness, I'm excited to offer a Health column for the readers of the Anchor News.

It's common to think about goals and changes you want to make in your health. We often set yearly health goals in January. Unfortunately, many of us fall into the goal trap by not doing a good job of setting our goals and not putting a daily plan in place to reach the goals.

When we want to set a goal to achieve something, it means that something in our life must change. Otherwise,

we'll simply get the same result we have now come December. Whether that is continuing to battle chronic disease or adding five pounds to go with the five pounds we gained this past year, without changing our daily lives we won't get different results.

The key to reaching the goals we have is in the process of what changes we make daily. If the goal is to run a marathon, the process is weeks and months of daily runs to get ourselves physically ready to make the 26.2-mile trek. If the goal is to get off our blood pressure medicine, the process is dialing in our



JERRY SNIDER

nutrition and exercise to create a healthier environment in-

side our body. Many times, we need a coach to help us create a plan to follow because we get overwhelmed with how big the goal we set is.

Just like we don't go on a trip to someplace we have never been without getting directions, packing for the appropriate weather, and finding the places to eat along the way, the journey to better health is a step-by-step process. The smaller the steps we can take in the process, the easier it will feel to make the changes.

We shouldn't be afraid to set big health goals for 2024 because a lot can change in

365 days. Take just a few moments to decide what daily change to make and before we know it our lives will begin to move towards our goal.

Have a question for Jerry? Send it to [jerry@allinhealthandwellness.com](mailto:jerry@allinhealthandwellness.com).

*Jerry Snider is an exercise physiologist, health coach, and owner of All In Health and Wellness. He has authored two books available on Amazon: No More Sugar Coating and Confidence Through Health and is the host of the podcast Confidence Through Health. Visit [www.allinhealthandwellness.com](http://www.allinhealthandwellness.com) to learn more about Jerry Snider.*

## DON'T EVER GO ALONE

BY MARGARET IVORY

When I was a teenager, my paternal grandmother was the first female mechanic in Oklahoma City. Her dad and mom were ahead of their time. They taught the boys what they taught the girls and they taught the girls what they taught the boys. So the girls knew roofing, plumbing, electrical, and auto mechanics. The boys knew cooking, cleaning, baking, and sewing.

My grandmother told me when she and our step-granddad would go to find a new car, she would have him first get the hood up and then distract the salesman by asking a series of questions and kick the tires around the car.

While Granddad kicked the tires, she would go under the hood to check out the car. By the time, the salesman and granddad made it back around the car, she would know whether it was a good car or not.

This is what I suggest to seniors. Take someone younger



MARGARET IVORY

with you even if you can understand what is what. While they kick around the tires and ask a series of questions, you look at the booklet or whatever they have that gives the information about whatever it is.

Remember it is not what they say but what is written that counts.

Praying this a great day for you. Margaret Ivory, 254-523-8978.

## CHANGE IS AN INSIDE JOB

BY MONA DUNKIN

2024 is a New Year for all of us. Here are some personally tried and proven thoughts on making this year the best year, best month, best day, best decision, best possibility, etc., etc., etc. ever. Effective change is within your ability.

Our Intellect, our Emotions and our Will are all a part of our internal system that aids in most, if not all, of our decisions. As in...

- It is with our intellect that we reason, weigh, consider and understand the issues of life.

- It is with our emotions that we feel the issues of life, such as joy, sorrow, pride, shame, etc.

- It is with our will that we decide the issues of life, as in yes or no to opportunities, yes or no to temptations, yes or no to actions, yes or no to change.



MONA DUNKIN

Here are twenty-two random thoughts on life improvement. Look through the list and mark the top five that appeal to you. The ones where your intellect, emotions, and will says "yes". Begin with the one that most influenced your possibilities.

1. Make a definite decision to change; be specific.
2. Recognize the positive aspects of change
3. Picture it. See yourself with skills, abilities, and attitudes to develop.
4. Know that late is better than never.
5. Get out of your own way.
6. You will never know unless you try.
7. Stop the insanity: apply the brakes and put your decision making in gear.
8. Use positive self-talk. Utilize the creative power of the spoken word.
9. Visualize change in increments and grow into it.
10. Growth comes from the acceptance of our limitations.
11. Give change a chance

to prove itself.

12. Focus on what you gain rather than what you give up.

13. Know that you will feel alone, even if others are going through the same thing.

14. You cannot hold two conflicting thoughts at once.

15. Recognize you may be at a different level of readiness for change.

16. Develop an "attitude of gratitude". - Zig Zigler

17. Respect yourself and others, there is no level of change or success you cannot attain.

18. The key to the ability to change is a changeless sense of who you are.

19. Learning to please you and God releases you from being a people pleaser.

20. Change and expect nothing in return. Why? Because you are doing it for you.

21. You do not have to go back to square one to start over.

22. Saying "No" in one area is saying "Yes" in another.

"Yes" to power "Yes" to empowerment "Yes" to loving

"Yes" to caring "Yes" to responsibility "Yes" to discipline

"Yes" to wholeness "Yes" to consciousness "Yes" to clarity

"Yes" to healing "Yes" "Yes" "Yes" "Yes" "Yes"

*This article was written by Mona Dunkin, Motivational Speaker and Personal Success Coach, [www.monadunkin.blogspot.com](http://www.monadunkin.blogspot.com) or [www.monadunkin.com](http://www.monadunkin.com). @SolutionsPrinciples253.*

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WANDA B. GUNTER

Author, Artist & Contributing writer for *The Anchor News*

# ULTIMATE GUIDE TO YOUR FIRST INVESTMENT

**SUBMITTED BY  
LINDA MCDONALD**

You've probably heard it said, "Real estate is the safest investment in the world." But when it comes to dipping your toes into the investment property pool for the first time, it can feel like anything but safe. So, let's break this down:

Start with the End in Mind: It's important to clarify what you want out of this investment. Are you looking for monthly cash flow or a long-term appreciation plan? Or both? Different types of prop-



**LINDA MCDONALD**

erties will fit different goals, so being clear on your "why" is crucial.

