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# THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

Volume 1, No. 19 Friday, June 27, 2025 • "Keeping Our Citizens Informed on the Issues That Matter" • Grambling, LA [www.GramblingConnection.com](http://www.GramblingConnection.com)



Exotic cars cruising in parade  
(Photo Credit: T. Valentino)

## GRAMBLING'S ANNUAL JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION WRAPS UP IN SPECTACULAR FASHION



Miss Juneteenth, Aubrey Champion  
(Photo by: T. Valentino)

**By Joice M. Dunn**

The 45th annual Juneteenth Heritage Festival was alive and well this year with several events that brought out the crowds. The parade held on Thursday, June 19, was a culmination of the week's activities and featured a colorful line up of exotic cars

from the car show held earlier in the week as well as featured Terry Lilly and Gary Dupree as grand marshals. Vendors and a Kids' Zone was set up along Main Street. The parade was followed by a health fair sponsored by the Epsilon Psi Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha.

See **Grambling's** Page 3



Bikers in Parade  
(Photo Credit: Stephanie Young)



Junior Miss Juneteenth, Evangeline Sha'Marie Rhodes  
(Photo by: T. Valentino)



Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Epsilon Psi Omega chapter, sponsors of Health Fair  
(Photo by: T. Valentino)

## Legislature Adjourns The 2025 Regular Session

**BATON ROUGE, La.** – The 2025 Regular Legislative Session has adjourned after adopting a balanced budget prioritizing significant infrastructure projects statewide (\$709M), teacher pay increases (\$199M), high-dose tutoring for students (\$30M), deferred maintenance for higher education (\$25M) and economic development initiatives (\$275M) to bring additional jobs and revenue to the state.

See **Legislature** Page 2



Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Epsilon Psi Omega Chapter of Grambling and Community Organizers pose for picture at tree planting event.

## Community unites at tree planting for a greener future

**By Joice M. Dunn**

With an aim of environmental stewardship and community spirit, residents, local orga-

nizations, and elected officials joined together for a large-scale tree-planting event to enhance green spaces and promote sustainability recently.

See **Community** Page 3

## Simsboro graduate receives HBCU Boosters scholarship

**By Joice M. Dunn**

**OMARION** Deshawn Rushing, graduate of Simsboro High School, was awarded a \$2500 scholarship from the local HBCU Boosters recently.

"There were a number of quality applicants for the scholarship, but Rushing was announced the winner," said Jim Maryland, president of the HBCU Boosters.

See **Simsboro** Page 3





OPINION

Celebrating Juneteenth: still confusing to some americans

By Timothy Welbeck

The United States’ newest federal holiday, celebrated annually on June 19, has quickly become its most puzzling one. Four years after President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, Americans have wrestled with what to make of the holiday.

What is Juneteenth? What is the proper way to celebrate it? Should holiday observers attend barbecues and cookouts? Should Juneteenth’s observance be a day of learning? Is there a way to acknowledge the holiday without misappropriating it?

This confusion likely emerged because many Americans did not even learn about Juneteenth until around when it became a federal holiday in 2021. Moreover, the Trump administration and state legislatures across the country have further complicated matters with their increased efforts to ban the type of education that led to the national recognition of the holiday in the first place.

‘All slaves are free’

Juneteenth – short for June Nineteenth – recognizes the day in 1865 when Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with roughly 2,000 federal troops from the 13th Army Corps. Upon arriving, Granger issued General Order No. 3. The order read:

“The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.”

Granger’s order effectively freed 250,000 enslaved people in the region.



Timothy Welbeck - Author

Though President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed the enslaved in all the states that had seceded from the U.S., nearly 2½ years earlier, Texas, a Confederate state, rebelled against it.

At the time, Texas had a minimal number of Union soldiers to enforce the proclamation’s emancipation of enslaved people residing within Confederate territory. Consequently, many of those enslaved in Texas remained ignorant of the proclamation’s potential impact on their lives, or of the fact the Civil War had functionally ended two months earlier.

In an interview published in 1941, for example, Laura Smalley of Hempstead, Texas, remembered how her enslaver fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. He returned without informing those whom he enslaved of their freedom. In her interview, she recounted,

“Old master didn’t tell, you know, they was free ... I think now they say they worked them, six months after that.”

‘Second Independence Day’

June 19, 1865, a Monday, changed that.

The news of emancipation culminated a generations-long struggle for Black people to obtain a modicum of freedom in the U.S.

For this reason, some refer to Juneteenth as the nation’s second Independence Day. The end of bondage was ostensibly codified in the 13th Amendment ratified later that year.

Legacies of slavery

While the holiday marked a joyous occasion for some, Juneteenth met early and persistent opposition, particularly in the time following Reconstruction.

For years, local report-



Activist and retired educator Opal Lee, 94, known as the Grandmother of Juneteenth, speaks with U.S. President Joe Biden after he signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law in the East Room of the White House on June 17, 2021, in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images)

ing spoke of Juneteenth, as the Galveston Historical Foundation put it, in a “flagrantly racist nature.” Additionally, the racist stereotyping – “idleness” – in the final sentence of Granger’s order simultaneously illustrated its complicated nature while also “[foreshadowing] that the fight for freedom would continue,” National Archives staffer Michael Davis wrote in 2020.

Historian Keisha Blain explains, “The enslavement of Black people in the U.S. may have ended but the legacies of slavery still shape every aspect of Black life.”

Advocates such as Opal Lee, commonly referred to as the “grandmother of Juneteenth,” pressed for Juneteenth celebration to continue and, ultimately, for it to be made a national holiday.

Lee began her advocacy in earnest during the mid-1970s in the Fort Worth, Texas, area. The oldest member of the National Juneteenth Observation Foundation, Lee spearheaded several campaigns to draw attention to Juneteenth. These campaigns included initiatives such as an online petition promoting the holiday’s observance launched in 2019 that amassed 1.6 million signatures.

In speaking on the significance of Juneteenth, Lee said, “Freedom is for everyone. I think freedom

should be celebrated from the 19th of June to the Fourth of July; however, none of us are free until we are all free. We are not free yet, and Juneteenth is a symbol of that.”

National recognition

Because of this advocacy, Juneteenth has grown from relatively obscure regional celebrations to, starting in 2021, a federal holiday.

The establishment of the holiday was the capstone of initiatives during the racial reckoning. Historians refer to the racial reckoning as the time period beginning in the summer of 2020 until the spring of the following year that witnessed heightened attention to America’s nagging history of racism.

