

The Sojourner's Truth

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“And Ye Shall Know The Truth...”

February 28, 2024

The Milestones Honoree for Social Services



Tracee Perryman, PhD; CEO, Center of Hope Family Services

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Beyond Stigma: Issue 8's Vision for Mental Health Equity

By Rev. Donald L. Perryman, Ph.D.

The Truth Contributor



What inspired me [to research Behavioral Health] is the[false] assumption in mainstream psychology that Black people's depression looks the same as that of white people.

- Rheeda Walker

The conversation around mental health is finally gaining the traction it deserves, and Issue 8, the proposed 10-year, 1-mil levy to enhance mental health and addiction services in Lucas County, stands as a beacon of hope, healing and progress, particularly for our African American and vulnerable populations.

In our community, the deep-rooted stigma, denial, and shame surrounding mental and emotional health issues, combined with a cultural emphasis on strength, can discourage seeking help, perpetuating the belief that there's no problem until we interact with other systems, such as the criminal justice system.

Yet, research indicates that even when experiencing similar maladies as others, African Americans may underreport certain symptoms like suicidal thoughts, contributing to a unique behavioral health profile that healthcare providers do not recognize.

Professor, researcher and author Rheeda Walker's work emphasizes the diversity in how depression or other disorders manifest across different racial backgrounds, challenging the mainstream psychology assumption that these symptoms are uniform across races. Walker argues that cultural, social and historical differences significantly influence the mental health experiences of African Americans, making it crucial to recognize and address these unique aspects.

Fortunately, for the past several years, the Lucas County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board's (LCMHRSB) work has focused on the distinct mental health realities faced by African Americans, initiating a more nuanced understanding of mental and emotional wellness that takes into account racial and cultural contexts.

Recognized by the State of Ohio with the Health Equity and Awareness Award, the Board has integrated Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) principles into provider agreements and implemented an Equity-in-Action Plan.

Establishing partnerships with organizations like United Pastors for Social Empowerment (UPSE), the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA) and the NAACP underscores LCMHRSB's dedication to culturally competent care. These partnerships and efforts to educate caregivers on the unique needs of patients of color and to address historical mistrust are pivotal in creating a more inclusive and effective mental health system.

Additionally, the LCMHRSB hired a full-time DEIB Manager and required staff to undergo annual DEIB training. This dedication ensures equitable access to mental health and addiction services for all Lucas County citizens.

So, central to the argument for the levy is the disproportionate impact of mental health issues on African American communities. Issue 8 addresses these disparities head-on, with targeted initiatives to support youth, seniors and those affected by the criminal justice system.

Moreover, the levy's focus extends beyond mere treatment. It acknowledges the deep-seated stigma surrounding mental health in African American communities. It seeks to reduce it by fostering an environment where seeking help is normalized and encouraged. The planned enhancements in youth and senior care and innovative approaches to integrating mental health support within the criminal justice system signify a holistic approach to tackling these issues.

Yet, the stark statistics—one in five adults experiencing mental illness annually and a distressing increase in suicidal ideation among our youth—underscore the levy's importance. LCMHRSB efforts have provided treatment services to thousands (26,781 residents in FYE 2023). This growing demand for care and services highlights the critical need for the passage of Issue 8.

Therefore, the underlying issue for the levy is not the strength of our current mental health system but its capacity to meet escalating needs. These needs, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, societal pressures, and systemic inequalities, are alarming. The staggering rates of suicides among teenagers and increasing mental health issues among seniors highlight the critical need for enhanced support and resources.

In light of the alarming statistics regarding mental health issues among both the young and the elderly in our community, the levy's passage is therefore critical for both maintaining and expanding mental health services to address these burgeoning demands.

So, this initiative is not just a call for financial support; it's a call to action for equity and justice in mental health care and a continuing commitment to expanding services for our youth and seniors alongside innovative approaches to compassionate accountability.

As someone who has previously dedicated eight years to the Lucas County Mental Health Board, witnessed the struggles and triumphs of my own family within the system, and been honored with the inaugural Dial Award for developing a vision of Behavioral Health Equity

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... continued on page 3

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Trump ... I Know How to Pimp Black Voters

By Lafe Tolliver, Esq

Guest Column

A/k/a: An open letter to African American/Black/Negro/Colored Voters (take your pick).

If you have been casually watching some of the recent television footage of Donald Trump at the South Carolina convention of Black Republicans, you invariably noticed that Trump was doing what he does best...he loves to pimp out voters of color.

Using wild tall tales that cannot be factually corroborated, Trump used a litany of fabrications to tell those Black Repubs that Trump is their guy and always has been their go-to-person.

One of the most outlandish statements was trying to mesh with Black voters by stating that his \$399.00 gold colored sneaker is a huge hit with Black youths since sneakers and Black folks go together like French fries and ketchup.

Trump reasons that if he can promote a gaudy and hugely over-expensive sneaker shoe to DeMarcus and Leon, his name will be gold in the Black community because, as we all know, if you put an athletic shoe in a group of Black men, all common sense leaves the room, and the overwhelming power of the sneaker shoe will prevail.

Yes, that is how low Trump thinks of some Black consumers. We go "ga-ga" over shoes, any shoes regardless of the cost because buying expensive shoes is an indication of purchasing status in some communities where status is everything.

Or, Trump is now using the ruse that the flood of illegal immigrants (yes, something must be done at the southern border...no pass here for Joe Biden) is tantamount to those "others" taking union jobs from Black people.

Totally false that immigrants can go directly to union hiring halls and get skilled trade jobs without a host of prerequisite requirements being fulfilled.

Another scare tactic of, "they are coming to get your jobs!" Lest you forget, this is the man that excoriated Colin Kaepernick when he took a knee at a pro football game; and Trump called those protesters sons of b*tches, a/k/a: calling Black women, dogs.

And surely your memory can recollect when he accused Barack Hussein Obama of being a Muslim and not being an American citizen? At speeches before White audiences, Trump would purposely draw out the word, Hussein, to imply that he is, "not one of us."

Is all of this simply forgotten and hushed up by Black "Republicans?"

