

Volume 83 No. 8 *"And Ye Shall Know The Truth..."* May 8, 2024



Tina Williams, EdD, MBA; the Area Office on Aging's Director of Engagement

<i>In This Issue...</i>					
Perryman and Tolliver Page 3	Cover Story: Tina Williams Page 5	Human Library Page 9	Erin Baker at Habitat Page 11	Classifieds Page 14	Lupus Survivor Page 16
Jealous on Asthma Page 4	Black Wall Street Page 8	HOPE Success Page 10	Book Review Page 13	Mother-Daughter Cotillion Luncheon Page 15	



Tana Benford, Toledo Zoo VP of Development and Membership, Avis Files, Director of Family and Supportive Services, Pathway, Inc, Jeff Sailer, Toledo Zoo CEO & President

BU Goes to The Zoo!

Pathway Inc. Brothers and Sisters United Receive Support from the Toledo Zoo

By Avis Files and Michelle Bland

In January of 2024, Pathway Inc. Brothers and Sisters United received 50 sponsored memberships to the Toledo Zoo & Aquarium through the Community Partner Membership Program. The program works with partnering agencies to distribute discounted or sponsored memberships to underrepresented members of our community.

Zoo Membership benefits include:

- Unlimited year-round admission during regular Zoo hours.
- Free parking for one vehicle at the Anthony Wayne Trail parking lot.
- Zoo-wide savings: Members receive a 10% discount on food, beverage, and merchandise purchases! Enjoy Membership Means More monthly promotional offers, discounts on ride passes, and education opportunities.
- Unlimited *Lights Before Christmas* (reservations required) and Christmas in July admission.
- Reciprocal zoos and aquariums: 50% Discounted admission to over 150 zoos nationwide.
- Early admission and animal encounters from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. during Member Mornings on Saturday and Sunday, March-October. *Please note: Zoo opens at 10 a.m. Not all buildings/exhibits may be open.*

Pathway Inc. Brothers and Sisters United offers co-parenting sessions using evidence-based curricula for Fathers and Mothers to assist them with learning more about Fatherhood and Motherhood and then bringing them together to discuss co-parenting issues and concerns. Fathers and Mothers are provided with the curricula to keep and use for future reference, along with the opportunity to develop parenting plans that can be used to help navigate the co-parenting relationship. "It's organizations like The Toledo Zoo that make a difference in our community," said Avis Files, Director of Family and Supportive Services for Pathway Inc., the designated community action agency of Lucas County. Mrs. Files, who leads Pathway Inc. Brothers and Sisters United, stated that she is grateful for the Zoo memberships providing families who are underserved offers opportunities for Fathers and Mothers to share moments with their children and create lasting positive memories. 74 parents and 187 children received these memberships and look forward to using them.

"I am grateful that my family received Zoo memberships. This opportunity will bring joy and a great learning experience for my children. Thank you Brothers and Sisters United for your excellent performance. Thank you Toledo Zoo for the opportunity for my family. We appreciate all your hard work and dedication."--LaTecia Thomas and Family

"We wanted to say Thank you for the Zoo memberships, we hadn't been to the Zoo as much as we would have liked, but now that we have memberships we plan to go as much as we can. We really enjoyed taking our children to see and learn about all the different animals. We plan to go a lot this summer to explore all the Zoo has to offer. We just wanted to show our appreciation and tell you Thank you for everything-We are truly blessed."- Tony Coleman and LaKeitha James and Family

"We are grateful to the Toledo Zoo & Aquarium for thinking of us," said Files, "It is this type of collective community effort that will make a difference in the lives of the families we serve. Offering underserved populations these types of opportunities to see and do something different is the key to real community change. We look forward to our continued partnership with the Toledo Zoo."

For more information, contact Avis Files at 419- 279-0798 - Pathway Inc. Brothers and Sisters United.



Strong Fathers Build Strong Families

Engaged Leadership

By Rev. Donald L. Perryman, Ph.D.
The Truth Contributor

Organizational agility, innovation, and growth are really difficult without engaged [leaders]. - Ken Oehler



Congratulations to departing University of Toledo President Gregory Postel, MD, who parlayed his half-million salary in Toledo into a \$1.35 million position as senior vice president for health affairs and dean of the College of Medicine at the University of Cincinnati.

Dr. Postel brought a wealth of knowledge from his medical training and past administrative responsibilities, most notably at the University of Louisville, to his position at the University of Toledo.

However, his recent comments to The Blade expressing his excitement over focusing on medical issues and engaging with respected colleagues in Cincinnati demonstrate his strong dedication to the medical aspect of higher education.

More specifically, this change shows that Postel's involvement while leading UT was, perhaps, focused on specific sectors of the university, notably those linked with his knowledge and previous experiences, rather than a broad-based integration into the Toledo community or the university as a whole.

Indeed, Dr. Postel's time at UT was marked by considerable challenges, such as dealing with pandemic-related issues and financial instabilities, notably those concerning the University of Toledo Medical Center (UTMC). Despite these challenges, his leadership was notably appreciated for guiding the institution through these tumultuous times.

However, while Postel departs for greener pastures, the University of Toledo, like many other schools, continues to grapple with a major unresolved crisis: declining enrollment and the financial consequences that come with it.

The University of Toledo's spring enrollment has persistently declined, most recently dropping 2.9 percent from the previous year to 13,951 students. These results mark a significant decrease from the 23,085 students enrolled in 2010. In contrast, Bowling Green State University not only reported increases in enrollment but also achieved a record-high retention rate of 93 percent for new, first-time students.

Declining Enrollment and its Financial Impact

Declining enrollment and retention rates greatly impact college and university financial stability, mostly due to decreasing tuition revenue, which is critical for operating budgets. This decline in revenue raises per-student expenditures and may impact state and federal financing based on enrollment. Financial pressures may also reduce credit ratings, raise borrowing prices, and compel cuts in academic programs, faculty and student services, lowering educational quality and the institution's appeal. This fiscal uncertainty may lead to a never-ending spiral of future enrollment decreases.

Furthermore, financial insecurity lowers alum donations and external assistance, both of which are critical for funding scholarships and initiatives.

In response to low enrollment and retention rates, the University of Toledo canceled or consolidated 48 academic programs.

UT Provost Scott Molitor justified discontinuing the specific academic programs in order to reallocate faculty resources more efficiently. However, the university community reacted harshly, with students such as sophomore Nick Livucchi in disbelief and retired biochemistry professor Dave Dignam denouncing the changes as unwise and poorly motivated. This demonstrated a disconnect between administrative decisions and academic community expectations.