This reckoning included the historic protests prompted by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

During this time, numerous institutions, ranging from colleges and universities to major companies, made commitments to racial equity. The recognition of Juneteenth represented a symbolic means to honor those commitments.

In remarks marking his signing of the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, Biden said, “Juneteenth marks both the long, hard night of slavery and subjugation, and

a promise of a brighter morning to come.”

Backtracking on gains

But within a year, some had already begun to argue the nation had, as community organizer Braxton Brewington wrote, “betrayed the spirit of Jubilee Day.”

Many of the racial equity commitments made during the racial reckoning quickly vanished within a year or two. Economist William Michael Cunningham revealed American companies pledged \$50 billion to racial equity efforts in 2020, yet had only spent \$250 million by 2021.

By the spring of 2025, companies such as Walmart and McDonald’s announced they will discontinue their diversity, equity and inclusion work. Moreover, Walmart will stop using the term altogether. Amazon, Meta and dozens of other large corporations made similar announcements.

And members of the Trump administration have mounted continual attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion policies and used the term as a politically expedient slur to deride Black people. This is also exacerbated by the Trump administration’s challenges to birthright citizenship, a key right that gave citizenship to the formerly enslaved and later guar-

anteed important rights to the entire populace.

This major shift has fueled arguments that the U.S. has regressed from efforts toward racial equity and thus undermined the meaning of Juneteenth. And such backtracking arguably makes some Juneteenth celebrations performative exercises rather than celebrations of true racial equity.

As one critic asked, has the holiday devolved “into an exploitative and profit-driven enterprise for companies that disregard the true significance of this day to the Black community?”

All of this has led to increasing confusion over how to commemorate Juneteenth, if at all. Juneteenth is not the first federal holiday with a complicated history. Nevertheless, with other complex holidays, Americans had years to process their misgivings. In short, the nation is still deciding what it means to be free.

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Timothy Welbeck is an assistant professor of instruction in the Department of Africology and African American Studies at Temple University. A civil rights attorney by training, he is a scholar of law, race, and cultural studies.

Legislature From Page 1

Focusing heavily on reforming the insurance industry in the state with a particular emphasis on excessive automobile rates, lawmakers were also able to pass a package of insurance reform bills including but not limited to: Allowing the Insurance Commissioner to declare auto insurance rates excessive (Act 11)

Banning drivers who are more than 51% at fault from collecting damages (Act 15)

Limiting recovery of damages for uninsured drivers (Act 16)

Preventing undocumented citizens from collecting damages after an accident (Act 17)

Requiring proof from those who sue that injuries occurred during the accident (Act 18)

Providing a 5% discount on insurance for commercial vehicles with dash cams (Act 19)

Additionally, House and Senate members adopted a number of bills authorizing tax exemptions/credits for fortified roofs, amending state ethics and campaign finance laws, and reorganizing several state agencies to improve efficiency and accountability (Dept. of Transportation, Department of

Natural Resources, Governor’s Office of Homeland Security, Dept. of Children and Family Services, Workforce Commission and Louisiana Economic Development).

In an effort to bolster energy production for the state and the nation, legislators reduced the severance tax on oil from 12.5% to 6.5% and seriously addressed decades of unanswered questions around legacy lawsuits making it more predictable for industry to do business in Louisiana.

“This is a culmination of a lot of hard work by our chairs and our members,” said Speak-

er of the House Phillip DeVillier. “Many of them have been working throughout the year to identify issues and priorities that can improve our state’s quality of life. They did their homework. They passed important legislation that will produce change in the years to come. This has been time well spent,” said DeVillier.

“The work of the Senate and the legislature as a whole this session has been to stack together a budget and laws that advance the state’s priorities,” said Senate President Cameron Henry.

“Tackling complex issues

like insurance reform, economic development advancement and workforce development takes commitment. Lawmakers passed some important bills and I look forward to seeing those priorities take off and flourish.”

For additional information on legislation passed during the 2025 Regular Session, the public can log onto www.legis.la.gov to search for bills and watch live streams of committee room and floor debate. Additionally the legislative mobile phone app, LALEGE, can be downloaded from the Apple Store or Google Play.

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# COMMUNITY

**Grambling's** From Page 1

Other events held earlier in the week included a Community Bible Study which was held Wednesday night at Christ Temple Baptist Church with Pastor Garnett Wagner. The annual Bake Off was held at Lewis Temple C.M.E church and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority held a Line Dance session at City Hall on Monday.

The festival featured a Scholarship Walk at the City Hall and a fishing

tournament on Saturday, June 14, at the recently stocked city park pond behind the Grambling Police Department.

The Car Show was held in the parking lot of the Whittaker Christian Center located at the corner of Main Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue also on Saturday.

The winners of the Miss Juneteenth pageant were Alaya Nichelle Casson, Little Miss Juneteenth, who attends J S Clark Magnet School in Mon-

roe; Evangeline Sha'Marie Rhodes, Junior Miss Juneteenth who attends Lincoln Preparatory School in Grambling and finally Miss Juneteenth. Aubrey Champion who attends Ruston High School.

"I think all the events were well attended. For many years it seemed as if things were dwindling, but they are much lively this year," said Jeffery Sims, president of the Greater Grambling Chamber and Juneteenth committee member.



Little Miss Juneteenth - Alaya Nichelle Casson  
(Photo by: T. Valentino)



Naturally Charming Universe was on hand as a Vendor at Health Fair

**Community** From Page 1

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Epsilon Psi Omega Chapter of Grambling in collaboration with Lincoln Preparatory School, State Rep. Rashid Young, Grambling Mayor Alvin Bradley, Jr., Lincoln Parish police jurors Greg Williams and Karen Ludley, Lincoln Parish School Board members Danielle Williams and David Ferguson, Greater Grambling Chamber of Com-

merce, and Jack & Jill of America, Inc. Louisiana Delta Chapter made the event a joint effort.

Volunteers of all ages gathered to plant a tree transforming the space into a budding symbol of ecological resilience and community pride.

"This event is more than just planting a tree" said Augustine Moore Chair of Enhance Our Environment Initiative of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. "It's about growing connec-

tions—with our environment, our neighbors, and the future of our city."

The initiative is part of a larger campaign to combat urban heat, improve air quality, and increase biodiversity. Many attendees said they felt empowered knowing their actions could have long-term environmental impact.

