

Mecklenburg Public Health measles notices

By Herbert L. White
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Mecklenburg County Public Health has issued a measles exposure notice.

The health department notices cover four more sites and times for possible exposure and advises monitoring for symptoms and what to do in the event of contact. The latest exposure locations and times are:

- Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center (1000 Blythe Blvd.) on Feb. 3, 6:30-11:30 p.m. and Feb. 4, 7 p.m.-12 a.m. Atrium Health Levine Children's Hospital is not impacted by the exposure
- Chipotle (239 S. Kings Drive) on Feb. 3, 9:50-11:50 p.m.
- Goodwill, 58085 University Point Blvd., on Feb. 4, noon to 3:45 p.m.
- Goodwill, 3710 W. W.T. Harris Blvd., on Feb. 4, 2-4:40 p.m.

The sites weren't the source of infection and are now safe to visit, according to the health department and are collaborating on the investigation. The exposures are connected to a case outside Mecklenburg County, where three cases have been reported. Eight exposure sites have been reported in the county, according to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services measles dashboard.

Measles is a viral illness that can have serious health complications and can easily spread. The symptoms of measles include a fever, runny nose, cough, rash and red eyes. Measles is highly contagious and can remain active and infectious in the air or on surfaces for up to two hours after an infected person has left a room.

Please see **MECKLENBURG** | 2B

Flowering bulbs combine color and pollinator appeal

By Melinda Myers
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Boost the beauty and pollinator appeal of your gardens and containers with flowering bulbs.

A combination of spring- and fall-planted bulbs can provide season-long color and nectar for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinators.

Include a few dahlias known for their excellent pollinator appeal. The award-winning Collarette Pooh grows 24 to 30 inches tall and features cherry red and yellow daisy-like flowers. Light up your gardens with Kelsey Sunshine collarette dahlias. The pale-yellow outer petals make a nice backdrop for the frilly white inner petals. Add even more color with the HS Date single dahlia with burgundy leaves and melon-colored flowers. Grow these and other dahlias in a sunny location with moist well-drained soil.

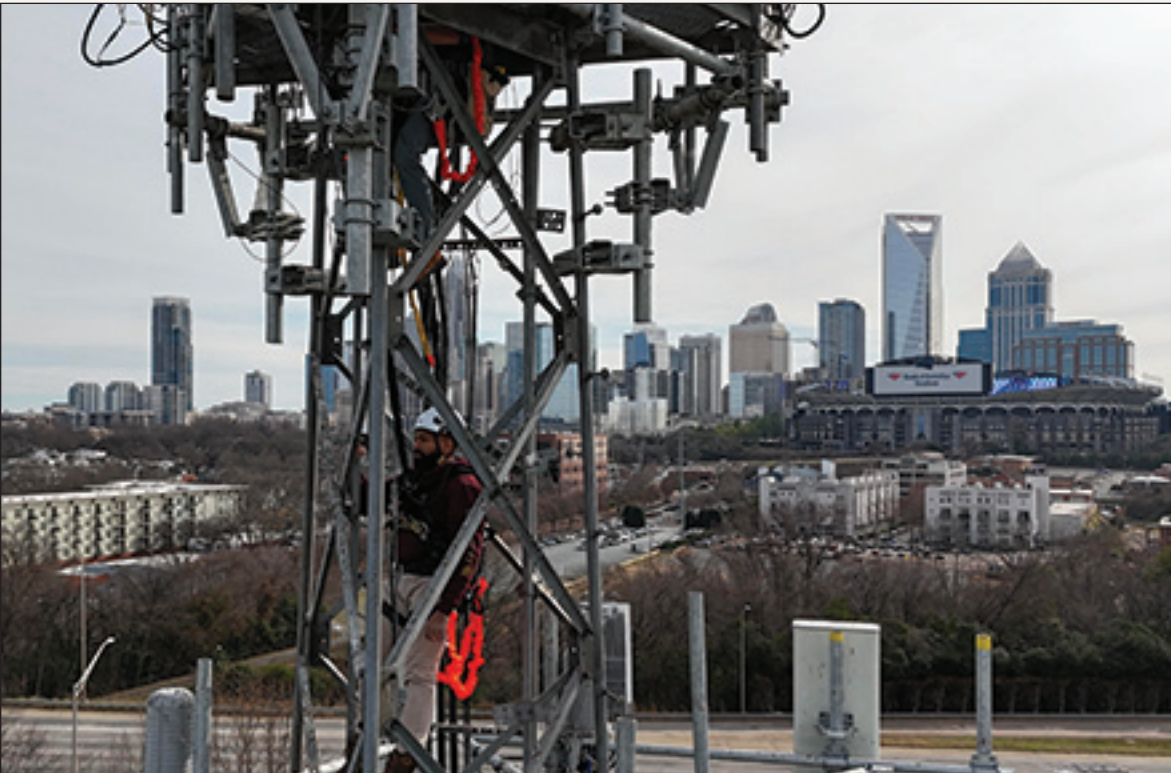
Add vertical interest and color to flowerbeds and containers with gladiolas. Start planting batches of the corns in spring and continue every week through early summer. You and the hummingbirds will enjoy the longer bloom time. Select from a wide range of colors, including white, pink, orange, yellow, red, bicolors and more. Once flowering begins you may need to provide some support. Just slide a bamboo stake next to the plants and secure the stems with twine to keep top-heavy plants upright.