Effective Enrollment and Retention Management

Unlike roles where leadership may operate at a high level and rely primarily on team reports, successful enrollment and retention management necessitates leaders' direct engagement with data and active participation in day-to-day operations, according to administrators who have successfully delivered positive enrollment outcomes.

"What people don't understand about [retention and enrollment management] is it's not one of these administrative responsibilities where you can be at a 30,000-foot level and rely on your team to merely report. You have to get your hands dirty; roll up your sleeves."

Another administrator told me that you cannot have an enrollment vice presi-

... continued on page 6

A Tale of Two Cities

By Lafe Tolliver, Esq.
Guest Column

For those who read informational articles about governmental activity in other US cities, there is an interesting story developing in Louisiana regarding the city of Baton Rouge and a sizable portion of its land mass being annexed to form a new city called St. George.



It appears that the occupants of the land mass to be known as the new city of St. George have been fighting for about 15 years to be legally able to disengage itself from Baton Rouge proper and form its own civic and municipal government.

Lower courts blocked their appeal to be a self-governing entity but the Supreme Court of Louisiana recently gave them the green light to "disconnect" from Baton Rouge proper and form their own enclave of about 60 square miles.

When you dissect the demographics of this new city, you will find that it will be 85 percent white and will be quite wealthy to boot, meaning that Baton Rouge will lose a substantial tax base for its mostly minority population.

Losing that tax base means that the citizens of Baton Rouge will suffer a significant loss of public services, which invariably means, a lower station of life for the citizens who cannot afford to move to the new city of St. George.

The aftershock of this separation of the wealthy from the poor has resulted in the usual commiserations that without that tax base, Baton Rouge will eventually turn into a welfare city with rampant crime and inferior schools and lower property values.

That is a possibility unless the aggrieved citizens of Baton Rouge appeal to the United States Supreme Court and argue that such a disengagement of the two "cities" will propagate racial residential segregation now being condoned by law.

The proponents of this newly created city cite the overwhelming crime rate in Baton Rouge and the inferior schools as their reasons for such a separation indicating that the present government of Baton Rouge lacks the expertise and the spinal fortitude to control crime and to enforce housing codes so that Baton Rouge does not become a sprawling ghetto.

For 15 years, the proponents of this two-city formation have aired their concerns with the Baton Rouge officials and to the public at large, but to no avail as to Baton Rouge righting itself; and doing those acts necessary to promote a crime free environment...much less, safe schools for their white children.

When pressed about the real reason the white citizenry is determined to make this civic divorce, it was noted that the white folks who will make up the overwhelming majority of the populace of the new St. George are sick and tired of crime, graffiti, blaring boom boxes and the woefully inadequate schools.

A larger concern was also that their property values were stagnant or in decline due to their "neighbors or neighborhoods" being negligent in the

... continued on page 6

Honoring
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
"Everybody can be great...because anyone can serve." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

State Bank GIVES

State Bank GIVES (Gathering Individuals to Volunteer, Empower and Serve) is a Volunteer program created to provide local nonprofit organizations access to State Bank employees who volunteer their time to make a difference in the lives of the people and communities where we live, work, and play.

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Reducing Asthma's Burden Means Addressing Pollution, Climate, and Barriers to Care

By Ben Jealous

Guest Column

"Please Kyla, stop running, you can't run like the other children. You have to worry about your asthma."

That's what Kyla Peck's aunt who babysat for her would tell her growing up.

This week is World Asthma Day. As we look at Kyla's story, it is worth remembering her story is all too familiar among the 27 million people living with asthma in the US (about one in 12 Americans) – especially those living in cities like Chicago, where Kyla is from.

Kyla says, "My mother has told me about the countless experiences she has had with me in the hospital from an early age. One of the most memorable moments of me being in the hospital for my asthma came recently. I was home in Chicago from college, maybe 20 years old, and I had a really, really bad asthma attack. I was hospitalized for maybe about 12 hours. Then I received the bill. Even after insurance paid their part, I owed about \$500. I was in college; I had no money. It was my first experience dealing with the health-care system knowing that I'd have to pay for my own care. It was stressful, not only having to navigate the asthma attack but having to learn to navigate my own financial situation living with this illness."

A 2020 survey by Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and the Chicago Department of Public Health found that 16 percent of Chicago families have a child who had been diagnosed with asthma. That is well above both the 11 percent rate across Illinois and 12 percent rate nationwide.

Life in Chicago comes with exposure to an extraordinary number of asthma's causes and triggers. Like in other large cities, emissions from gas-powered vehicles contribute heavily to overall air pollution. Chicago is a national crossroads of commercial transport by rail, road, and airplane.

There is historically no shortage of power plant and industrial pollution,

including fine particulate matter. Ground-level ozone, a major respiratory irritant, is a problem in the region (ozone is formed when certain industrial pollutants interact with the air). And the northern Midwest and Great Lakes region are heavily impacted by the smoke from Canadian wildfires that are more common each summer.

A lot of these triggers are problems for people all over the country. Last summer, smoke pollution from wildfires in Canada blanketed much of the US, including Washington, DC where Kyla now lives.

"The impact of that wildfire smoke from Canada was significant. It was so bad, I remember I was in my car and my eyes were burning. I was driving in my car with a mask on because I couldn't breathe the air."

The wildfire smoke is expected to return this summer. It will be especially bad for residents of Chicago and others in the upper Midwest. And experts expect this fire season to be even worse than last year's because of "zombie fires" that have remained burning in Canadian forests throughout the winter under the snowpack.

Another important trigger for people living with asthma is seasonal allergies. One of the less discussed public health impacts of climate change is that both the length and severity of allergy season are on the rise. Among other factors, warming temperatures and higher quantities of carbon in the air contribute to various trees and plants producing more pollen and producing it for longer periods of time.

One recent study North America's pollen seasons from 1990 to 2018 found climate was a primary driver of allergy season lasting an average of 20 days longer. The same study found the concentration of pollen also went up by 21 percent over that time.

To mark World Asthma Day – and throughout May, which is Asthma Awareness Month – we should focus on preventing asthma attacks with the most comprehensive approach possible. That means making sure asthma medicines are in schools and co-pays for inhalers remain low – initiatives being pursued by organizations like the Respiratory Health Association and some members of the Illinois legislature. It means educating the public about asthma. It means tackling the climate crisis, which worsens allergy season and the prevalence of wildfires. And it means addressing all sources of air pollution from combustion engine vehicles to dirty power sources like coal and gas.

