

April 2021

# DDOT Contractor Under Fire for Damage to Heritage Trees Six large oak trees are killed by Fort Myer Construction Company

#### BY MIKE GOODMAN

n March 17, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) alerted Southwest community leaders that Fort Myer Construction Company had killed six massive oak trees on the north side of Maine Ave., SW between Arena Stage and The Banks. Fort Myer had been contracted by the DDOT Street Light Division to install a light in that area.

According to a DDOT spokesperson, "While doing work on a streetlight upgrade project, a DDOT contractor erroneously excavated roots from six oak trees along Maine Avenue SW. DDOT's Urban Forestry team was immediately engaged to prevent further harm and assess existing damage. DDOT is working with the contractor to recoup costs associated with the trees' removal and replacement. DDOT has also modified the permit requiring additional



Courtesy of Gail Fast These six heritage trees along Maine Ave., SW were irreparably damaged by a DDOT contractor and face removal. notice and approvals from DDOT's Urban Forestry Division before any additional digging takes place."

Southwest leaders immediately began speaking out, and questions arose about whether DDOT was properly supervising the project and following proper protocol. "This work within the public way was improperly supervised—*if at all*—by both Ft. Myer and DDOT. Even though DDOT now states that they will have inspectors on site until the project is completed, it's too little, too late," says Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Andy Litsky. "DDOT's incredible lack of oversight regarding this contract begs credulity."

In emails obtained by *The South wester*, a DDOT official states that Fort Myer Construction Company did not follow the standards set out in their contract. This has raised questions about

See "Trees," page 16



FREE

THESE CURLS HAVE STRONG ROOTS

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KIDS CORNER Pages 8-9



ARTECHOUSE OPENS 4<sup>TH</sup> CHERRY BLOSSOM SEASON

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SW GARDENS PLANTS NEW INITIATIVES

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# Op-Ed: Planned Eye Street Bike Lane Still Raises Safety Issues



Courtesy of Matt Koehler Section of I Street SW in front of Amidon-Bowen Elementary School where new protected bike lane would go

#### BY MATT KOEHLER

ast month, *The Southwester* published a front page story about the planned protected bike lanes to be installed on I (Eye) Street SW, between South Capitol and 7<sup>th</sup> Street. I hadn't heard of the proposal until reading the article, and generally I'm for it. The stretch of road between Delaware Avenue to South Capitol is a nightmare. It's a sharrow – a particularly dangerous painted road feature that puts cyclists more at risk because drivers don't behave any better simply due to painted lines. A protected bike lane there would be a good idea.

I *am* generally for protected bike lanes everywhere. Within any densely populated urban area, they make sense. After living in DC for nearly a decade, and seeing traffic congestion nightmares, I've become a convert to cycling. It's more environmentally friendly, and, now with eBikes and dedicated lanes throughout the District, a quicker mode of transportation.

It's also safer.

Like many cyclists, I have my own story of getting hit by an impatient and careless driver. Unlike many cyclists, though, I sustained only superficial injuries but still carry the persistent anxiety of getting hit any time I'm on the road. So the more protected lanes for cyclists, the better.

However, I don't think putting a protected bike lane on Eye Street, particularly between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, is the best solution. That stretch of road is more residential, including several churches and Amidon-Bowen Elementary School.

See "Bike Lane," page 19

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# Phase II of The Yards Set to Begin this Year

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

rookfield Properties announced plans last month for Phase II of The Yards in Navy Yard. In a press release dated Feb. 16, the real estate services company unveiled a plan for 3.4 million square feet of development, mixed-income residential offerings, a "main street" stretching between the Navy Yard metro and Diamond Teague park, and more. Brookfield hopes work will begin later this year on the development they intended to become the "premier waterfront neighborhood in DC," according to the company.

Phase II is being designed by architects including Selldorf, SHoP, Leong Leong, and more, who Toby Millman, Brookfield's Senior Vice President of Development, called "some of the best architects in the world." Millman said the second phase will reshape



Looking West from Thompson Hotel on Tingey Street SE

Capitol Riverfront "into a true downtown" by creating a "distinctly 21stcentury mixed-use neighborhood."



Looking South on Yards Place toward N Street (closer to water)

The new development will deliver more than 1,260 multi-income residences, 20% of which will be "affordable at 50% area median income (AMI), which all buildings have achieved," Millman told *The Southwester*. Working with "local and minority-owned businesses is a priority for our restaurant and retail teams," Millman added. Brookfield hopes Phase II will excite "the community and visitors alike."

Yards Place, the "main street" leading from the Navy Yard metro station, "will be curb-less, cobblestone and pedestrian-oriented," according to the press release. The "shared street" will "provide a safer and more convenient route to the water for bikes and pedestrians," Millman added in an email to *The Southwester*. The DC government has plans to extend

See "Phase II," page 12

# VP Kamala Harris Art Installation On Display At The Wharf

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

n March 8, the Wharf and the Southwest Business Improvement District (SWBID) unveiled a new crochet art installation celebrating Vice President Kamala Harris. I'm Speaking, which was announced to coincide with International Women's Day, is the work of LA-based artist Londone Kaye.

Kaye's work has been seen in Times Square and on Kelly Clarkson's television show studio. The Kamala Harris installation, however, is Kaye's "largest installation to date, spanning 40-feet in width and 20-feet in height," according to The Wharf's press release.

More than 150 women took part in the initiative, which was organized by Love Across the USA, by crocheting a square for *I'm Speaking*. Love Across the USA is a community art initiative that celebrates women's voices.

"Creating a tribute to Kamala Harris for International Women's Day was a no-brainer – there is no more powerful female role model in the world," said Kaye. She says the response from women was so massive that they "could have easily covered a football field," adding the "spirit of unity is stitched into every square."

*I'm Speaking* is now on display on the exterior of the Officina restaurant located at 1120 Maine Avenue. It is visible from various angles, including from Banneker Park. It is now on display through Memorial Day Weekend, after which it will be taken to its permanent home. "The SWBID is honored to partner with The Wharf and London Kaye to celebrate International Women's Day and all this day represents to our communities," said SWBID's Deputy Executive Director, Lexie Albe. Officina owner Nick Stefanelli said, "We love that we get to join in with other partners to celebrate International Women's Day in this unique and very DC way."

The restaurant will feature a series of menu specials while *I'm Speaking* is on display. Proceeds from the special items will benefit the National Center for Children and Families, a local nonprofit that serves "poor, disadvantaged, abused, neglected and/or abandoned children, youth, and their families," The Wharf's press release said.

# Debut Book Release by SW Author

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

n March 31, a local 26-yearold author, Bianca Kersellius, released her first book, a memoir entitled *InDEBTed: Stories of Surviving Debt, Inequity and Obtaining Freedom.* 

*InDEBTed* takes readers on a vivid journey unpacking the rigorous reality of Bianca's life as a young Black woman in America, with student loan debt. In this selection, Bianca holds nothing back; she speaks her truth and covers perspectives and opinions that may not be popular, but are necessary.

Readers will receive tools and viewpoints needed to tap into the effects of student loan debt in the black community and to promote self-awareness around effectively and efficiently navigating finances.

Kersellius writes for millennials to connect with their realities concerning systemic oppression, mental health, and the financial disparities that exist within America—which she elaborates in detail throughout her memoir as she discusses her bouts with depression, loss, and her experience of adulting with student debt.

From Southwest, Bianca discovered writing as a preteen, which came in handy because she often journaled throughout her adolescence and it later became a hobby as she began creative writing well into her adulthood.



Bianca Kersellius, indie Author, creative entrepreneur and SWNA scholarship recipient

Kersellius is a 2016 graduate of Penn State University. She currently resides in Washington DC, where she also operates her event service business, Kersellius Kreations LLC. *InDEBTed* is her first full length book project and it is being released under her own imprint, Bianca Kersellius.

On March 31, *InDEBTed* was released online through Amazon KDP, Barnes & Noble and Google Play. More information can be found at https://www.kerselliuskreations. com/indebted.