Enjoy the bold foliage, showy flowers and visiting hummingbirds and other pollinators by including cannas in the full to part sun areas of your landscape. Select dwarf varieties for containers and grow cannas where you can easily view the visiting birds.

Consider growing a few begonias in containers and hanging baskets. Most tolerate some shade and many bloom from spring through frost.

Grow a few containers of some of the lesser-known bulbs. Hymenocallis, also known as Peruvian daffodil or spider lily, has large, lightly fragrant white flowers. The blooms attract butterflies, moths, and other pollinators while deer and rabbits tend to leave them be. Pineapple lily (Eucomis) has spikes of

Please see **FLOWERING** | 2B



DIGITAL SERVICES GROUP

Thomas Davenport, chairman of Gastonia-based Digital Services Group makes a point of learning every aspect of the business, even learning to climb a cell tower for maintenance.

A tower of power in growing digital space

Entrepreneur Thomas Davenport invests in local talent, business

By Charles K. Harris

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

According to recent U.S. Census Bureau data, Black-owned businesses grew by more than 50% between 2017-22.

That boon is great news for the Black community given the well documented link between economic power and improved social equity. Those truths are not lost on Thomas Davenport, an Atlanta-based private equity executive with more than two decades of experience in the finance industry.

Davenport recently bought Gastonia-based Digital Services Group, where he is chairman.

DSG launched in 1994 as a technical infrastructure business and has kept in step with evolving technological demands on cellular and solar power.

"I'm a big believer in the resurgence of the Southeast from a manufacturing and infrastructure standpoint," Davenport said. "I thought 'This is a business I can get my mind around,'" citing the company's location, growing industry relevance and his personal skillset blend.

Assuming the acquisition was strictly a dollars and cents driven investment for Davenport would be wrong.

"I love the people part," he said, adding that he enjoys "coaching, developing and understanding" the people who work for him.

"There are a lot of underserved communities that have requisite talent and manpower. A lot of the time that's severely underutilized by traditional business practices."

Since assuming the role of chairman, Davenport has prioritized hiring local talent and creating skilled roles throughout the digital power, tower and solar industry.

"We've got a good workforce, a good balance of access to talent but an old school [mentality] where people care about what they're doing," he said, adding "They do a good job, an honest day's work. And they've got integrity."

Blending spirited entrepreneurialism, business acumen and social consciousness is something Davenport says is in his DNA.

Born and raised in Atlanta, Davenport was influenced by his parents' ambitious and entrepreneurial attitudes. His father, after leaving the military, took a job as a maintenance worker for the Postal Service. Over time, he took advantage of USPS continuing education opportunities.

"He ended up managing the portfolio for all post offices in Alabama and Southern Georgia," Davenport recounts.

Please see **A TOWER** | 2B

A growing racial access gap to HIV PrEP

By James E. Causey

CENTER FOR HEALTH JOURNALISM

Jamal Keyton Perry knows firsthand the challenges Black men face in accessing PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, the HIV prevention medication.

As a Black gay man, he noted that even though the Food and Drug Administration approved the first at-home HIV test and the drug Truvada in 2012 — a once-daily pill that is 99% effective in preventing the spread of HIV — he didn't learn about Truvada until five years after it entered the market.

Perry learned about PrEP during his visit in 2017 to the Brady East STD Clinic, which offers free sexual health services and testing on Milwaukee's East Side.

After his test, one of the clinic's volunteers spoke with him about PrEP and asked whether he would be interested in working with young people at Diverse &

Resilient, an organization that works on improving the safety and well-being of LGBTQ people in southeastern Wisconsin.

Perry took that opportunity at the time, since he said he was taking control of his sexual health and wanted to help others on that journey.

While Black gay and bisexual men experience higher rates of HIV, studies indicate they do not necessarily engage in riskier behaviors than other groups. But PrEP remains less accessible to many in this community.

Reasons for the divide include limited access to early testing and treatment, the high cost of medication for those without insurance, mistrust of the medical system, stigma related to homophobia in Black communities, generalized HIV stigma, health care providers not discussing PrEP during medical visits, and a lack of tar-



ADOBE STOCK

The lack of access to early treatment and HIV prevention medication known as pre-exposure prophylaxis, is growing among Black and brown communities.

geted educational campaigns highlighting how the pill can significantly reduce the risk of contracting HIV.

While PrEP has been largely marketed toward gay and bisexual men, Perry, 32, said anyone who engages in unprotected sex should be on PrEP.

New HIV diagnoses are highest among people ages 25 to 34, followed by those

ages 13 to 24, noted Perry, now the HIV Biomedical Prevention Coordinator at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

The racial disparities are stark. From 2017 to 2019, Perry struggled to maintain his PrEP regimen because his insurance covered only a small share of the cost. He has been on the medication consistently since 2019

Please see **GROWING** | 2B

«RIDES

Modern-looking Mazda 3 is slick, quick and handles with ease

By Winfred Cross

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Finding a car these days isn't the easiest of things to do.

