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THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

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World Famed Tiger Marching Band to Lead 57th African American Day Parade in Harlem

GRAMBLING, La. — Grambling State University's World Famed Tiger Marching Band will return to Harlem this fall to lead the 57th African American Day Parade on Sunday, September 20, continuing a relationship with the historic celebration that dates to its inaugural parade in 1969.

The World Famed will take its place at the front of the annual procession along Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, bringing one of Grambling State's most recognized traditions to the heart of Harlem.

The University's history with the parade began in 1969, when the march-

ing band opened the inaugural African American Day Parade. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Shirley Chisholm served as the parade's first grand marshals. Created to provide positive representation and celebrate Black heritage and achievement, the parade has grown into a nationally recognized Harlem tradition.

The World Famed's appearance comes during a milestone year for Grambling State, which is commemorating 125 years of academic excellence, and the band, which is celebrating 100 years of music, performance and tradition.

"Grambling State has

long understood the power of our traditions to bring people together and carry our story far beyond the boundaries of campus," said Martin Lemelle, Jr., D.B.A., president of Grambling State University. "As we return to Harlem this year, it is especially meaningful to see the World Famed lead a parade that Grambling (State) helped open more than five decades ago. During this milestone year, our students have another opportunity to represent generations of Tigers and share the excellence and spirit of Grambling State on a national stage."

See World Page 2



Voting Rights Act commemoration comes with warnings after Supreme Court rulings

By Ralph Chapoco

The Southern Poverty Law Center Thursday commemorated the 61st anniversary of the Voting Rights Act amid ongoing attacks on the landmark legislation.

Speakers at the event celebrated the impact of the law, which reversed decades of disenfranchisement across the South, but warned of recent attempts to roll back progress on voting rights.

"For generations, Black people were denied full participation in our democracy," said Tafeni English-Relf, state director of Alabama for the SPLC. "And it was the passage of the Voting Rights Act that allowed those barriers to be broken down."

The Voting Rights Act was passed months after peaceful voting rights marchers were attacked on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, an event known as Bloody Sunday. The attack led to the Selma-to-Montgomery March and sparked congressional action.

The law abolished barriers such as literacy and qualification tests, and allowed the U.S. Attorney General to challenge poll taxes in state and local elections. Within six months of President Lyndon Johnson signing the measure on Aug. 6, 1965, the number of Black registered voters in Alabama doubled from 110,000 to about 228,000.

However, the U.S. Su-



"Summer Cybersecurity Students and Instructors" President Lyndon B. Johnson and Martin Luther King, Jr., Clarence Mitchell, and Patricia Roberts Harris exchange greetings after the signing of the Voting Rights Act on Aug. 6, 1965 in Washington, D.C. (Courtesy of the LBJ Library)

preme Court's rulings in Shelby County v. Holder in 2013 and Louisiana v. Callais this spring wiped out key enforcement provisions of the law and allowed states to erect new

barriers to voting.

The Holder ruling eliminated Section 5 of the law, which required states with histories of voting discrimination to have election law changes

reviewed and approved by the U.S. Department of Justice. Callais made challenges to legislative maps under Section 2 considerably more difficult.

Tafeni English-Relf, Alabama state director for the Southern Poverty Law Center, spoke with reporters last Thursday (Aug 6, 2026), about the significance of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. She said that efforts to undermine its provisions go back to 2013 in the case of Shelby County v. Holder.

"While we are celebrating today, we must also tell the truth, that the progress we celebrate has not always been protected," said Shalela Dowdy, a plaintiff in Allen v. Milligan that sought to add

a second congressional Black district in the state. "The Voting Rights Act has been weakened. Section 5 has been gutted. Section 2 has been narrowed."

Since Shelby County v. Holder, the disparity in voter participation between Black and white voters in Alabama has increased.

Associate U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito wrote in the Callais majority opinion that those who would challenge election laws as racially discriminatory must prove there was intent to discriminate against minority voters, instead of showing discriminatory effects of a law.

See Voting Page 2

GSU Summer Cybersecurity Programs Prepare Students and Teachers for Digital Future

GRAMBLING, La. — Grambling State University's Department of Computer Science and Digital Technologies expanded its cybersecurity education and workforce development efforts this summer through a series of hands-on programs designed to prepare high school students, Grambling State students and high school teachers for an increasingly digital future.

The summer series began with a May 26-June 18 CompTIA certification preparation



Summer Cybersecurity Students and Instructors

program for Grambling State Computer Science and Digital Technologies students.

The department then hosted three high school cybersecurity camp sessions June 22-26, July

6-10 and July 13-17, before concluding with a workshop for high school teachers July 20-24.

The programs introduced participants to cybersecurity fundamentals, Linux, network dis-

covery, cyber defense, ethical hacking concepts, digital safety and emerging career pathways in one of the nation's fastest-growing technology fields.

"Jobs in the cybersecurity field require that type of training and certification, so that camp was important for our current students," said Dr. Bharat Rawal, head of Grambling State's Department of Computer Science and Digital Technologies.

See GSU Page 2



BIG ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

Beginning in September 2026, The Grambling Connection is transitioning to a **PAID** model. This means the paper will no longer be free but will be available as a paid product through select outlets, and will continue to be available through print and online subscriptions. Our first paid issue will arrive in stores on Friday, September 11. This change will allow us to bring you even more stories that matter most to our community—while expanding and strengthening our staff and coverage.

You will still be able to pick up free copies through our August 28th issue.

Locations where it will be on sale are listed in this issue. Will will continue to add locations over the next few months. We ask that you support us through this change so we can keep the paper strong and moving forward.

www.gramblingconnection.com/subscribe



OPINION

Louisiana’s Killing Fields

By Prentiss Smith

Another child is dead. These are words that should never have to be uttered or written, but sadly, I have had the displeasure of writing them numerous times over the past several decades. This time, a 14-year-old girl lost her life, allegedly at the hands of a 13-year-old boy in Shreveport. A family is grieving. Friends are in shock. A community is devastated, struggling to understand how children barely into their teenage years became part of such an unimaginable tragedy. Sadly, this is no longer an isolated incident. Across Louisiana, we have become all too familiar with stories of young lives cut short by violence. Children are killing children. Hus-

bands are killing wives. Boyfriends are killing girlfriends. Parents are burying sons and daughters who should have been planning for school, college, careers, and families of their own. Louisiana is facing a crisis that should shake every citizen to the core. I have seen too many of our young people—especially black children and teenagers—are dying from violence. And much of it is gun violence. It has become a public emergency that demands more than thoughts, prayers, and political talking points. Something is deeply broken. We are witnessing babies killing babies. Children killing parents. Hus-

bands killing wives. Boyfriends killing girlfriends. Neighbors killing neighbors. The headlines have become so common that many of us barely stop to notice. Yet behind every statistic is a grieving family, a devastated neighborhood, and another future cut short. We can debate the causes—easy access to guns, poverty, broken families, untreated mental illness, social media, failing schools, drugs, or the glorification of violence. The truth is that no single factor explains this epidemic. But together they have created a crisis that is stealing the future of an entire generation. The question is no longer whether Louisiana has a violence problem. We know it does. The question is whether we have the courage to confront it with the urgency it deserves. I know there are no simple solutions, but doing nothing is not an option. We must invest in our children long before they pick up a weapon. We must strengthen families, improve access to mental health care, create safe neighborhoods, support effective law enforcement, and give young people reasons to believe their future is worth protecting.