At age 14, Nathan from Skokie was one of many Illinois youth living with asthma who teamed up with the Respiratory Health Association and other groups to help pass Illinois' Climate and Equitable Jobs Act in 2021. He said, "It affects your everyday life all the time; it's not just when you take your inhaler, you're always thinking about it and it's always affecting you."

We owe it to Nathan, Kyla, and the tens of millions of children and adults in the US living with asthma to solve the pressing environmental problems making their lives harder.

Ben Jealous, former president and CEO of the NAACP, is the executive director of the Sierra Club and a professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania.

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f t y i

Empowering Aging Communities: Tina Williams's Journey at the Area Office on Aging

By Asia Nail
The Truth Reporter

Imagine a day when time and aging come together, like two old friends meeting again. In this special moment, as the sun rises and sets, we will all embark on a journey into the world of getting older. In the heart of Toledo, Ohio, thankfully, the **Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.** stands as a source of hope and empowerment for mature adults, persons with disabilities and family caregivers, securely guiding us all into the world of aging.

At the forefront of this transformative journey stands Katina Williams, EdD, poised and ready to lend a helping hand. A dynamic educator, polished speaker and relentless advocate for community service, Williams leads with passion and purpose, offering guidance to those in need.

As the newly appointed Director of Engagement at the Area Office on Aging, she brings a wealth of experience and passion to her role. With a background rooted in public education and organizational leadership, she is no stranger to the complexities of community engagement and outreach. But it is her unwavering dedication to serving the aging population that truly sets her apart.

Those who love her know Williams as Dr. Tina, and for her, the path to leadership at the Area Office on Aging has been paved with purpose and passion. Since joining the organization in 2016, she has served in various capacities, each role a testament to her relentless drive to make a difference in the lives of those she serves.

"For the past seven years I've served as the Director of Nutrition + Wellness Education and Outreach," shares Williams.

In this role, Dr. Tina supervised daily operations, facilitated educational workshops, and spearheaded initiatives to enhance the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers. Her efforts were not only instrumental in securing funding for vital programs but also in enrolling thousands of individuals in essential services like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

However, it was Dr. Tina's tenure as Kinship Navigator Program supervisor that truly showcased her leadership acumen and unwavering commitment to community service. In this role, she oversaw day-to-day operations, developed trauma-informed training for kinship caregivers, and facilitated support groups for families grappling with the challenges of raising grandchildren. Through her tireless advocacy and strategic partnerships, Dr. Tina raised awareness about the unique needs of kinship families and played a pivotal role in the development of the Ohio Kinship and Adoption Network (KAN), a program that continues to provide vital resources to families across the state.

Now, as Director of Engagement, Dr. Tina's vision for the future of aging communities in Northwest Ohio is clearer than ever. "We are building a future where the aging journey is embraced," she says.

"An important part of my role is leveraging work with stakeholders because we don't do this work alone, it requires many dedicated community partners."

Since its establishment in 1974, the Area Office on Aging has been rooted in a core mission: to foster independence and promote the health, well-being and safety of older adults. As a cornerstone of support for over 40,000 individuals annually, the agency touches the lives of countless families across a sprawling

10-county region offering a myriad of programs and services in collaboration with a network of 180 providers tailored to the unique challenges and aspirations of aging communities.

"I have a real passion for meeting people where they are," says Dr. Tina.

Dr. Tina's holistic approach extends beyond traditional care models, embracing the spiritual and emotional dimensions of aging. Her research on the role of spirituality in the lives of African American women who have experienced adverse trauma speaks volumes about her commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

In her personal time, Williams' impact transcends the confines of her office walls. As an ordained Elder at River of Life Church, she not only teaches the word of God but also conducts leadership training, empowering individuals to become agents of positive change within their own communities.

Navigating Trust Issues in Later Life

Trust is a fragile commodity, particularly in the later stages of life when vulnerability is high. Older adults may find themselves grappling with a multitude of trust issues, ranging from concerns about health-care decision-making to financial exploitation. This erosion of trust can have far-reaching consequences, affecting everything from personal relationships to access to essential services. Through its advocacy and empowerment initiatives, the Area Office on Aging plays a pivotal role in rebuilding trust within aging communities, fostering environments of transparency, accountability and support.

The Intersection of Nutrition and Health in Aging Communities

In aging communities, the intersection of nutrition and health holds profound significance, shaping the quality of life for older adults in profound ways. As individuals age, maintaining a balanced diet becomes increasingly crucial, serving as a cornerstone for overall well-being and vitality. "Whether it's struggles with health, the journey through aging, or the pursuit of a better life, we do our best to understand a person's unique circumstances and we offer support and guidance every step of the way," says Williams.

Still, navigating the complexities of nutrition can pose significant challenges, particularly for older adults facing issues such as reduced appetite, chronic



Tina Williams and Area Office on Aging CEO Justin Moor



Tina Williams, EdD, MBA

...continued on page 6

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Perryman...continued from page 3

dent who lives in Tennessee and commutes back and forth to the University, as UT was said to rely.

Equity Issues and Retention

Moreover, addressing enrollment and retention challenges in higher education is closely linked to resolving equity issues. Researchers indicate that the general decline in enrollment numbers has been particularly sharp among underrepresented groups. This insight aligns with the need for institutions to address equity gaps more aggressively.

In paying attention to the needs of underrepresented students and closing equity gaps, successful universities and colleges also reorient or modernize archaic faculty modes of thinking.

"Some faculty still think it's a virtue to flunk everybody, and so we've examined high-failed gateway courses and had faculty go through workshops to interpret the data, redesign courses, and then track their progress towards decreasing them," another source also told me.

These high-failure gateway courses disproportionately affect minority students. Therefore, institutions can significantly improve retention and success rates among their most vulnerable populations by transforming these courses through faculty workshops and data-driven redesigns.

Another aspect of the equity issue linked to enrollment and retention became particularly evident at the University of Toledo, where the university halted scholarships for Black and Latino students following the recent Supreme Court ruling on admissions.

This decision sparked a substantial backlash from these communities, prompting them to consider setting up independent foundations to ensure funds are used to support educational opportunities specifically for their communities "as originally intended."

Above all, addressing equity challenges in higher education requires a genuine commitment to understanding and meeting the diverse needs of the student body, thereby creating an inclusive environment that supports both enrollment and retention.

Future Directions

Dr. Postel's departure is undoubtedly a significant change, but it also presents an opportunity for fresh perspectives at the helm of the University of Toledo.