You have to go Korean or Japanese because American manufacturers have basically given up that type of vehicle unless it's a revved-up sports car like a Corvette, Mustang or one of the offerings from Dodge.

Mazda still offers the Mazda 3, which comes in either hatchback or sedan configuration. I'm a sucker for a hatchback so I was happy when they sent its Mazda3 hatchback, which I think is absolutely wonderful.

One of my favorite attributes is its looks. The

wedge-shaped body is slick and modern looking. It looks quick even when sitting still. Trust me, when I got it on the highway, I wasn't disappointed. More about that later.

The interior of the Mazda 3 is like most Mazdas: The company specializes in providing upscale interiors that look far more expensive than the cars. It does so by using materials that neither feel nor look cheap. Every detail looks purposeful and functional.

The seats are comfortable but a tad tight. The Mazda 3 is a bit smaller than the competition so fitting five folks in will be a challenge. There isn't a lot of leg room in the rear, nor storage space behind the

seats. Storage increases a lot if you carry two. The rear seat folds, giving you nearly twice the storage space.

Front passengers get much better accommodations. The seats are supportive and maybe a little firmer than most people's liking. That's because the Mazda 3 is more a driver's car and you need to be held in place. The seats also provide a nice view of the road and the proper height.

The controls are nicely placed except for the touchscreen. It's too far toward to be useful, but I get it. Mazda uses a rotary control for screen functions. Apple CarPlay allows for some touch screen functions on certain models.

Let's talk about road manners. The reason most people buy Mazdas is for the driving experience. It's a company that has not forgotten how to deliver driving pleasure. The Mazda 3 has two engine choices. This version was not blessed with the turbo but that's OK.

The 191 horsepower, four-cylinder 2.5-liter engine is enough to make the Mazda3 feel frisky. Put your foot in the gas and the engine protests a bit, but it does move. You can pass with confidence when needed and you will have no problem keeping up in traffic. The six-speed transmission shifts crisply.

The handling is sharp. You can push this little car



MAZDA

The Mazda 3 is a premium hatchback that's quick and handles with certainty.

hard if you want and it goes where you point. The small footprint comes in handy when zipping around curves and slicing up curly roads. This thing is really a blast to drive.

The ride is firm but comfortable and noise levels are respectable.

My test car was a Carbon model, which is one step below the premium ver-

Please see **MODERN** | 2B

A tower of power in growing digital space

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Davenport's mother spent nearly two decades as a nurse before making the transition to financial advisor. His decision to go into financial services was not solely inspired by his mother's success, though.

"There were a number of Black men that [she] worked with who were very polished, very well spoken, always dressed really well and I got to interact with them," Davenport said. "I think subconsciously that was a big influence."

As a youth, Davenport was also impacted by the edgy, glamorous and high stakes business boom of the 1980s.

"I grew up in an era where hostile takeovers were all the rage," he said. "I would watch the news with my parents, and I was intrigued by the concept of 'you can go and buy a company.'"

Davenport recalls the specific moment he felt being a part of "big business" was within grasp.

"I distinctly remember being in a Kroger grocery store in Decatur, Georgia, and seeing Reginald Lewis on the cover of Black Enterprise magazine. Arms folded, cigar in hand, he had just closed almost a billion-dollar transaction," Davenport recalled. "He was suited and booted, confident and...he looked like me."

The fires of ambition ignited, Davenport spent his late teens and early 20s amassing an impressive academic record. A 2002 finance graduate of Morehouse College, Davenport went on to earn a MPA from Baruch College and an MBA from the University of Chicago. As a National Urban Fellow, Davenport worked in various capacities and locations, including Saint Paul, Minnesota.

After working as an investment banker for firms in New York City and Chicago, Davenport's desire to stake his own claim emerged.

"The thought that you could build a portfolio of businesses and hire and coach and develop [was an] inspiration," he said, which became reality in 2012 when he launched his own company.

"I opened Davenport Capital Management primarily as an advisory shop," he said, adding that the initial goal was to provide big bank level services to lower market business.

Like many small business owners,

though, things were not always smooth at the start.

"The advisory business is lumpy," he said. "There were feast and famine days, but I got to the other side and I learned a lot."

Davenport poured those early lessons into DSG. While very much the "high polished, well dressed" businessman he admired years ago, Davenport discourages the image of a big man behind a big desk when it comes to leadership. He prefers a more humanized, hands-on approach.

"I love interacting with our workforce," he said. "Being in the office, walking the warehouse."

Davenport has tried to understand every role of his employees

"I should have a good understanding of what they are going through on a daily basis," he said.

Davenport recently put his money where his mouth is by participating in tower and rigging training followed by ascending a cell tower and participating in a simulation emergency rescue operation.

"It's good to experience what [I'm] sending moms and dads out daily to do," he said. "Safety culture starts at the top."

While investing in the people part of a business is fulfilling, it is not without its worries.