Trump vocally championed racist Nazis during their rally in Charlottesville when he said that there were "good people" on both sides of the rally.

If you were in New York City, back in the day, you would remember that Trump was cited for housing discrimination and was forced to change his rental policies because he did not want people of color living in his rental units.

How many of you have had family members either serving in the military or you suffered the loss of family member in any of the conflicts that the U.S. Military has been engaged in since the Civil War?

Well, for those who served or gave their lives in those conflicts, Trump says they were "losers and suckers!" A great guy to serve as commander in chief of the military forces!

In the final analysis, neither political party has always been a close friend to people of color but in present day America, the Trump brand of the GOP is toxic to the aspirations of people who still possess only one tenth of the wealth of White Americans.

Can you name any Trump specific economic programs that Trump fought for Black Americans to receive that were not part of the overall economic agenda that benefitted everyone anyway?

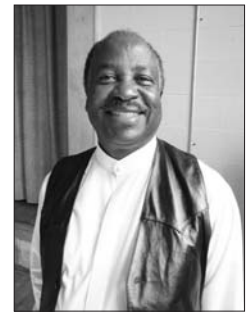
Trump has never and will go never to the ramparts on behalf of Black Americans because his rogue base of alienated and bitter White voters has told him and the feckless GOP in Congress, that people of color are no longer victims of systemic racism but rather White Americans now bear that burden! Go figure.

So, it amazes me that people like Ben Carson, Byron Donalds (Florida rep), Ye. Candace Owens, Clarence Thomas, Tim Scott (S.C. senator); and a host of others, still pledged undying fidelity to a man who has repeatedly expressed contempt or scorn for Black people.

So, when I hear that some Black voters are seriously considering voting for a con man, a fraudster, a convicted rapist (as declared by the trial judge), among a host of other anti-social acts, you gotta wonder, what is in it for them?

Character counts, or it should be; and Donald Trump has repeatedly and explicitly shown and demonstrated that he is totally void of anything remotely resembling a moral compass or having empathy (he could not even give condolences to the widow of the slain Russian freedom fighter, Alexei Navalny!) that should attract any voter.

Contact Lafe Tolliver at tolliver@juno.com



Perryman...continued from page 2

for LCMHRBSB, I've seen firsthand the transformative power of compassionate, culturally-informed mental health care.

My journey, from convening and leading the LCMHRBSB's initial Diversity Task Force to tackle critical issues like access to care and "cultural competence as the enforced rule and not the exception," has shown me the urgent need for equitable mental health services.

This work is personal to me, not just as a board member but as a family member navigating these challenges alongside loved ones. This investment is not just in services but in the very fabric of our community's health and resilience.

Let's unite to dismantle barriers to mental health care, support our youth and seniors, and build a stronger, healthier community for all.

Vote yes on Issue 8—because everyone deserves access to the support they need to thrive. Together, we can be the architects of hope, healing, and progress in Lucas County.

Contact Rev. Donald Perryman, PhD, at drdlperryman@centerofhope-baptist.org

Community Calendar

February 29

An Evening with State Rep. Elgin Rogers: Main Branch Library; 5 to 7 pm

March 7

Kwanzaa Park Neighbors Community Meeting: Padua Center; 6 to 7:30 pm; Guest Lt. Gina Shubeta – TPD will speak on neighborhood crime statistics

March 10

Indiana Avenue MBC: First pastoral anniversary for Rev. William and First Lady Brittany Foster; 10:30 am and 3:30 pm

March 31

80th Birthday Celebration for Edward Dixon and Scott Band Reunion: Scott High School; 1 to 5:15 pm



'An Evening with State Representative Elgin Rogers, Jr.'

State Rep. Elgin Rogers (D-Toledo) will host 'An Evening with State Representative Elgin Rogers, Jr.' on Thursday, February 29 from 5:00-7:00 pm at the McMaster Center of the Toledo Lucas County Public Library Main Branch.

The town hall event will give Rep. Rogers the opportunity to provide constituents with legislative updates, as well as receive feedback on the needs of the community.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will feature music from legendary jazz singer Ramona Collins and light refreshments. Space is limited so please RSVP by Friday, February 16th to Rep44@ohiohouse.gov.

Ohio Legislators Introduce Bills to Designate Ohio Black Media Week

Special to The Truth

State Reps. Elgin Rogers (D-Toledo) and Josh Williams (R-Sylvania) along with State Senators Vernon Sykes (D-Akron) and Michele Reynolds (R-Canal Winchester) recently introduced House Bill (HB) 368, and respective companion legislation Senate Bill (SB) 210, to designate the week of March 16 Ohio Black Media Week



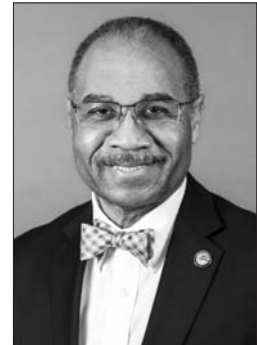
Rep. Josh Williams



State Rep. Elgin Rogers



Sen. Michelle Reynolds



Sen. Vernon Sykes

"I am excited to announce the introduction of these pieces of legislation, which seek to recognize the important work done by Black media outlets in the state of Ohio," said Rep. Rogers. "The Black press is vital to our democracy and the communities that they serve."

"The Black press has served as the information arm of the African American community for nearly two centuries," said Senator Sykes. "In a time when news outlets mostly printed negative stories about African Americans in their publications, the Black press proved vital in highlighting the positive contributions and newsworthy events of Black

people in this country.

Designating the week containing March 16 of each year as Ohio Black Media Week aligns with the National Newspapers Publishers Association's (NNPA) annual Black Press Week in mid-March, which seeks to amplify, promote, and empower African American journalism, and to keep the legacy and history of the Black press alive.

"We honor the profound impact of Black journalism on our collective history. Each story told, each truth uncovered, and each amplified voice serves as a beacon of resilience and progress," said Senator Reynolds. "In recognizing the vital role Black journalists play, we honor our past and empower our future. Their unwavering commitment to truth-telling and amplifying marginalized voices is essential in shaping a more just and inclusive society for generations to come."

