



THE GRAMBLING★CONNECTION

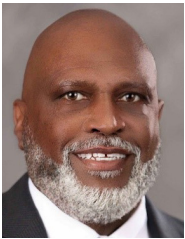
Volume 1, No. 8

Friday, January 17, 2025 • "Keeping Our Citizens Informed on the Issues That Matter." • Grambling, LA

CITY OF GRAMBLING UPDATE 2025

By Mayor Alvin Bradley

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I present the Progress and Priorities for the City. As we celebrate our collective achievements and share our vision for the future of Grambling, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the dedicated members of our City Council, City employees: City Hall, Police, Fire, Public Works, Communications/Social Media department. Additionally the Main Street America Project, Grant Writers, the Planning and Zoning Committee, the TIF Commission, the Juneteenth



Mayor Alvin Bradley

ties/Sororities, Police Jury and School Board Representatives, Grambling's Joy Fund, Local VFW Ludley-McCall, Local Masonic Lodges, Local Justice of the Peace, The Pinkie Wilkerson Foundation, the No Limit Soldiers Youth Athletics, Cancer

Committee, the Greater Grambling Chamber of Commerce, the Grambling Housing Authority, Grambling NAACP, Local Fraternities

Awareness and Support Group, Grambling Beautification Committee, our local Churches and Pastors, The Grambling Connection, and all of the local businesses, whose unwavering support and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in making Grambling a better place to live.

Accomplishments:

1. Working with Grambling State University (GSU): We have made great progress solidifying our partnership with GSU (Town and Gown) to promote educational and community initiatives that benefit both students and residents.

2. Renewed Partnership with the Greater Grambling Chamber of Commerce

3. Hired a Public Works Director: Our city now has a dedicated Public Works Director to administer infrastructure projects and ensure the maintenance of our city services.

4. Approved 2025 Budget: We have successfully approved a balanced and forward-thinking budget for 2025, reflecting our commitment to fiscal responsibility and community growth.

5. With the leadership of Council-Lady Delores Wilkerson Smith, we have Secured a Ladder Firetruck: This has enhanced

our public safety capabilities by securing a ladder firetruck, ensuring that our firefighters are well-equipped to protect our community. This is a step towards improving the city fire rating.

6. With the leadership of Councilman John F. Brown, Jr., the Implementation of an Emergency Response System (Civic Ready): Our new emergency response system has improved our ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies, safeguarding the well-being of our citizens. Also, a valuable resource concerning Safety

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Biden signs bill expanding Social Security benefits for retired teachers, public employees

By Jennifer Shutt

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has expanded Social Security benefits for more than 2 million Americans by signing broadly bipartisan legislation that Congress approved late last year.

The ceremony on Sunday marked one of the last times Biden is expected to sign major legislation as president, since Congress is now controlled by Republicans and his term is set to end on Jan. 20, when President-elect Donald Trump takes the oath of office.

"By signing this bill, we're extending Social Security benefits for millions of teachers ... and other public employees, and their spouses and survivors," Biden said. "That means an estimated average of \$360 per month increase. That's a big deal."

The nearly 2.5 million people covered under the new law, he said, would "receive a lump sum payment of thousands of dollars to make up for the shortfall in benefits they should have gotten in 2024."

The House voted 327-75 in November to pass the bill and the Senate voted 76-20 in December to send the bill to Biden.

The new law eliminates the windfall elimination provision and government pension offset that for decades had reduced the amount some Americans receive in Social Security benefits.

Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins, who attended the signing



Biden signs bill

ceremony at the White House, released a written statement saying she was "pleased" that "these unfair provisions in our Social Security system have finally been repealed."

"This is a victory for thousands of teachers, first responders, public servants, and the countless advocates who fought for years to correct this unfairness," Collins wrote. "For too long, the WEP and GPO have denied retirees and their spouses the Social Security benefits they earned through years of work and contributions to the system. This law ensures that public service will no longer come at the expense of one's earned retirement benefits."

Former U.S. Rep. Abigail Spanberger, a Democrat who chose not to seek reelection to Congress to pursue a run for the Virginia governor's office, wrote on social media that eliminating the two provisions had been a long time coming.

"Our retired police officers, firefighters, teachers, and public employees worked for DECADES to right this wrong," wrote Spanberger, who co-sponsored the House version of the bill last Congress.

Insolvency date moves up

The expansion of benefits is ex-

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The new Louisiana laws taking effect Jan. 1 most likely to affect you

By Greg LaRose

Many of the laws that took effect Jan. 1 in Louisiana appear unlikely to encroach upon your everyday life at first glance. But closer examination reveals trending political attitudes in the state, cover matters such as fiscal policy, health care access and public safety.

Arguably the most publicized new state law for 2024, a prohibition is now in place against gender-affirming care for trans minors in Louisiana. The restriction will most likely lead to a court challenge as it has in other states that have put similar bans in place. Courts have blocked enforcement of the laws while the cases are litigated.

Interestingly, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican, rejected a bill last week that would have stopped doctors and other providers from administering transgender care.

"These are gut-wrenching decisions that should be made by parents and should be informed by teams of doctors who are advising them," DeWine said. "These are parents who have watched their children suffer for years, and have real concerns their children would not survive without it... Families are basing their decisions on the best medical advice they can get."

A veto attempt from the Ohio Legislature is anticipated, although some Republican lawmakers have come out against the measure.

What follows is a brief overview of the most notable statutes that become official at the start of 2024

Fertility preservation

Louisiana will require many more health insurance plans to cover fertility preservation for cancer patients and others undergoing medical treatments that could render them unable to conceive a child.

A new state law mandates health insurance companies help pay for egg and sperm extraction as well as storage for up to three years. It applies to new health care plans starting this year and for existing health care plans next year.

However, health insurance plans aren't required to pay for in vitro fertilization or freezing fertilized eggs, which some doctors believe im-

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RESOLUTION FINALLY REACHED BETWEEN CITY OF GRAMBLING AND GEDC

By Lena Claybon

A resolution has been determined in the ongoing legal battle between the City of Grambling, its city council, and the troubled Grambling Economic Development Corporation (GEDC), which has been unfolding for nearly a year.

Todd Benson, an attorney representing the city, stated that the two groups met all day Tuesday, Jan. 14th, 2025, to come up with a settlement and by late afternoon, were able to reach an Agreement and enter it into record.

The Agreement was that The Board of Directors of the Grambling Economic Development Corporation (GEDC) which presently consists of Edward Jones (President), Phyllis Miller (Vice President), Linda Butler (Secretary/Treasurer), Eddie Robinson, III (Member), and Mary Gipson (Member) will tender their resignation as Board members, but without admitting any wrongdoing on their part. Further, any and all current employees of the GEDC will also tender their resignation, effective immediately.

In addition to that, the City of Gram-

bling, through its Mayor, Alvin Bradley, and present City Council, will appoint and approve whomever they deem as qualified candidates, as a new Board of Directors to administer the affairs of the Grambling Economic Development Corporation, and will file the necessary documents with the Louisiana Secretary of State, or any other authority with which such filing may be required, noting the change in leadership.

Also, according to the Agreement, once the City of Grambling and the Grambling City Council have appointed a new Board of Directors to administer the affairs of the GEDC, they shall continue to operate the corporation consistent with all of its present liabilities, assets, and obligations, specifically excluding the personal liabilities and obligations of all current board members, office holders, and employees.

Court documents released over the weekend revealed that Jones sold the shopping center, along with the land it sits on, to a Texas company for \$700,000 on December 30, 2024—allegedly violating a court order issued the previous year.

The sale was reportedly approved by

GEDC's board in August.

During Monday's testimony, Jones invoked the Fifth Amendment when asked about the sale, declining to answer questions posed by Benson in light of the potential contempt hearing scheduled for Friday.

At the heart of the lawsuit was the city and council's claim that the economic development organization, created in 2014 during Jones' time as mayor, was no longer serving the best interests of Grambling and had failed to cooperate with the city. The city also accused Jones and his brother Eddie Milton Jones, a former GEDC employee, of misappropriating GEDC funds.

Jones was the sole witness called by Benson on Monday. Throughout his testimony, Jones statements appeared to be riddled with contradictions from statements he had made during previous depositions taken last year.

Under cross-examination, Jones struggled to explain food and gasoline charges made to his GEDC credit card over the course of nine months in 2023. He admitted he had no documentation to support the charges, which included

restaurant bills from New Year's Day 2023 in Ruston and Bossier City. Jones maintained, however, that all these expenses were business-related.

At one point, Benson questioned Jones regarding charges, which were allegedly used for food at an election night gathering during Jones' unsuccessful 2022 reelection bid. Jones denied hosting a party but suggested that if such a gathering had occurred, using GEDC funds would have been justifiable.

"Was there any GEDC initiative on that ballot?" Benson asked.

Jones responded, "Yes. The GEDC and the city of Grambling work together... Anything that was on the ballot that the citizens of Grambling had to vote for, we considered it part of the GEDC."

GEDC financial records reviewed by Benson showed a significant reduction in charges to Jones's credit card starting in November 2023, after rumors surfaced about the city's intention to dissolve the GEDC. By December 2023, there were no charges for food on the card.

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Opinion

Lessons From The Six Triple Eight

By Rusty Potter

Words have the power to uplift, inspire, and transform the direction of your life. When we speak, we are not just expressing thoughts but our reality. That's why it's crucial to let your words empower your expectations.

I saw the movie, The Six Triple Eight, which tells the story of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only - Black, all-female unit to serve



Rusty Potte

overseas during World War II. Faced with overwhelming odds, these women were tasked with clearing a massive backlog of undelivered mail that carried hope, love, and connection for soldiers far from home.

