

Volume 88 No. 9                      *“And Ye Shall Know The Truth...”*                      April 2, 2025



Commissioners Announce a Task Force to Investigate LCCS

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# WTF?

By Larry Sykes

Guest Column

Recently a young African American girl lost her life due to a number of failures in the system that was supposed to be in place to protect her from the very thing that caused her death!

The young child was 13 years old and would have turned 14 on March 28, 2025. Instead of celebrating her birthday, the community is in mourning for her lost!

In recent years Toledo's African American community has lost a lot of our babies due to various reasons, but when it could have been preventable it's even more devastating to accept or to deal with.

Even sadder are those parasite bottom feeder who have attempted to set up GOFUNDME accounts to raise money for her services. Thanks should be given to a White female who out of the kindness of her heart has donated a plot for her burial!

Let me be clear in my message. I am not saying that everyone who is putting on a fundraiser for this lost child is suspect! But be aware that there are those who walk among us who will do such things for their own gain. It is my professional opinion that any funds raised should go directly to the funeral home or placed in an account that is safe and secure to be disbursed when a bill is presented and not to any family members, this will help eliminate exploitation!



## Why The Failure? (WTF)

There are a lot of factors that lead to her death that could have prevented it if the system was functioning right.

I am not going to say that the entire system failed her but due to the broken parts of the system this child's life was lost. These are some of my thoughts:

A broken family for whatever reason is a factor.

Duty to report. When this child confided in her teacher about some personal issues she was having and the teacher reported it to the police as she was obligated to do, the case file should have been closely monitored and followed up. It should have been coordinated by the schools' resource officer, the Toledo Police department and LCCS.

According to Lucas County Children Services website, the agency was called to the home three times! If this is true there appears to be a problem within the agency that may have caused a bottleneck to this case: not enough case worker, case workers having 200 +cases, not enough supervisors and other potential issues. If this is true it needs to be fixed immediately!

The board of directors for this agency has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that this agency runs smoothly and not just for the employees, but for the commissioners, the children and, most of all, for the taxpayers who pass levies to ensure the agency continues to operate properly. The board of directors should also go through training when appointed and then quarterly for updates.

The AMBER alert policy needs to be CHANGED now along with the Toledo Police Department policy on when a child is considered missing.

The County Commissioners held a press conference recently to say that they are looking to put a task force together to review and look into what happened! If the commissioners want to be serious and get the facts then they should hire a consultant from the University of Toledo who has the time, the resources, the expertise and independence to do a thorough job and not worry about blowback. As elected officials you owe that to your constituents who elected you and to Kei'Mani's legacy.

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## Community Calendar

April 5, April 12, May 3, May 10, May 17, May 31

The Toledo-Tanga Sister City Committee's Free Hybrid Drone Training program for students – 6th – 12th grades in Tanzania, Africa and Toledo. Learn how to fly, code and program drones. UT's Nitschke auditorium; 7:45 am - 11:30 am. Contact Norma King, Drone Academy Director at [njking@bex.net](mailto:njking@bex.net), 419-536-4615 or Leslie Henriquez President, Toledo- Tanga Sister City Committee at [LesHenriquez@aol.com](mailto:LesHenriquez@aol.com) 419-699-8686.

April 5 & 12

NANBPWC, Maumee Bay Club Kids Hair in Care Health Fair: Glass City Enrichment Center; To provide valuable education on hair care for diverse hair textures, promote mental health resilience among youth and connect families with essential community resources: 419-345-1505

April 6

Calvary Baptist Church: Celebrate Pastor Floyd Smith's Birthday by joining him for a Musical Tribute; 5 pm; Featuring Minister of Music Brian Thomas and his guest

April 27

NAACP Youth Council meeting: 3:00 pm at Sanger Branch Library; Election of Officers



# Preserving Our Natural Wonders is a Patriotic Cause Worth Fighting For

By Ben Jealous

Guest Column

Dorothy Gibbs chanted “save our parks” from her wheelchair while holding a sign that read “97 years old, still fighting for public lands!”

She was among an estimated 900 protesters who turned out at Rocky Mountain National Park on March 1 to protest the Trump administration’s mass firings of National Park Service staff last month, conducted through the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) headed by Elon Musk. Those 900 were among thousands of Americans who joined protests across the country that day at hundreds of national parks and monuments that day.

Gibbs, perhaps the oldest protester out that day, said for her “it’s personal.” She has volunteered with the National Park Service for 22 years and says her grandfather Charles F. Scott built Rocket Mountain National Park’s oldest remaining cabin. And she – like millions of others across the country – is concerned about the public’s ability to access our national parks.

That access is every American’s birthright. These sanctuaries offer more than breathtaking landscapes; they provide a refuge for the soul, a place where individuals from all walks of life can find solace, inspiration, and a connection to something greater than themselves in nature.

However, the recent mass firings within the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have cast a shadow over these treasured lands. One of the opening salvos of the DOGE-led assault on our public lands was to terminate approximately 1,000 NPS employees and 3,400 Forest Service workers. This decision threatens not only the livelihoods of dedicated public servants but also the very essence of our national parks.