The challenges are stark, as highlighted by former Toledo Mayor Carty Finkbeiner, who noted the city's economic struggles and their impact on the university.

Therefore, Postel's successor must engage, immerse, and "spend a lot of time listening" to understand the institution's complexities to navigate it toward a more sustainable and prosperous future.

With "engaged leadership," UT can ensure it remains a vital part of not only the Toledo community but also the broader landscape of higher education.

Contact Rev. Donald Perryman, PhD, at drdlperryman@centerofhopeabaptist.org

Tolliver...continued from page 3

upkeep and maintenance of their homes; and thus causing a drag and a drain upon the value of their homes.

To be noted, Black people are not prohibited from moving into St. George but with the property prices in St. George being towards the high end, the probability of a flood of Black residents flipping from Baton Rouge to the new city of St. George is highly improbable.

It is not a stretch to opine that when white folks move out with their monies, the result is that those left behind may suffer due to the national statistic that white wealth is 10 times as high as Black income. Money rules.

And, if those Black families have the financial wherewithal to also move to St. George, you will then have a stable Black middle class leaving Baton Rouge and with that exodus, Baton Rouge will lose positive role models and intact families.

Speculators have reasoned that if such a dis-engagement is legally successful, you may see similar trends across the country wherein "rich" white areas such as Buckhead Place in Atlanta could also petition for comparable results.

The most negative results would be residential segregation being the law or the rule of the land if you can show that such voluntary separation or self-segregation is based strictly upon economics and race not being a factor.

If America is chafing at the bit to hunker down by everyone fleeing to their own self designed residential caves or bubbles, this land will be pockmarked with large expanses of residential areas populated only by people of either race who have given up on the American ideal of one nation but rather we have become, voluntarily or otherwise, an America of many nations.

Contact Lafe Tolliver at tolliver@juno.com

Tina Williams...continued from page 5

health conditions and limited mobility. In the face of these obstacles, Dr. Tina suggests that the role of nutrition becomes all the more critical, serving as a powerful tool in promoting long life, managing chronic diseases, and preserving independence.

From ensuring adequate intake of essential nutrients to addressing dietary restrictions and preferences, the Area Office on Aging plays a vital role in supporting aging communities in their pursuit of optimal health and wellness. Through nutrition education, meal assistance programs, and access to nutritious food options, the office empowers older adults to make informed choices and embrace a lifestyle that fosters vitality and vitality throughout their golden years.

The Challenge of Isolation in Aging Communities

Aging brings new challenges, chief among them being the pervasive issue of isolation.

In aging communities, the challenge of isolation casts a shadow over the lives of many. For individuals who may have lost spouses, friends, or family members, the sense of loneliness can be overwhelming. Think about it: limited mobility, health issues, and the loss of independence further exacerbate feelings of isolation, leaving many aging adults feeling disconnected from the world around them. Without social interaction and meaningful connections,

...continued on page 12

The Great Lakes Jazz Society presents...

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Publication Date 03/24

Black Wall Street Community Development to Host Speed Funding Event

The Truth Staff

The Black Wall Street Community Development is collaborating with Toledo JuneteenthNY to hold a Speed Funding Event on June 13. In preparation for that event, which will connect area Black-owned business owners with potential funders, the BWSCD is hosting a series of sessions in April and May designed to provide information to area Black businesses owners that will help them grow their businesses and prepare them to meet with funders.

On May 3, about 20 business owners met at The Entrepreneurs Club on Fassett Street to hear Alissa Mauter, CEO and founder of groundup Creative Agency, discuss branding strategies.

"Branding is not just marketing and advertising," said Mauter to open her talk. "Branding is how you are speaking to your audience ... how people are perceiving what you are doing ... how you are creating a space outside of your business."

Mauter is an entrepreneur and business professional. She attended The Ohio State University earning a bachelor's degree from the John Glenn College of Public Affairs. She works with business brands and individual brands through various services – consulting, social media management, photography, web design and graphic design.

"When we are talking about branding, goal setting is so important," she advised her audience of entrepreneurs.

She further advised her listeners to: have an understanding of your brand ... know why you need money when you are asking funders ... develop a strategy to obtain funding ... develop an ability to speak confidently about your brand ... use additional funding to help you get to the next level.

"Growth takes structure, planning and funding," Mauter cautioned. "But funding at the right time."

Last week's session was designed to last for an hour, including a question and answer period. Afterwards the attendees were able to network and exchange information.

The Black Wall Street Community Development, founded by area Black-owned media – The Juice radio station, The Sojourner's Truth newspaper and Stalwart magazine – is holding a series of such sessions – "Scaling Your Biz;" "Financial Snapshot;" "Business Plans;" "Marketing and Advertising" in upcoming weeks.

There will also be a general networking meeting at The Entrepreneurs Club on June 5.



Alissa Mauter



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The Toledo Human Relations Commission's Annual Human Library

By Dawn Scotland
The Truth Reporter

The Toledo Human Relations Commission hosted their annual Human Library at The Main Toledo Library Branch Saturday April 27, 2024. The event featured 22 human books that participants could 'check out' for 15-minute conversations.

The event aims to remove barriers that divide people by having open dialogue. First started in 2000, the idea was brought to the Human Relations Commission from Owens Community College. Since its inception the event has grown every year to include even more 'books' and 'readers'.

Each participant this year was voted on by the community. The 'human books' created a title for their life stories as well as physical table displays. Participants had three hours to connect at the event and listen to an address given by Key-note speaker Erin Baker, Chair of the Human Relations Commission.

"The whole idea is that [the event] facilitates conversations between people who you might not normally come in contact with...[and] to be introduced to ideas, concepts [and] lifestyles that might not be ones that may be in your immediate circle. It's all about building bridges through conversation to break down barriers and to overcome prejudice and biases which is kind of core to what the Human Relations Commission is all about," stated Baker.