**Understand Your Budget:** This goes beyond knowing how much you can afford to spend on an investment property. You also need to consider the ongoing costs of owning and managing it, including taxes, maintenance, insurance, and potential vacancies.

**Choose Your Property Type:** Whether it's a single-family home, a duplex, or a commercial property, your choice will heavily depend on your budget and your investment goals. Re-

search the average costs, rental rates, and market trends for each type in your desired area.

**Location, Location, Location:** Remember, you're not just investing in a property, but also in a location. Look for areas with a strong rental market, promising future developments, and amenities that will

attract tenants.

There you have it—your recipe for success in your first real estate investment venture. Questions about investing? Let's connect. My job is to take the guesswork out of this process for you.

Linda McDonald, 254-855-1717.

## MINNITT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tion is crucial to our mission of cultivating a divine mindset that will inspire and impact every household and community worldwide," continued Minnitt.

"Together, we can triumph over the enemy that seeks to

sow chaos in our land." To learn more about the ministry, visit <http://fannyminnittworldministries.startsites.org> or to give directly visit <http://churchhalo.app/give/fannyminnittworldministries>.

# THE CHURCH HAS POWER AND AUTHORITY

**BY PASTOR  
MATTHEW REED**

In 2024 let the church realize its power in Jesus Christ. Jesus being your Lord makes you a member of the church. Being a member of the church means God has given you power over unclean spirits as stated in Matthew 10:1: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."

Jesus does not send us into battle without power and authority over the enemy (devil). Luke 9:1 says, "Then he called his twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." From these scriptures,



**PASTOR MATTHEW  
AND LADY HELEN REED**

it is safe to conclude that we have this power. Armed with this knowledge we should engage the enemy on every front and be confident of victory. The church should be emboldened to go forth into

a morally corrupt world with confidence to affect change.

Matthew 10:1 and Luke 9:1 assure us that the power of God is with us no matter what the battle or who the battle is with. Reading these scriptures, we the church should not be a people of little faith. When we are armed with this knowledge, we can go into battle knowing that we already have the victory. All we have to do is fight the battle. No battle... no victory.

Satan counts on us never entering the battle. He does all he can to cause fear and doubt, for he knows that our failure to engage is the only way he can defeat the church and its message. Let us resolve from the scriptures that we have power and authority and go to war with Satan and all his angels. Happy New Year! Amen!

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## GOD, DESTINY AND A GLASS OF WINE, AN EASY READ AND PERFECT GIFT

The best gift sometimes comes in a small package. Such is the case with *God, Destiny and a Glass of Wine*. All chapters begin with one of Linda Crawford's own "true-story" personal narratives that she later connects to a point that is relevant to this journey called destiny. The book is an easy read. Several readers have told her that they couldn't put it down once they started. It is available on Amazon.com. *God, Destiny, and a Glass of Wine* is sure to open your heart to receive healing, encouragement, and a different outlook on life.

Chapter 1: This Too Shall Pass, but When?

I was almost out of breath by the time I made it to the car. Though it was just a few feet away, it seemed like 100 miles. I had parked my car in the back yard to hide it from the bank. Let's face it. It was an old piece of stick-shift junk, but it was all I had, and I was behind on the payments. But tonight, in my panic to get out of the house, maybe the backyard wasn't so smart. Dressed in a gown, house shoes, and a thin jacket, I gripped the keys that were pinned inside my bra. Oh yes, my bra. That was the safest place to keep my

valuables, like my car keys and what little money I had. I had learned a lot in my 29 years. With lightning speed, I dashed out the backdoor, tripping over the threshold, but still holding my balance and determination. Thank God my boy was spending the night with a friend. It was pitch-black dark outside, as I had no time to flip on the outside lights. I just needed to get out. Once inside my car, I let out a sigh, unaware that I had been holding my breath. Quickly locking the car doors, I knew I was on my way. The car was run down and bent up, but it was my path to freedom tonight and my only means of transportation. I'll never forget it. It was a gray and black Toyota, well...a fading gray and a fading black, a hatchback, about 8 years old at the time, and a stick. Ha! A stick. That could be a holdup since I was still in the learning stage, but I could handle it. I tried to crank the old trap, but it just clicked. I tried again, combining my efforts with a plea. "Please God, I need my car!" Just as the motor turned over, I heard that dreadful sound, a swatch-type sound, like an old screen door dragging. My God! He knew I was going to try to get away. He



LINDA MASON CRAWFORD

knew, so he had unlocked the hatch back, ahead of time! He was in the back so fast; all I could do was bite my lip and jerk forward. "Stop the car, Lynn, and give me the money!" he yelled, as he swiftly crawled into the back seat. He lurched through the bucket seats so fast that my head literally seemed to spin, like the girl in the Exorcist. Grabbing the steering wheel, he yelled again, "Gimme the money, Lynn!" The Exorcist...I was sure that his voice changed. But tonight...no, not tonight. I kept driving, the car swerving across into the other the lane and back again as he, too, gripped the wheel. We came within inches of hitting a minivan. I saw head lights

