

Life!

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026 SECTION B

New measles challenge: Few doctors have seen it before

By Andrew Jones
KFF HEALTH NEWS

The boys sat in one waiting room and then another. Two hours and 20 minutes passed before the two were isolated, according to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services records obtained by KFF Health News. Then two more hours ticked by.

As the sun rose, an emergency room doctor called the state epidemiologist and described the symptoms. The public health official told him to keep the kids in the hospital and quarantine them. Shortly after that call, the patients were diagnosed.

It was measles. Hospital staff gave the father instructions on how to quarantine the family and sent them home.

The virus exposed at least 26 other people in the hospital that January day, federal investigators determined. Health inspectors for CMS investigated the measles infections and other failures in care and concluded that the twins' symptoms should have triggered an isolation procedure for which Mission Hospital staffers had trained seven months earlier. CMS designated Mission in "Immediate Jeopardy" for the exposures and other unrelated issues, one of the most severe sanctions a hospital can face, threatening to pull federal funding unless it remedied the problems.

A spokesperson for Mission said its staff was trained to manage airborne sickness and is following federal rules.

As U.S. hospitals face an increasing risk of encountering measles, and pressure to immediately spot it, health care workers face an unusual barrier: Many don't know what it looks like.

"There's a word, 'morbilliform' — it means measles-like, and there are lots of viruses that can cause a rash that looks like a measles rash in children," said Theresa Flynn, a pediatrician in Raleigh and the president of the North Carolina Pediatric Society. In 30 years in health care, she's never seen a

Please see **A NEW** | 2B

Gatekeeper reforms promise relief for NC's pharmacies

By Jaymie Baxley
NORTH CAROLINA HEALTH NEWS

Cole's Pharmacy, a family-owned drug store in Person County, February after nearly 70 years, leaving many residents in and around Roxboro with a longer drive for medications and fewer local health care options.

Robbie Carver, who managed the pharmacy with his sister, said the increasingly unpredictable reimbursements and fees from pharmacy benefits managers made it impossible to stay in business.

Pharmacy benefits managers, commonly referred to as PBMs, are huge pharmaceutical distribution companies that act as gatekeepers in the prescription drug supply chain, often squeezing retail pharmacists.

"It's like having a skeleton in your closet," Carver told The Roxboro Courier-Times. "You don't know who they are, where they are or how they operate. They cut and cut and cut what we received as pay-backs from medicine that we sold."

The closure of Cole's Pharmacy reflects a broader pattern.

A 2024 data brief from the Rural Policy Research Institute at the University of Iowa showed that the number of rural retail pharmacies across the U.S. declined by 5.9 percent from 2018 to 2023. At least three rural towns in North Carolina — Faison, Selma and Tryon — lost their pharmacies during that time frame.

Now Congress and North Carolina lawmakers are moving to rein in anti-competitive practices that many say have put financial strain on those com-

Please see **GATEKEEPER** | 3B

«RIDES

Mazda still has an affordable stellar driving experience with top dog CX-50

By Winfred Cross
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Mazda's CX-50 is slightly bigger than the CX-5, or at least it was.

There is an all-new version of the CX-5 coming soon that may be bigger or the same size as the current CX-50 which questions the necessity of this vehicle.

If you are confused, so am I, but that's nothing new for me. Mazda is keeping the CX-50 around for obvious reasons — it's a great vehicle that suits the needs of a general population.

The CX-50 looks more rugged than the CX-5. It has standard electronic AWD, and my version was the hybrid premium plus.

That version has no options and only a few accessories available. It's top dog, in other words.

The Hybrid CX-50 is powered by a 2.5-liter engine coupled to an electronically controlled continuously variable transmission. This setup allows the CX-50 to achieve 38 miles per gallon which is fairly frugal for a vehicle this size.

Mazda's hallmark is its ability to deliver an enthusiast's driving experience at an economy car price. There isn't a twisty road that intimidates this vehicle. It corners with confidence and tracks the highway with authority. It has the latest gadgets to keep it centered in lanes

but most of the credit goes to Mazda's excellent suspension.

The CX-50 will hold five people comfortably but only has so-so cargo space if you carry all five.

The second row will fold to give you more cargo space.

The interior is much like all Mazdas — functional but also upscale. There is plastic but it doesn't feel or look cheap. There is wood, metal and leather to give a more luxury feel and look.

The seats are leather and comfortable. Power adjustments are standard on both front seats and each seat is heated. The steering wheel and rear seats are heated as well.

The biggest problem with



MAZDA

The 2026 Mazda DX-50.

the interior is the touch screen which is only a touch screen if Apple CarPlay or Android Auto is

being used. The rotary control works fine but I've yet to figure why Mazda doesn't go full touch screen.

The amount of standard equipment for the hybrid premium plus model is

Please see **MAZDA** | 2B



ABC NEWS

ABC News anchor Linsey Davis has been an outspoken advocate for women who deal with uterine fibroids. Black women are more two to three times more likely to develop them than white women.