"The right of Black Americans to free expression in journalism and media was fought for and achieved by the work of the Black press," said Rep. Williams. "These pieces of legislation honor their trailblazing work and the participation of Black voices in our media today."

"Senate Bill 210 and House Bill 368 are just small tokens of the abundant appreciation we have to the Black journalists whose dedication to the truth and passion for the facts have kept our community informed to this day," said Senator Sykes.

The progress of House Bill 368 can be tracked here <https://legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/hb368>. The progress of Senate Bill 210 can be tracked here <https://legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/sb210>.

Modeling is a career, it is not an activity.

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Tracee Perryman, PhD: The 2024 Milestones Social Services Honoree!

By Asia Nail

The Truth Reporter

In the luminous tapestry of Women's History Month, we proudly unveil the spotlight on one exceptional individual whose dedication to social services has been nothing short of transformative – **Tracee Perryman, PhD**. As we approach the *YWCA of Northwest Ohio's 2024 Milestones: A Tribute to Women ceremony*, we honor this distinguished woman for her unwavering commitment to championing education, dismantling barriers and fostering equitable opportunities for all.

Within the fabric of urban leadership, Tracee Perryman, affectionately known here in Toledo as Dr.P, emerges as a luminary figure, spearheading transformative change as the CEO of Center of Hope Family Services (COHFS).

Under Dr. P's visionary stewardship, COHFS, located at 4447 Talmadge Rd, stands as a paragon of innovative programs addressing the intricate layers of societal disparities. It unveils a mosaic of services that spans education, mental wellness, job readiness, court advocacy and family support, transcending conventional approaches.

"We started **Center of Hope Community Baptist Church** and our Family of Services in 1997; it was my freshman year of college," recalls Dr. P. fondly.

From the onset Center of Hope Family Services has ensured all educational programs encompass the pillars of Respect, Relationships, Real Change and RESULTS.

"Children have always gravitated to me so when I noticed during our Wednesday night Bible study that many of the kids struggled with their academics, we added tutoring for the children," explains Perryman.

What initially began as tutoring has now flourished into their signature programs **ELEVATE!** and **EMPOWER!**

The **ELEVATE!** afterschool curriculum, lauded for its 97 percent success rate, is set to become a nationwide beacon of academic, social, and emotional resilience. This initiative transcends mere education; it's a symphony of hope resonating across urban and suburban landscapes alike.

ELEVATE! is leading the way in afterschool education with a 28-week curriculum, delivered over seven to nine months, providing ready-made solutions for schools and organizations across the country, boosting social-emotional learning and academic performance for children K-3 and improving life outcomes for children and families.

"Our vision was to restore hope to our community by being a catalyst for transformation, intertwining holistic, Christ-centered ministry with the diverse complexities of contemporary life. Our work is deeply rooted in creating a lasting impact," says Dr. P.

COHFS also has a Global Trade Mission summer program in partnership with **International Strategic Management** which introduces students to science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STEAM).

"Our other signature program is called **EMPOWER! FAMILY NAVIGATOR**," explains Perryman.

With this signature program, Center of Hope gives families critical support in times of challenge providing family and parenting education. "We have found that kids are ok when their parents are ok and vice versa," she adds.

Moreover, the Navigator Program supports families impacted by the criminal justice and child welfare systems, providing vital linkages to mental health services, legal support services, ongoing family education and connection to community.

"My mother's father was a school principal in Alabama during Jim Crow and my dad's grandfather was also the founder of a church and was instrumental in helping people migrate from the Southern states during the Civil Rights movement here to Toledo to become established. I've got it honest!"

Today, Dr. P's family legacy still mirrors a profound commitment to education as a model for societal progress. In her parents' shared journey, Donald Perryman, PhD, and Willetta Perryman play pivotal roles as Chief Innovation Officer and Chief Program Officer respectively, embodying a dynamic fusion of familial heritage and professional excellence.

This family's dream to effect lasting change has metamorphosed into a powerhouse institution closing the opportunity gap with robust and well-funded programs. Their sustainable growth trajectory echoes in every success story they've written.

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Land Bank Hosts Vendor Engagement Meeting

By Dawn Scotland
The Truth Reporter

Lucas County Land Bank hosted a Vendor Engagement Meeting for local contractors and vendors Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at West Toledo Branch Library. The presentation informed local businesses in the community about how to qualify their business for work through the Land Bank.

The mission of the Lucas County Land Bank is "to strengthen neighborhoods and preserve property values by strategically returning vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties to productive use." Last year, the Land Bank spent millions of dollars on hundreds of property renovations and neighborhood improvement projects.

David Mann, president & CEO of the Lucas County Land Bank, remarked "We're in our 14th year doing that kind of work, we spend a lot of money doing that and we need help from local contractors to get that work done."

Whether a vendor is new or has received work in the past, the meeting was an opportunity to stay up to speed. All businesses were encouraged to attend, especially disadvantaged businesses, those with MBE & WBE certifications, and those whose employees are union affiliated.

The Survey conducted by the Land Bank in 2021 showed that there is a lot of work to do in Toledo. There are over 5000 vacant lots in the city. "Our goal is to bring back those vacant and abandoned properties back to some kind of state in which it's much better for the neighborhood... it's not just demolition... we are just as interested in fixing up properties, saving buildings and helping to create green spaces and neighborhood places," stated Mann.

Shantae Brownlee, senior vice president of operations and chief financial officer of the Lucas County Land Bank highlighted the existing work of the Land Bank including their Home Preservation Initiative that helps homeowners maintain and repair their homes. This project includes a free home visit, contractor guidance, and access to low-interest loans. The RISE (Rebuild, Invest Stabilize and Engage) that partners with neighborhood organizations on place-making initiatives, with the goal of creating neighborhood spaces where residents feel proud and safe. The Side Lot Program that gives property owners living next to a vacant lot that share a common edge of that lot with their property the opportunity to be able to buy the lot for \$150.

The Lucas County Land Banks Bids & Request page has additional information about current projects available. Contractors interested in partnering with the Land Bank should fill out the form online (visit: lucas-countylandbank.org/contractors).

