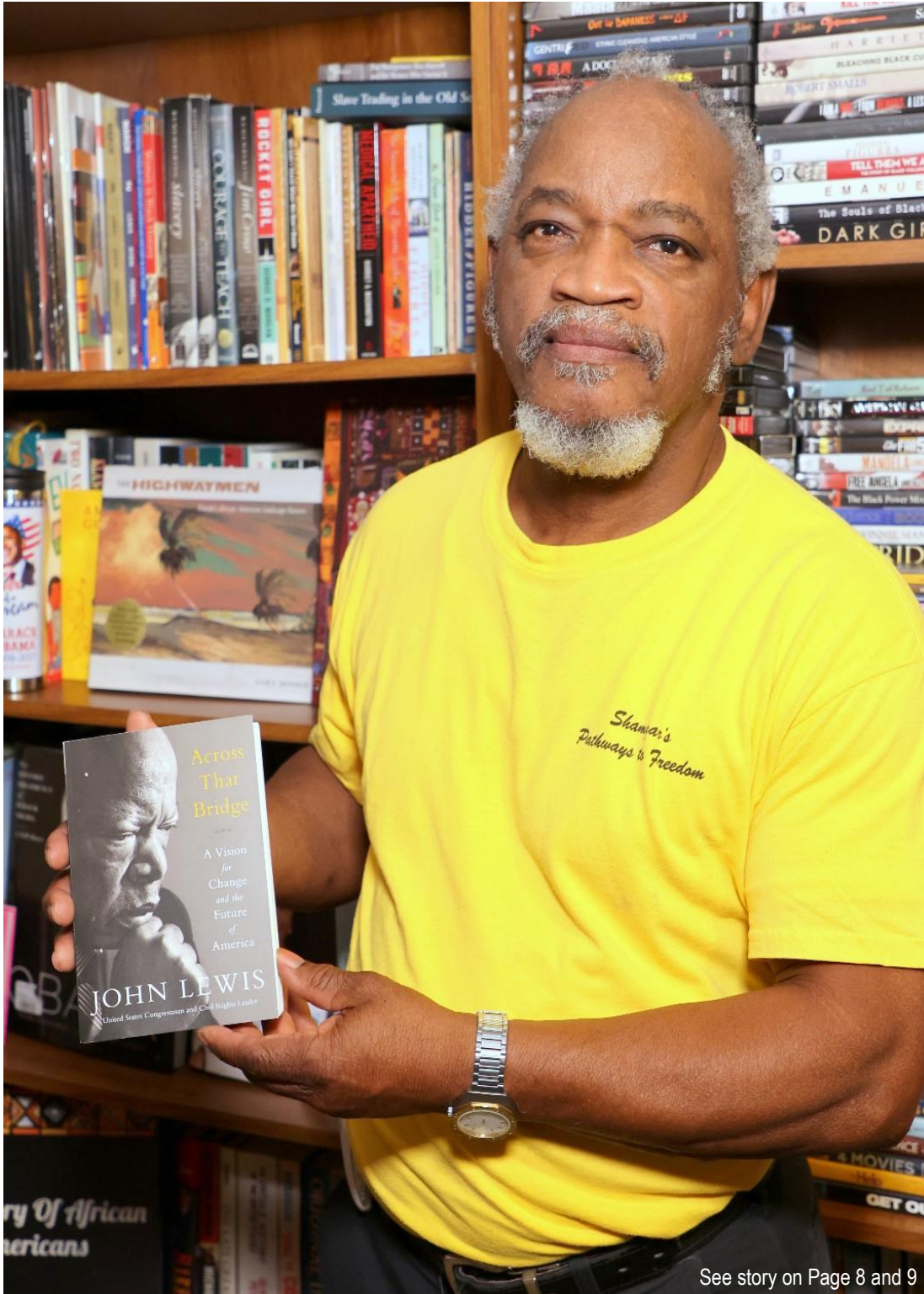


## PATHWAYS TO FREEDOM



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Ernie Mills Park**

**Celebrating Local Leaders  
Who Make A Difference**

**Break Barriers:  
A Stepping Stone to Success**

**Pathways to Freedom Exhibit:  
Celebrating Our Heritage and  
Culture Year-Round**

**He's Just So Different: (5 Tips  
to Raising a Non-Traditional Son)**

**Town Hall Meeting with  
City of Ocala Mayor Ben Marciano**

### **BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM: AFRICAN AMERICAN BUSINESSES IN MARION COUNTY**

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks will host a new program for Black History Month, African American Business in Marion County, at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave. on Tuesday, Feb. 6, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. No registration required.

Celebrate Black History Month while reflecting on the rich history of African American Business here in Marion County. Contributions to the growth of Marion County will be highlighted during the program.

Guest speakers include: Monica Bryant, Town Talk Magazine; Mdumisi Khumalo & Tiffany Adams Khumalo, Natures' Wellness Care LLC; and Howard Gunn, Ag-Grow Consultants. Performances by Sean T. of SeanT Music Global will be performing a Steele Drum Solo, and Mitzi Berryan and Cher-re Berryan will be performing a special Praise Dance.

Light refreshments will be served. This program is sponsored by Aetna and Vertex Retirement.

For more information about Ocala Recreation and Parks, go to [www.ocalafl.gov/recpark](http://www.ocalafl.gov/recpark) or call (352) 368-5517.

*Our mission is to record the rich history of the people, places and events in the community and share information that impacts the lives of residents in Marion County.*



# TOWN Talk MAGAZINE

Sharing the good news happening  
in our community.

### Founders

Monica Bryant & Cynthia Wilson-Graham

### Editor

Monica Bryant

### Photography/Editor

Cynthia Wilson-Graham

### Contributors

Scott Hackmyer

Elgin Carelock

### Let's Talk

#### We want to hear from you:

Email your submissions, events,  
comments or questions to

**Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com.**

Please include contact information  
(name and phone number) on the  
submission. Deadline is the first  
Monday of each month for the  
following month's publication.

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**or Towntalkmagazine.org**

## EDITOR'S DESK



It's Black History Month and I'm looking forward to attending the activities and events planned locally this month to recognize, and in some cases, remember the contributions and sacrifices others made to make our community a better place.

Usually, we celebrate the accomplishments of African American pioneers like Dr. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela who have paved the way and made significant contributions in shaping our future as well as their role in U.S. History.

While it's important to do that, I love the idea that again this year, we are recognizing local pioneers, (the 2024 Black History Archives Nominees on page 5) who live in our community and we're able to see how their accomplishments have made Ocala/Marion County not just a better place to live, but a great place.

