

# Op-Ed: Auditor’s Report Reveals DCHA Continues to Neglect Lead Issues

BY CAMERON ETESSAMI AND  
RACHAEL DAVIS, MEMBERS OF  
SOUTHWEST ACTION

A November report from the Office of the DC Auditor (ODCA) highlighted major concerns regarding lead-based paint exposure in public housing. The Report asserts that the DC Housing Authority (DCHA) largely neglected to execute proper lead abatement after hazards were noted in the mandatory lead-risk assessment. In fact, the Auditor’s office “found that as recently as October of 2017, DCHA did not know the location of lead-based paint with certainty in public housing, despite 96% of their properties being constructed before 1978 and federal law having required risk assessments to determine this by March 2002.”

The audit by ODCA went on to highlight that DCHA was unsuccessful in



Greenleaf Gardens in Southwest DC

Courtesy of Matt Koehler

addressing lead levels in a sample of housing units with residents under six years of age, an age group most at risk of developing detrimental mental and physical health problems. The finding indicates a profound and grave risk to the livelihood of young residents within the District of Columbia.

The ODCA accuses the DCHA of disregarding requirements to conduct annual lead inspections. The neglect is life-endangering as many DCHA units are in dire condition. DCHA was also found to have ignored and failed to maintain records of work orders surrounding lead-abatement in 50% of the work orders reviewed.

A local community organizing group, Southwest Action, is well aware of the issue and recognizes the importance of lead abatement in public

housing units as one of the key tenets of health and prosperity for District residents.

Members of Southwest Action strongly urge DCHA to adhere to the proper guidelines set forth by ODCA and consider it extremely reprehensible to

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DC NATIVE  
CHOREOGRAPHS  
SUCCESS AT  
ARENA STAGE

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POP-UP  
ARBORETUM  
HANGING OUT  
IN LANSBURGH  
PARK

Page 8

## Donation Lifts Youth Programming on Buzzard Point

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

Living Classrooms of the National Capital Region provides experiential learning to young people in Southwest and beyond. This summer, local middle school students participated in a S.T.E.A.M. (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) camp at the James C. Dent House Community Center on Buzzard Point.

These programs earned financial support from the Capitol Riverfront BID, which donated nearly \$6,000, according to D. Darnell Eaddy, Managing Director for the National Capital Region of the Living Classrooms Foundation. Eaddy stepped into his role in July, bringing a strong background in social work and youth development and a commitment to community engagement.



Courtesy of Darnell Eaddy

D. Darnell Eaddy, Managing Director,  
National Capital Region, Living Classrooms  
Foundation

Eaddy provided an email interview to *The Southwester*, which has been edited for length.

*The Southwester:* How do your programs impact the Southwest community?

**Darnell Eaddy:** Living Classrooms Foundation is committed to working with communities by creating access to opportunities designed to disrupt the ecosystem of poverty. Our program participants are our lead partners in the work of disrupting this system and mitigating the disparities it causes. We recognize that the strength of each community lies in the resilience of each resident and the access and opportunities available to community members of all ages. Living Classrooms creates safe spaces to nurture the abilities of all par-

See “Programming,” page 4






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[www.tdjbreastcancerfund.org](http://www.tdjbreastcancerfund.org)  
(202) 251-1639



# DC Native Choreographs Success at Arena Stage

BY SHEILA WICKOUSKI

Washington, DC native Jay Staten made his name as a dancer, performing in locations from New York City to Italy and appearing on several TV shows. As the new Associate Choreographer at Arena Stage, Staten is currently working on the production *Toni Stone*.

He provided an interview to *The Southwester*, which has been edited for clarity.

**The Southwester:** How did growing up in Washington, DC shape your career?

**Jay Staten:** Attending Duke Ellington School of the Arts was one of the biggest highlights of my life. That place was life-changing for me. It was a safe haven for me and still is for a lot of other budding artists in DC. When I think to myself, "how am I here?" I give most of the credit to Ellington, a place that doesn't get enough credit or funding for the amount of lives it touches and changes.

**SW:** Do you have any specific memories of Arena Stage?

**JS:** I used to ride past Arena Stage every day on the way to middle school and high school. Arena Stage and every other DC theatre has always been on my bucket list. It's great to



Courtesy of Author

Jay Staten

be home!

**SW:** Toni Stone has been called "one of the best [baseball] players you have never heard of." What did you learn about her while working on this production?

**JS:** I had never heard of Toni Stone before the production. What I learned is that strength and perseverance have been running strong in Black women for generations. Before there was Kamala Harris and Stacey Abrams, there was Toni Stone, paving the way and hitting balls.

**SW:** Arena Stage's production of *Toni Stone* will be simulcast at Nation-

als Park. Have you been involved in a simulcast of a live play before? How does that feel?

**JS:** I think it's amazing that during these crazy times, problem-solving has really made the theatre community become more creative. Some of that creativity has really pushed us forward. Watching a play about baseball at Nationals Park -- it doesn't get any better than that!

**SW:** In addition to your credits as a dancer, you are a community activist whose dance company for African-American youth has served more than 200 children and secured over \$3.2 million in college scholarships. What inspired you to create this opportunity?

**JS:** Dance really changed my outlook on life. It has given me opportunities that I never thought I would experience. I mean, it's not every day that a young man from Southeast DC is dancing and choreographing all over the world. I wanted to bring those opportunities to my community. I know I have a gift for communicating with the youth and I was always taught by my mom that giving back is important. I took those things and ran with them.

## The Southwester

Send submissions and questions to *The Southwester* by email at [editor@thesouthwester.com](mailto:editor@thesouthwester.com). Submissions for each monthly issue are due on the 15th of the preceding month.

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## Toni Stone to Appear at Nats Park

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

Toni Stone was the first woman to play baseball in the Negro Leagues. She was also the first woman to play in a professional men's league in the 1950s. Now, Toni Stone is about to make another appearance on the ball field when Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater partners with Nationals Park to host a free, live simulcast of the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of *Toni Stone*.

Based on Martha Ackmann's full-length biography *Curveball: The Remarkable Story of Toni Stone*, Lydia R. Diamond's play *Toni Stone* premiered off-Broadway in 2019. The play addresses Stone's baseball career, as well as the challenges that she faced as a Black woman.

The screened live performance inside the Kreeger Theatre will be broadcast on the video board at Nationals Park at 7:30 p.m. on September 26, 2021.

Tickets are free and must be reserved. To RSVP, please visit this web site and click RESERVE: <https://www.arenastage.org/tonistonenatspark>.



Courtesy of Tony Powell

*Santoya Fields (Toni Stone) in Lydia R. Diamond's Toni Stone running Sept. 3 – Oct. 3, 2021 at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater.*

The stadium will open two hours before the performance. Prior to the performance, there will be a ceremonial first pitch on the field. A variety of concessions and food will be available for purchase at the ballpark. Hundreds of Toni Stone commemorative bobblehead figures will be raffled off during the event.

"Toni Stone's story is hidden his-

tory and needs to be told. To tell this story in front of thousands at the ballpark and to celebrate Toni and the Negro League is an honor and a thrill," said Artistic Director Molly Smith.

While there have been movie screenings in stadiums to celebrate the lives of ball players, this is very likely the first time any ball player has returned to the field in a play being simulcast. The opportunity for thousands of people to view the performance could help Arena Stage reach the largest audience in its history.

Toni Stone's story of perseverance and fighting long odds resonates with current audiences while strengthening links to the past, including a local connection to Mamie Johnson, the first female pitcher to play in the Negro leagues, who died in Washington, DC.

"Ever since our organization ceremoniously drafted Mamie Johnson in 2008, we have strived to raise up the legacy of both women in baseball and the Negro Leagues," said Gregory McCarthy, who serves as the Senior Vice President, Community Engagement for the Washington Nationals.



# Breast Cancer Support Group June Meeting a Wild Success

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

The Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund (TDJBCF) kicked off the FDA Oncology Center of Excellence’s (FDA-OCE) Project Community Initiative “National Black Family Cancer Awareness Week: Engaging the Generations” (June 17 – June 23, 2021) at its June Support Group meeting. The Breast Cancer Fund’s effort dovetailed the FDA-OCE Initiative’s commitment to raising awareness of cancer in one of the most vulnerable populations in the country, a population that the TDJBCF’s embraces on a grassroots level locally in Southwest, as well as nationally and globally.

