



Volume 89 No. 1

*“And Ye Shall Know The Truth...”*

April 9, 2025

**From The Mailbox to the Ballot Box**



*Blair Johnson, Business Owner, Community Leader, Candidate for Toledo City Council*

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# From Mourning to Movement: How We Turn Tragedy Into Change for Kei'mani Latigue

By Carla Thomas

The Truth Contributor

Kei'mani Latigue was just 13 years old when she was reported missing on March 18. Six days later, police found her body in a burned-out, abandoned building—just days before what should have been her 14th birthday. She had been murdered by her father, Darnell Jones.

But long before her death made headlines, Kei'mani was crying out for help.

Teachers saw the signs. They reported what they could. Kei'mani herself spoke up. She asked for protection from the very people meant to keep her safe. And still—she slipped through the cracks of the systems that were supposed to protect her.

She was failed. This sad truth caused us to stop, reflect, and ask: how could this happen? Yet in a few weeks, most of us will return to our routines. The hashtags will fade. The vigils will end. The media will move on. And we, the community, will be expected to do the same.

But uhn-uhn . . . we can't keep treating tragedy like a trend.

When a young girl from our community is kidnapped and killed, it's not just heartbreaking — it's a wake-up call. A reminder that too many of our children are living unprotected. A reminder that too many of our systems are broken and that we cannot afford to go on with "business as usual."

So the question becomes: how do we take this grief, this outrage, this love shown for Kei'mani—and turn it into something that lasts? How do we make sure this moment doesn't just pass, but becomes the beginning of real change?

Let's start by acknowledging what is already happening in our community as a result of Kei'mani's death—because even in pain, people have shown up. At the place where her body was found, people didn't just bring flowers and teddy bears. They brought their hearts. They stood in silence. They cried together. They said her name out loud. And when they heard the building will be torn down, they made sure her memorial wouldn't be lost in the rubble. They moved and protected it. This is what it looks like when a community



Kei'Mani Latigue

comes together.

And that unity sparked more than remembrance. Survivors of sexual abuse have come forward, emboldened by the community's outcry and unwilling to let shame and fear silence them any longer. They are naming names, telling their truths and demanding accountability—not just from individuals but from systems. And not out of bitterness but out of bravery. Because they saw a community finally ready to listen.

In direct response to the public's call for answers, the Lucas County Commissioners have announced the formation of a task force to investigate Children Services, saying it's meant to rebuild public trust. That's a step in the right direction, and they deserve credit for moving quickly.

However, people are concerned. Some in the community worry that the task force will be made up of people too close to LCCS—friends, allies, or those unlikely to hold the agency fully accountable. It raises real concerns about oversight and whether meaningful change is actually possible. That's why there's a growing call for third-party involvement—because without real independence, this effort risks being more performative than productive. As a community, it's up to us to stay engaged in this effort, ask hard questions, and make sure this moment leads to real change.

To that end, community members aren't waiting for permission, they're already stepping up.

A new group, The Toledo Collective, has been formed, in response to this tragedy—made up of parents, survivors, teachers, and organizers, etc. It includes people from all walks of life, representing many corners of our community. These are people who want real change and are working toward it. From pushing for independent audits to supporting families and survivors, they're putting action behind their words.

This is how we turn mourning into a movement. But this movement isn't just about systems—it's about Kei'mani.

Let's not make her just another headline or a tragedy. She was a young girl — your average adolescent. She laughed with her friends. She was bright, kind, and full of life. She deserved birthdays. She deserved safety. She deserved a future.

What's more, she cried out for help. We need to let that sink in.

She did everything we tell children in danger to do. And it still wasn't enough. That's a hard pill to swallow—but choke it down if you have to because at some point our communal grief has to give birth to a new determination that says this ish has to stop.

Thankfully, in our city, there are already people doing the work. Organizations, advocates, survivors—folks who've been in this fight long before Toledo made headlines. And we should be supporting them. Showing up. Listening. Backing them with our time, our dollars and our energy. Let's stop repeating the same initiative ten different ways—and start strengthening the ones we already have. We should be linking arms across all of these organizations instead of starting from scratch.

The same way we showed up for Kei'mani in death, we need to show up for each other in life. We brought balloons, candles, and flowers to a corner of the city—what if we brought that same energy to classrooms, kitchens, and neighborhood meetings? What if collective care became our default, not

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# Trump's Tariffs Hurt Workers. A Smarter Trade Strategy Could Empower Them

By Ben Jealous  
Guest Column

In the Trump era, economic policy often comes with more bluster than strategy. His latest round of tariffs is no exception. Slapped on a broad swath of imported goods without rhyme, reason, or regard for the people who will bear the brunt of the cost – American families and workers – these tariffs are a political stunt masquerading as industrial policy.



Let's be clear: tariffs can be a tool for economic transformation. But they must be wielded with precision, guided by vision and paired with bold investments. What Trump is doing is none of that.

His scattershot approach will disturb the ongoing US manufacturing renaissance and raise prices on everything from cars to appliances, hitting working families hardest. The administration's recently announced 25 percent tariff on all cars and auto parts not made entirely in the United States could drive up the cost of an average new car by thousands of dollars. And for what? There are no clear signals to industry, no long-term plans for job creation, no environmental guardrails – just chaos and chest thumping.

We've seen this movie before. During Trump's first term, similar tariffs on steel and aluminum were supposed to help revive American manufacturing. And they could have, had he invested in clean, safe, high-tech production and the American supply chain. Instead, Trump opted for pain and scarcity. Less availability of metals had a negative downstream impact on the industries that relied on them. Prices on goods made with metals went up. And American metals makers didn't have a reason to invest in advanced manufacturing.

American manufacturing actually has been revived since then, but it was the Biden-Harris administration's Inflation Reduction Act and other initiatives like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that were responsible. The previous administration's trade policy was also smarter, with narrowly focused tariff increases specifically targeted to China and on sectors critical to the clean energy transition – solar panels, electric vehicles, EV batteries, semiconductors, and yes, steel and aluminum. Ideally, tariffs should be paired with investments in domestic manufacturing, particularly in facilities that are clean, unionized, and ready to meet the climate challenge. And tariffs should send a clear message to competitors that there will be consequences for polluting, relying on forced labor, and other harmful practices.