2024 Human Books Included:

- Alexicia Sims, educator
- Benita Robinson, Gender Equity manager for City of Toledo Department of Diversity



Above (L-R): Erin Baker, Chair of the Human Relations Commission and Caryn Maloney, Commissioner of the Human Relations Commission. Seated (L-R): Nina Corder, First Vice Chair of the Human Relations Commission and Theresa Alvarado, Chair of Youth Empowerment and Engagement

- Dejah Griffith, executive director of Lean on Me Foundation
- Victor Coleman, motivational speaker
- Erin Baker, keynote speaker

...continued on page 11



Gabrielle Makiira, former Kid Mayor of Toledo and her human book display



Judy Lee (Nur-un-nisa) Trautman shares her life's story Compassion, Leading from the Heart



Leila Harris, age 11, and her human book entitled The Power of Kindness - How Small Acts Can Make a Big Difference



Participants line up to check out 'human books' at the Toledo Main Branch Library



There were 22 human books on display at the Main Branch Saturday April 27



Physician Arvind Mistry, MD shares his journey shaped by Uganda's turbulent regime

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HOPE Toledo Success Milestone: The First Student Scholars Graduate with Baccalaureate Degrees

Special to The Truth

Two scholars from the HOPE Toledo Promise program graduated with their four-year degrees this past month. Wakeso Peterson, Jr. received his degree from Bowling Green State University on April 26, while Mario Purifie Jr. graduated from Wright State University on April 27. Both scholars graduated from Jesup W. Scott High School in Toledo in 2020 and are among the inaugural class of HOPE Toledo Promise Scholars.

HOPE Toledo Promise is the first fully funded, two-generation scholarship program in the United States. Through mentorship, wraparound support, and financial aid, the program aims to help students achieve their educational goals and break the cycle of poverty.

“Multigenerational education and community support are vital to the success of Toledo’s students, future workforce and a strong economy. We are honored and proud to see Wakeso and Mario walk across the stage and we look forward to seeing the positive impact they will make in our community and beyond,” said Shawna Woody, vice president of operations for HOPE Toledo.

Wakeso Peterson, Jr. graduated from Bowling Green State University with a bachelor of science degree in architecture and environmental design. He is interning at SSOE Group, an internationally ranked architecture and engineering firm headquartered in Toledo, Ohio.

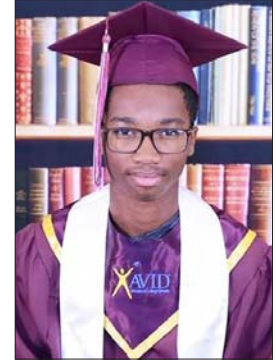
Mario Purifie, Jr. graduated from Wright State University with a bachelor of arts degree in crime and justice studies with a double minor in legal studies and deaf studies. This summer, he will work with a team that facilitates grand openings for restaurants across the country in the Chick-Fil-A network.

“HOPE Toledo has been a major support, guiding me through every step of my postsecondary educational journey. From early childhood education to postsecondary training, their unwavering commitment to ensuring every young person in Toledo receives a high-quality education has empowered me to pursue my dreams and create a better future for myself and my community,” said Purifie.

HOPE Toledo is a 501(c) 3 organization and encompasses HOPE Toledo Pre-K and HOPE Toledo Promise. The mission of HOPE Toledo is to work with the Toledo community to support and ensure high-quality educational experiences for all of our youth, from preschool to postsecondary and trade school, to help to create generational economic change for the betterment of our families and our community.



Mario Purifie, Jr



Wakeso Peterson, Jr.

Currently, 36 percent of the people in the TPS district are living below the poverty line and more than 70 percent of kids in Lucas County enter kindergarten without the skills needed to learn.

This cradle-to-career approach will better serve our children and, in the long run, help our region progress toward a stronger, more educated workforce. To that end, HOPE Toledo is working with the Toledo community, through public/private partnerships and in tandem with Toledo Public Schools Washington Local Schools, other school districts, as well as a broad range of community-based agencies, to develop a plan to deliver high-quality educational experiences for all of our youth. For more information or to donate, visit hope-toledo.org.

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Find out if you qualify at myohiohome.org.



Erin Baker Named New Director of Development and Engagement for Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity

Special to The Truth

Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity has announced the appointment of Erin Baker as its new Development and Engagement Director. Baker brings a wealth of experience and a strong commitment to community service, making her an invaluable addition to the MVHFH team.

Before joining MVHFH (Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity), Baker was on the leadership team at the Toledo Lucas County Public Library as The Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. With over a decade of experience in marketing, leadership, and forging community partnerships, Baker is poised to drive MVHFH's mission forward.

"Housing is not only a crucial aspect of my past but also a cornerstone of my future," said Baker. "I have passionately served MVHFH for years and deeply honored to join the organization to further advance equitable opportunities for safe and affordable housing for all. I look forward to assisting with creating spaces of belonging to ensure that everyone has a place to call home."

Baker is an active member of MVHFH's Women Build committee and previously served as a Board of Trustee.

"We are delighted to welcome Erin Baker on staff at Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity. Her passion for affordable housing and her extensive ex-

perience in nonprofit leadership make her an ideal fit for our organization," said Erin McPartland, executive director, Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity.

In her new role as Development and Engagement Director, Baker will leverage her expertise to cultivate partnerships, mobilize more resources, and advocate for advancing the organization's mission of building homes, communities, and hope.

Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity (MVHFH) is committed to building a world where everyone has a decent and affordable place to live. In Lucas County, their homeownership program provides the opportunity to purchase a home with a zero percent interest mortgage for qualifying program participants. MVHFH's Home Preservation programs complete critical home repairs, like roof replacement, code upgrades, and lead abatement, for qualifying program participants that already own their home. Discover more about the impactful work of Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity, visit mvhabitat.org today.



Erin Baker

LMH Hosts a Tom Seeman Q & A Session

By Dawn Scotland
The Truth Reporter

Lucas Metropolitan Housing hosted a book Q&A session with Tom Seeman, author of *Animals Want To See: A Memoir of Growing Up in the Projects and Defying the Odds* Wednesday, April 24 at TolHouse. In his debut work, Seeman, a Toledo native, details his life growing up in housing projects in Toledo to becoming a graduate of Yale and Harvard and a successful businessman.

"A lyrical coming-of-age story set in the projects of Toledo, Ohio, *Animals I Want To See* explores themes of identity, ambition, religion, and friendship—often across racial and social lines—as it spotlights a family of fourteen and tracks a boy's journey from a child janitor with big dreams to a teenage petty criminal to a student at Yale and Harvard" (source: PostHillPress.com).

Seeman's journey started in the projects in the 60's and 70's in Toledo, OH on Bronson Street. His debut memoir depicts his family life, hardships as well as triumphs from a young age into adulthood highlighting the help and lessons he learned along the way. Seeman received a scholarship from St. Francis de Sales High School which greatly changed the trajectory of his life. He then went on to graduate summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Yale, nail a perfect score on his LSATs, and attend Harvard Law.

