

Volume 89 No. 5 *“And Ye Shall Know The Truth...”* May 7, 2025

Johnson Produce Market In the Heart of the Community



In This Issue...

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Toledo Will Not Be Bullied Page 2 | Cover Story David Johnson Page 5 | Ruby Watkins and Lupus Page 8 | Mental Health Moment Page 12 | Classifieds Page 14 |
| Perryman and Baldemar Velasquez Page 3 | Deportation Protest Page 7 | Women's Health Page 10 | Book Review Page 13 | The Cotillion Luncheon Page 15 |
| | | | | Chi Eta Phi Sorority Page 16 |

Toledo Officials: We Will Not Be Bullied by the Trump Administration

By Jefferson Diaz
The Truth Reporter

The U.S Department of Transportation sent a memo to the city of Toledo with a warning: if they do not collaborate with federal agencies, such as ICE, or continue to hire people based on their race, sex or religion, instead of merit, they will stop sending funds.

Several city leaders – and members of the Democratic Party – held a press conference to send a clear message to President Donald Trump’s administration: “we will not let him bully us.”

Toledo expects to receive millions of dollars in 2025 from US Department of Transportation. The president of the City Council, Carrie Hartman, said: “What we get varies year to year and what we haven’t received this year is more than 40 million dollars.”

Hartman added that if they don’t obtain these funds, Toledo’s roads will be affected. “The city can only put up to \$24 million a year for this type of work. The extra money we receive from the federal government, which is our tax money, is used for large projects.”

The public transportation system and construction projects will also be affected if the USDOT doesn’t pay what they promised.

“Everything is chaos because they don’t specify when they will leave us without funds. We feel like they are bullying us,” Hartman said.

Toledo’s Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz said the city will continue to be “a welcoming place for diversity” and that the changes in policies from Washington still represent too much uncertainty to have “some certainty about what may happen in the near future.”

“There is a lot of fear but we will not stop receiving guidance from the different courts in the country and will just keep doing what’s best for everyone who lives in our city,” he added



Local officials decry Trump administration’s attempts to bully communities

Kapszukiewicz assured residents that so far ICE has not requested help from the Toledo Police Department to carry out raids looking for migrants. “We aim for our law enforcement officers to follow the law and take dangerous people off the street. Always following the due process.”

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When They Come for You

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

The Truth Contributor

The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. It is always about people.

- César Chavez



The familiar refrain, “What you gonna do when they come for you?” once served as the backdrop to a television portrayal of justice. This representation of our justice system glorified law enforcement while casting Black, Brown and poor communities as threats or “Bad Boys” without dignity or due process.

But for millions of Black and Brown communities today, terrorized by the constant fear of the U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement agency’s (ICE) “snatch and grab” actions resulting from President Trump’s stepped-up immigration enforcement crackdown, this familiar warning has become a daily calculation.

Despite recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings that migrants are entitled to judicial review, President Donald Trump continues an escalating pressure campaign against judges and the U.S. court system, arguing that migrants should not receive due process before being deported.

As civil rights erode, for migrants and other immigrants, “Come for you” represents sudden disappearance, detention and deportation, possibly without having the right to a day in court.

Most powerfully, this haunting melody is a soundtrack to lives lived under a constant cloud of fear, where people must navigate an existence where going to work, dropping a child off at school or walking down the street is perilous.

I sat down with Baldemar Velásquez, founder of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), immigrant and worker rights champion, labor activist who was named a MacArthur Fellow (also known as the “Genius Grant”) in 1989, to talk about what hope and action must occur in such times.

Perryman: Someone has described you as “César Chavez of the Midwest.” You’ve organized farm labor communities for the last 30 years, fighting for immigrants’ and migrant workers’ rights throughout the country from North Carolina to Mexico.

You put together the Brown/Black coalition with the code of conduct being signed by police chiefs on how to approach people in the minority community. You’ve even been to England and have organized and advocated in Africa. We are honored to have such civil rights royalty right here in Toledo.

Velásquez: I advocated in the U.K. Parliament for a law against modern-day slavery because many European companies exploit workers abroad, especially in agriculture. That same exploitation exists here in the U.S., particularly in tobacco fields in North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and even Southern Ohio. European companies like British American Tobacco – owners of Reynolds America – buy these crops, linking global supply chains to local abuses.

Perryman: What took you to Africa?

Velásquez: I visited Malawi, Africa, through our union’s international network and witnessed conditions worse than those in North Carolina: workers, including children, earning just 85 cents daily. These global connections allow corporations to import cheap labor products into the U.S., undercutting American workers and worsening exploitation. We need sustainable trade agreements that promote fairness, not more greed. Profit shouldn’t come at the cost of human dignity.

So, for me, this work isn’t just a job – it’s a lifelong cause. If we believe in equality and equity and fairness and justice for all, we gotta do our best to live it.

Dr. Perryman: What was your ‘aha moment’ that shaped your understanding and told you this is what I really got to do?

Velásquez: It was watching my mom and my younger siblings’ mistreatment and the suffering out in those fields. I was very angry. Living in the squalor we were housed in, chicken coops and barns. You’re out picking crops in those rows, and you think that the only thing in life is when you’re done with this row, but then there’s another one just like it waiting for you. This institution, hopelessness, watching my mom and my dad being taken advantage of. The poverty was one thing, but what really hurt was the treatment of my parents and their younger siblings. It’s something that a young man can hardly stand, especially when they cuss at your mom and things like that and call her dirty names. You wanna hit somebody, you grow up angry, and that was me.

Perryman: When did life begin to click for you?

Velásquez: What clicked apart from my early experiences was that I planned to join the Marines after high school. However, a teacher encouraged me to consider college — something I hadn’t thought was possible for someone like me. While studying engineering at Pan American College, the mistreatment of my grandparents and the Civil Rights Movement shifted my focus toward justice. During a volunteer project documenting police brutality in Cleveland, an elder asked why I wasn’t fighting for my own people after I casually mentioned growing up so poor, we made games out of playing with rats. That challenge stuck with me, and when I returned home, I began organizing migrant farmworkers with the quiet but powerful support of my mother’s network of farmworker women. Those were my first FLOC meetings in Putnam County.



Baldemar Velásquez

Perryman: Today, we see intensified immigration enforcement and deportation without due process. How do these trending forces connect to the struggles farmworkers and immigrant communities have always faced?