This is not just about economics; it is about justice. Low-income and working-class communities have borne the brunt of dirty industry and offshored jobs. Reindustrializing America has to be different this time. We need a clean, equitable economy built with and for working families.

And here's the good news: it is possible. I have seen it. From my time crisscrossing the country opposing NAFTA 30 years ago to my current work with the Sierra Club, I have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with labor leaders, environmental advocates, and frontline communities. We agree more often than not. We want trade policies that lift wages, protect the planet, and rebuild domestic industries – not that rig the game for polluters and drive up prices on already-struggling consumers.

One step in the right direction is for trade agreements and tariffs to address pollution and include carbon border adjustment mechanisms – fees based on the pollution in imported goods exceeding US levels. If your steel pollutes rivers in Mexico or your solar panels are made with coal power in China, you should not get a free pass in the US market. These mechanisms level the playing field, give American manufacturers a reason to go green and become cleaner, and improve conditions for workers and manufacturing communities overseas.

We also need to update agreements like the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement to include rapid-response mechanisms not just for labor abuses, but for environmental violations too. If a country undercuts us by trashing its air and water, we should be able to act quickly.

Trump's tariffs don't do any of that. They are about headlines, not outcomes. And we do not have time for empty gestures. The climate crisis is here. American workers are tired of being played. And families across this country cannot afford higher prices with no payoff.

We need a real plan. One that brings together labor and environmentalists, manufacturers and frontline communities. One that builds a new industrial vision—not just for profit, but for people and planet.

The path is clear. What we need now is the courage to walk it.

*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.*

## Mourning to Movement... continued from page 2

just our reaction?

From Grief to Action: What We Can Do Now

Grief isn't just the reason we came together—it's proof that we can. So the question becomes: how do we carry that same energy forward? How do we come together not just in response to tragedy, but in commitment to each other? If Kei'mani's story moved you, don't just feel—ACT.

- Support the local organizations already doing this work. Find them. Fund them. Volunteer.
- Demand accountability from Children Services—and every system meant to protect our kids.
- Join with your neighbors. You don't need permission to care. Organize listening sessions, start conversations, build safety networks.
- Check in on the kids around you. Listen. Believe them. Protect them.
- And when the news cycle moves on, keep saying her name.

Kei'mani deserved more. And so do the kids who are still here. There have been many tributes in Kei'mani's honor—and every one of them have been beautiful and come from a place of love.

But the most powerful tribute we can give her will be making sure the next child gets to live.

## Community Calendar

**April 15**

Toledo Chapter NAACP general meeting: AALP Office – 1326 Collingwood; 5 pm

**April 27**

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

**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, 419-536-4615 or Leslie Henriquez President, Toledo- Tanga Sister City Committee at LesHenriquez@aol.com 419-699-8686.

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# While We Were Sleeping: An American Deception

By June Boyd

Guest Column

"People will believe a liar, before believing someone telling the truth" Clyde L. Bond

RIP, my mother!

I dedicate this article to her because what she told me many years ago has come to fruition. President Donald Trump and Elon Musk have "duped" so many Americans.



This whole scheme began in 2021, following Trump's defeat in 2020. If you recall, he took all the classified materials from the White House with him to Mar-A-Lago, stored them and began to destroy the character and success of President Joe Biden. It was a gradual action, feeding people who would believe his stories.

It is very easy for me as a writer to verify what has happened because of several repeated statements, such as "I will never vote for Biden, he is giving those immigrants two thousand dollars a month." I asked her not to believe so much on social media.

One story relative to the character of President Biden, his son and any others involved with him began to come on the circuit regularly while we were sleeping. Everyone in America has been affected by this activity. Rich or poor, black or white, male or female, LGBTQIA or straight and any others...we have all been "duped."

The most dangerous of this action has been the partnership of Donald Trump and Elon Musk, and the most disgusting is the issue with the historical saga that took place on January 6, 2021, the attack on the U.S Capitol. Trump seemed to encourage the insurrectionists to upset the certification of the 2020 election won by President Biden.

Today, following his re-election, Trump is now attempting to prosecute anyone having been involved in the investigation of the insurrection, which included threatening to murder his Vice President Mike Pence. Everyone witnessed the attacks with our own eyes, but there are those who for some

reason deny that it happened, not to forget Trump's complete pardoning those charged with the attack, and crimes involved during the disruption. The reality is that incident is already a part of our history.

At least three or four days following Donald Trump's election as president for the second time, a deplorable text message hit a number of cell phones across the country to selected African Americans that a van would be picking them up, taking them to the plantation, back into slavery and picking cotton. I will guarantee those texts came from Elon Musk.

This former South African, born into apartheid that ended with Nelson Mandela becoming president of South Africa, no doubt devastated Musk. Now he is attempting to bring apartheid to America with Trump's assistance,

I have asked for an investigation relative to the texts. The proof is to look at the dismantling of the Civil Rights Movement, DEI and every source of progress African Americans have made including voting rights throughout the federal government.

We have been set back 60 years plus. Project 2025 surfaced throughout the last presidential campaign but Trump consistently denied he knew anything about it. However, on day one, following his inaugural, his committee was busy implementing every part of their movement, which has included defunding, slashing, laying off people from their jobs, shutting down departments - all from DOGE and Musk, encouraged by Trump and his cabinet.

This has been one of the most devastating periods in our lifetime. The Democratic officials in Washington, I am sure, are in a state of shock. We all knew what Trump promised, however he has gone far beyond anything that anyone could imagine.

There are two important components to this story, one is the betrayal to Americans relative to misinformation, and the taking of control by Trump in a "power grab" with no limitations. The last statement I heard was that Donald Trump stopped the fires in California. The individual who told me actually believed this fabrication. This will be an education for so many who have been misled but not surprised. Stay tuned.



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# Fixing What's Broken: A Conversation With BMJ Enterprises Founder and City Council Candidate

By Asia Nail

The Truth Reporter

Sometimes, to make a house a home, you have to first fix what's broken. That's exactly how local business owner and community leader **Blair Johnson** approaches both real estate and public service.

Johnson is the founder of **BMJ Enterprises**, a Toledo-based remodeling and property investment company. He's also stepping into a new role—running as an **Independent candidate for Toledo City Council**, seeking one of the six at-large seats.

We sat down with Johnson for a candid conversation about what drives him, the difference between real leadership and just holding a title, and how he hopes to create lasting change, one project—and one person—at a time.