A higher fibroids risk, yet Black women suffer silently

They're 2-3 three times more likely to develop than white women

By James E. Causey
CENTER FOR HEALTH JOURNALISM

For years, Petrina Lige endured severe pain, bloating, and abnormally heavy bleeding during her periods.

She remembers a difficult time when she bled for almost a month and needed an emergency blood transfusion. "I was in my early 30s when I realized something was wrong. I was married and trying to have children, so I decided to visit my doctor," Lige said.

Lige, an African American contract manager in Atlanta, was first diagnosed with fibroids in 2006, when she was 31. Her gynecologist suggested laser treatment. Instead, Lige chose to change her diet and exercise. She saw some

improvements, but the bleeding did not stop.

Now 56, Lige wants more women to talk about this issue rather than keep quiet.

Research shows that Black women are two to three times more likely to develop uterine fibroids than white women. By age 35, about 60% of Black women have fibroids, while around 40% of white women the same age are affected. Studies also indicate that they tend to develop these tumors at a younger age, often experiencing larger and more numerous growths.

Other groups are also affected at higher rates, with one recent study finding nearly 22% of Chinese American women affected by fi-

broids, compared to less than 11% of white women and 13% of Hispanic women.

Lige chose to have surgery the same year she was diagnosed because she struggled to keep up with the necessary dietary changes to manage her condition. She also stopped using hair relaxers after hearing talk about a possible link between perms and fibroids (studies have explored the link but the evidence remains inconclusive).

Although the surgery effectively addressed her larger fibroids, 10 years later, the fibroids returned, prompting her to undergo additional laser treatments. She was never able to have children.

Please see **BLACK** | 2B

Jackson's legacy across the generations

By Faith Harper
HOWARD UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE

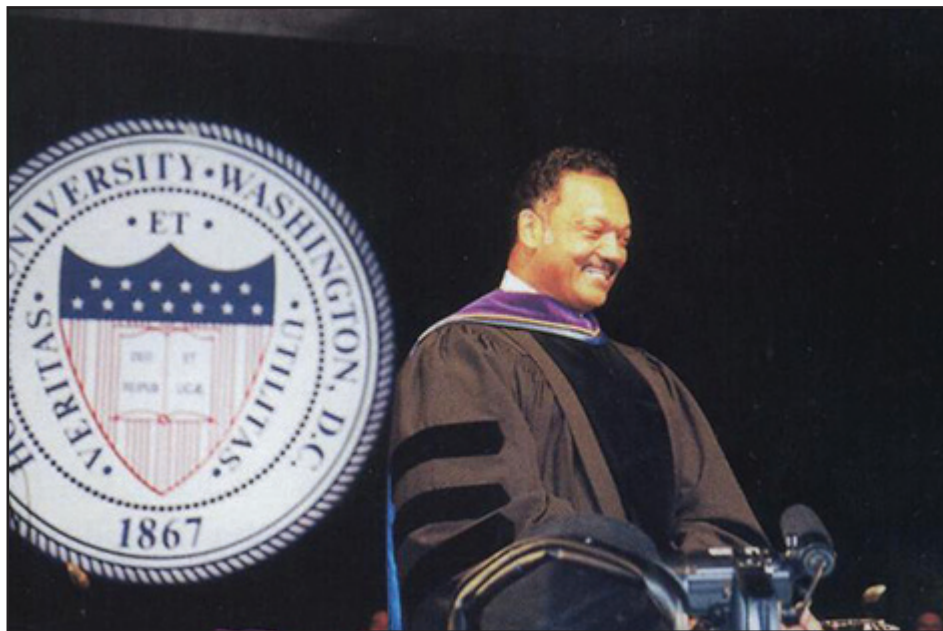
The Rev. Jesse Jackson became one of the figures to help link the Black community and American political structures to address issues of race, economics and social class.

One space in the Black community that he prominently molded was his relationship with the "Black church."

What started as enslaved Black people risking their lives to read from the Bible transformed into a rebellion for autonomy of one's mind, body and soul. Black Christianity became a way for Black citizens to rise in the community and offer a place in America where African Americans could hold positions of power.

The Rev. Dr. Cheryl J. Sanders, a Christian ethics professor at the Howard University School of Divinity, recognized Jackson's ability to foster unity and understanding of Christianity.

"His style of leadership and oration was relatable to the Black church and beyond," said Sanders, senior pastor at the Third Street Church of God in



HOWARD UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who died last month, inspired with oration and progressive initiatives that crossed class and race lines.

Washington. "He certainly represented the ecumenical nature of the Black church because he could make himself at home anywhere."

Sanders remembered how Jackson came back to "The Mecca" in 2021 to meet with Howard students who were protesting over mold and rodents in

residential halls.