Their motto, "No Mail, No Morale," became their rallying cry. They didn't just repeat it; they lived it. They turned

an impossible task into a mission of purpose through their words and actions. Despite racism, sexism, and the realities of war, they empowered each other with words of encouragement, strength, and unity. And because they believed in their mission, they achieved the extraordinary.

Like the women of the Six Triple Eight, we all face challenges that can feel impossible. But when we choose words that reflect our belief in ourselves and our purpose. Instead of saying, "This is too hard," say, "I am built for this." Instead of asking, "Why me?" ask, "What

can I learn from this?"

Your words should reflect your vision for your future. The person who says, "I will succeed," is already closer to success than the one who doubts.

Today, I'd like to challenge you to speak purposefully just like the women of the Six Triple Eight. Declare victory over your challenges. Proclaim growth over your setback. Let your words carry you closer to the life you're striving for.

When your words empower your expectations, there's no limit to what you can achieve.

News

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proves viability. Rep. Paula Davis, R-Baton Rouge did not include such measures in her legislation because they drew opposition from the Catholic Church and conservative Christian groups in 2022.

The new law also allows churches and church-run schools to apply for exemptions to the coverage mandate if fertility preservation conflicts with their religious beliefs.

The mandate also doesn't apply to Medicaid or health insurance plans purchased through the state health care exchange.

Centralized parish sales tax filing

You won't notice any difference when you're at the cash register, but a new system is now in place that proponents say will make life easier for retailers that do business in multiple parishes. Instead of remitting sales taxes in each individual parish, they'll now file with the Louisiana Uniform Local Sales Tax Board.

Prior to this law taking effect, Louisiana relied on more than 50 different tax collecting agencies including individual parishes, cities, sheriffs, police juries, school boards and other government entities. The new law only applies to sales taxes, meaning those local entities will still handle property taxes and other collections.

State Police traffic stops

Louisiana law requires all police

departments to track and report data on traffic stops, including the number of people stopped, their race, gender and age. An exception to the law is in place for law enforcement agencies that have adopted policies to prevent racial profiling.

Rep. Denise Marcelle, D-Baton Rouge, obtained approval for a change to the law that exempts Louisiana State Police from the exception. State troopers and agency policy have been under closer scrutiny since an Associated Press investigation into the May 2019 death of Ronald Greene. Journalists revealed in 2022 that State Police sat on body camera footage and other details of the Black motorist's death while in the custody of white troopers after a vehicle pursuit.

Pet insurance

A new law sets up the pet insurance industry in Louisiana and requires carriers to provide detailed information about the policies they offer and what's covered. It includes whether the pet insurer will reduce coverage or increase premiums depending on the policyholder's claim history or the covered pet's age, or if the insurer excludes pets from coverage because of certain health conditions.

Offshore safety

Persons in the oil and gas industry being transported offshore by air must now start wearing life jackets equipped with personal locator

beacons. Rep. Troy Romero, R-Jennings, gained unanimous support for his legislation to assist rescue efforts in the event of helicopter accidents in Gulf waters.

Juvenile crime victims

A new law clears the way for victims or their family to access juvenile court proceedings, which are currently held in confidence. The legislation from Rep. Stephanie Hilferty, R-New Orleans, applies to crimes of violence and second and subsequent felony offenses. It allows courts to provide online video access, where available.

Critics of the measure are concerned word of mouth from those who observe juvenile court proceedings could lead to retaliations.

Greg LaRose

Greg LaRose has covered news for more than 30 years in Louisiana. Before coming to the Louisiana Illuminator, he was the chief investigative reporter for WDSU-TV in New Orleans. He previously led the government and politics team for The Times-Picayune | NOLA.com, and was editor in chief at New Orleans CityBusiness. Greg's other career stops include Tiger Rag, South Baton Rouge Journal, the Covington News Banner, Louisiana Radio Network and multiple radio stations.

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pected to cost \$195.65 billion during the next 10 years and move up the program's insolvency date by about six months, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

"If H.R. 82 was enacted, the balance of the (Old-Age and Survivors Insurance) trust fund would, CBO projects, be exhausted roughly half a year earlier than it would be under current law," CBO Director Phillip L. Swagel wrote in a letter to Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley. "The agency estimates that under current law, the balance of the OASI trust fund would be exhausted during fiscal year 2033."

Other members of Congress attending the signing ceremony included Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, Nevada Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, Minnesota Democratic Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, Ohio Republican Rep. Mike Carey, Louisiana Democratic Rep. Troy Carter, Louisiana Republican Reps. Clay Higgins and Julia Letlow, Ohio Democratic Reps. Marcy Kaptur and Greg Landsman and Virginia Democratic Rep. Bobby Scott, according to a list provided by the White House.

[From Louisiana Illuminator] Former U.S. Rep. Garret Graves, R-Baton Rouge, was one of the authors of the bill that cleared retired teachers and other excluded workers from receiving Social Security benefits.

Jennifer Shutt

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Training for the Grambling Fire, Police and Public Works Departments.

7. With the leadership of Council-Lady DeVaria Hudson Ponton, the reestablishment of the Community Garden: Our new community garden initiative has provided a space for residents to grow fresh produce, fostering a sense of community and promoting sustainable practices and the Love the Boot Campaign.

8. With the leadership of Council-Lady Cathy Holmes Giles, Chairperson of the Juneteenth Committee: The continued support of our Juneteenth Committee has ensured that we honor and celebrate this significant day in our history with events that educate, commemorate, and bring our community together.

9. With the leadership of Councilman Jerry Lewis, the establishment of Safety Seminars for the elderly citizens of the City of Grambling and neighboring communities concerning trip hazards and falls for the well-being of all citizens. Also, a valuable resource for the Grambling Fire, Police and Public Works Departments.

10. Partnered with GSU to Resurfaced Central Street: The resurfacing of Central Street has improved road conditions and enhanced the driving experience for residents, students, and visitors.

11. We have reopened the Community Center for Community Engagement: Our community center is once again a hub for engagement, offering programs and activities that bring our community together.

12. We are in the process of replacing Water Meters: We have begun the process of replacing outdated water meters with more efficient digital meters, improving water management and billing accuracy.

13. Funded Infrastructure Projects: We have secured funding for critical infrastructure projects that will enhance the quality of life for all residents.

14. Repaired Lights on I-20: While we have repaired the lights on I-20, we recognize the need for ongoing maintenance to replacement and upgrading to (LED) bulbs to ensure continuous illumination.

15. Continue Filling Potholes: Our efforts to fill potholes are ongoing, ensuring safer and smoother roads throughout the city.

16. Formed the City's Litter Patrol: Our litter patrol team works diligently to keep our city clean and beautiful, promoting environmental stewardship.

17. Rehabbed 12 Lift Stations: We have successfully rehabilitated twelve lift stations, repairing force mains and manholes. We remain committed to repairing the remaining fourteen.

18. Water Cut-Off Valve Project: The

implementation of the water cut-off valve project will improve our water management capabilities and infrastructure resilience.

19. Partnership with John Manns, Local Manufacturer: We are working to establish a meaningful partnership with John Manns, a respected local manufacturer. This collaboration will create jobs and also strengthen our local economy and foster innovation.

Vision for the Future:

Master Plan Development with a Focus on Intentionality and Sustainability of Community Engagement, Community and Business Partnerships, and Economic Development: We will craft a comprehensive Master Plan to guide the city's growth and development, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for our citizens.

Parks & Recreation Expansion: We will enhance parks and recreational areas, providing diverse activities for both youth and elderly, fostering community engagement and healthy lifestyles.

Infrastructure Improvements: We are committed to continuous improvements in infrastructure, including road repairs, neighborhood lighting, water and sewer systems upgrades, and the installation of digital water meters.

Economic & Housing Growth: We are working to boost economic development through the I-20 Corridor, increase business opportunities, and revitalize the Main Street Project to attract more businesses and visitors.

Transportation & Accessibility: We aim to improve city accessibility with new sidewalks, street overlays along RWE Jones and other areas of the city and working with our State and Federal Senators and Representatives for the establishment of a Grambling Amtrak stop to facilitate travel and connectivity.

University & School Partnerships: We will strengthen ties with the local universities (Grambling State and Louisiana Tech), particularly in intramural sports and mass communications, and support Lincoln Preparatory School to enhance educational opportunities.

In closing, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the City Council, our dedicated public servants, and the citizens of Grambling. Together, we have accomplished so much, and together, we will continue to build a future that is bright, prosperous, and inclusive for all.

May God continue to Bless the city of Grambling, Lincoln Parish, the state of Louisiana and may God Bless America.

Mayor Alvin Bradley
City of Grambling

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Benson suggested that Jones only stopped making the charges after his actions were exposed, stating, "He let this go until he got his hand caught in the cookie jar, then he stopped."

Benson further implied that the GEDC had not shared its bank statements with the

city because the Jones brothers were concerned that the city would uncover financial misconduct.

Regardless of these allegations, the Agreement states that the City of Grambling shall dismiss its motion for criminal contempt filed previously seeking to have Edward Jones, Phyllis Miller, Linda Butler, Eddie Robinson, III, and Mary

Gipson individually held in criminal contempt, with prejudice. Further, the GEDC shall dismiss its Reconventional Demand filed in those same proceedings against the City of Grambling, the Grambling City Council and the Legends Square Taxing District, with prejudice. This provision is intended to fully resolve, with prejudice, any and all claims

or disputes existing between the named parties and/or the present Board members of the GEDC.

On behalf of the City of Grambling, Attorney Benson had this to say, "The City is happy to put this behind them and get on with the business of providing economic opportunities to the citizens of Grambling."

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Community

Member in Spotlight

The 100th Birthday Celebration for Thelma S. Williams

A Special Report

Thelma Alice Smith Washington Williams, a retired Grambling State University professor and GSU Laboratory High School teacher, celebrated her 100th Birthday on Tuesday, January 14. There was an enthusiastic response to her "RSVP ONLY" birthday celebration, which is no surprise to those who know her.