"As part of that initiative, we are to plant two trees. We were having a little trouble finding a place, so I contacted Coach Greg Wil-

liams, and he got us a spot at Lincoln Prep." Moore said the goal was to help make the landscape greener. Dr. Crystal Washington, Lincoln Prep executive director, welcomed the idea. "We're excited," Dr. Washington said. "There are learning opportunities for students because we already have a community garden. Plus, contributing to the environment is so important. And we are always excited when different com-

munity partners want to come in and assist with things like this."

Jeffrey Sims, president of the Greater Grambling Chamber of Commerce, said "Next year, when we do this, I hope it will be closer to Arbor Day and become a tradition. We are trying to support everything in the surrounding area. This is an awesome place, and it represents us. We want to be sure we keep the best part of that representation out front."

Moore indicated that

this is only the beginning of the project. While future plans include planting more trees, she said there will also be more student involvement and additional connections throughout the community.

"When communities come together, the roots of change grow deeper," she said.

The event concluded with refreshments, music, and a brief ceremony thanking the partners and volunteers who made the day possible.

**Simsboro** From Page 1

The members of the Boosters stood in support of their president and the awardee. The group agreed, "We can't give you a plan, but we'll give you support to carry out yours."

"To the HBCU Boosters, I want to say thank you. Your investment in students like me is a gift that changes lives. Your support affirms that we are seen, valued, and capable of achieving greatness," Rushing explained.

Throughout his years at Simsboro High School, Omarion has dedicated himself to academic excellence, leadership, service, and personal growth. Maintaining a GPA above 4.0 while actively taking part in a wide range of extracurricular activities.

He served as president of the Simsboro chapters of FBLA, National Ho-

nor Society, FFA, and Student Council. He was also a member of 4-H, the Simsboro choir, the boys' basketball team, the cheer team, track and field teams.

"All the things I that I have done were both a challenge and a blessing," said Omarion.

Outside the classroom, Rushing worked hard to serve others through community initiatives such as the hygiene drive and comfort closet—projects aimed at supporting students in need.

Omarion said, "My involvement with the Boys and Girls Club has been especially rewarding, allowing me to give back and inspire others, just as I've been inspired."

Omarion has chosen to attend Grambling State University, majoring in business management with a minor in graphic design.

Choosing to attend Grambling State University was both a heartfelt



Local HBCU Boosters present Omarion Deshawn Rushing with Scholarship check.

and intentional decision, according to Rushing.

"As a Historically Black University with a rich legacy of excellence, Grambling represents everything I value—tradition, resilience, pride, and Black excel-

lence. I believe GSU will not only provide me with the education I need, but also the environment and support system that will allow me to continue growing as a leader and visionary."

My ultimate goal is to

build and grow my inspirational clothing brand, Illuminous, which stands for "shining light in the darkness."

"I want my brand to reflect my personal mission: to uplift others, inspire confidence, and

make a meaningful impact on the world, especially in underserved communities," Rushing expressed.

He gave acknowledgements to those close to him, "To my family, especially my mother Sandra Rushing, thank you for your endless love, sacrifices, and belief in me. I wouldn't be where I am today without your guidance and strength."

Rushing said, "To my best friend and brother Lajayden Drake thank you for pushing me to be the best version of myself and for always being right by my side for every contest and event."

Omarion will step on the campus of GSU as a sophomore because of the advanced courses as a high school student.

"This next chapter is just the beginning, and I'm walking into it with gratitude, determination, and the light of purpose. The best is yet to come," said Rushing proudly.

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# COMMUNITY



Friends and family gather to help Copes celebrate his 85th birthday.

## Copes celebrate birthday with community

By Joice M. Dunn

Dr. Joe Lana Copes, an avid fisherman, reeled in his 85th birthday with community far and near. He was escorted into the Mt. Zion Baptist Church fellowship hall by his wife of 26 years, Carmen Copes, greeted by the words “Happy Birthday!”

The group, arranging from high school classmates to former co-workers, was welcomed by the youngest daughter. The fun began with a Trivia game and later Word Scramble related to Dr. Copes’s background.

Cheryl Ivory, a member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church and friend, casted out songs of praise during the birthday celebration.

The first to stand and send out happy birthday wishes was

Theron Dunn who had always held conversations with Copes, but discovered they were related. Joe Fisher, a longtime friend, remembered Copes as being a friend in times of need. The 96-year-old Fisher traveled a distance to make his presence known for the celebration.

Many in attendance, like Adrienne Gray, recalled Copes as one who went out of his way for others by encouraging and supporting them.

Elmira McCarty said she and Joe have a special relationship, where they taught each other about many things about life. Yolanda Wilson, a former Grambling co-worker, offered her birthday congratulations. Cathy Holmes Giles stood to say happy birthday to Dr. Copes and although her husband, Gregory, was in Mississippi, through a phone call sent birthday wishes.

To reel in the final catch, the grandchildren assisted by their mother, reminded “Pawpaw” what he meant to them.

Copes graduated from Woodson High School in Haynesville, Louisiana in 1958 as class president and valedictorian. He attended Grambling College (now Grambling State University) from 1958–1962 and graduated with honors majoring in social science education and a minor in English.

He taught for a year in Claiborne Parish at Hillcrest high school (Athens) and Mayfield high school. Copes began working at Bethune Jr./Sr. high school in 1963 where he taught language arts and social studies. He was nominated as Educator of the Year in 1964–1965; First Runner-Up for the distinction; taught Adult Education; sponsored the Bethune Debate Team who won both lo-

cal and state competitions.

He received a Master of Art from The University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS in 1969 in the area of Geographic Education. Copes began work at Grambling State University (GSU) in 1969 and taught Geography, then returned to graduate school at Clark University in Worcester, MA in 1970; earned a MA and Ph.D. in Geomorphology (Physical Geography) with a minor in Geographic Education.

Copes returned to Grambling State University in 1973 to serve as coordinator of geography for several years and earned a full professorship in 1975. He held several positions under President Raymond Hicks including Executive Assistant to the President, Interim Executive Vice-President, Director of Title III Programs and Interim Vice-President of

Academic Affairs. He received the Distinguished GSU Alumni Award and retired in 2006.

He’s married to Carmen J. Giles Copes and the father of daughters – Kourtney and Kelli. The highlights and joy of his retired days are five (5) grandchildren: Tristen, twin girls-Kamryn and Kori, and twin boys-Landon and Richard; sons: Herbert, Marvin and Antonio. His primary residence is Shreveport but also resides in Grambling.

