



# THE GRAMBLING★CONNECTION

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Teachers face paycuts

## Now that all 4 Louisiana Amendments were shot down, will Louisiana teachers face a pay cut?

By Julie O'Donoghue

Gov. Jeff Landry tied public school teacher pay to a constitutional amendment on budget and tax policies that failed spectacularly at the polls on Saturday, March 29.

Now the question is: Are the governor and legislators willing to cut teachers compensation?

Landry's budget proposal does not contain money for stipends of \$2,000 and \$1,000 that teachers and school support staff have received, respectively, over the past two years. They were relying on financial benefits reaped from Amendment 2 passing to help cover the cost of that compensation.

With the amendment now scuttled, the governor and lawmakers would have to take money from other items in Landry's budget to cover the expense. But it's not clear what type of appetite they have to do so.

Legislators in leadership declined to say Monday whether the state's 59,000 public school teachers should expect a pay cut as a result of Amendment 2 not passing.

"That is probably going to end up being the lynchpin of the session," said Rep. Julie Emerson, R-Carencro, author of the failed Amendment 2. "I really don't know how that is going to go."

Keeping teacher pay level with the current year would be expensive. Lawmakers would have to find \$200 million in Landry's proposed budget to cover the expense of another temporary, yearly stipend or to make a similar permanent salary increase on July 1.

Rep. Jack McFarland, R-Jonesboro, is asking legislators to let him know if funding the additional teacher pay is their primary concern. He is one of the state budget architects as the House Appropriations Committee chairman.

"If [the lawmakers] priorities are the teachers' stipends, then I'm going to have to know it," McFarland said. "To do the stipend, I would have to look at everything in the budget."

Even though teachers are facing potential pay cuts, Landry has included funding increases for other education initiatives in his budget.

For example, he's set aside an additional \$50 million for a new private school voucher program called LA GATOR for the next academic year. The initiative will allow more than 5,000 students to use public money to attend private schools or to pay for other private school education expenses such as uniforms and tutoring.

The average salary of a Louisiana teacher is already below that of other southern states. It was \$54,248 for the 2022-23 school year, when the regional average was \$59,145, according to the latest numbers from the Southern Regional Education Board. The additional \$2,000, first awarded in the 2023-24 school year, was meant to bring teachers closer to that pay range.

The decision to cut teacher pay would be especially unfortunate this year, said Ronnie Morris, president of the Louisiana's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Louisiana made major gains in reading comprehension on national tests — larger than those seen in any other state this year. Morris said the state's public school teachers are responsible for that success, which legislators and Landry have already celebrated, and they shouldn't have their pay cut after reaching such a milestone, he said.

"It would be a shame not to recognize our teachers for the work they've done to better position our state," Morris said. "I think that's the wrong message."

Louisiana's biggest teachers unions also endorsed the failed constitutional amendment that Landry and lawmakers were backing because of its ties to teacher pay.

Louisiana legislators will begin to debate state budget priorities in their legislative session that starts April 14.

*Julie O'Donoghue*  
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*Louisiana Illuminator is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest state-focused nonprofit news organization.*

## HBCU's ponder their future as Trump makes cuts to education dollars

By Robbie Sequeira  
Louisiana Illuminator  
Lena Claybon  
Contributor

The nation's historically Black colleges and universities, known as HBCUs, are wondering how to survive in an uncertain and contentious educational climate as the Trump administration downsizes the scope and purpose of the U.S. Department of Education — while cutting away at federal funding for higher education.

In January, President Donald Trump signed an executive order pausing federal grants and loans, alarming HBCUs, where most students rely on Pell Grants or federal aid. The order was later rescinded, but ongoing cuts leave key support systems in political limbo, said Denise Smith, deputy director of higher education policy and a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, a left-leaning think tank.

Leaders worry about Trump's rollback of the Justice40 Initiative, a climate change program that relied on HBCUs to tackle environmental justice issues, she said. And there's uncertainty around programs such as federal work-study and TRIO, which provides college access services to disadvantaged students.

"People are being mum because we're starting to see a chilling effect," Smith said. "There's real fear that resources could be lost at any moment — even the ones schools already know they need to survive."

Most students at HBCUs rely on Pell Grants or other federal aid, and a fifth of Black college graduates matriculate from HBCUs. Other minority-serving institutions, known as MSIs, that focus on Hispanic and American Indian populations also heavily depend on federal aid.

"It's still unclear what these cuts will mean for HBCUs and MSIs, even though they're supposedly protected," Smith said.

States may be unlikely to make up any potential federal funding cuts to their public HBCUs. And the schools already have been underfunded by states compared with predominantly white schools.

When asked how these cuts might affect Grambling State University, President Martin Lemelle, Jr. said, "We remain optimistic and committed to working with the administration and policymakers to communicate the enduring value and impact of HBCUs. Institutions like Grambling State are engines of opportunity, and we must ensure that federal investments continue to support the students and communities we serve."

Tennessee became the first state in 2018 to appoint a full-time statewide higher education official dedicated to HBCU success for institutions such as Fisk and Tennessee State. Meanwhile, North Carolina launched a bipartisan, bicameral HBCU Caucus in 2023 to advocate for its 10 HBCUs, known as the NC10, and spotlight their \$1.7 billion annual economic impact.

"We created a bipartisan HBCU caucus because we needed people in both parties to understand these institutions' importance. If you represent a district with an HBCU, you should be connected to it," said North Carolina Democratic Sen. Gladys Robinson, an alum of private HBCU Bennett College and state HBCU North Carolina A&T State University.

"It took constant education — getting folks to come and see, talk about what was going on," she recalled. "It's like beating the drum constantly until you finally hear the beat."

"These institutions were built out of churches and land by people who had nothing, just so we could be educated," Robinson said. "We have people in powerful positions across the country. We have to use our strength and our voices. Alumni must step up. 'It's tough, but not undoable.'"



## GSU Alums Team Up to Create GramFam Business Endowment for College of Business

By GSU Office of Strategic Communications

Six Grambling State University graduates have teamed up to create a \$50,000 GramFam Business Alumni Endowment supporting GSU's College of Business.

It's a project spearheaded by 1999 GSU graduate Damon Jackson, who with his wife Patrice, a 1998 Grambling State graduate, put together a team of five other alums — Erick Harris, Jacquillia (Trigg) Hooper, Jason Heyward, Christopher Buckley and Alcide Baker, to establish the endowment.

"My wife and I had been wanting to do an endowment for Grambling for years, and I was working for Kind Snacks and was going down to Florida A&M every year and presenting an endowment on behalf of Kind," Jackson said. "And once you give \$100,000 or \$110,000 a year there, you get a plaque on the wall outside the School of Business."

"So, I hit \$300,000 in endowment and another \$100,000 in product that I gave to the school and got a plaque on the wall. So, once I got a plaque on the wall, I realized I would love to do something like that for Grambling."

And so, Jackson began networking with fellow GramFam.

"I told Erick that my wife and I were going to do an endowment for Grambling — \$10,000 — and talk with them about giving a plaque or something to encourage other alumni to do the same," Jackson said. "And then Erick said, 'Hey, I want to be a part of that.' And once Erick said that, Jacquillia and everybody started saying they wanted to be part of it, too. So, I said that if folks are serious, I'm willing to talk to the school and see what they're willing to do."



Damon Jackson



Erick Harris



Jacquillia Hooper

Jackson and Hooper were both awarded academic scholarships and interned at Philip Morris after being recruited there by Harris. Jackson ended up following in Harris' footsteps to begin his career.

"I used to recruit Grambling students after I went to work for Philip Morris back in 2000," Jackson said. "I hired probably more than 35 students, and Erick Harris was the one who had hired me at Philip Morris. Myself and Jacquillia. That's how our connection was made. He was an alum who came back and recruited us at Grambling."

"Erick and I became best friends over the years. He was my mentor when I first went to Philip Morris, and within three years I had moved up three times to the point we were on the same level. That's when he told me the mentee had become the mentor."

Hooper, who hails from Orlando via Baltimore, said becoming a part of GramFam is something that came easy for her.