If you're one of those people wondering why we need to celebrate and designate a whole month to honor the achievements and contributions of African Americans. Two words: It's Necessary! And if we don't, who will?

Initially, Black History Month was a way of teaching students and young people about our contributions since many stories had been largely forgotten and were a neglected part of the national narrative, according to Zeba Blay, a Ghanaian-American writer, film and cultural critic and former senior culture writer for the Huffington Post. Now, she said, it's viewed as a celebration of those who've impacted not just the country, but the world with their activism and achievements. It's an opportunity to understand Black histories, going beyond stories of racism and slavery to spotlight Black achievement.

Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian Heritage Month and all the other months dedicated to marginalized people are not part of some conspiracy that won't let white people join in on the fun, according to information in Blay's article "Why We Don't Need A White History Month." Blay said while these month-long celebrations are important, there's nothing particularly "fun" about recognizing that if a month wasn't designated to celebrating our culture and race, maybe it never would be.

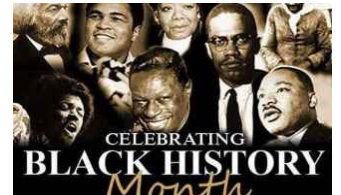
"It isn't inherently racist to be proud of your race or culture or to want them recognized and celebrated," Blay wrote. "Yet, it's important to remember that "Black Lives Matter" does not mean "White Lives Do Not Matter" and the existence of a Black History Month does not mean white people have not made significant contributions to the history of the world." We know they have!

We all have something we can do to make the world around us and our community a better place. We are definitely stronger together, and if we join hands and work together, we may be able to find solutions to address issues in our community i.e. Homelessness, Affordable Housing, Mental Illness, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence and Gun Violence that's affecting our community.

Let's Talk!

*Monica Bryant*

Monica T. Bryant, Editor



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# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## A DUNNELTON TREASURE: ERNIE MILLS PARK



**Ernest "Ernie" Mills**

Playing professional ball was definitely a dream Ernest "Ernie" Mills had, but he dreamed of playing in the NBA and not the NFL.

Growing up, Mills admired NFL players O.J. Simpson, who played 11 seasons primarily with the Buffalo Bills and is regarded as one of the greatest running backs of all time; Tony Dorsett, who played for the Dallas Cowboys and Denver Broncos; and Quarterback Roger Staubach, who played 11 seasons with the Dallas Cowboys. But it was Julius Erving, a professional basketball player commonly known by the nickname "Dr. J," that he admired the most for his love of basketball, his skills and how he carried himself.

After playing for the Dunnellon Steelers in middle school and the Dunnellon Fighting Tigers at Dunnellon High School (DHS), he accepted an athletic scholarship in 1986 to attend the University of Florida in Gainesville, FL. from 1987 to 1990.

Mills, who was born in Dunnellon, FL on October 28, 1968, is the oldest son of Maxine Thomas. After graduating from DHS, he was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1991 at the age of 22. It was during his first regular season game that year, he realized that playing ball in the NFL, not the NBA, was no longer going to be just a dream, but a reality. During his career, he played wide receiver for the Carolina Panthers and the Dallas Cowboys.

Mills attributed his success to seeing it done at every level of football and watching his cousin make it at every level, although he wasn't a big guy.

"Having a backup plan should only make you work harder on your first plan," is his advice for anyone who wants to play a competitive sport on a national level. "Compete to win each game and the rest will fall in place."

It worked out for Mills!

He retired from the NFL in 2000 and from coaching in 2015. He finished his nine-year NFL career with 196 receptions for 2,934 yards and 20 touchdowns. Now, he enjoys spending his free time playing golf.

Mills said there's too many memorable moments to list about growing up in Dunnellon, a small town located on the Rainbow and Withlacoochee rivers.

"Dunnellon has been great to me. Enjoying family and friends and competing for championships with my great teammates in youth and high school sports," he said.

The small town Mills grew up in honored him by naming a park after the former college and professional football player. He said while the facility was being completed, he was contacted and asked if it was ok to name the park after him.

"I was shocked and honored," Mills said. "I never dreamed of anything like this and it's still surreal."



**Ernie Mills Family Members**



Ernie Mills Park, located at 11899 Bostick Street, Dunnellon, FL., includes a basketball court, jogging track, covered staging area, playground, concession area, BBQ grills, picnic tables and restrooms. The park is often used for birthday parties, concerts and community celebrations. Admission is free.

Mills was in attendance at a ribbon cutting held in October 2023 to celebrate renovations and the re-opening of the park. The beautification project was funded by a grant from Duke Energy.

Mills said the park that bears his name is about a mile from where he lives. Although he hasn't spent much time there lately, he said he plans to start walking there soon.

Despite his many accomplishments, Mills just wants to be remembered for being a "good person and a down-to-earth guy."

To reserve the park call Public Services at **(352) 465-8590** for parties with 25 people or less. Reservations for parties of 25 or more are considered a special event and can be permitted by calling the Community Development Department at **(352) 465-8500 ext. 1010**.

The **Community Spotlight** highlights a person, place or event in our community. Tell us what's happening around town so we can share your **Good News** with others. Email submissions to [Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com](mailto:Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com).

# CELEBRATING LOCAL LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

More than 20 years after being inducted into the Black History Museum Archives, Narvella Haynes, a longtime community activist, still has no idea who nominated her.

Haynes, who's community service and involvement earned her the prestigious honor, remembers visiting the museum one day and saying to herself that one day she hoped she would be in there too.

"This was years before I got it. I looked at the people that were in there and I knew what they had done and the impact that they had made in the community," she said. "I never thought at that age and time that I would be considered."

Haynes is among more than 150 community leaders who have been inducted into the archives since its inception. On Friday, February 23, at 6 p.m. the 2024 Black History Archives Nominees will be inducted at the annual Black History Awards Gala at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave.

"It shows the contributions they've made to the community," said Davida Randolph, Program Manager at Howard Academy Community Center. "It's not just their contributions, but each and every one of them have something special that they do for the community when it comes to helping people with their rent, their lights and day to day bills."

The annual event acknowledges the accomplishments and contributions of individuals who have made and continue to make contributions to the Ocala/Marion County community.

Dr. Barbara Brooks, who graduated from what was then known as Howard Elementary School, said she knows all the people who were inducted back then and now her name and her picture is a part of that. Brooks, founder and president of R.A.M.A.L., a local organization which specializes in social services and education and her tireless efforts to improve the community, was inducted into the archives last year.

"I just feel really, really honored that I was chosen to be among all the honorees. I want people to remember that I tried to do my best to help people. I want to improve their lives and I want to improve the community," Brooks said. "That's why I strive all the time, all these years to do what I can do and try to show up, speak up and take action."