"He showed up to show his solidarity, but then he fell because of his health," Sanders said. "I thought, 'Here was somebody who was pushing the envelope in terms of their own health, yet still being present to support Black people and others pushing for social justice and human dig-

nity.'" Political figures like Frederick Douglass, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Jackson harnessed the foundations of the Black church to light fires under old revolutions, but in new eras.

King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an

Please see **REV. JESSE** | 2B

Black women suffer fibroids in silence

Continued from page 1B

ABC anchor describes her ordeal

The topic of fibroids and their impact on Black women gained significant attention after ABC News anchor Linsey Davis shared her long-term battle with the condition last August.

Davis, who is African American, discussed her painful menstrual cycles, extreme fatigue, and noticeable bloating after public speculation on social media suggested she might be pregnant while covering the Oscars on the red carpet.

"It was such an embarrassing moment ... but it is a pouch that, you know, happens," Davis said in an interview with actress and model Cynthia Bailey and singer Tamar Braxton, both of whom have also openly discussed their experiences with uterine fibroids. The conversation was facilitated by Dr. Soyini Hawkins, a gynecologist who advocates for women's health concerns to be taken more seriously.

Coming forward to discuss her battle with fibroids was a difficult decision for Davis, but ultimately one she thought would help other Black women going through the experience.

In August, Davis decided to have a hysterectomy after being diagnosed with 13 fibroids. She hoped this surgery would finally provide relief from this often-overlooked condition. Like Lige, Davis had previously undergone a myomectomy, but the fibroids returned, larger and more numerous, bringing back the challenges she thought she had overcome.

Lige explained that many people don't understand how fibroids affect not just the person who has them, but also those around them. She shared that she kept most of her feelings

about fibroids to herself because she didn't think anyone would understand her struggle. She recalled how during a trip to Africa for her birthday, the issue reached a critical point due to her constant bleeding.

She expressed concern that if she hadn't had access to a private bathroom, she wasn't sure how others would have reacted.

Several factors have been associated with the higher incidence of fibroids in Black women, including lower levels of vitamin D, higher rates of obesity, chronic stress due to racism, and potential exposure to hair relaxers. Dr. Erica Marsh, head of the reproductive endocrinology and infertility division at the Center for Reproductive Medicine at Michigan Medicine's Von Voigtlander Women's Hospital, said that while some risk factors that may be more common among Black women could influence tumor growth and size, none of these factors have been proven to cause fibroids.

Marsh has expressed the need for more research on how fibroids affect different minority groups, and she urged more Black women to take part in studies. "Research has taught us that if you're not included, then you're not represented," she said.

After her blood transfusion, Lige decided to undergo a partial hysterectomy — a decision she wished she had made sooner. "I didn't realize how much pain I was in until after my surgery. I had been living with pain for so long due to my fibroids that I didn't know it wasn't normal."

Millions of women, both Black and white, suffer in silence from fibroids because they are unaware that they are not alone.

A new measles challenge: Few doctors have seen it before

Continued from page 1B

measles case, she said.

North Carolina has reported more than 20 cases since mid-December, and more than 3,000 people nationwide have been infected since the beginning of 2025.

Children in areas with low immunization rates have been especially susceptible to outbreaks, triggering public health campaigns to promote the measles vaccine. CMS Administrator Mehmet Oz encouraged vaccination in a CNN interview on Feb. 8.

With two doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine, a person has a 3% chance of getting the virus after exposure. If exposed, an unvaccinated person has a 90% chance of being infected, according to the CDC. It can take a week or two before someone infected with measles shows symptoms.

But for the past year, the Trump administration has sown doubt about vaccine effectiveness. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was a longtime anti-vaccine activist before taking office, and under his leadership the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reduced the number of shots recommended to children.

After measles erupted in West Texas last year, Kennedy publicly recommended unconventional and unproven treatments for the virus, including steroids, antibiotics, and cod liver oil.

Infectious disease experts and doctors said federal policies have left health care workers to lean on their own experience or guidance from their state public health systems to fight a disease that many are preparing to see for the first time and that initially may behave like the common cold.

"As measles becomes more common, all of us are leveling up in our ability to recognize and immediately respond to suspected measles," Flynn said.

Three Cs

Officially, the U.S. has maintained "measles elimination status" since 2000, meaning the U.S. has avoided significant spread of the virus. After outbreaks in Texas, Arizona, Utah, and now South Carolina, the nation is on track to lose that designation before the year is out. Its own adopted regulations tie elimination status to a lack of a continuous viral spread persisting for 12 months.

One county in South Carolina, an hour's drive from Asheville, has had more than 900 cases in the current outbreak — more than Texas reported in all of 2025.

Symptoms of measles, a virus that attacks the lungs and airways, can include fever, cough, a blotchy rash, and red, watery eyes. Researchers consider measles among the most contagious diseases, and the virus may remain active for up to two hours after an infected person leaves a room.

It can be lethal, with 1 to 3 deaths per 1,000 cases in children.

In 2025, two children in Texas and one adult in New Mexico died of measles.