The importance of our national parks cannot be overstated. They serve as living classrooms, offering educational programs that enlighten visitors about ecology, history, and conservation. They are economic engines, attracting millions of tourists annually, and supporting local communities – not to mention providing a vital revenue source for the government. Most importantly, they are democratic spaces where every American, regardless of background, can experience the healing power of nature.

In fact, diversity in our national parks is a tradition as old as the parks themselves. It was the famed African American Buffalo Soldiers who served as the first rangers for America’s early national parks like Yosemite and Sequoia.

The writer and historian Wallace Stegner said, “The national parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.”

Our national parks stand as a testament to America’s commitment to preserving the natural splendor and cultural heritage that define our nation.

The rangers and staff who steward these lands are the backbone of the park experience. Their knowledge, passion, and commitment ensure that visitors can safely and meaningfully engage with these natural wonders. The recent layoffs have led to concerns about maintenance, operating hours, and public safety within the parks. Reduced staffing means fewer educational programs, delayed maintenance, and diminished visitor services, all of which undermine the foundational purpose of the NPS.

In response to these alarming developments, a national day of action on March 1 saw protests at hundreds of national park sites. At Yosemite National Park, demonstrators expressed their dismay over the staff reductions, emphasizing the critical role rangers play in preserving the park’s integrity. Similarly, at Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio, hundreds braved harsh weather to support NPS and Forest Service employees, highlighting the deep connection communities have with these public lands.

Troy Riling-Anderson is an ecologist whose job offer at North Cascades National Park in Washington State was rescinded before the mass firings in February, two days after President Trump’s inauguration. He expressed concern that this is about a land grab by corporations.

“The public lands are an American value, and they’re trying to get rid of that value by getting rid of the offices and the people,” said Riling-Anderson. “If that value doesn’t exist, there’s not really any way to stop them from selling off land.”

The Sierra Club and other groups are suing DOGE over these illegal mass firings, in an effort to protect not only our treasured public lands and

the stewards of those lands, but Americans’ access to the great outdoors.

Let us remember that the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage is not a partisan issue but a patriotic one. It is our collective responsibility to ensure our national parks and forests endure for generations to come.

*Ben Jealous is the Executive Director of the Sierra Club, former president and CEO of the NAACP and a Professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania.*



## ProMedica Community Events in April

ProMedica will offer the following community events in April:

**April 2 – Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Support Group** – The Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Support Group is supported by the National MS Society. The support group will take place at the ProMedica Neurosciences Center (2130 W. Central Avenue, Toledo, OH 43606) beginning at 6 p.m. The group is also open to friends and family. No registration is required. A virtual option is available, please call 419-291-2059 for more information.

**April 7 – ProMedica Weight Loss Surgery Support Group** – The ProMedica Weight Loss Surgery Support Group is for patients who have had weight loss surgery or for community members who would like more information about weight loss surgery. The group meets the first Monday of every month at the ProMedica Health & Wellness Center, Education Conference Rooms 1 & 2 (5700 Monroe Street, Sylvania OH 43560) beginning at 6 p.m. No registration is required.

**April 9 – Blood Drive (ProMedica Flower Hospital)** – The American Red Cross is hosting a blood drive at ProMedica Flower Hospital (5200 Harroun Rd., Sylvania, OH 43560) from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Conference Center Room E. To schedule an appointment, please call 1-800-RED-CROSS or visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) and enter sponsor code: FLOWERHOSP

**April 24 – Stroke Support Group** - The ProMedica Stroke Support Group will discuss recovering with aphasia with the University of Michigan Aphasia Program. The support group will take place at the ProMedica Flower Hospital Conference Center (5200 Harroun Rd., Sylvania, OH 43560) beginning at 4:30 p.m. Stroke survivors, caregivers and supporters are all encouraged to attend. No registration is required.

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<sup>3</sup>Borrower income must be below 80% of the area median income, or property must be located in a low- to moderate-income census tract, as updated annually by the FFIEC (Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council).



# Roberto Torres- Independent Candidate for Mayor

By Fletcher Word

The Truth Editor

Roberto Torres, former Toledo Public School board member who also held City of Toledo leadership roles such as director of the Youth Commission, Office of Latino Affairs and economic development manager during the administrations of former mayors Jack Ford and Carty Finkbeiner, held a press conference on Tuesday, March 25 to explain why he is an independent candidate for mayor of Toledo.

The “alarming rate of crime and violence,” the current city’s policies that prevent “the building of more affordable housing” and the city’s “barriers to development ... that prevent minority contractors and vendors from obtaining contracts” are the key reasons Torres has thrown his hat into the ring, he said.

As an example of the crime prevalent in certain areas, he mentioned that the Toledo Urban Federal Credit Union had been vandalized on three recent occasions and “to date, no suspects have been arrested.” Now the Federal Bureau of Investigation has had to step in and take over the case, he added.

Assailing the current city administration for lack of action on these fronts and, in some cases, actively impeding progress, Torres noted that the \$185 million in funds available to the City of Toledo through the American Rescue Plan Act were not directed to those in the city who needed such help the most.