"From a young age, I knew college was my next step — I was literally counting down the days until graduation," Hooper said. "My criteria were simple: go far and be inde-

pendent. Grambling State checked both boxes. At 13 hours from Orlando and even further from Baltimore, it was the perfect place to start fresh. Plus, the application process? A simple Scantron form — just bubbling in my future with a pencil.

"When I arrived, I was met with three things: friendly faces, relentless humidity, and an undeniable sense of community. Grambling became more than just a college; it became home."

Harris' sentiments about GSU are much the same. "I bleed black and gold," Harris said. "My mom went to Grambling. My father went to Grambling. My cousins went to Grambling. I come from right down the road in Monroe (Louisiana). I wear Grambling gear proudly. I talk about Grambling all the time. It is a part of who I am, and I do my best to stay connected with what's going on. I live about an hour from Chicago, and while I don't go to all of the meetings of the Windy City Alumni Chapter (of the Grambling University National Alumni Association), I make sure that I pay my dues or contribute to their fund-raising efforts."

"And about every two to three years I come to Homecoming, so Grambling truly is family for me. That's what it means to me."

Harris, who now serves as Sales Director for Breezy Hills Nursery, said giving back to GSU's College of Business didn't take much consideration.

"Coming from Grambling's College of Business is a foundational part of my career," Harris said. "What I

Opinion

Each Generation Can Learn from Previous Generations Going Forward

By Prentiss Smith

The exhortations of “I remember when I was a young man,” or “I remember when we were growing up,” or “I remember back in the day,” are all phrases that most generation X’ers and millennials don’t like to hear or don’t want to hear from their parents. They don’t want to hear it because they think their parents are “old fashioned’ or as some of them might say, “not cool.”

They think that we are throwbacks to the stone age when there were no cell phones and no social media, which was all of about 25 years ago. I know this because as a parent, I have seen my children and the children of other baby boomers like me, roll their eyes like, here we go again.

I could surmise in my mind that they were thinking that Dad is about to talk about how things used to be when he was growing up in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. It’s like ancient history to them, and most of them don’t care to hear about any history, especially the history that most of them have benefited from, but don’t really appreciate. Each generation can learn from previous generations going forward.

As a parent and grandparent of multiple generations, with children and grandchildren ranging from ages 8 to 50, I have observed this phenomenon more times than I care to think about. It is a phenomenon that I am keenly aware of because it is similar to the attitude that my friends and I had when our parents began to talk nostalgically about how it used to be like when they were growing up.

We didn’t want to hear it because we thought we knew it all, and honestly speaking, we really didn’t know half of what we thought we knew. We thought that our parents were talking “old timey stuff” that didn’t apply to our new-fangled ideas and ways of doing things.

We thought we were “hipped.” Yeah, we thought we were so smart because we were going to college or because we were making more money than our parents ever made. We were wrong then, and our children and grandchildren are wrong today, but that wisdom and knowledge comes with living a long time and understanding that every generation has its growing up to do, and its lessons to learn. Too many families have found themselves on the outs because of his dynamic. Each generation has to learn for themselves, but there is nothing wrong with taking a little advice from someone who has done what you are trying to do. Many of us baby boomers are just trying to help and be constructive.

Young parents, especially a lot of young mothers, believe that if it’s not in the latest parenting book, then it must not be right. They believe that their education and other influences can give them more insight into how they should raise their children than their parents, and nothing could be further from the truth than that sentiment.

Young people today, and I don’t want to generalize, but I will. And this is not a condemnation, but the truth is the truth—young people today are spoiled and that is as true for my children as it is for many of the young people that I encounter. They feel entitled, and that is just a fact. They act like they are owed something, which is a real problem today.

Setting boundaries and having universal rules can help bring continuity to raising children, and children respond better to continuity and consistency. One of my rules when my children were growing up was that they did their homework and whatever chores they had to do around the house before the television came on.

As they got older, that policy became more liberal, and they were

allowed to self-regulate themselves, but I kept an eye on the content and the types of programs that they were watching. That is just one example of setting boundaries and being consistent. Today, young people have Tik Tok and Instagram and Facebook. It is more difficult to know exactly what they are seeing or doing on their electronic devices, which have become the new babysitters. It is just different today, and different is not always bad, but there still needs to be boundaries, which is what I try to impress upon young parents.

George Orwell, the great writer, said this: "Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it." There is a lot of truth to that because I, along with my friends, thought that we knew everything. We were wrong then, and the children of today are wrong now. Experience and "old school" knowledge are vitally important in the raising of today’s generation of children.

We all make mistakes, no one is perfect. I certainly made a lot of them while raising my four children, but I was also willing to listen, learn, and get good counsel from those who had been there and done that. Honest dialogue between the generations is important, and leads to better outcomes for all involved, especially our children who we want to see survive and thrive.

"Every generation inherits a world it never made; and, as it does so, it automatically becomes the trustee of that world for those who come after. In due course, each generation makes its own accounting to its children," said Robert Kennedy, who had 11 children with his wife, Ethel. I think he knew of what he spoke, and it is prescient for these new generations of young people. And that's my take. smithpren@aol.com

POTTER MOTIVATION

Man In The Arena

By Rusty Potter

I read a poem by Teddy Roosevelt called "The Man in the Arena", and it made me think about people in our community who step up, take action, and make a difference. Roosevelt's words remind us that it's not the critic who counts, it's the person who dares to do the work, faces challenges head-on, and strives valiantly, even when success is not guaranteed.

Every neighborhood has a man in the arena. He's not just a bystander. He's not waiting for someone else to solve the problems. He's the mentor who guides the youth, the coach who pushes kids to be their best, the father who teaches his children responsibility, the community leader who stands up for what's right.

The arena is where he fights to make a difference. It may be a classroom, a workplace, or a local meeting—anywhere that needs leadership and commitment.

But here's the truth: being the man in the arena isn't easy. Roosevelt spoke of the struggle, the sweat, and the setbacks that come with stepping into the arena. The man in the arena will face criticism. He'll encounter obstacles. He may fail, but he won't quit. Because he understands that real impact doesn't come from the sidelines, it comes from stepping into the fight, from trying, from believing that change happens when people take responsibility for their space.

So today, I ask you: Are you the man in the arena? Are you leading in your home, your job, your community? Are you choosing action over excuses, courage over comfort? If not, what's stopping you?

The world doesn't need more spectators. It needs more people willing to stand up and do the work. It needs more mentors, more role models, more builders of dreams. It needs more men in the arena who refuse to sit back and wait for change, because they are the change.

If you see the man in the arena, appreciate him. If you are the man in the arena, keep going. And if you're been waiting for a sign to step up—this is it.



Rusty Potter

News

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learned and was exposed to there, that experience has propelled me through some big companies and some smaller companies, and I have advanced everywhere I’ve been. It’s just another example of the products from the experiences you had and things you learned at Grambling. GSU’s College of Business can take you all over the place.”

Hooper, who serves as Global Vice President, Solutions at KellyOCG, also credits GSU’s College of Business for being one of the driving forces behind her success.

“Grambling State University provided me with a strong foundation of community and resilience, particularly within the African American experience,” Hooper said. “It was the first and only place where I was surrounded by Black excellence at every turn. Throughout my K-12 education, executive MBA program, and 20-plus year career, I’ve often found myself as the ‘lonely only’ — one of very few Black women in the room. But at GSU, that wasn’t the case. I cherish that experience because it instilled a deep sense of confidence, belonging, and cultural pride.

“The College of Business accelerated my appreciation for our culture while equipping me with invaluable real-world skills. I tried sushi for the first time in an entrepreneurship class — expanding my palate and mindset. I secured an internship with a Fortune 500 company in New York City at a GSU business fair — an opportunity that shaped my career trajectory. I gained a solid understanding of accounting and profit and loss management, knowledge that has been essential in my professional growth.”

Hooper said it was more than an education she received as a GSU student.

“Every lesson, every experience, and every connection I made at GSU laid the foundation for my continued success in business,” Hooper said. “It wasn’t just about

education — it was about empowerment.