Prentiss Smith

Every time a child kills another child, we should ask ourselves not only what happened that day, but what happened in the years leading up to that moment. Somewhere along the way, opportunities were missed, warning signs were overlooked, and hope was replaced by despair. The most heartbreaking reality is that many of those pulling the trigger are children themselves. They are growing up in communities where violence has become normalized, where conflict is too often settled with a gun, and where too many young people believe they have little to lose. This crisis did not appear overnight, and there is no single cause. Poverty, broken homes, untreated mental illness, failing schools, easy access to firearms, drug traf-

ficking, hopelessness, and the erosion of community all play a role. Ignoring any one of these factors guarantees failure. A 14-year-old girl should not have lost her life. A 13-year-old boy should not be facing the possibility of spending his youth in the criminal justice system. Both represent a profound tragedy. Louisiana cannot afford to accept this as the new normal. If we do, we are surrendering our children to a cycle of violence that will consume yet another generation. I keep asking the question, what can we do as a country, collectively, to stem this scourge? There are no easy answers, but we have to think out of the box. We must invest in early childhood education, strengthen families, expand access to mental health services, create meaningful opportunities for young people, support effective community policing, and hold vi-

olent offenders accountable. Churches, schools, businesses, nonprofits, and neighborhood leaders must work together instead of operating in separate silos. Every young life lost is a failure not only of an individual but of all of us. We cannot arrest our way out of this crisis, nor can we simply legislate our way out. We must rebuild the communities where these children live, learn, and dream. Louisiana cannot accept violence as a way of life. Every child deserves the chance to grow into adulthood, pursue their dreams, and live without fear. If we fail to act, more families will bury their children, more communities will mourn, and another generation will be lost. The measure of a society is not how it responds after a child is killed, but what it does to prevent the next child from becoming either the victim or the shooter. And that’s my take. smithpren@aol.com

POTTER MOTIVATION

Good Habits and Rituals: The Foundation for Success

By Rusty Potter

Every morning across Northeast Louisiana, people head to work, students prepare for school, business owners unlock their doors, and families begin another day. While our jobs, responsibilities, and dreams may be different, we all have one thing in common: we are becoming the result of our daily habits and rituals. Success is not built in a single day. It is built one day at a time. Good habits are the positive

actions we repeat consistently. Rituals are the intentional routines that keep us focused on our goals and values. Together, they shape our character, strengthen our discipline, and determine our future. Think about the people in our community who have earned respect. They arrived on time, worked hard, kept their word, continued learning, and treated others with respect. When challenges came, they didn’t quit. Those daily choices eventually became a way of life. Our community needs more than people who talk



Rusty Potter

about change - we need people whose habits create change. Imagine what the city would look like if more students made reading a daily habit and neighbors encour-

aged one another, and more young people believed that education, faith, and hard work could open doors that poor decisions never could. One of the most valuable habits you can develop is investing in your personal growth. That is one of the reasons I wrote Smarter Than Yesterday: Helping YOU to Enjoy YOUR Journey. The book contains motivational stories designed to encourage readers to think differently, overcome obstacles, and keep moving forward. I hope that each story encourages someone to become just a little wiser, stronger, and more

determined than they were the day before. You don’t have to change everything overnight. Begin with one good habit. Spend time in prayer before leaving home. Write down your goals. Encourage someone who is discouraged. Replace excuses with action. Small choices, repeated consistently, produce great results. The future is being shaped by what we do today. Develop good habits. Practice productive rituals. Keep learning, keep growing, and keep becoming smarter than yesterday.

GSU From Page 1

“It was a longer, more in-depth camp, and we were proud to have three students earn certification after completing the camp and certification exam.” During the high school camps, students participated in interactive lessons and web-based training through platforms such as TryHackMe, a browser-based cybersecurity training platform that uses hands-on labs and guided learning to help users build cyber skills. “They learned how to hack, how to defend and how to protect,” Rawal said. “It’s game-based, which makes it fun. Students have to determine what action to take based on what they are seeing and dealing with.” Supported through grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the camps also served as a recruitment and outreach opportunity for the University. Participants came primarily from north Louisiana, with some students traveling from Texas, giving them an early look at Grambling State’s academic programs, campus environment and opportunities in technology. Rawal said the camps continue to grow in interest and impact as more students and educators seek opportunities to better understand cybersecurity. “The camps have been growing in

the number of attendees every year, so they seem to be heading in the right direction,” Rawal said. “These camps are succeeding, and that is good to see.” The workshop for high school teachers extended the impact of the summer programming by helping educators strengthen cybersecurity awareness and bring foundational cyber concepts, safety practices and career exploration back to their classrooms. Rawal said the need for cybersecurity education will continue to increase as organizations respond to artificial intelligence-powered threats, increased connectivity, data protection challenges, zero-trust security models and quantum-resistant cryptography. “That means more and more people will be needed in the cybersecurity world,” Rawal said. “So, it’s important to spread cybersecurity awareness, and that makes these camps so important.” Through its summer cybersecurity programming, Grambling State University continues to prepare students, support educators, expand access to technology education and help build a stronger cybersecurity workforce for Louisiana and beyond. To learn more about Grambling State University’s Department of Computer Science and Digital Technologies, visit gram.edu.

World From Page 1

The African American Day Parade was founded in Harlem in 1968, with the first parade held the following year. Its mission centers on celebrating African American culture, heritage and unity while recognizing the accomplishments and contributions of the community. For today’s student musicians, leading the parade offers an opportunity to represent Grambling State before a national audience while carrying forward a tradition established by generations before them. “Our students know that when they put on the World

Famed uniform, they represent far more than themselves,” said Nikole Roebuck, Ph.D., Director of Bands at Grambling State University. “To lead the African American Day Parade during our centennial year, knowing that Grambling State musicians were part of this tradition from its beginning, is a tremendous honor. We look forward to representing our University, honoring those who came before us and bringing the sound, pride and excellence of the World Famed to Harlem.” The 2026 African American Day Parade is scheduled for Sunday, September 20, along Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard in Harlem. This

year’s theme, “Good Businesses Sustain Our Future,” recognizes the contributions of Black-owned businesses to economic opportunity and stronger communities. Grambling State’s participation in the parade has continued across generations. President Lemelle, who served as one of several HBCU president grand marshals and participated on the University’s float during the 2025 parade, will return to Harlem this year as a float participant while the World Famed leads the procession. For additional information about the 57th African American Day Parade, visit africanamericandayparade.org.

Voting From Page 1

The decision allowed Alabama to use a 2023 congressional map previously ruled racially discriminatory by the courts. The move substantially redrew Alabama’s 2nd Congressional District, currently represented by U.S. Rep. Shomari Figures, D-Mobile, and reduced its Black Voting Age Population from about 49% to under 40%. At the event, SPLC an-

nounced the “We Decide” campaign to mobilize voters and increase voter participation in Alabama. This includes multiple days of canvassing starting in late August, along with community block parties in September. “The Voting Rights Act was never meant to be a final chapter in American democracy,” said Jerome Dees, policy director for the SPLC. “It was the foundation for what could come next. So today,

we honor that legacy by recommitting ourselves to the ongoing work of ensuring that every Alabamian has both the opportunity and the power to help shape our future.” This story was originally produced by Alabama Reflector, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes Louisiana Illuminator, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

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COMMUNITY

Area organizations Host ‘Back to School’ event

By Joice M. Dunn

Several area organizations came together at Grambling’s City Park on Saturday, August 8, to celebrate “Back To School” Fun and Fellowship.

“The event was primarily for our school youth; however, we invited senior citizens and military veterans who showed up in big numbers. We want to celebrate our youth, senior citizens, military and former veterans,” said James Maryland, HBCU president.

The bash included a fishing contest, directed by John Brown, Grambling councilman, who put in time to prepare the pond for over 50 participants. The winner of the contest was Ladarius Lakey of the Mt. Olive community. A Domino tournament was headed by Roosevelt “Gabby” Strong and other educational, spiritual, history games along with wholesome activities were available.

Sergeant Iris Winston of the Lincoln Parish Sheriff’s Office made it possible for the attendees to witness a drug and obedience demonstration by two K-9 officers. The crowd had the opportunity to receive the history of the unit, language used, selection/training process and care of the dogs. Questions and answers were allowed.

Tamika Giles, local cater, prepared a menu of hot dogs’ hamburgers, chips, baked beans, potato salad, drinks and water. Carl



The Lincoln Parish Sheriff’s Office held a K-9 demonstration.



Ladarius Lakey won first prize in the fishing tournament with a 2.5-pound catfish.