The meeting was emceed by Andrea Roane, a former WUSA9 TV news anchor and breast health advocate (Roane emceed a Support Group meeting back in June of 2019, too). TDJBCF Founder Thelma D. Jones provided welcome remarks followed by Emcee Roane’s introduction to the Project Community Initiative National Black Family Cancer Awareness Week video – highlights of the meeting can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/PcjWPex1Rc>.

In the video, Rea Blakey, an associate director for external outreach and engagement at the FDA (she also leads Project Community), lauded the Breast Cancer Fund for being a vital stakeholder for many years. Emcee Roane then shared her overall cancer advocacy work, including the popular WUSA Buddy Check9, a program which encourages women to do breast self-exams and remind “a buddy” to do the same. She also shared the devastating impact that cancer had on her family, including her spouse, son, and two brothers-in-law – one of which succumbed to his own diagnosis.

Starting the line-up of speakers was Professor of Oncology Dr. Lucile Adams-Campbell, Professor of Oncology at the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center and Associate Director for Minority Health at the Georgetown University Medical Center, among other titles. Dr. Adams-Campbell set the tone for the meeting, telling the audience of the importance of reducing the burden of cancer for the Black community by “talking the talk and walking the walk.” She spoke on the importance of mammography and screening but emphasized that adherence is equally important.

“Follow the guidelines and get this embedded into your thinking as every year routine,” Dr. Adams-Campbell said. She further discussed the challenges of structural racism, the disparities it continues to create, and how Black people are often regarded as the problem because not enough of us are at the table.

In addition, Dr. Adams-Campbell

shared that National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins issued an apology for what he called “structural racism in biomedical research” and pledged to address it with a sweeping set of actions. “To those individuals in the biomedical research enterprise who have endured disadvantages due to structural racism, I am truly sorry,” Collins said in his apology.

Dr. Adams-Campbell also shared that only 2% of Black people apply for any NIH grants but only 1% are funded and that a much “bigger and broader pipeline” needs to be built. Repeating an earlier comment, Dr. Adams-Campbell said, “Invite us to the table so that we can contribute, and we guarantee that we know a lot more about our health than others do.”

Guest Speaker Crystal T. Dixon, Assistant Professor, Health and Exercise Science at Wake Forest University, discussed her ACCURE Study in a presentation entitled “Seeking Health Equity: Examining Racism as a Social Determinant of Health.” Her presentation highlighted the groundbreaking research of the Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative. The research was based on a five-year, multi-state study that implemented system-based intervention involving technology and other tools to address systemic racism impacting African American breast and lung cancer patients in the healthcare system.

Complementing her presentation, she shared a definition of racism created by Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones:

Racism is defined as a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call ‘race’), that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities,

and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources.

Overall, the study’s focus was to determine what systemic issues are creating inequities in the healthcare system and how they can be addressed. “Systemic racism is a public health crisis,” said Professor Dixon. The full presentation as well as the entire meeting can be seen here (<https://fb.watch/v/1KCOqo47T/>) and on the Facebook page (<https://fb.watch/v/1KCOqo47T/>).

Emcee Roane introduced the FamiliesSHARES, which is a collaboration between NIH and Georgetown University Lombardi Cancer Center. The program’s goal is to have a conversation about the family history of certain common diseases affecting Black families. It provides information that will allow researchers to create a family history chart that individuals can use; it also provides people with a customized workbook that has information about common diseases such as breast cancer, prostate cancer, heart disease, diabetes, etc. The study collaborators feel the workbook will facilitate conversations amongst Black families about their family history, as well as keep a record of common diseases that can be shared with healthcare providers.

Over the course of the meeting, several speakers who share partnership or collaborative efforts with the TDJBCF, updated the audience on their efforts, which included:

**Dr. Ione D. Vargus, Author and Founder, Family Reunion Institute (Philadelphia, PA)** discussed her book *Black Family Reunions: Finding the Rest of Me* – a tribute to and celebration of family reunions and the purposes and benefits of family reunions as well as the many aspects of family reunion planning. Dr. Vargus was accompanied by her son Bill Vargus, a former sports-

caster for FOX in Philadelphia.

**Dr. Simina Boca, Adjunct Associate Professor Georgetown University Medical Center (Recorded)** discussed the study on the “Experience of Black/African American and Latina Breast Cancer Survivors in the Washington, DC region during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” The study examined how the pandemic disproportionately affected the targeted audience because of their vulnerable state. Eighty-four survivors shared their experience for the study. Dr. Boca indicated that a website is being created to reflect the data derived from the study. Both the TDJBCF and Nueva Vida are community partners in this effort.

**Dr. Chiranjeev Dash, MBBS, Ph.D, Assistant Director of Health Disparities Research, Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center** expanded on the importance of FamiliesSHARE, which enables doctors to have a better understanding of a patient’s health history. He also spoke

See “Support Group,” page 14

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## Announcement from Beth and Loren Hall

Our daughter, Madeline Phyllis Hall is engaged to be married to Warren Yorston of Raglan, New Zealand. We are delighted. Madeline was born and raised at River Park. She settled into New Zealand after attending Otago University there on a Fullbright Scholarship. She is currently with Beef and Lamb New Zealand, working with farmers on environmental and climate change issues. Warren is a beekeeper and house builder.



## PROGRAMMING

Continued from p. 1

ticipants to achieve a positive collective impact through experiential learning – literally learning through direct experience – or what we call “learning by doing.” Our core competencies in applying this approach are in our three focus areas: Education, Workforce Development, and Health, Wellness, & Community Safety. Through this work, Living Classrooms has impacted the lives of over 110,000 residents over the last 20 years by co-designing with communities programs that provide holistic and transformative opportunities.

**SW:** Your mission is linked to historic and contemporary racial, social, and economic disparities. How does this legacy shape your programming?

**DE:** Our legacy of historic and contemporary racial, social, and economic oppression has created the inequities and disparities that the Living Classrooms Foundation and other social service agencies and non-profits exist to attempt to both mitigate and dismantle. The oppression of marginalized communities is the core reason we seek to ensure that communities are heard, valued, and actively involved in the creation of programming and services to dismantle inequitable systems. We utilize a listen first approach, and we seek to respond with empathy. We recognize that community members are the experts of their experiences, and that it is imperative to keep families, stakeholders, and constituents involved in our planning and programming. Our participants know what their definition of success is and often just need support and resources to achieve their goals.

**SW:** How will the recent financial contribution from the Capitol Riverfront BID support the Southwest community?

**DE:** The generous donation from the Capitol Riverfront BID led by Michael Stevens will help to sustain our existing programming. The donation allowed us to expand the Creative Arts and S.T.E.A.M. enrichments offered to

middle school scholars enrolled in our summer program. Scholars were able to express themselves through creative writing and music production, learn more about the environment in their community, and enhance 21st-century skills by learning foundational engineering principles. Additionally, it will help us continue to implement our award-winning robotics team and our music programs, the Queen Beez and BeatZone, into the 2021-2022 school year.

**SW:** The Dent House opened on Juneteenth just two years ago. With new development coming to Buzzard Point, what is the importance of holding this space for the community?

**DE:** The incredible legacy of Rev. Dent and the history of the community are integral components of the legacy of Buzzard Point and the Southwest community. We are committed to holding this space to ensure the diverse history of residents and the community are preserved. We have an obligation to honor the work of our ancestors and ensure that the future generations are aware of their rich history. Furthermore, we have an obligation to ensure that we utilize this space to ensure that every resident can be participants in the changes occurring in the community and not be displaced by them.

**SW:** As the new Managing Director, what are your top priorities?

**DE:** My overall goal for the Living Classrooms Foundation of the National Capital Region is to continue to disrupt the ecosystem of poverty by creating opportunities for youth and adults. We will achieve this by expanding the great work that already exists, including educational opportunities for youth, creating workforce development opportunities that create a path for participants to earn a family-supporting wage, and partnering with the local government to enhance the environment surrounding the Anacostia River. Ultimately, our goal is to partner with residents, government agencies, foundations, and businesses to build a Workforce Development & Education Center with the capacity to serve thousands of residents a year.

## They Practice What They Preach

BY WILMA GOLDSTEIN

For 25 years, Brian and Ruth Hamilton have served as co-pastors at Westminster Presbyterian Church, located on the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and I Streets in DC’s Southwest neighborhood.