To get work through the Land Bank:

- Contractors must be qualified
- Special emphasis on local, MBE/WBE, and union contractors
- Get requests for informal quotes or formal bids/proposal
- Get a contract
- Do a good job!

The Basic Expectations of the Land Bank is that vendors should:

- Understand Your Contract
- Act Professionally
- Pull Permits
- Keep Site Clean

Get paid within 15 days of completion:

- Do a good job!
- Submit an invoice and any required documentation.
- A review of submitted documents will be done.
- On-site inspections may occur.
- Contractor will be notified if work order specifications have not been met or if permits have yet to be finalized.
- Payment may be held until issues are resolved.
- Get Paid! \$\$\$

To learn more about partnering with the Land Bank as a contractor visit their office at Office One Government Center Suite 580 Toledo, Ohio 43604 call (419) 213-4293 . Or visit the Land Bank online at lucascountylandbank.org/contractors; Facebook [/lucascountylandbank](https://www.facebook.com/lucascountylandbank); Instagram [/thelandbank/](https://www.instagram.com/thelandbank/); TikTok [/lucascountylandbank](https://www.tiktok.com/@lucascountylandbank)



Local contractors attend the Land Bank's engagement meeting



David Mann, President and CEO of the Lucas County Land Bank speaks to the community about opportunities for partnering with the Land Bank

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Toledo Activists Discuss the Black Community

By Tricia Hall
The Truth Reporter

Community activist, Albert Earl invited the community to discuss the issues and solutions that impact the Black Community. The call to action was called, State of The Black Community: The Urgency of Now, was held on February 22 at the historic Frederick Douglass Community Center.

"We need to organize the community because one person can't do everything," shared Earl. "Everyone needs to be working on this collective action."

The discussion raised ideas and questions related to education, politics and politicians, access to basic needs like healthy food options, raising awareness, organizing and collective action. Community advocate Donald Lynn brought up concerns about cultural separation within the black community.

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Angel Townsend: The New Compliance Officer Sees the Impact of TUFCU in the Community

By Dawn Scotland
The Truth Reporter

Angel Townsend has been the Compliance Officer at Toledo Urban Federal Credit Union since October 2023 and is one of the newest members of the team. The work the credit union is doing in the community, including building a new resource center, is what attracted her to come on board.

Townsend is a Toledo native, graduating from Rogers High School and the University of Toledo. Previously she worked for ProMedica for 17 years as a medical appeals coordinator and, prior to that, at an attorney's office. She is also the co-owner of Townsend Remodeling with her husband Billy Dee Townsend and brings her wealth of experience to TUFCU.

Townsend mostly works behind the scenes researching and writing the policies for the credit union making sure that the business and departments are up to date. "I manage everything that the credit union needs to operate to be abiding by the regulations. We had to put new policies in place once we got over 15 million in assets." She ensures the credit union runs smoothly at the next level.

Townsend lives in the same neighborhood as the credit union and has seen the impact of the credit union firsthand.

"There are a lot of opportunities the credit union brings. The things that a lot of people in the area can't get going to a traditional bank, they're able to finance a car going through the credit union because we don't discriminate... we'll give them the loan. People are just bettering themselves with opportunities the credit union gives them."

"When I came on board, I knew Suzette was here for the community but, when I started, I saw people come in for prayer. You get all different types of people. It made me understand the reason we needed this resource center. You get people coming in saying they don't have food, they need resources. They come to us for everything. It's not just financial."

"We're here to pray with you, we're here to give you a hug, give you a comment." She remarked that the team has prayer in the office every morning and the community gathers for prayer the first and the third days of every month in the mornings at the credit union.

"There's definitely a need for the resource center so that they have somewhere they can go and have people there to help them with the services they



Angel Townsend

need and can point them in the right direction. That's what it's all about. Helping the community"

To learn more about the Toledo Urban Federal Credit Union visit their location on 1441 Dorr St. or their new second location on Monroe Street (former Fifth/Third at Swayne Field).

TUFCU offers checking, savings, mortgages, credit cards and loans, among other services, as well as a new down payment assistance program for first time home buyers and a low interest loan for home repair contractors.

Visit ToledoUrban.net or call 419-255-8876 for more information.

Toledo Activists... continued from page 6



Richard Quinn addresses the group

"We need to understand the system, the entire system, so we don't divide against ourselves."

In the area of education, the question and solution centered around ensuring that equitable access was provided to the estimated 4,000 four-year old's in need of pre-school education.

"We're close but the reality of change is fragile," said John Jones of HOPE Toledo. "The potential of unity is fragile. How do we get individual groups and systems to work together and stop competing against each other? An individual group can only do so much."

The discussion concluded and agreed to hold another discussion in March to create more structure.



Steve Harris Jr., Richard Quinn, Toni Battle-Gaines, Albert Earl

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Black Women Mentors Acknowledged at Speed Mentoring Event

By Tricia Hall

The Truth Reporter

Phenomenal Black women who have demonstrated leadership were acknowledged during a networking event held on Thursday, February 22, 2024. Women of Toledo in collaboration with TolHouse, Northwest Ohio Business Mentoring Program and Toledo African American Chamber of Commerce organized the event that welcomed a full house of interested ladies who wanted to receive mentoring from the 16 women.

"Thank you for being here," began Sierra Ortiz, Women of Toledo associate director. "What an amazing turnout. At Women of Toledo our mission is to educate, engage and empower. I also want to thank and acknowledge our founding members, our partners and staff."

Guests filled TolHouse for Mentoring on the Moment, a speed mentoring event. Immediately following the 5:30 p.m. registration and the welcome remarks delivered by Ortiz, additional notable leaders delivered remarks.

"African American Chamber of Commerce is an active part of the mentoring program," said Roy Hodge, president Toledo African American Chamber of Commerce. "The chamber is made up of entrepreneurs and we create wealth in our community. I



Pam Hych, Lisa Johnson and Olivia Holden



Crystal Harris Darnell, Terrie Cook, Tia Miles and Alisa Gafaney



Sharese Wilburn and Pamela Banner



Ebony Carter, Aikia Carter, Jerrika Brown and Tracci Kamille Johnson

recognize the great women done by Women of Toledo."

