

Life!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2026 SECTION B

Measles in Mecklenburg wastewater

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Measles has been detected in Mecklenburg County's wastewater.

The county's public health department reported Jan. 12 that measles was found during routine wastewater surveillance in a sample from the Sugar Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. No cases have been identified in the county. The health department is investigating and monitoring Mecklenburg as cases have recently been reported in North Carolina, and a measles outbreak of more than 300 cases is ongoing in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The Mecklenburg County Public Health Immunization Clinic is offering walk-in-services for the MMR vaccine at all locations.

"Vaccination remains the best tool we have to prevent illness and protect our community from a large-scale outbreak," Mecklenburg Public Health director Dr. Raynard Washington said in a statement. "With measles detected in the county's wastewater, now is the time to make sure your kids are up to date on their vaccines as cases continue to rise in the Carolinas and across the country. The measles vaccine is safe and highly effective."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 2,144 confirmed cases of measles in the United States in 2025, the highest number of cases since 1991. As of Jan. 9, there have been five recently reported cases in North Carolina

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Advocate Health appoints Ebony Boulware to chief academic officer

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Ebony Boulware, M.D., M.P.H. is Advocate?Health's new chief academic officer.

Boulware will continue as dean of Wake Forest University School of Medicine, a role she has held since 2023. In her new position, Boulware, who succeeds Dr. Julie Ann Freischlag, who retired in December, will be responsible for strategic vision and leadership for Advocate Health's academic enterprise.

"This transition reflects the unique position of Wake Forest University School of Medicine as the academic core of Advocate Health - expanding upon the health system's national impact on education, research and clinical innovation," Boulware, a general internist and clinical epidemiologist, said in a statement.

Said Advocate Health CEO Gene Woods: "Advocate Health's mission to redefine care requires unprecedented coordination between medical research, clinical innovation and education, and we have just the right person to deliver on that promise, in Dr. Ebony Boulware. Ebony is a brilliant doctor and strategist, and her dual role ensures that knowledge and expertise flow in both directions between our academic core, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, and our nearly 70 hospitals across six states."

As dean at the medical school, Boulware leads the Winston-Salem and Charlotte campuses as well as programs to advance clinical, research, education, innovation and community engagement missions.

"Dr. Ebony Boulware is an incredible leader and innovator," said Wake Forest University President Susan R. Wente. "As dean of the Wake Forest University School of Medicine, she has built an environment of collaboration, curiosity, and service, preparing the next generation of medical professionals and researchers to lead with excellence and integrity. As chief academic officer, Dr. Boulware will undoubtedly extend this commitment further to en-

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«RIDES

Beefier Mazda CX-90 crossover delivers on power and handsome styling

By Winfred Cross

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Mazda's CX-90 has proven to be another success for the company because it follows the mantra - make it drive well.

The CX-90 lives up to that mantra but still has a few quirks that keep it from being perfect. Actually, it's more of a fault than a quirk, but it's been fixed, sorta. The CX-90 is Mazda's biggest vehicle but will hold only six people who travel with very little luggage. Four people will be comfortable if you get the captain's chairs in the second row. The two in the third row have little room. The solution? Buy the CX-70, this vehicle's twin minus the

third row. Get the bench seat for the second row and you can seat five and have a ton of space in the rear.

Mazda, of course wants you to buy the CX-90 as well as the CX-70. You can always get the things to go to the roof to hold stuff and that solves your storage problems as well.

There are still plenty of reasons to buy the CX-90. It's a very handsome vehicle. Mazda's design language has given it a whole fleet of handsome vehicles. The styling is very upscale crossover more than SUV. The interior takes that up a notch. There are luxury vehicle vibes going on. Everything looks designed and not pieced together. All materials look premiums

well they should. This model is the Turbo S Premium which has all the amenities you'll ever need.

I do wish Mazda would fix its infotainment system touchscreen. It's partially a touch screen if you are using Apple CarPlay. On the other apps you need to use the selector knob to access the functions.

The biggest upgrade is horsepower. The in-line six cylinder gets 340 horsepower and 369 pounds-feet of torque. This makes this big puppy feel more spirited when giving it some gas. Getting in and out of traffic is far more rewarding.

You also can tow 5,000 pounds.

Please see MAZDA'S | 2B

NEEK
TEA CO.™



NEEK TEA CO.

Neek Tea Co. founder Monique Hibma is an advocate of tea culture she learned as a child with her grandmother.

Steeping up: Neek Tea Co. brews connectivity

Charlotte entrepreneur Monique Hibma curates beverage culture

By Nikya Hightower

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Monique Hibma connects through tea.

Hibma's Charlotte-based Neek Tea Co. creates space for ritual and taking a pause, something she learned as a child. Hibma and her grandmother bonded over tea, time carved out of their day and the elegance of teacup and saucer.

Hibma wanted to recreate that moment for others, which led to Neek Tea's launch in 2022.

"Being able to have the steeping bag of tea and how I felt with the teacup and the saucer," she said.

"I really did feel like the fanciest girl in the world."

Hibma decided to abstain from alcohol but missed the social and communal aspects, which led her

back to tea as an adult. Neek Tea curates and sources premium organic teas and tisanes as well as high-quality teaware.

"My husband, before he would go to work, we would take 10 minutes to kind of just

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On The Net
neekteaco.com

Easy-care flowering indoor plants

By Melinda Myers

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Brighten your home's décor and elevate your mood by adding a few flowering plants to your indoor garden.

You may be surprised to find a wide array of flowering plants that will bloom when they are grown indoors. Match the plant to the growing conditions and your maintenance style for ease of care and greatest success.

Add a long-blooming moth orchid (*Phalaenopsis*) to your collection. It thrives in most home environments, making it the easiest of all the orchids to grow. Position your orchid in a brightly lit location

that's free of hot or cold drafts. Water thoroughly with tepid water once a week.

Leave the flower stalk intact and wait for a second smaller flush of flowers. Or prune it back to an inch above the foliage, provide proper care and watch for a fresh set of flowers in about a year. Or gift the non-flowering plant to a gardening friend.

There's always one who's willing to wait for the next set of flowers. In the meantime, you can invest in a new variety for your home.

Treat yourself to an easy-care anthurium. You can now find white, red, pink, lavender and even yellow anthuriums for sale almost

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MELINDA MYERS

Bromeliads are long blooming plants with tropical flowers.



MAZDA

The Mazda CX-90 is the automaker's biggest crossover and adds extra horsepower for the 2026 model.

Steeping up: Neek Tea Co. brews connectivity

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pretend like there was nothing else going on in the world and have tea," Hibma said. "I felt that same sense of presence and that sophistication that I felt when I was a little girl. And it was just really nice to now be in this present moment with all of those things that were foundational to me."