The entire group behind the GramFam College of Business Endowment feel empowered by their alma mater, which led to the endowment being established. The process began with Jackson reaching out to the others.

“Jacquillia and I became friends at Grambling,” Jackson said. “And the others — Jason Heyward was in the College of Business with me. Chris Buckley is my cousin and was in the ROTC at Grambling. And Alcide is Erick’s friend who went to Grambling at the same time as him. Erick, Alcide & Chris are all fraternity brothers in Alpha Phi Alpha.

“It was just a matter of hosting a call with all of them and saying here’s the vision and seeing how many people wanted to join in on the journey, and those are the people who signed up to join the ride.”

After putting the group together, Jackson and Harris talked to Derrick Warren, Dean of GSU’s College of Business, who directed them to talk to GSU Vice President for University Advancement and Innovation Brandon A. Logan.

“I explained to Brandon I had some people who wanted to do an endowment with me and that we would commit to \$50,000 over five years,” Jackson said. “What I told the folks while asking them to do this is that it’s no different than tithing at church or doing a charitable tax write-off to give back to students. With me coming from Harlem (New York), if it wasn’t for Grambling, I wouldn’t be in the situation I am today.

“And a lot of us come from underserved communities. So, I said to them, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to give back to our school?’ And everyone was like, that’s a great idea. So, I talked with Brandon, explained our vision, and now we’re already at over \$10,000 two months within our commitment date of August to start funding. And Dr. Warren said he would put a plaque on the wall for us and do something similar to FAMU, and then Brandon said they would do some-

thing like FAMU does during a football season by bringing us out on the field for a check presentation during a Homecoming game.”

Jackson said it’s remembering the struggle to start their way up the corporate ladder that helped spark the creation of the GramFam College of Business Endowment.

“Erick and I joke all that time that students from Grambling have great analytical skills,” Jackson said. “And the reason why I say that is because, most of the time, when you go to Grambling, you come from an underserved community and you’re part of a struggle that’s really tough. At Grambling, we all know the struggles together. So, for me, when I went into ‘Corporate America,’ I was already set up to handle the pressure. Coming from Grambling, you have a ‘don’t give up’ attitude. The College of Business made us that much stronger.

“We know the struggle of being a student there. We know the struggle of paying off those student loans, But we’re all Grambling proud. I’m from Harlem in New York City. I never thought I’d be at Grambling. But by me going there and getting my education there, that has affected and improved my life tremendously.”

Hooper agrees that it’s facing and defeating the challenges she has faced in her life that made helping establish the College of Business endowment so important to her.

“I come from humble beginnings and have faced extreme misfortune,” Hooper said. “A college fund wasn’t available to me, and college prep wasn’t a priority when my family was dealing with evictions, and at times, a lack of food, water, and electricity. Despite those challenges, I believed then and still believe now that honest work is good work and that when you do good, good comes. I arrived at GSU knowing that my success was in my own hands, and that college would be my catalyst for a better life. That meant earning good grades, taking on work-study jobs, waitressing at Chili’s in Monroe, and securing

internships. I graduated summa cum laude with a 3.98 GPA, completed four internships, and spent nearly three years working at Chili’s — weekdays, weekends, and late nights, except Homecoming, of course. My hard work paid off when I secured a solid job at Philip Morris in Chicago right after graduation.

“Because of my journey, I understand what it means to work hard despite limited resources. That’s why I’m committed to giving back through the GramFam College of Business Endowment — so that other students, regardless of their financial situation, have access to the opportunities and support they need to succeed. GSU gave me the foundation to build a successful career, and now, I want to help ensure that same foundation is available to the next generation of Grambling business students.”

Harris said that getting fellow GSU alumni to remember those early struggles is something he hopes establishing the College of Business will make happen.

“There is an opportunity for the Grambling family to truly understand what it means to perpetuate power,” Harris said. “That’s something I’ve studied when I locate groups that go to other HBCUs, particularly those on the East Coast that have a tremendous culture of giving back and giving back not only your time but also financially.

“When I look at the wealthy, when I look at Republicans, when I look at the Jewish people and look at the people who come to America from India and become successful in business, I realize we can and should do more for Grambling but we have to understand what it means to perpetuate power — patronizing each other, helping each other out, not only with money but with knowledge. Pulling people to the side and helping people realize that if someone is doing that for you, then you have to do your part. You can’t just think just because you’re a Gramblinite someone should give you something or include you — you have to demonstrate that you’re worthy of it as well.”

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Community

Black Family Wellness Expo Spreads Awareness

By Joice M. Dunn

Citizens of the Grambling and surrounding areas attended a Black Family Wellness Expo Saturday, March 15, at the Grambling State University Digital Library. The expo was co-sponsored by the Monroe-Grambling (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and Morehouse General Hospital.

The Expo was an effort to reduce economic disparities in health, as well as to save and improve lives in the Black community. The local event was part of The Links Inc, nationwide, Black Family Wellness Expo that was held across the country.

The Black Family Wellness Expo contributed to the Links national wellness effort to raise awareness about conditions that shorten or impact the quality of life for those in the Black community. A number of vendors were present during the expo and company representatives from various walks of life.

Bertha Roberts, assistant executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Ruston, was on hand to answer questions regarding mental health. Lonnikia Robinson, Board of Director member of the Northeast Louisiana Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, was



Doris Marzett prepares for presentation

present with information to encourage predominantly Black people to check for the sickle trait.

Garnet Wagner Jr, a Grambling native, gave the group a brief workout between sessions. He is an ACE certified personal trainer and certified nutrition specialist. The owner of Real Life LLC is a fitness, health and wellness business that helps individuals live healthier lives through physical, mental, and spiritual exercise by combining health and fitness with real



Attendees pick up healthy snacks.

life experiences.

Doris Marzett, RD nutritionist, enlightened the group of the effects sodium can have on the body. She explained the importance of knowing the difference between breads for fiber benefits. The three kinds of breads which consist of white, brown and whole wheat, but only the whole wheat as whole wheat flour, consisting of the fiber needed to help control the appetite.

Dr. Tonya Hunter from the Mon-

roe/Bastrop area offered several tips on women's health. Dr. Hunter enlightened females present receiving the proper rest (8 to 10 hours) is important. Shopping wisely is beneficial to health as well as staying hydrated and remembering to exercise. "By limiting grilling, red meat, as well as avoiding MSG's and smoking, will play a major role in staying healthy," she said.

Dr. Craig Turner, of family medicine in Monroe, co-signed Dr. Hunter's warnings. He also emphasized the importance of avoiding energy drinks, when the question came up. "They contain 200 mg and more of caffeine which is hazardous to the health," he answered.

Quentin Pederson, nurse practitioner on sports medicine of Shreveport, who deals with sports related injuries, explained to the group that living well means getting up and moving. Pederson said the more a person moves the better they are. He also explained that every three to five pounds gained or lost is 20 to 50 pounds on or off your knees or back.

The expo was coordinated by Dr. Rhonda Pruitt, a member of the Grambling Links and a local dentist. Dr. Pruitt was excited about the expo and said it would become an annual event.

Announcements

City of Grambling Water Department Issues Warning of 'Wrong' Sites for Paying Bills

The Water Department of Grambling wants Citizens to beware of paying their bills on the wrong sites online. Citizens should pay their water bills, property taxes and tickets at cityofgrambling.org ONLY. Once at the site, you will be directed to payment page (ncount.com) where you can pay your bills. Several of these 'wrong' sites have cropped up lately according to the Water Department. One such site is doxo.com. DO NOT pay your bills on this site. Once your money is gone, the City has no way to retrieve it so BEWARE!

Councilwoman to start 'Listening Post' for Grambling citizens

Grambling City Councilwoman Delores Smith/Mayor Pro tem will be available on the first Monday of each month, noon at Grambling's City Hall for what she calls a "Listening Post." Smith will be posted to listen to, or answer city-related issues citizens may have.

The "Listening Post" idea materialized from residents' stopping Smith around town to ask questions. "A lot of times when I go to the post office or the grocery store, people see you and want to ask you a question about this or that," Smith said.