"The things that keep me up at night are what I call the 'seeing around the corner' issues," Davenport confesses. "What's next? How do things evolve? [The hard part] of creating an enterprise that provides paychecks for folks is keeping that sustainable."

The efforts Davenport and his support staff at DSG make are what he calls "future proofing,"

such as strategizing economic longevity and environmental sustainability. There are other factors to consider, too.

"We're supporting AI infrastructure with boots on the ground," he said. "[We] help construct data centers and cell phone towers. You can't really outsource getting up on a tower and replacing equipment."

Ironically, the irreplaceable qualities Davenport connects to DSG's success are also at the core of being a consummate business owner.

"You can't really outsource getting up on a tower and replacing equipment," he said. "Those things require human touch and judgment."



LONGFIELD GARDENS

North American native Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*) provides nectar for a variety of butterflies.

Flowering bulbs combine color and pollinator appeal

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blooms topped with a small cluster of leaves. The flowers attract bees, butterflies and other pollinators.

Provide some late-season nectar for a variety of butterflies by growing blazing star (*Liatris spicata*). This North American native plant produces spires of fuzzy purple flowers and combines nicely with rudbeckias, asters, dahlias and other late-season bloomers.

Plant pre-chilled lily bulbs in spring or fall with other spring-flowering bulbs that need a winter chill to bloom. Either way, you'll enjoy their color throughout the summer by planting various early-, mid- and late-season lilies. See Longfield Gardens' Bloom Times for Lilies article at longfield-gardens.com for help with your selection. Ensure success by planting them in full sun and well-drained soil and protecting them from rabbits and deer.

Support early visiting pollinators with fall-planted spring-blooming bulbs. Look for opportunities to add these to your landscape. Make a list and note in your calendar so you are sure to get them

planted in fall.

Plan for months of spring color starting with early-blooming crocus, snowdrops (*Galanthus*), glory of the snow (*Chionodoxa*) and grape hyacinths (*Muscari*). Include early-, mid- and late-spring blooming tulips, daffodils and hyacinths. Add a few uniquely flowered fritillarias, bearded iris in a rainbow of colors and a few showy alliums.

Use Longfield Gardens' Bloom Time Chart for Spring and Summer Bulbs (longfield-gardens.com) to help you plan for months of beauty and pollinator appeal.

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 radio program.

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

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Growing racial access gap to HIV PrEP to people of color

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and reports no side effects.

Today, nearly 14 years after PrEP entered the market, its use remains significantly higher among white gay and bisexual men than among Black gay and bisexual men. While the number of PrEP users increased by 20% from 2021 to 2022, the CDC reports that 1.2 million additional Americans could benefit from taking PrEP.

Statistics illustrate the racial disparities clearly.

According to data from AIDSVu, Black Americans accounted for 42% of new HIV diagnoses in 2021, but only 14% of PrEP users. In contrast, Hispanic and Latino individuals represented 27% of new HIV diagnoses and 17% of PrEP users, while white individuals comprised 26% of new diagnoses and 64% of PrEP users.

There are geographic disparities as well. Data show that the U.S. South accounted for just over half of new HIV diagnoses but only 38% of PrEP users. In the South, Black individuals made up 48% of new HIV diagnoses but only 21% of PrEP users.

In the Midwest, Black individuals represented 48% of new diagnoses and only 12% of PrEP users. In the Western U.S., Hispanic and Latinx people accounted for 46% of new HIV diagnoses but only 23% of all PrEP users.

Perry noted that some cities and states have made more progress than others in addressing health disparities.

Atlanta launched programs to cover co-pays and out-of-pocket costs for Black gay and bisexual men. A co-pay assistance card covers up to \$7,200 in annual out-of-pocket costs for PrEP with no monthly limit.

Chicago saw a 21% decline in HIV cases from 2017 to 2021 due to its "Getting to

Zero" strategy, which emphasizes community-led efforts and partnerships with safety-net clinics in Black and Hispanic neighborhoods to encourage LGBTQ+ individuals to use PrEP.

In 2019, California passed a law allowing pharmacists to dispense a 30- to 60-day supply of PrEP without a doctor's prescription.

"These are the measures that must be taken to close the gap," Perry said.

The push to raise awareness of HIV and PrEP

The hip hop community has been actively involved in efforts to expand access to PrEP in Black and brown communities.

T-Boz, 55, of TLC, collaborated with Gilead in November to release "So We PrEP," a reimagined version of the group's 1994 hit "Creep." The music video encourages open conversations about sexual health with partners.

Health journalists can help by promoting awareness and informing people of the significance of PrEP. Reporters can also highlight the barriers that certain communities face in accessing PrEP, whether due to transportation issues, financial constraints, or stigma.

What initiatives are underway to reduce these obstacles? Are your community's HIV cases rising? How many people in your community are using PrEP? Who is most affected in your region?

The website prepvu.org is a good place to start. The platform provides ways to compare locations, show the number of HIV diagnoses over time, and show the number of people on PrEP by state and city. The site is a partnership between Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health and Gilead Sciences, which makes PrEP medications.