Patrick Jefferson, former representative of District 11 served as MC of the program and guided the crowd through the celebration. There were several presentations and awards in her honor, even the proclamation declaring it Thema Smith Williams Day by Grambling Mayor, Alvin Bradley.

Songs offered up, included one of Williams favorite, "God Bless Dear Olde Grambling, song by Dr. Ellen Smiley, GSU's Dean, The Earl Lester Cole Honors College and accompanied by Will Avery.

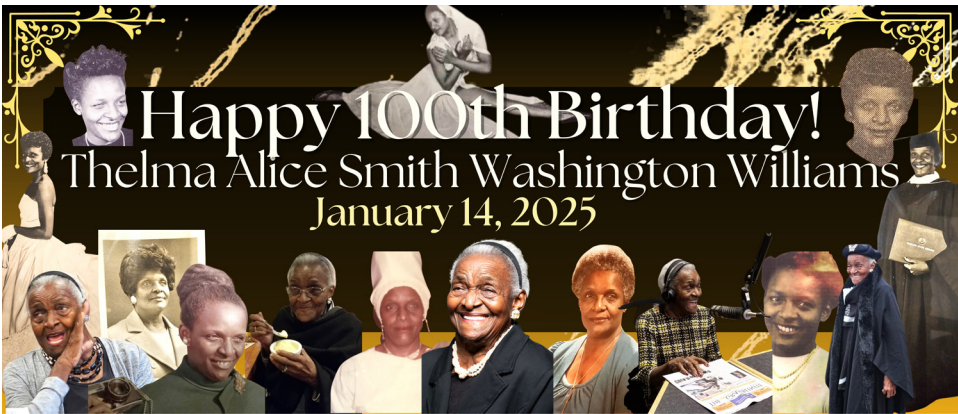
As the celebration continued, Mrs. Williams, a professionally trained Ballerina and Dance Teacher herself, watched and enjoyed as Elodie Davis Killins danced to Mrs. Williams' favorite song – "Dream of a Time" written by Dr. Valerian E. Smith, Williams' Brother.

Thelma Alice Smith Washington Williams, the complete name that many of her students knew too well.

"She has impacted the lives of thousands," said Dr. Mynette Mayo, Lecturer in the Department of Family and Consumer Science at Grambling State University. "She has connected to those at the



Thelma S. Williams



university, the Grambling community, Lincoln Parish, statewide and nationally as she and her students have ventured out into the world."

Mayo said for her and many others, Williams has been not only a teacher, but a mentor, a confidant and a motivator. "And for this, I am eternally grateful. She has taught me how to be the woman I have grown into, now as a senior."

Jolene M. Jeff described Williams as "a wonderful teacher." "She was like a mother to all of the girls, always explaining things to you," said Jeff, who transferred in 1961 to GSU from Xavier University in New Orleans. She graduated from GSU in 1964.

Williams had a big impact on many high school students like Lorine Bowman, a Grambling businesswoman. "She was one of our class sponsors, my dance instructor, my cheerleader instructor, our physical education teacher and girls' basketball coach. As our class sponsor, Mrs. Williams sponsored the event of our lifetime as high school students amid the transition from Jim Crow segregation to integration in the South. This was a trip

to our nation's capital, Washington, D.C."

Anthony Moore, a 1987 graduate of Grambling High School said, "I had Mrs. Williams in the 7th grade for the first time. She helped me all through my time there. My grandmother helped Mrs. Williams with a program to teach young new wives and mothers to be successful. She spent time at my family home, learning to be a new wife and woman of the house. She told me this herself, that this happened years before I was born. She featured my family in her book she published on Grambling, page 252. She was a GIGANTIC piece of my young life; I have so many stories of her impact."

Williams came to Grambling in 1956 to teach at then Grambling College as an assistant professor of health and physical education and dance instructor. She later worked at Grambling High School.

Thelma Alice Smith Washington Williams was born in Charleston, West Virginia on January 14, 1925, to Dr. Dennis Edward and Willia G. Hundley Smith. She has four children, three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

She has a master's degree in recreation from West Virginia University in Morgantown, a bachelor's degree in 1948 from Morgan State University in Baltimore in health and physical education, and a 1943 graduate of Garnet High School in Charleston, West Virginia.

Her talents and achievements are varied, from the arts to community service to history. She is the author of a book titled "Grambling: A Pictorial History" and numerous other historical pamphlets, articles, and writings.

She is a dancer trained at Carnegie Hall in New York City. She taught ballet and had choreographed hundreds of debutante balls, pageants, musicals, weddings, programs, and dance recitals in Grambling, Monroe, Jonesboro, and many other cities in the region. She also choreographed a movie – "Hurry Sundown," filmed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, directed by Otto Preminger and music composed by her brother, the late Dr. Valerian E. Smith.

She has mentored thousands of young people in their quest for achievement in life. She hosted a weekly radio and cable television show produced at Grambling State University and broadcast parish wide. She has been in frequent demand as a speaker throughout this region. For many years, she has been active on many committees in the community and has received many awards. She served on the LA Civil Rights Advisory Board and the Greater Grambling Chamber of Commerce Community Service Award has been named in her honor.

She is a member of New Rocky Valley Baptist Church in Grambling and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Pi Gamma Mu Honor Society of GSU Receives National Awards

The Louisiana Eta Chapter of Pi Gamma Mu at Grambling State University was recently honored and recognized at the 100th anniversary of PI Gamma Mu International Honor Society (PGM) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 1-3, 2024 as an Award-Winning Chapter.

National awards and special recognitions included : Star Chapter Roll of Distinction, LA ETA Chapter longevity (53

RIGHT: Pi Gamma Mu Members Receive Awards

years) Advisor's Longevity- Dr. Staten (34 years); GSU'S 100 members challenge for the 100th anniversary; Hall of Fame Inductee- Dr. Frances Staten; Student Paper Competition Winner, Jasmine Fordjour; and Ndumiso Shongee, -Student Election Winner to the Board of Trustee.



Announcements

GSU and Community combine to celebrate MLK

Grambling State University and the local community will come together to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on Monday, Jan. 20. Events will begin at 9 a.m. and end at 5 p.m. in the T.H. Harris Auditorium.

The theme is centered around, "Continuing the Dream: Empowerment Through Action." Community Service With the Wilkerson Center begins at 9 a.m. in the Favrot Student Union Black and Gold Room; R.W.E. Jones clean-up will begin at noon and at 4:30 the MLK March will kick off on the yard. The keynote speaker will be Representative Rashid A. Young (District 11) to close out the MLK Day observation ceremony.

Jackson Parish NAACP to honor King Day

The Jackson Parish branch of the NAACP #6309 will hold its annual commemoration parade and program honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on Monday, Jan. 20 at Boyer-Bell Memorial Building at 763 Beech Springs Rd. in Jonesboro.

The parade lineup will begin at noon in the Signature Lounge parking lot at 705 Leon Drive in Jonesboro. The parade will begin at 12:30 p.m. with the program to follow. Lee Edward Joe, retired educator and former JPB NAACP executive board member will be this year's Grand Marshal. The guest speaker will be Zachary O. Simmons, lead attorney of Pro

Bono Programs with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services in New Orleans.

For more information, contact Devin Flowers at 318-413-1233 or Nita Hayes at 318-475-0303.

Pinkie C. Wilkerson Foundation to sponsor celebration

The Pinkie C. Wilkerson Foundation will present "Remembering Pinkie" celebration luncheon Saturday, Feb. 1 at 11 a.m. at the Arcadia Event Center. The tickets for the event are \$50.

The event will honor citizens on a mission recognizing District 11 "Spirit of Pinkie Honorees".

The 15 honorees will fall in various catalogues. Beyond the Scope honorees include Lafaye Jackson, Rhonda Pruitt and Melinda Willis.

Humanitarians being honored include Kadar Dennis & Edgar Hill, Tyrone Jacobs (posthumously) and Grace Tatum.

Education honorees are President Martin Lemelle, Coach Michael Lyons (posthumously) and Donald White. Social Action/Civil Rights Advocacy honorees are William "Bill" Smith, Alicia Williams, Dr. Danielle Williams and Representative Rashid Young.

For questions or additional information contact Valena Lane at (318) 243-6676.

Retired educators to hold Town Hall meeting

The Lincoln Parish Retired Educators (LPRE) will hold a Town Hall meet-

ing on Thursday, Feb. 13, at 2 p.m. at the Grambling City Hall, 127 King Street in Grambling.

The keynote speaker for the event will be State Senator W. Jay Luneau, District 29.

NAACP meetings are set for third Thursday

The Grambling Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hosts its regular monthly meeting on teleconference every third Thursday at 6 p.m. The meeting will also include the installation of new officers.

Meetings are on teleconference -717-908-1834; Access Code 621055# and annual dues are due for the year. Make checks payable to Grambling Branch NAACP (#6094) and mail to P.O. Box 521, Grambling, LA 71245.

The updated Constitution of the NAACP and Bylaws for Units took effect on Wednesday, Jan. 1.

Membership is available to the public, either as an adult or as a youth (ages 7 to 17). Memberships for adults are \$30 a year and presently, the \$10.00 dues for children have been waived.

For additional information, please call or text 328-680-7679, Grace Tatem.

Grambling property tax receives extension

Due to the late mailing of the City of Grambling, 2024 Property Tax Notices, Tax payments have been extended. The

new due date is now FEBRUARY 5, 2025.

The Lincoln Parish Property Tax Notices were mailed Monday, November 25, 2024. Tax payments were DUE DECEMBER 31 for Grambling residents. They can be paid in person, by mail, or online. In person payments via cash, personal check, money order or credit card can be made at the Tax Collector office on the ground floor of the courthouse located at 1000 West Texas Avenue in Ruston.