McCarter and Rickey Burton, coordinators, put their fish cooking skills to use. Billy Norman and others stepped in to assist. However, some supporters brought their



Fish contestants cast their rods.

grills for barbecue, chicken wings, chicken leg quarters, ribs, and sausage.

Area candidates made an appearance at the event, not just as politicians, but supporters. Joining in the fun were Mike Smith, city judge; Sandra Woods, Lincoln Parish School Board; Troy Brooks, Police Jury; Alvin Bradley, Mayor of Grambling; Add Goff, City Judge and NaKisha R. Evans, Police Jury for District Nine who is running to complete the term of Reverend Joe Henderson who passed away.

Kerry Crawford, president of the UNITY organization, gave of his time and carts to make sure everyone that needed a ride, had

a ride. Louis Mayfield, a Ruston native, but resides in Haughton, offers assistance not just to the HBCU Boosters, but the 22 Hands Up Organization as well.

The organization not only drew a crowd, but had them secured by the Grambling police, grounds officials, and Fire department on standby for safety reasons.

There were several groups along with individuals who played a part in the success of this event.

Joining the HBCU Boosters was Darrell Hampton, president of The Minden Based 22 Hands Up Organization. Hampton said, “Any time you can get together with other groups to benefit the children,

that’s important. He brought about 20 people to the event. Some of the children caught their first fish. We have our largest fund raiser Food Fest on Saturday, Sept 26, at Community House in Minden from noon until 3 p.m. and I know the Boosters will be in support.”

The Boosters also partnered with Kadar Dennis (Kappa Alpha Psi-Entertainment Etc.) who moved their annual Book Bag Give Away from the Grambling Fire Station to join the City Park bash.

“The HBCU Boosters event was great. It was great to see everyone enjoying the fishing, as well as all the other activities. We have been doing our school supply giveaway for 17 years, but when we found out about the HBCU Boosters event by way of Mayor Bradley, it was a no brainer to collaborate for a one stop shop of fun, food, and free school supplies. We would love to join in other future events/projects. We gave away 300 school supply bags,” said Dennis.

Mayland’s philosophy, “Utilize The Grambling Resources, rather than take activities and business elsewhere, seem to be catching on. John Brown of The Grambling City Council was super supportive of the program. Mayor Alvin Bradley joined in as well, We surpassed our anticipated number of attendees, over 250 participants and there’s a push to make this an annual City of Grambling event,” he said.

Announcements

Line Dance class open to 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, August 17. For more information, please contact Collins at 832-891-7488.

Neighborhood violence march set for Saturday

The UNITY organization and Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church (PRBC) Brotherhood will present a Community March against neighborhood violence Saturday, August 15 with line up beginning at 8 a.m.

Using the slogan, “Together we can build a safer community,” the march will start at Elmore/Mayfield (East End) Park and end at Duncan Park.

Guest Speakers will include Pastor Detorion Gipson, Pastor Don Taylor, Minister Zachery Thomas and Reggie McLeroy. All churches and young men are welcome to join in.

Five Loaves: 2 Fish Ministry to serve free meal

The 5 Loaves: 2 Fish Ministry of Ruston will serve Free Hot Meals to feed the whole family.

The ministry will be serving on August 25, at Origin Bank in Choudrant, 3921 Elm St. from 4:30-5:30 p.m. or until food is gone. Follow the ministry on Facebook to see where to find the next meal will be served or www.5loaves2fishruston.org.

NAACP will hold monthly meetings on third Thursday

The Grambling Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) #6094B will host its Executive Committee meeting at 5:30 p.m. and regular monthly meetings at 6 p.m. by teleconference on the 3rd Thursdays of the month. The next meeting is scheduled for August 20.

Master Gardeners offers 11-week training course

The North Central Louisiana Master Gardeners now holds an 11-week summer course. The course began on June 30 and runs through September.

The second 11-week course will offer participants a certificate during a September graduation ceremony. Those graduating from the course will join the local Master Gardeners for future community involvement.

For additional information contact K. Bass at 318- 251-5134 or email her at kyleighbass@agcenter.lsu.edu.

City of Grambling Water Department Warns of ‘Wrong’ Pay sites

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

Free food distribution set for Saturdays

The Lincoln United Community Coalition will be distributing free food for those who qualify

each Saturday from 10 a.m. until noon. Food is distributed on first, third and fourth Saturdays from the Walmart retail store; second Saturday from the Northeast Louisiana Food Bank out of Monroe. Persons can come to the office at 407 N. Hazel in Ruston on distribution day at 9:30 to qualify. Plates are also sold for \$10 to help support the organization.

For more information, please contact Patricia Mims Brooks 318-265-2011 (office) or 214-662-5407.

Sign Up Now for free CivicReady

The Civic Ready Messaging System is a mass notification system built for government communications. This is a free service for our citizens. Please sign up so you can be notified of city-wide alerts and emergency notifications. Sign up by going to City of Grambling website (www.cityofgrambling.org) and clicking on CivicReady.

Grambling Community Garden seek volunteers

Volunteers are needed for the Grambling Community Garden. If you are interested in lending a hand, contact DeVaria Ponton, master gardener. The garden is managed by Grow Grambling, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Ponton can grant volunteers hours

and service-learning hours. Volunteers may contact Ponton at 318-278-9892.

The North Louisiana Autism organization offers support

The Autism Society of North Louisiana is a nonprofit organization that provides support, resources, advocacy, and community programs for autistic individuals and their families while promoting autism acceptance and inclusion throughout North Louisiana.

For more information or to connect with the organization, please contact us at autismnorthla@gmail.com

Parish public transportation available to Grambling

The Lincoln Parish Public Transportation System (LPPTS) is available to the 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.

Reservations are required 24 hours in advance unless prepaid and cancellations must be made two hours prior to pick-up time. For additional information please contact Samantha Dimmer, transportation coordinator 318-251-5138.

In Remembrance

The Story of Willie Jean Smith Riley

Willie Jean Smith was born on June 8, 1937, in Ruston, Louisiana, to the late Vera Addons Hopkins and Monroe Smith. From her earliest days, God placed within her a gentle spirit, a compassionate heart and an unwavering faith that would become the foundation of her life’s journey.

She received her education through the Lincoln Parish School System and proudly graduated from Lincoln High School in 1955. She later attended Grambling College, where she continued to cultivate the knowledge and wisdom that would serve her throughout her life.

At an early age, around 1950, Mother Smith accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and Savior and united with Mays Chapel C.M.E. Church. She faithfully walked with the Lord and dedicated her life to serving His Kingdom. As a devoted member of her church family, she served with humility and excellence in many capacities, including the Choir, Sunday School Secretary, and the Matron’s Group. Whatever the assignment, Mother Smith served

with a willing heart, believing that every act of service was an offering unto God. Her steadfast faith and unwavering commitment remained evident until her health no longer allowed her to labor as she once had.

In God’s perfect timing, she met the love of her life, Billy Riley, and together they built a loving home centered



Willie Jean Smith Riley

others, and creating lasting memories with family and friends. Her warm smile, encouraging words, and nurturing spirit made everyone

feel welcomed, loved, and cherished. She possessed the rare gift of making every person she encountered feel like family.

After a life beautifully lived in faithful service to God, family, and community, Mother Willie Jean Smith Riley peacefully transitioned from labor to reward on Saturday, July 25, 2026, at her home, surrounded by her loving family. While her earthly journey has ended, her heavenly reward has begun.

We rejoice in knowing that she has exchanged the cares of this life for eternal

rest in the presence of her Lord and Savior.

Her life was a living testimony of grace, kindness, humility, and unwavering faith. Through every season, she trusted God, loved unconditionally, and served faithfully. Her legacy will continue to inspire generations to walk by faith, love one another, and remain steadfast in the Lord.

Though she has exchanged earthly labor for heavenly rest, the seeds of faith she planted will continue to flourish in the lives of all who knew and loved her.