The listening post is a designated place and time to visit with Smith to get questions or concerns heard. Remember, the first Monday of each month.

Annual Denim and Pearls scholarship event set for Saturday

The Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Epsilon Alpha Zeta Chapter will have its annual Denim and Pearl scholarship event on Saturday, April 12 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Ruston Civic

Center.

The tickets for the events are \$40 and a table, seating eight is \$280. Tickets may be purchased at the door.

Individuals to be recognized during the event are Service: Jennie McCarthy, Scholarship: Rosalind Russell, Sisterhood: Nikole Roebuck and Finer Womanhood: Nanthalia Mc-Jamerson

Ruston High School Choir upcoming events

The Ruston High School Choral Department will perform during several upcoming events. The choir is a member of several organizations: LMEA All State Choir, member of the ACDA Choir and member of the District One Honor Choir.

The upcoming events for the group include RHS Percussion Ensemble Thursday, April 10 and the Band Spring Concert Tuesday, April 22, both in the Ruston High School Auditorium at 6 p.m. The last event will be the Bearcats on Broadway, Thursday and Friday, May 1-2 at 7 p.m. in the Dixie Theatre Center.

For more information, please contact: Lynette Murphy, choral director.

Line Dance class available for the Grambling area

A Line Dance Class with Yatta at Board & Bottle is now available for the Grambling area each Monday at 130 W. Park Ave. in Ruston and doors open at 5:30 p.m. The free class is being instructed by Kenyatta Collins. The next session is set for Monday, April 14.

For additional information please contact Collins at 832-891-7488 or WWW.REAL-LYGREATSITE.COM

Lincoln Parish Sheriff's hold 17th Senior Expo

The 17th Lincoln Parish Senior Expo will be held on Thursday, April 17 at the

Ruston City Sports Complex from 7:30 a.m., until 12 noon. The complex is located at 2103 Champion Way in Ruston. All seniors 55 years old and above should attend for fun, great food, prizes, and information.

For additional information please contact the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Department or call 318-251-6440.

NAMI Family support group holds meeting

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will hold a support group meeting Thursday, April 17, at 2 p.m. in the Lincoln Parish Library, George Byrnside Conference Room, 910 North Trenton St., Ruston. The meetings will continue each third Thursday of each month until December.

Dr. Jeannetta Stephens-Jones, Ed. D and Dr. Shirley Burch, Ph.D., will be present as well as NAMI Certified Peer Facilitators. Other group meetings will be held May 15 and June 19. The meetings will continue to be held July 17 and August 21. The next set of meetings will be held September 18, October 16, November 20 and December 18.

Anyone at least 18 years old may RSVP to jjones79aka@yahoo.com or call 93180 (318) 614-1961 or SJBurch57@gmail.com or call (318) 350-1612. The meetings are free to the public and all are invited to attend.

Ruston's Eggstravaganza set for Thursday at Sports Complex

Ruston Parks and Recreation's annual Eggstravaganza Egg Hunt will be held Thursday, April 17, at 6 p.m. and the gates open at 5:30 p.m., at the city sports complex.

The event is free but limited to the first 1,000 kids ages 12 and under with an admission ticket available online by visit-

ing eventbrite.com and searching for RPAR Easter Eggstravaganza.

The tickets can be printed or downloaded to a mobile device and must be presented at the gate.

Vehicles should enter the complex main gate on U.S. 167 South where a pair of Easter bunnies will be on hand for pictures. Other activities will include face painting and a small petting zoo. There will also be free treats for participants and Easter baskets.

For additional information please call 255-5800.

Exodus Family Farms to hold Third Egg Hunt

Exodus Family Farms will hold its third annual Egg Hunt event Saturday, April 19, from 4 to 7 p.m. The Farm is located at 343 Heard Road Ruston, 71270.

Activities for the event will include free food, an Egg Painting & Dyeing Station, Face Painting Station, Craft / Arts, Relay Races, Photo Booth with the Easter Bunny Petting Zoo & Mini Farm Tour Open Fishing Jumpers, Glow Bubbles, Play Zone and Glow-in-the-Dark Easter Egg Hunt.

"Our objective for this event is to unite families for a memorable Easter experience, highlighting the sense of community that is inherent to this sacred holiday. We would be grateful for any form of support be it monetary contributions, your attendance or volunteer work," said Deidra D. Scott, farm owner.

For additional information please contact Scott at 318-514-8855.

Lincoln Prep to hold first Spring Festival

Lincoln Preparatory School is preparing for its first Spring Festival to be held Tuesday, April 22, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. at the school.

"To make sure our most precious treasures, our students, are safe we are seeking volunteers," said Fanese Cowan, M.Ed., Lincoln Prep., Assistant Dean of Student Success and Compliance. Candy and prize donations will be greatly appreciated as well, she said.

For more information, please contact Cowan at fcowan@lincolnprep.school.

Grambling NAACP WIN Retreat set for April 26

The Grambling NAACP WIN Retreat will be held Saturday, Apr 26 at the Grambling Community Center, 127 King St, Grambling. The registration period will end April 15 at 2 p.m. and the price is \$10 +\$0.25 ticket service fee, after the cost will be \$15 at the door.

"WIN Stepping with Purpose"...in our sneakers! To strengthen relationships with

WIN members in District G, recruit branch/WIN members, foster creativity, and focus on the mission of Women in NAACP (WIN).

The attire is spring colored shirt, jeans, and sneakers. There will be door prizes, food, and lots of FUN! Invite someone and let's have a great time!

For additional information, please call or text 318-680-7679, Grace Tatem.

'No Limit' accepting registration for 2025-2026

The No Limit Soldiers Program is accepting registration and sign-ups. All area youth are encouraged to come out and participate. For additional information please contact Howard Kirkpatrick, 318-497-2978, Montez Moss, 318-243-7451 or Kelli Granger at 318-664-5435.

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.

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 them to P.O. Box 521, Grambling, LA 71245.

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 318-680-7679, Grace Tatem.

Parish public transportation available to Grambling

The Lincoln Parish Public Transportation System (LPPTS) is available to the general public including the Grambling area. The system currently provides demand-response, curb to curb, non-emergency service and operates on a first call/come first serve reservation schedule. The service is handicap accessible.

The service runs Monday through Friday from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m., with office hours from 7:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. There is a \$6 - \$10 fare charge per passenger per one-way trip, in the Lincoln Parish area only. The exact amount is required for each fare and must be paid immediately upon boarding. Reservations are required 24 hours in advance unless prepaid and cancellations must be made two hours prior to pick-up time.

The service also serves Choudrant, Dubach, Simsboro and Ruston. For additional information please contact Samantha Dimmer, transporta-



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# Community

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

## North Pine Tree Getaway

It began as a tribute to his parents. Raymond Robinson, a native of Grambling/Simsboro, is the Owner of the North Pine Tree Getaway, a lovely air bnb property right off exit 87 (Industry) in Simsboro nestled away on 5 acres of land that is as peaceful as it is scenic. “it was the home my parents built many years ago and raised me in. Now that they’ve both passed, I wanted to do something with it to honor them.” says Robinson.

His parents were Ray Robinson, who was a Director of Federal Funding at the Bienville Parish School Board Office, and his mother, Brenda Robinson, who worked at Grambling State University until she retired. “Both of my parents were educators and took pride in education.”

Robinson said the home was his parents’ dream that his father, along with the help of his brothers, built by hand. “I just remember my father talking about how when he first found the property, the City didn’t think the land was “buildable” because of all the trees but my father proved them wrong and found a clearing to begin building on. After that, he began chopping down the trees himself to make more room until he was able to bring on equipment to help clear out the rest.”



Raymond Robinson



North Pine Tree Getaway.

Robinson, who now lives in Dallas, said after both his parents passed, he thought long and hard about what he wanted to do with the property. He promised his father he would never sell it, but since he didn’t live here, he didn’t feel comfortable just renting it out and not being here to oversee it. Robinson said his Aunt Faye helped him come up with the idea for the air bnb and once the decision was made, other family members jumped in to help prepare the property as a vacation rental. “It’s not just your average air bnb. Here you get more than just a house, you get a courtyard, a patio with furniture and outdoor grills, you get picnic tables and 5 acres of land [for other outdoor activities].” You also get a beautiful home with all the amenities and a wood-burning fireplace.