For Hibma, teatime is more than just a beverage but an act of self-care.

"It's one of those things that people are going to be able to take that needed pause for themselves and feel really great about the time that they invested in their well-being," Hibma said. "When you're looking for something, it doesn't have to be the latest gadget or something really expensive. It's really something that is going to serve you in your everyday life."

Neek Tea's motto, "teatime, anytime," is a reminder to take a moment to pause but also that tea does not have to be a production. It can just be purposeful whether that be reflecting, relaxing or connecting.

"I think we are missing the fundamental part of what makes us human. And that's community and interaction with others, togetherness. Connection is now being sold as a social media and being on our phones and joining different online platforms that can use the word community. But when it comes down to it, it's like, who's going to show up for you in a time of need. And I think having tea allows us to have face to face interactions with people," Hibma said.

Along with being a staple for quiet or social routines, tea offers health

benefits.

"Tea is just such a beneficial incorporation in our life," Hibma said. "And for these vast reasons, such as bone health, tooth health, cardiovascular health, when you're drinking green tea, it has EGCG. That compound is helping with your heart health, cholesterol, it has so many benefits, which is why it has stood the test of time. I think my favorite is just all the little hidden things that it does."

A former teacher, Hibma created Tea for Teachers as a form of appreciation for educators. Each May, Charlotte-area elementary school PTA staff appreciation committees can apply for an annual giveaway. One school is selected to receive a collection of tea and a gift bag.

Applications open in April.

"Tea for Teachers is a way, just a small gesture to pour back into the people that serve our families, our communities and make our society a better place," she said.

Neek Tea offers a selection of organic teas, tisanes and quality teaware to ensure customers have an elevated teatime experience.

"As far as organic, that's hugely important," Hibma said. "When you're thinking about tea, you're drinking the whole leaf. That's the whole leaf that, if it's pesticides, if there are agrochemicals on that, that becomes part of the infusion. So, having a pure USDA organic certified tea, that's what I drink at home. And I wanted to be able to have a presentation that, if it has our name on it, it's what I'm drinking at home, too."

Measles pathogens detected in Mecklenburg Co. wastewater

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— in Polk, Buncombe, and Rutherford counties. The last confirmed case in Mecklenburg was in 2024.

Measles can have serious health complications and is easily spread. Symptoms include fever, runny nose, cough, rash and red eyes. Around 90% of unvaccinated individuals who are exposed to measles will become infected. And about one in five people in the United States who get measles will be hospitalized.

Children should receive two doses of MMR vaccine — the first at 12 through 15 months of age and the second between ages 4-6. One dose is 93% effective at preventing measles while two is 97% effective. If you previously received the recommended vaccine, you don't need a

booster. If you're not sure whether you should get a dose, talk with your healthcare provider.

If you see symptoms of measles, call your doctor, clinic or emergency department right away.

The MMR vaccine is available at healthcare providers and retail pharmacies across Mecklenburg, and it is offered for free or low-cost at the Mecklenburg County Public Health Immunization Clinic. Public Health's mobile health unit will be providing vaccines on-site at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools locations for the remainder of the school year.

Wastewater surveillance detects pathogens in wastewater that provide early warnings for outbreaks and public health responses.

Mazda's CX-90 delivers on power and handsome styling

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I don't think there is a Mazda that handles poorly but if so, this is not the one. Despite the girth, the CX-90 handles smoothly, not giving in to body roll. It negotiates twisty roads well enough and corners with authority.

The ride quality is close to plush. Most road harshness never reaches the cabin, offering comfort without feeling cushy.

The Mazda CX-90 is very quiet on the road. Noise levels increase a bit when you travel over 70 miles per hour, but not by much. Normal conversations can

be maintained without yelling. If you are not in the mood for conversation you can enjoy the Bose premium sound system.

Along with Apple CarPlay and Bose sound, major feature includes a panoramic sunroof, all-wheel drive, integrated Navigation system, heated front and second row seats, heated windshield wiper washers, heated steering wheel, power folding and dimming mirrors, second row captain's chairs, premium leather ventilated front seats, surround view camera and a host of driver's aids.

The CX-90 has its drawbacks but has far more pluses than minuses. I've liked this vehicle from the start and find no reasons to dislike. The estimated price of my test vehicle was \$56,000.

Pros:

- Handsome looks
- Luxury-like interior
- Stout engine
- AWD
- Comfortable, quiet ride
- Good fuel economy
- Loads of features
- Mazda handling
- Cons:
- Limited cargo space
- Tight third row seat

Advocate Health appoints Dr. Ebony Boulware to chief academic officer

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sure learning and discovery are catalysts that benefit the broad base of patient communities served by Advocate's national network."

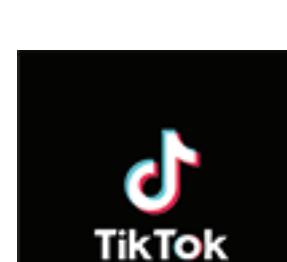
Wake Forest School of Medicine opened

its second campus in Charlotte last year, as the academic anchor of The Pearl Innovation District. Its first class of students started in July, with enrollment expected to increase to 100 students per class over the next five years.

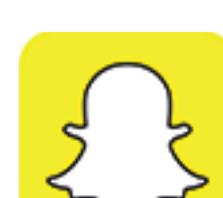
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Benefits to easy to care flowering indoor plants

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year-round. The colorful heart-shaped "flowers" are modified leaves that hold their color for many weeks. Grow this low maintenance, very forgiving plant in bright, indirect light and water thoroughly whenever the soil begins to dry.

Include bromeliads, another long bloomer with unique tropical flowers. Those with pliable leaves are more tolerant of lower light, while the stiff-leaved bromeliads need bright light to thrive. Water the soil often enough to prevent the roots from drying. After weeks and even months of flowering, the plant eventually dies but forms offsets, known as pups, you can grow to maturity.

The tubular, red-burgundy flowers of lipstick plant (*Aeschynanthus radicans*) reveal the inspiration for its common name. Grow this long-blooming, trailing plant in a warm location with bright, indirect light. Water thoroughly when the top inch of soil begins to dry. Move it to a slightly cooler location and allow the soil to dry a bit more between waterings during the winter.

Have fun by adding a hanging basket of goldfish (*Nematanthus*) to your collection. This easy-care plant produces long-lasting, orange-red flowers that resemble goldfish. Place it in bright, indirect light and water when the soil begins to dry.

Keep these and your other houseplants healthy and minimize pest problems by providing proper growing conditions and care. Fertilize actively growing plants with a flowering houseplant fertilizer according to label directions. Boost the hu-

midity by grouping plants together. As one plant loses moisture, transpires, its neighbors' benefit. Place pebbles in the saucer or tray to elevate the pot above any water that collects there. As the water evaporates, it increases the humidity around the plant and eliminates the need for you to empty excess water out of the saucer.