Sponsorships, Tickets and Ads can be purchased at the Howard Academy Office or online

### Sponsorship Packages

**Peace Sponsor - \$2,000**  
 One Peace Table for 10  
 1 Full Page Ad in Program Booklet  
 Acknowledgement during Awards Gala  
 Acknowledgement on all social media platforms

**Joy Sponsor - \$1,500**  
 8 Gala Tickets  
 1 Full Page Ad in Program Booklet  
 Acknowledgement during Awards Gala  
 Acknowledgement on all social media platforms

**Love Sponsor - \$1,000**  
 4 Gala Tickets  
 1 Half Page Ad in Program Booklet  
 Acknowledgement during Awards Gala  
 Acknowledgement on all social media platforms

**Harmony Sponsor - \$500**  
 1 Gala Ticket  
 1 Half Page Ad in Program Booklet  
 Acknowledgement during Awards Gala  
 Acknowledgement on all social media platforms

**Individual Tickets: \$65.00 per person**  
**Table of 10: \$800.00**

*Program Booklet Advertising Opportunities*

<b>Full Page</b> \$200.00	<b>Half Page</b> \$150.00
<b>Inside Covers (2)</b> \$300.00	<b>Back Cover (1)</b> \$400.00

All ads must be print ready in jpeg or png form and can be emailed to Davida.Randolph@marion.k12.fl.us. ADS ARE DUE NO LATER THEN 2/9/2024. NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR.

Last year the event sold out, so Randolph encourages anyone who plans to attend to purchase their tickets early. Individual tickets cost \$65 and a table that seats 10, and includes reserved seating and name on the table, costs \$800. No tickets will be sold at the door. Sponsorship packages ranging from \$2,000 to \$500 and opportunities to advertise in the program booklet are also available.

Proceeds from the event will go to Howard Academy and be used to continue providing programs to the community and the Black History Museum of Marion County.

Established in 2004, the museum is located inside Howard Academy Community Center, formerly Howard High School, in northwest Ocala, 306 N.W. 7th Ave.

Randolph said her long-term vision for the museum and archives is to open it up to the public so people can learn more about the contributions of African Americans in West Ocala.

For questions or more information, call (352) 671-4175.

To purchase tickets, tables, ads, sponsorships or to make a donation to support the event, please go to:

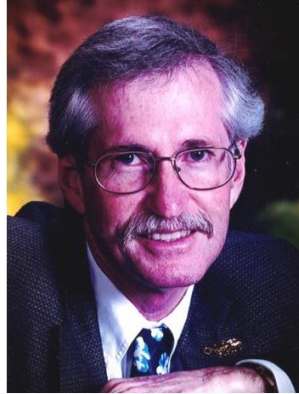
<https://marionschools.revtrak.net/HACC/hacc-black-history-award-gala/#/list>

# 2024 Black History Archives Nominees



*Rev. Eric Cummings*

## *Unsung Hero Award*



*Edwin Farmer*



*Lena Hopkins Smith*

## *Beacons of Light Award*



*Judge LeAnn Mackey Barnes*



*Dennis McFatten*



*Katrina Colston*



*Adjahnae Piner*



*Winsome Jacobs*

# BREAK BARRIERS: A STEPPING STONE TO SUCCESS

Robert Tyler never imagined he would be doing the work he's doing, but it has helped him understand his purpose in life. Tyler, Founder and CEO of Break Barriers, was inspired to create the nonprofit organization after so many barriers stood in his way after he was released from prison.

"I was determined to fix my mistakes and change for the better, but I faced an insurmountable number of obstacles such as legislative legal requirements that prevented me, and millions of others, from voting, obtaining adequate housing, employment and education," he said. "A lot of times after release, people want to do the right thing, but they don't have the proper support or resources to do so. That's why we created Break Barriers."

Break Barriers, which branched off from MECCA 2020, Inc., was founded in Gainesville, FL in 2015 by Tyler, Sherri Tyler, Alfred Russell and Khadijah Muhammad, all residents of Gainesville. The primary goal of MECCA, which stands for Muslims Engaged in Community and Civic Activities, is to combat prejudice and challenge negative perceptions of Muslims that arose after 9/11. They also wanted to showcase the immense good the Muslim community contributes to society. Break Barriers focuses on breaking down the barriers that stand in the way of the underserved population of releasees. One of their notable initiatives, "The Downtown Project," which provided hot meals to 300 to 400 homeless individuals every weekend, still continues. The organization moved to Ocala from Gainesville two years ago and is located at the Marion County Community Foundation.



**Robert Tyler, Founder/CEO**

"Break Barriers aims to reduce recidivism and build a community that is safer and more prosperous for all of us," Tyler said. "I believe the root cause of crime is not having the resources needed to overcome recidivism. Resources like social services, community support or education services geared toward helping the formerly incarcerated succeed in the workforce."

On Saturday, April 13, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., the organization is hosting IBreakBarriers 2nd Chance Event, its first big fundraiser, at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave. The event includes a guest performance by American Gospel Singer Vickie Winans, an elaborate 7-course meal and an African Art Auction and Fashion show. Pastor Rhella Murdaugh, Mt. Zion AME Church, is the event host.

April is Second Chance month, which aims to reaffirm the importance of supporting the formerly incarcerated in reentering society. 100% of the proceeds will be used to provide their clients with bus passes, proper work attire, haircuts, food and/or help with shelter expenses. Currently, 200 tickets are available and cost \$100 per person or \$900 for a table of 10 if purchased before March 13. Tickets at the door, if available, will cost \$150.

"We must come together to provide these individuals with the resources they need to be successful after incarceration. Without a home and a good paying job, many of these individuals revert to committing the same crimes that sent them to prison in the first place, said Amari Graves, Program Director for Break Barriers. "If they were able to provide for themselves or their families legally, I believe a lot of the crime would stop."



Graves said she knew in some capacity, that this was the path her life would take. She became involved with MECCA last year when Tyler's group was mentoring her sister who is incarcerated. She loved what they were doing and shared her vision of a program she wanted to start to help a similar demographic. She was asked to join the team, and they branched off as Break Barriers.

"I was raised without my parents because they were both in prison, so I knew from a young age that I wanted to do something that would help kids going through what I went through," she said. "By getting their parents on their feet, they're in turn able to create better lives for their children."

The most challenging part of working with this population is the lack of support the community offers this demographic, Graves said.

"It can be challenging to look past someone's convictions when you've never ventured down the wrong path," she said. "But this is the US, the land of second chances, so we believe that after these individuals have served their sentences and committed to change, their mistakes should be forgiven and a new life should begin."