## Photo of the Month Winner: Melissa Jane Taylor



"I'm Speaking" mural at The Wharf seen from Banneker Park

If you would like to submit a photo for consideration for Photo of the Month, please email it to editor@thesouthwester.com.

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## A Celebration of National Poetry Month and Jazz Appreciation Month Wednesday, April 21, 2021

12:00 NOON

## Guest Speaker: E. Ethelbert Miller

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Donald Wallace Jones, President For more information, contact Betty Jean Tolbert Jones bettyjeantolbertjones@yahoo.com 202-554-0901

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# NMAI Celebrates Earth Day with Focus on Indigenous Wisdom

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

n celebration of Earth Day, the National Museum of the American Indian's annual Living Earth Festival will host an online experience, including presentations exploring agriculture trends, innovations, and sustainability in Native communities, focusing on Native agricultural businesses.

The virtual festival will bring together Native innovators and practitioners dedicated to using Indigenous knowledge to protect and sustain the environment. Through cooking demonstrations, conversations, and film screenings, this year's festival explores the above themes.

The festival opens with a message from Notah Begay III (Navajo/Isleta Pueblo), four-time PGA Tour champion, sportscaster, and founder of the Notah Begay III Foundation, which provides health and wellness education to Native youth.

Youth in Action: Sustainable Agriculture (https://nmai.brand.live/c/

youthinactionapril) is a panel discussion by young Indigenous leaders that addresses the role that traditional ecological knowledge plays in their work as farmers and entrepreneurs. With the onset of COVID-19 and ongoing issues of climate change, investing in sustainable agriculture and food production is more important than ever. Moderated by Michaela Pavlat (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians), the panelists include Kelsey Ducheneaux-Scott (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), Jack Poshano (Hopi), and Marco Ovando (Shoshone-Paiute Tribe).

In an online cooking platform, Mariah Gladstone (Blackfeet/Cherokee Nation), founder of IndigiKitchen, will explore traditional Indigenous foods and show how to incorporate them into our everyday lives.

In Building an Agriculture business in Indian Country, Experts address a crucial issue – creating innovative, robust and ecologically sound food systems and agricultural businesses in Indigenous communities. Speakers include Dawn Sherman (Lakota/ Lenape/Shawnee), CEO of Native American Natural Foods; Mark N. Fox, Chairman, Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara Nation; and Leonard Forsman, Chairman, Suquamish Tribe. Moderated by Carmen Davis (Makah/ Chippewa-Cree/Yakama), editor of Native Business magazine.

#### **Five Film Screenings**

*Gather* (USA, 2020, 74 min.) is an intimate portrait of the growing movement amongst Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political, and cultural identities through food sovereignty, while battling the trauma of centuries of genocide. Director: Sanjay Rawal; Producer: Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Creek)

Voices from the Barrens: Native People, Blueberries and Sovereignty (USA, 2020, 56 min.) documents the wild blueberry harvest of the Wabanaki, who live in both the United States and Canada. Director: Nancy Ghertner; Canadian Director: Brian J. Francis (Mi'kmaq) *Crow Country: The Right to Food Sovereignty* (USA, 2020, 21 min.) follows several tribal members who are fighting for better food and a better future for their community. Director: Tsanavi Spoonhunter (Northern Arapaho/Northern Paiute)

*One Word Sawalmem* (USA, 2019, 18 min.) provides a rare look into the life of Native wisdom keepers, men and women respected within Indigenous communities for their intimate knowledge about living in balance with the natural world. Director: Natasha Deganello Giraudie;

Co-director: Michael "Pom" Preston (Winnemem Wintu)

*Guardianes de semilla* (Guardians of the Seeds) (Colombia, 2020,8 min.): Four Pastos community members known as guardians of the ancestral seeds showcase traditional rituals. Director: Mauricio Telpiz

All events from April 22–25 will stream on demand over four days at AmericanIndian.si.edu and be available after that on the museum's You-Tube channel.

# These Curls Have Strong Roots

#### BY AVERY PANNELL

hat do you know about the hair on your head? Is it dry? Damaged? Straight? Long? Black? Brown? Is it greying too fast? Or maybe leaving you too soon? What do you know about the history of your hair? Do you have culture embedded in every root?

There is no doubt that many of us think about our hair a lot – with good reason. A quote from the Amazon show, Fleabag, "[H]air is everything. We wish it wasn't so we could actually think about something else occasionally, but it is. It is the difference between a good day and a bad day."

I think we all can agree that no one knows more about the importance of hair than a Black woman. Her hair works miracles, solves crimes, demands attention, strikes an unwavering pose. Her skills are unmatched with a comb or brush. She's a whiz at applying the perfect amount of moisture and heat. Her wrists and fingers were made for intricate patterns that are only limited by her imagination. She walks into a room as a queen with a crown more valuable than gold, carrying the stories of all her ancestors within every curl.

#### The history of braids

The origin of braids can be traced back to African culture in 3500 B.C. with the Himba people of Namibia. Braided hairstyles were a unique way



Courtesy of Author

Avery Pannell, NC State class of 2022

to identify each tribe, along with a person's age, marital status, wealth, power, and religion. It was, and is, a social art. The time and effort put into braiding allowed for socializing amongst generations, and because of that, it became more popular around the world.

There are so many different types of braids.

Cornrows (the more well-known style of braids are tightly braided close to the scalp) were traced back to 3500 B.C. More modern cornrows (like the ones children ask their parents for when they go on vacation to the Caribbean) were brought to life in the 70s. Box braids, given their name because of the sections in which the braid is made from, are individual braids and

can be traced back to Egypt in 3100 B.C.

Braids are, and have always been, the go-to styles for women with natural textures. They are used for kinkier textures as a form of protection, not just fashion. Wearing braids can protect natural hair from heat damage and humidity.

#### You can look, but don't touch

When faced with unfamiliar beauty, curiosity strikes. We forget societal rules such as not touching strangers without permission. It's completely understandable, but does that mean it's acceptable? The short answer is 'no.'

Black hair has a mind and soul of its own. It is a living being on top of our heads. It should not be disrespected because it will retaliate with a force that mere mortals could not tame! The tricky part is that each head of Black hair is its own individual beast. Therefore, you cannot tackle one the same way you would another. Something as small as the oil from another person's hands can ruin hours' worth of work.

With that in mind, next time you get that urge to reach out and touch, please do not.

#### Giving hair a bad name

Have you ever heard of the term "nappy"? It is not a good word to use and definitely cannot be characterized as a compliment. Nappy is a negative description of tightly coiled, kinky black hair. It is a negative way to refer to dry, coarse, tangled characteristics of Afro-textured hair. It is considered very offensive, if not racist. Some Black communities find it inappropriate for even Black people to use the term.

#### This hair ain't free

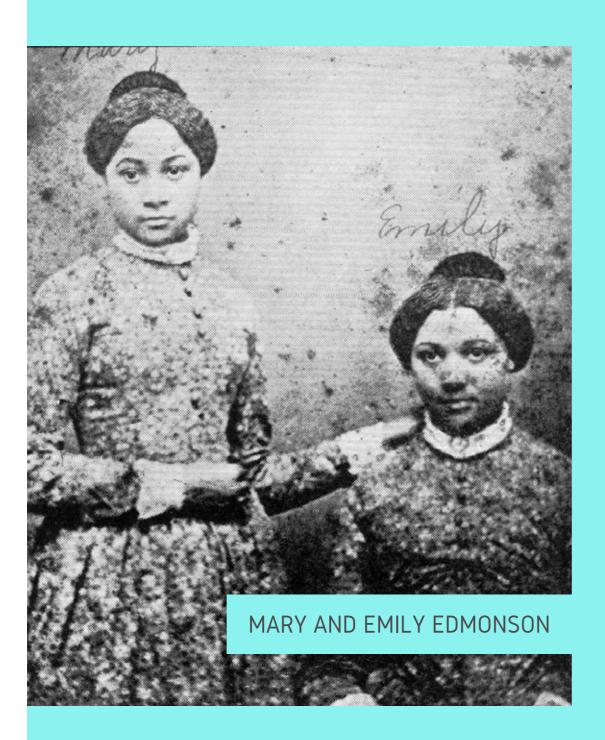
Weave. We know of it, but do we actually know anything about it? Do you know how much a good wig costs? Or even how someone got it on their head? We just know what society tells us. We know as much as Black entertainment has told us, especially Black comedy. But there's more to Black people than what Kevin Hart says.

