

THE GRAMBLING★CONNECTION

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MAYOR UPDATES CITIZENS ON CITY PROJECTS

By Lena W. Claybon

A town hall meeting was held Thursday, April 17, 2025 with Mayor Alvin Bradley facilitating the event. The Mayor said the meeting was to let the citizens know about all the things going on with the City as well as reports from various City Council members on projects they were working on.

The meeting began with the Mayor asking the City's attorney, Ronald Lattier, to give a brief update on the lawsuit involving the Grambling Economic Development Corporation (GEDC) and Davis Premier Estates over Legends Square. The attorney said that the property was valued at \$2.4 million but was sold for \$700,000 which was way below fair market value so the lawsuit seeks to annul the sale. It contends that under Louisiana law, this is considered an ille-

gal sale. The attorney also said that the lawsuit, that began in the local court, will now be going to Federal Court. The Mayor quickly moved on to discuss other items on the agenda including how the City is preparing for the new Buc-ees that's coming to the area. "We are trying to position ourselves to take advantage of it (economically) when it does come to town," the Mayor said. He also said that the tentative date for Buc-ees opening is September 2026.

He went on to say that Phase 1 has already started with the clearing of land by Tarbutton Rd for the Buc-ee's. Phases II & III will be clearing the route for the service road from Tarbutton to RWE Jones Rd in Grambling. This will involve both the City of Ruston and the City of Grambling. The Mayor showed the proposed route along I-20 where the service road will be installed. This will require going across

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Tabitha Brown to Serve as Spring Commencement Speaker at Grambling State



Tabitha Brown

GRAMBLING, La. – Actress, author, and entrepreneur Tabitha Brown will deliver the keynote address at Grambling State University's Spring 2025 Commencement Ceremony. The celebration will take place at 10 a.m. Friday, May 9, in the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center. Brown, affectionately known as "America's Mom," brings a message of authenticity, faith, and perseverance that has resonated with millions across the globe. With more than 13 million followers, she is widely celebrated for her inspirational content, comedic personality, and innovative approach to veganism.

The Emmy Award-winning host is a three-time New York Times bestselling author and a multi-NAACP Image Award winner. She has created and starred in several television projects, including Tab Time and Food Network's first vegan cooking competition, It's CompliPlated. Her entrepreneurial ventures include the healthy haircare line Donna's Recipe and product collaborations with Target and McCormick. As the Chief Empowerment Officer for Clover, Brown also champions financial wellness and empowerment for small businesses. The Spring 2025 Commencement Exercise will honor the hard work, perseverance, and academic achievements of Grambling State's graduating class.

GOP Vote to Cut Medicaid, Extend Tax Breaks for the Rich

Staff Report

House Republicans just voted on a new budget plan that would cut important programs like Medicaid and food assistance for kids—all to help pay for extending tax breaks that mostly benefit billionaires and big corporations. The plan would keep in place major parts of the 2017 Trump tax law, which is set to expire in 2025. But extending those tax cuts won't come cheap. Government experts say it could cost up to \$5.5 trillion over the next ten years once you factor in the growing interest on the national debt. The most expensive part? Keeping the individual tax cuts going. That alone would cost the country about \$3.8 trillion. Add in the breaks for big businesses, and that's another \$832 billion. On top of that, interest from all the extra borrowing would add another \$871 billion. Republicans say the tax cuts will help the economy, but critics are pushing back hard. Democratic lawmakers asked for the official numbers to show just how expensive this move would be—and who it really benefits. "This is a giveaway to billionaires, plain and simple," said David Kass from Americans for Tax Fairness. "They want to slash health care and food programs that help working families just to keep giving the rich more tax breaks." Kass also pointed out that regular Americans are already struggling with rising prices, while the wealthiest continue to get richer. He called on lawmakers to stop cutting programs like Medicaid and SNAP (food stamps) and instead raise taxes on the rich so they pay their fair share. This budget still has to go through more debate in Congress, but the fight is heating up. If it passes, millions of Americans could see cuts to programs they rely on—while billionaires get a big tax break.

GSU Criminal Justice Department Honors Women in History

By Joice M. Dunn

The Criminal Justice Department sponsored the annual women in history by honoring 17 area women who joined 27 previous honorees after a six-year break. A group gathered in the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center Tuesday, April 1. The origin of Women's History dates back to 1978 in Santa Rosa, California. Dr. Joyce Montgomery Tims, organized a Women in History program for the Grambling State University Department of Criminal Justice in 2013 until 2019 for women who have contributed selflessly to their community and society. "Due to Covid and the aftermath a hold was put on the celebration until this year," said Dr. Tims. The committee recognized distinguished women across the country as well as area ones. Chelsea Monae, News Director at KTVE/KARD, was honored, but also served as mistress of Ceremony. The speaker, Shirley Stewart, marketing director of the Monroe Regional Airport, was also honored. Judge Tammy Lee is the first female



Criminal Justice Honorees

to be sworn in as a judge in Monroe and Ouachita Pariah in 2000. She had the distinct honor as serving as the first African American Law Clerk at the Fourth Judicial District Court and first female Monroe City Prosecutor. Lee is a graduate of Wossman High School, Grambling and Southern Law Center. Yvette Mansfield Alexander serves as Division D Judge in Baton Rouge City Court. She earned her J.D. from Louisi-

ana State University Law Center and a B.A. in political science from Grambling State University. She has made history as the first African American woman elected to the Baton Rouge City Court and first African American Chief Judge. Cassandra D. Smith, a retired Ruston Behavior Center Social Worker, started her professional career in Princeton, N.J. as a food program specialist in 1974 with USDA. She relocated to Washington, D.C.

in 1975 and worked with USDA until 1984. Cassandra returned home to Grambling and received a Master of Social Work degree from the university in 1998. After applying her skills and training at Swanson and RBHC, she retired in 2017. Kris A. Barney is a dedicated Community Advocate and resiliency speaker specializing in domestic violence awareness.