**Amari Graves, Program Director** Most of their referrals come from word of mouth inside the Department of Corrections, but anyone who needs assistance or wants to make a donation, can visit their website at [www.ibreakbarriers.org](http://www.ibreakbarriers.org). They are always in need of volunteers and donations.

The biggest challenge is raising enough funds to build a facility to house their clients after they're released. Tyler said they have purchased the land, but are struggling to raise enough funds for the construction of the building. The goal is to be able to provide up to 15 people at a time with a stable home as they gain the training and education needed to secure a good job, car, etc., to be successful on their own.

The organization, which currently has four staff members and roughly 25 volunteers, has assisted more than 100 people in the state of Florida within the last three years. All services, including 2nd Chance Mentoring, assistance with employment, education services and housing navigation until construction of their housing facility is complete, are provided free of charge to their clients. Once the organization's 10-Step Entrepreneurial Program is fully developed, it will help entrepreneurs develop their own businesses.

"The most rewarding part of working with this population is seeing these individuals become productive members of society and helping fellow inmates along the same journey," Tyler said.

**Continued on page 9**

# HE'S JUST SO DIFFERENT (5 TIPS TO RAISING A NON-TRADITIONAL SON)

**By Elgin Carelock, Chairman of the Greater Ocala Community Development Corporation**

Growing up an American male in the 70s and 80s, there were clearly defined models and expectations for our lives. Men liked sports and cars and were expected to either go to college or the military, get married, raise children, own a home and find a good job and retire after 30 years.

There were a few variations in that scenario, like artists, musicians, entertainers and professional athletes, but by and large the male experience was about being as macho as possible, working hard, enduring hard knocks and making a positive contribution to your family, community and society.

As we Baby Boomers and Gen Xers began living our adult lives, we wanted to expose our children to all the things we did not have during our childhood. We wanted them to see more art and culture, travel, take advantage of new technologies like home computers and the Internet.

This awakening allowed our children to experience the full range of possibilities of who they could be in the future, and many decided to go away from the traditional definitions of what it means to be a "man." This awakening also caused an expansion in the number of exceptionally intelligent boys, who were not interested in sports, getting married or even working for a company for a lifetime.

As the father of two non-traditional children (male and female), I wanted to speak specifically to other men about how to navigate a male child that is outside of your expectations. More specifically, share five tips I used during my son's life to move us to the closeness we have today.

## **1. Take the time to listen to who they say they are**

Although they may be under 18, it is very important to hear how they view themselves. Don't make faces or offer opinions, just listen. Make mental notes and after they share with you, be curious and ask questions. The purpose of the questions should not be to talk them out of anything, but to understand where their mindset is at that point.

Ask when they first began identifying with their view and if there was anything that made them realize this was the route for them. Be prepared to accept whatever they say good or bad without putting your biases and insecurities into the conversation.

## **2. Research their interests**

You don't have to share their passions, but it is pivotal that you understand them. Take the time to research their interest enough to be able to have intelligent conversation. Use proper vernacular and ask questions about anything you did not understand.

This will show your son a level of respect that will open the door for you to ask questions about aspects of their journey that concerns you from a practical sense. If he feels you understand who he is and where he wants to go, then he will feel it only natural that you bring up points that concern you and will be willing to clarify if possible. If he is unable to clarify, don't use that reason to get him to change course, rather offer for the two of you to research together and find the answer.

## **3. Attend meetings and conferences of their peers**

Whether your son is interested in anime, ballet or robotics make sure you go with them to club meetings, conferences and events. Once again this is an opportunity for you to better understand who your son is and what types of influences he will encounter as he pursues this lifestyle or interest. Talk to other parents you meet and find out what they do to support their child and see if there are opportunities for you to do the same. If not exactly, you may be able to use certain aspects of their strategies to establish a stronger line of communication with your son.

## **4. Find common ground**

As you gain greater insight into your son, you will be able to identify things you have in common. For me and my son it was and still is music. For many years, I would introduce my son to different types of music. There were some he liked and others he did not, so I began asking him to share music he liked with me. Let's just say he has very eclectic taste in music, but I also learned of artists that are now in my library.

Another thing we shared was riding rollercoasters. In fact, my whole family liked riding rollercoasters, so we would travel all over the U.S. riding rollercoasters we found online or saw on videos. My son and I would search for the highest, fastest and craziest rollercoasters and challenge the girls to ride them.

When he got to high school, my son became interested in boxing and MMA, which was in my wheelhouse and we got to watch many matches and discuss strategies, training regimens of the top athletes and what it takes to remain a champion. It also gave me an opportunity to talk to him about self-defense and how to protect himself in various situations.

## **5. Be his Father**

Above all things, use the tips that I am sharing with you to build a relationship of trust that will eventually allow you an opportunity to impart wisdom into your son. This wisdom can come in many forms and will last his whole life. Yes, he will seek his own way when he gets older, but you will also find he will consult you on life changing decisions.

Fatherhood is tough enough as we watch our sons go through the various challenges of each stage of growth. The world and people around them will give them a hard enough time for being different or nontraditional.

We as fathers must create a sanctuary for our sons, so they can feel free to express themselves and to become the best person they can. We don't always have to agree with the path they choose, but we are obligated to provide them with the best possible outcomes.

Get to know your son, learn to understand the language he is speaking, and you will be surprised how much you are alike.

*Elgin Carelock is the CEO and Chief Strategist of re-View Business Strategies, Inc. (RBS) a growth focused, strategic planning and business development company with over 25 years of professional experience in the areas of sales, marketing, advertising, brand development and customer service. He is the founder of the Build A Better Business Series. Contact Elgin at [ecarelock@re-viewyourbusiness.com](mailto:ecarelock@re-viewyourbusiness.com) or (404) 993-7189 for questions or more information or go to [www.rbsknowledge.com](http://www.rbsknowledge.com).*



# PATHWAYS TO FREEDOM EXHIBIT: CELEBRATING



History in general was not one of those subjects Rev. Leroy S. Chandler enjoyed while he attended school, but African American history has always been important to him.

Chandler, now retired, said history was a necessary assignment to his education, but not impacting, but now with the knowledge of self, he realizes he didn't enjoy it because we were not included in the history they studied.

But a request to do a lecture at a prison facility he was ministering at 20 years ago changed his path. After doing some research for the lecture in two counties, two colleges and a university, he couldn't find a museum and/or an exhibit that existed.

"As many have said and it continues to be said, if you do not know where you come from, how do you understand where you are going," he said. "To know that we must illuminate the past. When we do not know our own history, we leave it to someone else's discretion."