Modern-looking Mazda 3 is slick, quick and handles great

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sion. It comes with nearly every driver aid standard and lots more stuff. That stuff includes, leather seats, wireless charging pad, Bose audio system, 18-inch black painted wheels, all-wheel drive, power adjustable driver's

seat with memory, Alexia voice assistant, and keyless entry.

The Carbo addition starts at \$30,780. It is not available as an option.

Pros:

- Mazda handling
- Zippy engine
- Wedge body-style

• Upscale interior

- Plenty of standard equipment

Cons:


- Space is at a premium
- Touch screen nearly out of reach
- Interior is nice but needs updates

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Mecklenburg Public Health measles notices

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When exposures can't be identified or contacted through case investigation, Public Health will issue an exposure notice to prevent further spread. If you see symptoms of measles, call your doctor, clinic or emergency department to get instructions to prevent further spread.

All cases and exposure notices are reported on the NCDHHS measles dashboard, which updates Tuesdays and Fridays.

The MMR vaccine is widely available at healthcare providers and retail pharmacies across Mecklenburg County. The MMR vaccine is offered at the Mecklenburg County Public Health Immunization Clinic located at:

- Northwest Health Department (2845 Beatties Ford Road) 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; Wednesday 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Southeast Health Department (249 Billingsley Road) 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; Wed. 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Ella B. Scarborough Community Resource Center (430 Stitt Road) 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; Wed. 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Valerie C. Woodard Community Resource Center (3205 Freedom Drive, Entrance A) Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Rare kidney diseases you may not even know about

FEATURE IMPACT

While the leading cause of kidney disease is diabetes, many other factors can lead to kidney disease and failure - including a collection of rare and genetic conditions.

According to the National Organization for Rare Diseases, a disease is considered rare if it affects fewer than 200,000 people in the United States. Today, 30 million Americans are living with rare diseases.

This Rare Disease Day, observed on Feb. 28 worldwide, the American Kidney Fund is committed to improving the understanding of rare kidney diseases by providing educational resources.

IgA nephropathy

An autoimmune disease, IgA nephropathy (IgAN) is related to improper function of the immune system. IgAN causes the immune system to produce abnormal antibodies, which build up in the kidneys, triggering inflammation and reducing the kidneys' ability to filter waste and fluid, causing damage and potentially leading to kidney failure.

According to NORD, approximately 70% of rare diseases begin in childhood, which was the case for Malkia White. She had no symptoms - the only indication of her kidney problem was protein and blood in her urine detected through a routine test.

She was diagnosed with IgAN but continued living her life without any changes - the disease was so rare, little was known at the time about how to manage it.

"From 6 years old to the age of 42, I maintained my medical appointments and lived an active lifestyle," White said. "I was an honor student. I was always in dance class. In high school, I was in a marching band and on the field hockey team. In that time period, I was being checked. It never occurred to me, or my family, to investigate or research [IgAN]."

APOL1-mediated kidney disease

Known as AMKD, this is a spectrum of kidney diseases associated with variants (mutations) in the apolipoprotein L1 gene.

Everyone has two copies of the APOL1 gene, but mutations of the gene can raise the chance of rapidly progressive kidney disease in people of western and central African descent.

Polycystic kidney disease

Polycystic kidney disease is a genetic disease that causes cysts to grow inside the kidneys.

There are two forms of PKD: autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease and autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease. The former is more prevalent, accounting for about 9 of 10 cases of PKD.

Cystinosis

A rare, multisystem genetic disease, cystinosis accounts for nearly 5% of all childhood cases of kidney failure, although some people with cystinosis do not develop kidney disease until they're teens or adults.

Caused by mutations in the CTNS gene, cystinosis happens when cystine, a component of protein, builds up in your body's cells.

Too much cystine causes crystals to form and can damage organs including kidneys, eyes, pancreas, liver and brain.

Complement 3 glomerulopathy

With complement 3 glomerulopathy, a part of the immune system called the complement system becomes overactive and doesn't work properly, leading to damage and inflammation in the kidneys. Specifically, it damages the kidneys' glomeruli, which help kidneys filter toxins out of the blood. It can cause kidney failure in about half of adults who are diagnosed with the disease.

Michelle Farley had a hard time getting her C3G diagnosis despite high blood pressure and an irregular heartbeat in her youth and suffering from daily vomiting and weekly headaches while in college. After a trip to her college medical center, she discovered her blood pressure was so high she was at risk for stroke or heart attack. Bloodwork determined she had markers for kidney disease, but she wouldn't receive a full diagnosis until she was 25.

"I was left undiagnosed for almost 22 years due to preconceived notions of how disabilities and sicknesses should 'look' on the outside and how old you need to be to have a chronic disease," Farley said. "I think it's important to spread awareness about rare kidney diseases so patients can be diagnosed faster and more accurately. I always wonder how long I could have maintained my native kidneys if I was diagnosed as a child."

Learn more about rare kidney diseases and the Rare Kidney Disease Action Network by visiting kidneyfund.org.



SHUTTERSTOCK

New federal nutrition guidelines and science are breathing new life into frozen meals as beneficial fare.