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Opinion

Republicans and Some Democrats Have Blood On Their Hands, and It's Undeniable

By Prentiss Smith

No, they didn't fire the weapons that killed 20 young children and six of their teachers at the Sandy Hook School in Newtown, Connecticut, and no they didn't pull the trigger on the 19 young children and two teachers that were slaughtered at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, but they might as well had.

Yes, they have blood on their hands because they have failed to protect the people who elected them. Most Americans support common sense gun measures, but the politicians, mostly Republicans, and some Democrats, are not listening.

Over the past ten years since Sandy Hook, there have been over 4000 mass shootings. Think about that. It is unconscionable, but it is real. Thousands have died, and thousands more have been injured and maimed in mass killings; and yet politicians, both Republicans and Democrats, have refused to do anything to stop this madness.

How many more precious babies are going to have to be slaughtered before Republicans and Democrats decide that enough is enough? How many more families are going to have to get the news that their loved ones have been the victims of a mass shooting or a drive by shooting, or suicide, or a tragic accident with a gun?

How many more victims of gun violence are going to have to be buried because politicians are bowing at the knee of the NRA? How many more young Black men and women are going to have to be gunned down on the streets of major cities in this country before cowardly politicians do what their constituents are literally begging them to do? And that is to enact "common sense" gun legislation that would have undoubtedly saved hundreds of lives over the last decade?

After the Newtown massacre of 20 five and six-year-old elementary students, it was widely thought that politicians would see that something needed to be done about the availability of assault weapons like AR-15's and AK-47's, the weapon of choice for so many of these mass killers, but that was not the case.

More of these deadly "weapons of war" were manufactured, marketed, and sold. And make no mistake about it, these cowardly politicians have blood on their hands, and it is undeniable.

Nobody that I know is advocating taking anyone's

gun away from them. That is not what the American people are advocating for, but they are advocating for a ban on assault weapons, implementation of universal background checks, and the enforcing of red flag laws that can identify individuals that should not have weapons. These are reasonable actions that surely can save lives, and if one life is saved because of these actions, then that is a good thing.

Americans love their guns, and that is fine, but the fact of the matter is that there are almost 400 million guns in America, and most of them are owned by law-abiding citizens, who have never committed a crime. Many of them are weekend shooters, target shooters, and just regular gun collectors, but because there are so many guns, they end up in the hands of people who have no business having a weapon.

In the first four months of 2023, there were 146 mass shootings. That is almost one and a half mass shootings a day. Almost 12,000 Americans died in the first three and a half months of this year from gun violence. It is an unbelievable number of people who have lost their lives because our elected leaders

have refused to do anything that would stem this dreadful tide that is traumatizing families all over the country.

In America it used to be God, family, and guns in that order. Sadly, that has changed, and the new order is Guns, God, and then family. Religious people whose allegiance should be to their God, have rationalized in their minds that the Sec-

ond Amendment is sacrosanct, and can't be altered in any way. That is lunacy. The law was written over 250 years ago, and was never intended to be used the way it has been interpreted by politicians.

The sad truth is that Americans have become desensitized to the daily body count. Many of them wake up every morning hoping that there has not been another mass shooting.

They have become immune to the pictures of police cruisers and EMT vehicles rushing to another active shooter that is randomly killing fellow citizens with impunity. The Doctors, Nurses, and other medical personnel have seen too much, and are dealing with the mental anguish and weariness that this gun violence has set up on society.

After this massacre, politicians failed to take any actions, and the carnage continues. No, these politicians didn't pull triggers in these mass killings, but they have blood on their hands, and it is undeniable. And that's my take. smithpren@aol.com



POTTER MOTIVATION

Boss Moves Without A Boss

By Rusty Potter

Have you ever watched an ant at work? It's one of the smallest creatures on earth. It stays busy from sunrise to sunset, always making progress. And here's the amazing part - ants have no boss. No manager. No supervisor hovering over them. They stay focused, organized, and keep moving toward their goal.

That's a lesson for us all: You don't need a boss to be great. You just need a reason.



Rusty Potter

In life, some people wait for someone to push them - maybe a teacher, a coach, or a boss. But the most successful people don't wait. They work. Like the ant, they get up early, stay focused, and keep moving forward, even when no one's watching.

Proverbs 6:6-8 says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."

This scripture reminds us that wisdom isn't just in knowledge - it's in action. It's in discipline. It's about being proactive.

So what's stopping you today? Are you waiting for someone to believe in you? Waiting for someone to tell you what to do? Or are you ready to wake up with purpose and chase your goals with the heart of an ant - steady, focused, and unstoppable?

You don't need a crowd to start. You don't need applause to be consistent. You just need to remember why you started.

Ants don't complain about the size of the grain they carry. They don't stop because it's hard. They work in silence, but their results speak loudly.

Let today be the day you stop waiting for direction and start walking in your purpose. Be self-motivated. Be dependable. Be humble enough to do the little things that lead to big results.

If ants can build a whole underground colony without a boss, you can build your dreams without waiting for permission.

The world doesn't need more people with titles. It needs more people with drive.

So move like an ant. Lead yourself. Outwork the excuses. And remember: Success doesn't need supervision - it just need commitment.

Rusty Potter is a motivational writer and speaker dedicated to inspiring others to reach their full potential. He has completed four marathons, including one after recovering from a pinched sciatic nerve, showcasing his resilience and determination. Passionate about helping others grow, Rusty shares insights on goal setting, perseverance, and self-improvement, encouraging readers to overcome life's challenges.