Robinson says he wants people to feel “at home” when they come there. He said his parents built it to be a comfortable home and they really took a lot of pride in it so he wants to build on what they started to keep their legacy alive.

### North Pine Tree Getaway

Charming Simsboro Retreat on 5 Acres w/ Patio!

**BOOK NOW**

*Perfect for Family Reunions, Company Retreats, Sporting Events, Group Outings, or just weekend getaways,*

- Minutes from Grambling, Ruston and Arcadia
- Custom home boasts 2,400-square-foot interior
- 3 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms
- A full kitchen at your disposal
- Dishwasher
- Washer/Dryer
- Wood-burning fireplace on patio and Outdoor grill
- Near Lake Claiborne State Park, Eddie G. Robinson Museum, local restaurants and more!

Book now at [www.evolve.com](http://www.evolve.com) and search “Charming Simsboro Retreat”. For more info, contact Raymond Robinson at (318) 245-2719 or [NPTG24@yahoo.com](mailto:NPTG24@yahoo.com)



There was dancing during the night.

## HBCU Boosters All White Gala brings scholarly gifts

By Joice M. Dunn

As the doors to the Lincoln Parish Library Event center opened, various supporters of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Boosters arrived dressed in All White for the Gala-Dance Saturday, March 29. The boosters have been together since 2022, James Maryland, president, named the group and right away they began fundraisers of all kinds to support the Ralph Garr Classic in Atlanta. Garr, a GSU grad, played professional baseball for the Chicago White Sox, California Angels as well as the Atlanta Braves.

“We will get back to raising funds for the 2026 Garr Classic, but this All-White Gala is for a \$2500 scholarship for a lucky young man or young lady from a Lincoln Parish high school. We just want anyone that qualifies for assistance to know they can receive it,” explained Tommie Woods, vice president.

The other Booster members are Carl McCarter, Henry Kelly, Billy Norman and Roger Phillips. The wives: Charlotte Woods, Clara McCarter, Roe Maryland and Mary Kelly of the Boosters play an important role with the organization as well.

“Mr. Maryland reached out to me when my father passed and he knew I loved helping young people, so I’ve been a member of the club for a couple of years. I do whatever needs to be done, setting up for events, picking up children, etc.,” said Norman.

The Gala had a little something for all to enjoy. A variety of entertainment was showcased - singing, line dancing as well as live music. Awards and recognitions were also part of the event. Ricky B. Davis, kicked off his pro-



Deneen Stringfellow sings, “The Wind Beneath My Wings,” in honor of Jim Maryland (background).

fessional career in 1968, playing for Zion Traveler and Spring Hill Baptist Churches. He was chosen as one of the prestigious Young Men of America. He organized the first Black Gospel choir at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston. Davis spent 13 years as music director for the Louisiana Leadership Training School and Monroe CME Church. Dr. Grace Tatem was overjoyed as she presented the award to Davis.

The greatest surprise of the evening came when Davis accepted his award and began to thank Dr. Tatem for all the things that she not only did for him, but others as well. He told the story of her move from Mississippi to Grambling, Louisiana to be near her sister. Davis praised Tatem for always going the extra mile for others and encouraging them to be the best they could be and then he presented her an award as well.

See **GALA**, page 7

## Links hold Beautillion Clinic

By Joice M. Dunn

The Arts Facet of the Monroe-Grambling (LA) Chapter of the Links, Incorporated held its Beautillion Clinic on Sunday, March 30, in the Movie Theater on the Grambling State University (GSU) campus.

“The Beautillion is a transformative program designed to celebrate, educate, and empower young men as they transition into adulthood. Rooted in principles of leadership, academic excellence, cultural awareness, and community service, the Beautillion provides participants with the tools and experiences needed to develop into confident, responsible, and successful individuals,” explained Beverly Hill-Hercules, chair of the Arts Facet.

Under the National Theme for the Arts: Lights, Camera, Action: Our Stories, Our Lens, the Arts Facet chose its Clinic Theme: The Art and Spirit of Mentorship. Speaking a few words of encouragement was guest Dr. Martin Lemelle, Jr., president of GSU and the youngest serving president at an HBCU in the nation. Dr. Lemelle, a former Beaux, spoke on leadership and mentorship encouraging the young men to enjoy the journey and find something that they are passionate about.

He also reminded the Beaus to find that something that each can do better than anyone else. He left the group with a question, “How do you continue to fill you cup? You can’t pour from a cup that is empty.”

The group watched the movie “The Forge” about a business owner who mentored a young man who did not have his father in his life and needed guidance. The young men responded to questions after the movie, drawing outstanding wisdom of putting others first and the benefit of forgiveness.

The Beaus for 2025 are **Angel Sheppard**, Monroe, who attends Neville High School. Activities: Soccer, Golf, and Boxing. **Zheric DeShawn Hill**, Grambling, attends Ruston High School. Activities: Football, National Honor Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes. **Trindon Romel Moore**, attends Ruston High School. Activities: Football, Track, Bearcat Mentoring Program, Football Player Council, and Bearcat Buddy Program. **Cadyn Jamar Rodgers**, Monroe, attends Neville High School. Activities: Football, Track & Field, B.O.O.M Youth Fraternity. **Johnny Ray Winzer** attends Ruston High School. Activities: Football and Soccer. **Sanplice Christopher Simien**, Monroe, attends Saint Frederick High School. Activities:

Football, Track and Field, Spanish National Honor Society, St. Vincent DePaul Service Group. **Devin Lucas Harris**, Monroe, attends Carroll High School. Activities: Track and Field. **Ashton A’Shawn Jackson**, Monroe, attends Ouachita Parish High School. Activities: Track and Field, Football, NAACP, Top Teens of America. **Nicholas Jerimiah Nelson**, attends Ouachita Parish High School, Monroe. Activities: Track and Field, Football, SGANHS, Student of the Year, Top Teens of America, Jack Kent Foundation Scholar. **DeArrion Jamone S’ven Outley**, attends Ruston High School and activities include Football, Track & Field, Basketball,

FFA, FCC, FCS.

Through mentorship, clinics, networking opportunities, and a culminating formal presentation, the program aims to cultivate leadership, encourage academic excellence, promote cultural awareness, develop social & professional etiquette, and encourage community engagement.

The President of the Monroe-Grambling (LA) Chapter of the Links, Incorporated, is Adrienne Webber, and other members of the Arts Facet for this year are Monica Bradley, Laverne Conley, Juan Hooper, Katrina Harris, Thomasina White, Dr. Janet Floyd, Dr. Tonya Hunter, Dr. Erica Murray, and Dr. Nikole Roebuck.



Links Beau Clinic group.

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# Church News

## A man came to town and He is coming back again!

By Rev. Julius R. Sumler

*And when He was come to Jerusalem all the city was moved, saying who is this? Matthew 21:10*

The Sunday before Easter is generally referred to as Palm Sunday, making the day Christ made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, riding a colt as the crowd cheered Him waving branches from palm and olive trees shouting “Hosanna!” While others asked, “who is this?” as He passed.

There are many people today who greet the Master with the same enthusiasm of biblical times. They shout “Hosanna” on one day but are quick to deny Him in the presence of enemies and critics.

As Christians, we have the responsibility of telling the world about the Savior. We should tell them about the day he entered our lives and about our commitment to live for Him daily, during this Lenten Season, even when the shouts of “Hosanna” have faded into an echo and the world turns to shout “Crucify Him.”

This text considers the actions of Jesus as He came to Jerusalem. Much had been said about Him. His words and deeds were known around the country although He rarely traveled far.

The journey to Jerusalem was the concluding act of His ministry which spread His reputation throughout



Rev. Julius R. Sumler

the land as a wonder worker and miracle man.