## Rev. Leroy S. Chandler

Chandler, pastor of New Saint Paul Church, Inc. in Flemington, is participating in Legacy Day 2024 on Saturday, February 17, from 8 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Fessenden Elementary School Gymnasium, 4200 N.W. 89th Place. The event, sponsored by the PTO and Alumni Associations of Fessenden Elementary, is open to the public and features the Pathways to Freedom exhibit, a memorial ceremony and special presentation at 11 a.m., food and fun activities. The theme for the event is "Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present, Preparing for the Future."

"It's imperative that people know who they are and that they have a heritage. When they do not, they will often take on that of someone else and attempt to live according to another culture," Chandler said. "This happens when a people's history is hidden or stolen. We then must get into a recovery mode for our history. Pathways to Freedom helps in that recovery."

Black History Month is celebrated each year in the United States during the month of February. Carter G. Woodson started the annual observance to expose school children to black history and that Black Americans and others would be able to see all of the contributions Blacks had made to the advance of human civilization. Since its origins in the 1920s, Black History Month has been assigned a theme. This year, the theme is "African Americans and the Arts," according to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

"Black History Month should assuredly continue to be recognized and celebrated; however, I have a fear that too much of our focus may be toward one month of the year and not enough emphasis is placed on our history the other eleven," Chandler said. "We never limited our exhibit displays to February and June. Our heritage and culture should be celebrated year-round."

The motto for Pathways to Freedom, which includes several thousand pieces is: Teaching to Bring About Truth, Awareness and Peace. Chandler said the entire exhibit has never been set up, but the portion they display now using 100 eight-foot tables requires 10 to 12 people working 14 to 16 hours constantly, which is why the number of times they set up the exhibit has been reduced from eight to 10 down to two or three times a year.



The classic Mossi household

Chandler has collected pieces from various locations in Georgia, North and South Carolina, numerous shops, flea markets throughout Florida and on a mission trip to Haiti. The first items collected were known as the Great American documents, i.e. The Declaration of Independence and The Bill of Rights. Two of his favorite pieces include "Hondo" and the "Mossi Family." Hondo is the name of a statue that represents a black warrior as he stands with a spear from Kenya and a shield from Zimbabwe, both several years old. The Mossi family represents a black family that works together supporting and protecting each other.

The PTO & Alumni Associations of Fessenden Elementary Presents:

## LEGACY DAY 2024

REMEMBERING THE PAST - CELEBRATING THE PRESENT - PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

### BRIEF HISTORY OF FESSENDEN ELEMENTARY

Fessenden Elementary School has a rich history beginning in 1868. Local freed African American families established a school on the current grounds. Originally called the Union School, it grew in response to the need for black student education in the segregated Deep South. In 1899, Ferdinand Fessenden supported the school's development, and the school was renamed in his honor upon his death. Joseph L. Wiley, a pivotal figure, expanded the school's reach and secured funding for its development. Fessenden faced challenges but continued to thrive, eventually becoming Fessenden High School in 1951. After 1971, it became Fessenden Elementary School. Fessenden's Parent Teacher Organization is supported by dedicated members of the alumni as well as community volunteers. In 1994, the school grounds were designated a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2024**  
**FESSENDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GYMNASIUM**  
**4200 NW 89TH PLACE, OCALA, FLORIDA 34482**

**8AM - 4PM: CP's PATHWAYS TO FREEDOM BLACK HISTORY EXHIBIT & MINISTRY OF SHAMGAR MINISTRIES, INC. (OPEN TO THE PUBLIC)**  
**11AM - 11:30AM: OPENING CEREMONY (ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND)**

**\*\* FOOD AND FUN ACTIVITIES ON SITE \*\***

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

PRINCIPAL STACIE NEWMONES (352) 671 - 4935 STACIE.NEWMONES@MARION.K12.FL.US	LINDA WARD (PTO PRESIDENT) (954) 993- 4249
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The exhibit is set up on a timeline and offers 22 stations of African American history including the Negro League Baseball, Black History stamps and Black Military firsts, which are military groups including the Buffalo Soldiers, Tuskegee Airmen, Montford Point Marines, the Triple Nickels and others many blacks are not familiar with. One aspect that is not included in the exhibit is more than 1,500 books, 400 documentaries and movies on African American history, which does not include magazines, periodicals and calendars. There are also more than 1,400 LP's (vinyl's) and many 75 and 45 rpm records.

What I really want people to know is the depth of knowledge contained within this exhibit and how important it is for our children to know our history," Chandler said. "I recently spoke with a third and seventh grader who did not know what slavery was. We have a duty to teach not for the purpose of hate but for peace, understanding and knowledge of self."

Chandler said the time it takes to view the exhibit totally depends on the individual viewing it.

"I have seen, sadly, young people that have walked through the exhibit in 15 minutes and other people who have spent several hours in it only to return on another day to spend more time," he said.

Continued on page 9



# OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE YEAR-ROUND

Continued from page 8

When choosing a name for the exhibit, Chandler said several were suggested, however, the name was chosen after some great men who fought for freedom.

“Malcolm and Martin, Meager and Marshall and Marcus and Mandela all approached the fight from different perspectives, but they were all for the same purpose, therefore pathways,” he said.

The ultimate goal for the exhibit is to establish the Pathways to Freedom African American Education and Cultural Center. He said the center would be multi-cultural, but to make it a reality it would take a lot of money, he believes exists already, even in the black community. Chandler said they do accept donations, and several people have committed to give a one-time donation and others give on an annual basis.

“Ignorance breeds anger and anger, if not properly dealt with, can bring about very violent results. The answer to ignorance is knowledge, hence, the Pathways to Freedom Exhibit,” he said. “My hope is that people leave with more truths, greater awareness of what blacks have contributed to this and other countries and more peace in and between the races.”



Rev. Leroy S. Chandler

For more information or to donate to support the exhibit, contact Chandler on his Cell: (352) 209-6838; at New Saint Paul Church: (352) 591-6091 or email [shamgarpathways0204@gmail.com](mailto:shamgarpathways0204@gmail.com).

Continued from page 6



Willie Williams is one of those individuals who have turned his life around. Tyler said he was finally exonerated after being incarcerated for 43 years for a crime he did not commit. Williams came to their organization for assistance after he was released in 2021. He received financial assistance and mentorship through their 2nd Chance Mentoring Program, where he met his wife.

“It is a great pleasure to see the success of Mr. Williams today,” Tyler said.

Break Barriers primary source of funding comes from private donors and the Muslim community has supported them for the last 10 years as well as board members and Tyler.

For questions or information about the organization, follow them on Facebook or Instagram at



To purchase tickets, scan the QR code.

**IBREAKBARRIERS** or contact Tyler at (352) 203-5114 or email [robert@ibreakbarriers.org](mailto:robert@ibreakbarriers.org).