News

SPLC Applauds Louisiana's Rejection of Act 3 Constitutional Amendment

(Black PR Wire) NEW ORLEANS — The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) applauds the decision of Louisianans to roundly reject all four constitutional amendments, particularly Amendment 3, which would have made it easier to sentence children to adult jails and prison. Out of the 64 parishes in Louisiana, 52 of them voted NO on Act 3:

"The people of Louisiana have decisively rejected Act 3, which would have transferred authority from the state constitution to the legislature to allow children as young as 10 to be placed in adult prisons. This harmful proposal posed a direct threat to the rights of our youth and would have worsened the cycle of incarceration, specifically for marginalized communities. This victory reinforces our dedication to justice, rehabilitation, and the belief that no child should ever be in an adult prison," said Terry C. Landry Jr., Louisiana policy director, Southern Poverty Law Center.

About the Southern Poverty Law Center

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. For more information, visit www.splcenter.org.

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Her advocacy stems from personal experience, having survived domestic violence that tragically led to the loss of her daughter, Miranda. Kris actively shares her story nationwide to educate and inspire resiliency.

Shakita Hays is a dedicated advocate and community leader from Monroe, committed to supporting children, families and community involvement. She earned her associate's degree from LA Delta Community College and has spent her career advocating for delinquent youth through her role in the juvenile justice system.

Cathy Holmes-Giles is a dedicated educator and community leader with over 45 years of teaching experience, currently serving as a 5th and 6th grade Reading Teacher at Washington Middle School in El Dorado, Arkansas. An accomplished educator, Cathy holds advanced degrees in Early Childhood and Guidance Counseling from Grambling State University.

Alicia D. Williams is a distinguished public servant over three decades of impactful experience in government and politics. A native of Grambling, Louisiana and a 1983 graduate of Grambling State University. She served as Senior Special Assistant to Governor John Bel Edwards.

Dr. Beatrice Tatem is the Executive Director of Wellness Initiatives, LLC., here she provides counseling services to couples, families and individuals. She is an experienced therapist, administrator and advocate.

NaTashia Tellis-Maryland serves as Chief Probation Officer and Deputy Marshal for the Ruston City Court Probation Department, bringing 23 years of experience in law enforcement. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in Louisiana and joined the probation department in 2024.

Lieutenant Sarah Williams dedicated her professional

life to public safety, serving nearly three decades with the Grambling State University Police Department, including roles as dispatcher and a police officer, retiring in 2017. Committed to continuous growth, she holds multiple degrees and certifications from Grambling State University.

Mary Bobb-Singleton has dedicated her career to public service, notably with the Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, where she earned "Employee of the Year" honors twice. Her extensive correctional Career spanned multiple roles, including oversight positions in Washington, D.C., before retiring.

Emma Williams dedicated her career to serving and protecting the elderly community in Lincoln Parish of Louisiana. Following her retirement from Louisiana Tech University, she volunteered and later become a Certified Elderly Service Officer/Investigator with the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Office from 2005 to 2020.

Corporal Harriet Sykes is a retired law enforcement professional with extensive service in the Grambling and Ruston Police Departments. A Grambling State University graduate with a degree in criminal justice, Harriet began her career as a dispatcher and reserve officer before becoming a police officer in 1996.

Jacqueline Scott is an accomplished attorney admitted to practice in Louisiana in 1989, with extensive experience across various legal fields including entertainment law, personal injury, criminal defense and succession. She has served as president of the Black Lawyer Association and holds leadership roles in several community organizations.

Honored posthumously was Clio Thalia Faye Brown Williams (1949-2009) who was a pioneer in desegregation and law enforcement in Ruston, Louisiana. In 1967, she became one of the first African Americans to integrate Ruston High School.

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Community

Local authors to be featured at book signing

Two Grambling State University Retirees will participate in the Third Annual Lincoln “Literarium” which was created by Lincoln Library Director Jeremy Bolom. The event will spotlight numerous Louisiana authors in this Book signing event on Saturday, May 3, at the Lincoln Parish Library Events Center from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Dr. Doris Williams Smith will feature her collection of 12 original poems at the Literarium. Her books cover several areas, including family, education and spirituality. Dr. Smith holds a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction: Secondary English. She also earned a Doctorate of Divinity. For decades, she held positions as Administrator and University Professor at New Orleans, Houston and Grambling. Her community service is expansive. Dr. Smith has written numerous grants and received several awards throughout her career. She is also a published author and motivational speaker.

Dr. Nanthalia McJamerson is a Retiree from Grambling State University and also served as a visiting professor at South Carolina State University. She holds a doctorate in Educational Psychology. As an author, she produced professional books and a poetry collection to be featured at the Literarium. She is the recipient of numerous awards and has given back to the community through scholarships and community service.



Doris Williams

In partnership, she and her husband, the late Dr. Jimmy McJamerson, founded a company for professional development and youth motivation.



Nanthalia McJamerson

Announcements

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 ended 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. For tickets or additional information, please call or text 318-680- 7679, Grace Tatem, Iylon Collins at 318-805-1677 or Windy Calahan at 318- 680-5511.

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 28. For additional information please contact Collins at 832-891-7488 or WWW.REALLYGREATSITE.COM

NAMI Family support group holds meeting

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will hold a support group meeting Thursday, May 15, 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. Anyone at least 18 years old may RSVP to jJones79a-ka@yahoo.com or call (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.

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 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 is a designated place and time to visit with Smith to get questions or concerns heard.

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 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.