Business hours are 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. On-line payments via credit card can be made by clicking the "pay your taxes" link on the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Office website (www.lincolnparrishsheriff.com).

Please be aware that the credit card processing company does charge a processing fee for ALL credit card transactions. Payments received after January 5, 2025, will be assessed interest and penalties.

NAACP Youth to sponsor raffle

The Youth Councils of District "G" of the LA State NAACP is sponsoring a raffle on a chance to win a 63" TV for \$2 per ticket. The drawing will be held Friday, February 28.

The raffle is an effort to raise funds to visit the Civil Rights Museum in Washington D.C in July or August 2025. You do not have to be present to win.

For information, contact Grace Tatem, 318-680-7679.

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Community



Louisiana Delta Chapter of Jack and Jill - Year End Update

The newly chartered Louisiana Delta Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc completed the year with donations and service. Hygiene Kits were prepared and delivered to the D.A.R.T Shelter in Ruston and Wellspring Alliance in Monroe. They also partnered with Volunteer of America-North Louisiana to provide and deliver holiday meals to residents of Independence Meadows. Participating age groups include the Tiny Tigers, Weehawks, Grambling Gems, Bayou Bulldogs, and Twin City Teens. The Louisiana Delta Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc was chartered in September 2024 during a ceremony at the Lincoln Parish Library Event Center and is the 267th chapter in the organization.



In Remembrance...

A Centenarian celebration of Life for Lillian Carr Cottingham

On Wednesday, December 18, 2024, Lillian Carr Cottingham left this earthly life answering the heavenly call. She entered the world as the fourth born of the union of George and Falvie Davis Carr on July 24, 1924.

Through the teachings of her parents and church training, she accepted Christ at the Millard Hill Baptist Church, Farmerville, Louisiana during her early childhood. She was active in the choir and usher ministries.

Lillian attended school at Mallard Hill Church School. Following school, she married the late Bernest Cottingham and moved to San Diego, California. God blessed their union with six children. She worked several years with the San Diego Unified School district as a bus driver. Later, Lillian worked in housekeeping for years to help support her family along with her husband. In 2000, she decided to return home. She reunited with Millard Hill Baptist Church and established residence in Ruston, Louisiana.

Every Sunday she and her older sister, Morene, would drive from Ruston for church service. They would trade Sunday's driving. Although both were in their nineties (90), their age did not hinder the determination to attend worship.

A cheerful heart is good medicine.. (Proverbs 17:22). Aunt Lillian was known among her nieces and nephews as the "Aunt that keeps you laughing." Her laughter was contagious! Her heart was pure; her smile was sweet, and her strength was strong in the Lord. Even in her struggles, she still smiled.

Always an outgoing person, she looked forward to her weekday trips to Union General Hospital Senior Activity Center in Farmerville where she enjoyed activities, having lunch with friends, meeting new people, traveling to different places for lunch and telling jokes.

A century of living! A century of love! Praise God!



Services to honor Jessie Ford Brown

Jessie Ford Brown was born on June 7, 1947, to the late Doyle and Ollie Ford Brown.

He accepted Christ at an early age at Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Grambling, Louisiana.

He attended Grambling Laboratory Elementary and High School.

After graduation, Jessie began a career in construction. He worked at TL James and Atkins Construction where he helped construct what we know as I-20. His life motto was extending a helping hand to those in need. His generosity was well-known.

Jessie was preceded in death by his children Cedric Brown, Michael Brown, and Antonris Levingston, one sister Betty-Ann Maryland, and two brothers Willard and Jerry Brown.

He leaves to cherish his memories: his wife Billye Brown, a daughter Sophia Brown of Grambling, La., six sons: Jarrod Brown (Barbara) of Mesquite, Tex., Jessie Levingston (Lawana) Vallejo, Calif., Nathaniel Frazier of Simsboro, La., Corey Brown (Aquanetta) of Grambling, La., Derrick Brown of Ruston, La., and Jeffrey Brown of Simsboro, La., 12 grandchildren and seven great grandchildren; four sisters: Darlene Wallace of Farmerville, La., Patricia May (Gus), Debra Jenkins, and Lorraine Lewis of Grambling, La., two brothers: Henry (Cherry) and Clarence Brown of Oakland, Calif., and a host of nieces, nephews, family and friends.



Celebrating Alfreda Kirkpatrick Turner

Alfreda Denise Kirkpatrick Turner blessed us with her presence on March 21, 1959, in Arcadia, Louisiana, to the late Rev. Frederick Douglass Kirkpatrick and the late Annie Pearl Thompson Kirkpatrick. At a very early age, she accepted Christ, becoming a member of New Rocky Valley Baptist Church of Grambling, Louisiana. Later in life, she became a member of Pacesetters Christian Fellowship of Jonesboro, Louisiana and tuned in faithfully to Praise Temple of Ruston.

Alfreda attended Grambling School (Alma J. Brown) during her elementary and high school years. While attending Grambling High (Alma J. Brown), she was a member of several honor clubs; the dancing felines and had the honor of representing and earned the title of Miss Alma J. Brown in 1977.

Alfreda graduated and attended Grambling State University where she danced with the Orchesis Dance Company. Alfreda met the love of her life, Douglas Ray Turner in high school and to this day he was still her sugar and spice and everything nice.

She was employed at Lincoln General Hospital for over twenty years, where she met lifelong friends who turned into family. Alfreda had many interest which included spending time with family, supporting her grandsons in all their activities, hanging with her daughters, cooking with her husband and talking with her best friend daily.

Alfreda lit up any room she entered, and her voice spoke volume. She was funny, loving and did not play about her girls, but especially her

grands and great grands. Alfreda transitioned to be with our heavenly father on December 23, 2024.



Honoring the life story of Ruby Robinson-Kelly

Ruby Lee Robinson-Kelly graced this world with her presence on August 7, 1949, in Jones, Louisiana, as the cherished daughter of Lavelt Robinson, Sr. and Jonnie Belle Robinson, of Ruston, Louisiana. From the beginning, Ruby's life was marked by a spirit of curiosity and warmth that would later define her remarkable journey. Her life's journey concluded as she entered eternity on December 21, 2024.

Ruby Lee grew up in Ruston, where she attended Lincoln High School and later pursued higher education at Louisiana Tech University, earning a bachelor's, a master's and a specialist degree. Her lifelong commitment to learning and personal growth shaped not only her own life but also the lives of countless students, leaving an enduring legacy of knowledge and inspiration.

In 1966, Ruby married Eddie James Kelly, and together they built a life filled with love, family and cherished memories in Ruston. Their union was blessed with three children, they created a home filled with warmth, devotion, and shared purpose. Their partnership stood as a testament to love and resilience, weathering life's challenges and celebrating its blessings side by side. Their union spanned decades, leaving an enduring legacy of commitment, faith and togetherness. Ruby had a deep passion for reading and expressed her creativity through sewing, finding joy in both.



Church News

The Word

A resolution worth keeping

By Terence L. Flucas

We have been blessed to again enter another New Year. A New Year full of hope, challenges, possibilities, and expectations. And many of us enter this New Year 2025 fully resolved that we will make much needed changes in our lives and not allow the troubles, the headaches, the heartaches, and the drama that plagued us in 2024 to hold us back or stop us from receiving all the great and wonderful things that await us in this coming New Year.

Many of us leave the Old Year 2024 behind with our minds made up that we will not make the same mistakes or fall into the same cycles of frustration again. And, so we are determined to do whatever we think is necessary, and do whatever it takes to make 2025 the best year ever. We are resolved to change old routines and old habits; and we are fully resolved to change our focus, our goals, and our expectations.

We are resolved to change our lifestyle; our appearance; and how we live day to day; and if necessary, change our circle of friends. And many of us are even prepared to go to the absolute extreme and go that extra mile just to bring about those changes that will promote our best efforts and make us appear more accept-



we’re prepared to join a prestigious organization, attend a church where everybody knows our name, and even start our own blog or post tic/toc videos to ensure that we gain as much popularity, and amass as many followers as we possibly can.

And there are many who believe that if they can change their image and their overall general perception then it will be the impetus to propel them into the life they were always meant to have; that way the New Year 2025 will be nothing like the Old Year 2024.

But the problem with changing one’s image, and one’s overall appearance and perception is that it does not take into account a person’s character or the condition of their heart. Many may be successful in changing their appearance, but it does nothing to deflate their ego; many may succeed in increasing their popularity, but it does little to change their attitude; many may do well to change their

able before the world and those around us. We are prepared to change our hairstyle, our physique, and our weight; we’re prepared to enhance our facial features, our eye color, and make new friends;

lifestyle and their inner circle of friends, but it falls short in changing their negative behavior; and many may accomplish their goals and make amazing strides in all of their personal and business endeavors, but it never addresses the problem of their obnoxious, narcissist, envious, malicious, and jealous ways that in the end may even lead some to find the [temporary] happiness and the satisfaction they [think they] want and are searching for by any means necessary.

And reality of 2025 is that so many people will spend the year making the same mistakes that they made in 2024; cultivating everything but their character and their heart. In life, and just like we have in so many other things, we make the terrible mistake of equating and relating one’s success to their appearance, popularity, and standing among those in the world; but if one’s heart and character is not in alignment with that of God, then we have seriously missed the mark.

When David saw and realized that his character and his heart were not in alignment with that of God; when David realized that his image and his appearance had become tarnished in the sight of God, David cried out *“Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.”* Isaiah also came to the painful realization that his character and heart

were no better than the very people that he lived among, causing him to proclaim that *“I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.”* Both David and Isaiah realized that image and appearance mean nothing, but that a person’s character and their heart are at the very foundation of who God is and what He expects from those who serve Him.