of an 18 wheeler that we also barely missed as we sped into the on-coming traffic. Hands pinned to the wheel, I was driving to my pastor's house, and no one was stopping me. That was the life I lived for most of my 16 years of marriage to a crack addict, one that was much different from my single days of the quiet, country, church girl. I had never touched drugs in my life. I smoked only one cigarette that nearly killed me. And here I was, 29 years old, married to a drug addict. I had so many similar stories to contend with, jumping fences to get my car back from the drug dealers, standing toe-to-toe and nose-to-nose with dealers who threatened to kill me if I didn't leave them alone about getting my car back, knocks on the door in the middle of the night from thugs demanding money my husband owed them, stealing my own car back and driving backwards, trying to miss the flying bullets. You name it; I just about dealt with it. Many times over the years, I walked into my house to find that every piece of furniture and every appliance was gone—sold in exchange for drugs. I remember waking up one Christmas Day to find that

my babies' gifts were gone, sold for drugs. Once, I frantically searched the streets of Tampa because my husband put our 6-year-old out of the car since it was "too dangerous to take him to the crack house," he said. This was before the days of cell phones. I don't even remember how I found my baby boy. I could go on and on, but the only thing that matters is that one day, I accepted the truth that I had to forgive if I expected to move on with my life. I have since come to grips with the truth, that my now ex-husband was a good person, who loved people. When he was straight, he would give away his last. When he was not, he would take another person's last. I literally saw him take his shirt off and give it away. Once he pulled off his watch and gave it away, and then took my watch and gave it away, too. He had a heart of gold, but in addiction, he was the devil. Still, I had to find a way to forgive. I owed it to myself, my children, and my God.

To order *God, Destiny, and a Glass of Wine*, paste the following into your browser: <https://www.amazon.com/Destiny-Glass-Linda-Mason-Crawford/dp/069211761X>.

### 5.0 OUT OF 5 STARS | INSPIRING & ENCOURAGING | KINDLE CUSTOMER

(Reviewed in the United States on August 20, 2019)

"I absolutely love this book! I could not put it down and read it in two days. There is so much good stuff in this book that I am reading it again. It is inspiring, encouraging and will bless you."

### 5.0 OUT OF 5 STARS FIVE STARS | AMAZON CUSTOMER

(Reviewed in the United States on May 21, 2018)

"This is an amazing book. It is entertaining, compelling and convicting. A definite must-read for everyone!"

### 5.0 OUT OF 5 STARS | EASY READ AND APPLICABLE TO MY LIFE

(Reviewed in the United States on March 27, 2019)

"After *God, Destiny, and a Glass of Wine*, I felt like I could take the author's response to certain circumstances and apply to my own life. Each chapter is a life learning lesson of praising God through hard times, and walking into God's plan for my life. It may appear as an easy read, because I read it in one day my first time reading it. Then I had the opportunity to re-read and breakdown each chapter week by week."

Rey

### 5.0 OUT OF 5 STARS | EXCELLENT BOOK

(Reviewed in the United States on June 13, 2020)

"This is an amazing book. I found it helpful in navigating my fear of not reaching my full potential. It helped me understand how I can have a positive God-ordained destiny. Excellent work!"

Dr. Mia Moody-Ramirez



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# Remembering 2023 | NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

## A HARKER HEIGHTS LEGACY, DR. LILLIAN L. BILLIE

—JANUARY 2023—

BY W.B. GUNTER

Dr. Lillian Billie established a foundation of service and excellence in Central Texas many years ago. She arrived in Bell County as music teacher who taught at Marlboro Heights Elementary School and became an active member of the community. Cathedral of Deliverance and Praise Church of God In Christ was founded March 12, 1969 by her late husband, Superintendent Edward R. Billie, who passed away in 2020. In 2023, the Harker Heights church will celebrate its 54th year, with Dr. Billie as Supervisor of Women's Department.

Dr. Billie was one of 30 women selected by the Church of God In Christ to fulfill the duties of the church. She was installed at the headquarters in Memphis, TN where she received her cap. Her duties include helping to build churches and continue the mission in Texas and beyond. She keeps in communication with other supervisors and district superintendents to ensure all needs are met.

During the freezing temperatures of 2021, through coordination of resources, Dr. Billie made sure people received food and supplies. In December, 2022, residents of the Thayer Residential Center, which recently opened its doors, were blessed by the



DR. LILLIAN L. BILLIE

sock ministry founded by Dr. Billie. Members of the church collected new pairs of socks and distributed them to nurs-

ing homes. "Socks are a viable part to the well being of individuals who may have issues with circulatory conditions and prevent wounds and infections," said Dr. Billie. Providing socks is part of an ongoing mission so collections continue.

In 2004, Ladies In Prayer Stations (LIPS), providing round the clock prayers. The first Saturday of every month, meetings are held, the names are distributed, and prayers are spoken on the behalf of anyone in need. To learn more about any of the outreach ministries, or if you're in need, call or text Dr. Lillian Billie at (254) 466-7463.

Dr. Billie is vital to the community she serves. She says,

"When people see your work, they want to elevate it higher. I often recall the phrase, 'My Kingdom Come,' and members of God's kingdom show up. After losing my husband, the letters, H-W-W came to me. I didn't know what it meant, but I asked someone to pray with me. The letters finally connected, and Holy Widowed Women, was founded. This past year, we met, comforted one another, and celebrated a big event. As we expand, we plan on including a ministry of pen pals."

The contributions of Cathedral of Deliverance and Praise, Church of God In Christ will continue its legacy and blessings at 702 Harley Drive, Harker Heights TX 76548.

## MCLENNAN COUNTY'S HISTORY MAKER: COMMISSIONER PATRICIA CHISOLM-MILLER

—MARCH 2023—

Patricia Chisolm-Miller is the McLennan County Commissioner for Precinct 2. The first woman to ever be elected to the commissioners court in McLennan County, she has held this office since January 1, 2019. Of the 1,016 county commissioners across the State of Texas, Commissioner Miller is honored and humbled to be one of the six African American women serving on commissioners courts across our state.