Velásquez: We’re moving at a high moment of tension around these issues that have persisted over the years. Now, we’re becoming the scapegoats or a distraction to the broader things this current administration is trying to achieve.

People are being abducted without a hearing, access to a judge or an attorney, and there are [many] individuals who have been sent to that prison down in El Salvador. It’s not a prison; it’s a concentration camp where people are held without charges, without the right to communicate with an attorney.

Can you imagine people coming into our community and just picking people up and saying, “We’ll deal with it later,” without a hearing or anything? That is a serious threat. I don’t know how they’re getting away with it. Can you imagine our fate if you and I just snubbed our noses at the law and the Constitution? It’s beyond comprehension, so we have to do everything we can to protect our people, have a good rapport with local law enforcement, and let them enforce local laws, not federal immigration laws.

Perryman: Are there other things that should be done?

Velásquez: The second thing is to convince local law enforcement to hold ICE and border patrol accountable for due process. They’ve gotta have warrants with names on them. Otherwise, we’re instructing our people: you don’t have to talk to them, so walk away. If they detain you, they must have a reason to detain you. That’s an essential piece on which we train our people

... continued on page 6

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Trump Kicks Civil Rights To The Curb!

By Lafe Tolliver, Esq

Guest Column

In case you have not yet noticed, Trump and his sycophants are gleefully seeking to blunt, limit or dismantle civil rights laws that were passed during The Great Society (President Lyndon Johnson) during the 1960's.

Since the end of legalized slavery in 1865, white America supported the bitter and punishing Jim Crow laws that corrupted life for Black Americans; it is now apparent that Trump wants to punish anyone who could or would benefit from equal treatment under the law.

Trump's cabinet members are in lock step with his dystopian view of an America in which only white people reign and rule and if there are any laws that attempt to level the playing field, Trump wants to snuff them out.

Just recently Trump issued an executive order regarding civil rights laws that were put in place to monitor fair elections since America has a hellish history of doing any and all acts including mayhem and lynchings to stop Black Americans from exercising their rights as voting citizens.

Suffice to know that if you examine the record of Trump and his facile cabinet members exorcising, in their words, the demons of D.E.I. and "wokeness", you will find a common principle running through all of those racist-based acts: stop, repeal, limit, obfuscate and deny any program or practice or law or ruling that remotely tries to rectify past racist acts in America.

If you did not know better, one would think that a sub theme of the Trump administration is to eradicate or dilute the history and presence of Black people in America. His Project 2025 is ballistic about the historical 1619 Project.

When Joe Biden issued executive orders changing the names of military installations to remove names of Confederate generals who fought against the United States in the civil war, Trump's Defense Secretary Hegseth brought back two rebellious names: Fort Benning and Fort Bragg.

Now, Trump is lauding any of his cabinet secretaries when they bring back reports of "rooting out" DEI initiatives in their department and seeking to eradicate any program that allows people of color to fairly compete with white applicants.



On the immigration front, Trump is giving preference to white South Africans on the basis that they are victims of race discrimination in the same country that they ruled for hundreds of years with an iron fist called apartheid!

Imagine that! Trump giving white South Africans a hand out and a hand up so they can be swiftly processed to come to settle in America. Now that they can no longer ride roughshod over Black South Africans, the white South Africans want out and they see Trump as "one of them."

The assault on civil rights legislation since the 60's onwards has been a fetish of Trump. In his heart of hearts, he loathes and disdains anything that remotely appears to rectify past hundreds of years of discrimination.

It is too numerous to count the number of governmental agencies or departments that were tasked with making sure equality and fairness in hiring and promotions were adhered to. Not now.

For Trump, it is fair game to apply a wrecking ball to any civil rights advancements because his knowledge of American history is practically non-existent on the history of Black Americans who have been on these shores since 1619 to the present date.

He allows his disdain for Black Americans to be executed by his suite of cabinet flunkies who are more than happy to put a Lashonda or a DeMarcus in their "proper" place.

For Black Americans, there is no rest for the weary because as soon as any advancements are made, or were made, Trump, acting like a Mafia capo, gives the "high sign" and members of his incompetent clown car go to work eradicating positive programs that benefit the marginalized and the least protected.

I mean...how does one eliminate programs for coal miners that monitor Black Lung diseases and the quality of the air in a coal mine? How does one attempt to stop funding for the premier broadcasting outlets such as NPR and PBS?

Why eliminate the watchdogs known as inspectors general whose jobs were to blow the whistle on acts of corruption and fraud in government? Who does this other than one who wants to hide acts of deception and abuse. Who says he loves the veterans but has already cut thousands of VA jobs and has made more onerous the process to obtain war-related benefits?

Without sounding like Chicken Little and squawking about the sky falling, well, it is falling and when Trump continues to turn the thumb screws that will affect his devoted MAGA base and their benefits, the sky will continue to darken and fall.

Your response? Be woke, keep your head on a swivel, make sure you are registered to vote in the right precinct and protest, protest and protest some more!

Contact Lafe Tolliver at tolliver@juno.com



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One Hundred Days of an Assault on the Economy, Education and Healthcare

By Schuyler Beckwith
Guest Column

As we pass 100 days of Donald Trump's second presidency, the picture for working families in Lucas County and across Ohio is bleak.

We were promised an economic boom. Instead, we're facing deepening economic hardship and attacks on public education and healthcare. In early April, the Dow saw its worst performance in over a century — wiping out retirement savings for working Ohioans while billionaires get richer. Veterans fear cuts to VA services. Parents are worried about public schools. And vital federal investments in cities like Toledo — like transportation grants and workforce development programs — are now at risk simply because we are a proudly Welcoming City.

As Toledo City Council President Carrie Hartman said, "Toledo will not be

...continued on page 12

The Legacy of Johnson Produce Market: A True Pillar of the Community

By Asia Nail

The Truth Reporter

If you've ever strolled down Pulaski Street, you know the spot. Big smiles, bright fruits and veggies, and a feeling that you're right at home. That's Johnson Produce Market—and behind it all is a man who has spent a lifetime giving his best to his community: David D. Johnson.

This isn't just a story about selling produce. It's about hard work, family love and a dream that's still growing.

A Truck, a Dream, and a Lot of Heart

Johnson's story didn't start with a big building or fancy business cards. Nope—he began by selling fresh fruits and vegetables out of the back of his truck.

Picture a young David riding through the city streets, ready to bring good food straight to his neighbors. It wasn't flashy. It wasn't easy.