Fresh thinking about frozen meals and healthy food options

FEATURE IMPACT

The key to easy preparation of high-quality meals, wasting less food and saving money may already be sitting in your kitchen.

For many families, the freezer is for last-minute meal options. However, new federal nutrition guidance and growing scientific consensus reveal a different reality: frozen foods can be the starting point for healthy eating, not a backup plan. That's why the American Frozen Food Institute is launching "Fresh Thinking About Frozen," a campaign to help families discover these benefits of frozen foods.

Making nutrition achievable

The recently released 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the nation's top nutrition advice, emphasizes portion control and nutrient-dense foods. Frozen options deliver on both counts.

Families who keep frozen produce on hand tend to eat more fruits and vegetables overall. Pre-portioned frozen meals also help people eat what they need without overdoing it. Plus, the convenience factor matters: frozen berries are ready for a morning smoothie, pre-cut frozen vegetables can be added to tonight's stir-fry and a balanced frozen meal can be quickly paired with a salad.

That isn't cutting corners. It's being smart on how best to feed a family well.

Hit pause button on fresh foods

Freezing food only changes a food's temperature, not its nutrition. Freezing keeps food close to its original state without requiring additives.

Produce begins to lose nutritional value right after it's harvested. Freezing fruits and vegetables hours after harvest pauses nutrient degradation and locks in the vitamins and minerals, so the food re-

mains farm fresh even as it travels across the country to your grocery store. Frozen meals are similarly made with real ingredients and turned into just-cooked recipes then frozen for families to eat when they're ready.

The nutrition community understands this. A recent survey conducted by AFFI found 94% of registered dietitians agree frozen fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as their fresh counterparts. Another 92% said frozen foods offer a variety of nutritious meal offerings. These findings are central to the "Fresh Thinking About Frozen" message: Frozen is not second-best. It's simply smart.

Solving the food waste problem

Nearly 40% of food in the United States gets thrown away, according to the non-profit ReFED. That translates to roughly \$1,500 per year per household, straight into the trash along with unused produce and forgotten leftovers.

Frozen helps fix that problem. Eight in 10 consumers agree buying frozen helps reduce food waste at home, AFFI research finds. The reason is simple: You use what you need, when you need it and the rest stays perfectly preserved. No more dreading the refrigerator cleanouts and feeling guilty over the uneaten food going into the trashcan.

Time for fresh thinking

Families already making this shift aren't settling for less. They're strategic about nutrition, budget and time. They integrate the freezer into regular meal planning. They feel confident about providing quality foods that are simply frozen.

The freezer isn't a place of last resort. It's a tool for eating well in real life. Visit frozenadvantage.org/FTAF for tips, recipes and resources to make the most of your freezer.

The Charlotte Post

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

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EMPLOYMENT

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Pricing & Revenue Operations Analyst: Analyze customer contracts and price requests to ensure accurate and competitive pricing across a range of equipment and service offerings; Use internal tool contract ingestion systems and pricing models—to identify products and align pricing structures ;Support Sales teams with strategic pricing guidance to maximize revenue and margin while maintaining compliance with internal policies; Participate in deal review calls with Sales, presenting pricing recommendations and delivering feedback; maintain pricing templates and system data inputs to ensure integrity and accuracy Help drive continuous improvement in pricing processes, tools, and governance. Job in Charlotte, NC. Req: M.S. biostatistics, or math or related field. Send resume to: Homemart Cabinetry Inc, 1810 W Pointe Dr. Charlotte, NC 28214

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OUTREACH EVENT

Contractor Outreach Event for Historic Latta Place project on February 25, 2026, at 10:30 am at the Quest at Latta Place, 6345 Sample Road, Huntersville, NC 28078. Meet the Elfor Construction project team and discover the Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation's project opportunities! RSVP to dgilliam@elford.com by Feb 23, 2026.

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Lalah Hathaway takes the stage at Ovens Auditorium May 2 with October London.

Queen City Blues fest around the corner

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

The latest events from stage, screen and exhibits in Charlotte:

Through Feb. 22
“Primary Trust,” The Arts Factory, 1545 W Trade St.

Written by Eboni Booth and directed by Tiffany Bryant-Jackson, “Primary Trust” won the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Outer Critics Circle Outstanding New Off-Broadway play. The cast includes Miles Thompson (Kenneth), Marvin King (Bart), Tim Huffman (Clay/Sam) and Frandasia Williams (Corrina/Wally’s waiter) making her Three Bone Theatre debut.

Thursday-Saturday shows start at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m.
Tickets: threebonetheatre.com.

Feb. 22
The Highland Neighborhood Association hosts a ribbon cutting ceremony and community celebration marking the opening of the *Public Art Plaza at Erwin Center*, 913 N. Pryor Street, Gastonia. The ribbon cutting is 3-5 p.m.

The Public Art Plaza includes a Walk of Fame Pathway composed of layered imagery that uplifts the history, culture, and lived experiences of Gastonia’s African American Highland community. Through visual storytelling, the installation captures a meaningful period of local history while celebrating the fusion of past and present.

March 7
The eighth annual *Queen City Blues 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, Tonio 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.