Check all your plants for insects each time you water. It is easier to manage small populations than larger infestations. Use yellow sticky traps to monitor and trap white flies, fungus gnat adults, thrips and other houseplant pests. Manage fungus gnat larvae residing in the soil with organic Summit? Mosquito Bits®. It contains a naturally occurring soil bacteria, *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti), that's safe for people, plants, and pets. Just follow the label directions for the most effective control.

Look for opportunities to include these and other flowering plants in your home. You'll enjoy the added color and beauty these plants provide.

*Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the *Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition* and *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything"* streaming courses and the nationally syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment* TV & radio program.*

*Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and was commissioned by Summit for her expertise to write this article. Myers' website is www.MelindaMyers.com.*

« BLACK BRILLIANCE »

Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Sr. led trailblazing Tuskegee Airmen

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com
Brig. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Sr. (1877-1970), pushed against racial boundaries in the United States military during an era of rigid racism.

Davis, who served in a segregated Army unit and rose through the ranks to become its first Black general, spent over 40 years in combat, diplomatic, and administrative roles. In 1940, he was promoted to brigadier general, making him the first Black person in Army history to reach that rank.

Davis first served in the segregated 8th Volunteer Infantry Regiment as a first lieutenant during the last year of the Spanish-American War. His regiment never saw action, and, in 1899, Davis reenlisted as a private after his regiment disbanded at the end of the war.

He joined the all-Black 9th Cavalry Regiment, nicknamed the Buffalo Soldiers for their service on the frontier during the Indian Wars. Once with the 9th, Davis quickly moved up the ranks, and within a year, he became sergeant major. Within two years, Davis passed the officer's test and became a second lieutenant with Troop F, 10th Cavalry.

Davis served with the 10th Cavalry for a year in the Philippines and in 1905 was transferred to Wilberforce College (now Wilberforce University) as professor of military science and tactics. During World War I, he became a supply officer to the 9th Cavalry stationed in the



Benjamin O. Davis Sr., the first Black general in Army history, commanded the all-Black 99th and 332nd fighter squadrons during World War II.

Philippines.

Promoted to lieutenant colonel, Davis led the 99th Fighter Squadron, the first all-Black unit in the Army Air Forces. The 99th deployed to North Africa in 1943 to fight Axis troops in the region. In October of that year, he returned to the U.S. and took command of the 332nd Fighter Group, which joined the 99th in Italy in December.

White officers questioned the unit's combat performance so much so that Davis returned to the 9th Cavalry stationed in the U.S. to defend their record.

He faced several days of questioning from Congress but never backed down from his stance that his airmen provided valuable service in battle.

After the war, Davis became a professor of military science and tactics at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee University). Davis spent the next decades in instructor roles with the Ohio National Guard, New York National Guard, Wilberforce College, and Tuskegee Institute.

Older Americans quit weight loss drugs

By Paula Span

KFF HEALTH NEWS

Year after year, Mary Bucklew strategized with a nurse practitioner about losing weight. "We tried exercise," like walking 35 minutes a day, she recalled. "And 39,000 different diets."

But 5 pounds would come off and then invariably reappear, said Bucklew, 75, a public transit retiree in Ocean View, Delaware. Nothing seemed to make much difference — until 2023, when her body mass index slightly exceeded 40, the threshold for severe obesity.

"There's this new drug I'd like you to try, if your insurance will pay for it," the nurse practitioner advised. She was talking about Ozempic.

Medicare covered it for treating Type 2 diabetes but not for weight loss, and it cost more than \$1,000 a month out-of-pocket. But to Bucklew's surprise, her Medicare Advantage plan covered it even though she wasn't diabetic, charging just a \$25 monthly copay.

Pizza, pasta, and red wine suddenly became unappealing. The drug "changed what I wanted to eat," she said. As 25 pounds slid away over six months, she felt less tired and found herself walking and biking more.

Then her Medicare plan notified her that it would no longer cover the drug. Calls and letters from her health care team, arguing that Ozempic was necessary for her health, had no effect.

With coverage denied, Bucklew became part of an unsettlingly large group: older adults who begin taking GLP-1s and related drugs — highly effective for diabetes, obesity, and several other serious health problems — and then stop taking them within months.

That usually means regaining weight and losing the associated health benefits, including lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and A1c, a measure of blood sugar levels over time.

Widely portrayed as wonder drugs, semaglutide (Ozempic, Wegovy, Rybelsus),

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Older Americans quit weight loss medication

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tirzepatide (Zepbound, Mounjaro), and related medications have transformed the treatment of diabetes and obesity.

The FDA has approved several GLP-1s for additional uses, too — including to treat kidney disease and sleep apnea, and prevent heart attacks and strokes.

"They're being studied for every purpose you can conceive of," said Timothy Anderson, a health services researcher at the University of Pittsburgh and author of a recent JAMA Internal Medicine editorial about anti-obesity medications.

(Drug trials have found no impact on dementia, however.)

People 65 and older represent prime targets for such medications. "The prevalence of obesity hovers around 40%" in older adults, as measured by body mass index, said John Batsis, a geriatrician and obesity specialist at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

The proportion of people with Type 2 diabetes rises with age, too, to nearly 30% at age 65 and older. Yet a recent JAMA Cardiology study found that among Americans 65 and up with diabetes, about 60% discontinued semaglutide within a year.

Another study of 125,474 people with obesity or who are overweight found that almost 47% of those with Type 2 diabetes and nearly 65% of those without diabetes stopped taking GLP-1s within a year — a high rate, said Ezekiel Emanuel, a health services researcher at the University of Pennsylvania and senior author of the study.

Patients 65 and older were 20% to 30% more likely than younger ones to discontinue the drugs and less likely to return to them.

What explains this pattern? As many as 20% of patients may experience gastrointestinal problems. "Nausea, sometimes vomiting, bloating, diarrhea," Anderson said, ticking off the most common side effects.

Linda Burghardt, a researcher in Great Neck, New York, started taking Wegovy because her doctor thought it might reduce arthritis pain in her knees and hips. "It was an experiment," said Burghardt, 79, who couldn't walk far and had stopped playing pickleball.

Within a month, she suffered several bouts of stomach upset that "went on for hours," she said. "I was crying on the bathroom floor." She stopped the drug.

Some patients find that medication-induced weight loss lessens rather than improves fitness, because another side effect is muscle loss. Several trials have reported that 35% to 45% of GLP-1 weight loss is not fat, but "lean mass" including muscle and bone.

Bill Colbert's cherished hobby for 50 years, reenacting medieval combat, involves "putting on 90 pounds of steel-plate armor and fighting with broadswords." A retired computer systems analyst in Churchill, Pennsylvania, he started on Mounjaro, successfully lowered his blood glucose, and lost 18 pounds in two months.