The Texas County Progress is the official publication of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas. Authorized by the organization in 1923, the magazine covers all 254 Texas counties and is the only publication in Texas and one of the few in the country devoted specifically to county judges and county commissioners. Commissioner Miller was featured in its column, "A Glimpse in the Life of a Texas County Commissioner" in the February 2020 Issue.

In addition, Commissioner Miller currently serves on the McLennan County Investment Committee, is Treasurer for the McLennan County Employees Federal Credit Union Board of Di-



COMMISSIONER PATRICIA MILLER

rectors, Second Vice President of the Waco Chapter of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women, a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, City Center of Waco Board of Directors, Waco ISD GWAMA Business Advisory Board, the Health and Human Services Advisory Council, and organizer and co-facilitator of the Lester L. Gibson Leadership Luncheon Forum. She is a past Vice Chair of the Community Race Relations Coalition Board of Directors, Compassion Ministries Board of Directors, United Way Allocations Committee, and the Women's Resource Center

Advisory Board. Her many awards include recipient of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated Waco Alumnae Chapter 2022 Political Awareness and Involvement Award, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, Omicron Upsilon Chapter 2020 Omega Psi Phi Citizen of the Year Award, the Delta Upsilon Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Community Service Award for Governmental Affairs, and the 2018 Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Lady of Distinction Award. She was recognized in 2000 by the McLennan County NAACP as the Freedom Fund Banquet Chairperson hosting U.S. Congressman John Lewis as the keynote speaker.

Commissioner Miller is a 50 years+ member of Tolver Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. Married to Robert Miller, Sr., she is a loving aunt, mom, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Her most memorable book is *Jesus and the Disinherited*, by Howard Thurman. Her favorite quote, from Winston S. Churchill is "To every man there comes in his lifetime that special moment when he is figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered a chance to do a very special thing, unique to him and fitted to his talents. What a

tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared or unquali-

fied for that which would be his finest hour."

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WEDNESDAY PRAYER WORSHIP  
7:00 p.m.

Pastor Matthew Reed and wife, Helen

# Remembering 2023 | NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

## GRANT BRINGS SUPPORT FOR EXPECTING MOMS

—APRIL 2023—

BY TONJA CARPENTER

Fifty thousand dollars from the Rapoport Foundation will help provide doulas for low-income families in Central Texas. Please help us inform families about these services so we can improve the lives of mothers and babies in our community.

A few weeks after Waco resident Gracemarie Rodriguez gave birth to her first child she started experiencing larger than normal blood clots and abnormal abdominal pain. Little did she know she had a uterine infection, which can be a life-threatening condition that can affect mothers after childbirth.

What saved Gracemarie was having her doula advocating on her behalf. A doula ly trained to support women before, during, and after childbirth. Gracemarie's doula was able to recognize the seriousness of her symptoms, even when her doctors did not. Her doula advocated for

her to get the care she needed, a decision that saved her life.

Now, thanks to a \$50,000 grant by the Rapoport Foundation to nonprofit Community Doulas of Waco, low-income families will be able to afford the same life-saving support that Gracemarie received.

"We're so thankful to the Rapoport Foundation for allowing us to serve more moms and families," said Tonja Carpenter, the founder of Community Doulas. "Our prenatal and postpartum services help lower maternal morbidity and mortality as well as infant mortality rates – numbers that are especially high among women of color in the US."

According to the CDC, black and indigenous women are 60% more likely to experience pre-term birth than white women and their babies are twice as likely to die before their first birthday.

With this money, Community Doulas of Waco is determined to improve these outcomes in Central Texas. They will do this

by providing educational, emotional, and physical support to moms and their families before and after birth.

Support includes the following:

- Helping moms develop a birth plan and postpartum plan
- Helping moms organize a

SEE **GRANT**, PG. 12

## AN EVENING WITH THE REAL OPAL LEE

—JULY 2023—

BY JOCELYN PIERCE

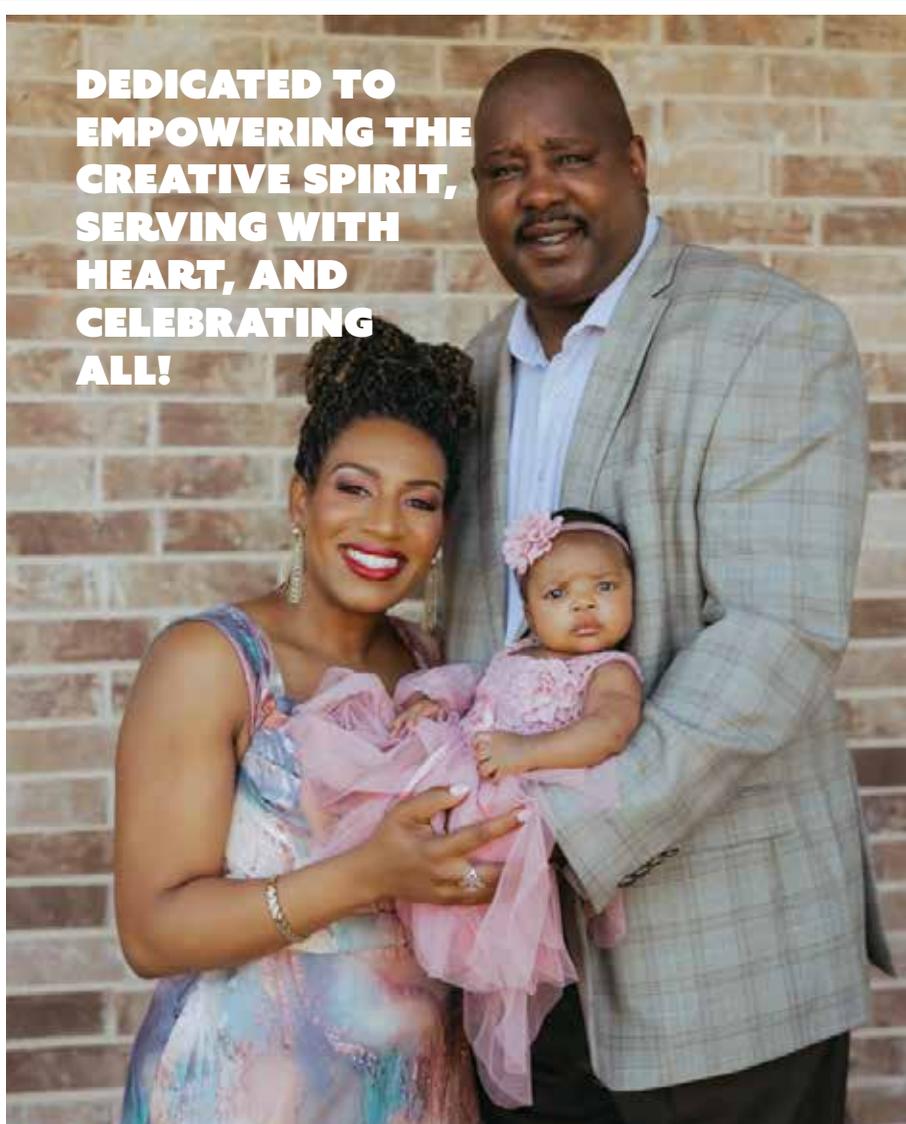
An opportunity of a lifetime, sponsored and hosted by the Community Race Relations Coalition (CRR) of Waco and the Delta Upsilon Zeta Waco Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., at St. Albans Episcopal Church Parish Hall, was presented on Thursday, June 23, to an audience of over one hundred Waco community members and citizens from surrounding areas. As the "Grandmother of Juneteenth" took the stage for "An Eve-