March 20-21
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra presents “Encanto in Concert” at Belk Theater, 130 N Tryon St.. The Oscar-winning Walt Disney Studios movie tells the tale of the Madrigals, a family living in a magical house in the mountains of Colombia. Watch the entire feature-length film as the symphony performs the score live.

Tickets at tix.blumenthalarts.org.

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 on blumenthalarts.org/events/detail/moonchild-waves-tour.

Please see **MARQUEE** | 6B



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Desegregation of public schools in the United States in the 1950s, highlighted by Dorothy Counts as one of the first Black students at Harding High School in Charlotte, is part of the arc of U.S. history in “Trouble So Hard: Songs and Stories of Slavery, Freedom and Civil Rights.”

Production looks to the past to inform the present

‘Trouble So Hard’ explores African Americans’ history in the US

By Nikya Hightower
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

“Trouble So Hard” is more than a performance.

It’s a statement.

“Trouble So Hard: Songs and Stories of Slavery, Freedom and Civil Rights” opened Feb. 7, at Greater Vision United Methodist Church in Huntersville and continued Feb. 14 at Matthews Playhouse’s Fullwood Theater. The next showing is June 18 at Tyvola Senior Citizen Center.

The musical narrative starts in 1526 with the arrival of the first enslaved Africans, through the Civil Rights Movement and to the present, covering police brutality and racial violence.

Harry Taylor, the creator and activist behind the performance, is committed to making sure history is not erased. The cast is Sandra Thomas, Kel Williams and Nick Tutwiler.

During COVID-19, Taylor was working on a project when the murder of George Floyd took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which

shifted the focus to something greater.

“The outrage across the country was just extraordinary and right then and there I changed this, I said I’m going to do this, but I’m going to do this in a different fashion,” he said. “It’s not going to be really for fun.”

The production taps into history to show the past always reflects in the present. Taylor said that’s why it’s important to see how history is repetitive.

“The same kind of people that we have in the world, people that think they’re better than everybody else, and they have the God-given right to put their thumb on people, and do whatever they want, enslave them, kill them, throw them in the water,” he said. “Then there’s other people that think that we’re all created equal and we are brought here for an opportunity to have life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and I’m on that second side.”

Taylor would like “Trouble so Hard” to reach schools and univer-

sities but admitted to having a hard time getting the narrative picked up.

“I have to find ways to make this bigger than it is right now,” he said. “I can’t be the only person that’s out shouting in the neighborhood. I can’t be the only crier.”

In the current climate of removing history in schools, museums and libraries, Taylor thinks now is the time for people to start educating themselves on history so Americans can better understand the now.

“That’s how you indoctrinate people into living in an authoritarian regime, into the dictatorship, by taking their history, their access to history, and don’t let them be educated,” he said.

“That’s what I’m trying to do with this, whether I like it or not. I’m in the twilight of my life and the good thing is that I hope that with Nick and Kelly, early 20s people that are passionate about history and music, we’re going to keep marching with that banner. We’re going to keep going.”

‘Primary Trust’ explores loneliness and growth

By Nikya Hightower
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

“Primary Trust” gets deep into loneliness.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning play takes the stage at The Arts Factory, 1545 W. Trade St. through Feb. 22. Ticket prices are available online; \$20 for students and teachers, \$30 for regular admission.

“Primary Trust,” written by Eboni Booth and directed by Tiffany Jackson, follows the quiet life of Kenneth, who navigates loneliness and job loss. The audience will get to intimately walk through these learning experiences, which Jackson says is like “The Truman Show” in that it views Kenneth’s life from every angle.

“When I originally read the script, it is so quiet in a beautiful way that I knew I had to be involved,” he said. “It’s done in such a beautiful way where you leave with hope instead of tragedy. There’s sadness because it’s what we do, but you leave in such a way that I walked

Please see **PRIMARY** | 6B



THREE BONE THEATRE

The Pulitzer Prize-winning play “Primary Trust” plays Feb. 6-22 at The Arts Factory.

Making it: Photo exhibit of North Carolina’s workers

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

A photo exhibit at the Gaston County Museum of Art & History is dedicated to the work of making things.

A free public opening reception for Joshua Braswell’s “NC Makers,” is Feb. 20 from 6-8 p.m. at the museum. The exhibit, which debuted Feb. 10, features images of craftspeople, artists, farmers, and other working people across North Carolina engaged in their day-to-day business of creating. Among the images captured are Mi-Sook Hur, a metalsmith and enamellist at the Penland School of Craft near Spruce Pine; Michael Hofman, a

porcelain artist from Asheville; and blacksmiths at Yellow Rose Forge in Forest City.

“I love photography and supporting creative expression in all of its varied forms, which led me to this project,” Braswell said in a statement. “The makers in this exhibit do amazing things, and I thank them for their willingness to allow me in their spaces of making.”

... “I photographed these makers over the course of a calendar year, and I’m extremely grateful to the folks who participated. They were going out on a limb by allowing me to photograph them – in many instances without having met me first. That was a tremendous level of trust that they didn’t have to extend to me. My hope is that viewers are inspired by these

Please see **MAKING** | 6B



JOSHUA BRASWELL

Photographer Joshua Braswell’s image of a blacksmith at Yellow Rose Forge in Forest City is part of the exhibit “NC Makers” on display at Gaston County Museum of Art & History.