‘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, transportation coordinator 318-251-5138.

The Brothers of Triumph Host Easter Egg Hunt

The Brothers of Triumph #131 PHA hosted their 3rd Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Sat, April 12, 2025. During to event, they gave away approximately 75 baskets and buckets to local children that attended as well as fed them and their families.



Easter Hunt Activities.



Baskets and Buckets.



Brothers Signage.

Grambling Branch of NAACP holds banquet

By Joice M. Dunn

The Grambling Branch of the NAACP held its annual Freedom Fund Banquet April 5th, in the Mary Hobdy Lobby of the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center. It was an evening of music and celebration. Doris Marzett, Program Chair, set the stage for the event

and despite the stormy weather, all seemed to relax and enjoy the night as Reverend Barry Calahan served as MC. Gabriel “Saxman” Johnson, a gospel / smooth jazz saxophonist, and native of Shreveport, kept the crowd entertained and pleased. The evening’s featured honorees included graduating seniors who were scholarship recipients,

the NAACP Collegiate Chapter, the NAACP Youth Council, the Call Me MISTER Seniors and Terrance Giles (Unsung Hero Award). The three seniors who received the \$1,000 scholarships were Kayla Mitchell, graduating from Simsboro and who will be enrolling at Grambling State University in the nursing pro-

gram; Josiah Finley, Ruston high graduate, who will attend Grambling State University, majoring in cyber security as well as joining the ROTC program to embark on his lifelong dream of being a military officer. Omarion Rushing who plans to attend Grambling State University with a goal of launching a clothing brand that inspires individuals to shine their light and be themselves; Elijah Neal, president of the GSU NAACP Collegiate Chapter, accepted the award for the organization. The chapter pushed to get over 12,000 people to vote. The organization was involved in door-to-door campaigns, phone calls and assistance in registration. The youth council was represented by Lorine Bowman, council leader. Taking the group through a pictoral reflection of the youth activities, Bowman made a plea for financial help to assist with travel to the museum in Washington, D.C. later this summer. The Call Me MISTER Program was recognized for its growth, hard work and dedication. Dr. George Noflin, Director and Tyra Muhammad, Program Coordinator, were proud to announce that there are six seniors in the MISTER program, Mr. Jalen Butler, Quinlan Coltrain, Mr. Tremayne January, Mr. Kamerius Palmer, Mr. Terrence Robinson and Mr. London Wright. The first



Terrance Giles, listed as Unsung Hero.

graduated in December of 2024. Robinson will be recognized in Baton Rouge, Tuesday, May 6. Dr. Noflin said the GSU program is the largest in the country with 33 young men. The program is able to take young boys that come to GSU and grow them into men when they graduate. Terrance Giles received the honor of the Unsung Hero, The presenter acknowledged that “his humble, kind, quiet and selfless spirit has never looked for recognition or praise. He has always been dedicated to helping other people who need help.” Iylon Collins, President of Grambling’s NAACP, extended an opportunity to the community to join the organization because she said, “When the NAACP Fights, We Win!”

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Community

Emma C. Wilson celebrates centennial birthday

By Joice M. Dunn

A standing room stood with applause as Emma Conley Wilson was escorted by a grandson, Clyde O'Neal Wilson, III (Trey) to the head table as the honoree celebrated reaching 100 years of life. As she moved through the crowd, Carolyn Wilson, daughter, revealed several accomplishments achieved as she continues to move forward in her life.

Many made an appearance to witness the momentous occasion and to show gratitude for the work and commitment of Wilson. Rev. Julius Sumler, pastor of New Rocky Valley B.C., welcomed the group. Members of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated were well represented, from the national, state and local organizations.

Although Saturday, April 5, had been declared Emma Conley Wilson Day, Grambling Mayor, Alvin Bradley presented a proclamation to her for reaching her centennial goal. Wilson was presented numerous awards and given credit for encouraging and setting an example for not only family, but those she encountered as she continues to journey through life. Before making her remarks, Wilson received a selection from a former Cub Scout, Keith Kelly.

Some family members reflected on the joy, appreciation and the knowledge gained by spending time with their mother and grandmother.

Shirley Wilson Burns, the second daughter, recalled the sayings often used by her mom. Burns remembered two statements over the years which she considers great advice.



Emma Wilson - Zeta Sorority rep. presents award to Emma Wilson as daughter looks on. Photo credit: Stephanie Matthews

“Ask for what you really want. (Realistically, the answer could be yes, no or maybe. If you don't ask, you will never know.) If it was not documented, it did not happen. (Mom was referring to promoting activities and projects of groups to which she belonged.) Now, it could refer to the current attempts to whitewash, distort, or delete the history of minorities and the disenfranchised,” Burns explained.

Her grandson Trey, as he is affectionately called, said, “My grandmother is a great example of humanitarianism. She is also a devout Christian. Always smiling and willing to help people in need. She is always present in my life – football games, band recitals or graduation. Thank you for being my grandmother.”



Emma C. Wilson is escorted by Grandson, Clyde O'Neal Wilson, III. Photo credit: Stephanie Matthews

In Remembrance

Remembering the life of Angelo Julien



A. Julien

Angelo G. Julien, Jr. was born November 23, 1930, in New Orleans to Angelo Julien, Sr. and Josephine Julien Murphy. He received elementary and high school education in New Orleans. Upon graduating from high school at the age of 18, Angelo enlisted in the United States Army.