It is true that every New Year is an opportunity for change and a new direction, but change without God is wasted time and effort, and a needless exercise in futility. So, if you resolve to do anything in this New Year 2025, resolve to be a better man and a better woman of God. Try not to make the same mistakes this year that you made last year. Try not to be misled by the same people that misled you last year; try not to change your image and your appearance to imitate the image and appearance of somebody else; and try not to be the same sucker, the same pushover, the same punching bag, and the same doorstep this year that you were last year. Resolve to be stronger, wiser, and the best version of you in 2025 than you were in 2024 and remember image and character that resembles the world only makes you look like everybody else, but image and character that resembles that of God makes you look like Him.

May the Lord God richly bless each of you in 2025.

Humbly & respectfully, Terence L. Flucas, pastor of Mays Chapel CME Church of Ruston.

Church Announcements

Ministerial alliance to host M.L. King program

The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance will celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday at noon Monday, Jan. 20 at the New Rocky Valley Baptist Church in Grambling. The speaker will be Rev. Clee Lowe of Baton Rouge.

New Rocky Valley church to celebrate 149 years

The New Rocky Valley Baptist Church will celebrate its 149th anniversary during the 10:30 a.m. service, Sunday, January 26. The speaker is Rev.

Stephen Grays of New Hope Baptist Church in Royce City, Texas.

Julius Sulmer is the pastor and the church is located at 2155 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., Grambling.

Mt. Olive Church to hold annual Scholarship Gala

The Mt. Olive Baptist Church will hold its Annual Scholarship Gala Friday, Feb.14. This year’s theme is “Giddy Up at Molta Bella” so grab your Valentine Date and wear your best western attire!!

The Scholarship Gala Fundraiser is

held to provide Academic Scholarships for graduating high school seniors and other youth ministry activities. This year the church members hope to expand the scholarships for other graduating seniors in the community.

The church is located at 571 Mt. Olive Rd. Grambling and Rev. Donald Young is the pastor.

Pleasant Grove Church accepting applications

The Pleasant Grove Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a pastor until Friday, Feb. 28. 446 Bowden Road,

Ruston (Clay), LA 71245 The ideal candidate will have good moral character and demonstrated leadership experience to shepherd the congregation, truthfully proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, provide administrative oversight and engage in the pastoral care ministries of the church and community.

Interested and qualified? Please send resume to Antono Braggs, 446 Bowden Road, Ruston (Clay), LA 71245 or billoasis446@gmail.com.

Editor’s Note: If you have a church announcement, please email the information to the gramblingconnection@gmail.com.

Area Church Directory

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Cathedral of Praise Worship Center - 2877

Highway 33, Ruston

First Assembly of God - 1400 Woodward Ave., Ruston

BAPTIST

Alabama, 16061 Hwy. 151, Arcadia

Barnett Springs, 1601 S. Barnett Springs Rd., Ruston

China Grove Missionary, 406 Vernon St., Ruston

Choudrant Love Chapel Baptist Church, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston

Christ Temple Baptist Church, 7349 Hwy 80. Ruston

Church of Restoration, 285 Main St., Grambling

Cook Baptist Church, 2000 Cooktown Rd, Ruston

Corinth, 4327 Hw 545, Dubach

Countyline Baptist Church, 7426 Hwy. 146, Ruston

Dayspring Baptist Ministries, 3191 South Vienna St, Ruston

Emmanuel, 1200 Farmerville Hwy., Ruston

Fellowship, 6476 Hwy 151, Dubach

Fellowship,1572 Highway 507 South, Simsboro

First, 117 Oak St., Choudrant - One block south of Hwy. 80 in Choudrant

First, Hico St., Dubach

First, 200 S. Trenton St., Ruston

First, Simsboro

Friendship Baptist Church,143 West Sixth Street, Bernice

Grace Baptist Church 2808 Trenton Ave. , Ruston

Grace Bible Baptist Church, 216 Rough Edge Rd., Ruston

Greater Pleasant Grove, 1270 Golf Course Rd., Unionville

Greater St. Luke, 163 St. Luke Church Rd, Arcadia

Gumspring Missionary Baptist Church, 3117 Hwy 151, Farmerville

Hico, 653 Hwy. 152, Dubach

Hopewell, 7657 Fellowship Rd., Hwy 151, Dubach

Lane Chapel, 1016 McAllister, Ruston

Lanes Chapel Missionary, Hwy. 151 Downs ville

Liberty Hill Missionary, Simsboro Longstraw Baptist, 1799 Styles, Ranch Rd.,

Macedonia No.1 Missionary, Rt. 2, Dubach

Macedonia No. 2, 489 E. Sibley Rd., Choudrant

Mineral Springs, 4599 Hwy 822, Dubach

Mount Harmony, 210 Mt. Harmony Church Rd, Ruston

Mount Calm, 566 Mount Calm Rd., Simsboro

Mount Olive, Grambling

Mount Olive Outreach, 2817 S. Service Road W., Ruston

Mount Pisgah, Hwy. 3061, Ruston

Mount Sinai, 2269 Hwy. 145, Choudrant

Mount Vernon Missionary, 1356 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach

Mount Zion, 2586 Hwy 150., Grambling

Mount Zion No. 2, 113 California Plant Road, Dubach

New Hope, Choudrant

New Hope, 302 W. Vaughn, Ruston

New Liberty Hill, Hwy. 544, Simsboro

New Living Word Ministries, 1900 w. Barnett Springs, Ruston

New Pilgrim Rest, Inc., 2697 Elm St., Arcadia

New Prospect, 3438 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach

New Prosperity Baptist, 1378 Prosperity Church, Clay

New Rocky Valley, 2155 Martin Luther King Ave., Grambling

Northview Missionary, Highway 33, Ruston

Olive Grove, 3138 Olive Grove Rd, Choudrant

Pilgrim Rest, 622 W. Line Ave., Ruston

Pine Grove, 470 Chandler Rd., Ruston

Pleasant Grove, 1366 Pleasant Grove Road, Choudrant

Pleasant Grove ,“The Oasis in the Woods”, 446 Bowden Rd., Ruston

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, 1127 Mondy Rd, Simsboro

Rock Corner & Garden of Prayer, 824 Rock Corner Rd, Dubach, off Hwy.33, 14 miles north of Ruston

Rocky Valley, Simsboro

Solid Rock Baptist Church, 1511 West California Hwy 80, Ruston

Southside, 3191 South Vienna St., Ruston

Springhill, 727 Dicks Store Rd., Ruston

St. David, Vienna.

St. John, Old Grambling Rd., Ruston.

St. Mary, 1114 Larson St., Ruston.

St. Peter, 404 Longstraw Rd., Ruston

St. Rest, 09 Walker Rd., Choudrant

St. Rest, Hwy. 146 West, Dubach

Temple, 1515 S. Service Rd. W. Ruston

True Believers Baptist Church, 184 CCC Road, Ruston

The Springs, (A ministry of Temple Baptist Church) 1601 S. Barnett Springs Ave., Ruston

The Springs.life The Word, 504 S. Main St., Grambling University - 2856 W. California,

Ruston Vernon Baptist Church, 190 Vernon-Eros Road, Ruston

Woods Chapel, 326 Hwy 454, Ruston

Zion Hill, 505 Lee St., Ruston

Zion Traveler, 1201 Martin Luther King Dr, Ruston

CATHOLIC

St. Benedict, 471 Main St., Grambling

St. Thomas Aquinas, 810 Carey Avenue, Ruston

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Church of Christ, 2902 Hwy. 80 West, Ruston

Grambling, 146 King St., Grambling

Northside. 1804 N. Trenton St., Ruston

Orleans Cir. Church of Christ, 2103 Orleans Cir., Ruston

Ruston, 2300 W. Woodward Ave., Ruston, www.rustonchurchofchrist.org

EPISCOPAL

Church of the Redeemer, 504 Tech Dr., Ruston

St. Luke’s, 538 Main St., Grambling

METHODIST CHURCHES

Ansley Union Church, 328 Ansley Rd, Ruston, located 10 miles south of Ruston off Hwy 167

Antioch UMC, Simsboro

Arcadia First UMC, Arcadia

Choudrant UMC, 125 Pecan St. , Choudrant

Dubach UMC, Dubach

First UMC, Arcadia

Grace, 3401 N. Trenton St., Ruston

Lewis Temple CME, Main St., Grambling

Mays Chapel CME, 615 W. Line Ave., Ruston

Memorial UMC, 9325 Hwy 80, Simsboro.

Mt. Mariah UMC - Salem UMC - 11793 Hwy. 151, Dubach

St. Peter AME, 1104 Arlington St., Ruston.

Trinity Methodist, 1000 Woodward Ave., Ruston

Wesley Chapel Methodist Church, 4330 Hwy. 818, Ruston

PENTECOSTAL

Anchor Tabernacle, Exit 93 from I-20 then South 1/2 mile, Choudrant

First Pentecostal, Corner of Kentucky and Goodwin

Ruston King’s Court UPC, 2401 S. Service Rd. West, Ruston

LifePoint Church of Ruston,1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston. lifepointtruston.com

The Pentecostals of Ruston, 2851 Hwy 33 North, Ruston

Power House Temple of Christ Apostolic, 101 Main St., Grambling

United Pentecostal, Dubach Zion Temple Apostolic

Faith Deliverance – Eastern Hills, off Beacon

Light Rd., Ruston Voice of Revival Ministry - 304 W. California St., Ruston

PRESBYTERIAN

Alabama (USA), 2091 Hwy 145, Choudrant

Covenant Reformed, 2106 Cooktown Rd., Ruston

Greenwood, Lincoln Parish Rd. 181, between

Mitcham’s & Hwy. 146, Ruston

Ruston (USA), 212 N. Bonner St.