Marquee: ‘In Pursuit of Home’ at Gantt Center

Continued from page 5B

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.

May 2
R&B icons *October London* and *Lalah Hathaway* take over Owens Auditorium, 2900 E Independence Blvd. for a concert event celebrating love,

soul and timeless music.

Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets presale on Jan. 28 at 10 a.m. local time. The general sale begins Jan. 30 at 10 a.m. local time on Ticketmaster.com.

May 5
The Robert Cray Band, 7:30 p.m. Carolina Theatre, 230 N. Tryon St.

The blues-rock standout first picked up a guitar after seeing The Beatles on TV then, having witnessed Jimi Hendrix perform in Seattle, determined his destiny would follow a similar path. Cray's developed into one of American music's top music artists over the last half century.

Tickets range from \$55-\$174 and available at ticketmaster.com.

June 6
Grammy-nominated R&B singer *Ari Lennox* brings her North American tour to Skyla Credit Union Amphitheatre. The show is in support of her third studio album *Vacancy*. Tickets available at livenation.com.

‘Primary Trust’ explores loneliness and growth

Continued from page 5B

away thinking, ‘I know this kid.’”

Although the play explores heavier themes such as trauma, grief and mental health, it's about growth and adaptation, showing how Kenneth doesn't dwell on the negative.

The production may spark moments in the audience where Kenneth feels familiar. Jackson said, “It makes you pause and think how much you don't know about people's backstories as you interact with them. You could be interacting with the server at a restaurant, you could be inter-

acting with someone at the bus stop, you just don't know their story.”

“Primary Trust” is intimate and vulnerable, allowing the audience to experience the characters' awkward and broken moments. Jackson said that the actors commit to vulnerability and honesty in their performance is worth the watch.

“This show is not about the set,” he said. “There's no big flashy thing that's going to happen. It's a quiet, beautiful study in humanity, and these four people have laid it all on the line for you to see that up front and that is worth watching.”

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Making it: A photo exhibit of workers at Gaston museum

Continued from page 5B

makers to do something creative, daring, or otherwise positively world changing.”

Said museum curator Alicyn Wiedrich: “I am consistently impressed with Joshua's eye for details and his ability to capture movement and emotions in his photographs. Through his photographs, I invite you to find the rough hands, the sweat, and the intense focus that allows the act of making to be so powerful.”

Braswell, a Gaston County native, was introduced to cameras and visual design as a student at Highland School of Technology.

“It was there that I worked on the school's weekly morning news program and was introduced to video editing and other editing and design software,” he said.

After a couple of years at Gaston College, Braswell transferred to UNC Greensboro, where he earned a degree in media studies with a background in cinema production that influenced his use of photography in storytelling.

“In college, I gravitated to the look of film noir and early expressionism, so in some subconscious way I think I can perceive the world in black and white and visualize that look better. For this exhibit, I shot digitally and then made the decision in editing which images I wanted to be rendered in black and white, and which ones in color.”

Admission to the museum is free and hours are Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Don’t sleep on value of friendships in ‘The Slumber Party’

By Nikya Hightower

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

“The Slumber Party” shows what it means to be a ride or die.

The stage production makes its Charlotte debut Feb. 19-22 at UNC Charlotte's Robison Hall, 9027 Mary Alexander Road. Tickets are available online at charlotteboxoffice.universitytickets.com and range from \$8-\$18 for the general public and free for College of Arts + Architecture students and staff.

The play, written by E. Freeman and directed by Margarette Joyner, will take the audience through childhood friendships to adulthood changes that puts relationships to the test. The production will reflect relatable moments of navigating not only what it looks like when friendships fail but the dynamic of how people show up for each other and when a group reunites.

Freeman based the play on her own experiences growing as part of a multicultural friend group, learning what it means to be a good neighbor.

“The foundation of a neighborhood is that you really look after your neighbors,” she said. “You really took care of your neighbors without it becoming anything big or unusual and as kids we all kind of grew up together.”

Those moments in Freeman's childhood influenced the characters

and their conversations.


“All of them show up at night with their own secrets, with their own little dogmas and with their own little concerns,” she said. “And I think that speaks to how sometimes even with friends, we show up with our mask on.”

The play invites the audience to look at their own friendships and think about how they are being treated and the courage to let go.

“Think about who these people you're surrounding yourself with,” Joyner said. “Are they truly friends? Do they have your best interests at heart? Are these people who you can talk to about anything and they won't judge? For those that you know, without a shadow of a doubt, are going to be there for you no matter what, those are your ride or dies.”

Freeman and Joyner, who have a 36-year friendship of their own, hope the show will spark conversations on relationships and encourage audiences to discover who to cherish and who doesn't fit.

“It's about friendships that have stood the test of time, regardless of what they've gone through, regardless of how far away they have been or moved,” Freeman said. “The ties that bind are still there. Sometimes those friendships are only for a season, as in the case of Rose.”

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