His entry into Jerusalem was highlighted even more so by the fact that He had earlier raised Lazarus from the dead and the world of this deed spread quickly and His reputation preceded Him. When Jesus approached Jerusalem, He sent two of His disciples into a village and told them they would find a donkey and a colt tied and they were to request them in his name. His disciples threw their coats over the animals and Christ began what appeared to be an ordinary entry into just another city along the way until word spread that Jesus was coming.

Though He came in a lowly form, without advancement, press agents and red carpet, but Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. It was mixed emotions because many expected a king to reign over them and free them from the tenacles of Rome.

What drew the crowds to Christ on this first Palm Sunday was the previous testimony of those who had either been healed by Him or had witnessed His work.

Today men are drawn to Christ for the same reason. They saw Lazarus. They saw the blind man. They both were living testimonies sanctified and justified by the power of Christ. Many cannot see themselves beyond

their present. They cannot see beyond the immediate present.

When we meet Christ, He gives us insight. The ability to see what those in the world cannot see. During these 10 days of Lent, may we sing with great joy “Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found, blind, but now I see.”

Our testimony should be “There’s a man coming to town, who can save and He can heal, there’s a man coming to town who knows how you feel!”

Come see a man who took my:

- ... Worst and gave me His best.
- ... Hatred and gave me His love.
- ... Burdens and gave me His Blessing.
- ... Sorrows and gave me His joy.
- ... Cares and gave me His contentment.
- ... Guilt and gave me His Grace.
- ... Rags and gave me His robes.
- ... Bondages and gave me His freedom!

That’s something to shout about! We should be glad to tell everybody that the King is coming! Tell them that He died and rose from the Grave. Tell them that when this life is over that He’s coming back again!

There’s a man coming to town with all power in His hand.

*Reverend Julius Ralph Sumler, pastor/teacher of New Rocky Valley Baptist Church of Grambling.*

# Church Announcements

**Mt. Olive Church of Grambling to sponsor Women’s Conference**

The Mt. Olive Baptist Church of Grambling will hold its annual Women’s Conference Saturday, April 26, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The church is located at 571 Mt. Olive Road Ruston, 71270.

The four speakers for the conference are Dr. Rixie Thompson, Marilyn Gibson, Dr. Jeannett Jones and Dr. Latoya Houston. Evangelist Kathryn Hargrove

mistress of ceremonies. The Women’s Day speaker for Sunday, April 27 will be Debra Crowe.

Rev. Donald Young is the pastor. Please RSVP at 318-251-9640, 248-796-1509 or 318-614-4726.

**Mt. Comfort B.C. to hold revival service**

A three-night revival service will be held at Mt. Comfort B.C. in Minden,

April 28-30. Serving as guest evangelist will be Rev. Elliott Abney and the Love Chapel B.C. Family of Ruston.

**Church of Christ in Grambling Extends invitation**

The Church of Christ in Grambling invites all to worship. Bible Study is held Sunday at 10 a.m. and morning worship at 11 a.m.

Listeners may join online services by

tuning into the YouTube channel, 146 King St. Church of Christ. Wednesday night Bible study begins at 7 p.m. The Zoom ID is 9744743562 and the church may be contact at Churchof-ChristatGrambling@gmail.com or 318-596-1038. The Church is located at 146 King St.

**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

**Christ Temple**, 7349 Hwy 80. Ruston

**Church of Restoration**, 285 Main St., Grambling

**Cook**, 2000 Cooktown Rd, Ruston

**Corinth**, 4327 Hw 545, Dubach

**Countyline**, 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., - One block south of Hwy. 80 in Choudrant

**First**, Hico St., Dubach

**First**, 200 S. Trenton St., Ruston

**First**, Simsboro

**Friendship**, 143 West Sixth Street, Bernice

**Grace**, 2808 Trenton Ave. , Ruston

**Grace Bible**, 216 Rough Edge Rd., Ruston

**Greater Pleasant Grove**, 1270 Golf Course Rd., Unionville

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

**Gumspring**, 3117 Hwy 151, Farmerville

**Hebron, Love Chapel**, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston

**Hico**, 653 Hwy. 152, Dubach

**Hopewell**, 7657 Fellowship Rd., Hwy 151, Dubach

**Lane Chapel**, 1016 McAllister, Ruston

**Lanes Chapel**, Hwy. 151 Downsville

**Liberty Hill**, Simsboro

**Longstraw**, 1799 Styles, Ranch Rd.,

**Macedonia, No.1**, 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**, 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 Pilgrim Rest, Inc.**, 2697 Elm St., Arcadia

**New Prospect**, 3438 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach

**New Prosperity**, 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**, 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**, 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**, 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**, 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

**Church of Christ**, 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**

**Ansley Union**, 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**, 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**, 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**, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston. lifepointruston.com

**The Pentecostals**, 2851 Hwy 33 North, Ruston

**Powerhouse 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

**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

**New Living Word Ministries**, 1900 W. Barnett Springs, Ruston

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

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** *If you would like your church information listed, please email the Grambling Connection at gramblingconnection@gmail.com.*

# Health & Wellness

Charming's Corner

## Understanding Chakras, the Energetic Body, and the Path to True Healing

By Charming Davis

In today’s world, modern medicine primarily focuses on treating symptoms rather than addressing the root cause of illness. However, ancient wisdom teaches us that true healing starts from within, beginning with our energetic body. The human body is not just physical—it is an intricate system of energy centers known as chakras, which influence our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. When these energy centers are blocked or imbalanced, they can manifest as physical pain, emotional distress, or even chronic illness.



Charming Davis

What Are Chakras?

The word chakra comes from Sanskrit, meaning “wheel” or “disk.” These spinning energy centers regulate the flow of life force, or prana, throughout the body. There are seven main chakras, each associated with specific organs, emotions, and aspects of our well-being:

- 1. **Root Chakra (Muladhara)** – Located at the base of the spine, governs survival, stability, and security. Blockages can cause lower back pain, immune issues, or financial stress.
- 2. **Sacral Chakra (Swadhisthana)** – Located below the navel, governs



7 Chakras

- creativity, pleasure, and relationships. Imbalances may lead to reproductive issues, emotional instability, or guilt.
- 3. **Solar Plexus Chakra (Manipura)** – Located in the upper abdomen, governs confidence and personal power. Blockages can manifest as digestive problems, fatigue, or low self-esteem.
- 4. **Heart Chakra (Anahata)** – Located at the center of the chest, governs love and compassion. Imbalances may result in heart disease, lung issues, or difficulty forming emotional connections.

- 5. **Throat Chakra (Vishuddha)** – Located in the throat, governs communication and truth. Blockages may cause thyroid issues, sore throats, or difficulty expressing oneself.
- 6. **Third Eye Chakra (Ajna)** – Located between the eyebrows, governs intuition and insight. Imbalances can lead to headaches, brain fog, or a lack of spiritual awareness.
- 7. **Crown Chakra (Sahasrara)** – Located at the top of the head, governs spiritual connection and enlightenment. Blockages may cause feelings of disconnection, depression, or chronic fatigue.

The Connection Between Energy and Physical Illness

When energy becomes stagnant or blocked in a chakra, it disrupts the body’s natural flow, leading to physical pain, illness, and emotional imbalance. For example, suppressed emotions such as grief or anger can create blockages in the heart chakra, eventually manifesting as heart disease or lung problems. Similarly, chronic stress or fear can weaken the root chakra, leading to lower back pain or immune system disorders. Western medicine often overlooks this connection, treating the symptoms rather than the energetic root cause. However, healing must occur on all levels—energetic, physical, emotional, and spiritual—to achieve lasting wellness.

Healing from the Inside Out

Energy healing works by clearing blockages, restoring balance, and allowing prana to flow freely through the chakras. Modalities like Reiki, sound baths, meditation, and breathwork help to realign the energetic body, promoting deep healing. When the chakras are balanced, the physical body can begin to repair itself naturally. However, energy healing is only one piece of the puzzle. True wellness comes from aligning mind, body, and spirit. This means integrating:

- **Nutrition** – Eating high-vibrational, nutrient-dense foods that support each chakra (e.g., root vegetables for the root chakra, leafy greens for the heart chakra).