Dr. Copes was previously married to the former Lula Brown Copes and they had one (1) son, Joey. Both are deceased.

The celebration was drawn to a close with a big thanks from Dr. Copes for all that cast love and laughter towards his 85 years. He said, “May the memories made on this day, be the biggest catch of all.”

## Announcements

### NAACP will hold monthly meeting on fourth Thursday

The Grambling Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) #6094B will host its Executive Board meeting at 5:30 p.m. and the regular monthly meeting on Thursday, June 26, at 6 p.m. in the City Hall, 127 King St., Grambling via teleconference.

Members and interested persons are encouraged to attend. 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. Make checks payable to Grambling Branch NAACP (#6094) and mail to P.O. Box 521, Grambling, LA 71245.

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

### Youth Council announces raffle winner

The Youth Council of the NAACP Grambling Branch announced the winner of the raffle of the handmade queen size quilt on Thursday, June 19. The winner of the quilt was CoCo Embry from Texas.

The quilt was valued at three hundred and fifty dollars (\$350.00) created by Hazel Hunter. The funds from this fundraiser will be used to finance the Youth’s educational, cultural and historical activities. Their next major activity approaching is a historical trip to Washington, D.C. or Montgomery, Alabama.

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

### NAMI Family support group holds meeting

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will hold a support group meeting Thursday, July 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 Aug. 21 and Sept. 18. The meetings will continue to be held October 16 and November 20. The next meeting will be held December 18.

Anyone at least 18 years old may RSVP to jjones79aka@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.

### 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, June 30. For additional information please contact Collins at 832- 891-7488 or WWW.REALLYGREATSITE.COM

### GSU Football Nutritional Program seeks help

Looking for donations from committed and supportive friends of the Grambling State University (GSU) Football Coach Mickey Joseph and the GSU Football Nutritional Program. Any donors, (GSU Football Alumni, GSU Graduates, Sororities, Fraternities, Social Service Groups, Churches, or Local Businesses are asked to donate by Tuesday, July 15.

At This Time All Donations are being made to: HBCU Boosters, Earmarked for the GSU Nutritional Program. Checks or Money Orders should be mailed to: P. O. Box 82, Grambling, La. 71245.

This program participants Are Volunteers To Support GSU Football Nutritional Program.

The HBCU Boosters will hold all Funds in its account for future disbursement. Please help Coach Mickey Joseph’s GSU Nutritional Program, said Jim “Bear” Maryland, acting coordinator.

### 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 the 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 Has Started ‘Listening Post’ for Grambling citizens

Grambling City Councilwoman De-lores Smith/Mayor Pro tem is available on the first Monday of each month, noon at Grambling’s City Hall for what she calls a “Listening Post.” Smith is available 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.

### Grambling Community Garden seek volunteers

Volunteers are needed for the Grambling Community Garden. If you are interested in lending a hand, contact De-Varia Ponton, master gardener.

Volunteer work includes planting new crops, pruning, weeding, assembling raised beds and mulching. The group also paint benches for people to sit when they visit the garden. The garden is managed by Grow Grambling, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Ponton has the ability to grant volunteers hours and service-learning hours. Volunteers may contact Ponton at 318-278-9892.

### ‘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.

### Lewis family search for descendants before reunion

The Phillip Lewis, Sr. and Julia Lewis Family Reunion will be held August 29-31. The family is looking for descendants of Phillip Jr., Ann; Jimmy; Rena; Crawford; Harmon; Oliver; Dock; Israel; Samantha and Penny.

For more information contact Cherylon Lewis Green, 318-773-0954 or Evelyn Lewis Cooper, 318-278-3150. EMAIL: LEWISREUNION@YAHOO.COM, FACEBOOK: HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PROFILE.PHP?

ID=61565651522368. The family moto: “ONE TREE, ONE FAMILY ... WE ARE ONE” PSALM 133:1.

### 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.

### Wilbert Ellis Baseball camp, coming soon

The 15th annual Wilbert Ellis Baseball camp will take place on Saturday, July 26, at Fraser Field, 1701 Martin Luther King Dr., Ruston.

The camp includes boys and girls from four to 15 years old. For additional information please contact Brenda Dupree 901-210-2137 or Ray Lyons 318-607-7407.



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# In Remembrance

## Remembering ‘Colonel’ Thomas Ewing Collier

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Ewing Labron Collier was born April 19, 1946, in Peakland, Tennessee to James Clifford Collier and Anna Lee Collier, who grew up with a thirst for knowledge, spirituality, and integrity.

He graduated as a valedictorian from J. L. Cooke High School, class of 1965, in Athens, TN. He departed this life on Father’s Day, Sunday, June 15, surrounded by his loving family. He was an active Deacon at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Grambling, Louisiana.

In June 1969, he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Building Construction from Tuskegee Institute. He was famous for saying “T.I. till the day I die.” His actions reflected the esteem he held for his alma mater as he was a consistently generous donor to Tuskegee University and was a Presidential Eminent Associate, a giving program set up in 1965.

In 1969, Collier was commissioned in the United States Air Force through Air Force ROTC Detachment 015. In 1977, he received a Master of Science in Education from Eastern Illinois University near Chanute Air Force Base. He spent 22 dynamic years in service to the United States of America and served during the Vietnam War. He received countless military honors. Once he retired from the Air Force, he worked for several HBCUs including Talladega

College, Southern University New Orleans, and the beloved Grambling State University.

Ewing was committed to giving back to the communities that shaped him and he believed deeply in social justice. A lifetime member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated, he pledged at Tuskegee Institute in 1967. He was the financial secretary of his alumni chapter in Grambling, Louisiana. He was also a 33rd degree Mason with the Evangelist Prince Hall Masonic Lodge of Grambling.

On April 6, 2024, he married his beloved wife, Rita Hood Collier. Prior to this union, he was married to Carolyn Douglass Collier for over twenty years. She preceded him in death in 2020. In 1968, he married his college sweetheart, Gwendolyn Slayton Collier. Together, they had three children, Dr. Rhonda Collier, Bruce Collier and Timothy Collier. He was also a beloved father of several bonus children including Tiffani B. James Smith (Kori), Brandon James (Kameka), Delvin Boatner, Dennard (Chasity), Donovan X (Brittney) and William Kometa (Lesley). He had two forever daughters-in-law Kameha Collier and Rachel Collier.