Along with tracking data, the CDC provides detailed summaries on its website for diagnosing measles. State public health agencies and some counties have

developed dashboards tracing the disease as it surfaces in such places as hospitals, schools, grocery stores, and airports. Large hospital systems developed staff training protocols last year and shared them with area clinics.

Look for the three Cs, that guidance said: cough, coryza (cold symptoms), and conjunctivitis (pink eye). According to CMS inspection records, HCA Healthcare, which owns Mission Hospital, trained Mission staff on the three C's early last year. On top of failing to isolate the twin patients right away, Mission staff didn't have a designated area for patients with respiratory symptoms, federal inspectors found.

The CDC advises health workers to immediately place patients with measles or suspicious symptoms in a special isolation room, where airflow is controlled inward. The Mission patients were separated from other patients only by plastic partitions, according to the CMS records.

Mission spokesperson Nancy Lindell said the hospital was equipped and staffed to manage airborne illnesses like measles.

"Our hospital has been working with state and federal health officials on proactive preparedness, and we are following guidance provided by the CDC," Lindell said.

Dogwood Health Trust, a private foundation established as part of HCA's purchase of Mission Health, helps fund KFF Health News coverage.

Most U.S. clinics and hospitals have never experienced measles cases, said Patsy Stinchfield, a former president of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases and a nurse practitioner. She called CMS' Immediate Jeopardy penalty for Mission "extreme," given the virus can be so difficult to identify.

"In the middle of winter right now, measles looks like every other viral respiratory infection that kids come in with," Stinchfield said.

The CDC has been less communicative in the past year with clinics about their response to outbreaks, said health workers and infectious disease experts. This disconnect began soon after Trump took office, according to a KFF Health News investigation finding that health officials in West Texas were unable to talk with CDC scientists as measles surged last February and March.

"We certainly do not feel the support or guidance from the CDC right now," said Brigitte Fogleman, a pediatrician at Asheville Children's Medical Center, where staff members have come up with their own method of staying off the virus: screening patients over the phone and in their cars before a visit.

In response to questions about how the CDC is supporting health care organizations during the measles resurgence, spokesperson Andrew Nixon said that "state and local health departments have the lead in investigating measles cases and outbreaks" and that the CDC provides support "as requested." He pointed to numerous guides and simulation tools the agency has developed as the virus has spread.

Mazda still an affordable stellar driving experience

Continued from page 1B

staggering. Leather seats the are heated front and rear, ventilated front seats, dual zone climate control, smart cruise control, power mirrors with two position memory function, LED headlights with adaptive front lighting system, black metallic interior trim and contrast stitching, aluminum roof rails and dual exhaust tips are what separates this from the premium models.

The premium plus model also has a 12-speaker Bose system, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, three months of SiriusXM satellite radio, traffic sign recognition, windshield wiper de-icer, power lift gate, 911 automatic emergency notification, HD radio and built in Alexa.

The as-tested price was around

\$42,540. That's not a bad price for a premium hybrid SUV. This is a bit more expensive than competitors but none drive as nicely as the Mazda.

The company continues to offer impressive vehicles that satisfy those who want a little more than average transportation.

Pros:

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Cons:

- Pricy
- Limited cargo space

Rev. Jesse Jackson's legacy reaches across the generations

Continued from page 1B

African American civil rights organization founded in Atlanta in 1957, inspired the birth and merger of Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition. Both were created on the backbone of social justice and theology, which Jackson emphasized to protect Black people in their endeavors.

The Rev. Nicholas K. Young, a therapist and young adult leader at New Bethel Baptist Church in D.C., noted that Black churches defined what human rights look like in America.

"Growing up, I thought there was no separation between [Black church and politics]," Young said. "The civil parts of this country

have often found themselves to be byproducts of Black church through Black church leadership."

Jackson resonated with him because he encompassed what Young preached at Bethel.

"I think Rev. Jackson was embodying the spirit of Amos, of Isaiah, of Moses," Young said. "These were people who not only thought about what it meant to be Christian, but also did the work to make this world a better place."

Beyond hymnals and praise dance routines, Black churches carry a song that civil rights leaders continue to sing in the streets today. For generations, the church has served not only as a spiritual refuge but as a training

ground for civic engagement and moral leadership.

Walter Hicks, grandfather of Howard student Mya Hubbard, attends True Word Church of God in Christ and acknowledges that Black churches have the responsibility of not being apolitical — and that extends to the congregation as well.

"In church, we were taught to vote and let the politicians do their job," Hicks said. "The church can guide you through, but cannot tell you how to vote. The church has to make people aware of the consequences of doing nothing. We are taught to make a difference and lead by example."

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Gatekeeper reforms promise relief for pharmacies

Continued from page 1B
community pharmacies — pressures that led to institutions like Cole's closing across rural and urban areas.

What are PBMs?