- **Physical Movement** – Exercise like yoga, tai chi, or dancing helps move stagnant energy and strengthen the connection between the physical and energetic bodies.
- **Spiritual Practices** – Meditation, gratitude, prayer, and connecting with nature nourish the soul and strengthen the energetic field.

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## GENERATIONAL HEALTH: The Crown & The Crisis: Black Women’s Health

By Destin Theus

“The Most Disrespected Person in America is the Black Woman. The Most Unprotected Person in America is the Black Woman. The Most Neglected Person in America is the Black Woman.” – Malcolm X

In our community, “**Strong Black Woman**” is often a badge of honor. But behind that strength, too often, lies a silent struggle of having to “keep it together” or always “pushing through” leaving the pillars of our community at the forefront of the fight and forced to deal with the backend; health disparities. Black women's health is not just a woman's issue, it is a community issue. Their well-being is foundational to the health, resilience and progress of the entire black community—mentally, physically and spiritually. Yet it would seem that the significance and general needs of their health are too often overlooked, belittled, patronized or simply forgotten by the healthcare system and society at-large and therefore, by proxy, by themselves. I look to not blame anyone but encourage anyone who may listen and go forth to act in their own way. In this expose I look to explore the unique health challenges, the central role of Black Women, and the interconnectedness of their health with their community’s overall well-being.

**The Disparities are Stark, The Roots are Deep.** The statistics paint a grim picture that demands our unwavering attention: Black women in America face alarmingly disproportionate rates of maternal mortality, often three to four times higher than their white counterparts. This isn't a matter of genetics; it's a stark indictment of a healthcare system that has historically marginalized and underserved Black women. From implicit bias in medical settings to the chronic stress stemming from navigating systemic racism and socioeconomic disparities, the roots of these health inequities run deep. Cardiovascular disease, too, casts a long shadow over our community, with Black women experiencing higher rates of hypertension, heart disease, and stroke, often exacerbated by limited access to healthy food options, safe spaces for exercise, and culturally competent healthcare providers. These aren't isolated incidents; they are symptoms of a larger societal illness that we must actively diagnose and treat.

**The Backbone, The Heart, The Healer.** Within the fabric of our community, Black women have long served as the unwavering backbone, the compassionate heart, and the tireless healer. The moniker 'strong Black woman,'



while often intended as a compliment, can inadvertently mask the immense pressures and burdens shouldered by our mothers, sisters, daughters, and aunties. They are the glue that often holds families together, the primary caregivers for children and elders, the organizers in our community groups, and the spiritual anchors in our churches. They navigate demanding careers, often while managing households and supporting extended families. This inherent strength and dedication, while admirable, can come at a significant cost to their own well-being. When the very individuals who are so vital to our collective survival and progress are struggling with their health, the entire community feels the strain. Their ability to nurture, lead, and uplift is directly tied to their own physical, mental, and spiritual vitality.

**The Ripple Effect.** Consider the ripple effect when a Black mother is grappling with postpartum depression or the lingering effects of a difficult birth. Her ability to bond with her child, nurture her family, and contribute to her community is undeniably impacted. The stress and anxiety she experiences can permeate the household, affecting the mental and emotional well-being of her partner and children. Similarly, when a Black woman is battling chronic cardiovascular disease, her capacity to actively participate in community life, to lead initiatives, and to provide the emotional and practical support her loved ones rely on is diminished. Conversely, when a Black woman is healthy – mentally resilient, physically vibrant, and spiritually grounded – she becomes an even more powerful force for good. She is better equipped to raise healthy and thriving children, to be a strong and supportive partner, to lead community initiatives with energy and vision, and to serve as an inspiration to those around her. Her wellness isn't just a personal victory; it's a collective gain that strengthens the entire Black com-



munity from the individual household to the broader society.

**Invest In Her, Uplift Us All.** The time for mere acknowledgment of these disparities is long past; we must move with intention and urgency towards tangible action. For Black women, this means prioritizing your well-being without guilt. Seek preventative care,

build strong support networks, and advocate fiercely for your health needs within medical systems that may not always see you. For our community, this requires a fundamental shift in how we support our Black women. Let us actively share caregiving responsibilities, create spaces where their mental and emotional health are prioritized, and challenge the societal pressures that demand superhuman strength without offering adequate support.

Our Historically Black Colleges and Universities have a crucial role to play here. They must continue to be centers of research on health disparities, train culturally competent healthcare professionals, and actively engage in community health initiatives that directly address the needs of Black women. Furthermore, we must demand policy changes at local, state, and national levels that address the social determinants of health, expand access to quality and affordable healthcare, and dismantle the systemic racism that underpins these inequities. Investing in Black women's health isn't just a matter of fairness; it's a strategic imperative for the overall health, strength, and progress of our entire Black community."

*Destin Theus is a Grambling State University student.*



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Arts & Culture

VAPA department head selected for prestigious Hambridge Center residency

By Dept of Strategic Communications - GSU

Rodrecas Davis, Department head and professor for Visual and Performing Arts at Grambling State University, has been named among the newest cohort of resident artists for the Hambridge Center. An acclaimed artist and arts administrator from the small town of Monroe, Georgia, the prestigious residency is both inspiring and instructive. Davis combined his visual arts and journalistic experience to provide both an academic and formal review of the arts at Grambling State University. Mr. Davis is a tenured Associate Professor of Art. At the intersection of creativity and academia, Davis stands out as a versatile figure whose contributions to the arts and education are both profound and impactful.

The Hambridge Center's residency is highly competitive and stands as a beacon for artists seeking to expand their horizons. With only 45 spots available out of 355 applications received globally. It is designed to nurture both the personal artistic pursuits and professional projects of its residents, offering a unique environment that encourages exploration and innovation. This dual focus resonates deeply with Davis's vision of art as an essential component of human existence.

"The arts are integral to everything that is made of material," Davis said, underscoring the pervasive influence of creativity in shaping our everyday lives.

Davis's affinity for art was sparked in the unassuming halls of Monroe, Georgia. Growing up, he found inspiration in the vivid worlds of comics, cartoons, and album cover designs. However, it was in a sixth-grade art class led by a supportive teacher, Mrs. Adams, that his passion truly took root.

"The pivotal moment that spurred my



Rodrecas Davis

creativity happened in the 6th grade," Davis said.

The class, which met just before the final period of the school day, offered Davis and his classmates an opportunity to delve into artistic exploration, often at the expense of their Social Studies lessons—a trade-off Davis was more than willing to make.

This newfound freedom and encouragement to experiment with creative expression led Davis to contribute as an illustrator for his junior high school newspaper. These formative experiences laid the groundwork for his pursuit of advanced studies in art, culminating in both a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) and a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.). His academic journey was marked by a commitment to pushing the boundaries of his craft, setting the stage for a career that

seamlessly blends artistic innovation with administrative leadership.

The path to securing the Hambridge residency was marked by a thorough submission process, requiring candidates to present a detailed account of their professional and creative achievements. Davis's application, which included a curriculum vitae, an artist proposal, and a curated portfolio of his work, showcased his enduring commitment to the arts. His consistent creative output, coupled with his effective leadership in arts administration, played a significant role in his selection for this esteemed residency—a testament to his standing as a culture bearer and art administrator.

Receiving this fellowship is a significant milestone for Davis, who views it as both a personal honor and a broader acknowledgment of the diverse roles

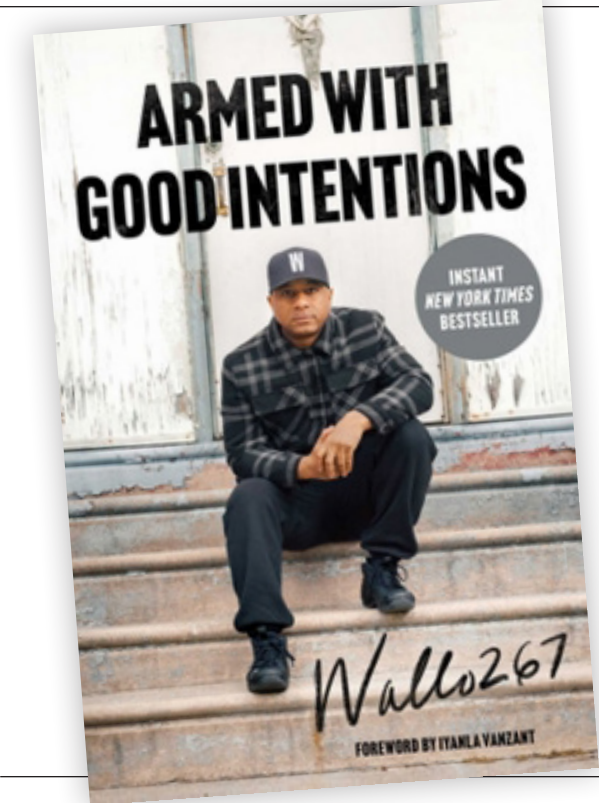
reatives often occupy.