OTHERS

Abundant Grace Tabernacle, 3092 Hwy 556, Choudrant

Campus Community Worship Center, 1000 Saratoga St., Ruston

Christian L.I.F.E. Church, 107 Love Ave., Ruston

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 205 Woodhaven Rd., Ruston

Church of the Living God, 1438 Hwy. 167 W., Dubach

Church of the Nazarene, 1101 Center St., Ruston

Douglas Church, 1642 Hwy 821, Ruston

Dubach Church of God in Christ, 256 Voss Street, Dubach

Faith Church, 1507 Goodwin Road, Ruston

Focus Christian Ministries, Martin Luther King Community Center, 901 Martin Luther King Dr., Ruston

Fountain of Praise United Worship Center, 1394 Hazel St., Arcadia

The Gospel, 108 Sanctuary Rd, Ruston

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 2508 Kavanaugh Road, Ruston

Impact Worship Center, Greenwood Recreation

Center, 1306 Cornell Ave, Ruston

Ruston Housing Authority Building 901Martin Luther King Dr. Ruston.

Lifestyle & Wellness

CHARMING'S CORNER

Holistic Healing for Cold & Flu Season

Did you know that you can use plants for more than beautiful decor and oxygen purifiers in your home? According to the Merriam-Webster, dictionary, herbalism or herbal medicine, is the art or practice of using herbs to maintain health and prevent, and alleviate disease. I am a strong believer that God equipped us with everything we need to thrive! Not only were we blessed with herbs on the third day of creation, according to the book of Genesis, we were also blessed to be given knowledge on how to use them throughout the Bible, books, word of mouth, and the internet.

Many of us are currently suffering with respiratory illnesses, even though we can prevent them at home by consuming specific, herbal medicines that are quick and easy to make. The remedies that I will share with you today can be consumed on a daily basis to boost your immune system to prevent you from getting sick and also consumed to ease symptoms. These recipes are easy to make at home however, if you rather skip the DIY process, you can purchase many herbal medicines & remedies at Naturally Charming



CHARMING'S CORNER By Charming Davis

Universe Holistic Wellness Center at 311 Main St., Grambling, LA. In the Village.

The first remedy is a powerhouse for cold and flu. It is a natural antibiotic, anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-inflammatory, mucus expelling, immune boosting, throat soothing, cough relieving, and nausea reducing miracle. This syrup can also reduce the severity and duration of your cold. If you use local raw honey it can also help you with your allergies. The second remedy is a powerful blend of herbs combined to support your immune system, fight inflammation, and provide a cozy, warming experience. Always use organic products if you can.

- All Purpose Cold, Flu & Cough Syrup**
- Ingredients:
- 1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
 - 2–3 garlic cloves, finely minced or crushed
 - 1-inch piece of fresh ginger, thinly sliced or grated

- 2–3 sprigs fresh thyme (or 1 table-spoon dried thyme)
 - 1/2 cup raw honey
- Instructions:
1. In a clean glass jar, layer the sliced red onion, garlic, ginger, and thyme. Repeat layers until the jar is almost full.
 2. Pour raw honey over the layers, ensuring all the ingredients are completely submerged. Leave some space at the top of the jar.
 3. Cover the jar with a lid and let it sit at room temperature for 8–12 hours (or overnight).
 4. Optionally strain the mixture into a clean jar to remove solids, or leave them in for continued infusion.
 5. Store the syrup in the refrigerator for up to 1–2 weeks
- How to Use:
- Take 1 teaspoon every 2–3 hours when experiencing cold or flu symptoms.
 - For preventative care, take 1 teaspoon daily during flu Season.

- Spiced Citrus Immunity Herbal Tea Blend**
- Ingredients:
- 2 tbsp dried orange peel (or lemon peel as an alternative)

- 1 tbsp hibiscus petals
 - 1 tbsp echinacea
 - 1 tsp ginger root (dried or powdered)
 - 1 tsp cinnamon chips (or 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon)
- Instructions:
1. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl. Store in an airtight container.
 2. Brewing Instructions:
 - Use 1 tsp of tea per cup (8 oz) of hot water.
 - Steep for 5–7 minutes. Adjust steeping time for desired strength.
 3. Yield: This batch makes about 10–12 servings. Enjoy daily! This blend is available for \$6 makes 30–40 servings.
- Charming Davis, founder of Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center, is dedicated to empowering others through holistic healing and personal wellness. Specializing in natural remedies, Reiki (energy healing), sound therapy and other holistic practices. Charming brings a unique touch to wellness by blending creativity with spirituality. Based in Grambling, LA, the Center offers a space for healing, self-expression, and community connection.

Looking into Healthy Eating

By Doris Marzett, R.D.

Consuming a healthy, balanced diet is a goal for many people. While this is an excellent goal for health reasons, the terms "healthy" and "balanced" will vary for each individual. A healthy, balanced diet generally means one that is rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats. A meal plan is a great tool to help you plan.

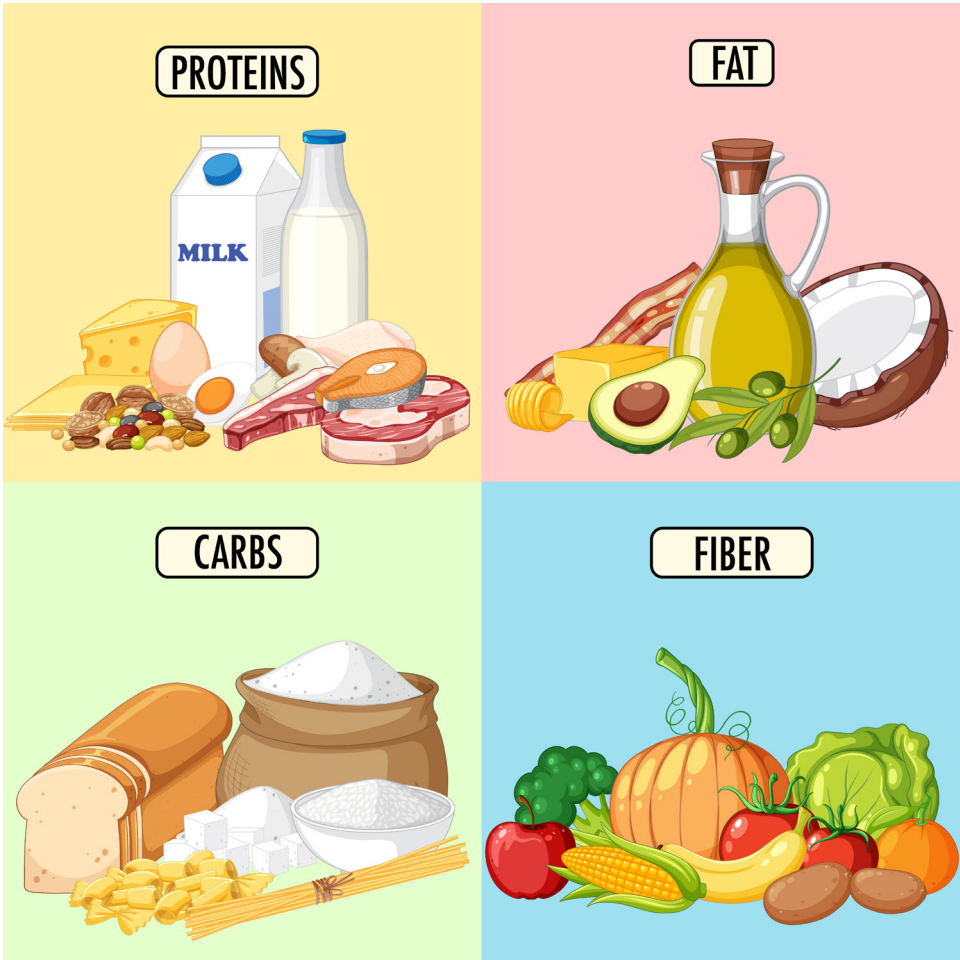
Meal planning can help keep you on track, no matter what your nutrition goal is. Prepping and planning doesn't have to be time-intensive and complicated. A few simple steps, including basic meal constructs, making a shopping list, shopping strategically, and methodically preparing food ahead of time, are what make meal planning a helpful tool to keep you energized, meet your nutrition goals, reduce food waste, and save money.

Healthy eating includes combinations of the following:

- **Vegetables:** Leafy greens, broccoli, as well as colorful options like peppers
- **Fruits:** Berries, grapes, bananas, apples, pears, oranges and grapefruit make great choices. (Choose fresh fruit whenever possible and try a variety of colors.)
- **Whole grains:** Brown rice, oats, and 100% whole grain pasta and breads. (Eating grains in their whole form provides additional fiber and nutrients.)
- **Lean protein:** Chicken breast (skinless), ground turkey, and white fish.
- **Healthy fats:** Salmon, tuna, catfish and buffalo as well as walnuts, pecans, and avocado. (They provide essential omega-3 fatty acids.)

Pay attention to food portions. Use your plate or bowl as a portion control guide. A rough guide for each meal is:

- **Vegetables/fruits:** half a plate (or one to two cups total)
- **Protein:** quarter of a plate (2–3 ounces or palm-sized portion)
- **Whole grains:** quarter of a plate (1/2 cup or fist-sized portion)



- **High fat foods:** small portion (or one thumb-sized) in the center of the plate
- You don't always have to measure your meals. However, doing so may be helpful for a short period to develop awareness of what an appropriate portion size looks like.
- Drink a glass of water up to 30 minutes before a meal to aid portion control.
- Focus on your meal and refuse to rush or gobble it down. This increases the chances you'll enjoy it and controls your portion sizes. Rather than eating snacks from the original packaging, empty a serving into a small bowl to prevent eating more than you should - and don't go back for more when you

have finished the 1st serving.

Here is a simple, balanced, nutritious menu that is easy to prepare. The key to balance is to eat a serving of each menu item.

Simple Healthy Meal

Tomato Soup: Dilute one can tomato soup according to directions on the can.