But "you could almost see the muscles melting away," he recalled. Feeling too weak to fight well at age 78, he also discontinued the drug and now relies on other diabetes medications.

"During the aging process, we begin to lose muscle," typically half a percent to 1% of muscle weight per year,

said Zhenqi Liu, an endocrinologist at the University of Virginia who studies the effects of weight loss drugs. "For people on these medications, the process is much more accelerated."

Losing muscle can lead to frailty, falls, and fractures, so doctors advise GLP-1 users to exercise, including strength training, and to eat enough protein.

The high rate of GLP-1 discontinuation may also reflect shortages; from 2022 to 2024, these drugs temporarily became hard to find. Further, patients may not grasp that they will most likely need the medications indefinitely, even after they meet their blood glucose or weight goals.

Re-initiating treatment involves its own hazards, Batsis cautioned. "If weight goes up and down, up and down, metabolically it sets people up for functional decline down the road."

Of course, in considering why patients discontinue, "a large part of it is money," Emanuel said. "Expensive drugs, not necessarily covered" by insurers. Indeed, in a Cleveland Clinic study of patients who discontinued semaglutide or tirzepatide, nearly half cited cost or insurance issues as the reason.

Some moderation in price has already occurred. The Biden administration capped out-of-pocket payments for all prescriptions that a Medicare beneficiary receives (\$2,100 is the 2026 limit), and authorized annual price negotiations with manufacturers.

The reductions include Ozempic, Wegovy, and Rybelsus, though not until 2027. Medicare Part D drug plans will then pay \$274, and since most beneficiaries pay 25% in coinsurance, their out-of-pocket monthly cost will sink to \$68.50.

Perhaps even lower, if agreements announced in November between the Trump administration and drugmakers Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk pan out.

The bigger question is whether Medicare will amend its original 2003 regulations, which prohibit Part D coverage for weight loss drugs. "An archaic policy," said Stacie Dusetzina, a health policy researcher at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

The Trump administration's November announcement would expand Medicare eligibility for GLP-1s and related medications to include obesity, perhaps as early as spring. But key details remain unclear, Dusetzina said.

Medicare should cover anti-obesity drugs, many doctors argue. Americans still tend to think that "diabetes is a disease and obesity is a personal problem," Emanuel said. "Wrong. Obesity is a disease, and it reduces life span and compromises health."

But given the expense to insurers, Dusetzina warned, "if you expand the indications and extent of coverage, you'll see premiums go up."

For older patients, often underrepresented in clinical trials, questions about GLP-1s remain. Might a lower maintenance dose stabilize their weight? Can doses be spaced out? Could nutritional counseling and physical therapy offset muscle loss?

Bucklew, whose coverage was denied, would still like to resume Ozempic. But because of a recent sleep apnea diagnosis, she now qualifies for Zepbound with a \$50 monthly copay.

She has seen no weight loss after three months. But as the dose increases, she said, "I'll stay the course and give it a shot."



MAZDA

Counties around the United States are bracing for a flood of newly uninsured residents who are expected to lose Medicaid benefits over the next decade.

On the hook for uninsured, counties weighing costs

By Christin Mai-Duc
and Claudia Boyd-Barrett
KFF HEALTH NEWS

In 2013, before the Affordable Care Act helped millions get health insurance, California's Placer County provided limited health care to some 3,400 uninsured residents who couldn't afford to see a doctor.

For several years, that number has been zero in the predominantly white, largely rural county stretching from Sacramento's eastern suburbs to the shores of Lake Tahoe.

The trend could be short-lived.

County health officials there and across the country are bracing for an estimated 10 million newly uninsured patients over the next decade in the wake of Republicans' One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The act, which President Donald Trump signed into law this past summer, is also expected to reduce Medicaid spending by more than \$900 billion over that period.

"This is the moment where a lot of hard decisions have to be made about who gets care and who doesn't," said Nadereh Pourat, director of the Health Economics and Evaluation Research Program at UCLA. "The number of people who are going to lose coverage is large, and a lot of the systems that were in place to provide care to those individuals have either gone away or diminished."

It's an especially thorny challenge for states like California and New Mexico where counties are legally required to help their poorest residents through what are known as indigent care programs. Under Obamacare, both states were able to expand Medicaid to include more low-income residents, alleviating counties of patient loads and redirecting much of their funding for the patchwork of local programs that provided bare-bones services.

Placer County, which estimates that 16,000 residents could lose health care coverage by 2028, quit operating its own clinics nearly a decade ago.

"Most of the infrastructure that we had to meet those needs is gone," said Rob Oldham, Placer County's director of health and human services. "This is a much bigger problem than it was a decade ago and much more costly."

In December, county officials asked to join a statewide association that provides care to mostly small, rural counties, citing an expected rise in the number of uninsured residents.

New Mexico's second-most-populous county, Doña Ana, added dental care for seniors and behavioral health benefits after many of its poorest residents qualified for Medicaid. Now, federal cuts could force the county to reconsider, said Jamie Michael, Doña Ana's health and human services director.

"At some point we're going to have to look at either allocating more money or reducing the benefits," Michael said.

Straining state budgets

Some states, such as Idaho and Colorado, abandoned laws that required counties to be providers of last resort for their residents. In other states, uninsured patients often delay care or receive it at hospital emergency rooms or community clinics. Those clinics are often supported by a mix of federal, state, and local funds, according to the National Association of Community Health Centers.

Even in states like Texas, which opted not to expand its Medicaid program and continued to rely on counties to care for many of its uninsured, rising health care costs are straining local budgets.

"As we have more growth, more people coming in, it's harder and harder to fund things that are required by the state legislature, and this isn't one we can decrease," said Windy Johnson, program manager with the Texas Indigent Health Care Association. "It is a fiscal issue."

California lawmakers face a nearly \$18 billion budget deficit in the 2026-27 fiscal year, according to the latest estimates by

the state's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office. Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has acknowledged he is mulling a White House run, has rebuffed several efforts to significantly raise taxes on the ultra-wealthy. Despite blasting the bill passed by Republicans in Congress as a "complete moral failure" that guts health care programs, in 2025 the Democrat rolled back state Medi-Cal benefits for seniors and for immigrants without legal status after rising costs forced the program to borrow \$4.4 billion from the state's general fund.

H.D. Palmer, a spokesperson for the state's Department of Finance, said that the Newsom administration is still refining its fiscal projections and that it would be "premature" to discuss potential budget solutions.

Newsom will unveil his initial budget proposal in January. State officials have said California could lose \$30 billion a year in federal funding for Medi-Cal under the new law, as much as 15% of the state program's entire budget.