PBMs create payment formulas that determine which medications are covered. They also set the reimbursement rates that are paid to pharmacies and impose fees that can be assessed weeks or months after a prescription is filled.

For years, much of this activity took place behind the scenes, and patients would only encounter PBM policies when they hit roadblocks trying to fill expensive prescriptions.

In the past two decades, though, PBMs have become more pervasive and more powerful by consolidating with large insurance companies. In 2024, for example, nearly 80 percent of all prescription claims in the U.S. were processed by just three PBMs: CVS Caremark, Express Scripts and Optum Rx.

Independent pharmacists' PBM operations often lack transparency and can result in payments that fall below what it costs them to dispense a medication.

"PBMs are the ultimate middlemen," said Kaite Krell, director of congressional affairs for the National Community Pharmacists Association. "They control how you're allowed to get your drug, where you're allowed to get your drug, how much that drug is going to cost and how much your pharmacist is going to get paid to dispense it."

Federal response

In February, Congress enacted what Krell's association called the "first major PBM reform in decades" as part of the budget deal for the coming year.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2026 separates PBM compensation in Medicare Part D, the prescription drug plan for seniors and some people with disabilities, from the price of drugs and the rebates tied to them. This change is intended to remove incentives to favor higher-cost medications.

It also requires PBMs to use contract terms and performance measures that are "reasonable and relevant" to the services they provide, a provision aimed at preventing arbitrary fees, retroactive payment clawbacks and other practices pharmacists say have been used to reduce reimbursements even after prescriptions are filled.

"That's absolutely huge," Krell said.

Separately, President Donald Trump's administration has proposed new rules that would require PBMs to disclose more detailed information about how they are compensated

in contracts with self-insured employer health plans.

Supporters of the rule, which must undergo a public comment period and potential revision before a final version is issued, believe it will help employers who provide health insurance to their workers understand where their drug spending goes and negotiate better terms.

PBMs' rural impacts

Joe Moose, who with his brother runs Moose Pharmacy, a 142-year-old business with eight locations in the Central Piedmont, said PBMs have driven reimbursement rates so low that community pharmacies often lose money dispensing medicine. That undermines their ability to sustain other vital services that they provide: administering vaccines and blood pressure screenings and helping patients manage chronic conditions.

"If you're paying somebody to fill their prescription, there's no money left from that already negative thing to offer all of these other services," he said, adding that pharmacy closures can cut off health care access for people — especially if they're poor and uninsured.

"They don't have access to a primary care doc, so the local pharmacy becomes the primary layer of health care for the whole rural community," Moose said.

Loss of a local independent pharmacy can have ripple effects that extend beyond medication access and can destabilize entire communities, he said.

"We've seen data where when community hospitals close, the community itself doesn't thrive and survive," he said. "I think it's very much the same when a community pharmacy closes in a rural area."

Simply wrong

U.S. Rep. Deborah Ross (D-Raleigh) worked on the legislative language around PBMs that appears in the federal budget bill. A former state lawmaker and civil rights attorney, Ross learned about the problems with PBMs shortly after she got to Congress in 2021.

"I had independent pharmacists who met with me about this issue and explained how PBMs were working," she told NC Health News. "They told me pretty much that PBMs were manipulating the system as middle people and were pocketing profits or passing them on to an ownership entity, which might be a pharmacist, at the expense of both patients and independent pharmacies."

She began collaborating with a bipartisan group of lawmakers that included U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, a Republican from Georgia who is a pharmacist.

Much of the market distortion, Ross found, stemmed from the "vertical integration" of PBMs. In many cases, the same parent company owns the PBM, a health insurer and a chain of pharmacies, which means the organization can steer patients to its own pharmacies, control prices across the supply chain and keep more of the profits.

"When PBMs were invented, they were really supposed to be more watchdogs to protect the consumer," Ross said. "But when they became part of a vertically integrated organization and they could then steer people to the pharmacies that they worked with and get a bonus for doing that, then consumer protection no longer became the goal."

Ross said the reforms are intended to restore transparency and ensure that savings negotiated in the

drug supply chain reach patients and plan sponsors rather than intermediaries.

"If PBMs were just trying to negotiate low prices with everybody and not getting paid themselves for it, that would be a whole different matter," she said. "But this is a situation where the savings don't go to the consumer. They go to the PBM, and that is simply wrong."

While the provisions of H.R. 7148 are not set to take effect until 2028, Ross said they've been met with positive feedback from independent pharmacists.

"They're waiting to see how it's implemented," she said.

State lawmakers make moves

North Carolina lawmakers have also taken action; they passed the SCRIPT Act in 2025. Signed into law by Gov. Josh Stein this past July, the law puts new guardrails on how PBMs operate in commer-

cial insurance and North Carolina's Medicaid managed care plans. It contains provisions designed to protect the state's independent pharmacies and to lower out-of-pocket costs for patients.

Among other changes, the law requires PBMs to allow any pharmacy willing to meet contract terms to participate in their networks and prohibits them from steering patients to preferred pharmacies through higher copays or other financial penalties.