But it was real—and it was rooted in something bigger: **caring for people.**

Johnson has a deep connection to his roots—his grandparents were from Georgia, and family ties to the land and the community shaped his early years. Johnson recalls how his grandfather's influence, combined with the hustle and grit of those around him, led him to this life of purposeful service.

"Growing up, I knew what it meant to work hard," he shares. "My family was always about providing for each other, and that's how I've built this business. We've always been about the community and making sure people have access to the things they need. Fresh produce isn't just a luxury; it's a necessity."

Staying Strong When Others Left

When big businesses started moving out of Central City, many people thought it would be smarter to leave.

Not Mr. Johnson.

In 2007, he made a bold move: he built a new, permanent home for Johnson Produce Market, **right in the heart of the community.**

"We weren't going anywhere," Johnson says with a proud smile. "We were planted here."

He didn't just build a market—he built hope.

And he made sure to hire local workers, giving young people real jobs and real chances to succeed.

"We didn't want to leave," Johnson explains. "There was no one building anything in this neighborhood, and I thought, if we're going to do this, we need to do it here. We need to be accessible to the people who need us the most."

Lessons You Can't Learn in a Classroom

For David, Johnson Produce Market isn't just about selling food—it's about growing people, too. Through the **Summer Youth Employment Program**, Johnson has mentored countless young people, giving them their first jobs and teaching them real-world skills.

"We give teenagers their first taste of what it means to work hard, show up on time, and take pride in what you do," he shares.

"I want the kids who work here to know that hard work pays off, I want them to learn that if they show up and give their best, they'll go far."

Many of the young people who got their start at Johnson Produce Market have

gone on to launch their own businesses, a true testament to the power of passing on lessons of hard work, dedication, and community pride.

Now that's what you call planting seeds!

Building on the Lessons of the Past

Johnson also recalls the mentorship he received from figures like the late Charlie "Chuck" Welch, whose community-driven mindset shaped the way Johnson approaches his business. Welch, a trailblazer in Toledo, made history as Ohio's first African American to create a radio station from the ground up, *The Juice FM 107.3 (WJUC)*.

It was through guidance like this that he realized the importance of sustaining and building upon the work of previous generations.

And while Johnson never set out to build a personal legacy, it's clear that his actions have done just that. He doesn't seek recognition for himself, but rather, he hopes that the work he's done will inspire others to give back, to build, and to invest in their own communities.

Thank You, Mom and Dad

Ask Johnson where he learned his grit and heart, and he'll tell you without hesitating: his family.

He wants the world to know:

The foundation of everything he has done, and will do, was built by two amazing people—his parents.

His father, **Ben Johnson Sr.**, taught him the value of sticking with it, even when things get tough. Though his father passed away before David graduated college in 1982, his lessons live on.

His mother, **Mary J. Johnson**, who passed away in January 2025, was his biggest cheerleader and encourager.

"I wouldn't be where I am without them," Johnson says.

Every peach, every watermelon, every ear of corn sold at Johnson Produce Market carries a little piece of their love.

Big Dreams on the Horizon

Johnson's not just looking back at what's been done—he's looking forward. He recently bought 21 acres of land, and he's got huge plans:

- A **greenhouse** to grow fresh produce all year long
- A **pavilion** for farmers' markets and family events
- **Classrooms** to teach kids about farming, healthy eating, and taking care of the earth



David Johnson

...continued on page 6



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We're working for you!

Perryman... continued from page 3

on their rights.

The next thing we've got to do is propose a solution, and the only solution is to reform the immigration laws. So, we're calling for a new amnesty modeled after the amnesty of '86 under President Ronald Reagan. Ronald Reagan was no friend of people with low incomes or the labor unions, but he did engineer that amnesty for some very practical reasons, and we're using his language.

Perryman: What is the essence of Reagan's amnesty model?

Velásquez: Number one, he said we need to legalize the workers here, whose only violation is being present without authorization. Almost 40 years ago now, Reagan saw the trend in our population growth and that it was skimming away the workforce needed in the future. We're hitting that point now where many baby boomers have retired, and as people retire, we don't have the birth rate in this country to fill the jobs that America will need. So, we need these immigrants here to keep the economy going and the United States' ability to produce its own products and grow its own food. If not, we must rely on imports, which are a security threat.

Secondly, we demand sustainable trade agreements because today's deals are written by and for Wall Street, protecting corporate investments while displacing millions. Agreements like NAFTA under Clinton and USMCA under Trump were never about helping workers; they let corporations chase cheap labor across borders, devastating farmers and workers in Mexico and Central America and forcing families to migrate to survive. The border crisis is not the cause — it's the symptom of a system that trades human lives for profit margins, that props up oppressive regimes while crushing people's ability to earn a fair living. If we ever want real immigration reform, we must confront the root injustice: trade and foreign policies that put Wall Street first

and humanity last. That's why we're marching on **May 3rd** — to start a national conversation about building a system that stops displacing people in the first place.

Perryman: What is some practical counsel for immigrant individuals, workers or young activists to manage living with the constant fear of separation and deportation?

Velásquez: We tell them to be proactive; join a group and get organized. Don't just sit there and be scared; get up and do something.

Number one, know your rights about people detaining you. Do they have a court order? Do they have a warrant with a name on it signed by a judge? Don't allow ICE to come into your house unless they have a warrant with a name on it, and if the person with the name is on the warrant, then produce the person, let them go peacefully and do not resist or run. However, ICE has no right to come into your house and pick up everybody else that's in there.

Perryman: Is there any other practical advice for migrants or immigrants?

Velásquez: On top of that, have a family plan in case of a legitimate deportation order, and have your things in place. Include a Power of Attorney and a plan listing who will take care of your kids and property in case of deportation.

Perryman: Labor and movement struggles are often disconnected, becoming siloed and therefore ineffective. How do you keep that from happening in Toledo?

Velásquez: We must make ourselves visibly available to other groups and people without them feeling that we're a threat. This is what we're trying to do with the Black/Brown Unity Coalition. We're not going to agree on everything, but there are some common things in our communities that we can agree on, and then we decide that those are the things we work on together.

That's how this code of conduct came together with the NAACP, Ray Wood, the Toledo Community Coalition, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Latinos United and, of course, FLOC. We brought these groups together, discussed this code of conduct, and agreed that it would benefit all of our communities. We worked together and we succeeded.