### The Foundation Is People

"If the foundation isn't strong," Johnson said, "everything else will fall apart. And in our communities, the foundation is people."

That's not just talk—Johnson's lived it. With years of experience in residential remodeling and inspection, he's seen firsthand how poor housing conditions can affect families. But he's also watched how a little help—like a new roof, working heat or clean water—can lift people up.

"We don't need heroes," he explained. "We need listeners. People who will actually hear what residents are saying and figure out how to help. I'm not running to be a politician. I'm running to be a public servant. I just want to serve again."

Before launching his own business, Johnson built a career rooted in service and leadership. He worked for the United States Postal Service for seven years as a carrier, clerk and supervisor—roles that strengthened his belief in fairness, efficiency and community connection.

He later transitioned into the private sector, managing regional operations for a hospitality and parking services company across cities like Columbus, Cleveland, Gary and Durham. Whether supervising mail routes or leading multi-city teams, Johnson says the same skills—clear communication, problem-solving and a heart for people—now help him deliver for his community in more meaningful ways.

### Two Types of Investors, One Need

Johnson doesn't just work on houses—he thinks deeply about housing. In our conversation, he explained that Toledo has "two types of investors."

"There are the ones who just want to come in, flip properties and make money," he said. "But then there are the ones who care about the community. They want to help fix up the neighborhood, create affordable housing and give people a decent place to live."

He believes the city can do more to help the second group.

"There are already programs that help with things like new roofs, windows or energy-efficient furnaces," he shared. "But just because something exists doesn't mean people understand how to access it. A lot of people just don't



Blair Johnson

know where to start—or they get stuck in the process."

### The Power of Listening

Throughout our talk, one theme kept coming up: **listening**. But not just listening to reply—listening to **understand**.

"People know when they're being ignored," Johnson said. "I've seen folks pour their hearts out at town halls, the next month, nothing changes. That's not listening."

He compares real leadership to being a plumber. "Sometimes the problem isn't what you see on the surface. You've got to listen carefully to find out what's happening underneath. Then you fix the leak."

### Building the Next Generation of Builders

Johnson is only 35, but he's already thinking about who will come after him.

"People aren't going into trades like they used to," he said. "But we're always going to need people to fix things—carpenters, electricians, plumbers. Robots aren't coming to hang drywall anytime soon."

One of Johnson's long-term goals is to train and hire local residents, especially young people, and teach them these skills.

"Even if they don't stay with me forever, that's okay," he said. "I'd love for them to learn, then start their own businesses. That's how we grow."

He describes it like planting a garden. "If I grow one strong tree, that tree can drop seeds. Those seeds become more trees. That's how we build a forest."

...continued on page 7

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# Kaptur Statement on Mishandling of the Economy

Last week, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (OH-09) released the following statement in response to the economic impact and fallout of President Trump's tariff announcements this week.

"America's enemies around the world today are applauding. They also are plotting as they watch US stock markets plummet even further. Nearly \$5 Trillion more in US wealth has been lost this week due to chaotic moves on tariffs arbitrarily imposed by the Trump administration. None of the tariffs that the President has proposed and implemented have ever had a single vote in the US Congress. This is unconstitutional.

"Where is Speaker Johnson... asleep at the wheel? Where is the Ways and Means Committee... asleep at the switch? The Trump Administration's dangerous overreach is totally damaging to the US economy and unnerving to America's Allies around the globe. Crashing the US economy is not in the short nor long term interest of the American people. What has occurred in America's markets this week is dangerous. Descent into economic chaos is consequential to every single citizen. Retirement plans are put at risk. Jobs are put at risk. Savings are put at risk. Investments are put at risk.

"I have spent the majority of my time in the House trying to repair the economic damage to our economy of poorly conceived trade agreements that hollowed out the industrial and agricultural economy of our region. As a private businessman and billionaire, Donald Trump never lifted a finger to help us as industrial firms, his included, shipped jobs offshore or collapsed family farm after farm through consolidation.



Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur

"Now this unnecessary market implosion has been forced on the American people without a single vote in Congress. I call on Speaker Johnson to do his job. Call the House back into Special Session to address this illegal tariff regime. Our grandparents and millions of Americans suffered through the 'Great Economic Depression' in the last century. That is not a route any American wants to endure."

## Hicks-Hudson Condemns Concurrence of Senate Bill 1

Last week, state Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo) condemned the Ohio Senate's concurrence of Senate Bill 1, also known as the "Higher Education Destruction Act."

"Senate Bill 1 is still a bad bill," said Hicks-Hudson. "No matter what changes have been made by the House, it doesn't help the attack on the First Amendment rights, employment contract law, and sanctity of higher education in Ohio. It's just putting lipstick on a pig."

Between the bill's committee hearings in the Senate and House of Representatives, S.B. 1 received over 1,700 testimony submissions opposing the legislation, compared to less than 50 submissions in support. Senate Bill 1 jeopardizes the future of higher education in Ohio by driving away students, faculty, and critical business partnerships.



Ohio State Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson speaks about Project 2025 and Issue 1

Senate Bill 1 now heads to Governor Mike DeWine for his signature.

## Returning Citizens Conference is Set for April 10 and 11

*Special to The Truth*

This weekend, a Columbus area massive collective will address the lives of people who have been affected by the justice system. In the past, they were called ex-felons, but newer, humanizing language refers to them as returning citizens. The National Returning Citizens Conference, the fifth of its kind, will be held April 10 and 11, and showcased at the Renaissance Columbus Westerville, 409 Altair Pkwy, 43082. It is designed to highlight fair opportunities and second chances for the formerly incarcerated.

Toledoans will be a part of this event. National recording artist Lyfe Jennings will perform and Rev. Willie Knighten, Jr. will participate in a panel discussion.

Sponsored by the National Alliance of Faith and Justice, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and the Faith and Justice Advisory Committee of the 400 Years of African American History Commission, this gathering of powerful voices is dedicated to creating pathways for personal growth, community reintegration and economic stability for individuals who have been involved in the justice system.



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

Deadline to register  
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**Monday, April 7, 2025**

If you believe you are already registered in Ohio, check the status of your voter registration to make sure the information is correct and/or that you have not been removed from the active registration list.