He is survived by his devoted siblings, Cynthia Collier Bowen, Tabitha Collier Cox (Ronald), Karen Collier-Walker, Deirdre Siler (Stewart), Christopher Stone, Terrence Collier, and Sandra Collier-Sheets. He is also sur-



Thomas Ewing Collier

vived by his stepmother, Sallie Mae Collier, who lives in Harman, Tennessee.

Ewing Collier loved his children, but he absolutely adored his grandchildren: Evan Collier, Erin Collier, Bruce Collier Junior, Benjamin Collier, Janay Collier and Jalen Collier. He doted on his bonus grandchildren including Kori Addison Smith, Harper James, Zariel Turner, Zaila Turner, D’Sani Walker, Darrell Boatner, D’Laya Wright, D’Layni Boatner, D’Aliyah Boatner, Daisy Boatner, Dylan Kometa, and Dior Kometa. He is also survived by his brother-in-law and sisters-in-law including Glinda Powers, Dannie Wallace, Marlene Jolla (Leon) of Baton Rouge, and Adrian Joseph (Gary) of Port Allen. He had a host of spe-

cial nieces and nephews including Melanie Eskridge and Antonia Brown of Rockwood, Tennessee.

The Collier family would like to thank Mount Zion Baptist Church, Baton Rouge General Hospital, St. Francis Hospital Monroe, Our Lady of the Lake Medical Center, and St. Joseph Hospice-The Carpenter’s House.

Memorial services set for June 27, 2025

A memorial service and military honors will be provided for Retired Lt. Colonel Ewing L. Collier at 11a.m. at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Grambling, June 27, at 11 a.m. at 2586 LA-150, Grambling, LA 71245.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to Tuskegee University in memory of Ewing L. Collier. Send to:

Division of Development and Alumni Engagement, Tuskegee University, PO Box 1304, Tuskegee Institute, AL 36087

Place in memoriam of: LTC Ewing L. Collier

Visit <https://www.tuskegee.edu/support-tu/give>

1. In the Designation section select “TU Global Office Fund” (Study Abroad).
2. Next go to the Tribute section and select the box for (honor, memory, support)-select memory.
3. After checking the box select “In Memory” from the drop down you will be prompted to enter the name- LTC Ewing L. Collier.

### CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Men’s Fellowship group to celebrate Jesus

The area Men’s Fellowship group will meet every second Monday of each month at the Memorial Funeral Home in Arcadia, Louisiana, located on 128680 LA-9 71001 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. The men only group gathers for strength, courage and knowledge and the next session is scheduled for July 14.

The meeting is spearheaded by Patrick Jefferson, former state representative, along with invited speakers. Every man is invited to come and worship.

#### 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 ChurchofChristatGrambling@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](mailto: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 Baptist Church**, 7349 Hwy 80, Ruston  
**Church of Restoration**, 285 Main St., Grambling  
**Cook Baptist Church**, 2000 Cooktown Rd, Ruston  
**Corinth**, 4327 Hw 545, Dubach  
**Countyline Baptist Church**, 7426 Hwy. 146, Ruston  
**Dayspring Baptist Ministries**, 3191 South Vienna St, Ruston  
**Emmanuel**, 1200 Farmerville Hwy., Ruston  
**Fellowship**, 6476 Hwy 151, Dubach  
**Fellowship**, 1572 Highway 507 South, Simsboro  
**First**, 117 Oak St., Choudrant - One block south of Hwy. 80 in Choudrant  
**First**, Hico St., Dubach  
**First**, 200 S. Trenton St., Ruston  
**First**, Simsboro  
**Friendship Baptist Church**, 143 West Sixth Street, Bernice  
**Grace Baptist Church** 2808 Trenton Ave., Ruston  
**Grace Bible Baptist Church**, 216 Rough Edge Rd., Ruston  
**Greater Pleasant Grove**, 1270 Golf Course Rd., Unionville  
**Greater St. Luke**, 163 St. Luke Church Rd, Arcadia  
**Gumspring Missionary Baptist Church**, 3117 Hwy 151, Farmerville  
**Hico**, 653 Hwy. 152, Dubach  
**Hopewell**, 7657 Fellowship Rd., Hwy 151, Dubach  
**Lane Chapel**, 1016 McAllister, Ruston  
**Lanes Chapel Missionary**, Hwy. 151 Downsville  
**Liberty Hill Missionary**, Simsboro Longstraw Baptist, 1799 Styles, Ranch Rd.,  
**Choudrant Love Chapel Baptist Church**, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston  
**Macedonia No.1 Missionary**, Rt. 2, Dubach  
**Macedonia No. 2**, 489 E. Sibley Rd., Choudrant  
**Mineral Springs**, 4599 Hwy 822, Dubach  
**Mount Harmony**, 210 Mt. Harmony Church Rd, Ruston  
**Mount Calm**, 566 Mount Calm Rd., Simsboro  
**Mount Olive**, Grambling  
**Mount Olive Outreach**, 2817 S. Ser-

vice Road W., Ruston  
**Mount Pisgah**, Hwy. 3061, Ruston  
**Mount Sinai**, 2269 Hwy. 145, Choudrant  
**Mount Vernon Missionary**, 1356 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach  
**Mount Zion**, 2586 Hwy 150., Grambling  
**Mount Zion No. 2**, 113 California Plant Road, Dubach  
**New Hope**, Choudrant  
**New Hope**, 302 W. Vaughn, Ruston  
**New Liberty Hill**, Hwy. 544, Simsboro  
**New Pilgrim Rest**, Inc., 2697 Elm St., Arcadia  
**New Prospect**, 3438 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach  
**New Prosperity Baptist**, 1378 Prosperity Church, Clay  
**New Rocky Valley**, 2155 Martin Luther King Ave., Grambling  
**Northview Missionary**, Highway 33, Ruston  
**Olive Grove**, 3138 Olive Grove Rd, Choudrant  
**Pilgrim Rest**, 622 W. Line Ave., Ruston  
**Pine Grove**, 470 Chandler Rd., Ruston  
**Pleasant Grove**, 1366 Pleasant Grove Road, Choudrant  
**Pleasant Grove**, “The Oasis in the Woods”, 446 Bowden Rd., Ruston  
**Pleasant Hill Baptist Church**, 1127 Mondy Rd, Simsboro  
**Rock Corner & Garden of Prayer**, 824 Rock Corner Rd, Dubach, off Hwy. 33, 14 miles north of Ruston  
**Rocky Valley**, Simsboro  
**Solid Rock Baptist Church**, 1511 West California Hwy 80, Ruston  
**Southside**, 3191 South Vienna St., Ruston  
**Springhill**, 727 Dicks Store Rd., Ruston  
**St. David**, Vienna.  
**St. John**, Old Grambling Rd., Ruston.  
**St. Mary**, 1114 Larson St., Ruston.  
**St. Peter**, 404 Longstraw Rd., Ruston  
**St. Rest**, 09 Walker Rd., Choudrant  
**St. Rest**, Hwy. 146 West, Dubach  
**Temple**, 1515 S. Service Rd. W. Ruston  
**True Believers Baptist Church**, 184 CCC Road, Ruston  
**The Springs**, (A ministry of Temple Baptist Church) 1601 S. Barnett Springs Ave., Ruston  
**The Springs.life The Word**, 504 S. Main St., Grambling University - 2856 W. California,  
**Ruston Vernon Baptist Church**, 190 Vernon-Eros Road, Ruston  
**Woods Chapel**, 326 Hwy 454, Ruston  
**Zion Hill**, 505 Lee St., Ruston  
**Zion Traveler**, 1201 Martin Luther King Dr, Ruston