Tom Seeman shares the most important lesson he's learned: "Every act of kindness, no matter how small makes a difference." And every day, he tries to do something kind for a stranger. "Some days it's something small, like letting someone into my lane in traffic," he acknowledges, "and some days it's something sizable, like creating a scholarship for underserved kids... Most days, my promise falls somewhere in between." He hopes *Animals I Want To See* will inspire readers to both believe in their own ability to defy odds and be kinder to others. (source: ToledoLibrary.org).

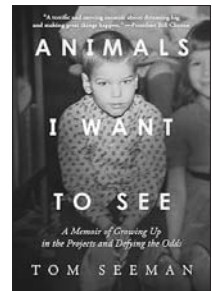
Tom Seeman is a businessperson who has owned and led several businesses. He grew up in a family of 14 on welfare and food stamps in the projects of Toledo, Ohio.

Seeman currently serves on the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston and on the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He funded a scholarship that actively seeks disad-

vantaged students to attend St. Francis de Sales High School in Toledo—the school that generously gave him a scholarship and that he credits for helping him fulfill his dream of attending a top college. He has worked across the globe, has lived in five countries, and has traveled to over 100.

He lives in Massachusetts with his wife, four children, three dogs, and a cat. (source: www.tomseemanauthor.com/)

Tom Seeman will have an Author! series at the Toledo Library Thursday, May 23 from 7-8 p.m. at the Main Branch. To learn more visit toledolibrary.org.



Human Library... continued from page 9

- Jesse Squire, educator
- Jessica Vallejo, doula and licensed massage therapist
- Leila Harris, student (11 years old)
- Mykal Mims, violence interrupter for the City of Toledo
- Sierra Ortiz, associate director of Women of Toledo
- Sierra Webb, community advocate
- Arvind Mistry, MD, physician
- Tony Dible, Overdose Prevention Program coordinator at the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department
- Sugar Vermonte, entertainer
- Sena Mourad Friedman, former

- VP of Operation, Communications and Development at the Fair Housing Center
- Nikki Orlovski, transgender artist & model
- Kathryn Tucker, senior vice president, and regional manager of PNC, Bank
- Judy Lee (Nur-un-nisa) Trautman, initiate of Sufi Ruhaniat International
- Gabrielle Mukira, former Kid Mayor of Toledo
- Frida Guzman, founder of "Frida's Boutique"

... continued on page 12

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Opera Outdoors Returns for Spring 2024

Opera Outdoors returns this May with weekly performances at Wildwood Preserve Metropark. The first performance will take place on the front lawn at the Manor House at Wildwood Preserve Metropark on Wednesday, May 8, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. In the event of inclement weather, the performance will be moved indoors to the Manor House.

Opera Outdoors is a series of pop-up live performances at outdoor commercial, recreational, and community hubs throughout Toledo. The upcoming fall series will feature the Opera's 2023-2024 cohort of resident artists, selected from an international pool of more than 150 applicants for a one-year residency in Toledo. Resident Artists Sara Mortensen (soprano), Imara Miles (mezzo-soprano), Jon Suek (tenor), Evan Fleming (baritone), and Steven Naylor (pianist) will perform iconic vocal selections from the classical repertoire, along with musical theatre and other American standards.

"Since the program's inception in fall of 2020, Opera Outdoors has become a part of our core programming" said Suzanne Rorick, Executive Director of the Toledo Opera. "We are honored to work along side our fantastic community partners to share engaging and accessible live music from the vocal repertoire with everyone."

Opera Outdoors Schedule: Spring 2024

Wednesday, May 8
Wildwood Preserve Metropark
6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 15
Wildwood Preserve Metropark
6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 22
Wildwood Preserve Metropark
6:00 p.m.



Imara Miles

The performances are presented in partnership with Metroparks Toledo, Toledo.com, and ProMedica. All events are free and open to the public. For more information, please visit toledoopera.org. For media access, or for more information, please contact Rachael Cammarn at rcammarn@toledoopera.org.

Tina Williams... continued from page 6

mental and emotional well-being can suffer, leading to increased rates of depression and anxiety.

"For many older adults, we serve as a lifeline to human connection," says Williams. Addressing the challenge of isolation requires a multifaceted approach, including community outreach programs, support groups, and initiatives that promote social engagement."

Recognizing the importance of community and connection in battling isolation, the Area Office sprang into action by establishing meal sites. Among these efforts was the creation of the congregate hot meal site in the historic Vistula neighborhood, effectively countering social isolation. This initiative emerged as a tangible solution to address the pressing issue, demonstrating the office's commitment to fostering a sense of belonging among older adults.

Breaking Down Income Barriers Among Older Adults

In a society where financial security is often equated with worth and value, older adults often face income barriers that can hinder their ability to live with

dignity and independence. From inadequate retirement savings to limited access to affordable housing, the specter of financial insecurity looms large for many aging individuals.

"At the Area Office on Aging we are committed to breaking down these barriers," shares Williams. "We advocate for policies and programs that promote economic empowerment and financial stability among older adults." Through initiatives such as income assistance programs and financial literacy workshops, the office seeks to ensure that no one is left behind due to economic hardship.

With Tina Williams' leadership, the Area Office on Aging is poised to continue expanding its reach, deepening its impact, and empowering even more individuals to live with dignity, independence, and purpose.

Discover more: areaofficeonaging.com

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For upcoming events

Human Library... continued from page 11

- Diana Vasquez, outreach specialist for Save Our Community
- Devon Fitzpatrick, social worker
- Aviance Hill, co-founder of Sisters 4 Unity
- Alona Matchenko, president of Toledo Helps Ukraine
- To learn more about the Human Relations Commission visit: www.hrc.toledo.oh.gov

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Books on Mothers and Motherhood by various authors

By Terri Schlichenmeyer
The Truth Contributor

Everybody's had one at least once in their lives.

Some people get two or more, while others don't currently have any. Whatever your situation, this is a good time to read about mothers and being somebody's Mom, so why not try one of these great books...

These days, science has a lot to do with being a mother and ***I Cannot Control Everything Forever*** by **Emily C. Bloom** (St. Martin's Press, \$29.00) takes things a bit farther. When Bloom wanted to become pregnant, she had to rely on science and when her daughter was born with congenital deafness and was later diagnosed with other maladies, she relied on science again. This is a beautiful book, perfect for mothers who've been "there."

Sometimes, just trying to be someone's Mom isn't easy. In ***Inconceivable*** by **Valerie Bauman** (Union Square, \$27.99), you'll read about the author's encounters with the sperm donor market, the costs both physically and economically, and what the experts say about this unregulated industry.