Join us in supporting Assistant District Attorney Mike Smith for Ruston City Judge

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Olivia & Phil Gordon
Jane Lee Grafton
Maggie & Thomas Graham
Sally & Randy Graham
Jackie & Steve Grayson
Reed Grayson
Rusty & Marvin Green
Deborah & Douglas Haddox
Kennedy & Jeremy Haddox
Larkin & Ben Haddox
Roni & Mike Haddox
Amber & Andrew Halbrook
Mary-Elizabeth & Andy Halbrook
Mamie & Carl Hammock
Drew Hampton
Judith Hampton
Jackie & Dennis Hancock
Philip Harris
Brad Hartwell
Elayna & Colton Hayes
Susan & Charles Herald
Lynda Henderson
Bevin Hicks
Mary Anne Hill
Johnnie Hogan
Dannah & Chris Holtzclaw
Vanna & Seth Hood
Angela & Tracy Houck
Whitney & Randy Hovey
Connie & Don Howard
Carolyn Hunter
Diane & Wayne Hunter
Destiny & Nick Impson
Kym & Tad Ingram
Coach Ed Jackson
Eddie Jackson
Latonya & James Jackson
Roger Jackson
Terrance Jackson
Madisyn & Coach Lorenzo Joe
Carmen & Jereme Johnson
Elisha James & Garner Johnson
Eric Johnson
Marvin Terrell Johnson, Sr.
Eva & Dr. Jerry Johnston
Tammy & Dr. Lamar Johnston
Roger Jones
Pam & Mike Jones
Roger Jones
Jenny & John Juneau
Mary & Jim Justice
Faye & Track Kavanaugh
Jay Kavanaugh

Kim Kavanaugh
Donald Kimbell
Choo Kirkendoff
Kim & Trey Klug
Michelle & Jacob Landry
Kathryn & Aaron Lawrence
Cheryl & Scott Leachman
Noel Lee
Robin & Lance Leihhr
Susie & Jimmy Leonard
Clinton Lewis
Donna & Luke Lewis
Melanie & Tommy Lewis
Gerald Long
Jimmy Love
Dr. Gary Luffy
Bob Lynn
Anthony Lyons
Lisa Mackrell
Sarah & Michael Mahaffey
Sherry & Eric Mahaffey
Karl Malone
Ginger & David Manuel
Abby & Dr. Josh Mandrell
Dr. Sheila & Dr. Ed Mariano
Kristina & Justin Martin
Jim “Bear” Maryland
Anthony Mason
Ellen & Matt Massey
Mary-Kyle & Johnny Maxwell
Stormy & Mitch Maxwell
Taylor & Brenner Maybry
Angela Mayfield
Barbara Mayfield
Chuck Mayfield
Katrina Mayfield
Leigh Ann & Jim McCorkle
Rleigh McCullough
Claire & Kade McDonald
Rachel & Dusty McGehee
Michelle & Andy McIntyre
Nancy & Bill McIntyre
Rachael & John McIntyre
Joan & Ryan McMaster
Hope Merchant
Sharon Miller
Megan & Brian Moore
Jodie & Reece Morphew
Jan & Randall Murphy
Amy Neal
Marilyn & Phillip Neaville
Billie Nelson
Wendy & Donald Newman
Katie & Jordan Nicholson
Hope & Joseph Odom
Keisha & Coach Luke Olson
Marisol & Adam O’Neal
Mary & Clayton Owen
Loretta Owens
Valerie & Rob Owens
Anita C. Patterson
Mallory & Chase Patterson
Cassie & Hunter Pearce
Sherri & Jim Pearce
Kaitlyn Pelley
Tracy Perry
Gregg Phillips
Jessie & Cody Phillips
April & Phillip Picou
Lauren & Josh Powell
Ericka & Phillip Prince
Kay & Keith Prince
Kari & Steve Quinnelly
Julie & Jered Ramsey
Megan & Chris Rathburn
Peter Richardson
Robert Roach
Tammy & Jamie Roberts
Gertrude Roebuck
Lauren & Steven Roebuck
Lindsey & Jordan Rome
Whitney & Dusty Rust

Bruce Rushing
Jean & Dr. Will Sanders
Carla Sandifer
David Sears
Jodi & Dustin Serpas
Mackenzie & Reed Sexton
Dr. Naveet Sharma
Heather & Tim Shaw
Julie & Matt Shirley
Caty & Jacob Simmons
Selena & Devin Singleton
Sarah & Jake Slocum
Dr. Jamie Slusher
Rebecca & Daniel Smart
Amy & Earl Smith
Anna & Dr. Landon Smith
Addie & Jack Smith
Bill Smith
Danielle & Layne Smith
Emily & David Smith
Esma Smith
Heather & Stacy Smith
Jenni & Dr. George Smith
Katy & Andy Smith
Kelly & Billy Smith
Ken Smith
Laura & Dr. Jimmy Smith
Mandy & John Robert Smith
Maryanne & Brian Smith
Dr. Nancy & Dr. Tommy Smith
Paige & Jason Smith
Dr. Paige & Dr. Ross Smith
Pearman “Pete” Smith
Polly & Wayne Smith
Randall Smith
Tucker Smith
John Stack
Dr. Kristina & Dr. Caleb Stanfield
Linda Steed
Sandra & Gary Stokley
Annette Straughter
Phillip Streets
Dewayne Stringfellow
Victoria & Brody Sullivan
Cricket & Bankson Summersgill
Julia & David Summersgill
Caroline Sutton
Kay & John Sutton
Donna Tanner
Dana Taylor
Karen Taylor
Kimberly Taylor
Lou Taylor
Kristen & Jeremy Telford
Steve Tew, DA
Virginia & Robert Temple
Henry Terral
Sarah & Jonathon Terral
Carla & Garrett Terry
Carla Thomas
Donna & Robert Thomas
Jamie & Phillip Thomas
Karen & Phillip Thomas
Melissa Thomas
Stanley Thompson
Morgan & Thad Thornhill
Carlos Tidwell
Barbara & Bill Tubre
Gail & Gene VanDenLangenberg
Lori & Brandon Waits
Cozetta Wade
Ashley & Josh Walpole
Pam & Mike Walpole
Sarah & Jamie Walsworth
Amy & Zach Walthall
Tony Ware
V. West
Dr. Peyton & Rick Whiddon
Nancy Whittenburg
Melvin Williams
Merlin Williams
Nancy & Glenn Williams
Ronnie Williams
Patricia & Tracy Willis
Antonio Wilson
Ivan Wilson
Tiffany & Jerry Wiltcher
Natalie & Chad Wise
Jenifer & Brian Woodard
Gabrielle & Russell Woodard
Aldrenia & Rev. Jeffery Woods
Carolyn & Chad Yates
Heather & Zach Yates

Assistant District Attorney

Mike
SMITH

FOR CITY COURT JUDGE

Ruston & Lincoln Parish



CHURCH NEWS

THE Truth is the Light

By Rev. Dr. Charles R. Watkins, Jr.

Psalms 145:3 – NRSV – “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.”

This psalm of David exalts the name of the Lord Most High and rejoices in the glorious splendor of his wonderful works. It is a song of worship that lifts our eyes above earthly concerns and fixes our hearts on the majesty of God.

The psalmist’s call to praise is just as relevant today as it was when these words were first penned. While life in our present time is often difficult and filled with problems, we are still called to acknowledge God with praise and worship. When we do, our hearts are lifted and redirected toward the one who is truly worthy, for the Lord is greatly to be praised, and his greatness is indeed unsearchable.

This text calls for perpetual and wholehearted worship

because God’s character is infinite and beyond full human comprehension. It emphasizes continuous, daily praise, reminding us that God’s mercy, power, and love cannot be fully measured or understood. We are invited to praise God not only for what God does but also for who God is, encouraging believers to focus on God’s limitless nature rather than on their temporary troubles.

Psalms 145:3 highlights the supreme greatness of God. God’s nature is unparalleled and incomparable, standing in sharp contrast to worldly power or human achievement. The word “unsearchable,” drawn from the Hebrew “ein cheqer”, conveys that God’s greatness cannot be measured, calculated, or fully explored. No matter how much we learn about God, we will never reach the depth of God’s majesty, for God’s nature is infinite.