“This administration had the opportunity of a lifetime that no previous mayor had,” he said, decrying the lack of effort to improve the city’s affordable housing stock.

Torres was born and raised in northwest Ohio and grew up in a migrant camp as one of 13 siblings, a number of whom joined him for his press conference last week. His father, originally from Mexico, and his mother, from Texas, settled in Ohio after years of working in agricultural states like California, Oregon and Minnesota.

A graduate of Swanton High School, Torres attended Bowling Green



Torres and supporters open campaign office in downtown Davis Building

State University and served four years in the United State Marine Corps

“Being a Marine is who I am,” he noted last week as he unveiled his campaign sign – a combination of the American flag, the Marine Corps flag and the flag of the City of Toledo. He served in Desert Storm before starting his career at the Catholic Youth and School Services at the Diocese and transitioning to public service with the City of Toledo in 1996, eventually creating opportunities, as he has noted, for minority businesses.

He was elected to the Toledo Board of Education in 2005 and, in 2008, moved to Canton, Ohio to become director of economic development, eventually securing \$1.8 billion in international investments. His career then took him to Cleveland; Grand Rapids, Michigan and Detroit, where he led immigrant affairs and economic inclusion initiatives.

He has returned to his hometown with an accumulated wealth of experience in economic development in similar midwestern cities and is taking aim at the current administration for the lack of development.

“This administration hinders development,” he said. “This city needs to eliminate barriers to economic development.”

In addition to the key issues of crime, lack of affordable housing and the dearth of economic development, Torres also took the administration to task for the trend of decreasing population, noting that the past eight years of Kapszukiewicz management has resulted in the population loss of 14,773.

“Can this city afford four more years of Wade?” he asked his supporters at the press conference. He received the anticipated and rousing “No” from those supporters.



Roberto Torres unveils campaign sign



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# A Day of Inspiration: Celebrating the 2025 YWCA Milestones Honorees

By Asia Nail

The Truth Reporter

Every now and then, you witness a moment so powerful that it feels like lightning striking—bright, unforgettable, and full of energy. *The 2025 YWCA Milestones: A Tribute to Women* event was one of those moments.

The room was alive with excitement as the audience gathered to celebrate eight extraordinary women making their mark on the world. These honorees aren't just leaders in their fields—they're trailblazers, each one carving out a path for others to follow.

As each of the 2025 honorees prepared to take the stage, a vibrant procession of past awardees emerged, exuding energy and unity. Adorned in matching scarves of persimmon—the YWCA's signature orange hue—they embodied the organization's enduring spirit and commitment. This heartfelt display set the tone for an afternoon dedicated to celebrating resilience, passion, and the transformative power of dedication.

## Welcome & Introduction: A Celebration of Leadership

The afternoon began with an uplifting welcome from **Kristian Brown**, esteemed 13abc News Anchor and Milestones Emcee, setting the tone for an event that honored the power, perseverance, and leadership of extraordinary women. Her warm presence and enthusiasm energized the audience, reminding everyone of the importance of celebrating women who inspire us.

Following the welcome, **Kristi K. Hoffman**, YWCA Development Chair and 2023 Volunteerism Honoree, introduced the **Y Women Leadership Circle**, a network dedicated to empowering and supporting women leaders. She highlighted the impact of collective strength and the vital role of mentorship in shaping future generations.

**Lisa McDuffie**, president and CEO of YWCA of Northwest Ohio and 2011 Woman of Distinction Honoree, then took the stage to deliver heartfelt greetings and acknowledgements. She expressed gratitude for the unwavering support of the community and the honorees' remarkable contributions, reinforcing the YWCA's mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

During the Mission Moment, **Rhonda Sewell**, a Dedicated Board Member (1996) and 2017 Volunteerism Honoree, made a compelling appeal for continued support, encouraging supporters to contribute. She underscored the importance of sustaining the YWCA's mission, ensuring that vital programs continue to uplift and serve those most in need.

With the stage set for inspiration, Kristian Brown returned to introduce the honorees. Before each woman delivered her speech, the audience watched a moving video interview conducted by supportive female journalists from 13abc, offering an intimate glimpse into each recipient's journey, achievements, and impact.

## Art: A Visionary Who Brings Art to Life

First to be honored was **Jori Lynch Jex**, a visionary whose dedication to the arts has transformed communities. For Jori, the arts aren't just performances on a stage or paintings on a wall—they're a powerful force for connection, inclusion, and change.

Throughout her 40-year career, she has worked tirelessly to ensure that art is accessible to everyone. From expanding educational programs at the **Valentine Theatre** to securing funding so students from Title 1 schools could experience live performances, she has made it her mission to remove barriers and open doors.

"You don't have to be an artist to feel the magic of the arts," she shared. "It belongs to all of us."

With that, Jori reminded us that the true power of the arts isn't just in what we see or hear—it's in how it makes us feel and the way it brings us together.

## Business: A Visionary with a Heart of Gold

Next, **Olivia Holden** took the stage to be honored for her contributions to business.

As the executive director of **ASSETS Toledo** for over two decades, she has trained thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs, equipping them with the tools and mentorship needed to thrive.