A weave is a type of hair extension where hair (synthetic or real) is sewn into braided hair and styled in any desired way. It lasts for 2-4 weeks and is often not meant to be put in conditions it cannot handle – water or intense heat, for example. Weaves can be any color, texture, style, length, etc. They are so versatile that you can be a whole new person every month of your life. It's no wonder that getting a weave is so popular, especially for celebrities.

All hair, no matter the amount, is beautiful. Our hair can write poetry. It can break barriers, start trends, inspire art, fight battles, and change who we are. We all should strive to respect our hair a little bit more than we already do, whether that means finally using something other than a 5-in-1 head

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FOR INFORMATION: CONTACT THE SW PEARL GROUP AT 202-641-8221

# SW Library Receives Two Cherry Trees

#### BY MIKE GOODMAN

n March 27, the National Cherry Blossom Festival and the Southwest Library held a dedication ceremony honoring the planting of two cherry trees in the library's park, adjacent to the playground. The ceremony was held exactly 109 years after the gift of 3,000 cherry trees from Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo to the city of Washington, DC, on March 27, 1912.

Speakers at the ceremony included Diana Mayhew, President of the National Cherry Blossom Festival; Councilmember Charles Allen; Richard-Reyes Gavilan, Executive Director of DC Public Library; Jaspreet Pahwa, lead of the Design and Construction of the new Southwest Library; and ANC Commissioner Ron Collins.

"Our cherry blossoms are such a special part of the whole city, but really our entire southwest community," said Councilmember Allen at the ceremony. "Southwest is the home of the cherry blossom."

Construction of the new Southwest Library is nearing completion and will open soon. The building will feature: environmentally sustainable design with solar panels and a green roof; expanded spaces for children, teens and adults; lots



Courtesy of Author

Richard-Reyes Gavilan, Diana Mayhew, Gregory Williams, ANC Commissioner Ron Collins, Barbara Ehrlich, and Councilmember Charles Allen pose with the two new cherry trees at the Southwest Library.

of natural light; a variety of seating options; a meeting room for 100+ people; and three conference rooms for 12-20 people.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival commemorates the gift of the cherry trees to Washington, DC, and celebrates the enduring friendship between the people of the United States and Japan. The Festival spans four weeks and welcomes more than 1.5 million people to enjoy diverse and creative programming promoting traditional and contemporary arts and culture, natural beauty, and community spirit. Events are primarily free and open to the public.

## SW Mutual Aid Reflects on a Year of COVID, Continuing Work

BY CARLEE CROWN AND MAX GROSSMAN

ard 6 Mutual Aid (W6MA) is a grassroots group working with Black and Brown grassroots organizations to help keep our communities safe. For over a year, the Southwest Pod of W6MA has partnered with Christ United Methodist Church (CUMC) on a community food and supply drive to serve our neighbors in response to COVID-19.

W6MA is deeply grateful to the Southwest community for its continued and generous support throughout the pandemic this past year. Over the course of the last year, neighbors have regularly provided food and cleaning supplies; donated fresh produce from the Farmers Market; supplied resources for our unhoused neighbors in the shelters and tent encampments; contributed coats, laptops, and household goods; and, most of all, given their time. Over 40 people regularly contribute their time and skills to the work of keeping each other safe.

This March, Southwest once again demonstrated its generosity by supporting the "Southwest DC Ducklings Children's Clothing Drive." We will be able to provide over 150 youth with clothing, and with assistance from a grant from Friends of SW DC, they will

See "Mutual Aid," page 14

# ENROLL NOW for 2021–2022 School Year

EAGLE ACADEMY PCS Congress Heights | Capitol Riverfront

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# Art Blooms at the Smithsonian Garden

#### BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

rt in Bloom welcomes spring in Washington DC, with 26 unique oversized cherry blossom sculptures designed by local artists. Sponsored by the Embassy of Japan, the Smithsonian Garden is hosting the display of three sculptures in the Haupt Garden on the Independence Ave. side of the Castle. Each symbolizes the lasting friendship between Japan and the United States.

In an ode to traditional floral motifs that symbolize renewal and resilience, Ameena Fareeda's Renewal Blossom speaks to both the fleetingness of time and brighter days to come. The artwork pays homage to Japanese

Is it just a cherry blossom? Or, is it also a chair?

heritage and how Japanese people have overcome obstacles, seen significant rebuilding progress, and reemerged with support from their U.S. partners.

Blossoms on the Mall by Jaleel Davis celebrates the unity of two cultures spanning more than a century: Japanese cherry trees, bestowed over 100 years ago, blend in harmony with the iconic Jefferson



Courtesy of The Smithsonian

Memorial to illustrate a rich, joint legacy of alliance.

Chiyogami Compilation by Paige Friedman is a vibrant take on blending traditional and modern techniques. Its collage approach celebrates the coming together of two unique cultures into a beautiful partnership and a shared bright future.

The sculptures are within walking distance from the Cherry Blossoms at the Tidal basin and will be on display in the northeast terrace near the Arts and Industries Building of the Haupt Garden, which is opened to the public daily from dawn to dusk until May 31.

New safety protocols have been implemented

in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including requiring visitors to wear face coverings during their visits and placement of signs and markers throughout the garden to ensure social distancing. All Smithsonian museums remain closed.

## **Arena Stage is** 'Looking Forward' for the 2021/22 Season

remiering in May at Arena Stage, the film Indigenous Earth Voices will explore the people's relationship to the Earth. All of the artists involved in this film, including actors, directors, interviewees, and playwrights are Indigenous. The film features six stories from locations throughout Canada and the United States, focusing on subsistence stories, family traditions, land rights, myths and legends, regalia, tribal rituals, treaties, and issues that impact Indigenous cultures.

These stories, written by six playwrights, are based upon interviews with tribal leaders and storytellers from many different tribes across Canada and the United States. The interviewees come from the tribes of Cherokee, Cree in Canada, Cu'pik Eskimo in Alaska, Lakota, Piscataway, Shoshone, Zuni and others.

Featured playwrights include Tara Beagan (Ntlaka'pamux and Irish Canadian), Lee Cataluna (Hawaiian), Dillon Chitto (Choctaw, Laguna and Isleta Pueblo), Frank Henry Kaash Katasse (Tlingit), Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee), and Madeline Sayet (Mohegan).

Later in the year, Arena's Voices of Now ensembles will premiere an additional theatrical film following on the success of last year's original piece and visual time capsule. The film will debut on June 18.



KID'S CORNER

6.

# **Spot the difference!**

Page 8

3.

Can you spot the differences in the two scenes below?





Each month check out the most recent issue of the paper for activities and games to help you discover SWDC! Have a suggestion? Email us: editor@thesouthwester. com. Check out next month's issue for the answers!

## Answers from March 2021 issue

**Differences:** The picture on the right has an extra bee in the cloud, but no bee on the honeypot; the picture on the right has hats for all 4 bees; the picture on the left has one more flower in the tree; the picture on the right has another cloud; the picture on the right has more honeycomb. **Word Scramble:** There are 74 words you can make from "Sunshine."