“I think a church really needs to be a community center and has the responsibility of organizing around all kinds of issues and problems that afflict the community. We’ve tried to do that over the years, not just to conduct services, but to really be out and engage with the neighborhood,” Brian Hamilton said in an interview with the Buzzard Point Oral History Project.

This guiding principle has benefited both the church and the community. Westminster has served as a haven for LGBTQ neighbors, immigrants, the recently incarcerated and other historically marginalized groups. As a result, the Reverends Hamilton have built a diverse group of congregants, followers, and others who have received comfort and assistance from their various ministries that have evolved over the years.

In recognition of their thoughtfulness, selflessness and devotion, the Education and Scholarship Task Force of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly (SWNA) presented the Reverends Brian and Ruth Hamilton with the 2021 Star Award. Each year, the Star Award is given to a Southwest organization that practices exemplary community service.

On August 15, SWNA President Donna Purchase presented the



Brian and Ruth Hamilton, Co-Pastors of Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Courtesy of SaVanna Wanzer

award, noting that the Hamiltons have been longtime supporters of the work of SWNA and the Education and Scholarship Task Force. In prior years, before the COVID-19 pandemic required pivoting to a virtual ceremony, celebrations of SWNA’s scholarships and awards were often held at Westminster.

Ruth Lytle and Brian Hamilton met while each staffed churches in Detroit in the 1990s.

In February of 1996, they accepted an offer to co-pastor at Westminster and moved into one of Southwest’s original Sanitary Houses, where they raised two sons and still live today.

Ruth, the daughter and granddaughter of pastors, lived in New Mexico and Arkansas before studying at Mt. Holyoke and training for the ministry at the San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Brian, who was born and raised in Maine, went to college at Eastern University and then to the New School of Social Research, now known as New School University,

See “Preach” page 15

## First Person: Music in the Heart

BY WILMA GOLDSTEIN

Like so many in the Southwest community, I have a personal connection to Westminster and Brian and Ruth Hamilton.

I have been to many memorial services at Westminster for jazz fans and musicians for whom Westminster is not their church, or who may not belong to any church, but feel connected to Westminster. I expect my own to be conducted there.

Shortly after I was assigned to

do this story, I was standing in a checkout line at Safeway and overheard this conversation. Assuming it must have been karma, I decided it should be shared as an example of how Southwesterners think about Ruth and Brian.

Shopper #1: “Didn’t see you in church this morning.”

Shopper #2: “No, I do usually come to that church but ‘my girl Ruth’ was doing the sermon at Westminster and I had to go hear my girl!”



Moving toward a  
**BRIGHT  
FUTURE!**

# CELEBRATE

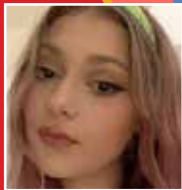
*the SWNA ESTF*  
**2021 Scholarship  
Award Winners**



Dia Mynn  
Brown  
Bowie State



Cedric  
Caschetta  
Virginia U



Nicla De Biasi  
Northeastern U



Mikayla  
Edwards



Gabriella  
Grimaldi  
GWU



Ellen Guo  
Virginia Tech



Steven Guo  
GWU



Dehja Harris  
Trinity  
Washington



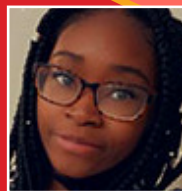
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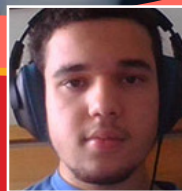
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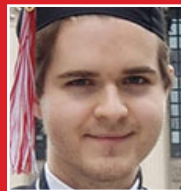
Antoinette  
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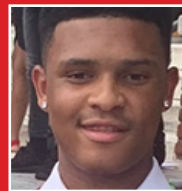
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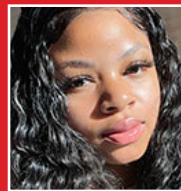
Aidan Smith  
GWU



Khalil Warren  
Lincoln U



Jordan Watson  
Virginia State



Aaliyah  
Wilkinson  
Virginia State



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**Southwest  
Neighborhood  
Assembly**

SWNA **ESTF** - Education and Scholarship Task Force was established to encourage and assist youth in the Southwest Washington DC, Ward 6, Zip code 20024 neighborhood to pursue a post-secondary education.



# KID'S CORNER

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](mailto:editor@thesouthwester.com). Check out next month's issue for the answers!

## Spot the difference!

Can you spot the differences in the two scenes below?



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

## Answers from August 2021 issue

**Differences:** The picture on the left has a seahorse where there are yellow fish in the right picture; the picture on the right has an umbrella and bottle of water with the two people on the blanket; there are two crabs in the picture on the right; there is a beach ball in the picture on the right; there is a message in a bottle in the picture on the right; the sea turtle in the picture on the right has seashells on its back.

**Word Scramble:** There are 281 words you can make from "Birthdays."

## WORD SEARCH: ANIMALS!



BAT  
CHIPMUNK  
BEAR  
KITTY  
DEER

HEDGEHOG  
SQUIRREL  
COYOTE  
BIRD  
MOUSE

# Word Scramble!

How many words can you make from HIBERNATE?

[illegible]





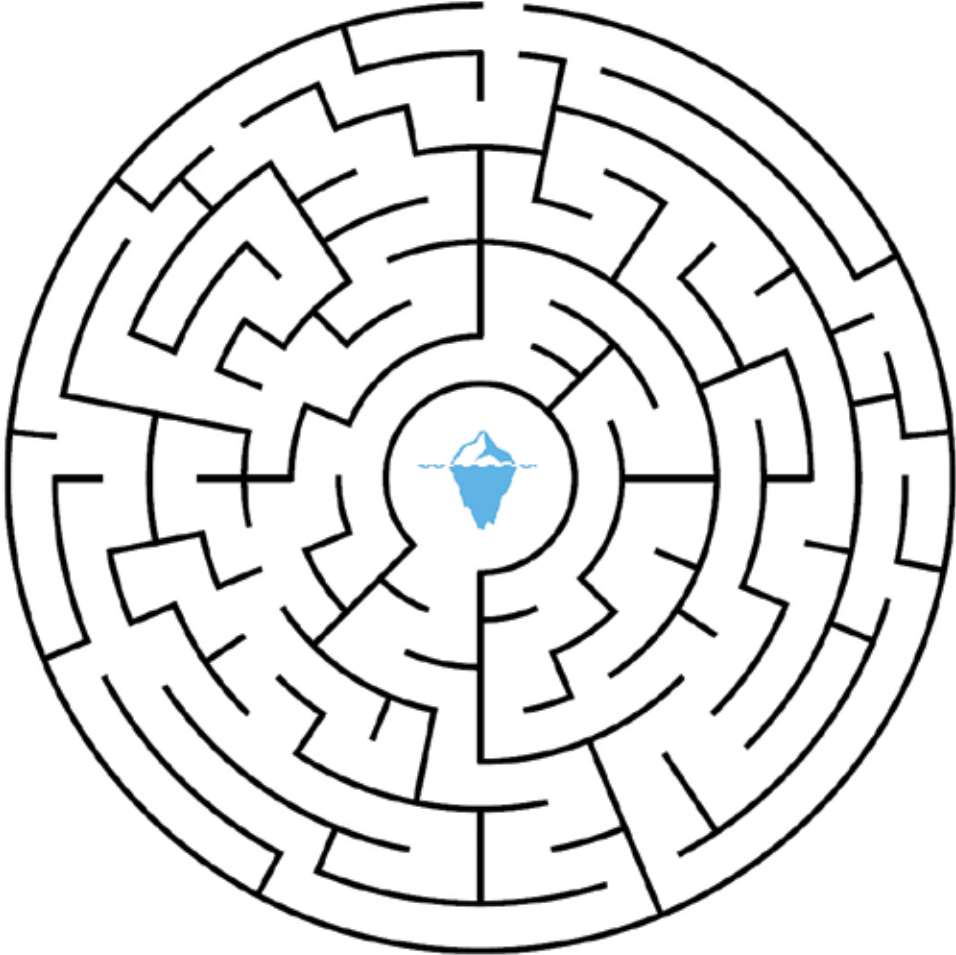
# KID'S CORNER

SUMMER  
EXTRA!