Chicken Salad

- 1 - 8 ounce can chicken breast
- ¼ cup poppyseed dressing
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ¼ cup crasins
- ¼ cup chopped nuts

Toss together all ingredients, except nuts, and chill until ready to eat.

- Green Salad:** Place one cup salad greens on a plate. Place chicken salad on greens. Sprinkle it with nuts.
- Pearly Peas:** Cook one 10 ounce package of frozen peas with pearl onions according to package directions.
- Toasted Ciabatta Roll:** Split roll. Drizzle with a small amount of olive oil. Sprinkle it with salt (or a seasoned salt) and pepper. Toast to desired brown color.
- Quick Pears Helene:** Place a drained, chilled canned pear half in a dessert dish. Top with vanilla ice cream. Drizzle with chocolate sauce

Simple Healthy Meal

- Salisbury Steak**
- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
 - 1 egg, beaten
 - ½ package (2 T) onion soup mix
 - ¼ tsp black pepper
 - ½ cup dry breadcrumbs
 - ¼ tsp dry mustard
 - ¾ cup milk
 - ¼ tsp garlic powder
 - 1 ½ tsp Worcestershire sauce
1. Heat oven to 350°F.
 2. Mix all ingredients thoroughly. Shape into 4 loaves and place in shallow baking pan. Spread with catsup or barbecue sauce.
 3. Bake 30 - 35 minutes, until done.
 4. Makes 4 servings.
- Scalloped Potatoes:** Follow package directions.
- Buttered Spinach:** Cook 1 - 10 ounce package frozen spinach according to package direction. Season with butter, salt and pepper.
- Celery Sticks and Apple Wedges:** Clean, wash, and cut celery and apples.
- Strawberry Cream:**
- 1 - 3 ounce strawberry gelatin
 - 1 cup frozen strawberries, chopped
 - 1 cup boiling water
 - 1 cup vanilla ice cream
1. Dissolve gelatin in water.
 2. Stir in strawberries and ice cream.
- Refrigerate until set, about 20 minutes.

Arts & Culture

BOOK REVIEW

Whispers of Desire

The landscape of "Whispers of Desire" is rich with themes of vulnerability, healing, and the power of art. Claire and Alex's relationship is a tapestry woven from both their struggles and triumphs, each thread representing the complexities of love intertwined with the shadows of their pasts. Their connection lights the path for transformation, as they both learn to confront their fears and embrace the adventure of creating a life filled with hope and inspiration. The novel under-

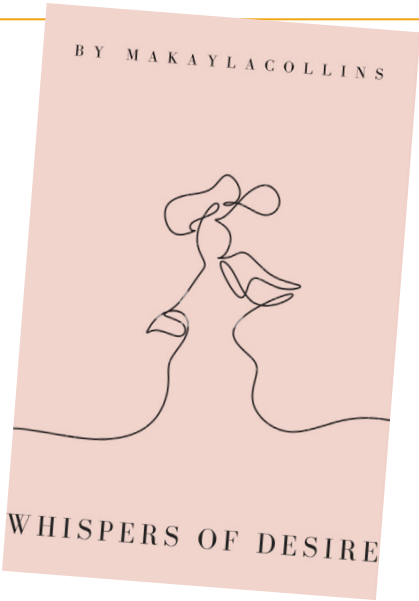
scores the importance of support, trust, and the belief that true art and love can flourish in the face of adversity.

"Whispers of Desire" can be found on Amazon at <https://a.co/d/i3Mzpo4>

Author's Bio

Makayla Collins is a dynamic abstract artist and entrepreneur from Beaumont, Texas, known for her creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and big vision. Raised in a small town, she embodies warmth, ground-

edness, and potential. From a young age, she was drawn to the arts, using vibrant, textured canvases to express emotion, energy, and meaning. As an entrepreneur, Makayla has embraced multiple ventures, turning her dreams into successful realities. Her creative and business ventures have made her a trailblazer in her community. Despite her success, she remains deeply connected to her values of love, compassion, and authenticity, believing that love is the unifying thread in both her art and relationships. With a heart full of passion and a vision for the future, Makayla is just beginning to make her mark, and her influence is set to grow.



Campus Corner

Members of Delta Sigma Theta Create Endowments at Grambling State

Grambling, La. - January 13, 2025 - Members of the Delta Iota Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. have doubled down to support their alma mater.

As Grambling State University (GSU) held its 2024 Homecoming festivities last year, the Pledge Lines of Delta Iota Chapter from Spring 1999 and 2004 each wrapped up the establishment of \$10,000 endowments presented to the university, respectively.

While plans for the endowments were completed around Homecoming or soon thereafter, plans for the anniversary contributions to GSU were longer in the making.

“It was our 25th anniversary in 2024 of joining the sorority and this was something that we had talked more and more about as the anniversary year approached,” said Victoria Washington of GSU’s Delta Iota Class of 1999. “Service, scholarships, sisterhood, and making a social impact are the core beliefs of Delta Sigma Theta, and so we wanted to see how we can make an impact on the university where we all met. And so that’s how we initially came up with the idea of doing this.”

“Of all the things we planned and talked about for our 25th anniversary, the endowment was one of the most important pieces of that — creating some type of scholarship plan that we can give back to the university where we all met. So, we’re very proud of how it all came together.”

Dr. Dayna Harper, a 2006 graduate of GSU, said the spring of 2004 line’s Legacy of Excellence Scholarship was established because that group felt it was essential to give back to the institution that shaped their lives and values.

“This endowment is a tribute to Delta Iota’s legacy of leadership, academic excellence, and community service,” Harper said. “It serves as a way to ensure that future generations of GSU students receive the support they need to excel and continue carrying forward our chapter’s tradition of excellence.”

Stephanie Usher, a 2005 Grambling State graduate and member of the Delta Iota line of 2004, said being a Delta made establishing the endowment something that came naturally.

“Sisterhood in Delta Sigma Theta means always standing together, lifting each other up, and giving back to the world around us,” Usher said. “Together, we’re stronger, and our impact reaches beyond ourselves. United by love, service, and a commitment to making a dif-



Ladies of Delta Iota Chapter, Spring '04



Ladies of Delta Iota Chapter, Spring '99

ference, we are forever bound by the call to give back.” Members of both GSU’s Delta Iota 1999 and 2004 lines said the endowments were coincidental other than the fact both being established during milestone anniversary years.

“I don’t think either line thought about another (line) maybe establishing an endowment,” Washington said. “But it makes sense, because giving back is what Deltas do. It was not planned; it was just coincidental. But that’s a good thing. As Deltas, we all want to give back to the university that means so much to us, so it just worked out like this in a good way for the two lines and

more importantly, the university.”

Students applying for scholarships from the endowments will need to be a sophomore, junior, or senior African-American female in good academic standing with a minimum grade point average of 3.04 on a 4.0 grading scale who are in financial need of the funding.

“The scholarship is designed to support students who demonstrate academic achievement, leadership potential, and a commitment to community service — qualities that align with the values of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.,” Harper said. “The intent is to offer meaningful financial support to at least one student annually, with the potential to expand to multiple recipients as the fund increases.”

Harper said hopes are that the endowments make an even broader impact than simply providing financial assistance to students in need.

“This scholarship also reflects our commitment to directly investing in Grambling State University in the name of the Delta Iota Chapter,” Harper said. “It highlights the importance of alumni giving and serves as an invitation for others to join us in supporting GSU. Our hope is that this act of giving inspires fellow alumni, current students, and supporters to continue building on the university’s legacy of academic excellence and service.”

Learn more about investing in a brighter future for Grambling State by visiting gram.edu/endowments.

Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing | Grambling State University

Sallie Mae Scholarship Winner Mayah Prelow: A Bright Future in Nursing

Grambling, La. - January 13, 2025 - Grambling State University is celebrating the continuous success of its students, exemplified by the recent achievement of Mayah Prelow, a freshman from Mesquite, Texas, who has been awarded the prestigious Bridging the Dream Scholarship. This recognition, which Prelow describes as a significant relief and a validation of her hard work, is offered by the Sallie Mae Fund in partnership with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund to support students pursuing higher education by alleviating financial burdens.

Upon learning of her award, Prelow expressed immense joy, stating, “It felt like a weight lifted off my shoulders. I was overcome with the joy of knowing that my academic pursuits were being supported.”

As a nursing student from a single-parent household, the scholarship means more than just financial assistance; it represents the belief others have in her potential to make a difference.



Mayah Prelow

experiences, including serving as the first vice president of her student council and contributing to school traditions, further solidified her dedication to her education and community.

Prelow’s commitment to her nursing studies is matched by her active involvement in campus organizations, where she plays a vital role in fostering community and awareness among her peers. As a member of the Mental Health Club, she advocates for mental health awareness and resources, engaging with fellow students to address this important issue.

Prelow has demonstrated a commitment to excellence throughout her academic career. She set ambitious goals in high school, ultimately ranking in the top 10% of her class at Vanguard High School. Her leadership

Additionally, her participation in the NAACP allows her to champion social justice initiatives and promote cultural understanding on campus.

Despite the challenges of balancing a rigorous nursing program with these responsibilities, Prelow thrives in her dual roles. The skills she has developed through her leadership experiences in these organizations not only enhance her academic journey but also empower her to manage her time effectively.

“Being involved in these organizations allows me to connect with others who share similar passions and to make a positive impact within the campus community,” Prelow said.

Her dedication to both her studies and her extracurricular activities exemplifies her commitment to personal growth and community service at Grambling State University. The Bridging the Dream Scholarship will enable Prelow to focus on her studies and further her career aspirations.

reer aspirations.

As she envisions her future as a pediatric nurse practitioner, Prelow is determined to address health disparities and enhance access to healthcare for children. Her childhood dreams of becoming a veterinarian evolved into a passion for pediatric nursing, driven by her desire to care for others and make a difference in their lives.