## **WORD SEARCH: APRIL FOOLS!**

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ENJOY									JOKE						
FUNNY							PRANK								
NICE								FUN							
SMILE									LAUGH						
								SAFE							
EXCITING								SALE							

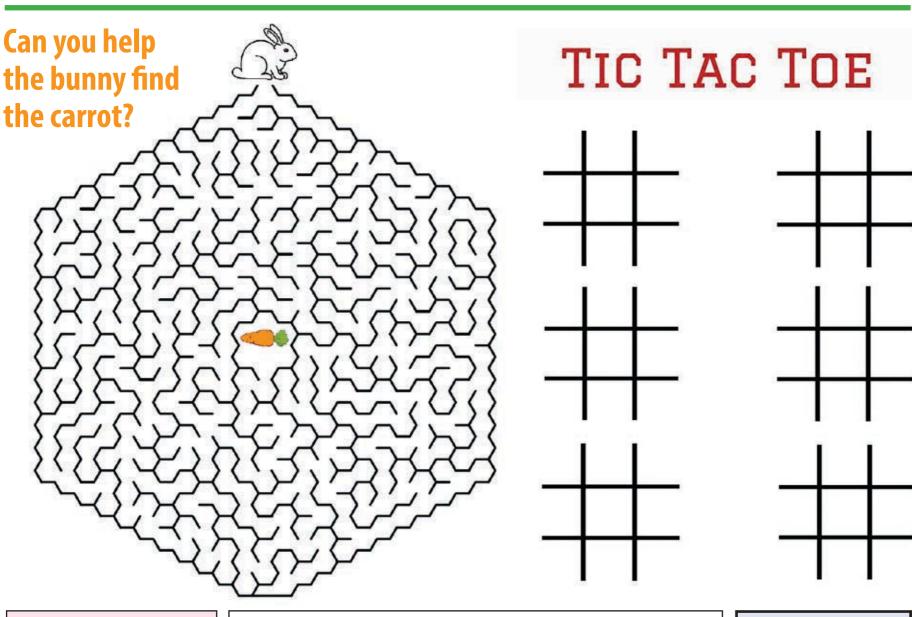
# Word Scramble!

How many words can you make from SPRINGTIME?

The Southwester

SPRING FYTRA!





# Jokes!

Why should you never tell an egg a joke? Because it'll crack up! (Submitted by Ella)!

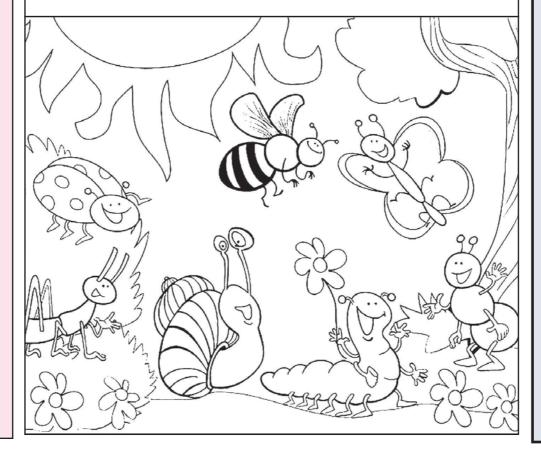
What was the reporter doing at the ice cream shop? Getting the scoop!

Why do fish live in saltwater? Because pepper makes them sneeze!

Would you like to submit a joke for Kid's Corner? Email it to editor@thesouthwester. com.

Include your first name so we can tell other kids who sent it in!

# **COLORING TIME!**



Moment! Can you complete these equations? a. 82 + 3 =b. 6 + 4 =c. 12 + 12 =d. 8 - 7 =e. 13 - 4 =f. 26 - 10 =g. 11 + 9 =h. 600 - 200 =

Math

# A Jump Start on College and Independence

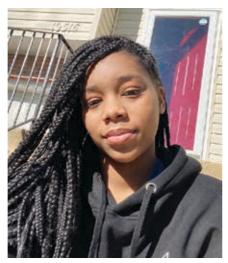
BY THELMA D. JONES

**B** ack in February, Kayla Wingate, a junior at Eastern Senior High School, began her college registration journey at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Alfred Street Baptist Church Virtual Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Festival. Sponsored by the Alfred Street Baptist Church Foundation and title sponsor Google Cloud in Alexandria, VA, the event occurred virtually for the first time on Saturday, Feb. 20, 2021.

In 2020, the festival welcomed 10,000 prospective students and their families, produced 1,766 offers of admission to high school seniors, and awarded more than \$5.4 million in scholarships. The 2021 event was billed as the largest free virtual HBCU college fair or festival in the nation. The Southwest Neighborhood Assembly Education and Scholarship Task Force (SWNA ESTF) facilitated connecting SW resident Kayla Wingate to the event.

During the time that Kayla received the festival information, her older sister Janasi, a freshman at Virginia Union University in Richmond, VA, learned about the Task Force. In a conversation with Paul Taylor, aka "Big South," who was carrying out his responsibilities as "Mayor of Southwest," Janasi referred to Thelma D. Jones, ESTF Member and Chair, SWNA Youth Activities Task Force (YATF), for assistance in applying for a SWNA ESTF scholarship.

Jones delved into why Janasi had not applied for a scholarship before entering college, especially since it had been available in the neighborhood for almost 50 years, helping out more than 230 college-bound students and awarding \$464,000 in scholarships.



Courtesy of Author

During the conversation, Jones became aware of another possible scholarship recipient in the home, which is where Kayla's story of getting a jump start on the college application process begins.

## How did you find out about SWNA ESTF?

Kayla Wingate

My older sister Janasi mentioned that she had registered both of us for scholarship opportunities. I really didn't pay it any attention at first; however, I was grateful but didn't think it would be anything I should take seriously based on past experiences with certain programs. After a few days, I had forgotten [about] the program. Then my sister alerted me about a call. She whispered, "scholarship" to me; I knew exactly what she was talking about! I answered the phone kind of shocked, not really knowing what to say or think.

Ms. Vyllorya Evans, ESTF Chair, spoke in her oh-so-sweet voice and said, "Hello, is this Kayla?" I said, "Yes." She introduced herself and shared how she was interested in helping me start my college search journey. Our conversation continued with me telling her my three top colleges, which are Alabama State University, Southern University and A&M College, and Louisiana State University. Ms. Evans was so excited about my first choice being Alabama State, and it gave me hope that maybe this could be something. It brought tears to my eyes.

A couple of days later, Ms. Evans assisted me with registering for the Alfred Street Baptist Church Annual HBCU College Festival. It was a pretty easy process to sign up, especially with her help. Then she arranged for a college admission person from Alabama State University (ASU) to call me. I was so overjoyed; I cried for the second time since meeting Ms. Evans.

Lili Spearman, ASU's District Recruiter, called and scheduled a google meeting that afternoon. When we started, I was nervous and we had a few technical issues with our devices. The conversation ended with me having a vision as a Hornet (ASU mascot) in 2022. I'm really glad I got to speak with Ms. Spearman and look forward to meeting her one day.

I have always been really determined and excited about going to college, more so about being away and on my own. The opportunity to make direct contact with a college representative gave me so much hope, and I am now even more determined to go to college, thanks in part to the caring and supporting ESTF members and a neighborhood friend.

## Specifically, what happened that excited you?

On the day of the college fair, I completed applications for ASU and Southern. The application fee was waived for both. I watched a virtual campus tour of both schools. I also entered the exhibit room for ASU and had a conversation with Sunkeissa Cantrell, ASU Assistant Director of Recruiting. She provided helpful information about housing, dual enrollment, and financial aid.

#### What are your next steps?

This experience will help me to work with my Eastern High School counselor in getting the needed documents for the completion of my application, including applying for housing and financial aid. Of course, finishing the 11<sup>th</sup> grade is at the top of my list.

## What advice do you have for other SW students?

I want nothing more than for this to work out for me and any other SW students who want to further their education. I also highly recommend that any student who wants to go to college or is feeling a little discouraged about going to college, to visit swnascholarship.org so they can be set on the right path to further their education and be the best they can be in life.

The SWNA ESTF invites all students who reside in the 20024 zip code, 8<sup>th</sup> grade and up, to visit and register at swnascholarship.org and take advantage of participating in college fairs, college tours, financial aid workshops, and many other activities for students and parents in preparation for college. The application process is currently opened for the 2021-2022 school year. If you, a student, or parent/guardian need more assistance with the college process or have questions regarding ESTF, email Vyllorya Evans at vyllorya@swna.org or call (202) 257-7619.