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1. Visit: [VoteOhio.gov](https://VoteOhio.gov)
2. Scroll down the webpage (to the middle of the page)
3. Go to "REGISTER TO VOTE"
4. Select "Check Your Registration"

VIDEO: **Online Voter Registration in Ohio**  
(Instructions) [https://youtu.be/jPIU\\_HlzLVO](https://youtu.be/jPIU_HlzLVO)



Check Your Registration



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**Fill out the online or paper voter registration form:**

- If you have never registered to vote.
- If you are registered, but have changed your first or last name.
- If you are registered, but have changed your address.
- If you registered in the past, and voted, but do not see your information in the active voter registration list. In this case, you need to re-register.

After registering, you will receive a mailed notice from the Lucas County Board of Elections regarding where you vote (your polling location).

For more information, call: Lucas County Board of Elections at (419) 213-4001 or the Ohio Secretary of State at (877) 868-3874

# Port Authority Leader Will Speak at Spring Commencement

Special to The Truth

Lourdes University will honor Thomas J. Winston during its Spring Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 10, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. The ceremony will occur at the Russell J. Ebeid Recreation Center on the Lourdes campus at 6832 Convent Blvd.



Thomas J. Winston

Winston, a Lourdes University Board Member and the president and CEO of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, will be bestowed with a Doctor of Public Service, Honoris Causa degree during the ceremony. He will also grace the event as the 68th Commencement speaker, offering insights from his extensive business and leadership experience.

In his role at the Port Authority, Thomas Winston is responsible for developing and implementing the organization's strategic direction. He oversees all operations and development activities, including aviation, maritime, economic development, financing programs, brownfield redevelopment, property acquisition, downtown parking operations, and other strategic activities associated with the Port Authority's multi-modal facilities.

Winston joined the Port Authority in 2010 as vice president, Adminis-

tration and Chief Financial Officer, leading its accounting, financing programs, legal, IT and human resources departments. He became president and CEO in September 2019.

Before joining the Port Authority, Winston held increasing leadership responsibilities in diverse business capacities with several industry-leading corporations, including Owens Corning, Pfizer, and Nuveen Investments.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Winston earned his Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Philosophy from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1992 and his Master of Business Administration in Finance and Marketing from Loyola University Chicago in 1998.

Winston is a member of the internationally recognized Association for Financial Professionals (AFP). In addition to his work at Lourdes, he serves on the Board of Trustees for Imagination Station, Boys & Girls Club of Toledo, Toledo Opera Association, The Toledo Museum of Art, The Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council, and is Chair of the Ohio Economic Development Association.

In recognition of his profound contributions to business and leadership, Lourdes University is proud to confer upon Thomas J. Winston an honorary degree, celebrating his dedication to and impact on community service.

## BMJ Enterprises...continued from page 5

### Event Spotlight: Building Black Wealth

Johnson's commitment to empowerment goes beyond housing. As a member of the Greater Toledo Realist Association (GTRA), he's helping to host **Building Black Wealth Day on April 12** at the brand-new Wayman Palmer YMCA. The event is free and open to the public.

"We'll have financial coaches, housing experts and local leaders sharing real tools," he said. "A lot of people want to buy homes or fix their credit, but they don't know where to start. We're going to help with that."

The event aims to make financial literacy feel less intimidating. "We're not going to throw big words at you," Johnson promised. "This is about giving people what they need in a way that makes sense."

### From the Mailbox to the Meeting Room

When asked why he decided to run for council, Johnson doesn't hesitate.

"Our people need help," he said. "And not just help—they need someone who will really show up."

He talks about his parents' backgrounds in service—his mother worked for the U.S. Postal Service, and his father is a Navy veteran and business consultant.

"I was raised to believe in working with people, not just over people," he said. "That's what public service is supposed to be about."

Johnson's not flashy, and he's not trying to be. But what he offers is something every city needs: someone who cares enough to roll up their sleeves and do the work.

### Home Is a Team Effort

Toward the end of our interview, we laughed about how home improvement projects can take over your life—and how having someone to guide you through it makes a big difference.



Blair Johnson, Darnell Smith, Rob Pasker

"Sometimes, I even need someone to coach me through my own house!" Johnson jokes. "Homes are like puzzles, and when the pieces are everywhere, it's easy to get overwhelmed."

But that, he says, is the whole point.

"You don't have to do it alone. Whether it's fixing a house or fixing a system, we all need help. That's why I'm doing this. Because if we work together, we can build something that lasts."

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# Getting Your Affairs in Order 2025 – How to Be Ready for Life Changes

The Truth Staff

Getting Your Affairs in Order, presented by the Area Office on Aging and the Toledo Lucas County Public Library was held April 5 at the Main Library Branch. The informative workshop helped attendees to prepare for a living will, to understand the power of attorney, bank accounts and fraud prevention, the transfer of assets, life and home-owners insurance, among other topics. The sold-out event included lunch and was free and open to the public.

The workshop was held from 10 a.m. to noon and featured a host of experts that spoke on various aspects of estate planning for those in attendance. This was the fifth event in the series.

The welcome was given by Judge Jack Puffenberger of the Lucas County Probate Court, followed by Tina Williams, of the Area Office on Aging.

The Invocation was offered by Rev. Barbie Harrison and the Program Purpose by Deborah Barnett of N-SYNC, LLC.

The event was organized by Barnett and Harrison, along with others who see the need to have a program to encourage people, young and old, to get their affairs, especially financial affairs, in order.

“We all have something,” said Barnett opening the session. “Put it together, your well-being needs a plan. Different life-changing situations will help you understand that a will is not always the way ... all of our situations are different.”

Topics ranged from how to communicate wishes to the family, final arrangements instructions, living wills, trusts and more.

“Everyone should start getting their affairs in order as soon as they begin to think about it,” Harrison shared. “Young adults, especially young adults



Deborah Barnett



Lucas County Recorder Michael Ashford



Tastefully Two

...continued on page 13

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# TPS Breaks Ground on Education, Recreation, Residential Facility

The Truth Staff

Toledo Public Schools broke ground on the new education, recreation and residential development on the Scott Park campus last Thursday morning as board members, elected officials and numerous officials and education leaders from around the area joined in the celebration.

“What we are doing is monumental,” said Robert Vasquez, president of the Toledo Board of Education. “We are going where no other K-12 school districts haven’t gone.”

The Scott Park campus, which has been acquired by TPS, will be converted into a state-of-the-art campus featuring three new magnet schools including a college of business academy; a college of education and social services academy (training teachers, school counselors and fire fighters, etc) and a construction and architectural academy.