Contact Graves at (904) 840-5092 or email [amari@ibreakbarriers.org](mailto:amari@ibreakbarriers.org) for sponsorship opportunities ranging from \$250 to \$2,500 to support the event.

A black poster with white and colorful text. At the top, it says "STONECREST AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY CLUB Presents". The main title "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" is in large, colorful, block letters. Surrounding the title are the words "Free Entry", "Local Artist", "Music", "Vendors", "Raffle", and "Food". Below the title, it says "AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE ARTS", "Saturday, February 3rd 2 - 5pm", "Donations Accepted for Boys &amp; Girls Club of Marion County", "A Historical Exhibit by Rev. Leroy Chandler", "Stonecrest Community Center", "11050 SE 176th Place Rd.", "Summerfield, FL 34491", and "Contact: Rhonda Follks 352-425-1525".



OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY, INC.

PSI CHI CHAPTER

SERVING OCALA SINCE 1956

# 3rd ANNUAL CHARLES R. DREW BLOOD DRIVE

IF YOU REALLY WANT  
TO LEND A HAND,  
LEND AN ARM.

Saturday, February 10, 2024 / 12:00pm – 4:00pm

New St John,  
Missionary Baptist Church  
2251 NW 2nd St, Ocala, FL 34475

EAT AND DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS &  
MAKE SURE YOU BRING A PHOTO ID!

All donors will receive a gift card & the following free health  
Screenings: cholesterol, blood pressure, iron & blood type.

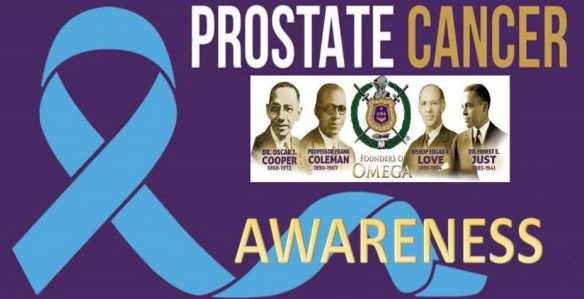
[www.psichiques.com](http://www.psichiques.com)



OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY, INC.

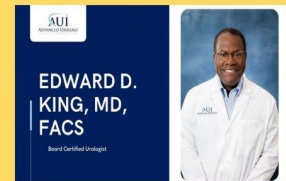
PSI CHI CHAPTER

SERVING OCALA SINCE 1956



Saturday, February 10, 2024 / 11:00am - 12:00pm

New St John, MBC  
2251 NW 2nd St,  
Ocala, FL 34475



Originally from Albany, Georgia, Dr. Edward King received an A.B in biochemistry from Dartmouth College and an M.D. from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. He completed a urology residency at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore and has practiced in Ocala and The Villages, Florida since 1996. Dr. King is a past president of the Marion County Medical Society and a former Chairman of the Department of Surgery at the Ocala Regional Medical Center. He has held numerous leadership positions at the Munroe Regional Medical Center (now Advent Health Ocala) including Chief of the hospital's medical staff and vice-chairman of the Munroe Medical Center Board of Directors.

[www.psichiques.com](http://www.psichiques.com)

Ocala Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.



## Save The Date

May 4th, 2024 ~ 4:00 - 8:00 pm

# Derby Divas

## A Day at the Delta Downs



An evening of elegance and excitement at our Derby Gala Fundraiser & Watch Party!

Join us for an unforgettable blend of food, fun, and festivities all in support of a great cause!

Klein Conference Center  
Ocala, Florida

## Howard Academy Community Center

Cordially invites you to celebrate with us  
the  
Black History Museum of Ocala

### Archive Inductees

Past & Present  
and

Meet the members of the

### African American Administrators Council

Thursday, February 15, 2024  
6:00p.m.

Howard Academy Community Center  
306 N.W. 7th Avenue  
Ocala, FL 34475

For more information,  
call (352) 671-4175

# OPEN CALL TO ARTISTS



**DEADLINE TO APPLY:**  
February 18, 2024

Paint a new Ocala Skate Park panel live during a Levitt AMP concert. Apply online at [www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp](http://www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp).

We're looking for artists to live paint double-sided metal panels (8ft x 4ft) during the 2024 Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series. These newly painted panels will eventually replace the current art panels in the [@ocalaskatepark](https://www.instagram.com/ocalaskatepark).

This opportunity is open to artists currently working and residing in Marion County, and the surrounding counties. All designs will be approved before the start of the 2024 Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series to ensure artwork will be family-friendly, non-political and without copy right infringement. Accepted artists or art groups will receive a \$250 honorarium at the conclusion of the concert series.

For more information and to apply, visit our website at [www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp](http://www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp). Entries can be submitted online, via email to [artinfo@ocalafl.gov](mailto:artinfo@ocalafl.gov) or mailed to City of Ocala Cultural Arts, 201 S.E. 3rd St., 2nd Floor, Ocala, FL 34471. It is FREE to apply.

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ADMINISTRATORS' COUNCIL PRESENTS



Ticket Cost: \$65.00

*Come Jazz with Me!*

**SPONSORED BY:**  
The African-American Administrators' Council

**SATURDAY  
MARCH 23rd  
7PM-10PM**

Mary Sue Rich  
Community Center at  
Reed Place  
1812 N.W. 21st Avenue  
Ocala, Florida 34475

Featuring  
LIVE JAZZ BAND

The  
Next Level  
Production Band

Refreshments & Hors D'oeuvres Provided



## Does Your Preschooler Have Challenging Behaviors?

Sleep Struggles

Temper Tantrums

Whining

Join a FREE Preschool Parenting Program for families with children 3-5 years old.

Tuesdays, beginning February 13, 2024 (Ends May 21, 2024)  
5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Lillian Bryant Community Center, 2200 NW 17th Place, Ocala



Space is limited.  
Registration is required.  
SCAN HERE.



## Child Care & Dinner Provided

Receive a \$50 bonus when you attend at least 11 sessions

For more information, contact Ruth Velez at (352) 369-2315, Option 8 or [ParentingPrograms@ELC-Marion.org](mailto:ParentingPrograms@ELC-Marion.org)

The Incredible Years



United Way  
SUCCESS BY 6

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# TUSCAWILLA SCULPTURE STROLL

Saturday, Feb. 24 | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Free to attend



Celebrate 10 new sculptures displayed through Tusawilla Park with self-guided tours, live music, fair games, and more!

Visit [ocalafl.gov/artpark](http://ocalafl.gov/artpark) for more information or call 352-629-8447.