On the flip side, anyone who's taking a different, alternative route to motherhood may like ***Relinquished: The Politics of Adoption and the Privilege of American Motherhood*** by **Gretchen Sisson** (St. Martin's Press, \$29.00). It's a look at the women who give birth but must let go of their children, and what it's like from that side of the adoption.

To understand motherhood in America today, read ***Broken: Transforming Child Protective Services*** by **Jessica Pryce** (Amistad, \$28.99). This book is an investigation into what the author says is a biased system that "disproportionately" targets mothers of color in America and that wrecks havoc on Black families, including separation. It's an eye-opening tale that will chill the blood of any parent, anywhere.

On a totally lighter note, if you grew up reading about Evil Step-Mothers in fairy tales, then you should look for ***The Book of Mothers*** by **Carrie Mullins**

c. 2024
various publishers
\$20-\$29.00
various page counts

(St. Martin's Press, \$29.00). This interesting book takes a look at fifteen classic novels featuring maternal figures you'll recognize. From Austin to Alcott, Woolf to Walker and eleven other authors in between, this is a fun book but also a serious peek at what literature has had to say about mothers and how it's shaped American motherhood.

And finally, if you've had one of those weeks and you need to laugh, look for ***Momma Cusses*** by TikTok'er **Gwenna Laithland** (St. Martin's Essentials, \$20.00). It's a funny, sardonic, but dead-on look at being a mother, from a point of view of someone who has kids and knows how to raise them – sometimes, with patience. Bonus: some of the advice is serious stuff that you'll ultimately be glad you've read.

And if this isn't enough for you or the Mom or Mother-to-Be you know, then ask your favorite bookseller or librarian. They know what you'll need, whether it's advice for getting pregnant, staying pregnant, or exploring pregnancy; words of wisdom for the Mom of a newborn or a new adult; or just good reads for relaxing because you deserve it. Every mother does.

Sherece Harris... continued from page 16

anything or that anything is wrong. You wouldn't know anything is going on unless we tell you. We all still look great!"

Out of her family she has been diagnosed the longest. And often had to face her toughest battles alone. Harris decided to create the Facebook group called 'Living with Lupus'.

"Since I've dealt with it so long," she stated, "I try to help other people to have a better understanding." Harris recommends doctors, offers support and resources on her page. "Just to let people know that you're not by yourself dealing with this."

Harris has advice for other people dealing with the disease.

"Don't feel like this is the end because it's not the end. I'm a living witness that it can go into remission, and it can be treated...Don't let it control your life. You control it.

"It's going to look like it's not getting better... It will get better. Just take care of yourself and pray." She is a member of Walk the Word Ministries.

"I have a lot of scars and I used to be so embarrassed of my scars but now... these are my war wounds," she shared.

May is Lupus Awareness Month. To learn more about the disease, help fundraise and support those affected visit lupus.org.

The Toledo Living with Lupus weekend includes: a bowling night from 7 to 11 p.m. on Friday, May 17 at All Strikes Lane; a wig giveaway on Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. at 1010 Dorr Street; a karaoke event at The Trunk on Saturday night from 7 to 11 p.m.; the Walk at Ottawa Park on Sunday starting at 9 a.m.

For more information email – royrachel@aol.com.



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LEGAL NOTICE TO BIDDERS TOLEDO LUCAS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY MAIN BRANCH LIBRARY AHU REPLACEMENT

Sealed proposals will be received at the main Toledo Lucas County Public Library, 325 N. Michigan St., Toledo, Ohio, 43604 (Dispatch Office addressed to the Fiscal Officer) until May 14, 2024, 12:00 P.M. to be opened immediately thereafter for furnishing the necessary labor, equipment, tools and materials for Main Branch Library AHU Replacement

Copies of the bid and contract documents including instructions to bidders and specifications may be obtained, upon deposit of \$25.00 (twenty-five dollars) in cash or check for each set, from the office of Buehrer Group Architecture & Engineering, Inc.; 314 Conant Street, Maumee, Ohio 43537. Electronic documents are available at no cost. **NOTE: CASH DEPOSITS WILL NOT BE REFUNDED. If within ten (10) days after the opening of bids**, documents are returned undamaged, deposits **paid by check** will be fully refunded. The bid and contract documents shall be on file, for inspection, at the office of Buehrer Group Architecture & Engineering, Inc. 314 Conant Street, Maumee, OH 43537.

Each bid shall be accompanied by a Bid Guarantee and Contract Bond in the amount of 100% of the bid; or a certified check; cashier's check or letter of credit in the amount of 10% of the bid which will require a 100% Performance Bond upon award of the contract. All bids shall be submitted on forms of proposal supplied by the Architect. All bidders, by bidding, agree to pay wages not less than the minimum as determined by the State of Ohio, Department of Industrial Relations, and agree to comply with Executive Order No. 11246 of the President of the United States.

The Board of Trustees, Toledo Lucas County Public Library reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any irregularities in bidding. No Bidder may withdraw his or her bid for a period of sixty (60) days after bid opening.

A voluntary pre-bid meeting will be held at 11:00 am local time, on May 7, 2024, at Main Branch Library, 325 N. Michigan Street, Toledo, OH 43604.

By order of the Board of Trustees, Toledo Lucas County Public Library.

INVITATION FOR BIDS RICHMAR MANOR SITE RENOVATIONS IFB24-B008

Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH) will receive bids for **Richmar Manor Site Renovations in accordance with IFB24-B008**. Received in accordance with law until **May 27, 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.



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS HCVP – HQS INSPECTION SERVICES RFP24-R003

Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH) will receive proposals for **HCVP – HQS Inspections Services in accordance with RFP24-R003**. Received in accordance with law until **May 9, 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.



Public Bid Advertisement (Electronic Bidding) State of Ohio Standard Forms and Documents

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Lucas County, OH

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Domestic steel use is required per ORC 153.011.

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Contract	Estimated Cost
General Contract	\$5,100,000
Alternate 1 – Phase III	\$500,000
Alternate 2 – Tunnel Washer Ductwork	\$150,000

Pre-bid Meeting: May 14, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. – The University of Toledo, Health Science Campus, Health Education Building - Room 103, 3100 Transverse Drive, Toledo, OH 43614

Walk-Through: Immediately following Pre-Bid.

Bid Documents: Available electronically at <https://bidexpress.com>.