In addition, the plans call for onsite-partnerships with Owens Community College and the University of Toledo bringing high school through higher education opportunities; the construction of numerous recreational facilities plus residential housing for faculty, staff and community

The \$100 million Scott Park project will include a fitness center, dining hall, recreational athletic dome, administrative suites, outdoor and indoor construction training facilities, the three academies, child-care center, ministry office and a fishing pond, among other amenities. The campus will also be a part of a two-park system that is connected to Ottawa Park via the bike trail.

An \$84 million annual return to the community is anticipated from the project via the new opportunities and work being done at Scott Park. It will bring an estimated 3,000 jobs to the campus.

The cost for the project was made possible when Toledo voters approved Issue 19 in the last November’s general elections, the first time TPS had asked voters to approve a levy for new funds in 11 years.



Romules Durant: TPS Board Members, Toledo City Council Members break ground for the new education facility at Scott Park

“Toledo is being perceived on a national scale of being innovative and doing things differently,” said TPS Superintendent Romules Durant, EdD. “We are providing opportunities for this current generation and for future generations as well.”

Last week’s event was a ceremony to break ground for the first phase of the new facility – the educational academies that Rudolph Libbe will be constructing.

“Toledo should be proud – this is a great place and TPS is going to make it even greater,” said Vasquez.



TPS Superintendent Romules Durant, EdD

## Graduating From College? Take These Steps to Launch Your Career

By Special to The Truth

With demand for financial advisors expected to grow quickly — at a rate of 13% through 2032, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics — those with college graduation on the horizon would be wise to consider this marketable profession.

The key to launching a successful financial advising career is becoming a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professional. Those with CFP® certification are highly valued by employers and clients alike and can expect to have more career options and higher salaries. Here are the steps to take to gain this competitive edge and begin working in the field:

Get educated: CFP® certification has a two-part education requirement. The first is attaining a bachelor’s degree in any discipline from an accredited college or university. The second is completing comprehensive college-level coursework in personal financial planning areas such as investment planning,

... continued on page 10

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# Universal Pre-K, A Prescription for Success

By Steven Flagg

Guest Column

We just spent a week with our grandchildren, and we are tired and happy. How can you not love a three-year-old boy and an almost six-year-old girl full of life, energy, love and a desire to learn? Sponges come to mind as they soak up our love and the opportunities for learning.

As we played and interacted with them, it was demonstrated repeatedly that they are being prepared for success.

Our three-year-old grandson was counting backwards as he launched his rockets, singing songs like itsy bitsy spider and the ABC song, and demonstrating critical thinking skills with his imaginative train layouts.

Our almost six-year-old granddaughter who is now in kindergarten blew us away with her knowledge and ability to learn new concepts and solve problems.

Yes, we are proud grandparents; still our anecdotal experiences shouted to us the value of early childhood education. Both of our grandchildren have been in childcare facilities since they were infants. The facility they attended provides daycare but also age-appropriate Pre-K education. And the skills demonstrated by our three-year-old grandson and actual kindergarten evaluations of our granddaughter told us that a Pre-K experience is a valuable, worthwhile investment.

So why isn't a Pre-K program available to all children? You do not have to do more than a Google search to find documented evidence of the social, cultural and economic value for a community that has made the investment in their youngest citizens.

We in Lucas County are having a start-stop, it costs too much, where do we find the resources Pre-K conversation. It is a very agonizing, frustrating moment toward hopefully fruitful progress.

At the March 12 Lucas County Commissioners meeting, Universal Pre-K was on the agenda. Commissioners inferred that HOPE Toledo, which has been providing childcare programming since 2021, had difficulty in recruiting financial support from local business, which left a funding gap and unpaid bills that the County feels compelled to fill.

Commissioner Lisa Sobecki leveled a not-so-subtle rebuke and challenged Ohio's state legislature, governor and the local business community.

According to a March 16, 2025, The Blade editorial, "Listen-up not Shut-up," Sobecki was intemperate in her demands and remarks about business and was not putting up her money but that of taxpayers.

Valid points but had the editorial board viewed the video of the meeting at the 54th minute mark, they would have seen a frustrated commissioner who suggested that businesses could offer more than financial support through lobbying efforts in Columbus. In other words, put up or stop complaining that



Pre-K is not available. Her remarks were emotional and brash, but the substance made a lot of sense.

Certainly, local businesses must ensure their survival as a first priority. And there may be resources that can be diverted by the city and county. But making this argument just diverts us from finding solutions. And businesses cannot thrive without stable effective governance that significantly contributes to a thriving local economy.

A universal Pre-K program may just be the prescription for a county that has been losing population for decades. Young families would see the savings and potential for their children, and with magnet schools like those offered by the Toledo Public Schools, they would view Lucas County as a good place to live. This is exactly the demographic we want to recruit. Business would thrive in a growing economy created by a larger employment base and young families in their prime spending years.

This may be an insurmountable goal, but a successful universal Pre-K county wide program is possible with state and local government investment along with a business community that does more than give lip service to supporting our youth. With a long-term return of \$7-\$10 for every \$1 invested in Pre-K, this might be the prescription we write to secure our future.

## Graduating From College...continued from page 9

estate planning and psychology of financial planning. While many begin the certification process after graduating college, you can get a head start by working toward this goal while you're still enrolled in school.

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# Local Leaders Make Visits to Maritime Academy

By Paul Hubbard, Maritime Academy Chairman of the Board

Guest Column

In two separate visits to tour Maritime Academy Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz and Ohio State Representative Elgin Rogers experienced operating a Laker Cargo Container ship on the simulator at the Academy.

Maritime has one of the few ship simulators in the country. The mayor spoke to the students about their future goals. The students replied that their goals were opening a boarding school, plumber, social media influencer, Army human resource officer and graphic designer, among other goals.

The mayor told the students that the businesses he is recruiting to Toledo for economic development need skilled hands-on employees. The jobs would not require a college degree but skills. The mayor discussed the difference in learning knowledge in college but not learning a skill that will lead to a job. He told the students about learning a skill that will lead to a job.

The mayor also discussed the operations of City of Toledo's government. He told the story of the Edmond Fitzgerald Ship that sunk in Lake Superior in November 1975. Twenty-nine crew members died. The Edmond Fitzgerald was a Toledo laker ship carrying iron ore and that the crew who died were from Toledo.