"My heart is full today," began Olivia Holden, executive director Assets Toledo. "Great to hear ... continued on page 12

Chef Sierra R & B Taste Experience

By Dawn Scotland

The Truth Reporter

On Superbowl Sunday, February 11, over 100 guests enjoyed private Chef Sierra Symone's R&B Taste Experience held at the Reynolds Reception Hall. This is the Toledo native's third event of its kind bringing an elevated night to the Toledo culinary scene.

Chef Sierra Symone, originally from Toledo, attended Bradford Culinary in Columbus, Ohio in 2013 and Owens Culinary School in 2015. She established SiSi's Pop Up Catering in 2015 and SiSi's The Food Truck in 2020.

Guests dined, danced and vibed to music by DJ Stevie Chanel while experiencing live art by painter Oshea Art and drinks by Allure Hookah Lounge for only \$75.

First course: Braised short ribs and gouda grits

Second course: Red beans and rice, honey cornbread and chicken wings

Third course: Surf and turf mac and cheese

Fourth course: Roasted chicken breast over mashed potatoes and arugula salad



...continued on page 12

Chef Sierra Symone, private chef and owner of Sisis The Food Truck and Sisis Pop Up Catering



Ariqua James and Katarina



Meshawn Graham and Latisha Lindley



Tracee Perryman... continued from page 5

Under Principal James Jones' leadership at local Robinson Elementary, for instance, a school that grappled with academic challenges for 35 years, was transformed into a thriving public institution after implementing EL-EVATE!. With a remarkable 70 percent reduction in suspension rates, the school witnessed notable improvements in both math and reading academics.

In our vast urban landscape, often individuals are treated as commodities, yet COHFS stands as a counterforce, providing tangible alternatives. The marginalized are not statistics but recipients of respect, dignity and a genuine investment in their potential. It's a shift from exploitation to empowerment, with tangible outcomes rippling through the fabric of communities.

In an era where individuals are frequently reduced to billable transactions, COHFS stands as a beacon of change, fostering a culture of respect and dignity.

"Our core values are: Authenticity, Accountability, Advocacy and Access," asserts Dr. P. "Every person we serve becomes an integral partner in innovation, not merely a statistic in our program."

Now for more than 25 years, COHFS has served as the vanguard, delivering a 594 percent return on social investment – a financial alchemy that translates into tangible improvements in the lives of those often marginalized or labeled as 'at-risk.'

Tracee Perryman has garnered numerous accolades and achievements, including the *Nonprofit Innovation & Excellence Award (2018)*, the *Ohio Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center Award for Academic Improvement in Reading and Literacy (2018)*, and recognition as a *Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Business Alumni*.

"We have been successful because we bring results. When I began this work we predominantly worked with urban schools. Now our work has spread to Sylvania, Washington and Springfield local school districts where the populations of children are very diverse."

It's crucial for companies to understand the importance of embracing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion not just as a checkbox but as a fundamental pillar of organizational success.

COHFS exemplifies the power of intentional programs that address closing gaps and uplifting marginalized communities, demonstrating that diversity isn't just a buzzword but a catalyst for positive change.

Amidst this landscape, the narrative has shifted. Black individuals are no longer seeking mere set-asides; they aspire for enduring equity and access. In this new age, the call for justice cannot be deterred. Right is right, and the struggle for equity isn't a "black" or "marginalized" issue – it's everyone's issue. Black History is not a separate entity; it is woven into the fabric of American History.

"I am optimistic about future data on the post-secondary educational outcomes of the children we've served. We are hopeful by the nation's commitment to stand firmly behind DE&I, ensuring a brighter and more inclusive future," shares Dr. P.



Tangible improvements go beyond mere numbers on a balance sheet; they manifest in the smiles of children who now believe in their academic prowess, the confidence of individuals securing employment as adults, and the resilience of families navigating life's challenges with newfound strength. These transformative changes underscore the profound impact of a dedicated educator on a mission.

In honoring Tracee Perryman's YWCA Milestones honor for Social Service, we acknowledge not just an individual but an architect of change. Her remarkable ability to seamlessly blend fiscal acumen with an unwavering commitment to social justice sets her apart as a phenomenal woman!

THANK YOU Dr. P for saving our kids and our families. Her narrative resonates as one of hope, beautifully etched in the hearts of all those she have touched. She is an inspiration and testament to the transformative power of dedicated leaders.

The YWCA 29th Annual Milestones: A Tribute to Women Awards will be held at the Glass City Center on Tuesday, March 19, 2024. Follow Dr. Perryman's work @ cohfs.org



2024 Milestones Honorees - Tracee Perryman, Bishop Pat McKinstry, Dawn Buskey, Catherine Hoolahan, Marie Bush, Eleanore Awadalla, Ann Heckler



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The Dialogue to Change Program

In order to have equitable communities, we need to face racism head-on. Participants will experience engaging and interactive in-person training designed for diverse groups of 10-20 participants.

Individuals will explore the profound impact of bias and systemic racism through facilitated exercises and discussions. All necessary materials will be supplied.

The Unitarian Church is sponsoring these sessions to fulfill its mission of "widening the Unitarian Church's circle" of involvement in the entire Toledo community. It is hoped that 10 participants will be from the Unitarian Church and 10 from other churches, entities or individuals in the community and that these dialogues might lead to building stronger relationships

throughout the community.

Alexii Collins, Racial Justice Coordinator at the YWCA NW Ohio, will be leading the sessions and providing the updated program and materials.

The sessions are planned for Tuesday, March 5 and Thursday, March 7 from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day at the First Unitarian Church of Toledo at 3205 Glendale Ave. in Toledo. Lunch will be provided. Funding for these sessions is provided by the education fund of the First Unitarian Church.

To register for these sessions follow this link: <https://forms.gle/aFX-5bu34gfK4maw59> or contact Alexii Collins, acollins@ywcawno.org, (419) 241-3235.

Announcing the Grand Debut of Our Members-Only Entrepreneurs Club!