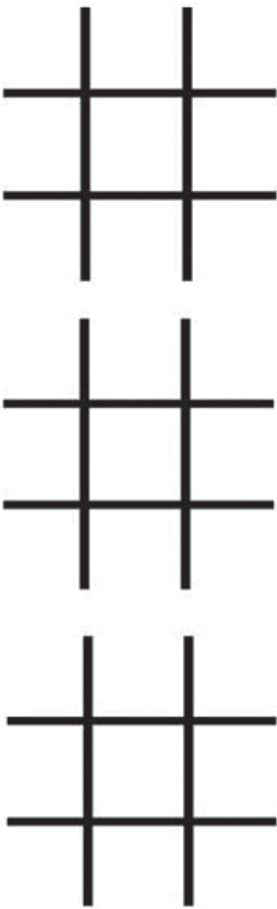
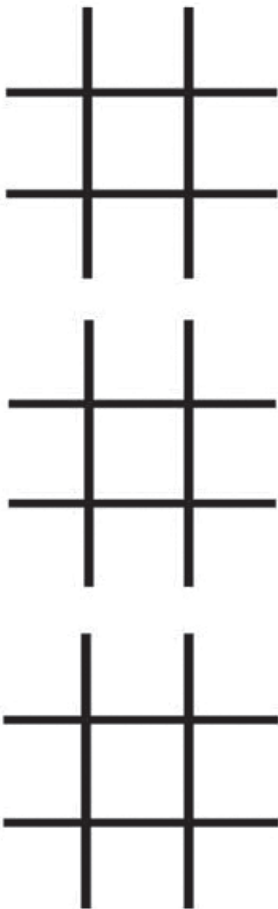
## Maze!



Can you help the  
penguin get to  
the iceberg?



## TIC TAC TOE



## Jokes!

Why did the banana  
go to the doctor?  
*Because it was  
peeling bad!*  
(Submitted by Ellie)

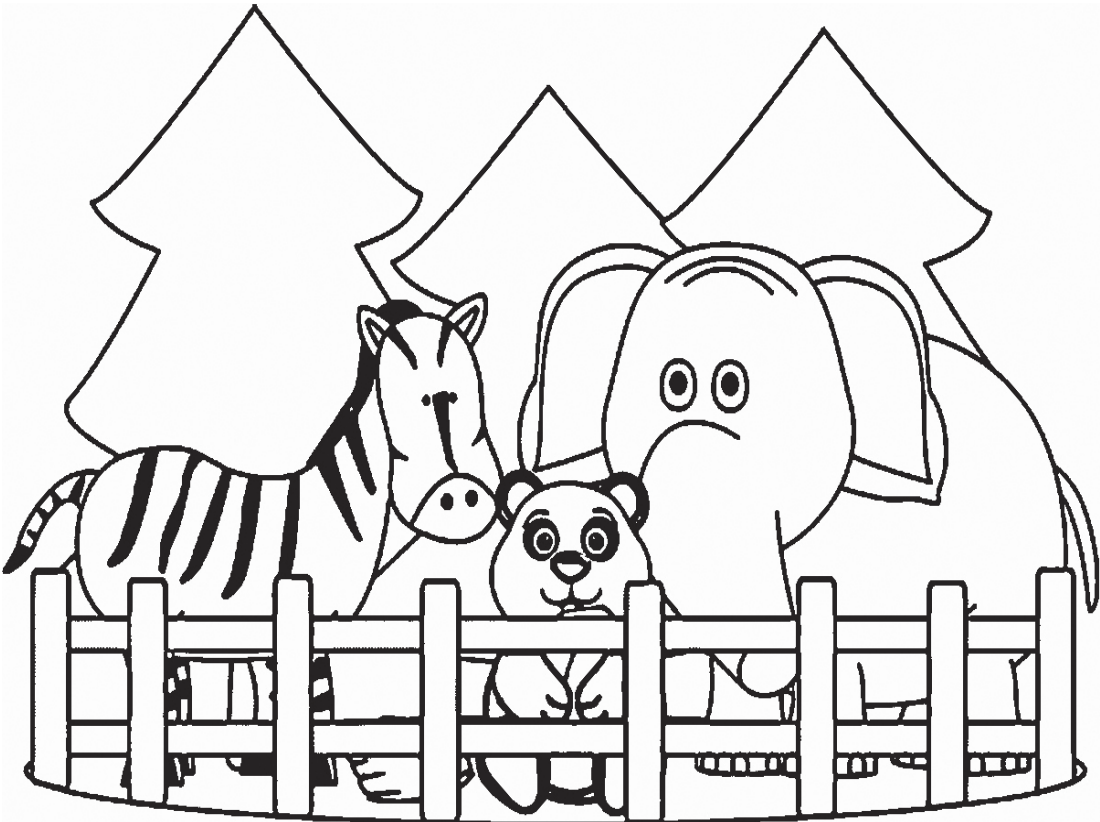
What is fast, loud,  
and crunchy?  
*A rocket chip!*

What did the left eye  
say to the right eye?  
*Between us,  
something smells!*

Would you like to  
submit a joke for  
Kid's Corner? Email  
it to [editor@thesouthwester.com](mailto:editor@thesouthwester.com).

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

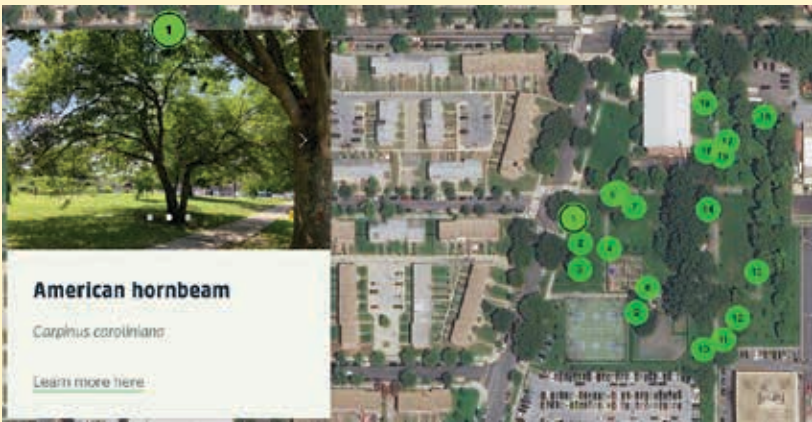
## COLORING TIME!



## Math Moment!

Can you complete  
these equations?

- a.  $50 + 50 =$
- b.  $150 + 20 =$
- c.  $15 + 5 =$
- d.  $196 - 97 =$
- e.  $21 + 21 =$
- f.  $28 - 4 =$
- g.  $72 - 18 =$
- h.  $200 \times 3 =$



Courtesy of Matt Koehler via Storymaps

Overhead view shows the location of the 19 notable trees at the Lansburgh Park Pop-up Arboretum with detailed descriptions on the left. Interactive map found here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d3ef4b8ef7b34c9e92ed6a106de022b0>

# Pop-up Arboretum Hanging Out in Lansburgh Park

BY DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STAFF

**D**DOT Urban Forestry Division and Southwest Business Improvement District (SWBID) are collaborating on a new initiative, a pop-up arboretum in Lansburgh Park, launched in August. The pop-up arboretum is a temporary exhibit of nineteen notable trees ranging from a young paw paw tree to mature yellow buckeye trees.

The pop-up arboretum is a fun way for Southwest residents to learn more about the species of trees inhabiting Lansburgh Park and can help inspire future arborists. Many of the trees featured in the pop-up are also common throughout the District, so this will help give your tree ID skills a boost. You can also learn some fun new facts, like did you know that according to the National League of Cities there are 5,233 streets named after the Elm tree?

An arboretum is simply a living

collection of trees, often organized by geographic region or plant families. Arboreta can be used for scientific study, tree breeding, and education. By using existing parks as arboreta, DDOT can take advantage of natural resources in our city parks to highlight tree diversity, support the enjoyment of trees, and help people connect with nature.

In the park, the nineteen trees included will have a temporary sign with tree species information and interesting facts about the tree. We suggest you begin your tour from the Delaware Ave SW side of the park. Scan the QR code on the signage at the entrance for more information or visit <https://tinyurl.com/popuptrees>.

This is the fourth pop-up arboretum DDOT has created in DC and we are excited to host it here in Southwest. The pop-up arboretum will last through the end of summer so be sure to check it out!

# September Mutual Aid Hours, Back to School Bash

BY CARLEE BROWN AND MAX GROSSMAN

**W**ard 6 Mutual Aid (W6MA) is a collective of Black and Brown grassroots organizations working together to help keep our communities safe. For over a year and a half, 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.