Perryman: Finally, amid the trauma of current mass deportation, lack of due process, and erosion of Civil Rights, what are the signs you see that the seeds you and others planted are still growing and give you hope?

Velásquez: What gives me hope is seeing real responses to our efforts, like support of immigration reform and the county commissioners' endorsement of the Law Enforcement Code of Conduct. We're working to extend these protections countywide and into places like North Carolina and Virginia, where many immigrants and FLOC members live without formal IDs.

For the Black community, the code offers an alternative to ineffective internal affairs investigations, creating a transparent process where community meetings can hold law enforcement accountable. It's about building trust, not deepening mistrust, and continuing the work of justice we planted years ago.

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



Baldemar Velasquez

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Johnson Produce Market...continued from page 5

"We're not just growing crops," Johnson says. "We're growing community."

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A Place Built on Love

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It's a place where neighbors can gather, where young people can find work, and where families can get fresh, affordable produce. And it's a place that will continue to grow, evolve, and serve the community for generations to come.

Johnson Produce Market is a reminder that one man—with faith, family, and a fierce love for his community—can make a lasting difference.

As he looks forward to the future of Johnson's Produce Market, David has one final message for his customers, employees, and the community that has supported him all these years:

"We won't disappoint you. We'll keep it moving in the right direction."

In the end, it's not just about selling fruits and vegetables—it's about nourishing the soul of a community. Because when a market is built on love, its roots grow deep, and its harvest feeds generations.

Thank you to the Johnson family for their dedication to our community. Connect with them on Facebook



Toledo Marches Against Trump's Anti-Immigration Policies

By Jefferson Díaz
The Truth Reporter

Under the slogan: "No fear. No hate. No ICE in our state!" At least 100 people marched in Toledo, on Saturday, May 3, to protest the immigration policies of Donald Trump's administration.

Under the auspices of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) and Toledo Persists, the activity began in the parking lot located behind the McDonalds on South and Broadway all the way to the Golden Rule Park where a platform was installed with a large sign that said: "North to South: justice has no boundaries."

Not only that sign was present during the march, but several attendees also showed off their creativity and carried signs with messages ranging from "we are all migrants," "ICE = Gestapo" to "Immigrants are not criminals but the president is."

There were also signs with slogans in Spanish and one that invited people to "join the resistance" with symbols alluding to Star Wars.

Four Toledo police officers followed the march and ensured that the agreements they reached with the FLOC representatives were fulfilled: always walk on the sidewalk and not block any roads. In a strange moment during the march, a drone appeared in the sky and made some of the attendees look up with a sight of uncertainty.

One of the protesters commented: "Maybe it's a coincidence and someone is flying their drone without knowing that we're marching." But one of the organizers from Toledo Persists indicated: "I don't believe in coincidences." They reported the drone to the authorities but as it appeared it flew away without returning.

Immigration reform and not letting anyone be arrested on official Lucas County grounds.

FLOC Director Baldemar Velasquez was the first one to speak from the platform installed in Golden Rule Park. Velasquez detailed three points that they're asking of the federal government: amnesty for migrants who meet the requirements - not having a criminal record and not having committed crimes is one of those requirements, a review of trade agreements with neighboring countries that may cause people to migrate to the United States and that labor rights are fulfilled for all of the citizens in this country.

"Migrants are afraid. It's time for them to stop hiding and have a solution that can resolve their immigration status in this country," said Velasquez.

Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz spoke and reaffirmed that the city has a project that welcomes cultural and population diversity: "Welcome Toledo - Lucas County."

"We're going to defend due process for all the citizens in our city. Everyone must commit to respect the laws, from police officers to migrants. Toledo is a place where we want to live in harmony and with the values of justice."

Lucas County Commissioner Pete Gerken took the floor and said that at the county commissioners' meeting they will approve a resolution that will prohibit agents of federal agencies, like ICE, from detaining citizens in spaces that belong to Lucas County.

"Migrants are afraid to go to their court dates to resolve their immigration cases because they believe that ICE is going to detain them. We cannot allow that."

Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur was the last one to speak and made a recount of all the work that FLOC has done to defend the rights of migrants and agricultural workers in the United States.

Kaptur, however, was interrupted as one of the protesters rebuked the congresswoman, shouting that she supported the approval of the Laken Riley law in Congress and that she was "a fascist." The rally organizers called for calm and removed this person from the crowd.

Unfazed, Kaptur continued: "Awful things are happening in our country right now. We must stand together and move forward."



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Ruby Watkins: A Late Starter in Her Struggles with Lupus

By Fletcher Word

The Truth Editor

Fifty-three-year-old Ruby Watkins's symptoms began in the fall of 2017, when she was well into her adulthood. She began having problems digesting food and was becoming nauseous when she did. Her joints started aching and then came the days when she was simply unable to get out of bed.

She was in and out of hospitals for almost a year, seeking diagnoses from a number of health professionals. She was also losing patches of her hair, which led her to seek the advice of a dermatologist, Dr. Hope Mitchell, MD.

After a year of suffering for what were to her unknown reasons, in September 2018, Watkins finally received an accurate explanation from Dr. Mitchell – she was, and is, suffering from lupus.

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

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

In Watkins' case, she suffers from systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), the most common form of lupus, afflicting about 70 percent of cases. SLE is typically widespread throughout the body and can attack joints, organs

and blood vessels. On one hand, Watkins feels she is fortunate that her organs have not been attacked by lupus. However, her joints have been attacked and she has suffered greatly because of it.

Both of Watkins' knees have had to be replaced, she has four or five herniated discs. Her skin issues have continued – the hair loss continues and in general, she has to be careful in the sun less her skin gets too exposed. The fatigue also is an ongoing problem.

Toledo born and reared, Watkins, a graduate of Oral Roberts University with a major in education, works in a school which carries, for her, its own set of issues. Interactions with youngsters, "the little germ factories," render her sick on a frequent basis, especially since it is simply not in her nature to resist giving a little one a hug when nec-



Ruby Watkins

...continued on page 11



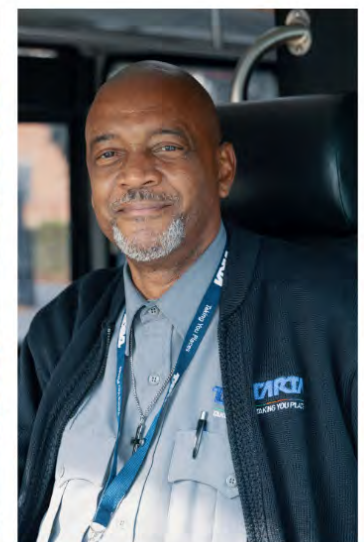
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Valerie Simmons Walston Launches the Next Chapter by Hosting Women's Wellness and Leadership Event

By Alexandria Leatherberry

The Truth Reporter

Valerie Simmons Walston launched the Next Chapter last week and created a time and space for community leaders to discuss wellness and its contribution to fulfilling their roles. "How can you lead if you're not well?" she asked.