# Local Students Journal their Thoughts in Verse and Watercolor

#### FOREWORD BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

wo young writers at Waterfront Academy have been working on journaling their experiences of the ephemeral beauty of the spring cherry blossoms and what it's been like getting an education during COVID (respectively).

Accompanying these two essays are paintings from several fellow student artists who wielded paint brushes, instead of pens, to express their thoughts of spring in watercolor.

#### Essay by Madeleine, Age 6

The cherry blossoms bloom in Spring and the trees in the fall. I love the blooming in the spring. I love when they bloom but I don't when they die. I love the spring when the blossoms fall from the sky. Cherry blossoms are the best.

#### Essay by Penelope, Age 10

Coronavirus has definitely changed my school schedule. In 2020, around a couple months after Coronavirus started (around March), we did online classes. Unexpectedly online classes were harder than usual school. Thankfully, in September 2020 we started in-person school again and were slowly expanding our time at school. We started from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., and now we are from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.! Even though it is hard to wear a mask all day, I'm happy we stopped online classes.



Courtesy of Xavier (age 10 Cherry blossoms in watercolor



Courtesy of Patty (age 6) Beauty in the eye of the beholder



Courtesy of Lucy (age 9) A splash of yellow. A splash of green. A splash of pink and red, and a whole lot of spring

# First Flowers of Spring

Colors, critters, and the ever present beautiful sunsets along the Channel



**Photos Courtesy of Irene Allen** 



# ARTECHOUSE Opens 4<sup>th</sup> Cherry Blossom Season with a Hope of Renewal

**BY MATT KOEHLER** 

alking into Renewal 2121 (https://www.artechouse. com/program/renewal-2121/), masked but amidst a small jubilant crowd of early viewers, I felt lighter than the last time I experienced one of ARTECHOUSE's cherry blossom-themed interactive exhibits. Much has happened in the past year that has caused intense existential anxiety. Some parts of the world are just starting to stutter-step out of pandemic lockdowns, others reentering. COVID-19 notwithstanding, here in the States, and especially in DC, there's been political unrest and violence, followed by a contentious election and more violence. Yet, we enter the 2021 spring season with tentative hope.

Renewal transports us to Tokyo 100 years from now, a megalopolis more mega than it already is, where climate change runs rampant. The city has grown and mutated beyond what exists today, and humanity has encroached upon every natural space with technology, pollution, and waste. Really though, Tokyo 2121 is a science fiction archetype for any future super city.

Here amongst the unchecked technological growth, its requisite human population and waste, is renewal: a lone sakura tree blooming in early spring becomes the focal point of digital steampunk imagery that plays out on the massive main gallery screens. Atmospheric music (by Mario Hammer and The Lonely Robot) with heavy bass booms punctuate the melancholy song of a violin while sakura petals flutter and blow in the electronic breeze.

Every several minutes the scenes shift, offering those standing close enough to the big screens a different interactive experience. In one, factoids about the wastefulness of modern society appear and disappear. "An estimated 124.5 billion dollars worth of masks will end up as waste. That is more than 31 times the cost of the One World Trade Center in New York



s courtesy of Matt Koehle



City," the screen tells me. In the final scene, the megalopolis gives way to a tranquil scene where nature again reigns over the land.

Renewal offers a dark vision of the future, but, as the title implies, there is hope for nature's reemergence and the renewal of life. Four different galleries explore themes of "the city, nature, and ourselves" and "the constant rebirth of cities through human innovation and nature's adaptive resilience." Created by Takeda Yuya (surname first), a motion graphics designer and artist, visuals in the main gallery offer an immersive experience.

Moving off to the right of the main gallery, patrons enter Backend - the "mind of the machine." It's the data center of the super city - powering and deciding "what technology can do for us." And, it is always watching. Pacing about the dimly lit room, TV's placed in the center play back ghostly images of you looking back.

Quickly exiting the eerie data center, I made my way to ATH20XX, a muraled alleyway showing cyborgs in kimonos. The artwork by Fujita Satoshi (surname first), a.k.a Dragon76 (Fujita's birth year), harps on themes of artificial intelligence and biomechanical enhancements.

I ventured deeper into the bowels of Tokyo 2121 and found myself on a bridge between two massive buildings in View from Above. The back multimedia room transported me back to the early 90s to the inside of a pixelated Super Nintendo game, complete with beep boop sounds. Ever present drones on either side of the bridge tracked my presence.

Taking a different route back to the main gallery, I strolled down Sleepless Alley - a narrow side street chocked full of vendors and interactive vintage games. Scan your hand over an electronic panel and get an advert for water or play a game called "Extinct Menagerie" to see animals and plants that are now extinct. Minus the extinct flora and fauna, this part of Renewal reminded me of the actual Tokyo I explored all those years ago when I lived in Japan.

Before leaving Renewal 2121 for the real world, I made my way back to the main gallery to take it all in. Few patrons remained, including a lone child dancing in front of the final scene, nature's renewal - soft, tranquil music played. The scene disintegrated and the music abruptly changed back to the mechanical booms of the super city. The innocent muse disappeared, fleeting - not unlike ephemeral cherry blossoms. Her departure, though, promised a different renewal - that of ourselves.

Renewal 2121 is showing at Artechouse (1238 Maryland Ave. SW., dc.artechouse.com) through Sept. 6, 2021. Admission ranges from \$17-\$24; \$20 for students, seniors, military and first responders; and free for children under the age of 4. See the link above for tickets and more information.

## PHASE II

ontinued from p. 2

bike lanes along New Jersey Ave and 1<sup>st</sup> St. SE into the new development, and Brookfield "will be adding new Capital Bikeshare stations to accommodate expected demand," Millman said.

The firm chose "biophilic" design elements for Phase II, meeting LEED Gold standards and incorporating solar energy, a plan which Millman

set by the industry and the District of as the community looks to enjoy more Columbia." Mayor Bowser's initiative to increase renewable energy in DC is one Brookfield is "proud to be a part of," Millman commented. Phase II is also designed according to "wellness considerations following COVID-19," the press release said.

The designers and architects Brookfield chose stated, "One of our top goals is to create more public green space for everyone to enjoy at The Yards. Yards Park has only

said is meant to "meet high standards grown more popular in the past year open-air spaces, and the designers and architects...are working with that in mind. We are also working to reclaim and revitalize waterfront park space, including a new 40,000 SF park, so more folks can enjoy outdoor recreation at The Yards." Millman said he hopes "more folks can enjoy outdoor recreation at The Yards."

Brookfield is a global developer that operates more than 650 properties worldwide. The firm emphasizes sustainability and innovation in its planning, development, and property management. Yards Park was opened by Forest City Realty Trust in 2010, and was bought by Brookfield in 2018.

Millman is "confident the tenants will be there," he was quoted saying in a February 2021 Washington Business Journal article. People "are absolutely going to be returning to the office," he said.

# Apply Now! SWNA Scholarship

# Awards Range From: **\$1,000 - \$3,000** Deadline: **Tuesday, June 15, 2021**



# To apply, visit us at: www.swnascholarship.org



Encouraging and assisting youth in the SW Washington, DC, Ward 6, Zip Code 20024 neighborhood to pursue a post-secondary education.



# Banneker Park Undergoes a Major Facelift

BY MATT KOEHLER

owards the end of January, Southwesters likely noticed that the trees around Banneker Fountain at L'Enfant Plaza had been cut down. *The Southwester* noticed the community chatter, so we looked into it to find some answers.

Banneker Park and Fountain are getting a much needed upgrade, which should be completed early next month. It's been about 16 years since Banneker underwent maintenance (2005 and before that in 1997), but the last two makeovers didn't go far enough. The National Park Service (NPS) said that "there was no substantial rehabilitation for pavement and trees in the overlook area" during the last upgrade. The new repairs will be primarily focused on:

- Repairing and cleaning the masonry
- Updating and optimizing the fountain's piping and filtration equipment in the mechanical room
- Replacing the trees while installing a deeper soil system that will do a better job at capturing runoff and maintaining the health of the new trees

NPS stated that the total cost of the upgrade will be around \$1.1 million.