If leadership were a nurturing garden, Miss Olivia would be the steady hand tending to every bloom—cultivating growth, offering guidance, and ensuring that each entrepreneur has the support to flourish. She's not just helping people build companies; she's helping them build legacies.

"Success isn't just about making money," she said. "It's about making a difference."

Holden's work proves that business isn't just about profit—it's about purpose.

## Education: The Educator Who Builds Futures

Next was **Kim Grilliot**, a woman who has spent her life shaping young minds. If education were a canvas, Grilliot would be the artist, carefully crafting the strokes that bring each student's potential to life.

As the first lay president of **Notre Dame Academy**, she has led with heart and strategy—expanding scholarships, modernizing facilities, and strengthening the school's endowment by over 300%. Her leadership ensures that future generations have access to a learning environment that fosters respect, creativity, and curiosity.

"Every student has a light inside them," she said. "Our job is to help them shine."



Jori Lynch Jex



Olivia Holden



Kim Grilliot

... continued on page 11



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# The Fourth Annual DEAI ALLiance Summit

By Emily Evans

The Truth Reporter

The fourth annual DEAI ALLiance Summit conference was held on March 20 at the Delta Marriott. The summit highlighted how DEAI has been victimized recently with fear tactics. The meeting/summit provided insight and encouragement to let people know that they won't have to go back to the past and can look for strategies to move forward.

The DEAI ALLiance of Northwest Ohio was formed in May 2022 after Toledo's first annual Diversity Employment Career Fair. The event was largely successful, but the organizers agreed that it was clear that more work was necessary to make Toledo a better, more inclusive place to work and do business.

A committee was created, and meetings were held monthly throughout the year. In 2023, the committee formally named itself the DEAI ALLiance of Northwest Ohio and held its second annual event alongside the Ohio Minority Supplier Diversity Conference. This two-day event included a Supplier Diversity Conference, a career fair, a panel discussion aimed at educating local CEOs on the importance of DEAI initiatives, and breakout sessions for regional DEAI and HR professionals.

After the second annual event, The ALLiance continued meeting, sought formal 501(c)3 status and continued efforts to plan a third annual summit. That summit was held in April 2024.

DEAI is passionate about commitment and proven solutions. The group members work together with the community to provide proven outcomes. What's next for the group is to help companies in the region. They are a team of masterminds, professionals with collective expertise. They push for corporations and organizations to become members of the DEAI organization so intentional work does not remain stagnant. They best help the community by providing resources and the annual conference helps create a space for education for the community about DEAI practices and workplace fairness, development and equity.

"DEAI is about Humanity, and there is a return on Investment for diversity," said Felica Clark, president of DEAI alliance of northwest Ohio. "This alliance works with teams who provide strategic plans and

memberships so the community, creates a space for education, hiring practices, workforce development, fairness and equity etc.

"They want to be thought of as an educational tool to align themselves, have strategies and to remain mission driven, said Rhonda Sewell one of the founding members of the DEAI alliance.

The alliance desires to encourage the community to stay the course, don't make everything political since there are always paths forward and use the conferences as an educational tool to help people align themselves with strategy. Stay mission driven and believe in your organizations mission. DEAINOW.Org is the contact information for the group of anyone has any questions or concerns or if you would like to become a member of the organization.


The Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council (OMSDC) is one of 23 affiliates of the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), a nonprofit corporate membership organization that advances business opportunities for its certified Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American business enterprises and connects them to its corporate members. One of the country's leading corporate membership organizations, NMSDC was chartered in 1972 to provide increased procurement and business opportunities for minority businesses of all sizes.

George Simms, president and CEO of the OMSDC, stated: "They wish to achieve economic equity in the state of Ohio. It's important to partner with the community in a great way with the DEAI and have an impact with minorities in the state of Ohio, contributing to the population at the same percentage to the GED. Giving young people the best opportunities. Plant trees even if you cannot enjoy the fruit but so the generation after you will see the returns on your investments." The best is yet to come".

OMSDC shared plans with the DEAI at the summit by improving relationships with minority businesses as well as corporate businesses. The work is for future generations to prosper in business and economic development.



Felica Clark and George Simms



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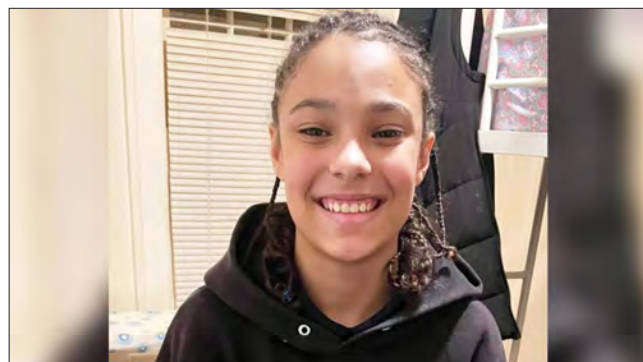


# Lucas County Commissioners Form a Task Force to Examine Children Services

By Fletcher Word

The Truth Editor

The death of Kei'Mani Latigue has sent shock waves throughout the Toledo community in ways that few such tragedies previously have. One result of the homicide has been the formation of a task force by the Lucas County Children Services Board and the Lucas County Board of Commissioners to examine the practices of the LCCS agency.