SEE **LEE**, PG. 16



JESSICA PIERCE, DR. OPAL LEE, MICHAEL BABERS & JOCELYN PIERCE POSE FOR A PHOTO AT THE REAL OPAL LEE EVENT.

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## Remembering 2023 | NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

### KILLEEN'S CELNEQUE BOBBITT JR. GOES PRO!!

—MAY 2023—

BY W.B. GUNTER  
WITH CJ BOBBITT, JR.

Celneque (sel nik) Bobbitt Jr., of Killeen, is an official member of the Australian team, Mandurah Magic! "CJ" was studying the game before he had teeth, and wowing the crowds with his agility and skills by the time he was 2. He played on the same court as Royce O'Neale. Both men be-

long to professional basketball teams, and they learned under the leadership of Coach Celneque Bobbitt, Sr.

Bobbitt gives the Anchor News insight into his journey as he embarks on fulfilling a goal he envisioned years ago. He begins: My journey began as a kid playing with the team Little Dribblers. My Dad was the coach. My parents believed in me and I was told that if I really wanted it, that I needed to take it seriously, work hard, and the

opportunities would happen. I played AAU with Bret Williams and we started a team. We went to Nationals in Houston.

In my sophomore year, I was on the Texas Progress Team where I joined the Nike EYB. During my junior year, I switched from the Adidas Gauntlet. As a high school senior, I decided to play during the summer. I was a member of the University of Colorado team in Denver for 2 years before going to New Mexico State



CELNEQUE BOBBITT JR.

where Chris Jans was the head coach. We had a good year 28-7. We made history. All of that came to a halt when COVID hit.

I had to lift myself up, run, stay active and in shape. There was no team beside me. All of the tournaments were canceled and I was on my way to getting a contract signed when I tore my Achilles. I sat out an entire year rehabilitating. My girlfriend was playing at New Mexico State. I had to work hard and get healthy. I needed to find a coach willing to work with me. I went to Michael Harp camp twice in July and December. I felt as if they could help and get me a job, but the realization hit me that I had to put the work in for myself.

I played ABA and made it to nationals in St. Louis. In the first game, we took a very discouraging loss. Royce O'Neale's coach, Adams, called with news of Australia as a possibility. Mike Utley watched a video of the game, and now I'm trying to get things together. A lot of people tried to talk me out of my dream, maybe to help me avoid disappointment. I was told to reassess my goals. I was hearing it so much that I began questioning myself. Some days I sat or while I was driving, I'd just break down because I never felt validated

when things weren't happening.

I did see success in Denver, where I was averaging 10 points a game, but I felt I wasn't getting the credit I deserved as a contributing team member. My parents and Devonte Brown always supported my dream. They reminded me that if it's meant to be, it'll be. I was in a hurry to play overseas. My friends were making it, and mentally, it was tough on me.

There were days when I said, "Forget it." I was about to go into teaching school. After I re-evaluated, I decided not to quit. It occurred to me that I needed to have the right energy around me and I have to maintain my own state of mind because we never know what's ahead. As I was going through ups and downs, I realized I must not lose myself in those moments. I had to myself. I knew I didn't want my dreams to sneak up on me when I was not prepared. Sometimes you have to be your own fan and a savant of the game. Lots of teams are looking for players, but not all players know how to find the teams. Listen. You have to listen in order to get further along in a career.

As a coach, my dad never showed favoritism but he was supportive and tough. Players have to have support because no one is going to guide them through this journey. Meditate. Take time to self-affirm. No one is going to see the work you put in, the extra shots, and conditioning, so be very cautious and critical during your off time. You have to sacrifice time socially to put in the work."

Mandurah Magic games can be streamed by tuning in to NBL 1 and globally on Twitch. As Celneque Bobbitt Jr. prepares to embark on his journey, we thank him for granting us a glimpse into the world of growing into a professional athlete and wish him well.