Join us for an evening of elegance, ambition, and celebration at our exclusive Black Carpet Gala! This is not just an event; it's the beginning of a journey, bringing together the brightest minds and trail-blazing spirits in our community.



When: March 9, 2024

Where: The Entrepreneurs Club
222 Fassett St.
Toledo, OH 43605

Time: 8 PM – 1 AM

Why should you be there?

Network with Elite Entrepreneurs: Connect with like-minded individuals who share your passion for innovation and success.

Experience Luxury and Sophistication: Dress to impress and walk the black carpet where prosperity meets ambition.

Exclusive Insights: Be the first to hear about the future opportunities, and benefits that our club will offer to its esteemed members.

Support and Be Supported: Stand with fellow entrepreneurs as we embark on this exciting journey to elevate our businesses and personal growth.

Let's raise a glass to new beginnings, boundless opportunities, and the collective power of our entrepreneurial spirit.

Make sure to dress in your finest attire; this night is all about making a statement, celebrating achievements, and setting the stage for a future full of success and innovation.

RSVP now by replying to this email and secure your spot among the stars of the entrepreneurial world. Be a part of something bigger. Be a part of our legacy.

See you on the Black Carpet!

80th Birthday Celebration
Band Reunion Open House, Held at Scott High School For:
Family and friends, former Robinson Jr High and Scott High School band members and chaperones. Former "Dixon Band-Day" participants and Fishin' buddies.

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Creativity Comes Alive at TPS Fine Arts Festivals

Enjoy the creativity of Toledo Public Schools, as students put their artistic and musical talents on display during the upcoming Fine Arts Festival series. TPS offers a wide variety of art and music-related curriculum and programs. This allows a student to express themselves through painting, ceramics, photography and the musical performing arts.

Each TPS high school is partnering with the elementary schools in its learning community to host an all-inclusive event dedicated to the arts. Each event will be unique and will feature musical performances, art demonstrations, "Make it and Take it" art projects, and some schools will have student artwork for sale.

The TPS Fine Arts Festival events are free and open to the public:

- Thursday, February 22 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Scott High School
- Wednesday, March 13 from 5:30-7:00 p.m. Jones Leadership Academy of Business
- Thursday, March 14 from 5:30-8:00 p.m. Waite High School
- Saturday, March 16 from 9:00 a.m.-Noon Bowsher High School
- Friday, March 22 from 5:30-7:00 p.m. Rogers High School
- Wednesday, April 17 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Start High School
- Thursday, April 18 from 5:00-8:00 p.m. Woodward High School

Black Women Mentors... continued from page 9

from Roy, tonight is a great opportunity. I encourage you to lean on each other and stick together. I have been doing this for a long time."

The mentors delivered a two-minute introduction to all the potential mentees before moving to a designated location. The mentors were stationary as the mentees moved from station to station every five minutes with a two-minute break. Interested women who want to learn more about the WOT mentoring program can contact Lisa Halsey, WOT Program Associate Economic Development & Mentoring at LisaH@womenoftoledo.org

"It feels great to look around this room and see all of these women," began Audrey Johnson, founding member and past president of Women of Toledo. "I remember when I went to the first Women of Toledo meeting with Ramona Collins and I knew that I needed to be a part of this organization."

A sample list of mentors: Hope Michell, MD of Mitchell Dermatology; Tracie Johnson of Washtenaw Community College; Tisha Mays of aMAY-Sing Kids; Hope Bland, PhD. of Lucas County Children Services; Ronda Sewell of Toledo Museum of Art; Jerrika Brown of The Browns Business Consulting Agency; Terrie Cook of Simply D'Vine; Ambrea Miklolaiczky of Ark Restoration & Construction; Benita Robinson of City of Toledo; Sheena Barnes of Toledo Public School Board of Education; Ebony Carter of Minority Business Assistance Center; Crystal Darnell of Board of Lucas County Commissioners, Audrey Johnson of The Fair Housing Center; Ramona Collins a Jazz Legend; Brenda Holsey of Ohio Association of Beauticians Inc.; and Lisa Halsey of Women of Toledo.

For additional information about Women of Toledo, visit <https://www.womenoftoledo.org/>



Aileen Mendoza and Taylor Shettlewood

Chef Sierra... continued from page 9

Fifth course: Peach rolls with vanilla ice cream

"This is the third time I've been to [the event.] It's a tradition at this point. We're expecting good food and good vibes. I'm excited.... I feel like [Toledo] really doesn't have a food and vibe scene at all. I think she should do this more often," remarked Jenessa Otero.

Chef Symone offers a wide range of services including personal chef services, catering, meal prepping and more to provide delicious and memorable experiences. She also sells her own signature seasonings that can be purchased on her website.

The next culinary experience will be 'Savor & Sip' in the fall.

To learn more about SiSi's Pop Up Catering and Chef Sierra Symone visit Facebook: Chef Sierra Symone, IG @ChefSierraSymone & @SiSisTheFoodTruck or her website ChefSierraSymone.com





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DJ Stevie Chanel



Kiara G and Jenessa Otero

United Vision Baptist... continued from page 16

"My church has been such a great support in my business," said Tyla Jackon, owner of Dynasty Child Care. "They're always wearing my t-shirts telling people about my day care." Jackson's childcare center offers services for low-income families.

After service that Sunday, church members and guests could purchase items such as t-shirts, candles, food items.



How to Live Free in a Dangerous World: A Decolonial Memoir by Shayla Lawson

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

The Truth Contributor

Do you really need three pairs of shoes?

The answer is probably yes: you can't dance in hikers, you can't shop in stilettos, you can't hike in clogs. So what else do you overpack on this long-awaited trip? Extra shorts, extra tees, you can't have enough things to wear. And in the new book *How to Live Free in a Dangerous World* by Shayla Lawson, you'll need to bring your curiosity.

c.2024
 Tiny Rep Books / Penguin
 \$29.00
 303 pages

Minneapolis has always been one of their favorite cities, perhaps because Shayla Lawson was at one of Prince's first concerts. They weren't born yet; they were there in their mother's womb and it was the first of many concerts.