Kei'Mani Latigue

Kei'Mani's teachers had reached out to LCCS to report that they suspected the 13-year-old was being abused at home. The agency received a report on December 8, 2023 and two reports on March 21, 2024, regarding the child, who lived with her grandmother, Dorothy Latigue. The agency conducted investigations but did not find any evidence to require removing her from her home.

However, while Kei'Mani's murder, and the fact that LCCS did not take action in her case that might have prevented such an incident, has raised such a furor in this city, during a press conference last week announcing the formation of the task force, commissioners and members of a committee that will weigh options to form such a board made it clear that a task force will not be asked to merely look into the Kei'Mani Latigue issue.

"That case is a symptom of many issues," said LC Commissioner Pete Gerken. "We are looking at a system, not an incident."

One of the stated goals of a task force, said Gerken, "is to restore public trust in the agency – our sole purpose is to restore trust."

The commissioners have put together a group of three to start the work – LCCS President Suzette Cowell, retired former LCCS Executive Director Robin Reeves and Breda Osborn, director Lucas County Job & Family Services – "a small group with expert knowledge, people with knowledge of the system," as Gerken described the threesome.

Gerken said that the commissioners are quite used to the concept of putting together task forces. In the recent past they have done so to deal with issues involving the Toledo Zoo, Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority and the Toledo Lucas County Health Department.



Former LCCS Director Robin Reeves speaks as LC Board of Commissioners President Lisa Sobecki, current LCCS Director Randall Muth, LC Commissioners Anita Lopez and Pete Gerken, and LCCS Board President Suzette Cowell look on.

"This will be an outside-in looking task force," added Gerken. "This is not an attack on the workers, we respect the work force but the agency obviously needs some reform."

According to records, LCCS served 11,808 children and 4,635 families in 2024, managing a monthly average of 834 children in its custody. The organization investigated nearly 4,479 child abuse and neglect referrals, resulting in 1,564 confirmed victims and 383 opened cases.

"Forming this task force is about building trust, it's not about a specific case," said Lisa Sobecki, president of the LC Board of Commissioners. "We will listen to the community, we know we can do better."

"Every child in the community is important to me," said Reeves, the former director of LCCS. "Our children won't be safe if we don't have a child protection agency."

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# Marla Oden Celebrates 60th with a Host of Friends

The Truth Staff

Marla Oden celebrated her 60th birthday on Saturday, March 22 at Local 500's LIUNA Training Center along with several hundred friends who were treated to a lavish luncheon banquet that Oden, an accomplished caterer and owner of Whisk Takers Catering, prepared for the special occasion.

When she first arrived in Toledo, only a few years after graduating from high school, Oden attended cosmetology school and eventually became a successful hair stylist. As the years passed, however, she became interested in developing her cooking skills and eventually started catering for small groups here and there. A single mother by then, Oden was raising children, running her hair salon, cooking occasionally – doing it all to be sure but eventually felt that she needed a career change and a drastic change of scenery.

Oden took her catering skills to the next level when she moved to Las Vegas to enroll at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts. There she attended classes over the course of the next year, worked in a food truck, found hair clients (her previous profession) and even flew back to Toledo on a red eye frequently to work on clients' hair.



Marla Oden

Somehow, in this blur of activity, she managed to maintain a 3.5 to 4.0 grade point average at the school and received her degree in French techniques.

“Going to culinary school taught me a lot about making fresh pasta, gnocchi, cooking risotto and skinning fish. The one thing I love about Vegas is how diverse it is giving you access to so many different kinds of fruits and vegetable because of all the cultures that are there,” she said later of her experiences in the desert.

She returned to Toledo where she started Whisk Takers Catering about a decade ago and her acquaintances, clients and friends are the better for it.





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# Use Earth Day to Tackling Overconsumption

By Patrice Powers-Barker, OSU Extension, Lucas County  
The Truth Contributor

While the memory of Home Economics is often cooking and sewing, the field of work has always been much broader than those two important topics. Today, in the USA, the field is often called Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and it covers topics like financial literacy, planning the household budget, healthy relationships including childhood and human development, food and nutrition, food safety, preparing for careers, balancing work and family, mindfulness and overall health and wellbeing.

Globally, there is a professional organization called the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHC), and they have a 2025 theme of Tackling Overconsumption. I like the idea of a global theme and the opportunity to know how I can make small, impactful changes right in my small area of the world.

The IFAC warns that humans, “use more resources than the Earth can provide and often more than is good for us. This overconsumption leads to health and financial problems, climate change, loss of biodiversity, and pollution”. On a personal level, overconsumption can cause health and financial challenges. For example, overconsumption can strain a household budget, excess purchases can lead to waste and more trash, and overeating can contribute to obesity and related health issues.