Aaron Lusk, the Maritime superintendent, indicated one of his problems is finding experienced certified teachers. However Maritime Academy and Lourdes University have formed a partnership to train and certify the teachers who need to be certified. Lusk went on to mention that Maritime will reestab-



Mayor Kapszukiewicz and Maritime students



Rep. Elgin Rogers in the navigational room

lish its welding program and scuba diving class. Culinary arts are also available at the Academy.

Rep. Rogers mentioned during his visit that all school kids deserve a quality education no matter who they are or what school they go to. There were two student guides who showed him the Academy. Rogers also spoke to the students about their future goals. He was so impressed with the two student guides that he found them part time employment without them asking.

# Ohio's Public Libraries at Risk: Budget Proposal Slashes Funding

Public support needed, call Speaker Huffman & House Finance Chair

State Rep. Michele Grim (D-Toledo) last week called Ohioans to action in support of Ohio's public library systems which face a more than \$100M cut in funding in the proposed Ohio House operating budget.

"This budget shamefully dismantles the Public Library Fund, cutting statewide funding by more than \$100 million while at the same time giving a billionaire \$600 million to build a stadium in Cleveland. I am proud that our community is home to the nationally award-winning Toledo Lucas County Public Library. Like so many libraries across the state, it serves as a critical resource for job seekers, provides reliable internet access, and fosters community engagement. I will not stand by while Republican leadership attempts to destroy a public good that benefits all Ohioans," said Rep. Grim.

Libraries are a critical resource for Ohioans looking for work, getting training and education in rural areas, using reliable internet access, and gathering for community events and engagement. House Republicans rejected Governor Mike DeWine's executive proposal that would have increased the Public Library Fund from 1.7% to 1.75% of the tax revenue collected in the state's General Revenue Fund. Instead, the current proposal of the budget establishes a new method of funding public libraries through a direct GRF

appropriation which will hurt libraries' ability to predictably forecast revenue and long-term financial sustainability.

According to the Ohio Library Council:

- Ohio's public libraries are extremely popular, with over 7.4 million cardholders and one of the highest library usage rates in the nation.
- Public libraries deliver a significant return on investment, generating \$5 in economic value to Ohioans for every \$1 spent.
- Ohioans visited their local libraries more than 44.6 million times in 2023. That is the equivalent of 434 sold-out Buckeye football games at Ohio Stadium.

To help protect Ohio's cherished public library systems contact the offices of Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) and House Finance Chair Brian Stewart and request they restore the proper funding proposed by Governor Mike DeWine.

Speaker Huffman- office: (614) 466-6344, email: Rep78@ohiohouse.gov<mailto:Rep78@ohiohouse.gov>

Chair Stewart- office: (614) 466-1464, email: Rep12@ohiohouse.gov<mailto:Rep12@ohiohouse.gov>

Graduating From College...continued from page 10

financial planning, provide holistic advice or even offer a financial services firm auxiliary support, such as in technology or marketing. Visit CFP Board's Career Center to find a mentor, get information about career fairs and search for open positions suited to your skills and interests.

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# College DEI Probes Undermine Black High School Success

*Trump-era investigations are casting doubt on Black Achievement. However, educators say the myth of lower standards is not just wrong – but dangerous*

By Quintessa Williams, *Word In Black*  
Guest Column

When the Department of Education announced last month that they would investigate admissions practices at 50 of the nation's elite colleges and universities, it declared that school DEI policies exclude qualified white and Asian college-bound students from campus.

Implied but not stated in the directive, experts say, is an assumption: that other minority high school seniors who've earned seats at top schools probably don't deserve them — especially if they're Black.

For Black students, who often have to fight uphill battles just to get accepted into America's top universities, the assumption that admissions standards have been lowered just for the sake of diversity is not just harmful but false. That's because the number of Black high school graduates has ticked up in recent years, along with the percentage of Black students who qualify for admission to elite institutions of higher education.

"We see time and time again that whenever forward progress is made in addressing systemic challenges, there's a backlash," says Alaina Harper, EdD, college admissions expert and executive director at OneGoal in New York, a nonprofit organization that helps high school students of color pursue their postsecondary aspirations. "The idea that standards must be lowered for our students to succeed is highly inaccurate."

Where's the Credit for Graduation Gains?

In recent years, Black students have made steady progress in high school graduation rates.

In the 2010-11 academic year, around 74 percent of Black public high school students graduated on time, but within a decade the percentage had climbed to 81 percent according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The seven-point gain is the largest improvement among any racial group over the same time frame, yet critics continue to suggest it's due to "softened" academic standards, not hard work.

But experts point to schools in majority-Black cities and districts that have invested in new approaches to teaching and learning — not short-cuts.

For example, the public school system in Atlanta, where more than 70 percent of students are Black, has a graduation rate of 86.2 percent. In suburban Dallas, the DeSoto Independent School District, which is predominantly Black, the graduation rate is around 93.2 percent. The school district in Prince George's County, Maryland, whose population is majority Black, had a graduation rate of 84.7 percent.

None of those districts lowered standards to get there, Harper says. They added support.

"It's not that our Black students lack potential," Harper says. "It's that they lack access. The support and opportunities available to them are not equally distributed."

Deeper than DEI

Improved high school graduation rates notwithstanding, Black students are still significantly underrepresented on college campuses. In 2022, just 36 percent of Black 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in college; since 2010, Black college enrollment has declined 23 percent, according to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute.

Harper says that many Black students never get the chance to fully pursue their goals due to a lack of resources and funding in K-12 schools to guide them.

"We're more likely to see Black students in schools with limited access to college and career instruction, or academically rigorous coursework," Harper says. "They also face financial barriers that make college feel out of reach."

Data tells part of the story. According to The Education Trust, a nonprofit, predominantly Black K-12 public-school districts receive \$2,200 less per student than majority-white districts. That funding gap plays out in fewer counselors, outdated textbooks, and less access to advanced coursework — all of which weaken college readiness.

The Toll Suspicion

Even when Black students beat the odds and make it to elite colleges, doubt is never far behind. The common assumption among some white professors, classmates, or school officials — that a Black student on campus got there because of preference, not performance — adds a psychological burden, especially in predominantly-white, academically competitive spaces.

"We cannot let our young people internalize the message that they don't belong," Harper says. "When students constantly feel like they have to prove they earned their spot, it's exhausting, and unfair."