"It's an honor...the Hambridge Residency acknowledges the many professional roles that creatives find themselves in," Davis said.

He believes that his inclusion in this cohort highlights the dedication of visual and performing arts faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), who tirelessly work to nurture the next generation of artists and scholars.

Looking ahead, Davis envisions the residency as a springboard for new creative endeavors. He plans to develop a more exploratory body of work that will lay the foundation for an upcoming solo exhibition. Additionally, he intends to seek out further residencies, understanding the invaluable role they play in providing restorative and regenerative experiences for creatives across various disciplines.

Beyond his personal aspirations, Davis remains a guiding light for aspiring artists, his journey from a small-town classroom to an international stage serving as a powerful testament to the transformative potential of art and the opportunities it creates for personal and professional growth. Rodrecas Davis's story is one of resilience, creativity, and the enduring impact of the arts on individuals and communities alike. As he continues to push the boundaries of artistic expression, Davis exemplifies what can be achieved when passion meets opportunity, leaving an indelible mark on the world as both an artist and a cultural leader. His narrative not only celebrates personal success but also champions the essential role of the arts in enriching our collective human experience, reminding us, as he often advises, to "be true to yourself. Follow your intuition and make the art your soul calls you to make."



Book Review: *Armed With Good Intentions*

**Wallace "Wallo267" Sanders--a man who spent twenty years in and out of the prison system before restarting his life and catapulting himself to unforeseen levels of social impact, cultural influence, and success--presents a powerful memoir "that everyone can glean wisdom from" (Deion "Coach Prime" Sanders).**

Named after his well-respected father who disappeared when he was two, Wallo grew up in North Philadelphia with his mom, brothers, and grandmother, feeling pressure to achieve the success and reputation his father had on the streets. He spent time in and out of juvenile detention centers, and school psychologists and counselors labeled

him "criminal-minded." His luck on the streets involving petty crimes would soon run out. After his involvement in an armed robbery, Wallo was arrested and received a prison sentence of nineteen to fifty-two years. Upon serving twenty years of his sentence, Wallo was released and returned home to Philadelphia.

This memoir traces the journey from Wallo's youth and incarceration to his incredible success. In his time spent in prison, Wallo reckoned with the choices that put him there, accepted responsibility for his own actions, and vowed to arm himself with only good intentions upon his release.

Wallo's reflection and newfound philosophy--which he now shares

with you--informed the new trajectory of his life. Upon his release, Wallo moved back to Philly and committed himself to entrepreneurialism. His viral motivational content gained him over sixty-thousand Instagram followers on his first day of freedom. This would prove to only be the start of his continuously growing career utilizing his social influence as a motivational speaker, entrepreneur, and cultural changemaker.

"Full of energy, hard learned lessons, and no BS advice, *Armed with Good Intentions* is a must for anyone who wants to take a chance to bring their best to the world" (Erika Ayers Badan, CEO of Food52).

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**GALA** from page 4

Others honored at the Gala was Patricia Cage Bibbs. Her 1968 classmate from Lincoln High School introduced her as one of the most decorated coaches in the history of the Southwestern Athletic Conference. Carl McCarter bragged that Bibbs, in 2008, was inducted into the Grambling State University Alumni Sports Hall of Fame; in 2010, she was inducted into the Grambling Legends Hall of Fame, as well as receiving the SWAC Lifetime Achievement Award; in 2012, she became the 51st NACC Division one head coach to join the 500 Victory Club; she was inducted into the SWAC Hall of Fame and this year, 2015, Bibbs and the list of her accomplishments goes on, but McCarter said, just Google her and she quietly came forward.

Barbara Foster, another honoree, was presented an award for her 30 years of service at Walmart.

Deneen Stringfellow took the floor to sing, "The Wind Beneath My Wings," in honor of Jim Maryland. The president said, "We've sponsored many fundraisers and helped many businesses and schools, not just Grambling. This HBCU Booster Club reaches out to help wherever the HBCU need is requested, but this All-White Gala Dance is to let all Northern Louisiana know that people can come together to help our communities and our youth. We would like to thank everyone that played a part."

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# Grambling State Athletics Thanks Coach Jackson, Begins Search for New Men's Basketball Coach

According to the GSU Athletics Department, the Grambling State University men's basketball head coach Dante Jackson has announced his resignation as head coach and GSU Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics Dr. Trayvean D. Scott announced that a focused national search for the next leader of the Grambling State men's basketball program will begin immediately.

"We deeply appreciate Coach Donte Jackson's dedication, leadership, and impact on Grambling State basketball," said Scott. "His commitment to excellence has elevated our program and inspired

our student-athletes. We thank him for his service and wish him success in his next chapter."

Under Coach Jackson, the G-Men reached new levels of success, capturing multiple Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) Regular Season Titles, a SWAC Tournament Championship and a trip to NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament for the first time in GSU's Division I program history.

**UPDATE:** Last Thursday, Apr 3, 2025, Coach Jackson announced he has accepted a position as new head coach of Alabama A&M Men's Basketball Team. We wish him the best!



# Hayes' Grand Slam Lifts Grambling State to Win over Southern

BATON ROUGE, La. | A late grand slam by Grambling State's Nyan Hayes lifted the Tigers to victory and completed a come from behind 12-10 victory over Southern on Thursday night at Lee-Hines Field.

Hayes, a senior infielder from New Orleans, La., found some late magic with an eighth inning grand slam to dash SU's hopes of a series opening win. The homer highlighted a big day from him as he went 3-for-4 with a grand slam, a solo home run and five RBI.

Grambling State (11-17 overall, 7-3 SWAC) trailed 6-1 after four innings, but eroded Southern's lead by reeling off 12 consecutive runs over the next four frames.

Hayes opened the scoring with a solo shot in the top of the first. With SU maintain a 6-1 lead, Keanu Jacobs-Guishard smacked a two-run homer, trimming the Jaguars lead in half, 6-3 in the top of the fifth.

Following a Southern solo home run in the bottom of the fifth, GSU pulled closer in the sixth. A two-RBI double by Shannon Martin, followed by a sacrifice fly by Martavius Thomas pulled the Tigers within a two, 7-5.



GSU wins over Southern.

Trailing 8-5 in the top of the eighth, Grambling State rallied for seven runs. With the score tied 8-8, Hayes walloped a grand slam to push the Tigers in front 12-8.

Southern used a two-run homer in the ninth inning to make it a 12-10 game, but GSU closing pitcher Javier Martinez shut the door on the Jags to preserve the

win. It was his third save of the season.

Mason Martinez got the start on the mound for Grambling State, going four innings and surrendering six runs on six hits. He delivered four strikeouts and walked two.

Ethan Bates (3-0) notched the win in a relief appearance after striking out one batter and allowing four runs on seven

hits and two walks.

Renard Grace (1-4) was tagged with a loss after giving up five runs on seven hits. He had seven strikeouts and two walks.

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## A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



The City of Grambling is seeking professional planning services from experienced and qualified firms to develop a comprehensive 10-year Master Plan. The Master Plan will guide the future growth, development, and revitalization efforts within the city. This RFP is intended to select a firm that demonstrates the ability to provide innovative, sustainable, and community-focused planning solutions.

For a copy of the RFP, visit:  
<https://cityofgrambling.org/grambling-city-news>