### CATHOLIC

**St. Benedict**, 471 Main St., Grambling  
**St. Thomas Aquinas**, 810 Carey Avenue, Ruston

### CHURCH OF CHRIST

**Church of Christ**, 2902 Hwy. 80 West, Ruston  
**Grambling**, 146 King St., Grambling  
**Northside**. 1804 N. Trenton St., Ruston  
**Orleans Cir. Church of Christ**, 2103 Orleans Cir., Ruston  
**Ruston**, 2300 W. Woodward Ave., Ruston, [www.rustonchurchofchrist.org](http://www.rustonchurchofchrist.org)

### EPISCOPAL

**Church of the Redeemer**, 504 Tech Dr., Ruston  
**St. Luke’s**, 538 Main St., Grambling

### METHODIST CHURCHES

**Ansley Union Church**, 328 Ansley Rd, Ruston, located 10 miles south of Ruston off Hwy 167  
**Antioch UMC**, Simsboro  
**Arcadia First UMC**, Arcadia  
**Choudrant UMC**, 125 Pecan St., Choudrant  
**Dubach UMC**, Dubach  
**First UMC**, Arcadia  
**Grace**, 3401 N. Trenton St., Ruston  
**Lewis Temple CME**, Main St., Grambling  
**Mays Chapel CME**, 615 W. Line Ave., Ruston  
**Memorial UMC**, 9325 Hwy 80, Simsboro.  
**Mt. Mariah UMC - Salem UMC** - 11793 Hwy. 151, Dubach  
**St. Peter AME**, 1104 Arlington St., Ruston.  
**Trinity Methodist**, 1000 Woodward Ave., Ruston  
**Wesley Chapel Methodist Church**, 4330 Hwy. 818, Ruston

### PENTECOSTAL

**Anchor Tabernacle**, Exit 93 from I-20 then South 1/2 mile, Choudrant  
**First Pentecostal**, Corner of Kentucky and Goodwin  
**Ruston King’s Court UPC**, 2401 S. Service Rd. West, Ruston  
**LifePoint Church of Ruston**, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston. [lifepointruston.com](http://lifepointruston.com)  
**The Pentecostals of Ruston**, 2851 Hwy 33 North, Ruston  
**Power House Temple of Christ Apostolic**, 101 Main St., Grambling  
**United Pentecostal**, Dubach Zion Temple Apostolic Faith Deliverance – Eastern Hills, off Beacon Light Rd., Ruston  
**Voice of Revival Ministry** - 304 W. California St., Ruston

### PRESBYTERIAN

**Alabama (USA)**, 2091 Hwy 145, Choudrant  
**Covenant Reformed**, 2106 Cooktown Rd., Ruston

**Greenwood**, Lincoln Parish Rd. 181, between Mitcham’s & Hwy. 146, Ruston  
**Ruston (USA)**, 212 N. Bonner St.

### OTHERS

**Abundant Grace Tabernacle**, 3092 Hwy 556, Choudrant  
**Campus Community Worship Center**, 1000 Saratoga St., Ruston  
**Christian L.I.F.E. Church**, 107 Love Ave., Ruston  
**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**, 205 Woodhaven Rd., Ruston  
**Church of the Living God**, 1438 Hwy. 167 W., Dubach  
**Church of the Nazarene**, 1101 Center St., Ruston  
**Douglas Church**, 1642 Hwy 821, Ruston  
**Dubach Church of God in Christ**, 256 Voss Street, Dubach  
**Faith Church**, 1507 Goodwin Road, Ruston  
**Focus Christian Ministries**, Martin Luther King Community Center, 901 Martin Luther King Dr., Ruston  
**Fountain of Praise United Worship Center**, 1394 Hazel St., Arcadia  
**The Gospel**, 108 Sanctuary Rd, Ruston  
**Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church**, 2508 Kavanaugh Road, Ruston  
**Impact Worship Center**, Greenwood Recreation Center, 1306 Cornell Ave, Ruston  
**Ruston Housing Authority Building 901**, Martin Luther King Dr. Ruston.  
**Lifechurch.LA**, 3000 S. Vienna St., Ruston  
**LifePoint Church of Ruston**, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston  
**Living Water Full Gospel Church**, 149 Fairgrounds Rd., Ruston  
**Miracle Temple COGIC**, 1405 S. Farmerville, Ruston  
**New Living Word Ministry**, 1900 Barnett Springs Rd. Ruston  
**New Testament Church at Grambling Inc.**, 508 Main St., Grambling  
**Praise Temple**, Ramada Inn, 107 Love Ave., Ruston  
**St. Paul Lutheran**, 504 Tech Drive, Ruston  
**The Bridge Community Church**, North Campus, 2301 N. Trenton, Ruston  
**Triumph The Church and Kingdom of God in Christ**, Hwy. 3061 E. Tenn. Rd., Ruston  
**United Faith Tabernacle Ministries & Prayer Center**, 303 Cherry St., Bernice,  
**Upon the Rock Outreach Center**, 513 E. Texas Ave., Ruston

*If you would like to have your church information listed, please email the Grambling Connection at [gramblingconnection@gmail.com](mailto:gramblingconnection@gmail.com)*





# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## CHARMING'S CORNER

# “It Ain’t Just Weight—It’s What You’re Carryin”

By Charming Davis

Naturally Charming Universe  
Holistic Wellness Center

Now listen, honey—I want to talk to you real soft and real honest, like a southern auntie who loves you too much to let you keep sufferin’. ‘Cause if you’ve been strugglin’ with weight—gainin’ it, losin’ it, gainin’ it again—I want you to know this: it’s not just physical. A lot of that weight? It’s spiritual. It’s emotional. It’s energetic. And it’s time to lay it down.