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*Remembering* 2023 | NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

**HEAVEN'S NEW ARRIVAL, MOTHER DELOIS VONNER HALIBURTON**

—AUGUST 2023—

For five decades, Mother Delois Haliburton was part of an integrated prayer circle in Waco, Texas. Seven women of diverse races united in prayer during the racially-turbulent times of the 1960s. They were featured in the Waco Tribune-Herald in 2003 for their unique, longstanding efforts and for their close-knit relationship.

Mother Haliburton spent her life teaching and modeling Christian behavior. She shared her wisdom and words of encouragement freely. She remained steadfast in her commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ. She lived her life with purpose, spreading Christ's message of love whenever possible.

Born in Lovelady, Texas to Nugent and Roberta Vonner, Mother Haliburton accepted Christ at an early age and was reared in the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) doctrine. In 1951, she married William F. Haliburton and embraced



**MOTHER DELOIS VONNER HALIBURTON**

his commitment to the Baptist doctrine. Although their marriage ended in divorce, she remained a lifelong Baptist.

Mother Haliburton united with First Baptist Church, N.B.C. in 1963. She was an active member, serving as a teacher and providing leadership in various ministries to all age levels until she experienced health challenges. She

also served as the Women's Mission Union President for the Willow Grove Baptist District Association and in the women's leadership cabinets of the State of Texas Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention.

Mother Haliburton was preceded in death by her parents, twelve siblings, a set of still-born twins; her son, Dr. Bruce Haliburton and her daughter, Rita Nute. She is survived by her children: Judy Haliburton of Waco, Nita Haliburton of Arlington, Texas, Dr. Francene Francis (Rev. Monty Francis) of Fort Worth and Cheryl Haliburton of Waco, Brenda (Bruce's widow) and Wesley Nute, Sr. (Rita's widower). She also leaves to cherish her memory six grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, one brother, Horace Vonner (Evelyn) of Waco and two sisters, Kay Tillman of Oakland, California and Laura Lewis of Houston. Mother Haliburton

SEE **HEAVEN**, PG. 12

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**HEAVEN** | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

burton will be remembered by her "select daughter," Brenda Richardson, her beloved "select-family," Jeff and Dr. Bess Dunner Family and a host of

other relatives and cherished friends.

Services are as follows Public Viewing: McDowell's Funeral Home, 1104 Chestnut Street,

Waco, Texas 76704, Friday, August 11, 2023, 10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.; Homegoing Service, 2nd Missionary Baptist Church, 2001 Dallas Street, Waco, Texas 76704, Saturday, August 12, 2023, 11:00 A.M., Rev. Monty Francis, Sr., Officiant, Rev. Kenneth Hall, Eulogist.

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**GRANT**  
 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

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Please help us spread the word about our expanding programs, so we can support new moms and babies in our community.

Tonja Carpenter and Gracemarie Roderiguez are available to speak with the press. Pictures and videos of our doulas in action are also available.

To set up an interview or learn more about Community Doulas of Waco please contact Tonja Carpenter at (254) 307-0377 or email her at info@communitydoulaswaco.org.

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Remembering 2023 | NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

# AFRICAN AMERICANS AND WOMEN OBSERVE DUAL 75TH ANNIVERSARIES

—SEPTEMBER 2023—

BY DR. PEACHES HENRY

In June 1948, President Harry Truman signed the Women’s Armed Service Integration Act which allowed women to serve as full, permanent members of all branches of the military. On July 26, 1948, Truman signed Executive Order 9981 which ended segregation in the United States military. Thus, 2023 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of two military milestones: women being allowed to serve their country in the military and the integration of the military. Since these significant changes in the US military, African Americans and women have made great strides that are represented by three Waco female African American veterans. Syrenthia Rice, Mary Bradford, and Erica Johnson had long distinguished careers in the military respectively representing the Army, the Marines, and the Air Force.

In 1982, Syrenthia Rice enlisted in the United States Army after graduating from Jackson

State University in 1980. While in the military, Rice finished her master’s degree and served in communication. In 1993, Rice went to Drill Sergeant School, attaining the rank of Master Sergeant (E7) in just seven years. She served throughout the US and overseas including Fort Jackson in South Carolina; Fort Gordon in Georgia; Fort Hood in Texas; Fort Shill in Oklahoma; Fort Bragg in North Carolina; Seoul, Korea; and Heilbronn, Schwabischa and Germund, Germany. Rice spent 12 years on active duty. After retiring from the military, she began her Federal Civilian work with the Department of the Army as the Community Life Office. She retired from the Veteran Benefits Administration in Waco. In the military, she “learned so much about leadership.” She “loved the military” and had an “awesome career.”

A year after Rice began her career in the Army, Mary Bradford began hers in the United States Marine Corps in 1983. Bradford is a “Mustang” having served 10 years in the enlisted ranks before being se-



SYRENTHIA RICE



MARY BRADFORD



ERICA JOHNSON

lected to the Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Education Program after which she served 12 years in the officer corps. She was selected and served three years as a Marine Corps Drill Instructor, training over 650 women recruits. She was also selected to serve as a Company Commander before obtaining her final rank of Major. Bradford saw assignments both within the continental US and overseas. She was among the first cadre of women Marines to serve as a Communications Field Radio Operator deploying numerous times to the Middle East and Far East. Bradford retired from the Marine Corps after 22 years on active duty. Her husband, whom she met while active duty, was also in the Marines. She began her Federal Civilian work with the Department of Defense (DoD), serving in several key assignments within Marine

Corps Personnel and Family Readiness. Currently, Bradford serves as the Deputy Director in the Veterans Administration Center for Women Veterans.