"Local governments don't really have much capacity to raise revenue," said Scott Graves, a director at the independent California Budget & Policy Center with a focus on state budgets. "State leaders, if they choose to prioritize it, need to decide where they're going to find the funding that would be needed to help those who are going to lose health care as a result of these federal funding and policy cuts."

Reviving county-based programs in the near term would require "considerable fiscal restructuring" through the state budget, the Legislative Analyst's Office said in an October report.

No easy fixes

It's not clear how many people are currently enrolled in California's county indigent programs, because the state doesn't track enrollment and utilization. But enrollment in county health safety net programs dropped dramatically in the first full year of ACA implementation, going from about 858,000 people statewide in 2013 to roughly 176,000 by the end of 2014, according to a survey at the time by Health Access California.

"We're going to need state investment," said Michelle Gibbons, executive director of the County Health Executives Association of California. "After the Affordable Care Act and as folks got coverage, we didn't imagine a moment like this where potentially that progress would be unwound and folks would be falling back into indigent care."

In November, voters in affluent Santa Clara County approved a sales tax increase, in part to backfill the loss of federal funds. But even in the home of Silicon Valley, where the median household income is about 1.7 times the statewide average, that is expected to cover only a third of the \$1 billion a year the county stands to lose.

Health advocates fear that, absent major state investments, Californians could see a return to the previous patchwork of county-run programs, with local governments choosing whom and what they cover and for how long.

In many cases, indigent programs didn't include specialty care, behavioral health, or regular access to primary care. Counties can also exclude people based on immigration status or income. Before the ACA, many uninsured people who needed care didn't get it, which could lead to them winding up in ERs with untreated health conditions or even dying, said Kiran Savage-Sangwan, executive director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network.

Rachel Linn Gish, interim deputy director of Health Access California, a consumer advocacy group, said that "it created a very unequal, maldistributed program throughout the state."

"Many of us," she said, "including counties, are reeling trying to figure out: What are those downstream impacts?"

See and savor Charlotte for under \$15

By Jaslynn Vorachith

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

You have time and the urge to explore Charlotte, but not a lot of money.

Make a day of exploring some of the city's hidden deals, all under \$15.

Free

Freedom Park 1900 East Blvd.

Large playgrounds, fields to play sports such as baseball, tennis, volleyball, and basketball. Has trails for walks, runs, and biking. Many places for picnics and a pond for added scenery.

Reedy Creek Nature Preserve, 2986 Rocky River Road

Offers hiking trails, free educational exhibits, and wildlife sanctuaries. Perfect for families and nature adventures.

CLT Overlook, 5130 Airport Overlook Drive

With free admission, you can have a great view of the city and runways at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, perfect for night viewing.

For families, there are

playgrounds and exhibits.

Mint Museum Uptown, 500 S Tryon St.

In the heart of Charlotte, the Levine Center for the Arts offers rotating exhibitions along with modern art showcases with free admission on Wednesdays.

UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens, 9090 Craver Road

Outdoor gardens and greenhouses featuring tropical plants and seasonal blooms.

Free entry and donations are optional.

Camp North End, 300 Camp Road

Art, outdoor dining, weekend markets, and events. While free to explore, it also offers a variety of pop-ups and food along with the aesthetics of a mall.

Restaurants

JP Lao Kitchen, 2604 Little Rock Road

Southeast Asian flavors, serving main entrees under \$10, with convenient pre-packaged meals for easy takeout.

Comet Grill, 2224 Park Road

Free arcade games and activities such as oversized block tower game, slides, swings, and ping pong. A perfect way to experience the nightlife.

Only 21 and older after 6 p.m.

Spare Time Entertainment, 9600 Pineville-Matthews Road

All you can bowl Sunday-Wednesday nights, 9-11 p.m. \$7.99 per person.

Other activities include arcades, laser tag, and escape rooms, though prices vary.

52 weeks of Black Brilliance

thecharlottepost.com

Classifieds

Classified Deadline: Monday at noon, prior to Thursday's edition

BIDS

NOTICE TO BIDDERS/ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Cabarrus County Schools (CCS) is accepting sealed bids for "Lawn Maintenance Services" on Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. Companies shall provide appropriate pesticide license, workers compensation and general liability certificates to be included in bid submission documents. The specifications will be available at www.cabarrus.k12.nc.us, go to "Departments", "Facilities Management", "Upcoming Projects, Bids and RFQ's", beginning Thursday January 22th, 2026 at 9 am and can be picked up at CCS Facilities Management Department, 4425 Old Airport Road, Concord, NC 28025. Please email Beth Bobrek, Project Manager at Beth.Bobrek@cabarrus.k12.nc.us or James Waldroup, Grounds Manager, at James.Waldroup@cabarrus.k12.nc.us in the Facilities Management Department to express interest.

Pre-Bid Conference Location, Date, and Time:

- A prebid meeting will be held on Wednesday January 28, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at **Cabarrus County Schools Facilities Management Department located at 4425 Old Airport Road, Concord, NC 28025.**
- **Attendance is encouraged.**
- Any needed site visits should be conducted during the week of 2/2 – 2/6 2026.

Contractors intending to bid are strongly encouraged to visit the school sites they will bid on. Proper legal ID, will be required before being admitted to the school site.

Bid Opening Location, Date and Time:

Sealed bids will be opened beginning at 1:00 pm and read publicly at Cabarrus County Schools Facilities Management Department, 4425 Old Airport Road, Concord, NC on Thursday Feb 12, 2026. No bids will be accepted after 1pm. Cabarrus County Schools has the right to reject any or all bids.

Information related to this request for bids, including any addenda, will be posted to www.cabarrus.k12.nc.us, go to "Departments", "Facilities Management", "Upcoming Projects, Bids and RFQ's".

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

Architectural Designer Selection
Catawba County Schools Middle School Additions and Renovations

The school system intends to select a Design Consultant for middle school additions and renovations for Catawba County Schools in Newton, North Carolina. Information required to respond to this RFQ is available on the Catawba County School System's website at <https://www.catawbaschools.net>. Design firms wishing to be considered for this project are requested to submit their qualifications per the instructions on the website by 4:00 PM on Friday, February 6th, 2026.

EMPLOYMENT

Spanish Teacher (Middle School, 6-8), Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte, NC. Prep Span lang less & delv 6-8 lvl stud instr. M-F, 6:45a – 2:45p w/ occ aft hrs. Reqs bach in Sec Ed/Span/Ed/rel/equiv. Must have/elig for NC Ed Lic w/ Span K-12 code/area. Reqs prof in Span & Eng. Hires mst cnstn to drg scrn & bg chck. Apply: res to: robert.ellyson@cms.k12.nc.us & ref#118309.