The event was held at the EC Family Event Center located at 1402 Indiana Ave. Attendees gathered to learn and network among the influential individuals who have taken their journey and shared it through interviews, educational forums and literary works.

The Mistress of Ceremony Diana Patton led the event introducing the audience to the guests of honor: Malaika Bell, CEO of Mosaic Strategic Solutions; Nicole Brock, PhD, founder of Entanglement Theory; La'Shardae Scott, DSW, CEO of Scott Center for Observation Treatment and Transition (S.C.O.T.T).

Each of the women discussed the personal journeys with wellness challenges and her active pursuits for solutions. Scott reflected on her experience with discovering her son's sickle cell status. In her discovery she found a need to uncover resources and also found her direction as a leader.

"A leader is someone who brings someone up with them," stated Scott as she shared her endeavors to ensure other mothers and healthcare professionals have up-to-date education and information on sickle cell anemia. Preceding Scott, Brock and Bell addressed the audience about humanizing their experiences as individuals to remove fear.

"Storytelling is an action of preservation, teaching and communal," noted Walston. The art of storytelling is a talent shared by each of the special guests as Walston ensured the event was one to highlight the local authors.

Amongst the women were male authors: Terry Crosby, *Do You Have the Balls*; CJ Fargan, *The Jungle: Two Sides of the Same Coin*, who sat for a panel discussion moderated by Jim Snodgrass with NCSF Personal Trainer Anthony Amison Sr. and University of Toledo Professor Willie McKether, PhD. The male panelists addressed challenges that African American men face professionally and personally and shared with the women of the audience insight on supporting a partner.

Valerie Walston is the author of *S.O.A.R Surviving Obstacles Attaining Rewards: A Self-Help Journal*. She connects authorship to leadership by way of

storytelling which will be her Next Chapter mission. Next Chapter Enterprises will be focusing efforts on further developing opportunities to promote authors, motivate the next leader and educate the community. Walston looks forward to hosting another wellness event this year that she will be announcing on her social media platforms.



Valerie Simmons Walston



Diana Patton



Jim Snodgrass



La'Shardae Scott, DSW



Terry Crosby, CJ Fargan, Anthony Amison



Willie McKether, PhD

Living With Lupus
May 16-18, 2025

MAY 16, 2025
Living With Lupus Paint & Sip
The Trunk | 3553 Franklin Ave. | 7-11 PM
\$47 Includes painting supplies
Registration Required: <https://bit.ly/lupuspaintandsip>

MAY 17, 2025
Karaoke w/DJ Cheryl
Bluegill Fishing Club | 642 N Detroit Ave. | 7-11 PM
\$10 Membership Fee Free for cardholders. Donations to the Lupus Foundation of Greater Chapter of Ohio will be greatly appreciated

MAY 17, 2025
Free Wig Giveaway
1010 Dorr St. | 1-4:30 PM
Giveaway for any woman who has lost her hair (not just those with Lupus). New or gently used wig donations appreciated

MAY 18, 2025
Living With Lupus Walk
Ottawa Park | 2201 Kenwood Blvd. | 9 AM
\$10 Registration (snack included) age 7+
\$5 Registration for under age 7
All proceeds go to the Lupus Foundation of America Greater Ohio Chapter

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Take the Process Into Your Own Hands

By Patrice Powers-Barker, OSU Extension, Lucas County

The Truth Contributor

While there is not a single definition for “processed foods” the term is used in scientific as well as cultural and political settings. What do we even mean by “processed” foods?

To better understand types of modern foods, a group of Brazilian public health researchers developed a classification system called NOVA. These four categories were not designed to classify individual foods but to use as a tool for researchers to understand the health impact of different eating patterns.

- Unprocessed or minimally processed foods (group 1) – in basic terms, to process a food means to change it from when it was harvested or raised. For this category it means they mostly maintain their nutritional make up. Processing can be as simple as peeling, slicing, and packaging fruits and vegetables. It also includes whole grains, nuts, meat, and milk.

- Processed culinary ingredients (group 2) – these foods like salt, oils, and grains are not meant to be eaten alone but are processed through milling, pressing, refining, etc. and will be added as ingredients to processed foods.

- Processed foods (group 3) – include foods from the other two groups and might be canned, or “ready-to-eat” foods that require no further preparation.

- Ultra-processed food and drink products (UPFs) (group 4) – these have been changed through the addition of artificial colors or flavors, and preservatives. Examples are soft drinks, packaged snacks that are sweet or high in salt, pre-prepared frozen dishes. These products are many steps (or processes) away from the group 1 food.

One of the reasons that processed foods are so widespread is because of convenience. Food additives are added to food to enhance flavor or appearance, or to preserve it. The concern for health is when we eat too much ultra-processed food every day, over time. These are often calorie-dense but nutrient-poor foods that do not provide healthy nutrients and can cause health problems.

Scientists recognize that we enjoy eating all types of food. They assume that there are few, (if any), health implications if someone eats a snack-sized bag of chips once a month. In reality, many people eat more potato chips than that each month. At the other end of the spectrum, it is assumed that eating a one-pound bag of chips every day, twice a day could expose someone to a potentially serious dose of preservatives that could negatively affect health. The recommendation is to limit ultra-processed foods.

Decrease ultra-processed foods from the daily diet:

- Buy more unprocessed or minimally processed whole grains to make your own meals with brown rice, quinoa or oatmeal. This might take a little more time than microwaving a prepackage meal, but your recipe will be much closer to minimally processed food versus ultra-processed. This will often save money in the grocery budget also.

- Buy or grow your own vegetables and fruits. As always, we recommend purchasing from local farm stands and farmers markets when the produce is in season. It often tastes better!