I know because I’ve lived it. I’ve dropped 60 to 70 pounds—more than once. And each time life hit me hard, I turned back to what was quick, what was easy, what comforted me. And just like that, the inflammation, the fatigue, and the extra pounds crept back in. My body was holdin’ the grief, the stress, the spiritual burdens I never really released. That’s when I realized: the scale doesn’t just measure food—it measures energy.

### What Is Spiritual Weight?

Spiritual weight is the heaviness we carry from years of trauma, heartbreak, disappointments, unspoken pain, generational burdens, and even past life wounds. Sometimes it ain’t even your weight—it’s what’s been passed to you through your bloodline or absorbed from your environment. It shows up as:

- Chronic fatigue
- Emotional eating
- Inflammation
- Low self-worth
- Cycles of self-sabotage
- Holding on to pain in the body (especially belly, hips, and heart space)

This is what I call spiritual bondage—and honey, it’s time to break free.

### How Do We Begin to Release It?

First thing: we get honest. Then we get intentional. Healing is a full-body, full-spirit journey. And here’s how we start:

Spiritual + Herbal Cleansing: At Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center, I offer powerful detox and spiritual clearing herbs like dandelion root, burdock root, ginger, red clover, and peppermint to cleanse the liver, reduce inflammation, and move stuck energy from the body. You can sip them in teas or take them as tinctures—al-

ways with prayer and intention.

Energy Healing + Spiritual Work: Whether it’s Reiki, chakra clearing, intuitive readings, or custom rituals, I help you locate where the weight is stuck—in the womb, the heart, the mind—and we work together to release it. Energy healing helps remove emotional blocks that contribute to physical weight and disease.

Lifestyle Shifts That Align the Body and Spirit

Here’s a list I live by, and I recommend to my clients:

- Sunlight – Get your light, honey. It wakes up your soul.
- Time in Nature – Trees, grass, water... nature grounds you.
- Meditation and Breathwork – Clears the mind, opens the heart.
- Exercise – Even just dancing in your living room helps move stagnant energy.
- Affirmations – Speak life into yourself. You deserve to hear your own voice say, “I love you.”
- Whole Nutrition – Real food that loves your body back.
- Spiritual Baths and Herbal Soaks – These release the old and make room for the new.

### Honey, You Are Not Alone

Yo-yo dieting, emotional eating, the shame, the anger, the self-judgment—I’ve been there. And what I learned is this: when you truly love yourself, you stop feeding yourself pain. And when you start releasing what’s not yours to carry, your body will thank you.

Let me help you. Come see me at Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center, right here at 311 Main Street in Grambling, Louisiana 71245. We’ve got healing sessions, organic herbs, detox kits, spiritual guidance, and more. And if you ain’t nearby, that’s alright—book a phone consultation today. We’ll talk, we’ll pray, and we’ll map out your healing journey together.

You are worthy of a life that feels light, joyful, and free. Let’s stop the cycle. Let’s stop shrinking ourselves emotionally while our bodies carry the proof of our pain. It’s time to value ourselves, care for ourselves, and know that with deep self-love, everything else falls into place.

We got this, honey. Let’s heal—for real this time.

- Business Hours
- Monday–Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Saturday: 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

- Phone Number
- (318) 789-5393



Charming Davis



Tiana Jones, PGA, gives putting instructions to PGA WORKS participants during the PGA WORKS Beyond The Green clinic at the Home of the PGA of America at PGA Frisco on Monday, June 16, 2025 in Frisco, Texas.

# Minority Students Attend PGA WORKS Beyond the Green at 71st KPMG Women’s PGA Championship

By Black Press of America

FRISCO, TEXAS – As the best women golfers in the world prepare for the 2025 KPMG Women’s PGA Championship at Fields Ranch East at PGA Frisco, high school students from the area experienced PGA WORKS Beyond the Green recently at the Home of the PGA of America. This career-exploration event, hosted at select PGA of America Championships, is designed to educate, inspire, and provide students from historically underserved backgrounds with access to industry leaders, executives, and influencers to pursue careers in the business of golf and beyond.

Young women from organizations local to the area near PGA of America such as Fore Frisco, Black Sports Professionals of North Texas, University of North Texas, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Collin County Alumni Chapter, Black Sports Professionals of North Texas, and The Links Incorporated gathered to learn from inspiring female leaders and PGA of America leadership about careers in and around the world of golf. This experience equipped attendees with new curiosity and valuable tools for personal and professional success. PGA of America President and Master Professional Don Rea Jr. kicked off the morning with an inspiring welcome message.

“There are so many doors you can go through in the golf industry, and today is exciting because you are going to get the keys to those doors,” said Rea, PGA Owner/Operator of Augusta Ranch Golf Club in Mesa, Arizona. “The golf industry is a \$102 billion industry, which means there are opportunities for you to have the career that you want to have around golf and to choose the life that you want to live.” Participants then got hands-on experience through a golf clinic from PGA of America Golf Professionals to learn the fundamentals of the game and a panel discussion led by hosts Addie Parker, Travel and Lifestyle Editor for Sk-ratch, and Coach Shayain, LPGA Certified Golf Instructor & Entrepreneur.

“If you’re in the room, you belong in the room,” said Meyer-Shipp during the panel. “You need to own it. You belong there so embrace it and embrace that power.”

Following the panel discussion, students were allowed to talk to the panelists and additional leaders within the community through a Lunch & Learn, where they had direct access to an experienced leader, such as PGA of America Chief People Officer Sandy Cross, to

ask questions and receive advice.

“This experience made me realize how inclusive golf has become and how diverse it’s getting,” said Gabby Pippins, Student/Sports Content Coordinator at the University of North Texas and a member of Black Sports Professionals of North Texas. “I got a lot of tips from people in the profession and things that I could apply to what I’m doing right now in college and what I plan to do in the future.”

To end the day, participants toured the Home of the PGA of America and the KPMG Women’s PGA Championship grounds, learning about media operations, the volunteer efforts surrounding the championship, and more.

PGA WORKS is a strategic initiative within the PGA of America REACH Foundation, the 501(c)(3) foundation of the PGA of America, committed to making golf look more like America through on-course and off-course opportunities.