Adding an extra layer of stress is what social psychologist Claude Steele calls "stereotype threat": the fear of confirming racial stereotypes, an anxiety which can undermine academic performance. In highly-regarded, predominantly white schools already short on support for Black students, the emotional toll can become even heavier.

Reframing the Conversation

As the Trump administration's anti-DEI rhetoric escalates, Harper says, it's time for higher-education institutes to ask more incisive questions — not about who's getting ahead, but about who's being left behind.

"We need scalable, evidence-based solutions that work for all students," she says. "That means integrating postsecondary advising into the school day, simplifying financial aid, and closing affordability gaps."

With college access shrinking and resources dwindling in Black-majority schools, Harper says we should stop asking whether students deserve opportunity and start asking why they keep being denied it.

"This narrative around who gets what and who deserves what—it's not helping anyone," she says. "We should be focused on whether every student can access a career, earn a family-sustaining wage, and build a future they can see themselves in."

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# Poetry Books by Various Authors

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

The Truth Contributor

A, B, B, A.

That's not only how you spell the name of a popular music group. That's also how a poem might be structured, if it rhymes, or it might be created in other ways. That's the thing about poetry: it's all how you perceive it when creating it and reading it. So why not think about putting these great poetry books on your shelf this month...?

c. 2025  
Penguin  
\$18.99 - \$20  
various page counts

When you spend time with poetry, you expect a certain kind of relationship between author and reader. That's only part of what you get in *The Space Between Men* by Mia S. Willis (Penguin Poets, \$20). It might also change the way you feel.

Here, Willis – a poet, historian and educator – explores culture, Black history and what it's like to be Black, Southern and queer. When those various experiences come together in poetry here, it invites readers to consider the width and depth of the spaces, and their mere existence.

If short but image-fueled poetry appeals to you, this book is worth a good look.

Poetry can take your thoughts in many directions, including thoughts about yourself. If you're hungry for soul-searching, then try *Is This My Final Form?* by Amy Gerstler (Penguin Poets, \$20).

Life doesn't follow a straight line. Some things are two things at once and situations can change, which are two points that seem to be everywhere inside this book. Is this a series of biographical poems with a twist of imagination, or are the poems in here a collection of new perceptions and ways to embrace what could be? Read, and think about it because it's up for a reader's interpretation. However you perceive these poems, you may chuckle sometimes. For sure, you'll want to read them again and think anew.

And finally, if your child loves the beauty of poetry and wonders how to create poems, then *The One and Only Rumi* by Rabiah York, illustrated by Maneli Manouchehri (Penguin, \$18.99) is a book to bring to the table.

Here, children will learn the story of Muhammad, a wise young boy whose life changed when Genghis Khan came to his village. Muhammad was only allowed to fill a bag with possessions and he knew he'd miss the birds and the friends he'd made at home. His father said it was unlikely that they'd ever return.

Yes, there were other birds and other friends in his lifetime, but Muhammad never forgot the first ones and "he never stopped listening" to the wind or the sound of the leaves or the laughter of others. He grew to become a man, a teacher, and a poet, as your eight-to-12-year-old will see in this beautifully illustrated, beautifully told book.

If these collections about poetry and life don't quite fit what you need, be sure to ask your favorite bookseller or librarian for more. They can help you find poetry, silly rhymes, great biographies, and collections of verse that are perfect volumes with which to spend hours. In the meantime, give these poetry books an "A."

### Ready For Life Changes...continued from page 8

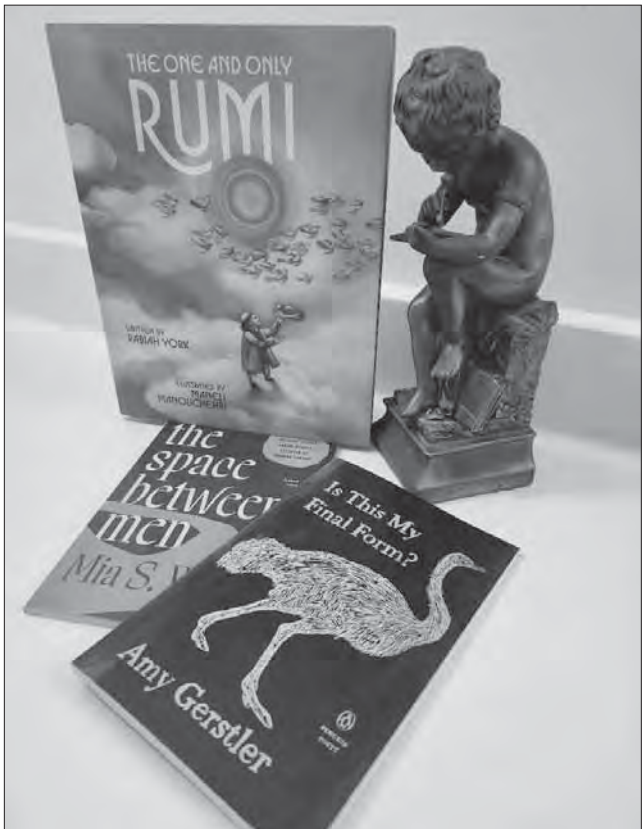
with kids, need to start having these conversations now, the focus has been on the seniors but everybody should be talking about it."

Speakers Included:

- Rev. Barbie Harrison
- Austin Finnerty of the Lucas County Auditor's Office
- Douglas Johnson of the Lucas County Treasurer's Office
- Lucas County Recorder Michael Ashford
- Romie Brown, agent with State Farm Insurance
- Matthew Benner, Huntington Bank

The event concluded with a question & answer survey moderated by Celeste Felix. Lunch was provided by Tastefully Two – Joanne Menefee and Gwen Wyse, proprietors.

Major sponsors included Huntington Bank and the Lucas County Recorder's Office and supporting sponsors Black and Brown Unity Coalition, First Church of God, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA); Lucas County Auditor; Lucas County Treasurer; N-SYNC, LLC; Tastefully Two; Sarah Ross, State Farm Agent; Toledo Community Coalition.



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# The Sojourner's Truth

# CLASSIFIEDS

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## COMMISSIONERS SEEK COMMUNITY-MINDED INDIVIDUALS TO SERVE ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The Board of Lucas County Commissioners is inviting residents to take an active role in shaping the future of their community by applying to serve on various boards, commissions, and advisory committees.