Because God is perfect, faithful, and good, God is worthy of constant adoration. God’s im-



Rev. Charles R. Watkins

measurable goodness, power, and mercy call for maximum, heartfelt praise. This verse invites believers to fix their attention on God’s eternal and majestic character rather than the overwhelming changes and challenges of life.

The verse also serves as a call to worship, functioning as a doxology—an expression of

praise that moves us beyond casual acknowledgment into holy reverence and awe. It is often used as an opening invocation in worship and prayer, helping believers focus on God’s majesty before bringing personal needs and concerns before God.

In times of hardship, this text offers encouragement by reminding us to trust in God’s power. It urges deep meditation on the Lord’s glorious splendor and reassures us that God remains sovereign over every circumstance we face.

The key takeaway of Psalm 145:3 is that, because God is perfect and unchanging, our worship should not be dependent on fluctuating situations. Instead, praise should be anchored in God’s enduring goodness and unmatched power. This verse serves as a daily reminder to focus on God’s sovereignty rather than life’s problems and reassures believers that God is greater than any

challenge they encounter.

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you that you are our God, worthy of our continuous praise and worship. Fill our hearts each day with songs of thanksgiving and praise for who you are and for all that you have done for us. May we never forget your goodness and your grace toward all your children. Keep our hearts in a ready and worshipful posture of praise.

God, you alone are worthy of honor and are greatly to be praised. Precious Lord, open the eyes of our understanding more and more, so that in every circumstance of life we can truly sing, “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable.”

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

(Reprint from The Christian Monitor)

The Reverend Dr. Charles R. Watkins, Jr., is an Itinerant Elder (Retired), who lives in Summerville, South Carolina.

Church Announcements

Love Chapel to hold church anniversary, revival

The Love Chapel Baptist Church will hold its Church Anniversary Sunday, August 16, at 2:30 p.m. The revival will run Monday, August 17 – Wednesday, August 19, nightly at 7.

Reverend Gairie Harris and the True Believers church family will serve as special guests on Sunday. Rev. Eric Caldwell and the Springhill B.C. Family will serve on Monday; Reverend Calvin Williams and the Springfield B.C. Family of Gibsland will serve Tuesday and Rev. Trevor Barber and the St. Peter B.C. Family of Ruston will serve on Wednesday/

The church is located in Ruston, pastored by Rev. Elliott Abney. All area churches are invited to join in the service.

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 Chapel 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.

The meeting was instructed by Reverend Noah Banks of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church in Arcadia.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, September 14. The meeting is spearheaded by Patrick Jefferson, former state representative, along with invited speakers. Every man is invited to come and worship.

Lewis Temple CME Church Food Distribution

Lewis Temple CME Church on 301 Main Street in Grambling distributes free bags of food every third Monday of the month from 1-3 p.m. To qualify you need identification and a utility bill. You

must live in the Grambling or Simsboro area.

For more information, please call Liz White at 318-299-7509.

China Grove Church opens ‘China Closet’

The China Grove Baptist Church will open the ‘China Closet’ to the public each Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the church on 407 Vernon St., Ruston.

The Closet will be open to anyone in need of clothing or assistance. It is under the supervision of the matrons/mision department of the church.

For additional information contact Evangelist Annie Wilson at 318-570-9134 or call Tonika Blake at 318-243-3295. The church is pastored by Rev. Damian E. Wilson, Sr.

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.

New Hope Church to hold community-wide Bible Study

The New Hope Baptist Church of Ruston will hold a noon community-wide Bible Study each Wednesday. The church is located at 301 W. Vaughn Ave., Ruston.

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
Gumpring, 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.,
Love Chapel, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston
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, 571 Mt. Olive Rd. Grambling, Louisiana.
Mount Olive Outreach, 2817 S. Service Road W., Ruston
Mount Pisgah, Hwy. 3061, Ruston
Mount Sinai, 2269 Hwy. 145, Choudrant
Mount Vernon, 1356 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach
Mount Zion, 2586 Hwy 150., Grambling
Mount Zion No. 2, 113 California Plant Road, Dubach
New Hope, Choudrant
New Hope, 302 W. Vaughn, Ruston
New Liberty Hill, Hwy. 544, Simsboro
New Living Word Ministries, 1900 W. Barnett Springs, Ruston
New Pilgrim Rest, Inc., 2697 Elm St., Arcadia
New Prospect, 3438 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach
New Prosperity, 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. rustonchurchof-christ.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
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



HEALTH & WELLNESS

CHARMING’S CORNER

The World Needs More People Who Are Willing to Heal

By Charming Davis

If you watch the news for even a few minutes, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed. Division, violence, fear, anxiety, loneliness, and anger seem to be everywhere we turn. We often ask ourselves, “What’s wrong with the world?” But perhaps a better question is, “What can I do to become part of the healing?”

Healing isn’t just about recovering from illness or injury. Healing is the courageous work of becoming aware of our thoughts, our habits, our wounds, and our choices. It’s learning to respond instead of react. It’s choosing compassion over judgment, wisdom over impulse, and love over fear.

The truth is that hurting people often hurt people. We see it in families, friendships, workplaces, schools, and communities. Pain

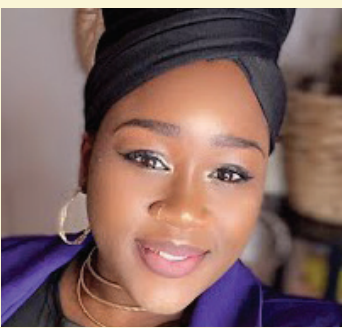
that goes unaddressed has a way of spilling onto everyone nearby. Sometimes it shows up as anger. Other times it wears the disguise of criticism, control, avoidance, or emotional distance.

But healing works the same way.

A person who has learned to regulate their emotions brings calm into tense situations. Someone who has experienced grace is often quicker to extend grace to others. A person who has found peace with God carries a quiet strength that others can feel, even without many words being spoken.

Our healing becomes a gift to the people around us.

This doesn’t mean we become perfect. Healing is rarely a straight path. There are good days and difficult days. There are moments when old fears resurface or old habits try to re-



Charming Davis

claim their place. Growth isn’t measured by never stumbling. It’s measured by how often we choose to get back up and continue walking.

One of the greatest acts of service we can offer our communities is to take responsibility for our own inner lives. Imagine neighborhoods where people paused before reacting in anger. Imagine families where apolo-

gies were offered freely and forgiveness wasn’t seen as weakness. Imagine workplaces where people listened to understand instead of listening only to respond.

Those changes don’t begin in government buildings or on social media. They begin in living rooms, around dinner tables, in places of worship, at schools, and in the quiet moments when no one else is watching.

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 5:9 (NLT), “God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.”

Working for peace isn’t passive. It takes courage. It asks us to examine our own hearts before pointing fingers at someone else. It invites us to become people who build bridges instead of walls.

Every day gives us opportunities to contribute something to the world. We can spread encour-

agement or criticism. Patience or frustration. Hope or despair. Each choice becomes part of the atmosphere we help create.

The world doesn’t simply need more successful people, more influential people, or even more talented people. It needs more healed people. People who are willing to do the inner work. People who are willing to love deeply, forgive generously, speak kindly, and live with integrity.

None of us can heal the whole world by ourselves. But each of us can become a source of healing wherever God has planted us. And when enough ordinary people choose that path, extraordinary change becomes possible.

May we each ask ourselves not only, “What kind of world do I want to live in?” but also, “What kind of person am I becoming?”

Because the world is changed one healed heart at a time.

Erica Schwartz Confirmed as CDC Director: What This Means for Your Health

On Wednesday, the Senate confirmed Dr. Erica Schwartz as the new director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), making her the first permanent director of the agency in nearly a year. She was confirmed in a 51-44 vote, becoming the 22nd leader of the Atlanta-based CDC.