He met the love of his life, Ethel Lorraine Kelly, at Ft. Carson, Colorado and they were

married on January 18, 1956. To this union, four children were born. He served his country as a soldier in the Army for 20 years. Angelo was honorably discharged in 1968 as a First Class Sergeant with the following honors: Good Conduct; Army of Occupation Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Vietnam Service Medal; NCO Professional Development Ribbon; Combat Infantry/Badge First Award; Expert Infantry-

man Badge; Republic of Vietnam; Campaign Ribbon w/Device; Expert Badge with Pistol Bar; Sharpshooter Badge with Rifle Bar; Marksman Badge with Rifle Bar an Korea Defense Service Medal. As a civilian, Angelo was employed at the Ammunition Plant and Grambling State University.

Angelo was a member of the St. Benedict Catholic Church where he served faithfully. He was also a member of Knights of

St. Pert Claber. He loved serving the Lord. He enjoyed music, detective shows and cooking. He enjoyed gardening occasionally.

The family would like to acknowledge the members of St. Benedict Catholic Church, Lula Wilson and Dr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Akoma for their love, care and support of our beloved father, grandfather, uncle, parishioner, neighbor and friend over the years.

The life story and final chapter of Viola Wiley

Viola Estell Homes Wiley was born December 16, 1924, in Greenville Mississippi, to the late Alma L. Homes and James Posey. She grew up in Baton Rouge, where she gained religious training at Neely Methodist Church and attended the public schools there, graduating in the top ten of her class from McKinley High School. She continued her education at Southern University in pursuit of a degree in nursing. After two years, her choice changed, however, as she became wife to Clayton Wiley and mother to their first of seven children. As spouse to a U.S. Army soldier, Viola began the roles of mother and homemaker in Columbia, Louisiana.

Over the next five years, the family grew, Clayton and Viola established themselves in the community of Caldwell Parish called “Ball Town.” The couple became helpful neighbors, caring relatives and active members of the St. Paul



Baptist Church. In 1960, led by God’s will and sound judgment, the family of eight moved to Grambling. It was here that Viola continued her maternal role while refining her skills of sewing, gardening, reading and writing. She became actively involved in the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, PTA and Grambling community volunteer projects, as well as numerous affiliations at Lewis Temple C.M.E. Church. In 1962, the Wiley’s became a family of nine. Despite her own large family, Viola’s nurturing extended to reaching others in various capacities. Sunday dinners, after church, gradua-

tions, weddings, holidays, GSU Homecoming, family emergencies were opportunities for her to open the doors to the Wiley home.

Throughout the years, she also managed to use her skills outside the home in a number of employment positions: Mailroom Clerk (Grambling College 1967-69); U.S. Postal Distribution Clerk (Grambling 1969-77); Insurance Clerk (Grambling State University (1978-80); Receptionist/Typist (Educational Consultations and Services

(1982-91). Viola still found the time to give tireless services to her church, Lewis Temple, in the areas of Missionary Society, Board of Christian Education, Hospitality Committee, Christian Youth Fellowship and Stewardess Board. In her later years, although her physical abilities diminished, her spiritual gifts enhanced as she used her talents for speaking, writing and making crafts. These gifts continued in her new home at Princeton Place Nursing Home in Ruston.

Remembering the life and legacy of Donny Harris



Donny Harris, beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend, passed away on April 3, at the age of 63. He was born on January 12, 1962, in Homer, Louisiana to Hardy Harris and Zeneria Chatman.

He accepted Christ at an early age at Mt. Olive Baptist Church of Homer. Donny graduated from Homer High School. He developed a trade skill in auto mechanics and fence building.

Donny was known for his kindness and generosity, always ready to lend a helping hand to those in need. He had a passion for hunting, fishing, farming and fixing whatever he could with his hands, which he shared with family and friends. His stories and wisdom will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

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Church News

Making a difference through compassion, positive actions

By Donald Lee

Hello friends. If you're a Christian, I'd like to talk to you a bit about being a "living epistle to be read of men," as the scriptures reference. In other words, I'd like to encourage you to let your daily actions cause others who may not know Jesus as Lord see Him through you.

Even if you're not a Christian, something written in this column can still influence you to conscientiously impact someone else's life through positive action.

When you purpose in your heart to brighten someone else's day, especially when they've had a "this is the last straw" kind of day in the midst of a tumultuous month or year, you cause him to change how he views his life, his problems.

Whereas people tend to misinterpret mole hills as mountains, you cause



Donald Lee

them to adjust their focus so that they can see the truth — that those "mountains" are only illusions, surmountable problems, mere mole hills to be conquered.

When you walk in wisdom, having a discerning heart, you can be the best example of wholesome living that you can possibly be. You represent that tangible thing that those who are taunted by life's pressures can look at, grab a hold of and walk in — that thing called victory, or triumph.

When you have an encounter with someone who's having a bad day, even when he or she doesn't express it, you get the wisdom and power and divine insight into the very core, into the depths of that person's heart when his or her outward appearance is showing you something totally different.

What is shown outwardly belies the storm that person encounters within. That person can be laughing and playing and filled with joy, on the outside, but inside, that person can be contemplating suicide.

The issues of life can be pounding on that person and pounding on him and pounding. But that person could be afraid that if he reaches out to someone and shares what's been eating away at his peace and threatening his very existence, the person (s) he reaches out to will pass judgment on him.

This is why it is important to have "a discerning heart," to operate in discernment. When one operates in discernment, that person, in essence, is listening to his intuition, or that gut feeling within, that warns him that something may be wrong with the person he is talking to.

According to statistics gathered by Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, or SAVE, an organization dedicated to suicide prevention, suicide is the 10th

leading cause of death here in the United States for all ages.

There is one death in this country by suicide every 12 minutes. Moreover, suicide claims the lives of some 44,965 Americans each year.

Depression, one of the noted causes of suicide, affects 20 percent to 25 percent of Americans ages 18 and up in any given year.