K-6 Teacher (multi openings), Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte, NC. Prep lessons & del stud instr @ K-6 lvl. M-F, 7:15 a – 3:15 p w/ occ aft hrs. Reqs p/ 1st bach in Elem Ed / rel / equiv. Must have/elig for NC Ed Lic w/ K-6 code/area. Hires mst sbmt to drg scrn & bg chck. Apply: res to: robert.ellyson@cms.k12.nc.us & ref #118311.

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Claim by: 02/28/2026

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Promo: 285

**Promotional offer includes 15% off plus an additional 10% off for qualified veterans and/or seniors. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. See Representative for full warranty details.

A. FLORIDA: FL 04300795, FL 04301070, FL 04301071, FL 04301072, FL 04301073, FL 04301074, FL 04301075, FL 04301076, FL 04301077, FL 04301078, FL 04301079, FL 04301080, FL 04301081, FL 04301082, FL 04301083, FL 04301084, FL 04301085, FL 04301086, FL 04301087, FL 04301088, FL 04301089, FL 04301090, FL 04301091, FL 04301092, FL 04301093, FL 04301094, FL 04301095, FL 04301096, FL 04301097, FL 04301098, FL 04301099, FL 04301100, FL 04301101, FL 04301102, FL 04301103, FL 04301104, FL 04301105, FL 04301106, FL 04301107, FL 04301108, FL 04301109, FL 04301110, FL 04301111, FL 04301112, FL 04301113, FL 04301114, FL 04301115, FL 04301116, FL 04301117, FL 04301118, FL 04301119, FL 04301120, FL 04301121, FL 04301122, FL 04301123, FL 04301124, FL 04301125, FL 04301126, FL 04301127, FL 04301128, FL 04301129, FL 04301130, FL 04301131, FL 04301132, FL 04301133, FL 04301134, FL 04301135, FL 04301136, FL 04301137, FL 04301138, FL 04301139, FL 04301140, FL 04301141, FL 04301142, FL 04301143, FL 04301144, FL 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THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2026 PAGE 5B

« ON THE MARQUEE »



HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER

"Mortgage Burning" is part of Mario Moore's exhibit "In Pursuit of Home" at the Harvey B. Gantt Center For African-American Arts+Culture.

'Do The Right Thing' at the IPH

By Herbert L. White
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

A look at events from stage, screen and exhibits in Charlotte:

Jan. 23-24

Charlotte Symphony presents "The Music of Motown" at Belk Theater, 7:30 p.m., 130 N. Tryon St. The symphony plays iconic pop-soul hits by Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder and others. The program is part of the symphony's Sandra & Leon Levine Pops Series. Tickets available at tix.blumenthalarts.org.

Jan. 24

Acute Inflections, the New York-based jazzy R&B duo plays Project 658, 3646 Central Ave.

The pair blends soul and comedy that channels Harlem Renaissance glamor with a modern twist.

Acute Inflections have been featured on HBO and Amazon by creating an experience where vintage elegance meets contemporary soul with dynamic duets and comedy.

Proceeds support the Renaissance Youth Center, a South Bronx charity empowering inner-city youth through music education and after-school programs. Tickets are available at acuteinflections.com/product/01-24-2026.

Jan. 30

Independent Picture House (4237 Raleigh St.) shows "Do The Right Thing" at 7:30 p.m. as part of its Black History Month series.

On the hottest day of the year on a street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, hatred and bigotry smolder until it explodes into violence. The 1989 movie earned Oscar nominations for Best Actor (Danny Aiello) and Best Original Screenplay (Spike Lee).

For tickets: independentpicturehouse.org

Jan. 30-Feb. 1

Charlotte Symphony presents Prokofiev & Schumann at Knight Theater, 430 S. Tryon St.

Music director Kwamé Ryan opens the program with Ives's "The Unanswered Question," a meditation on existence. Prokofiev's bold and electrifying Piano Concerto No. 3, played by Ran Dank, follows. Schumann's Symphony No. 2 caps the program with a testament to resilience, soaring melodies and spirit.

Tickets available at tix.blumenthalarts.org.

Feb. 13

Chaka Khan, Patti LaBelle, Gladys Knight, and Stephanie Mills are extending their "The Queens! 4 Legends. 1 Stage" tour to Spectrum Center. The tour brings together four trailblazing R&B/pop giants for a celebration of legacy, sisterhood, and music.

Tickets: bpctickets.com.

Feb. 13-14

Charlotte Symphony presents Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, Belk Theater, 130 N. Tryon St.

As part of the CSO Spotlight Series, pianist and vocalist Gabriel Kahane joins the orchestra conducted by Kwamé Ryan to perform "Pattern of the Rail," a song cycle inspired by Kahane's cross-country train journey through the United States during the 2016 presidential election.

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 closes the program, tracing a journey from darkness to resolve, with sweeping melodies and dramatic power.

Program starts at 7:30 p.m. both days. Tickets \$40.39-\$145.68; available at tix.blumenthalarts.org.

March 7

The eighth annual Queen City Blues

Please see LEELA | 6B



MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith University's International Institution of Sound marching band is one of six Carolinas schools to participate in the Big HBCU Southern Classic Battle of the Bands Jan. 24 at Bojangles Coliseum.

HBCU band culture goes note for note in showcase

Some of America's best bands compete in Big HBCU Southern Classic

By Courtney Singleton

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Big HBCU Southern Classic Battle of the Bands is going indoors.

The Jan. 24 showcase of 10 historically Black college bands at Bojangles Coliseum Charlotte will be hosted by DJ Envy and Loren LoRosa of "The Breakfast Club" with a live performance by platinum recording artist and North Carolina Central University alumna Sunshine Anderson ("Heard It All Before.")

Tickets range from \$39 to 233.50 for VIP packages and are available through ticketmaster.com. Onsite parking and entry to the fanfare are free with ticket purchase. Admission for children under 3 is free.

"My favorite part is seeing those bands get off the buses and enter the stadium and arenas and seeing all the people just go crazy and those first notes," said Alex Davis, president of Big HBCU and a Johnson C. Smith University alumnus who played snare with the International Institution of Sound marching band. "It's just nothing like it."

Davis and his team picked the bands based on who stood out throughout the season from their hard work and perseverance to include smaller bands that are too

often overlooked, like JCSU's.

"I think what has put us on the stage this year for the battle is that we have shown that we are resilient," he said. "We have shown that we're in a new era of excellence. We've shown that we're in a transformational stage and we're doing some great things and people are starting to notice. I'm excited that this event is in our hometown and we get to participate."

North Carolina A&T State University's Blue and Gold Marching Machine and rival NCCU's Sound Machine will perform against each other in a Charlotte battle since

2016 at JCSU as will Winston-Salem State University's Red Sea of Sound. The showcase isn't limited to in-state schools, though.