Looking ahead, Prelow envisions herself making a significant impact in healthcare within the next five to ten years, particularly in underserved communities. She attributes her success to her mother, whose dedication and perseverance have inspired her throughout her academic journey.

“I’m grateful to The Sallie Mae Fund and Thurgood Marshall College Fund for providing me with this scholarship opportunity,” Prelow said. “Being one of 40 applicants nationwide to receive this scholarship is a fantastic achievement, and I’m excited to continue working toward my goals.”

Grambling State Alumnus Jerald Johnson establishes \$25,000 endowment to benefit College of Business

Grambling State University (GSU) business graduate Jerald Johnson took a long and challenging road to founding Simplistek, an IT consulting company that offers business process solutions and staff augmentation services to major corporations.

The journey of overcoming obstacles throughout his career paid off for Johnson, and now he’s paying it forward to his alma mater. Recently, Johnson established a \$25,000 endowment — the J.J. Johnson Family Endowed Scholarship — to support Grambling State University’s College of Business financially.

A Houston native, Johnson’s path to Grambling State wasn’t rooted in family tradition but instead shaped by determination, good fortune, and the grace of God. “I was initially interested in studying computer science because I liked computers in high school,” Johnson said. “Someone at my church recommended Grambling, and my mom’s best friend, who had moved from Houston to a town near Shreveport, also encouraged me to attend GSU.”

Growing up in a modest household, Johnson faced challenges early on.

“It was kind of a tough life,” he said. “I didn’t have a car in high school. My



Jerald Johnson

hour, was my main source of transportation during the week.

Taking the bus every day exposed Johnson to stark realities, including seeing homeless people regularly, one of whom left a lasting impression. “I would see this man almost every day, begging for money,” Johnson said. “It was a reality check. He seemed to be in his 30s or 40s. Seeing him made me reflect on my future. I was determined not to end up in that situation

Johnson began his studies at Grambling State in 1991, graduating in 1995. After graduation, he landed a job at Texas Instruments as a programmer/analyst, specializing in electronic data exchange.

After two years at Texas Instruments, he joined Price Waterhouse, where he was introduced to business consulting,

parents had one vehicle, and Houston is very large geographically. The commute from my house to school was at least 30 minutes without traffic by car. However, public transportation, which extended my commute to at least 1

working with major corporations like Compaq, Texaco, Entergy, and Eli Lilly. At Eli Lilly, he met Peter Li, a person who became a mentor to him and sparked his entrepreneurial aspirations. “Peter saw my dedication and told me I could succeed on my own,” Johnson said. “But I knew I wasn’t ready. I wanted more experience and stability for my family before taking that leap.”

In 2002, Johnson returned to Houston to work for Reliant Energy. By 2005, he transitioned to independent consulting, making significant progress before Hurricane Ike disrupted his plans during the Fall of 2008. “I nearly went broke,” he said. “I thought I might go bankrupt. I had been doing well, with revenue close to \$700,000, but the hurricane caused me to lose almost everything.”

Johnson relocated to Dallas, taking contract work to make ends meet. A 2012 contract with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) proved to be a turning point.

“SMUD paved the way for Simplistek,” he said. “It gave me the confidence to build something bigger. Simplistek’s name reflects my focus on simplifying complex business processes for end users through comput-

er-based solutions.”

As Johnson built relationships with companies like CenterPoint Energy, Infosys, and Accenture, Simplistek’s success grew. That success led him back to Grambling, where he joined the College of Business Advisory Board. Inspired by financial principles learned from Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University, Johnson and his wife prioritized giving back.

“On the Advisory Board, we have an annual financial obligation,” Johnson said. “I always try to extend my giving. When (GSU Vice President for University Advancement and Innovation) Brandon A. Logan presented the idea of an endowment, I realized it was a great way to give back and extend this opportunity to my network.”

Johnson’s son is currently a student at Grambling State and set to graduate from the College of Business in the spring. “My family wanted to ensure that others have the same opportunities I did,” Johnson said. “This endowment is about giving back to Grambling, which gave me so much. That’s what this is all about.”

Learn more about investing in a brighter future for Grambling State by visiting gram.edu/endowments.

Sports

Grambling State Earns Victory against Florida A&M 78-64

By Leon Mitchell
GSU Athletic Communications

GRAMBLING, LOUISIANA | Grambling State (5-10, 2-2 SWAC) delivered a strong offensive performance to secure a 78-64 victory over Florida A&M (4-10, 1-2 SWAC) on Monday evening at the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center.

Grambling State shot an impressive 52.3% from the field and 62.5% from beyond the arc, propelling them to a well-earned win at the Hobdy Center. The Tigers showcased their resilience, bouncing back from a close first quarter to build and maintain a commanding lead in the second half.

Kahia Warmesley led the way for Grambling with a game-high 26 points, shooting 8-of-12 from the field and 3-of-4 from three-point range. She also added five rebounds and three steals.

Douthshine Prien contributed 19 points, going 15-of-20 from the free-throw line, while pulling down eight rebounds and dishing out five assists. Arianna Mosley added 10 points on an efficient 4-of-5 shooting performance.

Florida A&M's Sydney



Lady Tigers on Fire Against Florida A&M

Hendrix was the standout for the Rattlers, scoring 18 points on 8-of-13 shooting while grabbing eight rebounds. D'Mya Griffin chipped in 17 points and five rebounds, and Sabou Gueye contributed 11 points off the bench.

Grambling controlled the game in the paint with 26 points and capitalized on turnovers, converting Florida A&M's mistakes into 19 points. Grambling won the battle on the boards 31-28, the Tigers also excelled at the

free-throw line, converting 27-of-35 attempts.

Florida A&M struggled offensively in the fourth quarter, shooting just 25%, allowing Grambling to seal the victory with a 21-point final period.

Henry Dyer Set for Football Hall of Fame

By Curtis Ford
Associate AD for Athletic Communications

ATLANTA, Ga. | Grambling State University's Henry Dyer is set to be enshrined in the Black College Football Hall of Fame as a member of the 2025 Class.

Dyer was an All-American fullback for Grambling State. He was GSU's first documented 1,000-yard rusher and was named first-team All-SWAC from 1963-65. He was drafted in the fourth round of the 1966 NFL Draft by the Los Angeles Rams.

Dyer is among six inductees in the 2025 class that includes Rashean Mathis (Bethune-Cookman University), Jacquay Nunnally (Florida A&M University), Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie (Tennessee State University), Jay "Sky" Walker (Howard

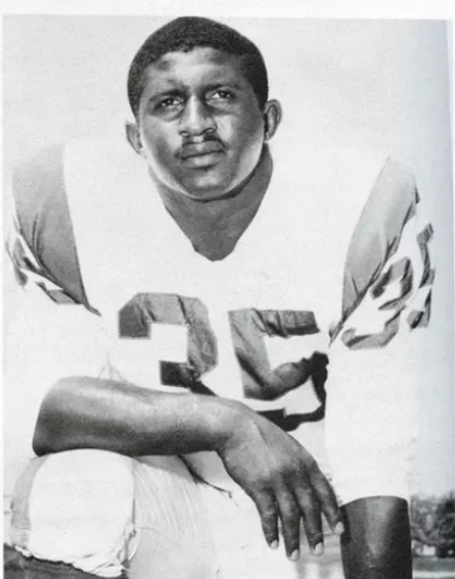
University) and Coach Fred "Pop" Long (Wiley College).

Votes were tallied from the 9-member Selection Committee, comprised of prominent journalists, commentators, and historians, as well as former NFL General Managers and executives, and from members of the BCFHOF to determine the Inductees.

The Class of 2025 will be honored at the 16th Annual Black College Football Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Presented by the Atlanta Falcons on June 7th, 2025, in Atlanta, Georgia.

They will also be recognized at halftime of the Allstate HBCU Legacy Bowl on February 22, 2025 at Yulman Stadium in New Orleans, LA, which will be broadcast live on NFL Network (3:00pm CT).

For more information, please visit www.BlackCollegeFootballHOF.org



Henry Dyer

Lincoln Prep basketball on a roll

By LaShaun Johnson

The Lincoln Prep basketball season record as of Thursday, Jan. 10 stands at 10-6.

Stat Season Leaders through the 16 games include: Trey Spann, junior - 19 pts, 8 reb, 2 stl, 2 as; senior, Devin Burton - 12 pts, 7 reb, 2 blk; senior, Fredrion Payne - 8 pts, 4 stl, 4 ast, 3 reb; senior, Amarjae Young - 8 pts, 2 stl, 2 reb; junior, Zion Hicks - 7 pts, 6 reb, 1 stl and freshman, Jabari Levingston with 5 pts, 4 reb, 4 ast, 3 stl.

The Panthers played St. Frederick-Away on Jan. 13 and New Living Word (Boys Only) - Away on Jan.16.

The Michael Lyons Classic will take place Saturday, Jan. 18 (Games all day beginning at 12:30 p.m.- Home. The Lyons Classic started last year during the 2023 - 2024 seasons an annual

celebration of Coach Michael Lyons Legacy with Grambling Laboratory School. It's a day where some of the best teams along I-20 matchup for a good day of basketball.

The Player: Junior Trey Spann has proved repeatedly he belongs in the conversations.

Impact player: Freshman Jabari Levingston has been a major contributor in his freshman campaign for the Panthers. Defensive Key players: Senior Fredrion Payne and Freshman Jabari Levingston won't let you put it on the floor without taking it.

The remaining Schedule:

- 1/21 - Southwood - Home
- 1/24 - Jonesboro-Hodge - Away
- 1/28 - Haynesville - Away
- 1/31 - Ringgold - Home
- 2/3 - Homer - Away
- 2/4 - Glenbrook - Home
- 2/7 - Cedar Creek - Home
- 2/11 - Plain Dealing - Away
- 2/14 - Arcadia - Home
- 2/18 - Union - Home
- 2/21 - Neville - Home

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