These appointments provide an opportunity for individuals to contribute their expertise, insight, and passion to local government, ensuring that Lucas County remains a thriving, well-managed community.

"Public participation is essential to good governance," the Lucas County Commissioners said in a joint statement. "By lending their talents to serve on a board, residents will have the chance to weigh in on key decisions, advocate for important issues, and help guide policies that impact the lives of their fellow residents."

Residents from all backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Whether you have experience in business, public service, law, or another field, there are numerous opportunities to make a meaningful impact.

Lucas County is currently accepting applications for the following boards:

- \* Toledo Regional Transit Authority Board of Trustees
- \* Lucas Metropolitan Housing Board of Commissioners
- \* Lucas County Children Services Board of Trustees
- \* Keep Toledo/Lucas County Beautiful Board of Directors
- \* Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County Board of Directors

Individuals interested in applying can find more information and submit an application by visiting the Boards and Commissions page on the Lucas County website: [www.co.lucas.oh.us/76/Boards-and-Commissions](http://www.co.lucas.oh.us/76/Boards-and-Commissions)<<http://www.co.lucas.oh.us/76/Boards-and-Commissions>>.

For questions or assistance, contact the Lucas County Commissioners' office at (419) 213-4821.

## MISS SARAH'S PITTEPATTER CHILDCARE, LLC

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## CASINO TRIPS

Rising Sun Casino – April 7-6  
Motor City Casino – April 15  
Call for info – 419-901-1515

## DIRECTOR MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS

WGTE Public Media seeks a strategic, creative, and organized professional to lead its marketing, communication, and community engagement efforts. This role involves developing and implementing innovative, cost-effective strategies for platforms that include online, television, radio, and public events.

Responsibilities include managing WGTE's website, social media, and app to enhance user experiences, overseeing digital marketing (SEO, SEM, display ads, email, and content marketing), and crafting promotional campaigns to expand reach and enable greater engagement.

Candidates should have a bachelor's degree in marketing, communications, or a related field, and/or possess 3 to 5 years of equivalent experience. Strong skills in writing, campaign development, project management, and digital marketing are essential. Experience in media, nonprofits, fundraising promotions, and team leadership is preferred.

Send your letter and resume to: [employment@wgte.org](mailto:employment@wgte.org) or Human Resources, P.O. Box 30, Toledo, OH 43614.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH), located in Toledo, OH is seeking experienced applicants for the following position(s): Human Resources Assistant (PT). For complete details, visit <https://www.lucasmha.org> and click on Careers. Deadline: 04-23-25. This is a Section 3 covered position. HUD recipients are encouraged to apply and are to indicate on the application if you are a LMHA Public Housing client or Housing Choice Voucher Program participant. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply. NO PHONE CALLS. Equal employment opportunity shall be afforded to all qualified persons without regard to age, race, color, religion, religious creed, gender, military status, ancestry, disability, handicap, sexual orientation, genetic information or national origin.



## PUBLIC BID ADVERTISEMENT (ELECTRONIC BIDDING) STATE OF OHIO STANDARD FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

1130-25-359

### BUILDING ENVELOPE/WEATHERPROOFING FY 25-26 THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO LUCAS COUNTY, OH

**Bids Due:** April 15, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. through the State's electronic bidding system at <https://bidexpress.com>

**EDGE Participation Goal:** 5.0% of contract of the contract sum with EDGE-certified business(es) AND **additional** 10% EDGE-certified OR Diverse Supplier vendors including MBE, WBE, VBE, BSVI, SDVOB, and LGBTBE.

**Domestic steel use is required per ORC 153.011.**

<b>Contract</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
General Contract	\$2,400,000.00
Alternate 1 – MacKinnon Hall	\$1,185,000.00
Alternate 2 – Libbey Hall	\$985,000.00

**Pre-bid Meeting:** April 01, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. – Main Campus, Plant Operations Building - Room 1000, The University of Toledo, 2925 East Rocket Drive, Toledo, OH 43606.

**Walk-Through:** Immediately following Pre-Bid.

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

**More Info:** Finley Consulting Group, LLC, Dave Finley, (216) 214-9933, [dave@finleycg.com](mailto:dave@finleycg.com)

Call to place your ad:

419-243-0007

[www.TheTruthToledo.com](http://www.TheTruthToledo.com)

# Zeta Phi Beta Chapter Celebrates 60th Anniversary

By Alexandria Leatherberry

The Truth Reporter

The graduate chapter Zeta Xi Zeta of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. celebrated their 60th anniversary on March 29, 2025, awarding scholarships to high school graduates in a traditional gala style. The organization's gala returns on its diamond anniversary with the mission to continue the legacy of service, sisterhood, and scholarship. The gala has been a signature fundraiser of the Zeta Xi Zeta chapter to support the pursuit of higher education for young women of color.

Inviting guests to enjoy an evening of fellowship, food and live entertainment, led this year by the band, Distant Cousins, and mistress of ceremony, Fayth Atkins from Fox36.

Amongst the guests awaited the scholarship winners, Imanga Lufungolo, an upcoming graduate of Notre Dame Academy, and Celine Winfield-White, a senior at Central Catholic High School. The scholars were each given \$1,000 towards their educational endeavors for their academic and community achievements.

Amongst awarding the scholars, the Zeta Xi Zeta chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. recognized Asia Bolds-Haans with a Finer Womanhood Award for her contributions to the organization. Asia is serving her first term on the executive board of the Zeta Xi Zeta chapter and accepted her award stating, "joining has been the best decision I ever made."

State Director Patricia E. Jones closed the award ceremony with comments of the atmosphere experienced at the 60th anniversary gala. Before leaving attendees had the opportunity to participate in a silent auction of select goods and enter into a raffle for a barrel of spirits.

The barrel raffle will conclude and the winner will be drawn this spring; the Zeta Xi Zeta chapter will be updating their social media pages with further information to join their fundraising opportunities in support of their mission.



Zeta Xi Zeta Graduate Chapter



Zeta Executive Bd - Asia Bolds-Haans, Trisha Draper, Kimberly Dada, Pasha Carter, Angela Crooks, Danielle Reddick, Shevonne Banks, Cierra Awls, Jamilah Jones



The Scholarship Gala Committee



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*Kristen B., Age 34  
 Sono Bello Ambassador  
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