To lower consumption and cost of food, plan your shopping. The time invested in planning and using a grocery shopping list usually helps households save money. While in your kitchen check a few things. First, is there food in the cabinet, fridge or freezer that can be used instead of buying more? Also, check the garbage can. Make note of what types of foods you are often throwing out. If it’s often the same foods, eat them sooner or buy less of them. Or are there small amounts of food that could be used instead of thrown out?

Not surprising, some tips for Earth Day and every day are to carry reusable items when possible. Two common examples that can help reduce waste and cost are reusable bags and refillable water or drink bottles. If you must use plastic bags, find ways to reuse them such as lining small waste-

baskets or use with smelly items before throwing in the larger wastebasket.

**3Rs, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle** are often used to describe items like glass, plastic, cardboard and cans, but it can also be applied food. The recommendations for the 3Rs of food include budgeting, meal planning, making thoughtful purchases, and enjoying all the food. The following recommendations have been adapted from University of Nebraska Extension.

**Reduce** the amount of food thrown away. If at home, serve smaller portions of food. You can always go back for more if needed. At restaurants with large servings, ask for a take-home container (or bring your own reusable one) to bring extras home. At the store or farmers market, do not shy away from fresh produce that doesn’t look “perfect”. Maybe the shoulder of the fruit didn’t ripen to the same color or maybe the size of the produce is not as “standard” as the others. If the produce is not bruised or damaged, this produce often be purchased at a lower price. They provide the same nutritional benefits as their ‘perfect-looking’ counterparts.

**Reuse** leftover food by planning to serve it again within two days or freezing for future use. Some people like to put it in single serving containers to bring to work or school. Be sure to label and date your container. Are you making a recipe and have left-over onions, peppers, or fresh herbs? Chop them up and freeze them. Label and date the freezer container and pull it out the next time you need those ingredients for cooking.

**Recycle** leftovers into a different meal; for example – leftover roasted chicken or cooked beans and lentils can be turned into chicken or bean salad, soup, casseroles or tacos. If you have several foods that might go to waste at the same time, try adding them to such adaptable recipes like those listed above. Plan a meal of the week where you have small portions or a plate of “samples” of the food left from previous meals.

In addition to the 3Rs, extra food scraps can be composted for the garden. Not only can you **compost** for your own garden, but the food scraps can also be dropped off to the food compost at bins at the following Toledo

... continued on page 11

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## A Mental Health Moment

# Black Mental Health and Surviving 2025

By Bernadette Joy Graham, MA, LPCC

The Truth Contributor

There is no surprise that many Black Americans choose not to seek mental health care. With challenges around the world people of all nations suffer with anxiety levels as none of us know what, how or when these challenges will turn to crises levels in our own communities.

If you are a Black American in the U.S, some mental health statistics from 2024 breaks down serious concerns and prevalence that will be near catastrophic in 2025 and years to come for mental health.

- 21.4 percent of Black American adult experience mental illness annually.
- 19.7 percent of Black adults have experienced a mental health condition in the past year.

The prevalence of just the experiences with mental health and Black communities is in the Why?

Access to Care:

- Only 25 percent of Black adults seek mental health treatment as opposed to a significantly lower national average of 40 percent.
- Factors contributing are low access to care, including stigma, lack of culturally competent providers, and limited health insurance. Since a new political regime has come into office, funding has been cut in food programs, health programs especially health insurances that have closed, loss of employment, increased prices on everything and many more changes devastating the lives of all Black individuals and families.

Suicide Rates amongst Black Americans have continuously been shown much higher compared to other races:

- Black males in 2024 were 13.7 per 100,000 compared to 11.8 percent for all males.
- Black females had a suicide rate of 5.7 percent per 100,000 compared to 4.8 percent per 100,000 for all females.

Depression and anxiety are top contenders when people in general seek out mental health.

Approximately 10.3 percent of Black adults experienced moderate to severe depression and depressive symptoms annually. The national average was reported at an average of 8.9 percent.

Anxiety disorders and symptoms for Black adults annually was reported as 18.6 percent; the national average is significantly lower at 12.5 percent.

These statistics show conditions for 2024. Everyone worldwide is in some type of statistical category. In regard to Black Americans, observation and overall medical conditions tell it all and it is not good and will continue to decline if Black communities continue to refuse to check their own mental health.

The mental health of Black children is downright always affected by the mental health conditions of their families and caretakers. Take a mental health moment and think about our future Black generations to come. It is not just about Black adults. So if you do not care for mental health or your own at least give Black children the opportunity to have healthy outcomes especially their minds. It's mind over matter.....children matter as they will one day be the adults making changes and choices over the world. Having healthy minds will make the world a better place. Let's all make our communities GREAT once and for all.

Sources:

- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)



- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

If you or someone you know is in a mental health crisis please call 988 or go to the closest emergency room.

**\*\* Bernadette Graham is a Licensed Professional Mental Health Therapist in private practice. She also provides educational workshops on matters of grief and mental health as well as conducting groups, and speaking at events. Bernadette has been an advocate within the Mental Health field for over 20 years. You may contact her or complete an intake at the following:**

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**YWCA...continued from page 7**

Grilliot's impact stretches far beyond the classroom, shaping futures with every student she inspires.