That said, we've got to really be prayerful that we sense when someone needs a compassionate hug or smile or encouraging word. Depression and hopelessness are real. But so is the aid God wants to render them through us.

Let's be ready to be God's hands here in this hurting world.

Donald Lee pastors Dallas-based Kingdom Living Christian Center. Follow Kingdom Living Christian Center on Facebook. He also is an author, freelance writer and editor and ghostwriter. Lee can be reached also at donaldjleespeaks@gmail.com or (225) 773-2248.

Church Announcements

Five Loaves and Two Fish Ministry to serve meals

The Five Loaves and Two Fish Ministry of Ruston will serve a free hot meal Thursday, May 1 at the St. Benedict Catholic Church, 471 Main St., Grambling. The meal will be served from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. or until the food is gone. The ministry can be followed on Facebook, www.5loaves2fishruston.prg to see when the next meal will be served.

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, Louisiana.

The four speakers for the conference are Dr. Rixie Thompson, Marilyn Gibson, Dr. Jeannett Jones and Dr. Latoya Houston. Evangelist Kathryn Hargrove will serve as mistress of ceremonies. The Women's Day speaker for Sunday, April 27 will be Debra Crowe. Rev. Donald Young is the pastor of the church. Please RSVP at 318-251-9640, 248- 796-1509 or 318-614-4726.

Mt. Comfort B.C. to hold three-night 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. Rev John Cole is the pastor of Mt. Comfort.

Pilgrim Rest to honor pastor for eight years of service

The Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church of Ruston will honor Pastor Brandon Crew for eight years of service Sunday, May 4 at 2:30 p.m. The church is located at 622 West Line Avenue in Ruston.

The special guest for the evening service will be Rev. Warren Johnson and the Galilee Baptist Church family of Hodge, Louisiana.

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 tun-

ing 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 ChurchofChristatGrambling@gmail.com or 318- 596-1038. The Church is located at 146 King St.

Naomi Ross honored

Naomi Ross will be honored at a special event themed "Women Adjust Your Crown., Sunday, April 27, at 2:30 p.m. at Hopewell Baptist Church, 7657 Fellowship Road, Dubach, Louisiana.

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 Downs ville
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. Ser-

vice 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.*

Arts & Culture

Twin sisters buy former plantation to preserve history and protect people in the Region

Staff Report

In the heart of Louisiana’s river-parish country, where the bayous twist through centuries of untold stories, identical twins, Jocynita "Jo" Banner and Joyceia "Joy" Banner, are reclaiming more than land—they’re reclaiming history. The sisters grew up steeped in the oral histories passed down from their grandmother Grace. Her voice, rich with memory, told of ancestors who were enslaved, who resisted, who survived. Now, standing on the very soil where those stories unfolded, Jo and Joy are determined to honor that legacy—not by burying the past, but by illuminating it.

Through their nonprofit, *The Descendants Project*, the Banners recently acquired Woodland Plantation—ground zero of one of the largest slave revolts in U.S. history in 1811. Hundreds of enslaved people, inspired by the Haitian Revolution, rose up and marched toward New Orleans in a bold bid for freedom. The rebellion was met with brutal force—many were killed, their heads mounted on pikes as a chilling warning.

It’s a history the sisters never found in their textbooks.

“I think about how many people don’t even know this happened,” said Joy. “That erasure isn’t accidental—it’s part of the design.”

This isn’t the first time the sisters have taken history into their own hands. Woodland is now the second plantation



Twin Sisters - Jo and Joy Banner

they’ve purchased—following Many Waters in Wallace, Louisiana, which serves as the headquarters for their organization. It’s a strategy they call “defensive buying”: acquiring historically significant sites before they fall into the hands of industrial developers or are sanitized for tourist appeal.

But their mission extends beyond preservation. The Banners are on the front lines of an environmental justice fight in what’s come to be known as Cancer Alley—an 85-mile stretch of the Mississippi River lined with nearly 200 petrochemical plants. The air is thick not only with pollution but with generational grief. According to the EPA, residents here face up to a 95% higher risk of developing cancer than the national aver-

age. Woodland sits squarely in the most toxic zone.

“We’re not just preserving culture,” said Jo. “We’re trying to keep our people alive.”

That urgency led the Banners to challenge a proposed \$800 million grain export facility by Greenfield Louisiana LLC. The company promised jobs and economic uplift—but the sisters saw the proposal for what it was: another industrial threat looming over a vulnerable, predominantly Black community.

Their legal battle began with a 2021 lawsuit seeking to overturn a 1990 zoning change that had reclassified residential land for industrial use. In 2023, they won—a court ruling declared the re-

zoning illegal. But the fight wasn’t over. Just months later, parish officials passed a new ordinance to pave the way for Greenfield’s project.

Then came a twist: in August 2024, Greenfield pulled out. After repeated permit delays by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the company scrapped its plans.

To some, it was a victory. To the sisters, it was a reminder that vigilance is constant.

“The danger,” Joy warned, “is that without knowing our history, people won’t understand why this fight matters—or why it keeps happening.”

For Jo and Joy, the Descendants Project is a counterweight to that amnesia. It’s a means of reconnecting people—especially Black Americans—with the land, with their ancestors, and with the truth.

"Your sense of place comes from knowing your history, and I think it has, you know, in many respects, been intentional that we, as African Americans, don't know our place, don't understand our contributions or don't know about our contributions. We feel like we have no ownership in it, right? And, so, I think it makes us really vulnerable," Joy Banner said.

"I think a lot of us as Black Americans, we walk around with this complex that we are a burden -- we should just be lucky to be here. We're [saying], 'No, you create this space. This space was created by your ancestors for you.'"