The confirmation comes after weeks of questions about whether Dr. Schwartz would maintain scientific independence, particularly regarding vaccine policy and guidance. Last week, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee advanced her nomination after lawmakers questioned whether she would push back against HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy if asked to act against scientific evidence and established public health practices.

The CDC is responsible for guiding the nation’s response to infectious diseases, vaccines, health emergencies, and prevention efforts. Her appointment comes after months of uncertainty at the agency, with significant vaccine policy changes and ongoing public health challenges.



Dr. Erica Schwartz

experience in preventive medicine, military medicine, and public health leadership. She earned a degree in biomedical engineering from Brown University before receiving her medical degree from Brown University’s Warren Alpert Medical School.

She has served in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (USPHSCC), the Navy, and the Coast Guard. During Trump’s first term, she served as deputy surgeon general and helped support the federal government’s response during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why Trust and Clear Health Information Matter

Many communities — particularly Black communities — have experienced barriers, misinformation, and unequal access to healthcare. This is especially important because historical and ongoing healthcare inequities have contributed to gaps in access, trust, and health outcomes. While addressing health inequities is not something that can change overnight, clear communication from public health leaders can help people make informed decisions about their health.

Additionally, strong patient-and-provider relationships remain critical for more effective, culturally sensitive care. Public health recommendations are most effective when people understand not only what is being recommended, but why it matters for their families and communities.

What Should Patients Expect Next?

Dr. Schwartz’s leadership will shape how the CDC communicates future health guidance. With this in mind, people should continue to rely on trusted healthcare providers for individualized health recommendations. Staying informed through credible sources can help you and your family make decisions about prevention and treatment.

As Dr. Schwartz assumes her new role, here’s what you should know about the new CDC leader and what her role means for Black communities.

What Does the CDC Director Actually Do?

The CDC director leads the agency responsible for protecting public health. The federal agency provides guidance on vaccines, disease outbreaks, health screenings, and prevention efforts. While Dr. Schwartz’s confirmation is major news, it doesn’t immediately change your doctor’s recommendations or daily healthcare. You’ll continue to discuss any healthcare decisions with your provider.

Who Is Dr. Erica Schwartz?

Dr. Schwartz is a physician with

The Best Fat-Burning Exercises for Your Age (20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60+)

If you’ve ever wondered why the workouts that melted away pounds in your 20s don’t seem to work as well now, you weren’t imagining it. As we age, our metabolism naturally slows, muscle mass declines, hormone levels change, and recovery takes longer. The good news? The best fat-burning workout isn’t necessarily the hardest one—it’s the one that’s right for your age and your body.

Here’s how to maximize fat burning at every stage of life.

In Your 20s: Build the Foundation

Your body is generally at its physical peak in your 20s. Recovery is faster, muscle growth is easier, and your metabolism is typically working in your favor.

Best fat-burning exercises:

- High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), Sprint intervals, Strength training, Sports like basketball, soccer, or boxing, Jump rope workouts

Why they work:

HIIT can burn hundreds of calories in a short period while boosting your metabolism for hours after your workout. Building muscle now also pays dividends later because muscle burns more calories than fat—even while you’re resting.

Goal: Build lean muscle while establishing healthy exercise habits.

In Your 30s: Prioritize Strength

Life gets busier with careers, families, and responsibilities. Many people become less active while stress hormones like cortisol increase, making fat loss more challenging.

Best fat-burning exercises:

- Heavy strength training, Circuit training, Rowing, Cycling

Why they work:

Maintaining muscle becomes increasingly important in your 30s. Strength training not only burns calories during exercise but also helps preserve your metabolism.

Goal: Preserve muscle while preventing gradual weight gain.

In Your 40s: Train Smarter, Not Harder

Hormonal changes begin af-



fecting both men and women. Many people notice more fat accumulating around the midsection, while recovery becomes slower.

Best fat-burning exercises:

- Walking on an incline, Full-body resistance training, Swimming, Elliptical workouts

Moderate HIIT (1-2 times weekly)

Why they work:

The focus shifts toward consistency instead of intensity every day. Walking may not seem exciting, but studies show brisk walking is incredibly effective for burning fat while reducing stress on the joints.

Don’t neglect resistance training—it becomes even more important as muscle loss accelerates after age 40.

Goal: Protect muscle, reduce belly fat, and improve heart health.

In Your 50s: Protect Your Joints While Burning Fat

Joint discomfort, arthritis, and hormonal shifts can make certain workouts uncomfortable, but staying active is more important than ever.

Best fat-burning exercises:

- Brisk walking, Water aerobics, Swimming, Resistance band workouts, Pilates, Hiking

Why they work:

Low-impact workouts help you stay consistent without overloading your joints. Resistance bands and bodyweight exercises maintain strength while improving balance.

Adding balance exercises also reduces fall risk as you age.

Goal: Burn fat safely while maintaining independence and mobility.

In Your 60s and Beyond: Keep Moving

The biggest threat isn’t just gaining fat—it’s losing muscle and mobility. Staying active can dramatically improve quality of life.

Best fat-burning exercises:

- Walking, Chair exercises, Water fitness classes, Tai Chi, Light resistance training, Dancing

Why they work:

Exercise helps maintain muscle, improves balance, lowers blood pressure, strengthens bones, and supports brain health.

Even 20-30 minutes of daily movement can significantly improve overall health.

Goal: Stay active, independent, and strong.

Don’t Forget Recovery At Every Age

As you age, recovery becomes just as important as the workout itself.

What You Need to be Doing at Your Age

The secret to burning fat isn’t finding the most punishing workout—it’s choosing exercises that match your body’s changing needs.

In your 20s, push your limits and build muscle. In your 30s, make strength training a priority. In your 40s, focus on consistency and preserving muscle. In your 50s and beyond, protect your joints while staying active with low-impact workouts.

Remember, it’s never too late to start. Whether you’re 25 or 75, regular movement, strength training, and smart nutrition can help you lose fat, improve your health, and feel stronger for years to come.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Singer Coco Jones Weds NBA Star Donovan Mitchell

GRAMBLING — Grambling State University fans may remember Grammy Award-winning singer Coco Jones commanding the stage as the headlining performer at the university's Homecoming concert in 2025. Now, the R&B star is making headlines for a milestone away from the stage.

Jones married Cleveland Cavaliers star Donovan Mitchell on Saturday, August 1, in an intimate, star-studded ceremony in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The couple exchanged vows surrounded by family, friends and a guest list that brought together some of the biggest names in sports and entertainment.

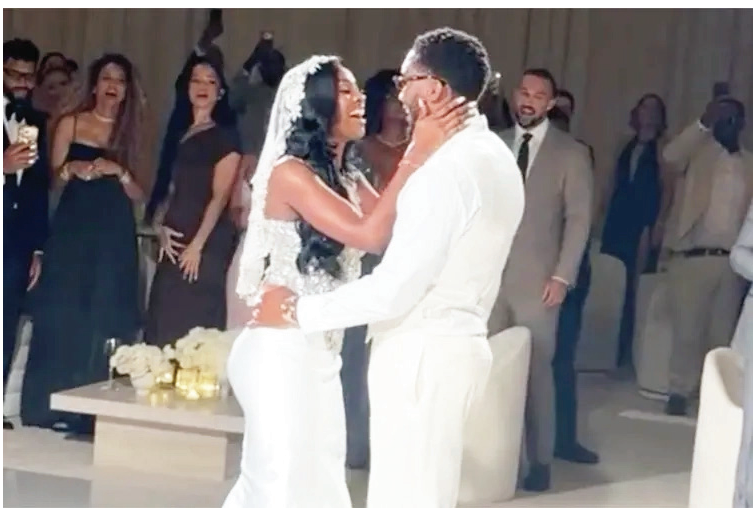
Jones walked down the aisle in a custom white satin mermaid gown featuring a structured corset bodice and crystal floral appliqués. She later changed into a sheer white lace minidress for the reception. Mitchell complemented his bride in a crisp white tuxedo.

The elegant ceremony featured candlelight and lush white floral arrangements, creating an intimate setting for the couple's



celebration. For their first dance as husband and wife, Jones and Mitchell chose Musiq Soulchild's R&B classic "Love."