**Government: A Fighter for the People**



Lisa Sobecki

Next was **Lisa A. Sobecki**, honored for her work in civic leadership. If public service were a fire, Sobecki would be the one keeping it burning—ensuring that no one is left out in the cold. From serving as the first female fire safety instructor in the U.S. Navy to shaping policies as a State Representative and now as a Lucas County Commissioner, she has dedicated her career to serving others.

Her leadership has left an indelible mark on Toledo Public Schools, overseeing the creation of 44 new schools, the renovation of two historic high schools, and the implementation of a transformative strategic plan that has redefined education in the district. In the Ohio House, she championed workforce development, fair school funding, and critical infrastructure projects, always putting working families first.

"Leadership isn't about standing in the spotlight," she said. "It's about shining that light on the people who need it most."

**... continued on page 12**

**Earth Day... continued from page 10**

Metroparks: Swan Creek Preserve Metropark (4659 Airport Highway, Toledo, Ohio 43615), Glass City Metropark (901 Front Street, Toledo, Ohio 43605), and Toledo Botanical Garden Metropark (5434 West Bancroft Street, Toledo, Ohio 43615).

If all these ideas together seem overwhelming, choose one or two to work on for this month. Then add another one or two next month. Keep adding new practices until you are doing all of them. Hopefully you will see extra grocery dollars adding up as you cut back on waste! While changes **must** happen on a global and national scale, what key areas for change can we apply to our food choices, for personal benefits as well as benefitting our planet?

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## YWCA...continued from page 11

Her words serve as a powerful reminder that the government should always be driven by service—listening, fighting for what's right, and never forgetting those who place their trust in public servants to lead with integrity and compassion.

**Science: A Young Woman's Unstoppable Spirit**

Next came **Kaylee Halko**, a young woman who has turned her rare genetic condition into a powerful force for scientific advancement. Diagnosed with progeria at two, Halko has spent her life helping researchers, becoming the first person to enter clinical trials for a potential cure. Her contributions to the National Institutes of Health and Boston Children's Hospital have led to groundbreaking treatments, including a pioneering open-heart surgery now available to others with the condition.



Kaylee Halko

Now 21, she continues her research and studies psychology, aspiring to become a guidance counselor. Despite her challenges, she remains an inspiration, showing that true strength comes from using one's experiences to make a difference.

"You don't have to be the strongest person in the room to make the biggest impact," she said.

Kaylee proves that science is about transforming lives, and as she and her progeria friends prove, calling each other "P-Dogs," that laughter and strength go hand in hand in overcoming challenges.

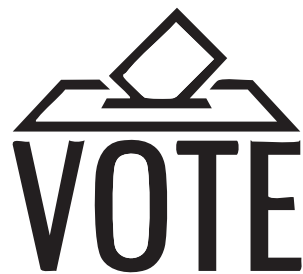
**Social Services: A Champion of Change**

Next was **Alicia M. Smith**, honored for her work in social services. If justice were a river, Smith would be the one ensuring it flows to every corner, reaching those who need it most.

As the executive director of the Junction Coalition, Alicia has worked tirelessly since 2014 to create a sustainable, safe, and thriving community for all, especially for underrepresented and under-



Alicia Smith



Ohio's Primary and Special Election:  
**Tuesday, May 6, 2025**

Deadline to register  
or update your voter registration:  
**Monday, April 7, 2025**

If you believe you are already registered in Ohio,  
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VIDEO: **Online Voter Registration in Ohio**  
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privileged residents in the Junction neighborhood. Her commitment to social, economic, and environmental justice empowers voices and nurtures healthy relationships.

"Compassion isn't just about feeling bad for someone," she said. "It's about standing beside them and saying, 'I'm here to help.'"

More than just a leader, Alicia is a guiding force—showing us that true change begins with action, determination, and a dedication to justice.

**Volunteerism: Rooted in Service**

Then came **Diane Packer Friedman**, a woman whose dedication to volunteerism has made an indelible mark on the community. If kindness were a tree, Friedman would be its roots—steadfast and nurturing, giving life to everything she touches.

As a dedicated public-school teacher for 35 years, Diane's influence in education has impacted more than 4,200 middle school students. After retiring, she expanded her reach, serving as chair of the YWCA board from 2017 to 2024, where she helped raise \$18.6 million to renovate the YWCA facility, ensuring it would better serve the community for generations to come.

"We all have something to give," she said, her voice warm and inviting. "And when we give, we make the world a little brighter."

Diane's legacy of service proves that the power of selflessness is boundless, and the simplest acts of kindness can lead to lasting change.

**A Woman on the Rise**

Ebony Carter

**Ebony Carter**, the final honoree of the afternoon, took the stage to accept the Woman on the Rise award. Since joining the **Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce** in 2020, Ebony has empowered local minority entrepreneurs, providing thousands of hours of counseling and helping businesses obtain certifications that open doors to new opportunities.

As vice president of Minority Business Services and Director of the **Minority Business Assistance Center**, she's worked tirelessly to close the wealth gap for minorities and women. Ebony is also a sought-after speaker, known for her impactful presentations like *The Art of Scale Up* and *The Hidden Cost of Entrepreneurship*.