In all their travels, Lawson has noticed that "being a Black American" has its benefits. People in other countries seem to hold Black Americans in higher esteem than do people in America. Still, there's racism – for instance, their husband's family celebrates Christmas in blackface.

Yes, Lawson was married to a Dutch man they met in Harlem. "Not Harlem," Lawson is quick to point out, and after the wedding, they became a housewife, learned the language of their husband, and fell in love with his grandmother. Alas, he cheated on them and the marriage didn't last. He gave them a dog, which loved them more than the man ever did.

They've been to Spain, and saw a tagline in which a dark-skinned Earth Mother was created. Said Lawson, "I find it ironic, to be ordained a deity when it's been a... journey to be treated like a person."

They've fallen in love with "middle-American drag: it's the glitteriest because our mothers are the prettiest." They changed their pronouns after a struggle "to define my identity," pointing out that in many languages, pronouns are "genderless." They looked upon Frieda Kahlo in Mexico, and thought about their own disability. And they wish you a good trip, wherever you're going.



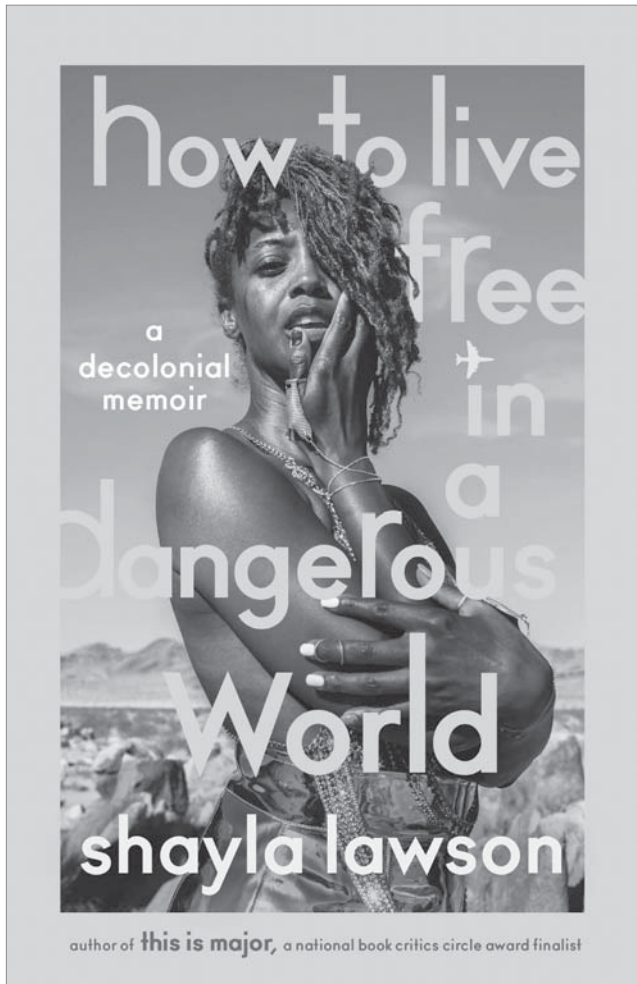
How to Live Free in a Dangerous World author, courtesy Nicholas Nichols

"No matter where you are," says Lawson, "may you always be certain who you are. And when you are, get everything you deserve."

Crack open the front cover of *How to Live Free in a Dangerous World* and you might wonder what the heck you just got yourself into. The first chapter is artsy, painted with watercolors, and difficult to peg. Stick around, though. It gets better.

Past that opening, author Shayna Lawson takes readers on a not-so-little trip, both world-wide and with observant eyes – although it seems, at times, that the former is secondary to that which Lawson sees. Readers won't mind that so much; the observations on race, beauty, love, the attitudes of others toward America, and finding one's best life are really what takes the wheel in this memoir anyhow. Reading this book, therefore, is not so much a vacation as it is a journey of discovery and joy.

Just be willing to keep reading, that's all you need to know to get the most out of this book. Stick around and *How to Live Free in a Dangerous World* is what to pack.



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'An Evening with State Representative Elgin Rogers, Jr.'

State Rep. Elgin Rogers (D-Toledo) will host 'An Evening with State Representative Elgin Rogers, Jr.' on Thursday, February 29 from 5:00-7:00 pm at the McMaster Center of the Toledo Lucas County Public Library Main Branch.

The town hall event will give Rep. Rogers the opportunity to provide constituents with legislative updates, as well as receive feedback on the needs of the community.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will feature music from legendary jazz singer Ramona Collins and light refreshments. Space is limited so please RSVP by Friday, February 16th to Rep44@ohiohouse.gov.

INVITATION FOR BIDS GLENDALE FIRE ALARM UPGRADES IFB24-B002

Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH) will receive bids for **Glendale Fire Alarm Upgrades in accordance with IFB24-B002**. Received in accordance with law until **March 8, 2024 at 3:00 PM ET**. For documents: www.lucasmha.org; 424 Jackson Street., Toledo, OH 43604; or 419-259-9438 (TRS: Dial 711). Bidders are required to meet Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity requirements as described in Executive Order #11246. This contract opportunity is a Section 3 Covered Contract, and any Section 3 Business Concerns are encouraged to apply.



PUBLIC NOTICE

2024-2025 ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

To all interested agencies, groups, and persons:

The City of Toledo is seeking comments on its **Draft July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 One-Year Action Plan** to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on or before May 17, 2024. The One-Year Action Plan is based on the HUD-approved Five-Year 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan submitted by the City of Toledo for housing, community, and economic development.

The One-Year Action Plan includes a description of the federal funds anticipated to be received, as well as other resources expected to be available within the City of Toledo during the 2024-2025 program year. The Action Plan provides a description of the activities to be undertaken when using these resources and the expected results of those activities. Also, the Action Plan depicts a geographic distribution of assistance including Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs) and the newly approved Junction-McClinton Nunn Choice Neighborhood Plan, special needs activities, general and public housing actions, and activities specific to the 2024 50th Year Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), 38th Year Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), 33rd Year HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), the Neighborhood Stabilization Programs (NSP) (if applicable), and the 2020 Lead-Based Paint and Healthy Homes Grant. In addition, the Plan will contain HUD-required certifications, as well as a summary of the community input received at the public hearings regarding the Action Plan.