It also bars PBMs from reimbursing their own affiliated pharmacies at higher rates than independent competitors and includes protections intended to prevent pharmacies from being paid

less than the cost of acquiring certain medications.

"We don't have to accept an underwater claim," Moose said. "That gives a powerless industry, being the community pharmacy and primarily independent community pharmacy industry, some power and some say-so."

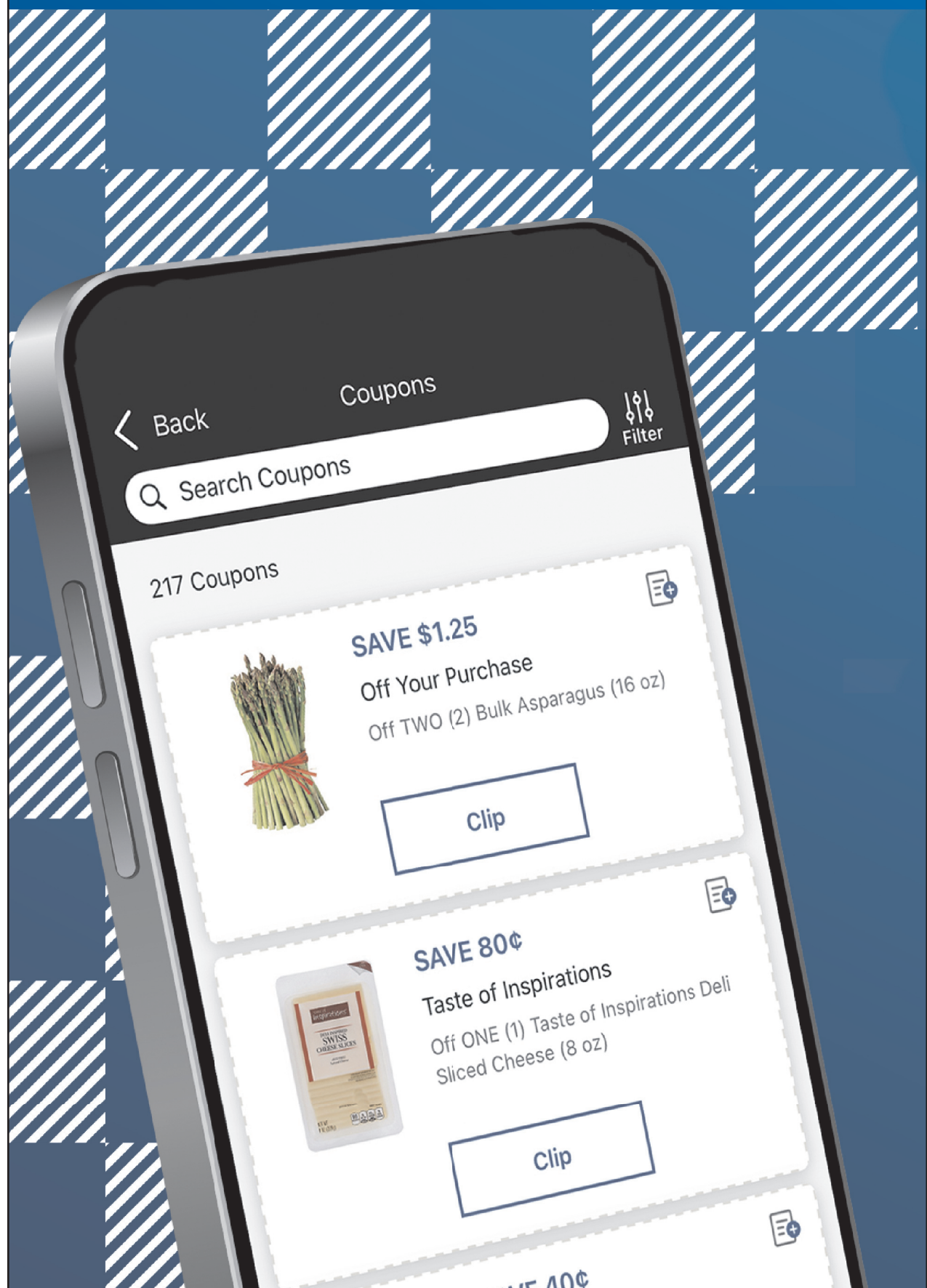
The state and federal reforms, he added, are "very encouraging."

"As pharmacists, we've been screaming about [PBMs]," he said. "Then you start looking at stats of all the pharmacy closures that are happening and all the pharmacy deserts that are being created, and you see all of that points largely to PBM activities."

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Optional Pre-Bid Conference (Virtual): Wednesday, March 18th 2026 at 2pm

Deadline to submit questions: Wednesday March 25th, 2026 at 5 pm

Addendum published responding to questions: Monday March 30th, 2026 by 5 pm

Bid deadline and opening: Bids must be received by Monday April 13th, 2026 at 2 pm. Bids can be mailed to 3816 Latrobe Drive, Charlotte, NC 28211 or hand delivered to 3816 Latrobe Drive, Charlotte, NC 28211.