## About PGA of America REACH Foundation

The PGA of America REACH Foundation is the 501(c)(3) charitable foundation of the PGA of America. The mission of the Foundation is to positively impact the lives of youth, military, and diverse populations by enabling access to PGA of America Golf Professionals, PGA Sections, and the game of golf. For more information on the PGA of America REACH Foundation, visit PGAREACH.org, follow @PGAREACH on Instagram, X and find us on Facebook.

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# ARTS & CULTURE



LIBERATION STORIES OFFERS A BLUEPRINT FOR RESISTANCE  
IN A TIME OF RISING AUTHORITARIANISM: BOOK REVIEW

## New Anthology Centers Narrative Power as a Tool for Social Movements

As book bans rise, protestors face criminal charges, and authoritarian ideologies inch closer to the mainstream, *Liberation Stories: Building Narrative Power for 21st-Century Social Movements* arrives at a critical time. This new anthology is both a call to action and a practical resource for organizers, storytellers, and movement leaders who are shaping the future in the face of escalating political violence and disinformation.

The anthology was released June 17, 2025, and is already being hailed as a must-read for those fighting for justice.

“In a moment where so much of the public discourse is about the chaos and confusion being unleashed, amplifying the narrative interventions that have worked and are working is critical,” said Tarana Burke, author, organizer, and founder of the me too. Movement. “It’s exciting to add *Liberation Stories* to the canon of knowledge-building materials necessary to keep our work alive.”

Edited by narrative strategists Shanelle Matthews and Marzena Zukowska, *Liberation Stories* brings together a powerful range of voices from across movements—Black liberation, immigrant rights, Trans liberation, climate justice, and more—to explore how storytelling has shaped the course of activism and how it can be wielded more intentionally moving forward.

“When we narrate the story of social movements, too often we focus on the handful of leaders in the spotlight,” said Marzena Zukowska, co-editor of *Liberation Stories*. “*Liberation Stories* pulls back the curtain and shares the behind-the-scenes stories of the cultural workers, artists, researchers, organizers and communicators, who make us believe that a different world is possible.”

Far more than a collection of essays, *Liberation Stories* functions as a practical guide. The anthology offers actionable case studies, tested narrative frameworks, and insights into how movements can shift public perception, policy, and culture by building narrative infrastructure that lasts. It is a resource grounded in lived experience, crafted for those on the frontlines of change.

“We are in an ideological contest for the future,” said Shanelle Matthews, co-editor of *Liberation Stories*. “The right has a story—and it’s winning hearts. If we don’t offer a vision rooted in dignity, joy, and material justice, we leave the door open to fear-based politics.”

As movements continue to respond to disinformation, backlash, and political violence, *Liberation Stories* provides inspiration and instruction in equal measure. For journalists, educators, cultural workers, and grassroots leaders, it is a tool to help reclaim narrative power and build the futures we deserve.



## Theatre Arts at Grambling State receives NAST accreditation, revises department name

By GSU Office of Strategic Communications

A famous quote of George Bernard Shaw was that “progress is impossible without change.”

And to continue marking progress, name changes are in store for what has been known as Grambling State University’s Department of Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) and its Bachelor of Visual and Performing Arts degree.

Those changes were recommended by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), which reviewed and recently accredited what had been called Grambling State’s Bachelor of Visual and Performing Arts undergraduate degree program.

That accreditation runs through the 2030-31 academic year, the next scheduled NAST review year for GSU.

The department will now be known as the Department of Theatre Arts, offering a Bachelor’s of Theatre degree.

“This was all predicated by the department’s and the university’s response to NAST requirements to update our curriculum offerings and bring them more in line with what was actually being offered in the department,” said department head Rodrecas Davis.

While technically already in place during summer registration, those changes become official for the Fall 2025 semester.

“There’s a little bit of substantive change in regard to the curricula itself, but primarily there’s no difference in the core,” Davis said.



vis said. “Students will still have access to all the same classes, just in a different configuration that gives more options to electives students can take, so there’s some flexibility that’s added there that wasn’t previously available.”

GSU Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Connie Walton said the degree name change was also made at the request of NAST.

“Students who were under the old curriculum will have five years to complete that program and everyone coming in the fall will automatically be under the umbrella of the Degree of Theatre under the Department of Theatre Arts. It will have the same concentrations that have been previously present in the department — dance, theatre, or visual arts.”

Davis remembered the Theatre program’s past as he looks toward its future.

“The reaffirmation of the Theatre program by the National Association of Schools of The-

atre (NAST) reflects the Department of Visual and Performing Arts and Grambling’s commitment to providing undergraduates with access to a rigorous program of study,” Davis said. “This achievement is a vote of confidence by our peers and colleagues in academia and a testament to our nurturing of the seeds sown by Dr. Allen Williams and Dr. Floyd L. Sandle.”

Graduating senior Reygan Mullins, who received her Bachelor’s of Theatre degree during Spring Commencement Exercises in May, said she’s pleased to be moving on to her next phase of life knowing that the Theatre program will continue training students to showcase their talents on stages across the country and throughout the world.

“A lot of underserved people don’t get the opportunity to go to college and participate in a theatre, much less one as nice as ours,” Mullins said. “To know that it is also a fully accredited program is just that much more to brag about.”

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# EVENTS

## More Photos From Juneteenth Activities



Parade car  
(Photo by: Stephanie Young)



Kids enjoying ride in Kids Zone



Parade car  
(Photo by: Stephanie Young)



Onlookers enjoy Parade  
(Photo by: Stephanie Young)



GSU Ball Players Pose at Car Show  
(Photo by: Stephanie Young)

# Classifieds

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### ~JOB ANNOUNCEMENT~

Lincoln Total Community Action, Inc. is accepting applications to fill positions listed until Friday, June 27, 2025. Persons may apply at – Lincoln Head Start Center, 421 W. Vaughn Avenue, Ruston, LA between the hours of 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM. Applicants must clear a criminal background check, and provide a resume with application (Teacher and Assistant only). Positions include:

Teacher –BS Degree in Child Development, Early Childhood Education, or related field and experience in working with pre-school children.

Assistant Teacher – Associate Degree in Child Development, or at a minimum a CDA certification.

Bus Attendant(PT) - High school diploma or equivalent. Physically able to get on and off bus.

Full-time positions are 35 hours week with fringe benefits (Health insurance, Dental, and Life insurance).

For additional information, contact 318.255.5401 or 255.2319.

The Agency is an Equal Opportunity Employer