The 2025 ESSENCE Festival Returns to New Orleans July 4th – July 6th 2025

This Year’s Essence Festival Of Culture® Presented By Coca-Cola® Honors 55 Years Of Essence Magazine With Intention, Impact, And Unforgettable Around-The-Clock Cultural Moments

(Black PR Wire) NEW ORLEANS-Today, ESSENCE Communications, the esteemed publisher of ESSENCE Magazine—America’s leading lifestyle publication dedicated to Black women since 1970, proudly announces the highly anticipated return of the ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® to its forever home: New Orleans. The Festival will occur from Friday, July 4th, to Sunday, July 6th, 2025. Whether you're attending in person or tuning in virtually, one thing is sure: the wait is always worth it. From elevated daytime experiences at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center and a star-studded evening concert series lineup at the Caesars Superdome, this year’s Festival promises to be both intimate in experience and expansive in impact.

Evening performances will bring together legendary icons spanning across generations and rising icons poised to shape the future of entertainment. This year’s headliners include genre-defining

R&B quartet Boyz II Men, chart-topping global sensation Davido, New Orleans’ very own cultural architect Master P, and R&B icon Maxwell. They’ll be joined by reggae legend Buju Banton, beloved R&B singer and songwriter Donell Jones, Grammy Award-nominated superstar GloRilla, the legendary Rock and Roll Hall of Famers The Isley Brothers, multifaceted hitmaker Muni Long, lyrical legend Nas, soulful stand-out Summer Walker, and Songwriters Hall of Famer Jermaine Dupri presents “ESSENCE Flowers”—a special tribute to music titan Quincy Jones. Evening hosts for the Caesars Superdome stage include award-winning actor and comedian Anthony Anderson and cultural curator Kenny Burns.

This year’s ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® is the continuation of a story 55 years in the making. What started on a page now lives on the stage. What we’re building isn’t new. It’s who we’ve always been.

And the experience you’ll find this year in New Orleans didn’t just appear—it was Made Like This.

Since its inception, ESSENCE Magazine has been a lens through which Black culture is reflected, protected, and celebrated. Over the last three decades, the lens has expanded from the page to the stage, culminating in the ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola®. What began as an extension of the magazine’s mission has now grown into the nation’s largest event, centering Black artistry, self-expression, and leadership on a global scale. The Festival is a cultural archive, continuing to evolve with the community that has long supported its growth. Returning to an in-person format has generated nearly \$1 billion in economic impact, reinforcing its role as a space that equally invests in people and progress.

While the lights shine brightest at night, the heart of the ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® begins in the day. The daytime and evening experiences are not separate. They are in conversation. Together, they tell a story of intention, community, and creativity from curated experiences and moments created to reflect the culture’s depth, nuance, and brilliance. From ESSENCE Magazine’s beginnings as a print publication to its evolution into a multi-platform cultural force, the ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® continues to reflect that legacy of documenting culture and soundtracking eras.

In 2025, ESSENCE celebrates the 55th anniversary of ESSENCE Magazine with a weekend that reflects on where we’ve been while boldly looking ahead. The ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® will debut fresh experiences while welcoming back beloved staples, including the ESSENCE Food & Wine Festival™, BEAUTYCON™: @ESSENCEFEST Edition, AFROPUNK BLKTOPIA™, ESSENCE Film Festival® by ESSENCE STUDIOS™, ESSENCE Stage™, SOKO MRKT™ by ESSENCE®, ESSENCE Authors™, ESSENCE® GU® Kickback, and GBEF® HQ.

This year’s lineup includes former ESSENCE Magazine cover stars, Grammy Award-winning songwriter and R&B



legend Maxwell and Grammy-Nominated singer and songwriter Summer Walker. Performances from multifaceted singer and songwriter Muni Long, R&B icon Donell Jones, Grammy Award-winning lyricist Nas, and chart-topping global sensation Davido continue the Festival’s tradition of showcasing artists who have helped cement the Festival into a cultural cornerstone. Bringing more energy to the weekend, Grammy Award-winning reggae superstar Buju Banton and Grammy Award-nominated superstar GloRilla will make their ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® debuts.

Master P will take the ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® stage in his hometown of New Orleans. From building No Limit Records into a blueprint for independent success to shaping how the world views Southern rap, his performance is a full-circle moment to honor New Orleans’ musical legacy in the city that raised him.

The ESSENCE Festival of Culture® presented by Coca-Cola® will also celebrate the cherished legacy of Quincy Jones, a visionary whose influence transcends generations. Curated by Grammy Award-winning super producer Jermaine Dupri presents “ESSENCE Flowers”, the tribute will bring together artists who’ve sampled, studied, or shared space with Quincy, offering a once-in-a-lifetime moment that honors his cultural impact.

The 2025 ESSENCE Festival of Culture® is presented by Coca-Cola® with major partners AT&T, L’Oréal Groupe, and Target as the official retail partner. Attendees can secure their spot at daytime experiences directly on the E360 app, with access to special offers, personalized itineraries, and real-time updates on everything happening throughout Festival weekend.

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Sports

Grambling State Track and Field Athletes Deliver Electric Outing, Climb HBCU Rankings



GSU Track and Field Athlete in action.

By Aniyah D. Rivers
GSU Athletic Communications

NATCHITOCHES, La. | Grambling State University's track and field team delivered an electric performance at the Leon Johnson Invitational, recording multiple personal bests, season bests and new HBCU Top 100 marks for the 2025 season.

Josiah Joseph soared to a personal best of 7.02 meters in the long jump, earning him the No. 35 spot on the 2025 HBCU performance list. Shamyra Joiner also made her presence felt in the same event with a strong mark of 5.95 meters, finishing 40th overall.