- Continue to buy some processed foods but look for lower-sodium and/or lower sugar options. This would include canned foods like low-sodium vegetables and fruits packed in their own juice. There is nothing wrong with having canned and frozen foods for convenience but check the nutrition label to check for a limited amount of additional ingredients.

- Add some fresh food to moderately processed foods like spaghetti sauce. Buy a jar of sauce and add some shredded fresh vegetables or fresh greens to cook wilt in the warm sauce.

- Look at what ultra-processed foods you currently buy. Could you purchase less of the ultra-processed food and replace some of it with other options?

If you are interested in learning more about gardening, there is a free horticulture hotline available for all Lucas County. If you have any questions about plants, trees, insects, or gardens, please contact the Hotline on Mondays and Wednesdays between 10:00am -1:00pm (April through October) at 419-578-6783. You can also stop at the OSU Extension office located at the Toledo Botanical Garden (next to the Rose Garden) at 5403 Elmer Drive, Toledo, OH 45615. If you would like to email any questions or photos with your question, use lucascountymastergardener@gmail.com. We will also be growing some demonstration gardens in raised beds in the “village” of the little houses on the grounds of the Toledo Botanical Garden. Information from UC Davis, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and The Ohio State University.



Ruby Watkins... continued from page 8

essary. “I can’t hug them,” she admits. However, the stress of the job and the physical challenge will cause her to retire earlier than she had anticipated, perhaps as early as next year.

So which parts of the population are prone to contract lupus?

Lupus is more common in African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans. Women of childbearing age are more like to develop lupus as 90 percent of those with the disease are women.

And for many people, as with Watkins, the problems of diagnosis are common, in part no doubt, because it is more common in minority groups than in the majority. Also, in part because the autoimmune disease does not afflict everyone with the same obvious symptoms.

That also presents a problem in the day-to-day lives of lupus sufferers,

notes Watkins.

“People can’t see when others have an autoimmune disease and when you’re struggling,” she says. “Give people some grace, you don’t know the challenges others are facing.”

Here in Toledo, the fifth annual Living with Lupus Walk will be held the weekend of May 16-18. Events will include a paint and sip party, a wig giveaway, a karaoke party and the walk on Sunday, May 18.



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A Mental Health Moment

The Overlooked Crises and Challenges of Minority Mother's Mental Health

By Bernadette Joy Graham, MA, LPCC, LLC

The Truth Contributor

Mental Health Awareness Month (May) began in the United States in 1949. Its purpose is to provide an essential opportunity to highlight mental health issues, reduce stigma, and promote emotional well-being due to stress, anxiety, and depression that affect millions of people universally. It also reminds us that mental health is just as vital as physical health.



Mental health influences how we think, how we feel, and how we behave. In addition, how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Yet, despite its importance, mental health often takes a back seat due to misunderstanding, cultural stigma or lack of access to care.

Mental health challenges, just as do physical challenges, affect us all in various ways. May 10 of this year is Mother's Day. Regardless of being a mother or not, none of us come into this world without a mother. Those who are mothers may describe motherhood as a joyful, life-changing experience and, if not joyful, there is no denial in it being life-changing.

Unfortunately, for many minority mothers, motherhood brings an invisible burden of negative and unaddressed challenges of stress, anxiety and depression rooted in social inequities, lack of access to quality healthcare, systemic racism contributing to a mental health crisis that disproportionately affects Black, Latina, Indigenous, and Asian mothers in the U.S. and beyond.

Minority mothers carry the weight of multiple identities in emotional and psychological overload. In addition to typical postpartum stressors, many face issues of racial discrimination in healthcare settings, economic instability and insecurity, limited access to culturally competent mental healthcare, language barriers and stigmas in their own communities around seeking help.

After childbirth, these stressors often compound not only the mother's health and well-being but the emotional health and development of the child. Postpartum depression (PPD) affects an estimated one in seven mothers overall with many studies showing significantly higher rates among Black and Latina mothers, with symptoms of chronic anxiety, trauma and burnout with caregiving due to limited support.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Black mothers are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related or childbirth causes than white mothers. Minority women have often shared they are less likely to receive mental health screenings during and after pregnancy and report feeling unheard by healthcare providers.

Take a mental health moment as Mother's Day approaches and beyond

about the challenges of minority mothers and how mental health care can improve the overall quality and outcomes for both mother and child. By breaking the silence, offering solutions and advocating for change whether you are a healthcare provider, employer, policymaker or friend the mental health of minority mothers is not just a women's issue but encompasses community and public health and human rights. It is time to center much more effort to minority mother's voices, needs and invest in the care they deserve bringing another life into this world.

Sources:

<https://www.mhanational.org/mental-health-month>

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health-awareness-month>

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

Department of Public Health, College of Health and Human Services, Southern Connecticut State University, 493 Fitch Street, New Haven, CT 06515, USA

Bernadette Joy Graham, Licensed Clinical Mental Health Therapist and Certified Grief Recovery Specialist can be reached via Email: graham.bernadette@gmail.com

If you feel you may be in a mental health crisis, please call 988 or go to the nearest emergency room.

One Hundred Days of an Assault... continued from page 4

bullied." These grants are not luxuries — they fund safer roads, public transit, and good-paying jobs. Pulling them would hurt every neighborhood.

Public education is also under direct threat. Toledo Board of Education member Polly Taylor-Gerken reminds us that "Head Start was never only a program — it was a promise." That promise is in jeopardy as Trump pushes to eliminate the Department of Education and slash early childhood funding. Even amid this chaos, local leaders continue to invest in our future — like transforming the old Scott Park campus into a state-of-the-art career tech hub for TPS students. "While they tear down," Polly said, "we build up."

On healthcare, Commissioner Lisa Sobecki warns that Republican attempts to slash over \$800 billion from Medicare and Medicaid could devastate our community. Over 138,000 Lucas County residents rely on Medicaid. Cuts would raise the uninsured rate, clog ERs, and put enormous strain on our local healthcare system. "Access to healthcare," she said, "is not only a human right — it's an economic necessity."

State Representative Erika White also raises the alarm on reckless deregulation

... continued on page 13

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Love, Rita: An American Story of Sisterhood, Joy, Loss, and Legacy by Bridgett M. Davis

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

The Truth Contributor

Take care.

Do it because you want to stay well, upright, away from illness. Eat right, swallow your vitamins and hydrate, keep good habits and hygiene, and cross your fingers. Take care as much as you can because, as in the new book, *Love, Rita* by **Bridgett M. Davis**, your well-being is sometimes out of your hands.