The project manual, construction documents, bid schedule and additional project details can be found on Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region's website at: www.habitatclregion.org/bids.

Questions can be directed to: bids@habitatclregion.org

REQUEST FOR PREQUALIFICATIONS

Edifice LLC is the Construction Manager at Risk for the CMS Beverly Woods Elementary project in Charlotte, NC. Edifice is seeking to pre-qualify subcontractors. An Outreach and Public Information Session about the project will be conducted on March 24, 2026. More information is available at <http://edificeinc.com/subcontractors/>.

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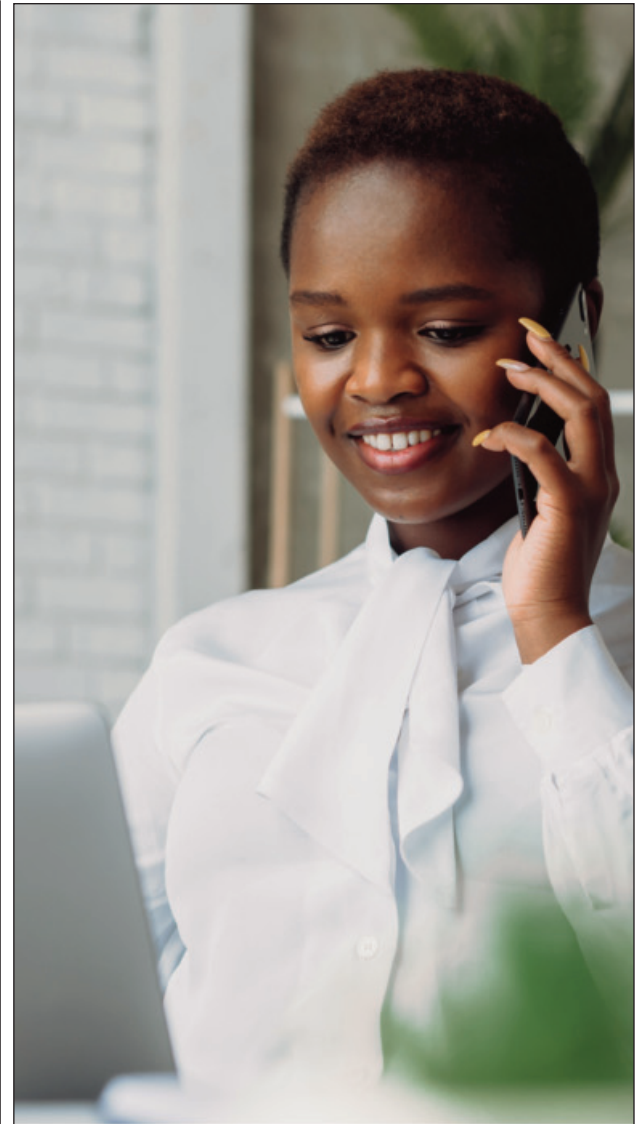
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THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026 PAGE 5B

‘Sinners’ win sets up intrigue for Oscars night

By Jake Coyle
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

After a near awards-season sweep by “One Battle After Another,” “Sinners” won best ensemble at the Screen Actors Guild’s 32nd Actor Awards on Sunday, shaking up the Oscar race and setting up a potential nail-biter finale in two weeks at the Academy Awards.

The guild’s awards, formerly known as the SAG Awards, are one of the most closely watched Oscar precursors. Actors make up the largest slice of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and their choices at the Actor Awards often align.

The victory for Ryan Coogler’s blues-soaked vampire saga showed that it has a strong chance to win at the Oscars, too, despite an almost unblemished run of awards for Paul Thomas Anderson’s “One Battle After Another.” It’s won at the Golden Globes, the Producers Guild Awards, the BAFTAs and the Directors Guild Awards.

But the win Sunday, in a Netflix-streamed ceremony at the Shine Auditorium in Los Angeles, flipped that awards-season script. Writer-director Ryan Coogler, whose “Black Panther” triumphed at the guild’s awards in 2019, became the first filmmaker to steer two ensembles to the guild’s top prize.

“From the bottom of our hearts, to the bottom of your hearts, thank you so much for everything,” said Delroy Lindo, who spoke on behalf of the film’s cast.

Moments earlier, Michael B. Jordan also won best male actor, upsetting the category favorite, Timothée Chalamet, and handing the 39-year-old Jordan the most significant prize of his acclaimed career. Even Jordan looked shocked as the audience rose to its feet and Viola Davis, the award’s presenter, celebrated.

“I wasn’t expecting this at all,” said Jordan, who reflected on starting out as actor before he paused to appreciate the moment. “Yeah, man, this is pretty cool.”