Interested in ways to help W6MA and CUMC?

- Donate groceries, cleaning supplies and household items at CUMC. We accept donations **Wednesdays and Fridays 3-6 p.m.** as well as **Saturdays 11 a.m.-2 p.m.** Please note that our Wednesday and Friday hours are subject to cancellation due to heat. On days weather is preventatively hot, we will leave a sign outside the courtyard entrance indicating that the Pod is closed. Needed items include:
  - paper towels, toilet paper;
  - non-perishable foods: hearty canned soup (good for a meal), corned beef hash, microwaveable meals, mac and cheese, powder drink mix, instant coffee, breakfast cereal, bottled water;
  - personal hygiene: sanitary pads, diapers (sizes 2-4), pull-ups (size Adult XL);
  - cleaning: spray cleaner, dish soap, laundry detergent, floor cleaner;
  - kitchen supplies: frying pans, manual can openers;
  - paperback books for adults, fiction novels, memoirs.

- Come say hi and consider donating fresh produce bought at the **Southwest Farmer's Market** at our table on **Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**
  - **Donate** to Serve Your City and W6MA's annual **Back to School Bash** event that provides Black and Brown youth with backpacks that include the digital devices and school supplies necessary to thrive in school. See more information at [serveyourcitydc.org/b2sb](https://serveyourcitydc.org/b2sb).
  - Are you a business looking to give back to the community? The **Back to School Bash** is a great way to get involved! Find out more at [serveyourcitydc.org/b2sb](https://serveyourcitydc.org/b2sb) or email [hannah@serveyourcitydc.org](mailto:hannah@serveyourcitydc.org).
- W6MA and CUMC have a number of ways you can get the support you need:
- If you or someone you know has a need for 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, hygiene and household supplies at the CUMC's 5000 Ministry Food Pantry on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of the month at **9 a.m.** (courtyard entrance).
  - If you can not come to the church due to health or mobility issues and you live in SW, call 202-554-9117 to request a delivery.
  - Obtain fresh produce from SW Mutual Aid every Sunday morning at **9-10 a.m.** at CUMC's courtyard entrance.
- Just want to learn more? Email [swmutualaid@serveyourcitydc.org](mailto:swmutualaid@serveyourcitydc.org).

# Community Grant Opportunity

**T**he Southwest Community Foundation (SWCF) announces a special grant opportunity that opens October 1, 2021. The foundation expects to award up to seven grants of between \$1,000 and \$10,000 for innovative projects that enhance the lives of people living in Near Southwest DC. The grant funds have been made possible by a community-benefits agreement negotiated between ANC6D and Douglas Development.

Established in 2015, SWCF fosters ways to strengthen the volunteer and not-for-profit sectors of the Near Southwest community. Serving as a formal, impartial, nonpartisan vehicle, it directs philanthropic monies where they are most needed and best deployed. The foundation accepts funds and donations intended for the benefit of residents of Near Southwest, defined as the area bound-

ed by 14th Street SW, Independence Avenue, South Capitol Street, and the Potomac and Anacostia rivers. This area includes residents of all ages, races, and incomes, in public housing, market-rate rental units, and single-family homes.

SWCF welcomes grant applications for programs, operations, and projects from nonprofit organizations that are based in Southwest or primarily serve Southwest residents. The foundation will publish application guidelines on its website by October 1. The deadline for submission will be December 1, 2021. Awards will be announced and distributed in early 2022.

For further information, stay in touch with Southwest Community Foundation | Improving Life in Southwest DC ([sw-community-foundation.org](https://sw-community-foundation.org)).



# September Blood Drive at Westminster Church

**S**omeone in the United States needs a blood transfusion every two seconds, yet less than 10% of Americans donate blood. Westminster Presbyterian Church (400 I St. SW) is helping our community meet its needs by hosting an Inova Blood Service drive on Saturday, Sept. 18, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. There are lots of reasons to donate blood: to help save lives, in appreciation of times when a loved one received a transfusion, or to

enjoy the free juice and snacks afterwards!

Donors must be 17 years of age or older (16 with parental permission), weigh at least 110 lbs, and be feeling well. All donors and staff must wear masks during the donation process.

To make an appointment, get more information about eligibility, or to learn more, please visit <https://www.inovabloodsaves.org>



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## Fall 2021

**SEPTEMBER 1, 9**  
Transit Pier Concerts

**SEPTEMBER 2**  
Sunset Cinema Outdoor Movie

**SEPTEMBER 4-5**  
DC JazzFest

**SEPTEMBER 11-12**  
Fiesta DC

**OCTOBER 2**  
Wiener 500 Oktoberfest

**OCTOBER 3**  
DC Turkish Festival

**OCTOBER 24**  
Día de los Muertos

**NOVEMBER 14**  
Oyster Derby

## Holiday 2021

**NOVEMBER 26**  
Lighting of The Wharf Christmas Tree

**NOVEMBER 28**  
Lighting of the Menorah

**DECEMBER 4**  
The District's Holiday Boat Parade

Registration required.  
 Event features fireworks.

Schedule subject to change; visit wharfdc.com for updates.  
All events are open to the public.

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# Stories of Healing, Resilience and Advocacy Shared by Smith Center and Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

The Smith Center for Healing and the Arts and the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund (TDJBCF) partnered for an evening of inspiration and powerful examples of courage and resilience on Wednesday, July 21, 2021. The third annual event was hosted on Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook, and featured Smith Center Board Members the Honorable Lee Satterfield, Senior Judge, DC Superior Court and Kimberly Parekh, Senior Education Advisor, UNICEF.



Smith Center Executive Director Lisa Simms Booth said, "I'm delighted to be back with the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund, and I'm thrilled that the relationship between our organizations continues to thrive. I'm especially proud to have this conversation tonight about healing, resilience and the power of service to the



community which is so important to both our organizations."

Simms Booth served as the evening's emcee and began with an overview of the Smith Center's twenty-five years of work, including exciting events to mark the organization's twenty-fifth anniversary. Subsequently, Simms Booth moved to the conversation portion of the evening with the Honorable Lee Satterfield.

Judge Satterfield shared his story, which started with the loss of his leg at age 17 to osteosarcoma, a difficult form of bone cancer. Following many years of good health, the latent health effects of his cancer treatments on his heart caused a stroke, and a few years ago, necessitated a transplant.

In response to the question of what he would say to someone facing a cancer diagnosis, Satterfield replied, "I would say that life is not permanent; it is constantly evolving, which is a good thing. We could get sick, but

we can also get better. We all have the capacity to overcome obstacles."

Judge Satterfield, the author of *Courageous Warriors: Overcoming Obstacles to Inspire and Lead* shared his motivation for writing the book. "The primary reason was to highlight the need for better treatment for children diagnosed with cancer," he said. "The second reason was to highlight the latent effects that can happen to those that had childhood cancers. Lastly, I was fortunate to survive long enough to get a heart transplant and I wanted to promote the need for organ donors."

The evening continued with Simms Booth interviewing Kimberly Parekh, founder and facilitator of the Young Adult Metastatic Support Group at the Smith Center. Parekh shared her story of being diagnosed with Stage IV metastatic breast cancer in her 30s, and the impact of shifting from being very healthy to very sick. She slowly earned

back her health using an integrative approach including both traditional treatments and holistic options.

When asked why she chose an integrative approach, Parekh said, "I believe it helps me in my disease management and has suited me. But my approach is unique to me, as everyone's body is different and everyone's disease is different. There is no one size fits all approach. This is a part of well-being and healing, and everyone has to find their own way."

Simms Booth asked Parekh about the difference between healing and cure. Parekh said, "I think about impermanence; everything is constantly changing, and everything is in flux. I strive not to attribute positive or negative feelings; rather, it just is. There are a lot of war-related terms used when talking about cancer patients - warrior, battle, etc. It is not peaceful. I have accepted my diagnosis and let go. But acceptance doesn't mean I have given up. In fact, I do everything in my power to stay well and be well. I think that is part of healing."

The meeting shifted to focus on service, advocacy, and the power of community. Simms Booth asked the speakers, including Thelma D. Jones, Founder, TDJBCF, about what inspired them to give back or pay it forward.