Kayla Ford clocked a season-best 56.63 seconds in her event, earning the No. 42 spot on the 2025 HBCU list. Meanwhile, Kimora McLemore launched her way into the Top 10 HBCU rankings with a 35.20-meter throw in the discus.

Angel Sanders showed major growth this season, leaping 5.61 meters to earn a No. 22 HBCU ranking. In the triple jump, Marissa Tell landed at 11.98 meters, marking a Top 10 HBCU finish and continuing her

dominant form.

In the hurdles, Dakari Betts won the 110-meter hurdles, clocking a strong 14.53 seconds to solidify his position among the HBCU elite.

Sprinter CJ Guidry continued his breakout season, running a season-best 21.49 seconds in the 200 meters to earn the No. 69 HBCU ranking, with Savantez Phillips close behind at 21.66.

In the 400 meters, Quincy Chery ran a strong 48.17 seconds, earning the No. 45 spot, while Elijah Simmons posted 48.49.

Aubrey Hunter had a huge day, hitting a personal record of 47.89 meters in the javelin, launching himself to No. 15 on the HBCU list. Jalen Peel also threw discus, recording 44.30 meters.

High jumper Marcus Kennedy cleared 2.02 meters, continuing to show consistency in the field.

The highlight came in the men's 4x400-meter relay, where the team of Elijah Simmons, CJ Guidry, Jordon Greenwood and Quincy Chery delivered a season-best 3:13.54, ranking them No. 17 among HBCUs and No. 93 in NCAA Division I.



Mayor at Town Hall Meeting.

CITY from page 1

land that belongs to several of our citizens so we are hoping to get cooperation from those citizens. "I want to dispel any myths that might be rumors..." "We're not going to take your land. Your land is your land." But he said he's hoping to work with the landowners and work out the "particulars" in a way that will be a "win-win" for everyone.

Moving on, the Mayor talked about the success of the Request For Proposal (RFP) he sent out for a 10-Year Master Plan for the city. "We did have what we call a mandatory pre-bid conference on yesterday (April 16) and it was well attended. I think we had about eight companies that were interested in developing the master plan for the city of Grambling."

The Mayor said the idea of the master plan is about Identifying the areas that are ideal for economic development, ideal for recreation including recreation for the youth here in the city.

He touched upon one of the reasons why the Master plan is so important. "As the City goes for grant dollars, they want to know if there is a master plan in place. They want to know what your master plan is and is the funds that you are asking for a part of your master plan? They want to see what you're doing."

"And so", the Mayor went on, "We had a great opportunity yesterday. At least eight companies came out and we did a tour of the city. And we did give some information as to what we were looking for." The Mayor urged the citizens to go to the City of Grambling website to read up on the scope of work the Master plan will entail and offer suggestions if they have any to enhance the plan.

Other updates included:

The City of Grambling has signed an MOU with Grambling State University that will allow for more collaboration between the City and the University for getting things done.

The City recently received a donation from the City of Baton Rouge of a firetruck with a ladder.

New water meters will be installed soon throughout the town of Grambling.

Councilwoman Delores Smith announced that she has established a "Listening Post" the first Monday of every month at 12 noon at the City Hall for the citizens to come and say whatever they'd like to say about what's happening in the City and tell her whatever they want.

After that, the Mayor opened the floor to questions and answers from the audience.

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GSU Beats Alcorn.

GSU Breezes Past Alcorn State 22-7

By GSU Athletics

GRAMBLING, La. | For the second game in a row, the Grambling State University baseball eclipsed to the 20-run plateau, defeating Alcorn State 22-7 in seven innings on Friday night at Wilbert Ellis Field at R.W.E. Jones Park.

Just like in the series opener, GSU (17-19 overall, 12-5 SWAC) blasted three home runs in a 16-hit effort.

Terry Burrell III had one of his strongest performances of the season, going 3-for-5 with a double, a home run, seven RBI and two stolen bases.

In total, six Tigers racked up multi-hit games. Nyan Hayes went 2-for-6 with a triple and a home run. Trey Bridges, Cameron Hill, Chenar Brown, Shannon Martin all went 2-for-4. Bridges and Brown both drove in a pair of runs with Bridges adding a home run and Brown tacking on a double to his stat line. Martin picked up three RBI and hit a double.

GSU starter Randy Reyes (3-3) notched his second consecutive win after pitching 4.1 innings, surrendering five runs on fours, He struck out two and walked four.

Leading 3-0 in the bottom of the second, Hayes' solo homer extended GSU's lead to 4-0.

The Tigers opened a double-digit lead with a six-run four inning. An RBI double by Burrell began the fourth inning onslaught. With runners on second and third, Brown ripped a two-RBI double to make it a 7-0 game. After an RBI single by Marcelus, Martin helped GSU push its lead to 10-0 with an RBI single roped out the middle of the infield.

Alcorn State (5-28, 1-15 SWAC) tried to make it interesting in the fifth inning, shrinking Grambling State's lead to 10-5.

The G-Men responded with six runs in the bottom of the frame to take a 16-5 advantage. Bridges' two-run home run highlighted the GSU half of the fifth.

With Grambling ahead 19-6 in the sixth, Burrell smashed a mammoth three-run homer to left field to make it 22-6. ASU added one run in the top of the seventh but couldn't avoid the run-rule loss.

Jaylon Burrell led Alcorn State at the plate going 3-for-4 with a double, a home run and four RBI.

Jermel Ford (0-9) was charged with the loss for the Braves. Gave up 10 runs on eight hits. He struck out three and walked three.

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