Banneker Park was built in 1969 and commemorates Benjamin Banneker, an African American scientist, almanac author, surveyor, farmer, who helped in planning the original boundaries of the District of Columbia. The park was designed by Dan Kiley, who also designed Constitution Gardens on the National Mall, among other notable projects. The recently completed Kiley highrise apartment building at 600 Fourth Street SW is



Workers begin restoration of the masonry, fountain, and replacement of the trees at Banneker park in January 2021

named after him. Kiley designed green spaces for the Capitol Park complex of buildings when they were built in the 1960's.

To get more details about the upgrade at Banneker Park, *The Southwester* spoke with Jeff Curtis, the Landscape Architect involved in the project, via email.

#### How long will this project take? Can you provide me details about the total expected cost of the project?

The project is slated to take three months, with an estimated completion at the beginning of May.

#### What can residents expect in terms of how the area will look while the upgrade is taking place (road closures, etc.)?

The plaza around the fountain will be closed for the duration of the work for safety reasons. But there will be no street closures, and the grassy areas and the stairway that provides access to the waterway will remain open.

## What upgrades are being done to the fountain?

We are replacing the fountain jet ring, installing a new filter, replacing the return pipes in the mechanical room, and installing a nanobubble water treatment system, which will use microscopic oxygen bubbles to clean the water without the use of traditional chemicals like chlorine.

#### I read in the proposal that the soil and space for root growth for trees needed to be improved, can you describe in greater detail the structural changes you will implement to promote the healthy growth of the planned new trees?

The project will replace the compacted subgrade soil beneath the block pavers surrounding the trees with a structural soil system specially designed by Cornell University. This system is basically a mixture of gravel and soil that allows and encourages root growth while still being able to withstand the compression requirements for a paved surface.

#### Are you just replacing the (now former) landscaping or will it be reimagined?

This project is a renovation of the existing park, not a redesign. The National Park Service is typically tasked with maintaining the look of the land that it manages and this will not be an exception. The area will look more or less the same, but in a better, more sustainable condition, including a fountain that works better, repaired masonry and better looking, healthier trees.

## Any particular part of the project that you're most excited about?

I'm most excited about the work that is being done with the trees. The original 1970s' design of the memorial did not account for the soil requirement of the trees planted there, so we have had to replace them every five to 10 years where the lifespan of a London Plane tree in good conditions can easily be over 100 years. The new soil system utilizes technology and understanding that has been developed within the last couple decades. It won't get the trees to the full potential of a tree in an uncompacted open field or forest, but it will be a big improvement.

#### Something I missed?

It might be worth noting that although the park has undergone two major rehabilitations (in 1997 and 2005), this is the first major work on the pavement and trees in the overlook area since the park was built in 1969.

## **MUTUAL AID**

Continued from p. 6

also receive new shoes for the summer.

Our work continues. Interested in other ways to help W6MA and CUMC?

- Donate groceries, cleaning supplies, and household items. Examples include:
  - Non-perishable foods: tuna, chicken, cereal, pasta sauce, soup, snack food, and microwavable meals
  - Cleaning supplies: disinfectants, laundry soap, and paper towels
  - Kitchenware: pot, pans, utensils, dishes, towels and small appliances
- Help make sure every student can access the online classroom. Alongside our partner organization Serve Your City, W6MA is working to bridge the digital divide by providing laptops and tablets to students. Please fill out the form at bit.ly/

w6ma\_laptops if you would like to donate a device.

- Tutor local students online. W6MA's tutoring program is looking for college students, grad students, and professionals who want to lead virtual tutoring sessions in any subject. If you are interested, please contact syctutoringmutualaid@gmail.com.
- W6MA and CUMC have a number of ways you can get the support you need:
- If you or someone you know has need of food or cleaning supplies, call the W6MA Hotline at 202-683-9962. You can request food, masks, cleaning supplies, and other goods for delivery.
- Obtain groceries and fresh produce at the CUMC's 5000 Ministry Food Pantry on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays of the month at 1 p.m. (courtyard entrance). If you can not come to the church due to health or mobility issues, call 202-554-9117 to request a delivery.

Want to learn more? Email swmutualaid@serveyourcitydc.org.

## **Perhaps a Mural at Lansburgh Park?**

#### BY GABRIELE STRAUCH

S WNA Youth Activities Task Force (YATF) is pleased to announce an exciting youth activity project in the making: creating a painted mural at recently renovated Lansburgh Park, located at 1098 Delaware Ave., SW. Pending approval by the ANC and DPR, the work for the mural will begin in mid-May.

YATF has identified the artist who will work with a group of enthusiastic Southwest "Youth Assistants." Together with the artist, the selected youth group will generate and develop ideas about the mural design and be active participants in creating this artistic project. The mural will embellish Lansburgh Park in the heart of Southwest, bring joy to everyone passing through the park, give the creators recognition for their positive contribution to their neighborhood, and leave their creative legacy for years to come.

The Task Force is looking for Southwest youth, ages eight and up, who display creative/artistic talent, show leadership, work collaboratively, and commit to staying on task. After completing the mural, YATF will plan an unveiling celebration to recognize the participants for their collaboration and contribution to the SW neighborhood.

For more information and the application form, contact Thelma D. Jones, YATF, Chair, at thelma@ swna.org or call (202) 251-1639.

*Gabriele "Gabi" Strauch, YATF Vice Chair, is the mural project coordinator.* 

#### Page 15

## Ward 6 Youth Meal Sites

All DC youth ages 18 and younger may receive free grab-and go meals at DCPS and DPR meal site locations through June 30, 2021. Please note that during this period, DC youth are not required to be enrolled DC Public Schools students to receive meals. Youth and/or parents/guardians on their behalf may receive up to 3 breakfast and 3 lunch meals daily. (Effective March 2, 2021)

School Name	Address	Ward	Meal Distribution Hours (Monday - Friday)	Grocery Distribution (while groceries last)		
Amidon-Bowen Elementary School	401 I Street SW	6	10 am - 2 pm			
Arthur Capper Recreation Center	1000 5 <sup>th</sup> Street SE	6	10 am - 2 pm			
Brent Elementary School	301 North Carolina Avenue SE	6	10 am - 2 pm			
Eastern High School	1700 East Capitol Street NE	6	10 am – 2 pm			
Miner Elementary School	601 15th Street NE	6	10 am – 2 pm			
Payne Elementary School	1445 C Street SE	6	10 am – 2 pm			
Rosedale Recreation Center	1701 Gales St NE	6	10 am – 2 pm			
Seaton Elementary School	1503 10th Street NW	6	10 am - 2 pm			
Tyler Elementary School	1001 G Street SE	6	10 am - 2 pm			
Walker-Jones Education Campus	1125 New Jersey Avenue NW	6	10 am – 2 pm	Friday 10:00am - 2:00pm		



# Visit SWNA's website! www.swna.org

# A Celebration of Women's History Month and Health

#### BY LASHANAH THOMAS

he Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund (TDJBCF) held its monthly support group meeting via Zoom and Facebook Live on Wednesday, March 17, with over 250 viewers tuning in. The national Women's History Month theme, "Valiant Women of the Vote: Refusing to be Silenced," resonated strongly throughout the evening as attendees shared their triumphs of survivorship. The TDJBCF monthly support group meetings are still going strong as viewership continues to grow with the transition to virtual meetings since March 2020 when

the pandemic overtook the city. The meeting was emceed by Ronnette R. Meyers, President and CEO of JLAN Solutions and the daughter of TDJBCF Honorary Board Member Jan

**TDJBCF Honorary Board Member Jan** Adams, President and CEO, JMA Solutions. Leaving an indelible impression on the audience, Meyers has since been confirmed as the emcee for the TDJBCF April Anniversary meeting. The evening kicked off with Founder Thelma D. Jones providing the welcome and reminding everyone that although COVID-19 brought the world to a standstill, cancer did not stop and nor did the TDJBCF slow its focus in carrying out its mission and vision of saving lives and embracing and achieving a world free of breast cancer. Jones also shared the wonderful news of the non-profit delivering over 14,000 daily meals and over 50 fresh produce deliveries since April 2020 to seniors, immunocompromised residents, River Park families, and residents throughout the Southwest community. She also spoke about receiving three grants from Georgetown University Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center to benefit Black and Latinx breast cancer survivors and to some degree their families. Following the welcome, Breast Cancer Survivor



Dora Blair, a life-long friend of Meyers, gave the blessing.