Jones said, "altruism is part of my

See "Healing," page 15

## Photo of the Month Winner: Wolde Makonnen

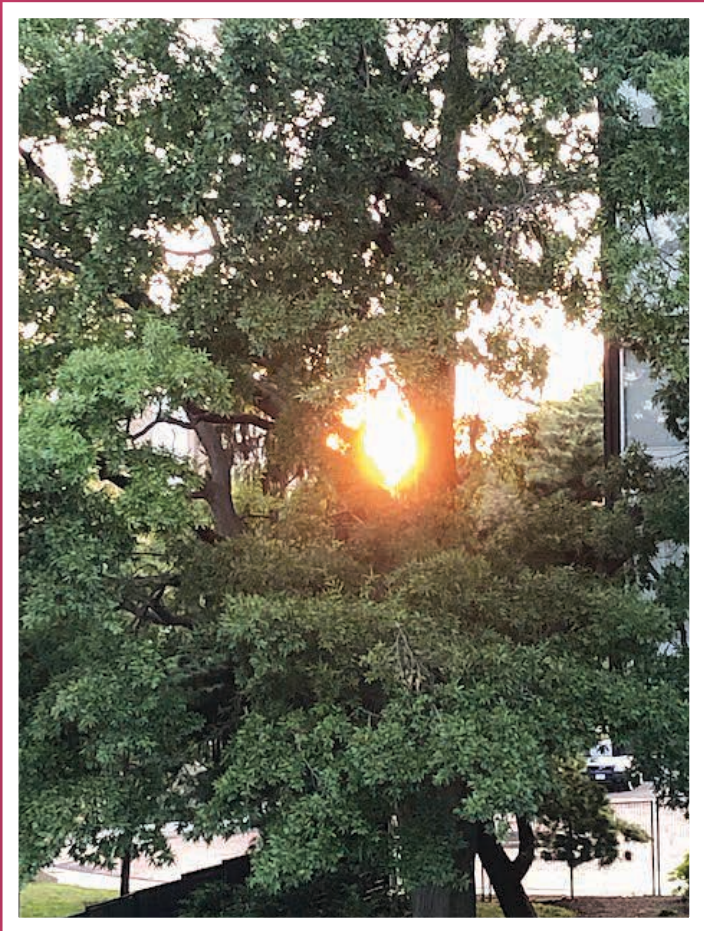


Fall in Summer at the Wharf

If you would like to submit a photo for consideration for Photo of the Month, please email it to [editor@thesouthwester.com](mailto:editor@thesouthwester.com).



# Southwest Moments



Courtesy of Irene Allen

A Southwest sunset from a St. James balcony



Courtesy of Cambria

The rooftop bar at Cambria

## Cambria Offers Quite a View

Earlier this year, a new hotel opened up at Q St. and South Capitol St., SW, within a very short walk of both Audi Field and Nationals Park. Cambria Hotel Washington, DC Capitol Riverfront features 154 rooms, modern amenities, and two restaurant/bars with sufficient space to accommodate DC United fans, Nationals fans, and any others who wish to stop in.

Just off the lobby is RowHouse, a restaurant and bar open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, with a 4pm-7pm happy hour on Mondays through Fridays. And on the Cambria open-air rooftop, with stellar views of the city, is Perch SW, featuring small plates, cocktails, and local craft brews. The hotel has hosted neighborhood events and private events on the rooftop space, and the rooftop bar is open Thursday-Sunday evenings, as well as for Saturday and Sunday brunch. The view is certainly worth checking out.

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# SW Community Survey Results - What did we hear from SWDC Residents?

BY MIRANDA CHIEN-HALE,  
SW DC ACTION

**T**hank you to the more than 300 neighbors, ~2% of the total SWDC population, who filled out Southwest Action's Community Development survey either at Christ United Methodist Church (CUMC) or online via links shared on social media, or by following an article in the February *Southwester* from January - May of 2021. This survey aimed to capture what types of businesses or community organizations Southwest residents find to be most important for ensuring a healthy, inclusive, and thriving neighborhood. Residents identified businesses and organizations they value and/or would like to see in Southwest.

## What type of businesses would residents like to see in SW?

- Over 60% of all total respondents would like to see some type of **hardware store**.
- Over 50% of all total respondents would like to see **coffee shops**.
- Over 40% of all total respondents would like to see **restaurants, bars, grocery stores, medical/doctor's offices, floral/garden stores**.
- Over 30% of all total respondents

would like to see **banks or credit unions**.

## Spotlight:

- **Long-term residents of 10+ years** also identified **hardware stores, coffee shops, banks or credit unions, and medical/doctor's offices**.
- Residents that identified as **Black/African American** identified **medical/doctor's office** as a **top choice**. This was closely followed by a **dollar store**, as well as interest in seeing a **Barber's shop/hair salon, banks/credit unions, grocery stores, convenience stores, and coffee shops**.

The following question highlights the biggest difference among key demographics.

## What community organizations do you feel are important to have in SW?

- Over 50% of all total respondents chose **youth-serving organizations** (scouts, summer day camps, clubs, etc).
- Over 40% of all total respondents chose **Senior Center and after-school programs, arts programming, health access/education**.
- Over 30% of all total respondents would like to see **job training**.

## Spotlight:

- **Long-term residents of 10+ years and residents that identified as Black/African American** identified **Youth-serving organizations** (scouts, summer day camps, clubs, etc.), **Senior Center, and after-school programs and job training** as top needs.

## Which businesses & community services in SW do you use the most?

- Over 50% of all total respondents use Safeway/grocery stores.
- Over 30% of all total respondents use the CVS pharmacy.
- Over 20% of all total respondents use the restaurants.

## Spotlight:

- Long-term residents of 10+ years and residents that identified as Black/African American identified these same businesses & community services as most used.

## Who responded?

Nearly 60% of the respondents identified as White as compared to the 46% resident reported in the US Census. Nearly 1/3 of respondents have lived in Southwest for 0-5 years and nearly 44% reported being between 21-40 years old.

According to the US Census' 2019 American Community Survey, SWDC is composed of nearly 14,500 residents. The racial breakdown in 2019 was White - 46.2%, Black/African American - 38.7%, and Hispanic/Latino, Asian, or other - 15%. Roughly one-third of the SWDC population is between 20-34, another one-third is 35-59, with the last third ranging from 0-19 of age or over 60. According to the DC Office of Planning, SW has experienced the following demographic shifts since 2000 - the white population nearly doubling while the black population dropped by nearly 30%. **Given this extreme demographic shift, we seek to pay special attention to the needs and desires of our longer-term and Black residents.**

As we continue our push to bring community-controlled, permanently affordable housing and retail space to the neighborhood, via the expansion of the Douglass CLT, information like this can help us learn how best to address the needs of our neighborhood, especially for those who have been intentionally and historically underserved (to learn more about the community land trust proposal, visit [bit.ly/swclt](http://bit.ly/swclt)).

See "Survey," page 13



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# Support Group Parties with Dual Purposes this September

BY SOUTHWESTER STAFF

With the change of the season upon us and all that’s happening in our lives, the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund (TDJBCF) believes that it’s time to celebrate and party with a purpose. Join the support group Wednesday, Sept. 15, at 6 p.m. via Zoom and Facebook live to celebrate the 9<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fund and party with a purpose at the virtual 69<sup>th</sup> birthday of Thelma D. Jones.

The celebration will feature renowned guest speaker Vanessa B. Sheppard, Ph.D, who serves as Associate Director, Community Outreach Engagement and Health Disparities at Massey Cancer Center at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine (VCU). She is also Chair of the Department of Health Behavior and Policy at VCU School of Medicine.

Dr. Sheppard will discuss the



Courtesy of Author  
Vanessa B. Sheppard, Ph.D, Department of Health Behavior and Policy Massey Cancer Center Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

study she led on “Sisters informing Sisters,” the first peer-led decision support intervention for Black/ African American women diagnosed with breast cancer, which improves patients’ communication with providers and treatment decision outcomes. Dr. Sheppard will also discuss her upcoming efforts in working with the TDJBCF to expand the “Sisters Informing Sisters” intervention effort.

In addition, she will talk about her research work at VCU’s Massey Cancer Center which is focused on cancer disparities with an emphasis on breast cancer, cancer care delivery, behavioral trials, and longitudinal cohorts. Lastly, Dr. Sheppard will touch on the importance of her research work being conducted within persons diagnosed with cancer and/or at increased risk due to lifestyle behaviors or potential genetic alterations.