## Business Spotlight



**Business Name:** Southern Palate Restaurant and Catering

**No. of Employees:** 2

**Business Owner:** Angela Boone

**Business Address:** 12009 South Williams St., Dunnellon, FL 34432

**Business Phone:** (352) 462-7152

**What Year Did You Start Your Business?** 2017

**Hours of Operation:** 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Thursday - Saturday

**Products and/or Services:** Catering and Decorating

**Email:** [Sp.increase@gmail.com](mailto:Sp.increase@gmail.com)

**Website:** N/A

**Are you on Social Media?** Yes

Facebook, Google, Yelp and TripAdvisor

**What or Who Inspired you to start your business?**

I was inspired to start my business because of my passion for cooking and childhood memories of family gatherings. Food often brings people together and I love the fellowship of it all. I want my customers to feel welcomed, like they are part of my family. When they walk through our doors, I don't treat them as if they are a stranger when they visit for the first time. I greet them with a friendly smile and invite them in. First impressions are lasting ones.

**What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty?**

Our specialty at the Southern Palate are the Oxtails and Mac & Cheese. Oh yeah, we cannot leave out the fried chicken and pork chops. These menu items are what my customers rant and rave about. I'm often questioned about what it is that I do that makes these items so tasty? I respond and tell them that I marinate it in prayers and sprinkle in a lot of love.

The Southern Palate is unique in a very special way. It is heartwarming to hear the testimonials of customers that have been diagnosed with illnesses and are having appetite issues and they share with me that my food is not only comforting, but also satisfying.

The **Small Business Profile** is **FREE** and open to small businesses located in Marion County with less than 25 employees or solo entrepreneurs.

To have your business featured in an upcoming edition, please request a form by emailing [Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com](mailto:Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com). Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.

**OCALA**  
Themed Activities • Ocala Street Cruisers  
Dance Lesson by Arthur Murray Dance Center

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @ocalaculturalarts

# '80s

**Retro Sounds**  
at First Friday Art Walk

**FREE**

**March 1 | 6 - 9 p.m.**  
**Downtown Ocala**

**Headliner Carlene Mitchell as Diana Ross & Tina Turner**

For more information visit [ocalafl.gov/retrosounds](http://ocalafl.gov/retrosounds).




GEORGE ALBRIGHT  
 MARION COUNTY TAX COLLECTOR  
 PRESENTS THE  
**14TH ANNUAL CHARITY CAR SHOW**  
 PROCEEDS SUPPORT MARION COUNTY CHARITIES



\* TOP 25 TROPHIES \* PEOPLES CHOICE TROPHY \* MUSIC \* KIDS BOUNCE HOUSE  
 \* FOOD AVAILABLE ON-SITE \* AZALEA SALE \* CRAFT VENDORS \* ANTIQUE VENDORS  
 \* CAR PARTS SWAP SPACES

**SHOW OPEN TO ALL VEHICLES**  
 - PAST & PRESENT -


**MCPHERSON GOV. COMPLEX**  
 503 SE 25TH AVE OCALA, FLORIDA  
 9:00AM-3:00PM FEB 17th 2024

Make checks payable to MCTC Employee Fund \$15.00 Pre-registration by February 15th, 2024 \$20.00 at the gate  
 Mail to: PO BOX 63 all vehicle and car part swap spaces same price.  
 Ocala, FL 34478

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Vehicle Make \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Year/Model \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

By execution of this form I hereby release the Marion County Tax Collector's Office from any or all damages during this event.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 For more information contact Jacob Wicklein at 352-368-8206 or e-mail at jwicklein@mariontax.com



**SAVE THE Date**

**Founders' Day 2024**  
 "Building Better Together"

**February 12th & 13th ● 7:00 P.M. Nightly**


February 12th - Founders' Day Musical  
 February 13th - Founders' Day Program/Director's Address

Reverend Standley Gillings, Sr., Moderator  
 Sister Darion Tyler, Women's Auxillary President  
 Sister Fredna Thornton Wilkerson, Director of Founders' Day

**Second Bethlehem Baptist Association**  
 1205 NW 4th St., Ocala, FL 34475

Marion County Public Library System



**African American Read-In:**  
**A Celebration of Black History Month**



Celebrate a rich heritage in literature, film, music and art with your friends and neighbors. Readers, performers and listeners of all ages welcome!

- Fort McCoy Public Library**, 14660 NE Highway 315, Ft. McCoy  
Monday, February 5, at 11:30 a.m.
- Freedom Public Library**, 5870 S.W. 95th St, Ocala  
Tuesday, February 6, at 3:30 p.m.
- Reddick Public Library**, 15150 NW Gainesville Road, Reddick  
Saturday, February 10, at 11:30 a.m.
- Forest Public Library**, 905 S. Hwy. 314A, Ocklawaha  
Wednesday, February 14, at 11 a.m.
- Dunnellon Public Library**, 20351 Robinson Road, Dunnellon,  
Monday, February 19, at 2 p.m.
- Bellevue Public Library**, 13145 SE County Hwy 484, Bellevue  
Monday, February 19, at 2 p.m.
- Sankofa Public Library**, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave., Ocala  
Monday, February 19, at 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- Marion Oaks Public Library**, 294 Marion Oaks Lane, Ocala  
Wednesday, February 21, at 1 p.m.

The Marion County Chapter of Florida A&M University NAA has scholarship applications available until **February 9, 2024.**

Visit your guidance counselor or simply scan the QR Code to begin your journey as a **RATTLER!**



**THE APPLICATION MUST INCLUDE:**

- ❖ Two letters of recommendation. The letters may come from a teacher, counselor, Principal and/or a community citizen (not related to you)
- ❖ An official high school transcript of grades; the first semester of your senior year must be included.
- ❖ ACT or SAT scores
- ❖ Acceptance letter from Florida A & M University

**Application MUST BE postmarked by Monday, February 9, 2024 - mailed to the address below.**

Marion County Chapter  
 P.O. Box 5191  
 Ocala, FL 34478

**FAMU**  
**RATTLERS**

# MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

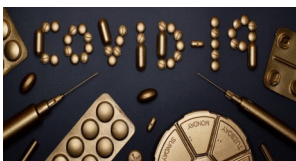
## HOW TO SAVE MONEY BY CHANGING HABITS

Valentine's Day is this month and it makes me think about how specific dates and traditions cost us lots of extra money. You probably have noticed that on certain celebration days, such as Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, going out to dinner or buying flowers can cost triple what it would on another day.



It is great to express your love for your spouse or parent but perhaps a talk between the two of you discussing whether it would be okay to celebrate a few days or a week before or after the actual day could be as special as hitting the exact day. You might even be able to enjoy two or three dinners out together or flowers on multiple days if you just shift the date you celebrate.