Among those celebrating



with the newlyweds were several NBA standouts, including Jalen Brunson, Bam Adebayo, Josh Hart, James Harden and Mitchell's Cleveland Cavaliers teammate Evan Mobley. Singer Ciara and her husband, NFL star Russell Wilson, were also reportedly among the guests.

Although Jones and Mitchell largely kept their wedding celebration private, glimpses from the

ceremony and reception began circulating online through guests and entertainment outlets in the days following the wedding.

The wedding marked the latest chapter in a relationship that began three years ago. Jones and Mitchell reportedly met at businessman Michael Rubin's annual Fourth of July White Party in 2023. The couple became engaged in July 2025.

Jones, whose career has steadily risen in recent years, won her first Grammy Award in 2024 for Best R&B Performance for her hit single "ICU." Her appearance as a Grambling State Homecoming headliner gave local fans an opportunity to see the rising star perform before she reached another level of national prominence.

Mitchell, meanwhile, has established himself as one of the NBA's premier players. The Cleveland Cavaliers guard is a multiple-time NBA All-Star and has been one of the league's top scorers throughout his career.

From the Grambling State Homecoming stage to Grammy winner — and now newlywed — Jones continues to have plenty to celebrate.

One thing I would consider adding is **the year Coco performed at Grambling's Homecoming and, if available, one sentence about that concert**. That would make the Grambling angle feel even more substantive rather than simply being used as the opening hook.

Will Smith Teams With 'Michael' Breakout Star Jaafar Jackson for New Action Thriller 'Supermax'

Will Smith is headed back into action, and this time the Oscar-winning actor will be joined by one of Hollywood's newest breakout stars, Jaafar Jackson.

Smith and Jackson are set to star in Supermax, an upcoming action thriller from Amazon MGM Studios and Miramax that will bring together the veteran blockbuster star and the actor fresh off the record-breaking success of Michael.

Smith will lead the film as Rex, one of two FBI agents sent to investigate a mysterious murder inside what is described as the world's most secure prison. The movie is being billed as a fast-moving, twist-filled action thriller, with AnnaSophia Robb joining Smith as his FBI partner.

Details surrounding Jackson's character are being kept under wraps, adding another layer of intrigue to the project.

David Gordon Green, whose diverse directing credits include Pineapple Express, Halloween and The Exorcist: Believer, is set to direct. David Weil and David J. Rosen, known for their work on the television series Hunters and Invasion, wrote the screenplay.

Smith will also serve as a producer through his Westbrook production company. Amazon MGM Studios acquired worldwide rights to the Miramax project, which is expected to stream globally on Prime Video.

For Smith, Supermax adds another action project to a career that has made him one of Hollywood's most recognizable stars. After first gaining national attention on the television series The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, Smith made the transition to movies and became a global box-office draw through films including Independence Day, Men in Black, I Am Legend, Hitch and the Bad Boys franchise.

He won the Academy Award

for Best Actor for his portrayal of Richard Williams, father of tennis champions Venus and Serena Williams, in the 2021 film King Richard. Smith most recently returned to one of his signature roles as Miami detective Mike Lowrey opposite Martin Lawrence in 2024's Bad Boys: Ride or Die, which earned more than \$400 million worldwide.

Jackson, meanwhile, comes to Supermax following a remarkable movie debut.

The son of Jermaine Jackson and nephew of the late Michael Jackson, Jaafar Jackson was selected to portray his famous uncle in director Antoine Fuqua's Michael. The film chronicles Michael Jackson's rise from his early years with the Jackson 5 through his emergence as one of the biggest solo entertainers in music history.

Released in April, Michael became a global phenomenon, opening with more than \$217 million worldwide before eventually crossing the \$1 billion mark. In doing so, the film surpassed Oppenheimer to become the highest-grossing biographical film of all time and the first biopic ever to earn \$1 billion at the worldwide box office.

The success immediately turned Jackson, who had never before carried a major feature film, into a rising Hollywood star.

That makes Supermax an intriguing next step. Rather than following his portrayal of his legendary uncle with another music-centered project, Jackson will move into the action-thriller genre alongside an actor who has spent more than three decades headlining some of Hollywood's biggest films.

Production on Supermax is reportedly expected to begin in August. A release date has not yet been announced.



Jaafar Jackson



Will Smith



ESSENCE Ventures Makes Strategic Investment in REVOLT's Parent Company

The partnership brings Offscript Worldwide and REVOLT together with ESSENCE Ventures, and its parent company Sundial Media & Technology Group's portfolio of category-leading brands, to create a single point of access for brands and advertisers

(Black PR Wire) NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--ESSENCE Ventures, the investment and operating arm of Sundial Media & Technology Group today announced a strategic investment in Offscript Worldwide, the parent brand of REVOLT, REVOLT Sports, 3BLACKDOT and the Offscript Creator Network, bringing together two media portfolios with complementary audiences and capabilities across entertainment, music, women's lifestyle, beauty, creators, sports and gaming, technology and live experiences. The partnership will offer advertisers access to diverse, highly engaged audiences at scale.

The investment gives ESSENCE Ventures a minority stake in Revolt New Media Holdings LLC and gives Sundial founder and Chairman Riche-lieu Dennis a seat on the board. Offscript Worldwide and REVOLT will continue to operate independently under Chief Executive Officer Detavio Samuels, with the relationship focused on expanding commercial opportunities for advertisers.

Together, the broader portfolios span ESSENCE (Girls United, ESSENCE Studios, ESSENCE Festival of Culture®), Refinery29, AFROPUNK, Beautycon™, and now REVOLT, REVOLT Sports, 3BLACKDOT, Offscript Creator Network, along with a growing network of content, creators and live experiences, reaching all audiences across generations. Collectively, the portfolios reach millions of consumers across owned, social, creator, video and live experiences, giving advertisers access to diverse, highly engaged audiences at scale.

This comes at a moment when human connection and shared experiences are becoming increasingly valuable in an AI-driven world. Both organizations are at the forefront of creating experiences that bring audiences, creators and brands together in real life. Most recently, the ESSENCE Festival of Culture® welcomed a collective audience of 500,000, demonstrating the continued power of live experiences to convene communities at scale.

"This investment is about continuing the momentum both organizations have built and creating the scale to compete for where media and advertising are going," said Kirk McDonald, Chief Executive Officer of Sundial Media & Technology Group, parent company of ESSENCE Ventures. "For generations, Black-owned media has punched above its weight, shaping culture while being underinvested rela-

tive to the value it creates around the world. By bringing together complementary audiences, platforms and capabilities, we have an opportunity to give advertisers greater access to the people and communities shaping culture — while preserving the independent ownership, audience trust and authentic voices that make these brands distinct."

"Black-owned media has never meant a Black-only audience — and this ecosystem is proof at scale," said Detavio Samuels, Chief Executive Officer, Offscript Worldwide and REVOLT. "Offscript Worldwide and REVOLT built the audiences driving youth culture across music, gaming and sports. Sundial Media Group adds cross-cultural, multigenerational women's audiences. Together, that's the full range of people shaping what's next. For advertisers, that's not a niche buy. That's access to culture itself."

The relationship builds on the evolution already underway across both organizations. ESSENCE Ventures and Sundial Media & Technology Group have expanded beyond their flagship properties into a broader portfolio spanning media, technology, commerce and experiences, while Offscript Worldwide has expanded beyond REVOLT into a broader portfolio of media brands, creator platforms and cultural experiences designed to shape culture and engage the next generation of audiences.

Financial terms of the investment were not disclosed.

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SPORTS



Cabrera Elevated to Head Coach of Grambling State Women's Volleyball

GSU Athletics

GRAMBLING, La. | Grambling State Women's Volleyball assistant coach Daniel Cabrera has been elevated to head coach of the of the program.

His promotion comes just after head coach Paige Phillips stepped down to spend more time with her family.