The TDJBCF will welcome virtual guests from throughout the country, feature a musical presentation, share brief video tributes from our ambassadors, breast cancer survivors and partners, and raise a birthday toast to TDJBCF’s Founder Thelma D. Jones.

“This birthday, like all my birthdays, is special,” Jones said, referencing her 2007 diagnosis of a late stage, and rare, aggressive form of breast cancer. “I am still passionate about using my lived experience, network, connections, and voice to help bring about a paradigm shift in reducing the incidence and mortality rates of breast cancer, especially in our underserved communities. At the same time, I want to be an example of courage and hope to others as we travel this journey together as no one should have to travel their journey alone.”

Don’t miss this special virtual celebration that’s defying COVID-19 and looking ahead to brighter days. For more information on the celebration, email [thelma@tdjbreastcancerfund.org](mailto:thelma@tdjbreastcancerfund.org) or call (202) 251-1639.

## SURVEY

Continued from p. 12

So, what did we learn?

How do these responses line up with how you feel? What can we take away from these responses? How can we inform and drive what we ask and push for from Southwest’s Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC), the DC Council, and DC government more broadly. Check out our website at [www.swdcaction.com](http://www.swdcaction.com) to learn more.

**What does Community Development mean to the Community and Southwest DC Action?**

Community development means creating an equitable, vibrant, diverse, economically healthy community with services that meet the needs of the people who live here. Our vision for Southwest is a community in which all residents have access to all basic services and there is a thriving local business community. There would be many multi-use open and vibrant spaces that are inviting to all

- residents. Furthermore...
- Businesses should meet the community needs and focus on locally owned and small businesses.
  - This means having: medical/doctor’s offices, affordable grocery and convenience options (e.g. dollar store, convenience store, hardware store).
  - a neighborhood Barber’s shop/hair salon
  - access to a bank and/or credit union
  - a nearby and affordable neighborhood coffee shop and restaurant
- More broadly speaking...
- The community needs open spaces for socializing, recreation, small businesses (e.g. farmer’s markets), and entertainment.
  - There must be recreational opportunities for all ages with inclusive accessibility options for all residents.
  - Any new developments in Southwest should include investments in open spaces, including parks, recreational fields, and communal spaces.

- Community WiFi should be made available and free to low-income district residents.
- Families need accessible and affordable childcare, after-school programs, and early childhood education.
- To be an equitable community, Southwest youth need employment opportunities and job training, and a Senior Center.
- The Southwest Business Improvement District (SWBID) should include representatives from all parts of the community and be racially and socially diverse.
- Southwest should have more community gardens, edible landscaping, and community-maintained flower/green beds.

## Who is Southwest DC Action?

Founded in the fall of 2019, **Southwest DC Action** is a volunteer group of more than 30 Southwest DC neighbors who are organizing and advocating for anti-racist development and an equitable and environmentally sustainable neighborhood. We have five workgroups – Community Development, History and Culture, Environment and Climate Resiliency, Housing, and Youth – meeting all together once a month to organize, advocate, and take action. Check out our website at [www.swdcaction.com](http://www.swdcaction.com) to learn more.



**Friends of Southwest DC**  
P.O. Box 44434  
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**Over 20 years of helping Southwest!**

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*Over the past year we have been proud to provide funding for:*

- Camp Arena Stage scholarships for SW kids
- Christ United Methodist Church SW Food Pantry
- DC STORM trips and radio programs for SW youth
- Living Classrooms Thanksgiving food drive
- Omicron Eta Lambda SW school supplies distribution
- Serve Your City SW Ducklings Clothing Drive
- St. Augustine’s meals for residents at the SW Aya
- SW Comm-Unity Forum Christmas Toy Drive
- SWNA college scholarships
- Waterfront Village programs for seniors

*Please join us! Donate by mail or on our website.*

**We welcome grant applications from organizations working in Southwest.**

Friends of Southwest DC is a 501(3)(c) nonprofit organization. All our work is done by volunteers, so your contribution goes to help Southwest residents.



SUPPORT GROUP

Continued from p. 3

about the Georgetown/Howard University partnership study on “Disparities in Chronic Stress, Quality of Life and Physical Activity among Black and White breast cancer survivors.” The study is a collaborative effort between Howard University and Georgetown University and is designed to help better understand how breast cancer survivors are coping with stress and examining the correlation of stress and breast cancer outcomes.

**Attorney LaRuby Z. May, Managing Member, May Lightfoot PLLC** talked about the Zantac litigation and the over-prescription of the drug to Black and Brown people and others who live in food deserts and lack accessibility to healthy food options. Zantac and the generic version known as Ranitidine were prescribed for individuals with heartburn, indigestion, acid reflux, and other digestive related issues. Zantac/Ranitidine has been shown to cause cancers, including but not limited to breast, prostate, bladder, and stomach cancers.

Dr. Carla D. Williams, the associate professor of medicine and interim Cancer Center director of Howard University, bookended Dr. Adams-Campbell’s words about the importance of being at the table in her closing remarks. Dr. Williams spoke about the importance of being a health advocate and shared her definition of health justice. “Health

justice permanently corrects the conditions that have allowed health disparities, inequities, and injustice to arise and persist.” Encouraging the audience to become individual health advocates, she gave an impassioned call to action, “Let’s all find our roots [to be health justices]. Pick your cause [from the many injustices presented during the meeting]. What is the one thing you can work on as a root cause issue in our collective spheres of influence so that we can make these changes?” Dr. Williams also described the TDJBCF and its founder as “a true drum major for health justice and health equity” and praised Jones for her newsletters, which help to keep everyone informed.

Thanks to Emcee Roane and all the speakers. The kickoff of the FDA-OCE National Black Family Cancer Awareness Week (#BlackFamCan) ended on the same high note that it started on, leaving the virtual audience with a lot of food for thought and a call to action. Special thanks to the TDJBCF newsletter editor Lashanah Thomas, TDJBCF Ambassadors, Peri Hamlin, Jenelle Leonard, Pentandra Digital Marketing Consultants LLC, and the A-Team (Rodney Minor, executive producer, BRTV Consulting, Anthony Venuto, and Derek Tawiah).

For information regarding future meetings or the TDJBCF, contact thelma@tdjbreastcancerfund or call (202) 251-1639.

don’t stop at lead and mold but also extend to floods and pipe backups in bathrooms – her family was victim of both in 2007. She stated that “buildings have been neglected, and from [her] perspective, the housing authority has the opportunity to profit, and they are willing to displace families and disrupt your life” – hinting at the looming fear of being displaced during the upcoming redevelopment project at Greenleaf.

SW Action’s contact at Greenleaf Gardens further expressed that although she is no stranger to change, it’s how “you’re doing the change and treating human beings in the process of change” that matters. “You can’t replace community. You can’t replace people’s lives. The City is turning around and talking about equity – what about instilling equity in the places where people [already] live?” she said.

References:

Lead (Pb) Toxicity: What Are the U.S. Standards for Lead Levels? | ATSDR - Environmental Medicine & Environmental Health Education - CSEM. (2019). Retrieved 17 January 2021, from <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/csem/csem.asp?csem=34&po=8#:~:text=In%201977%2C%20the%20Consumer%20Products,contain%20greater%20amounts%20of%20lead>



Courtesy of Perry Klein

Ben Curran of SW Strong!, the local disaster preparedness group, was joined by Miss District of Columbia, Andolyn Medina, on Saturday, August 14th at the SWNA table at the SW Farmers Market. Miss DC has generously agreed to support disaster preparedness efforts by encouraging everyone to be aware, make a plan, build a kit, and stay informed. For more information on disaster preparedness, please see <https://ready.dc.gov/>.

Community Center Seeks Community Engagement Participants

BY SOUTHWEST DC COMMUNITY CENTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

After a successful crowdfunding campaign powered by generous neighbors, the Southwest DC Community Center (SWDCCC) volunteer Community Engagement and Communications Committee is embarking on a community engagement initiative to lay the groundwork for co-creating the future SWDCCC.

This initiative will empower local youth as Civic Fellows to connect with neighbors who can share their lived experiences as Community Experts. Insights collected during this process will be used to inform the design and operation of the new community center. The crowdfunding campaign we conducted this summer will enable us to both provide the Community Experts compensation for their contributions and to offer a stipend to Civic Fellows for their efforts.