It was a family story told often: when Bridgett Davis was born, her sister, Rita, then four years old, stormed up to her crying newborn sibling and said, "Shut your... mouth!"

Rita, says Davis, didn't want a little sister then. She already had two big sisters and a neighbor who was somewhat of a "sister," and this baby was an irritation. As Davis grew, the feeling was mutual, although she always knew that Rita loved her.

Over the years, the sisters tried many times not to fight – on their own and at the urging of their mother – and though division was ever present, it eased when Rita went to college. Davis was still in high school then, and she admired her big sister. She eagerly devoured frequent letters sent to her in the mail, signed, "Love, Rita."

When Davis was in college herself, Rita was diagnosed with lupus, a disease of the immune system that often left her constantly tired and sore. Davis was a bit unfazed, but sympathetic to Rita's suffering and also annoyed that the disease sometimes came between them. By that time, they needed one another more than ever.

First, they lost their father. Drugs then invaded the family and addiction stole two siblings. A sister and a young nephew were murdered in a domestic violence incident. Their mother was devastated; Rita's lupus was an "added weight of her sorrow."

After their mother died of colon cancer, Rita's lupus took a turn for the worse. "Did she even stand a chance?" Davis wrote in her journal.

c. 2025
Harper
\$29.99
367 pages

"It just didn't seem possible that she, someone so full of life, could die."

Let's start here: once you get past the prologue in *Love, Rita*, you may lose interest. Maybe.

Most of the stories that author Bridgett M. Davis shares are mildly interesting, nothing rare, mostly commonplace tales of growing up in the 1960s and '70s with a sibling. There are a lot of these kinds of stories and they tend to generally melt together. After about 50 pages of them, you might start to think about putting the book aside.

But don't. Not quite yet.

In between those everyday tales, Davis occasionally writes about being an ailing Black woman in America, the incorrect assumptions made by doctors, the history of medical treatment for Black people (women in particular), attitudes, and mythologies. Those passages are now-and-then, interspersed, but worth scanning for.

This book is perhaps best for anyone with the patience for a slow-paced memoir, or anyone who loves a Black woman who's ill or might be ill someday. If that's you and you can read between the lines, then *Love, Rita* is a book to take carefully.

One Hundred Days of an Assault... continued from page 12

tion. Rolling back clean air and water protections threatens public health — especially for children and seniors. Gutting safety standards in construction and mining endangers workers and invites disaster.

Through it all, Lucas County Democrats remain focused on real solutions. Our local elected officials manage tax dollars responsibly, protect vital services, and invest in our people — not billionaires and political cronies. I hope Republicans are getting the message, because thousands are taking to the streets and attending panels to voice their dissent. It seems State Rep Josh Williams can't take the heat, though (see: To the editor: Solving our policy disputes with dialogue, not threats). My advice to Rep Williams – quit supporting and introducing legislation that actively harms people of color, LGBTQ+ folks, and many others in your own community and maybe people will stop yelling at you. In my opinion, the only reason you keep winning is because you and your corrupt buddies have drawn yourselves impossible to lose districts.

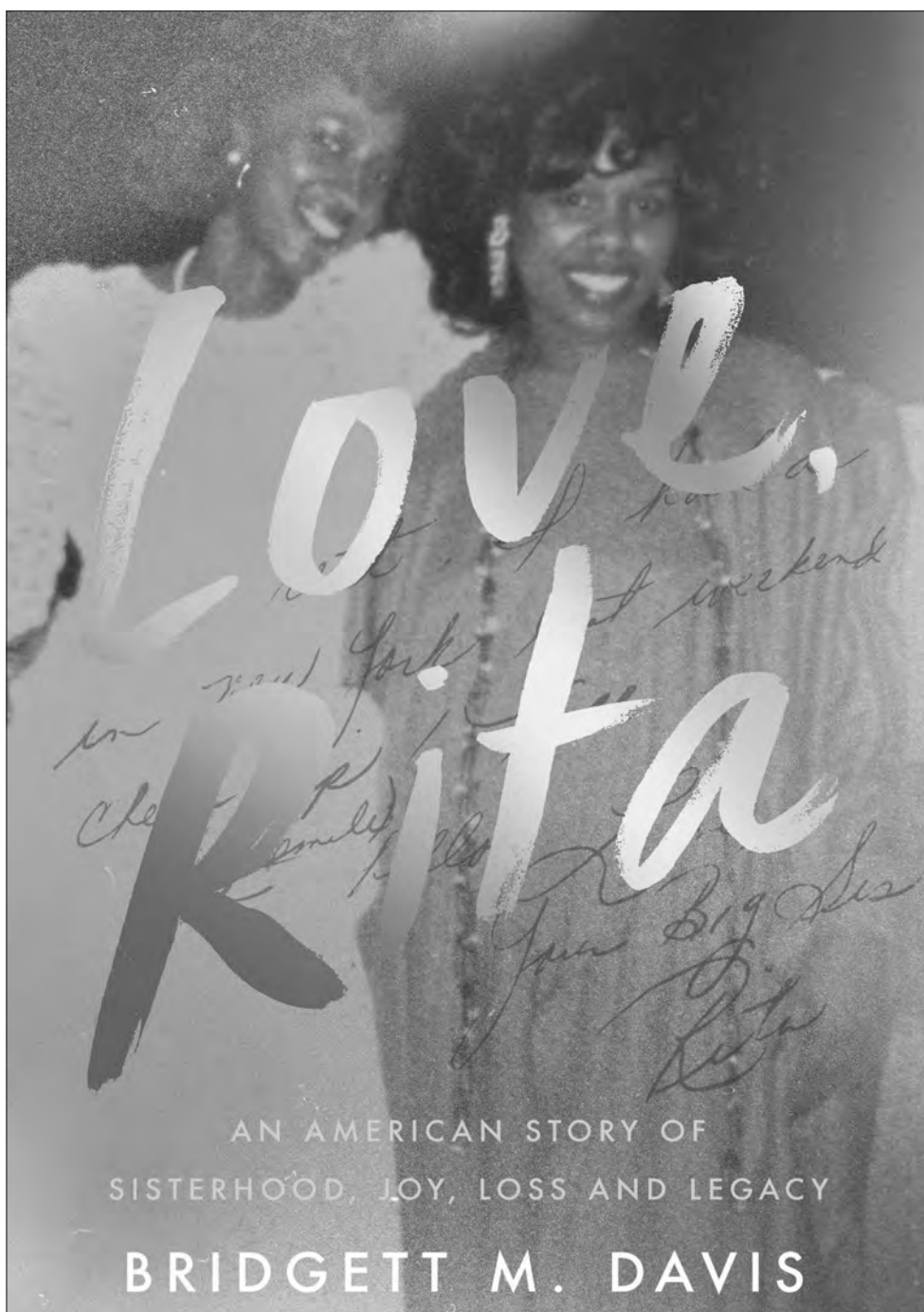
Lucas County deserves better than chaos and corporate giveaways. We are lucky to have local leadership that sees us, values us, and builds with us.