The **Draft One-Year Action Plan** will be available for review beginning **Wednesday, March 27, 2024**, on the website of the following entities:

Department of Housing and Community Development
One Government Center, 18th Floor
Downtown Toledo, Jackson & Erie Streets
website: <https://toledo.oh.gov/departments/housing-community-development>

Lucas Metropolitan Housing
424 Jackson Street
Toledo, Ohio 43604
website: www.lucasmha.org

Office of the Mayor
One Government Center, 22nd Floor
Downtown Toledo, Jackson & Erie Streets
website: <https://toledo.oh.gov/government/mayor>

Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board
1220 Madison Avenue
Toledo, Ohio 43604
website: www.endinghomelesstoleado.org

Clerk of Council
One Government Center, 21st Floor
Downtown Toledo, Jackson & Erie Streets
website: <https://toledo.oh.gov/government/city-council/>

Toledo-Lucas County Public Library
325 Michigan Street
Toledo, Ohio 43604
website: www.toledolibrary.org

The Fair Housing Center
326 N. Erie Street
Toledo, Ohio 43604
website: www.toledofhc.org

Lucas Co. Board of Developmental Disabilities
1154 Larc Lane
Toledo, Ohio 43614
website: www.lucasdd.info

Public Hearings on the **Draft One-Year Action Plan** are scheduled as follows:

Thursday, March 28, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 1st Floor
One Government Center, Toledo, OH 43604

Thursday, April 4, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 1st Floor
One Government Center, Toledo, OH 43604

The City of Toledo will also receive comments from the public in writing beginning **Wednesday, March 27, 2024** through **Thursday, April 25, 2024**, at the following address:

CITY OF TOLEDO
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
2024-2025 ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN
ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER, SUITE 1800
TOLEDO, OHIO 43604

The City of Toledo supports the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you would like to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion ADA coordinator at (419) 245-1198 or submit a request online at toledo.oh.gov/ada.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT SERVICES RFP24-R002

Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH) will receive proposals for **Real Estate Development Consultant Services in accordance with RFP24-R002**. Received in accordance with law until **February 24, 2024 at 3:00 PM EST**. For documents: www.lucasmha.org; 424 Jackson Street., Toledo, OH 43604; or 419-259-9438 (TRS: Dial 711). Bidders are required to meet Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity requirements as described in Executive Order #11246. This contract opportunity is a Section 3 Covered Contract, and any Section 3 Business Concerns are encouraged to apply.



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROJECT BASED VOUCHERS RFP24-R001 F

Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority (LMH) will receive proposals for **Project Based Vouchers for the HCV program**. Interested parties should be owner/developers, management agent, and/or project sponsors for projects concentrating on Supportive Services. LMH has reserved up to 151 PBV for this rolling RFP. Received in accordance with law until **February 29, 2024, at 3:00 PM ET**. See documents: www.lucasmha.org; 424 Jackson Street, Toledo, OH 43604; or 419-259-9438 (TRS: Dial 711). Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity requirements (Executive Order #11246). This contract opportunity is a Section 3 Covered Contract and any Section 3 Business Concerns are encouraged to apply.



Call to place your ad: 419-243-0007

www.TheTruthToledo.com

Anita Lopez Encourages Early Voting, Touts Her Labor and Elected Officials' Support

The Truth Staff

"I want to be part of the changing of the guard," said Lucas County Commissioner Anita Lopez on Tuesday, February 20, standing in front of the Lucas County Early Voting Center and announcing the start of the early voting period for the upcoming March 19 primary. She also stressed during the press conference why she wants to win election to the post she was appointed to just month before.

Lopez, the longtime former Lucas County Auditor, emphasized the extensive organized labor support she has received as a number of such supporters, along with elected officials, joined her at the event.

Lopez is facing off in the Democratic primary against State Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson who has also emphasized her labor endorsements.

"The majority of labor actually has endorsed me," noted Lopez listing the support she has been given by the Building Trades, the various safety forces unions, Laborers Local 500, among others.

With Lopez during the press conference were a number of elected officials from around the county, such as Lucas County Recorder Michael Ashford, Lucas County Auditor Katie Moline, Scott Noonan of Maumee City Council.

Lopez listed as three key components of her platform the need to bring more jobs into the county, her desire to be as accessible as possible "to all areas and all groups, and her "county experience" that will help to bring "immediate change" to those areas that need change.

Moline, a former Toledo City Council Member, was appointed to the County Auditor position to replace Lopez after Lopez was appointed to the Commissioner post. Moline attended the press conference, she said, both to encourage voters to vote early and "to support my friend ... her experience at the county level means she will be forward looking and accessible and she will bring that experience to the County Commissioners' office."



Lopez is a licensed State of Ohio attorney and a graduate of Central Catholic High School, the University of Toledo and the University of Toledo College of Law.

She began her legal career at the Toledo Fair Housing Center and later joined the City of Toledo as Director of Purchasing, Contract Compliance and Affirmative Action.



LC Commissioner Anita Lopez thanks her labor and elected officials supporters

In 2004 Commissioner Lopez was elected as the Lucas County Recorder, and in 2006 she was elected Lucas County Auditor. Lopez made history as the first woman in Lucas County to be elected Auditor and as the first Latina Lucas County Commissioner.

She was sworn in as a Commissioner on January 8, 2024.

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Tanya, UTMC primary care patient

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United Vision Baptist Church Black Business Expo

Special to The Truth

United Vision Baptist Church and Pastor Perry Harris III hosted a Black business expo on Sunday February 18 in order to celebrate Black History Month and to showcase the goods and services provided by area Black-owned businesses.

Jack's Mens Wear, Lovely Creations, Manny's Kitchen, Dynasty Child Care, K & J's Kandles & Melts were a few of the businesses displaying their wares for the attendees.

"The church is a vehicle not just for the religious piece," said Pastor Harris. "It should be an active and vibrant part of our community. So this gives us an opportunity to give back to our community."

... continued on page 12