Her heartfelt words thanking her best friend and colleagues left no dry eye in the room.

"You don't have to wait for the perfect moment," she said. "Sometimes, you just have to create it."

Ebony is a rising star, already making a powerful impact on the community—a shining example of what happens when passion meets purpose.

**An Event to Remember**

As the ceremony came to a close, one thing was clear: these women were not just being honored for what they have done, but for what they continue to do.

Their stories were not just inspiring—they were calls to action, reminding everyone in the room that change doesn't happen on its own. It happens because of women like them—people who refuse to stand still, who push forward, who light the way for others to follow.

And as the audience rose in applause, it was clear that this wasn't just a celebration of past achievements. It was a promise for the future—a future shaped by vision, resilience, and the unwavering spirit of those ready to lead.

Donate to support YWCA's mission.





# *The Trouble of Color: An American Family Memoir* by Martha S. Jones

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

The Truth Contributor

c. 2025  
Basic Books  
\$30.00 • 315 pages

# *Last Seen: The Enduring Search by Formerly Enslaved People to Find Their Lost Families* by Judith Giesberg

c.2025 • Simon & Schuster  
\$29.9 • 309 pages

Who do you think you are?

That's a question that can be taken a multiple of ways. It's in-your-face, aggressive, angry. Or it's inquisitive and open, asking for introspection. Where did your family come from, and who do you think you are? Or, as in these books, is that question to be answered?

For author **Martha S. Jones**, issues of identity were already understood: she'd grown up knowing that there were Black ancestors in her lineage, full-stop. She never thought it was anything but obvious – until a college classmate questioned Jones' heritage.

In her book, *The Trouble of Color* (Basic Books, \$30), Jones writes of untangling her truth. Color obviously mattered differently to Jones' three-times-great grandmother than it did for her parents. Color didn't draw a smooth line through history, it didn't stay in one place or even in one century. The story of living as someone of color weaved all along Jones' family tree, often revealing nuggets of pride, strength, and of surprise.

There's a journey inside this book that begs readers to go along – and you'll be glad you did. It takes you from city to country to find Jones' ancestors, and it's both comfortingly familiar and quite astounding. If you've ever delved into your own heritage, had your DNA tested, or looked into your ancestry and discovered unexpected things, this is a book to read.

If you've done those things, then you know the delight you feel when you found someone who was lost – and you'll understand the heavy sadness and urgency inside the stories in *Last Seen: The Enduring Search by Formerly Enslaved People to Find Their Lost Families* by Judith Giesberg (Simon & Schuster, \$29.99).

One of the most heinous practices of slave-owners in America was the separating of families. Children could, and were, sold away from their parents. Siblings were divided. Husbands and wives were sold apart, with no idea if or when they might see one another again. After Emancipation, it was

common to see advertisements in newspapers, classified ads, editorials and posters in search of missing loved ones and separated relatives.

In this heart-wrenching, sometimes happy, always powerful book, Giesberg profiles a tiny handful of those stories. Once he found them, for instance, Tally Miller changed his surname so that no one could ever take his family away from him again. Hagar Outlaw struggled to find as many of her nine children as she could, once she was freed. Time never stopped husbands from looking for their wives (or the other way around), or siblings from finding each other.

This book explodes the imagination, and it'll make you glad for the research methods we have at our disposal today. Readers who've hit a dead-end on their own genealogical searches will want to read this important slice of devastating American history.

Of course, these books will make you want more, and you'll get it by heading for your favorite bookstore or library. There, you'll find what you need, and who maybe you think you are.



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By Twix 'N' Between

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# Omega Psi Phi Donates to Leila's Promise

*The Truth Staff*

The Ques did it again! The brothers of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc, Xi Tau Chapter held their fourth annual Strike Out on Saturday, March 29, at the Timbers Bowling Lane, and presented a scholarship check to Leila's Promise, an organization dedicated to empowering young people to make a difference.

Leila's Promise was founded by Leila Nazarene Harris to give to those in need. Leila's giving attitude began at the tender age of four when she asked her parents to give to those in need rather than buying her Christmas presents. Now at the ripe old age of 12, Leila has inspired other young people to work with her to give, lead and make an impact.

"You don't have to have a lot of money, you don't have to be a certain age, all you have to do is have a heart and desire to do what the Lord called us to do," said Toledo City Councilman John Hobbs, III, a member of the Xi Tau Chapter and the host of the donation ceremony.

On Saturday, the Ques raised \$1,000 to help Leila make a difference as they, along with their families and assorted members and families of the Devine Nine, enjoyed an afternoon of bowling and fellowship at Timber Bowling Lane.

Leila was not able to be present for the award since she and her family are traveling out of the country, but a representative read notes from her thanking the brothers of Omega Psi Phi "for all you do in the community" while adding that "it only takes a little to make a difference."



*Councilman John Hobbs opens the ceremony*



*The check presentation to representatives of Leila's Promise*



*The brothers of the Omega Psi Phi, Xi Tau Chapter*

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