Civic Fellows will receive training in topics like interview and group facilitation practices, civic engagement and urban planning concepts more broadly, and human-centered design principles. In addition to one-on-one interviews with neighbors, Civic Fellows will leverage this training to co-facilitate a neighborhood

discussion group around one of the following themes:

- Promoting workforce readiness and entrepreneurship
- Supporting older adults aging in the community
- Designing a center accessible for all
- Creating a family-friendly amenity

The Civic Fellows will then present a final project that reflects on their experience and shares their own vision for the community center at an event open to the public. Youth in our community who are interested in being a Civic Fellow are encouraged to fill out a short application at <https://swdccc.link/CFapplication>.

Each discussion group will meet once for 90 minutes in September or October in a COVID-safe way. If you’re interested in participating in a discussion group, please sign up at <https://swdccc.link/getinvolved>.

This engagement process will be a key feature of our longer-term efforts to build a community center that can achieve the vision of the SWDCCC, which is to serve as a vibrant, central hub for the community to support lifelong learning, arts, cultural enrichment, and community life. We hope you’ll join us!

REPORT

Continued from p. 1

neglect an issue as severe and widely understood as lead levels in paint. DCHA is believed to be an agency that represents and protects the people living in their housing units, not one that puts them in harm’s way. It is already known how dilapidated some of the housing units throughout the city remain. Greenleaf Gardens, located in the Southwest-Waterfront neighborhood, is one among many public housing complexes in these conditions.

SW Action reached out to a life-long Washingtonian and resident of Greenleaf Gardens, who agreed to speak with us on the condition of anonymity. The resident expressed several concerns with DCHA’s handling of public housing communities and its residents. The resident noted during our call that she “knows for a fact that a lot of properties tested positive for lead and mold” in recent years. She pointed to DCHA’s disregard as the source of these issues, expressing that there is “still so much mold, and neglect of these properties. They do a patch job at best, and in the meantime, families are living with it.”

The resident also noted that the problems present in public housing



PREACH

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for a master’s degree and doctoral studies. Frustrated by his inability to find a place in academia where he could work on the intersection of sociology and theology in urban settings, he returned to Eastern University for his ministerial degree. Time spent at Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia convinced him that he could find what he was looking for among select Presbyterian churches, and he never looked back.

While they share many pastoral activities, Ruth, the more extroverted of the two, leads community outreach with existing and emerging organizations. Brian is known for his ability to build and repair almost anything, and created the beautiful stained glass window in the church sanctuary. He also established and serves as President of the Southwest

Development Corporation, which includes Westminster’s food and catering programs, Friday Night Jazz, Monday Night Blues and the bimonthly discussion group Thinking About Jazz, which is held on Saturday afternoons. A fervent fan of American roots music, Brian is frequently heard saying “God loves jazz.”

A 2019 article in *CapitolBop* described the birth of Westminster’s Jazz Night as a way for the then majority white congregation to connect with the then majority Black surrounding neighborhood. Today, the event connects hundreds of Black and white fans of jazz, known as America’s classical music, and honors African-American cultural traditions, including offering fried fish on Fridays. For the Hamiltons, these concerts are conduits to crucial community-building.

Ruth’s outreach in the community began with her service on several boards, including the Community Benefits Council, which she chaired

for a decade, and the United Planning Board. The relationships she built working in the community have allowed the Hamiltons, who think of themselves as servant leaders, to successfully develop a wide range of partnerships based on shared values and vision.

Their personal flexibility and accessibility results in Westminster hosting a broad spectrum of programs and events. Westminster has provided space and support to survivors of domestic violence and narcotics addiction and held anti-racism events and prayer vigils for families who have lost children to police violence. They have hosted car washes that raise money for organizations like SWNA and helped make choir robes for children at Amidon-Bowen. Westminster has provided access to COVID-19 testing, offered food and sleeping space to advocates and protesters who travel to DC, held community meetings and dance parties, and hosted April’s Remember

the Pearl event. Food and Friends, the organization that delivered daily meals to homebound people with HIV/AIDS, started in Westminster’s kitchen.

In addition to a commitment to service, the Hamiltons have been allies and advocates for social justice. Reverend Brian Hamilton performed marriage and civil union ceremonies for members of the LGBTQ community before these unions were recognized under the law, which he calls “practicing ecclesiastical disobedience.”

Along with other churches in Southwest, Westminster is working on plans for a new facility that will include both affordable and market-priced housing. As they look to the future, the Hamiltons aim to expand their work in the arts and provide even more space for community needs.

HEALING

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family values from North Carolina. Giving is as natural as getting up in the morning and brushing my teeth. My work at the World Bank was about serving. When I retired, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and I prayed to the Almighty that if you take me through this, I will give my life to

help others walk through this journey. I haven’t faltered in following up that prayer. Every day, I feel the need to reach out to help others. I am especially focused on working in my Southwest neighborhood and being a voice for those that feel left behind.”

Simms Booth’s final question focused on advice for those who want to help in their community. The responses unanimously suggested finding something you are passion-

ate about or that moves you. Don’t think big and start small. One thing at a time.

“This has been an absolutely wonderful and breathtaking evening; these events keep getting better and better. I continue to enjoy the relationship with Smith Center that started in 2010 when I trained in integrative patient navigation. I’ve done two retreats and we continue to work together. This is a vital relationship and I look for-

ward to the next time,” said TDJBCF Founder Jones.

For more information on Smith Center and its programs, please visit [www.smithcenter.org](http://www.smithcenter.org) or call (202) 483-8600. For more information on the next meeting of the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund support group, please visit [www.tdjbreastcancerfund.org](http://www.tdjbreastcancerfund.org), email [thelma@tdjbreastcancerfund.org](mailto:thelma@tdjbreastcancerfund.org) or call (202) 251- 1639.

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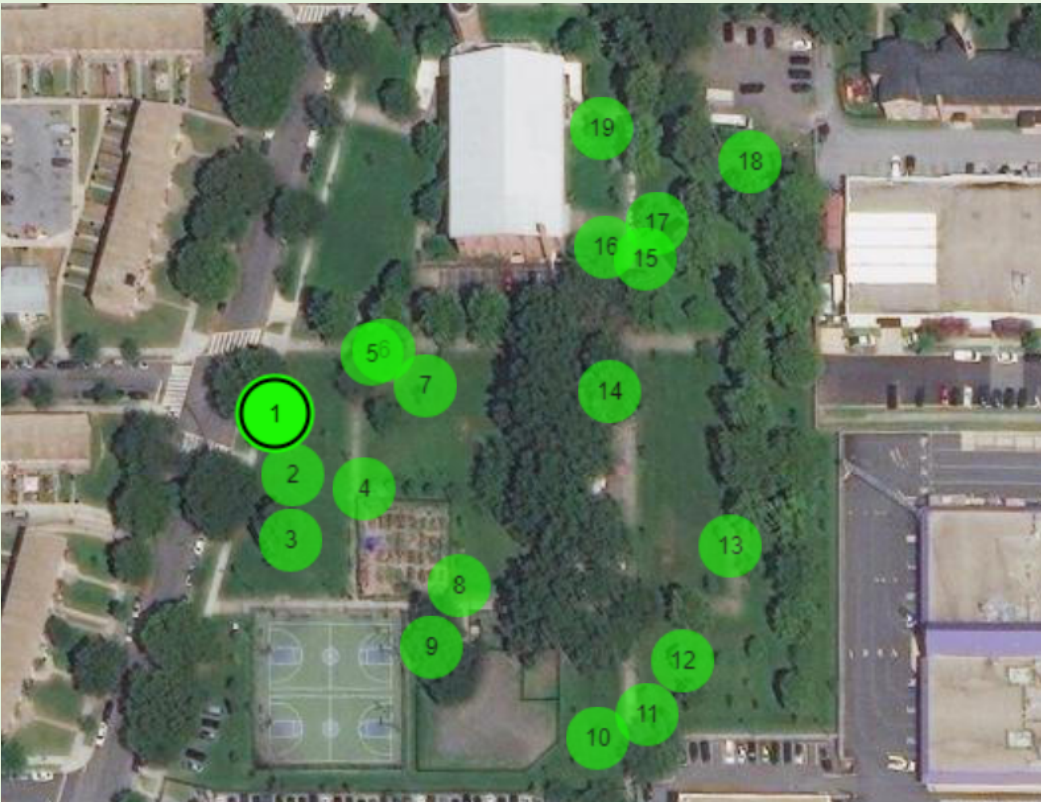
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