Hampton (Virginia) University's Marching Force, Alcorn State (Mississippi) University's Sounds of Dyn-O-Mite and rival Mississippi Valley State University's Mean Green Marching Machine will participate. So will Talladega (Alabama) College's Great Tornado Band as well as Benedict College's Band of Distinction and South Carolina State University's Marching 101.

"The band is really your family," said JCSU sophomore Jermaine Jeans, who plays with the IIOS. "You're with your family almost for 10 hours out of the day and then even when you guys aren't in band camp you want to spend time with each other. We're having movie nights. We're having band bonding activities with each other that aren't even mandatory, we're making posters for when our rookies come in to help guide them around campus, affirmations to give them."

Bands are an integral part of HBCU

Please see HBCU | 6B

On The Net
www.bighbcu.com

My favorite part is seeing those bands get off the buses and enter the stadium and arenas and seeing all the people just go crazy and those first notes.

Big HBCU President ALEX DAVIS

« MOVIE REVIEW »

The monkey turns predatory in 'Primate'

By Dwight Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

Primate

3 stars

Monkey see. Monkey kill.

Chimpanzee gone wild is a rare one for the horror genre. But not a preposterous premise. Anyone who remembers back to news stories in February 2009, may recall Travis, a male chimpanzee. He was the pet of Sandra Herold since he was three days old. As he grew up, townspeople in her North Stamford, Connecticut, community knew him well.

Travis even appeared in a Pepsi TV commercial and was on "The Maury Povich Show" ("Where Beasts Gather"). One day her friend Charla Nash came over and Travis, now weighing 200 pounds, mauled her. Mauled her bad. Blinded her, severed body parts and lacerated her face. She lost her eyelids, nose, lips, face bone structure and nine fingers. Before and after pictures of her attack shocked the world. Evidently, chimpanzees are immensely stronger than humans, have powerful jaws, sharp teeth and deadly fighting instincts.

Keep that in mind as you calculate the amount of fear this tale of terror, horror and hopeful escape generates. Director/writer Johannes Roberts ("47 Meters Down" and "Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City") and co-writer Ernest Riera ("47 Meters Down") start with a premise not different from Nash's ordeal. Unlike many horror films about primates, their narrative is not about a King Kong gigantic ape or intelligent apes that fight the good fight ("Planet of the Apes"). Their antagonistic primate is more similar to Travis. And that grounding makes this venture scarier because it's steeped in past truths.

They've gathered at a cliffside villa in Hawaii. That's where family patriarch Adam (Troy Kotsur, Oscar winner for "Coda"), a successful author, still lives



PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Tienné Simon in a scene from "Primate," a tale of terror about a chimp turned predator.

with his youngest teen daughter Erin (Gia Hunter). Her big sis Lucy (Johnny Sequoyah) has come home from college with two friends in tow: Hannah (Jess Alexander) the flirty one and Kate (Victoria Wyant). They're picked up at the airport by their buddy Nick (Benjamin Cheng). But not before Kate has made friends with two guys on the plane, Drew (Charlie Mann) and Brad (Tienné Simon).

The young ladies settle into the palatial home, which has three levels leading down to an infinity pool with a steep, long drop to a rocky shore. Kate is shocked when she sees an animal. It's Ben, a chimpanzee. He's the family pet and Adam's primate friend. Sometimes caged. Sometimes not, roaming around like a family member. When dad goes away on a business trip, something ignites a mean aggressive behavior in Ben. The kids are baffled, shocked and then scared shitless as the

docile chimp goes on a maiming and killing rampage. Salivating, growling and maiming with no remorse. There's a call for help. Operator: "911. What's your emergency?" Caller: "He's gone crazy!"

Those who love the horror genre will get the fear, terror and blood-rushing through your veins thrills they crave. The script measures out the mayhem in sprints. It's a tight rhythm (editor Peter Gvozdak, "The Purge," "The Avengers") of head bashing, mouth gouging, ripping and severing. As a director, Roberts doesn't reinvent the wheel. Doesn't need to. Also, special effects are limited and believable. Largely thanks to Miguel Torres Umba, who plays Ben in a man-in-suit costume. So, the central character isn't a telltale CGI fake. That's helpful.

Quick, agile camerawork (cinematographer Stephen Murphy, "Atlanta") fol-

Please see CHIMPANZEE | 6B

HBCU bands square off at Charlotte showcase

Continued from page 5B

culture. Their musicianship, choreography and showmanship light up football Saturdays and is often the highlight. Band battles are an extension of that pageantry when the showcases highlight their dedication to building endurance, musicianship, dance routines, and field shows before stepping on the field or parade route.

"The early mornings, the late nights, they pay off," said Jeans, who marches with cymbals on performance days, but also plays tuba, trombone, piano and bass guitar. "It showed us to get where we want to be we must put the work in and everybody... did what they had to do to put the work in. We're going to continue to just evolve and grow."

Said Davis: "It's the best times of your life. I feel like even though you might be a broke college kid and you're like, 'man this is hard,' but when you sit back and look at it you really appreciate those times."

Showcases like Big HBCU Southern Classic champions marching band culture on its own stage with an opportunity to give back.

"I've been an advocate for bands, and in band, pretty much since I've been able to walk," Davis said. "The reason why we do these different events is because most colleges and HBCU marching programs don't get any funding. So, these events are built so we can help them with scholarships and things like that because if it wasn't for band programs a lot of students would not go to college, probably myself included."

That culture is what makes Black

colleges unique, said Tomisha Brock, JCSU's director of bands.

"HBCUs develop the total person, especially if you are of African descent or Black and brown descent and you've come up through a school where your history was kind of repressed or it was halfway taught or you were in a school where you were the minority in a school and you didn't see many people that looked like you let alone teach in a class where you're taught," she said. "Being able to be in a community of like-minded people that look like you are learning more about your heritage while also learning how to shape your own identity, values and beliefs. I think that is the essence of HBCU culture."

There's also the creativity of marching bands and showcases like the Charlotte classic.

"Music and arts programs and student activities on campus help to just enhance the experience and allow you to express yourself in a creative manner, in a judgement free manner, in a place where you are a part of a team," Brock said. "You belong and you can have fun serving not only to showcase your talents and your identity but also to serve as an ambassador for your institution to bring others into to this knowledge and enlightenment that we have at our HBCUs."

Said Jean: "Having an opportunity to come back into an event like this is going to speak volumes for our university, volumes for our community and it's going to definitely be a motivator for our students and our potential recruits in the future as well."



MATTHEWS PLAYHOUSE

Matthews Playhouse is hosting the inaugural Matthews Got Talent competition Feb. 28

Put your talent on display at Matthews Playhouse

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Show off your talent and a shot of performing before an audience.