Sincerely,

Schuyler Beckwith

Chair, Lucas County Democratic Party

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Page 15

NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR DESIGN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

To be publicly announced April 15, 2025 and advertised on April 22, 2025

The Toledo Lucas County Public Library is accepting qualifications from design professionals to provide services for its Holland Branch and New Whitehouse Branch phased Project. Interested firms may request an RFQ from Nick Hamilton, Project Coordinator, at Nick.Hamilton@toledolibrary.org. Qualifications will be accepted until **12:00 p.m.** local time, **May 13, 2025**.

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

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Pre-bid Meeting: May 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. – Health Science Campus, Facilities Support Building, – Room 1300, The University of Toledo, Health Science Campus, 1135 East Medical Loop, Toledo, OH 43614.

Walk-Through: Immediately following Pre-Bid.

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

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Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH), located in Toledo, OH is seeking experienced applicants for the following position(s): Clerical Specialist, Inspector, Maintenance Team Lead. For complete details, visit <https://www.lucasmha.org> and click on Careers. Deadline: 05-04-25. These are Section 3 covered positions. 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.



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On behalf of Developer Pivotal Housing Partners, West Chester Ohio, General Contractor Ruscilli Construction Co. LLC 5815 Wall Street Dublin, Ohio 43017 is building a new build 20-unit townhouse affordable housing apartment project called The Grand at 1157 Grand Ave., Toledo Ohio 43614 and a new build 50 unit 4 story affordable housing apartment project called The Glen at 3440 Glendale Ave., Toledo, Ohio 43614. Ruscilli is requesting interested MBE/WBE subcontractors/suppliers and Section 3 Businesses or Section 3 individuals to contact Sylvester Gould at Gould Development Company LLC, Nitschke Technology Complex, 1510 N. Westwood Ave., Suite 2025 B, Toledo, Ohio 43606 for potential project opportunities at 419 -787-7837.

TOLEDO OPERA TO HOLD AUDITIONS FOR NEW CHORISTERS IN CARMEN AND THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

Toledo, OH— Toledo Opera is holding auditions for chorus positions for the 2025-26 season. The 2025-26 season will feature: Bizet's Carmen (August - October 2025 commitment) and Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* (November 2025 - February 2026 commitment). Auditions are scheduled to take place on Saturday, May 17, 2025 from 10:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M., and on Sunday, May 18, 2025 from 3:00 P.M. until 6:00 P.M. Those interested in auditioning should prepare one or two selections which best demonstrate their vocal range and abilities. For the adult chorus, one selection in either Italian or French is preferred. A pianist will be provided. Toledo Opera is seeking the following singers: all voice types for a SATB chorus.

Carmen by Georges Bizet

October 10 & 12, 2025

Valentine Theatre

Mixed voices: soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass. Music rehearsals begin on July 27 and run weekly on Sundays. Staging rehearsals will begin September 22 and typically run Monday through Friday in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays in the afternoons/evenings.

The Elixir of Love by Gaetano Donizetti

February 13 & 15, 2026

Valentine Theatre

Mixed voices: soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass. Music rehearsals begin on November 9 and run weekly on Sundays. Staging rehearsals will begin on January 26 and typically run Monday through Friday in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays in the afternoons/evenings.

For more information regarding auditions, visit <https://www.toledoopera.org/performances/auditions-2025-2026/>. To schedule an audition, please email James Norman at jnorman@toledoopera.org. For more information about the 2025-26 season, visit toledoopera.org. For media access, please contact Rachel Cammarn at rcammarn@toledoopera.org.

Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc. A Professional Nursing Organization



L to R: Tanya Calhoun, Dachia Walker, Krystal Jones, Myshala Cummings, Tiffany Jordan, Erica Johnson, Tasha Nelson, Stephanie Watson, Tobria Layson, Sharonda Stimmage, Brittany Taylor, Michelle McCaster

In a proud celebration of nursing excellence, sisterhood, and community service, Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Incorporated, a professional nursing organization, officially announces the chartering of the Xi Eta Eta Chapter in Toledo, Ohio. This special event, which took place on April 5, 2025, at the Delta Hotel, brought together nurses, community leaders, and supporters



Dr. Temeaka Gray-El



Karen Sherman-Sorina

to welcome a new chapter dedicated to service, professional growth, and the enduring bonds of sisterhood.

Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc. was founded in 1932 by Aliene C. Ewell, a registered nurse, and 11 other dedicated nurses at Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Today, the organization boasts a national membership of over 9,000 registered nurses and nursing students. Guided by the motto "Service for Humanity," Chi Eta Phi prioritizes leadership, education, and community service, with a particular emphasis on underserved populations. The sorority's mission is to advance health equity and address healthcare disparities.

The establishment of the Xi Eta Eta Chapter of Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc. was made possible through the leadership of Karen Sherman-Sorina, a devoted healthcare professional and charter organizer. Karen was inspired to charter the chapter in memory of the late Dr. Temeaka Gray-El, PSY.D., M.B.A., APRN-DHNP, a dedicated and highly respected University of Toledo College of Nursing faculty member who passed away in 2021.

"Dr. Gray-El believed in empowering future generations of nurses and serving the community with compassion and excellence," said Sherman-Sorina. "This chapter is a tribute to her legacy and a continuation of Toledo's proud tradition of nursing excellence."

The charter luncheon featured a special musical performance by renowned saxophonist Mike Williams on Sax, whose powerful rendition of "For Every Mountain" by Kurt Carr captivated the audience. His performance was a poignant highlight of the event, leaving a lasting emotional impact on all who attended.

The twelve charter members of the Xi Eta Eta Chapter of Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc. are committed to empowering nurses, advocating for healthcare equity, and carrying forward Toledo's proud nursing legacy.

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