In honor of Women's History Month, this meeting acknowledged, honored, and celebrated women who are both historic and heroic in their individual journeys, personally and professionally, while dealing with breast cancer and succeeding against the odds. The featured speakers included renowned Dr. Lori L. Wilson, MD, Associate Professor of Surgery and Division Chief of Surgical Oncology at Howard University Hospital; and Shalita Lyons, Executive Director and Founder of She Still Smiles, Inc.

Lyons shared her survivor's story and encouraged everyone to eat healthy and maintain a healthy diet regardless of their health status. Her overall message inspired the meeting attendees as she expounded on her mission of hope by educating and providing moral support and financial assistance to breast cancer survivors and their families in the DMV. With the same goal of inspiring hope, Dr. Wilson shared her life-long journey of being surrounded by cancer. Dr. Wilson shared experiences of her patients with cancer, both of her parents with cancer, and then herself with two different types of breast cancer with an initial diagnosis and now as a Metastatic Breast Cancer Survivor. She also talked about the decision and importance of her and her spouse sharing her initial cancer journey as part of the highly acclaimed PBS documentary "Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies" which first premiered in March 2015 while Wilson was caring for a young son. In addition, in conveying her passion and efforts with her residents and students at Howard University Hospital, she surprised the audience by sharing that she and her spouse had not only become a foster parent of two, one boy and one girl, but also that she is slated to become

the first full professor of surgery in the 153 years of Howard University Hospital's history, a milestone and welcome announcement for Women's History Month.

The meeting shifted to attorney LaRuby Z. May, Managing Member, May Lightfoot PLLC, who was welcomed back for a second time. Attorney May provided a brief overview of the Zantac litigation and the efforts she has been making to fight for those who are unable to fight for themselves. All women delivered information that was useful, encouraging, and touching as reflected by the great questions and commentary from viewers.

Inspired by both the conversation and community, Jan Adams, President and CEO, JMA Solutions and **TDJBCF Board Chair Mamie Mallory**, Mallory & Associates, LLC donated \$5000 and \$2500 respectively, to serve as proud sponsors of the TDJBCF Support Group's 11th Anniversary Celebration on Wednesday, April 21, at 6 p.m. via Zoom and Facebook live. Jenell Ross, President, Bob Ross Auto Group in Centerville, OH is the invited guest speaker. She is one of only four African American woman auto dealers in the country and is also president of the Mercedes-Benz of Centerville, OH, the first African American and the only African American woman owned Mercedes-Benz dealership in the world. Ross has been a staunch breast cancer advocate since the passing of her mom from breast cancer more than 10 years ago. She established the Norma J. Ross Memorial Foundation in honor of her mom which provides education and awareness, cancer screening and mammography and offers financial assistance for those along their journey and for aftercare.

The evening closed with remarks and acknowledgements from Jan Adams reminding everyone to register for the COVID vaccine once they can and to continue following CDC guidelines (CDC.gov). Adams concluded with a special thanks to this author as the Newsletter Editor, TDJB-CF Ambassadors, Pentandra Digital Marketing Consultors LLC, and the A-Team (Rodney Minor, Executive Producer, BRTV Consulting, Sarita Minor, and Derek Tawiah) for contributing and helping to make the meeting a resounding success.

A recorded version of the virtual meeting is available on the TDJBCF Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/TDJBreastCancerFund/) for viewing. The next meeting will be the TDJBCF Support Group's 11th Anniversary Celebration on Wednesday, Apr 21, at 6 p.m. via Zoom and Facebook Live. If you are interested in attending the next meeting or supporting the TDJBCF, visit www. tdjbreastcancerfund.org or call (202) 251-1639.

Lashanah Thomas, a Georgia State University Cum Laude graduate with advanced honors, is the TDJBCF newsletter editor. She recently graduated with an M.A. in curriculum and instruction at The George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development and plans to pursue her PhD beginning in August 2021. A former SW resident, she currently resides in Jonesboro, GA.

#### TREES

Continued from p. 1

what punitive measures will be taken against Fort Myer, and how the Southwest community will be compensated for this loss.

"The tree canopy in Southwest is one of our most treasured community resources," states Litsky. "The damage caused by Fort Myer Construction requires a very large fine per each heritage tree that they have destroyed—and those funds need to be reserved specifically to restore the tree canopy in Southwest and not stashed in the General Fund. What they've destroyed in Southwest they are going to fix in Southwest."

As the news broke, Councilmember Charles Allen sent a letter to DDOT's Interim Director, Everett Lott, with four requests related to the incident. He asked for an immediate investigation, including "whether Fort Myer or DDOT failed to employ any particular controls that could have prevented the damage in this situation..." Second, Allen requested a report on similar destruction of Special Trees and Heritage Trees covering the last three years. Third, Allen requested that DDOT pursue a monetary fine to the fullest extent allowed under the law, and prioritize planting trees in Southwest. Fourth, in the event of removal of these trees, Allen requested that the wood from these Heritage trees be donated for uses in the Southwest community.

"If these trees must be replaced, neither of us will live to see their replacement reach the size of the current trees," the letter states. "The likely loss of these trees is of tremendous concern to the Southwest community, where they have been treasured for generations for their size, age, beauty, and ecological value. I look forward to continued discussion with you and your staff on this issue."

*The Southwester* will continue to follow this story, as many of these questions remain unanswered. "For far too long, politically connected Fort Myer Construction has run rings around District agencies—especially DDOT," says Litsky. "The Council's Committee on Transportation and the Environment needs to step up and exercise some oversight. It's high time that the District stops allowing the fox to guard the hen house."

# SW Gardens Plants New Initiatives in 2021

BY PAMELA MCKINNEY

S outhwest Community Gardens (SW Gardens) was founded in 2013 to create a space where neighbors can connect with one another in a hands-on, peaceful, and respectful environment around the activity of growing produce. Since the beginning, we have maintained 10 communal plots that allow anyone in the community to participate in growing and enjoying organic food.

Just like everyone, SW Gardens has had to adjust to life in a pandemic. Last year, we continued our communal operations, providing opportunities for our neighbors to care for and grow fruits and vegetables. All of our communal harvests were given out for free to Southwest residents from our main location in Lansburgh Park. We limited communal work days to four people per hour, offering work days on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Thanks to support from Friends of Southwest, the DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation, we were able to expand our fruit orchard last fall to include apples, pears, and plums. Once these trees mature, anyone who comes by the garden during the fruit trees' harvest will be able to



enjoy nature's bounty.

We have a few new initiatives planned for this year. First, in partnership with the SWBID, our resident herbalist, Kelley Gallagher, and garden secretary, Barbara Gilbert, we are planning to install three herb gardens outside of the garden fence.

This herb garden will include common and uncommon herbs and information for how you can use the herbs in your daily life. Second, we are planning to launch our first community supported agriculture (CSA)



program! For our initial launch, we will be providing weekly harvest to six public housing residents with support from our younger farmhands, who we plan to pay for their time and work. Finally, we will be opening back up Courtesy of SW Gardens Above left: Community gardeners, Jessica and Brad, planting yams

Above right: Planting spinach!

At left: Garlic anyone?

the communal section on Saturday, April 24.

For anyone interested in helping with any of the initiatives mentioned above, please email swgardensdc@ gmail.com. No experience needed!