In 1986 following her Air Force veteran father’s recommendation, Erica Johnson enlisted in the United States Air Force. “I wanted to go to college, and the Air Force offered that benefit,” Johnson said. From 1986-1989, Johnson worked in supply/logistics, and from 1989-2011, she worked in personnel. She reached the rank of Master Sergeant (E7). She was posted in the US and abroad including Bergstrom Air Force Base (AFB) in Texas; Kirtland AFB in New Mexico; Kadena AFB in Okinawa, Japan; Tokyo, Japan; and Baylor University AFROTC Detachment 810 in Waco. Johnson spent 24 years, 11 months, and 29 days on active duty just one day short of 25 years. Johnson

said the military “helped me to grow and expand my way of thinking. I learned new skills and how to interact with people who were different from me, who came from different backgrounds, and how to lead others.” While recently tracing her family history, Johnson discovered that she comes from and continues a long line of service members including her grandfather, father, uncles, cousins, and nieces. Her husband, whom she met while active duty, was also in the Air Force. “I come from a legacy of service members,” Johnson declared.

As United States observes the dual seventy-fifth anniversaries of the admittance of women to full military service and the desegregation of the military, we applaud Johnson, Bradford, and Rice for their outstanding military contributions.



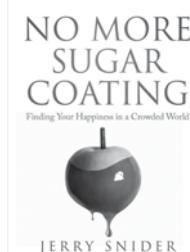
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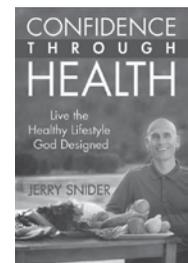
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*Remembering* 2023 | NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

**HONORING THE PRAIRIE VIEW INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE**

—NOVEMBER 2023—

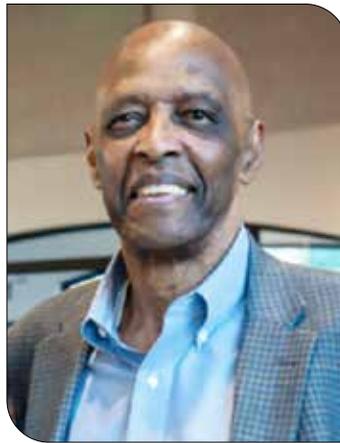
**BY DR. PEACHES HENRY**

“Why didn’t I know this?” Michael Hurd asked himself as he researched Thursday Night Lights: The Story of Black High School Football in Texas. Dr. Peaches Henry, president of the Waco NAACP, noted that she asked the same question when she read Hurd’s book. Both were speaking of the history of the Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL), the governing body for extra-curricular activities for Texas’ African American high schools from 1920-1970. The PVIL was the Black counterpart of the University Interscholastic League, which excluded Black schools from membership until 1967. Hurd noted that the absence of this history of the outstanding athletes of the PVIL spurred him to write his book. Hurd was the featured speaker at “Thursday Night Lights: Honoring the Prairie View Interscholastic League,” an event co-sponsored by the Waco NAACP and the Community Race Relations

Coalition (CRRRC).

The current climate of erasure of African-American history across Texas prompted Henry to organize an event that would both excavate this era of African-American history and honor local PVIL competitors. “We are returning to habits of the past during which African Americans relied on their churches and civic organizations as well as oral history from our elders to preserve and pass on our history.” Jo Welter, CRRRC board chair, remarked, “In order to have justice we must deal with the truth. Part of dealing with truth is being honest, telling, and knowing our history.”

From 1920-1970, the PVIL was the governing body for academic, athletic, and performance competitions for Black high schools in Texas. Many Wacoans participated in the PVIL winning at the district and state levels. Many PVIL competitors went on to have stellar careers in the National Football League, the music and entertainment businesses, academia, and the sciences. The end of segregation marked the



**MICHAEL HURD**

end of an organization that left an outstanding legacy across the state of Texas. However, when the PVIL shuttered its doors due to integration, much of the history of the association was literally dumped into trash bins.

Hurd’s book details the history of football programs at Texas’ all-Black high schools as part of the PVIL. His talk centered on the work of uncovering the players, coaches, and records of the PVIL. He discussed traveling

around the state of Texas to talk to the men who played on and coached the many outstanding teams whose players formed a pipeline to historically black colleges and universities. Though he found many of these men alive and delighted to discuss these times, he was saddened that so many of these stellar athletes were no longer alive. He also discussed local Waco teams that figured prominently in the PVIL, including the championship Moore High School football team. While Hurd’s book focuses on football, the PVIL oversaw other sports including female sports such as track and field, basketball, tennis, and more.

Significantly, the PVIL also oversaw academic areas and the performing arts. To reveal these aspects of the PVIL, Henry presented a short documentary which compiled a series of interviews conducted with former Waco PVIL participants. The sheer scope of the events in which Wacoans participated was incredible and included marching band, choir, declaiming, spelling, mental math, num-

ber sense, one-act plays, fire baton twirling, debate, extemporaneous speaking, ready-writing, and more. The competitive spirit, community unity, and sense of pride evidenced by these participants were inspirational. Walter Mae King, who competed in math sense, noted that her teachers prepared them with the motto, “Compete to win.” According to Linda Lewis, “Going to UIL at Prairie was affirming. It was exciting to be among Black scholars.” “The PVIL was comprised of the most talented Black young people you ever wanted to meet,” declared Sherry Perkins, one of the first fire baton twirlers at Moore High. Ninety-six-year-old Velma Clark took great pride in her baby sister who as a third-grader competed in PVIL spelling and beat every competitor including the twelfth-grader called in to take her on. In Clark’s words, “She sat her down too.”

As the documentary and Hurd revealed, the PVIL left a legacy of African-American triumph, excellence, and resilience which should be recovered, preserved, and transmitted.