Dust is a strange thing to talk about but dust is your enemy. In addition to not being good for your health dust is costing you money. You have probably been running your heater for a couple of months now. Have you remembered to check and change the filter? Both heating systems and air conditioning work more efficiently with good air flow through a clean filter. Be honest, when is the last time you cleaned the dust off of your refrigerator coils? Not only will your refrigerator last longer with clean coils but it will take less electricity to work properly. Do you clean the lint tray on your clothes dryer after every load? A clothes dryer takes a lot of electricity to run. There are lots of ways to make it more efficient and less costly. Clean the lint tray, don't overload the dryer; it is actually more efficient to split large loads into two or three loads than it is to run an overloaded dryer. Don't put bulky or delicate items into your dryer, just air dry them. This is better for these items and cuts your cost. You can try adding a clean, dry towel to each dryer load as this will absorb moisture and help your clothes dry faster.



We all seem to know someone right now with COVID. The drug stores are all selling COVID tests again and have them on display as soon as you walk in the store. If you haven't received FREE COVID-19 tests from the government since

September you can get four test kits for free by going to **COVID.COM**. The site will transfer you to a Postal Service site to place your order. Even postage is free and you can actually request two orders for a total of eight tests. All you have to provide is your name and address. Do not enter any credit card information, if the site asks for it, you are on the wrong site. Better to order it now and have the test kits on hand just in case you need to test.

We have written before about how you might be eligible for a free cell phone but you have one week to apply for a \$30 a month discount on your internet bill through the Affordable Connectivity Program. You must apply, be approved and be enrolled with a service provider by the end of the day on **February 7**. You can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer or tablet from participating providers. You are eligible if you are at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or if you receive SNAP, Medicaid, Section 8, Public Housing, PBRA, SSI, Lifeline Cell Phone, WIC or Veteran Pension or Survivor Benefits. Call **(877) 384-2575** or email **ACPSupport@usac.org** for questions about your eligibility or application. Google Search **Affordable Connectivity Program** for information and instructions on how to apply.

*Save the Date*

**2024**  
**International Women's Day Celebration**

Friday, March 8, 11:30am-1pm  
at the CF Klein Center

**HONORING**  
*Women in Law and Government*

## 'HAMMER IN' AT FORT KING

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department will host the 'Hammer In' at Fort King on Saturday, Feb. 24, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Fort King National Historic Landmark, 3925 E. Fort King St. The event is free and open to the public.

Blacksmiths belonging to the Florida Artist Blacksmith Association (FABA) will be showcasing their talents and skills during Fort King's first 'Hammer In'. May marks the first anniversary of the blacksmith shop opening. Members from the Gainesville and Central Florida region of FABA will celebrate the occasion by designing and forging historically accurate hardware and functional tools to accentuate the Blacksmith Shop, blockhouses and gate doors of the fort. The project will be ongoing until completed.

The public is invited to this free event to see the blacksmith shop in action and learn from masters of the trade as they work around the shop on 15+ portable forges. Forged in the Fire champion, and construction site lead, Keith Hill, will be in attendance to share how he continues to educate the community about 1800s history and techniques.

Parking for this event will be held at the Duke Energy Lot. Signs will be in place directing traffic to the parking area and a shuttle will be available for transportation to the fort.

For more information, go to **www.fortkingocala.com** or call the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department at **(352) 368-5517**.

# History Trip: Howard Academy Community Center

Travel on your own to Howard Academy Community Center, located in northwest Ocala, where you will be met and taken on a tour of the community center, school, and Black History Museum. Howard Academy was opened by the Freedmen's Bureau in 1866 as a school for African American children. Today, Howard is home to the Black History Museum of Marion County, Title I offices, and a variety of community programs. Course fee includes a boxed lunch.

COURSE #: TRI217  
 FEBRUARY 6, 2024  
 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM  
 MEMBERS: \$20; GENERAL PUBLIC: \$25  
 DEADLINE TO REGISTER FEBRUARY 1, 2024

Registered Participants will be driving to Howard Academy Community Center: 306 NW 7th Ave Building 3 Ocala, FL 34475



Master the Possibilities  
 Leading in Lifelong Learning

REGISTER TODAY AT  
 WWW.MASTERTHEPOSSIBILITIES.ORG  
 OR CALL 352-861-9751

MASTER THE POSSIBILITIES ADMITS STUDENTS OF ANY RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL AND ETHNIC ORIGIN, GENDER, GENDER IDENTITY OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION TO ALL THE RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES GENERALLY ACCORDED OR MADE AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL.

# Celebrate African American Businesses in Marion County

Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place  
 1821 NW 21st Ave.



In honor of Black History Month, reflect on the rich history of African American businesses in Marion County. Light refreshments provided.

Tuesday  
 February 6  
 11 AM - 1 PM  
 Ages 50+

For more information:  
 352.401.6980 | OcalaFL.Gov/RecPark



Marion County Public Library System  
 FLORIDA HISTORIES AND THE FRIENDS OF THE OCALA LIBRARY PRESENT

# Florida TALKS



## Magdalena Lamarre

"Southern Road to Freedom:  
 Florida's Underground Railroad"



Discover Florida's early history as a Spanish territory, the escape routes used by runaway slaves and the black communities they established before the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Saturday, Feb. 3, 11 a.m.  
 Sankofa Public Library  
 1821 NW 21st Ave., Ocala | 352-438-2550

Florida HUMANITIES  
 Florida ARTS & CULTURE  
 FRIENDS OF THE OCALA LIBRARY  
 Marion County PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM



## New Zion AME Church Black History Month Program

"The Battle Is Not Yours"

Rev Leroy Johnson Life  
 Story Program

Sunday, February 25, 2024  
 Service Starts At 10:00 a.m.  
 At New Zion A.M.E Church  
 18295 NE 75th St, Williston, FL  
 32696

Pastor  
 Mandela Smith

Speaker  
 Larry Johnson

His Life Story Has Been On TV Networks And  
 Podcasts Across America

**Town Talk Magazine**  
**P.O. Box 6212**  
**Ocala, FL 34478**

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**“Let's Talk”**



**MAYOR  
BEN  
MARCIANO**



**Town  
Hall  
Meeting**

**MARY SUE RICH CENTER  
AT REEDS PLACE  
1821 N.W. 21ST AVE.  
OCALA, FL. 34474**

**OPEN  
TO ALL**

**Wednesday  
March 6, 2024  
6 P.M. – 7 P.M.**

**An opportunity to meet  
your newly elected  
Mayor, and hear him  
share his vision for  
Ocala's future.**

**For More Information:**

**Tara Woods, Community Liaison  
352-369-7182**