"We are grateful to Coach Paige Phillips for her dedication and leadership of our volleyball program," said Grambling State Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics Dr. Trayvean Scott. "She has made a positive impact on our student-athletes and represented Grambling State with professionalism and integrity. We thank Paige for her commitment to our university and wish her continued success in the next chapter of her career."

Cabrea joined the GSU staff in 2025 as assistant coach after having served as the women's volleyball head coach at the University of Louisiana-Monroe. Prior to ULM, Cabrera served as head coach for both the men's and women's programs at Olivet Nazarene University.

In 2020, he led the wom-

en's team to a 20-2 record, a conference title, and a national tournament berth, earning Chicagoland Coach of the Year honors.

He also launched the ONU men's team, which reached a national top 20 ranking and finished as NCCAA runner-up in 2022.

Cabrera's resume includes stops at Culver-Stockton College, work under Olympian Caren Kemner, and coaching for USA Volleyball's Iowa High Performance program.

As a player, he competed at Hannibal-LaGrange and played professionally for the Great Lakes Lightning. A Chicago native, he starred at Saint Patrick High School, leading his team to a top-50 national ranking.

"We are excited to name Daniel Cabrera as our next head volleyball coach. Daniel has been an important part of our program and has earned this opportunity through his leadership, work ethic and commitment to the development of our student-athletes. We are confident he will build on the foundation that has been established and continue moving Grambling State Volleyball forward."

Grambling State Unveils 2026 Volleyball Slate

By: GSU Athletic Communications

GRAMBLING, La. | The Grambling State University volleyball team has announced its 2026 schedule, highlighted by one home tournament, and 11 regular-season matches inside the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center.

The Tigers schedule features 17 non-conference contests before opening conference play in late September.

Grambling State unofficially opens the season with a pair of exhibition matches, hosting Henderson State on Aug. 16 before traveling to ULM on Aug. 24.

The Tigers officially begin the regular season at the West Georgia Tournament from Aug. 28-30.

At the West Georgia Tournament, the Tigers face Presbyterian on Aug. 28 at 10 a.m., followed by matchups against host West Georgia on Aug. 29 at 6 p.m. and Northwestern

State on Aug. 30 at 1 p.m.

Grambling State returns home on Sept. 2 to host Nicholls at 6 p.m. before making the trip to Tuscaloosa to take on Alabama on Sept. 7 at 5 p.m..

The Tigers will host and participate in the Grambling State & Louisiana Tech Tournament from Sept. 10-12.

The stretch begins with a road contest at Louisiana Tech on Sept. 10 at 6:30 p.m, followed by home matches against McNeese on Sept. 11 at 6 p.m. and Northwestern State on Sept. 12 at 1 p.m. inside the Hobdy Assembly Center.

Following a road match at Nicholls on Sept. 16, Grambling State closes out the stretch at the Cowgirl Classic, facing Oral Roberts on Sept. 18 at 6 p.m. before taking on host McNeese on Sept. 19 at 1 p.m.

SWAC play begins on the road with trips to Alcorn State on Sept. 25, Southern on Sept. 27 and Arkansas-Pine Bluff on Sept. 30.

The Tigers continue conference action with road matches at Bethune-Cookman on Oct. 9 and Florida A&M on Oct. 11 before returning home for a five-match homestand against Prairie View A&M (Oct. 16), Texas Southern (Oct. 18), Arkansas-Monticello (Oct. 20), Alabama A&M (Oct. 23) and Alabama State (Oct. 25).

Grambling State closes the month of October on the road at Jackson State on Oct. 30 before visiting Mississippi Valley State on Nov. 1.

The Tigers conclude the regular season with three consecutive home matches against Arkansas-Pine Bluff (Nov. 4), Alcorn State (Nov. 6) and Southern (Nov. 8) before wrapping up conference play at Prairie View A&M on Nov. 13 and Texas Southern on Nov. 15.

The 2026 SWAC Volleyball Championship is scheduled for Nov. 20-22 in Montgomery, Ala., and will be hosted by Alabama State.

GRAMBLING STATE VOLLEYBALL									
2026 SCHEDULE									
SCRAMBLE HENDERSON STATE	8.16	GRAMBLING & LA TECH TOURNAMENT MCNEESE STATE	9.11	BETHUNE-COOKMAN	10.9	MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE	11.1		
SCRAMBLE LOUISIANA AT MONROE	8.24	GRAMBLING & LA TECH TOURNAMENT NORTHWESTERN STATE	9.12	FLORIDA A&M	10.11	ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF	11.4		
WEST GEORGIA TOURNAMENT PRESBYTERIAN	8.28	NICHOLLS	9.16	PRAIRIE VIEW A&M	10.16	ALCORN STATE	11.6		
WEST GEORGIA TOURNAMENT WEST GEORGIA	8.29	ORAL ROBERTS	9.18	TEXAS SOUTHERN	10.18	SOUTHERN	11.8		
WEST GEORGIA TOURNAMENT NORTHWESTERN STATE	8.30	MCNEESE STATE	9.19	ARKANSAS AT MONTICELLO	10.20	PRAIRIE VIEW A&M	11.13		
NICHOLLS	9.2	ALCORN STATE	9.25	ALABAMA A&M	10.23	TEXAS SOUTHERN	11.15		
ALABAMA	9.7	SOUTHERN	9.27	ALABAMA STATE	10.25				
GRAMBLING & LA TECH TOURNAMENT LOUISIANA TECH	9.10	ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF	9.30	JACKSON STATE	10.30				
							HOME AWAY TOURNAMENT	100	

Grambling State Selected for 3rd Annual Chris Paul HBCU Classic

The Chris Paul HBCU Classic is rolling into Washington, D.C., and CareFirst Arena is about to feel like the epicenter of Black college basketball for one packed weekend.

Nine programs and a future Hall of Famer's vision are coming together on Dec. 4-5 for an event the coaches involved say is meant to highlight HBCU hoops culture and opportunity.

For Grambling State's Patrick Crarey, the invite doubles as a stamp of approval on the Tigers' rise.

"It's a testament to the continued growth and recognition of our program and an outstanding opportunity to once again showcase Grambling State University on a national stage...Events like this celebrate the excellence, tradition, and culture of HBCU basketball while providing our student-athletes with an unforgettable experience," Crarey said.

Clark Atlanta head coach Alfred Jordan knows exactly what this stage means for his program.

"We are incredibly grateful



for the opportunity to compete in the Chris Paul HBCU Classic once again. This marks the third time our program has had the privilege of participating in such a prestigious event, and we don't take that opportunity for granted...Our team is looking forward to competing at a high level, representing Clark Atlanta University with pride, and embracing every challenge that comes our way," Jordan said.

Florida A&M head coach Charlie Ward sees the Classic as the kind of spotlight his team has earned.

"Being part of the Chris Paul

HBCU Classic is a great opportunity for our program and for FAMU. This is exactly the kind of stage our guys deserve, and I'm excited for Rattler Nation to see us compete on it. Chris Paul has built something special for HBCU basketball, and we're proud to be part of it," Ward said.

The move to D.C. only adds juice. Tennessee State head coach Nolan Smith, who led the Tigers to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in more than 30 years last season, is already leaning into the hometown hoops energy.

"Our program is very excited to travel to Washington, D.C. to play in my brother Chris Paul's Event. The basketball scene in D.C. will be electric, and we hope to add to the electricity. We are headed up to play in two big-time games," Smith said.

Paul, who was the brainchild of the event, said it is special to provide a platform for HBCU basketball teams.

"HBCU basketball has become an important pillar of college sports. As support continues to grow, I'm excited to bring this year's games to the DMV area and provide the teams an opportunity to showcase their talent on a national platform," said Paul.

Chris Paul HBCU Classic Friday Dec. 4

Session 1

- Winston-Salem State vs. Clark Atlanta
- Virginia State vs. West Virginia State

Session 2

- Hampton vs. FAMU
- Grambling vs. Tennessee State

Saturday Dec. 5

Session 1

- 3rd Place Game (Non-Division I)
- Championship Game (Division I)

Session 2

- FAMU vs. Tennessee State
- Hampton vs. Howard

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