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# Remembering 2023 | NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

## A PILLAR IN THE COMMUNITY: MCDOWELL FUNERAL HOMES, L.L.C.

McDowell Funeral Homes L.L.C. began as a dream, shifted to a vision and overtime, and has transformed into a legacy that is well known by many. The late Lester McDowell, Founder/Visionary, was led by divine inspiration to establish a funeral home that would impact lives by providing quality service and support to families and the community. McDowell's desire and dream of helping others was birthed by a passion that was rooted in him from a young age and intensified over time. Touched and inspired by a higher power, the idea of personal service through a special connection to the community has been the key to the success of McDowell Funeral Homes, L.L.C. and the foundation upon which the business was created.

The first location of McDowell Funeral Homes L.L.C. was opened in 1991, in Hillsboro, Texas. What began as a dream, would now become reality as Mr. McDowell opened and provided affordable funeral service to families and around the Hillsboro community. From then until his transition to glory, Mr. McDowell dedicated his life and service to achieving his destiny. With his wife, Lois Jacqueline Cotton, working diligently by his side the business grew rapidly, requiring additional support. Seeking help, he employed a gentleman by the name of Joseph Woods who would become his first licensed Embalmer and Funeral Director.

In 1994, a second location was opened in Waco, Texas. This location is known as the corporate location. In 1999, his daughter, Andrea Jaquay McDowell, started working closely with him. It was during this time Mr. McDowell groomed Andrea by equipping her with the wisdom and tools necessary to be successful in the funeral home business. In 2000, she became Funeral Director in Charge to see her father's dream reach fruition as she co-labored with him daily in preparation to continue his legacy. Mr. McDowell was blessed to have both of his daughters, Madelyn O. McDowell-Butler, and Andrea J. McDowell as licensed Funeral Directors.

This family owned and operated business was flourishing and McDowell would often tell the community, "I just pay the bills, but I work for Andrea;

she runs the business." McDowell's offered much love, support and respect for Andrea's leadership style. He recognized her capability to follow in his footsteps as he allowed her to guide the reigns as she stood on his shoulders. He securely held his family and the business in his heart and in his hands, believing and thanking God for every blessing.

The vision continued to grow and in 2015, McDowell purchased property to build a third funeral home in Waco, Texas. This opportunity to improve and expand the legacy would take time, dedication, and hard work, yet it has all paid off. McDowell Funeral Home L.L.C has served the community for 30-plus years. In January 2021, when the founder and owner, Lester McDowell was called from labor to reward, his daughter, Andrea with twenty-five years of experience, became President of the family-owned and operated business. She holds a degree in applied science in Funeral Services from the Dallas Institute of Funeral Services being a licensed Funeral Director. In addition,



LESTER MCDOWELL

Andrea has a bachelor's degree in business as well as a master's degree. Going about her father's business, Andrea, along with others under her leadership, opened the third location of McDowell Funeral Home on November 24, 2023.

Andrea takes pride in her calling by rendering service in a distinctive way. Her work includes, but is not limited to, preparations of remains; dressing, casketing and cosmetizing; arranging end of life services, and ensuring the satisfaction of bereaved families

who call upon her. She credits her father as "the reason why." She works very closely with the clergy in the community by donating her time and finances. She was raised to understand the values of selfless giving, compassion, and service to God's people, both living and deceased. She has a passionate belief in mentoring and helping others. Andrea has instilled her values and

compassion for grieving families into her staff and believes it is their mission to serve every family with reliable and dignified services.

Andrea explained, "Throughout the years McDowell Funeral Home has helped families say farewell to their loved ones in an exceptional way with Our Mission of, 'Changing the Paradigm of Funeral Services.'"

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**LEE** | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

ning With The Real Opal Lee,” there was a sense of pride and appreciation for the sacrifices, struggles and hard work that lead to that moment. At age 96, Dr. Lee is very poignant, sincere, and determined in her charismatic approach to share very treasured memories of her quest to make a difference in the lives and living of her fellow Americans.

In a question-and-answer session, narrated by Delisa Burrell-Smith, a CRRC and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority member, Dr. Lee shared fond memories of growing up amid racism in Marshall, Texas in a household that was loving, stabilizing, and sustaining to her through very critical times. Despite all that she endured during her lifetime, her dream remains for all Americans to experience Equality and Freedom, two key components that are needed for Justice to reign. Making a pledge to walk and gather signatures in a 1, 400-mile walk, 2.5 mile increments at a time, from Fort Worth to other cities in North Texas, Dr. Lee reminisced about her journey and the strides made in her pursuit to gain national recognition for Juneteenth,

a celebration of freedom for slaves in Texas, who received the news of emancipation in 1865, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln.

Many miles and tremendous challenges resulted in Dr. Opal Lee going to the White House, meeting President Joe Biden, witnessing him sign Senate Bill 475, being named the “Grandmother of Juneteenth”, and carrying the banner for her work to establish Juneteenth as the eleventh federal holiday and the latest recognized federal holiday since Martin Luther King Day, observed every year on the first Monday in January, was named as a federal holiday in 1983. For her incredible efforts to make the world a better place, Dr. Lee has also been awarded three honorary doctorates, was named the 2021 Texan of the Year by the Dallas Morning News Editori-

al Board, the 2021 Unsung Hero of the Pandemic, Fort Worth’s 2022 Person of the Year, and a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize along with numerous other honors. Added to her honors, the City of Waco proclaimed June 23, 2023, as Opal Lee Day with a proclamation from Mayor Dillon Meek and the Waco City Council.

The energy Dr. Lee displays is inspiring, and her humble but compelling plea is for young people, those under the age of 96, to take the reins and intensify the fight for Justice. She continues to pave the way through her plans to open a seventy-million-dollar Juneteenth Museum in Fort Worth for which forty million dollars has already been raised. To untiringly share her voice and support, Dr. Lee is an author and inspirational speaker who proudly proclaims, “Juneteenth is not a Texas thing. It’s an American thing.”

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