#### Page 18

# "Hybrid" Cherry Blossom Festival Underway In DC

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

n oft-repeated pandemic refrain is "the coronavirus doesn't care" about various phenomena like borders, the NCAA basketball tournament, campaign rallies, and so on. In DC, we might say cherry trees "don't care" about the pandemic.

At the time we wrote this piece, the cherry blossoms had started blooming, and planning for the national festival was well underway. However, Washington's famous cherry trees, a gift from Japan more than a century ago, have outpaced the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. With herd immunity just beyond reach, the National Cherry Blossom Festival "will look different this year," according to an announcement from DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative.

The DC-based nonprofit is inviting District students K-12 students, as well as students from Japanese schools, to participate in the Cherry Blossom Festival Student Art Gallery. Students submitted artwork depicting the theme "Home is Where the Blossoms Are," with a special focus on Friendship, the group's press release said in an email from DC Library on Feb. 15.

The city's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) wrote in a March 22 email, that DC residents were invited to fly a kite at a public park despite the lack of an official gathering. DPR encouraged Washingtonians to tag @ DCDPR on Instagram and Twitter with



the hashtag #DPRKitesandBlossoms.

Diane Mayhew, President and CEO of the National Cherry Blossom Festival, said in a video tweeted by Mayor Muriel Bowser on March 1, that this year's festival "will unite the city and the region, engaging local businesses and restaurants." Mayhew said DC residents were invited to join the celebration on "neighborhood porches." There will also be a "new initiative that will feature the display of 25 blossom art sculptures in all eight wards of the city and surrounding areas," which will be designed by local artists.

The festival, which features "hybrid" in-person and distanced programming, will run from March 20 through April 11.

And check out the "Bloomcam" realtime camera views of the blossoms at www.nationalmall.org/bloomcam to see the status.



done by volunteers, so your contribution goes to help Southwest residents. We support The Southwester through our advertising.

# Southwest Moments



Courtesy of Julia Ciliberti

Fowl play – a man talks on his phone at SW Waterfront while an interloping pigeon looks on.

# Ward 6 Democrats host *Words Matter* Poetry Contest

#### BY MIKE GOODMAN

n celebration of April as National Poetry Month, the Ward 6 Democrats are sponsoring *Words Matter*, a poetry contest open to all residents of Ward 6.

To enter, respond to the following question in the form of a poem: "What does DC

statehood mean to you?" Entrants are encouraged to use the

- following guidelines when submitting:
- Times New Roman font, size 14Entrants must reside in Ward 6 to be
- consideredThe contest is open to neighbors
- ages 6 to 96 Entries can be submitted as an

attachment via email to ward6dems@ gmail.com, and will be accepted through Monday, April 19, 2021.

# ROOTS

Continued from p. 4

and shoulders bottle or just putting on a hair mask to bring it back to life from years of neglect.

Your hair is one of the few things about you that you can change at any moment.



Koehler, Copy Editor of *The Southwest-er*.

The winning poem will be announced Monday, April 26, 2021 and will be published in local media and on the Ward 6 Democrats' website, and will be promoted on all Ward 6 Democrats' social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

More information can be found at: https://www.ward6dems.org/inaugural\_ward\_6\_democrats\_words\_matter\_poetry\_contest

So, cut it short, grow it out and then cut it short again. Get that style you've always wanted to get but were too stuck on your "signature cut" to give it a try. Dye it! Shave it! Get plugs! Go crazy because you can, and you know that because centuries of people have been changing their hair in drastic and amazing ways.

Be bold and love your hair heritage!

Continued from p. 1

The Fourth and Eye Street intersection is also a messy area for traffic, but a protected bike lane won't eliminate or lower the danger, just change it.

Based on the newest design proposed by DDOT, there will be space for parking in front of Amidon, as well as a dedicated lane for drop off and pick up (the Westminster side will lose parking in favor of a protected bike lane). A dedicated lane for drop off and pick up is better than the original plan but doesn't go far enough.

During an ANC meeting in mid March, DDOT Community Liaison Andrew DeFrank explained that even with adding a dedicated drop off and pick up lane, kids will still have to cross the new bike lane. DeFrank said they were considering raising the lane to the level of the sidewalk, like a speed bump, as well as adding signage, markings, and vield signs.

There are still several safety concerns that won't be mitigated by these design features.

The main issue, as with the original design proposal, is kids getting in and out of cars. Even with a dedicated lane for this, kids will either be exiting the car in the street on the driver side or into the bike lane on the passenger side. DeFrank said the latter is common but recognizes the situation at a school is different. He also said that putting in a protected lane encourages more casual cyclists who will respect the lane and ride slower.

Yay!

Perhaps, but it depends on who is using the bike lane. Even going slow, an adult cyclist can do a lot of damage to a small child, which, because Amidon-Bowen is an elementary school, there will be plenty of. And I know from personal experience as a cyclist, we don't always slow down or see pedestrians.

A better design feature would be to raise the existing crosswalk between Westminster and the playground, and add in more speed bumps going towards 7th Street.

Another concern is that turning this section of Eve Street into a more widely used thoroughfare, with a highly sought after protected bike lane, will bring more and all types of cyclists, especially during the warmer months, game days, and big events either at The Wharf or in Navy Yard.

Will regulars and droves of tourists traveling between The Wharf and Navy Yard take into consideration this short section of road? Will they consider the neighborhood kids that frequent Amidon's playground after school and on weekends? Will they respect the fact that this is a school and slow down?

We simply don't know.

The ANC and The Southwester pointed out that other elementary schools don't have protected bike lanes like what DDOT is proposing. Amidon would be the first, so the potential to get this wrong is high.

Furthermore, this is happening quickly and the community hasn't yet been given time to consider the new changes and offer comment on it.

According to DeFrank, DDOT is planning a summer-fall install, which he says would give the community time to consider it and comment.

Currently, DDOT has not offered a solid plan on what it is going to do, and that makes community members nervous. Parents and stakeholders can't be expected to accept the plan without having a clear idea of what the plan is and time to comment on it.

Furthermore, there are several other construction projects slated to start soon that would force a deconstruction of the newly installed protected bike lane. Why not wait until after these projects are done?

The other thing is that Eye Street is not the main thoroughfare and adding in a protected bike lane could bring far more bicycle traffic and the potential risk to children.



I've made this argument before but DDOT really should be looking at a redesign of M Street, from 7th St. to 12th St., SE. Connect the protected bike lane at the Wharf to a new one on M Street. It's a main thoroughfare and it's over burdened with all kinds of traffic, especially on game days, during holidays, and other events. Pedestrians and cyclists often compete for sidewalk space. Imagine having a protected bike lane, instead of that pointless median, running down the center of M street. This would give drivers the road, cyclists a protected bike lane, and pedestrians the sidewalk. That's a DDOT project I think everyone could get behind.



www.becauseyoucanfitness.com

Well, I think they bloom earlier now that daylight savings time Daffodils comes earlier. are up!

Nah... there's a lot of drifting hot air on Capitol Hill.

A DECEMBER

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# SOUTHWEST DC STEPS INTO SPRING

## WARMER WEATHER, CHERRY BLOSSOMS AND MORE: IT'S OFFICIALLY SPRING IN SOUTHWEST.

Cherry Blossom season is upon us and we're kicking things off the National Cherry Blossom Festival's Art In Bloom program. You can find this stunning sculpture by artist Tracie Griffith Tso in the green space by the lot at 4th and M.



Speaking of public spaces - the Southwest Duck Pond is back in action! And look out for new landscaping and flower beds all over Southwest.

You can enjoy the warmer weather at the streeteries outside of our 4th street restaurants - so make a reservation at Marsala Art, Momo Chicken, and Station 4's patios soon. Many Southwest restaurants will have Cherry Picks specials available to celebrate the season.



And don't forget -Farmer's Market SW is back in full swing as of the first weekend of April. Just in time for the spring grower's season! Find them every Saturday from 9am to 1pm at 4th & M. For more info, visit www.marketswdc.com.

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