Matthews Playhouse is hosting its inaugural Matthews Got Talent competition for performers of all ages and abilities with a chance at a spot in the theater's 30th anniversary gala. The climax is a day-long live showcase on Feb. 28, with four categories of competition and a grand finale featuring the best performers from every category.

Tickets are \$30 for 14-older and \$15 for children 13-under. A single ticket opens access to all showcases and will be sold at the door on starting at 9:30 a.m. The playhouse is located at 100 E. McDowell St.

Performers must submit a video audition – an MP4 format, maximum three minutes – by Jan. 30 to matthewsplayhouse.com/matthews-got-talent. Content must be family-friendly, and contestants

must be able to set up their equipment in under two minutes.

Up to 15 contestants per category will be picked for the live showcase. Selected acts will be notified by Feb. 2. First place will earn \$200 and a feature performance in the anniversary gala; second pays \$100 and \$50 goes to third.

The categories are:

- Ages 7-12 (three finalists picked)
- Ages 13-17 (three finalists picked)
- Ages 18-older (three finalists picked)
- Multi-age groups (three finalists picked)
- Grand finale (top 12 finalists of all ages)

The Feb. 28 live competition schedule at Matthews Playhouse:

- Ages 7-12, 10:11:30 a.m.
- Ages 13-17, 12:1-1:30 p.m.
- Ages 18-older, 2-3:30 p.m.
- Multi-age groups, 4-5:30 p.m.
- Grand finale, 7-8 p.m.

Leela James brings 2BHonest Tour to the Carolina Theatre

Continued from page 5B

Festival is at Ovens Auditorium at 7 p.m. The Southern soul and modern blues scene blend old-school storytelling with contemporary R&B. with performances by King George, Pokey Bear, Lenny Williams, West Love, Tono Armani, Mike Clark Jr., E.J. Jones, Stephanie Luckett & the YP Band, and Henry Welch.

Tickets available at ticketmaster.com.

March 12

Leela James plays the Carolina Theatre at 8 p.m. as part of the 2BHonest Tour.

James, who has released seven LP albums, channels some of the all-time R&B/soul greats with performances that are equal parts church and blues club. James has eight top-20 R&B radio singles, including two No. 1 tracks on the Billboard charts. Her 2021 single "Complicated" topped the Billboard Adult R&B songs chart for three straight weeks.

Tickets are \$68-\$122 and available online at Ticketmaster.com.

April 7

Contemporary soul trio Moonchild



plays Knight Theater at 7:30 p.m. as part of the Waves Tour.

The Los Angeles-based threesome of Amber Navran, Andris Mattson and Max Bryk combines neo-soul, jazz and electronic music into a genre-fluid sound.

Tickets start at \$52.77 and available at blumenthalarts.org/events/detail/moonchild-waves-tour

Through April 26

"In Pursuit of Home" at Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, Levine Center for the Arts, 551 South Tryon St.

Artist Mario Moore's exhibit encourages viewers to reflect on how the meaning of home is changing in modern America and the inequalities intertwined with its

pursuit.

The exhibition explores the desire for homeownership in the United States, particularly among people in their 20s and 30s, and the barriers that make achieving it more challenging.

More information: ganttcenter.org/exhibitions/in-pursuit-of-home.

Chimpanzee turns the tables in 'Primate'

Continued from page 5B

lows the victims as they run in vain, lock themselves in cars and hide in closets. Nothing is wonderfully lit, the colors adequate, the sets ordinary (production designer Simon Bowles, "A Quiet Place Day One") and props too (Ellie Forey and Tina Jones). In others' hands, that would be a deficit.

With this tech team's professionalism, it just makes the surroundings seem real and not like replicas—even if they are.

Roberts has a good sense of horror and how to make genre requirements work to the movie's advantage. Audiences will scream "get in the other car" or "hide deeper in the closet." Not because they want to, but because they're compelled.

The casual setup makes the characters seem more real, approachable and accessible. Easy to get wound up in their plights. The older sister protecting the

young one. The brave girl not afraid to try alternate means of escape. The dudes who show up unaware. None of it seems silly and campy like a "Scream" or a "I Know What You Did Last Summer." Nor serious and earnest like George A. Romero's 1988 horror film "Monkey Shines."

What's on view is just natural and alarming enough to pull you in. Make you cover your eyes at the scariest moments and uncover them for more gore. And the gore is not overblown. Most of the fear is based on dread and impending violence.

All this was achieved with roughly a \$21 million-plus budget. Likely because there are so few locations and no big stars in the cast, except Kotsur. As an ensemble, the young cast steps up nicely. Hunter's Erin is vulnerable and impulsive like a kid would be.

Mann and Simon as the interlopers are fun to watch. Alexander's Hannah is as rebellious as Wyant's Kate is concerned. Kotsur, who is deaf, is a brilliant casting choice as non-verbal communication is part of the film's theme. So much hinges on Sequoyah's portrayal as the courageous Lucy, and she's up to the challenge—emotionally and physically. Tweens, teens and twenty-somethings will likely flock to theaters and enjoy the movie and cast even more on streaming services.

You'll be frightened. Not by demons, ghosts or fake-ass monsters. Instead, one innocent-looking but deranged chimpanzee will make you quiver. A wild, crazed primate will leave an indelible impression. Monkey see. Monkey kill. Monkey scare.

Visit film critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrown-Ink.com.

Mann and Simon as the

Freedom in the Air Sounds of Resistance & Resilience



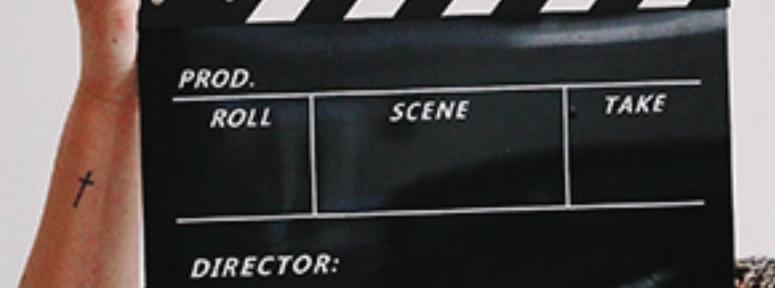
January 24, 2026 | 6:00 p.m.
St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Honoring Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, this program blends spirituals, folk, and fiddle tunes with Baroque and colonial music in a shared language of resilience and hope. Featuring Sequina DuBose, acclaimed with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Danish Opera, and Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and Patrick Dailey, praised by Los Angeles Daily News and Boston Classical Review and featured at the Kennedy Center with Aretha Franklin.



7th ST. FRESH, CLASSICAL, AND A LITTLE UNEXPECTED CONCERTS

The Creatives:
A podcast about Charlotte's most creative people



The Charlotte Post

On top audio platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify and SoundCloud