More Info: The JDI Group, Inc., Sarah Penner, 419-725-7161 ext. 257, Spenner@thejdigroup.com

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL MOVING SERVICES RFP24-R004

Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH) will receive proposals for **Residential & Commercial Moving Services in accordance with RFP24-R004**. Received in accordance with law until **May 17, 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.



The 56th Annual Debutante Cotillion Mother-Daughter Luncheon

The Truth Staff

It's back!!

After a hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Debutante Cotillion, sponsored by the NANBPWC, Inc Toledo Club, has returned. Last Saturday, May 4, the 56th Annual event continued with the customary Mother-Daughter Luncheon at the Inverness Country Club.

Karen Jarrett, Cotillion cochairman, served as the mistress of ceremonies for the luncheon. The welcome for this year's five debutantes and their mothers or guardians was given by Toledo Club President Tyra Smith. Smith introduced the North Central District Governor Denise Black Poon and the attending Club members.

Club Chaplain Tommie Lee McGhee offered the invocation.

The luncheon offered members an opportunity to continue the restart of a tradition that included 54 Cotillions through May 2019. The 55th Cotillion was cancelled when the pandemic broke out in early 2020.

After lunch was served on Saturday, Denise Cardwell, Etiquette chairman, read a poem and explained the purpose of the Mother-Daughter Luncheon – after which the debutantes and mothers were introduced.

Deborah Carlisle and Beverly Tucker, Talent co-chairmen, and Karen Jarrett and Denise Cardwell, Cotillion co-chairmen, conducted a question and answer session.

Wilma Brown, Cotillion general chairman, was also present at the luncheon. Brown has helped to guide the Cotillion since it began almost 60 years ago.

The next event in the process is the Talent Contest in which the debutantes are invited to show-case their talents in front of a live audience. Talents on display typically include singing, dancing – including ballet and modern dancing, spoken word, performance on musical instruments and more.



(Seated): Mironda Harris, Deborah Carlisle, Talent Co-Chair; Beverly Tucker, Talent Co-Chair; Tyra Smith, Chapter President; Denise Black Poon, Governor; Barbara Tucker, Financial Secretary and Parliamentarian; Denise Cardwell, Co-Chairman. (Standing): Ethel Scott; Tommie McGhee, Chaplain; Wilma Brown, Cotillion Chair; BJ Tucker; Karen Jarrett, Co-Chair

This year, for the first time in the history of the organization, there is a Golden Sponsor for the Cotillion. The Taylor Automotive has agreed to be that Sponsor and will present the top three performances of the Talent Contest with cash awards.



District Governor Denise Black Poon and Club President Tyra Smith



Debs (standing): Reagan Quinn, Taylor Scribner, Rakaiya Phillips, Courtney Marie Jones, Taliyah Neely. Mothers and guardians (seated): Roxanne Quinn, Kimberly Scribner, Rhonda Phillips, Linda Smith, Crystal M. Jones, Malinda Estby, Trudie Neely, Bryanna Neely



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The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under a grant with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public; the author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Government.

Shereece Harris – Lupus Warrior and Survivor

By Dawn Scotland

The Truth Reporter

Shereece Harris is a lupus warrior and survivor. Her story is a living testimony of the trials and resilience of living with an autoimmune disease.

Harris, a Toledo native, is a Toledo Public Schools educator, mother and grandmother.

Now 41, she has been battling the disease since she was 19.

The onset came suddenly.

“When I was around 19, I started getting really sick and I was getting a lot of tests done—they were saying my platelet count was low”, she recalled. The doctors were considering taking out her spleen because they thought that was the initial issue.

“After they had started doing more tests, they figure out it was lupus.”

Lupus is a chronic (long-term) disease that can cause inflammation and pain in any part of your body. It’s an autoimmune disease, which means that your immune system — the body system that usually fights infections — attacks healthy tissue instead. (source: lupus.org)

As a teenager she wasn’t aware of the disease. “I didn’t take it seriously at all. So, I wasn’t taking my medicine or anything until I got sick for the very first time. It was a wakeup call that this was serious,” she said.

She was in the hospital for two months, was unable to feed herself and had to learn to walk again. Miraculously, Harris recovered.

Harris has lupus nephritis that affects her kidneys. There are different types of the autoimmune disease that affect different organs of the body, from the skin to kidneys and other internal organs. Because lupus affects many parts of the body, it can cause a lot of different symptoms. (source: lupus.org)

Her blood pressure became dangerously high and damaged her kidneys. At about the age of 24 she developed end stage renal failure and had to go on dialysis. Harris endured dialysis for four and a half years and, thank-



Rachelle Roy and Shereece Harris

fully, she was the recipient of a kidney transplant in 2014.

“After I got the transplant, I thought everything was going to be great.” She got married, later divorced and experienced relatively no issues with lupus.

At the end of 2018 she started to have problems again. This time with her heart.

“I had to have an aortic dissection. It’s basically when the main artery in your heart tears. [The doctors] were saying it was tearing by the minute. I had been rushed to the hospital from work,” she said.

She had to be life flighted to Cleveland Clinic. “They weren’t even sure if I was going to make it to Cleveland.”

Harris did make it to Cleveland and had emergency surgery to repair her heart. She made it out and was in recovery in Cleveland Clinic for a month.

Unfortunately, there was so much wear and tear on her body that her transplanted kidney went into rejection, and she had to go on dialysis again. She received her second transplant in 2021.

The following year, she had a heart attack. Where she had to get life flighted to Cleveland Clinic again and they had to put a heart stent in.

With all the pain and uncertainty, she experienced with lupus she is now serving as a living witness of survival, and triumph.

As of a year now her lupus has been in complete remission. “I don’t take medicine for lupus now...I don’t have flare ups and when I take blood work lupus isn’t even detected,” she stated.

Harris isn’t the only one in her family with the disease. She has multiple cousins on her father’s side who also have lupus and an aunt that was just diagnosed a year ago. Her second cousin, Rachelle Roy, organizer of the Living With Lupus Walk weekend (the fourth annual weekend will be held May 17-19) also has other relatives with lupus. Roy, in fact, has relatives on both her father’s and mother’s side with lupus even though scientists say it is not hereditary.

The disease affects everyone in different ways. Roy was not diagnosed with lupus until she was 41 and her symptoms have not been similar to

her cousin’s. Her version of lupus is discoid lupus. Discoid lupus scars her face and it has also taken away her eyebrows. She sees a dermatologist, rheumatologist and a family doctor to control her lupus and also watch how much stress and sun she allows in her life.

“If you look at a lot of us,” Harris stated, “It doesn’t look like we’ve been through

... continued on page 13

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