As expected, Jessie Buckley won best female actor for her performance in “Hamnet.” But the other actor races have been harder to call. On Sunday, Sean Penn (who didn’t attend) won best

Please see **SINNERS** | 6B

Oprah delivers Tayari Jones’ ‘Kin’ news face-to-face

By Hillel Itallie
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Oprah Winfrey welcomed her latest book club author, Tayari Jones, in a personal way.

For decades, Winfrey has broken the news to her chosen authors by cold-calling them or popping up on video during Zoom meetings. For Jones and her novel “Kin,” she decided to communicate more directly, showing up at the Penguin Random House offices in midtown Manhattan while Jones was speaking with her publisher.

The two know each other well: Winfrey previously selected Jones’ acclaimed 2018 novel, “An American Marriage,” for her club.

“I’m a two-fer!” exclaimed Jones, who traded high-fives with Winfrey.

“Kin,” published last week, is Jones’ fifth novel. With a narrative starting in the 1950s, it follows the lives of motherless girls from Honeysuckle, Louisiana, and how their stories diverge. In an announcement that included a video link to her visit, Winfrey likened “Kin” to “a trip back home, like a visit with my own ‘kin’ I hadn’t seen in a long while.”

“It is masterful and reminds us of the true bonds we share with family, whether biological or chosen,” Winfrey said.

Her interview with Jones can be seen on the Oprah YouTube channel and other podcast outlets.

“To be selected for Oprah’s Book Club is a writer’s dream, and to be chosen twice is a stunning gift,” Jones, who has called the “An American Marriage” endorsement a turning point in her career, said in a statement. “Oprah knows that our stories will heal us. For decades she has elevated the voices of the world — book by book. Like the old folks say, I’m

Please see **OPRAH** | 6B

« ON THE MARQUEE »



MIDDLE C JAZZ

Guitarist Selwyn Birchwood (Electric Swamp Funkin’ Blues”) plays at Middle C Jazz March 25. Show starts at 7 p.m.

Selwyn Birchwood plays Middle C Jazz

Also: Leela James brings 2B Honest Tour to the Carolina Theatre

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

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

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 7-8

Eric Darius plays Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. Shows 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. March 7; 5 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. March 8. The contemporary jazz saxophonist has a No. 1 single “Too Good to Let Go.” For tickets: middlecjazz.com.

Pat’s Place Child Advocacy Center hosts the 12th annual *Rhythm & Brews* 7-10 p.m. at Venues at Brick Row: Old Town Event Center, 19725 Oak St., Cornelius.

The fundraiser raises awareness and money to support the organization’s mission to help child victims of abuse.

Tickets are \$125 with access to VIP reception or \$100 general admission. The dress code is dressy casual and includes:

- Uptown dueling pianos
- Catering by FS Food Group
- Local craft beers featuring six breweries
- Live and silent auctions

Information: patsplacecac.org.
March 11
Bywater Call plays Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St., at 7 p.m. Tickets available at middlecjazz.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 15

Independent Picture House hosts its annual Oscars Viewing Party & Fundraiser at 4237 Raleigh St.

The party, emceed by “Positively Charlotte” hosts Alicia Quarles and Liza Mahachek, raises money to support the cinema’s operations, programs, and mission to educate and engage the community through film.

Live music, complimentary food and drink, silent auction and trivia are among the festivities.

Information: independentpicturehouse.org.

Emmy and Grammy winner *Braxton Cook* (“Not Everyone Can Go”) plays Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St., 6 p.m. Tickets available at middlecjazz.com.

March 20

Saxophonist *Mike Phillips* plays

Please see **MARQUEE** | 6B

« MOVIE REVIEW »

Edgy psycho-drama drives taut ‘Josephine’

By Dwight Brown
BLACK PRESS USA

Josephine

3.5 stars

She can’t unsee what she’s seen. She’s only 8 years old.

Witnessing a crime is a tough position to be in. That skewed psycho-emotional state gives this family drama heart-wrenching, nail-biting and unsettling moments that just won’t quit.

Writer/director Beth de Araujo has a keen ability to create a unique premise rarely seen in film before. Yes the notion of a lead character haphazardly witnessing a violent incident is age-old, most iconically so in Alfred Hitchcock’s thriller “Rear Window.”

Yes, there are structural similarities. The twist here is that the crime is a violent rape and the witness isn’t an adult. That gives this film an edge. Meticulously, de Araujo keeps the viewer in that dazed headspace as she intuitively directs and coordinates all the integral elements: characters, sets, locations, atmosphere, relationships, circumstances and a dark, bleak aftermath looking for light.

It’s a usual San Francisco morning for Damien (Channing Tatum of “Magic Mike”) and his Asian American daughter Josephine (Mason Reeves). They exercise, chat and go for a jog in Golden Gate Park. This time she gets ahead of him and runs down a trail he misses. She finds herself on a hill overlooking a restroom cottage. Screams are heard. A man (Philip Ettinger) and a woman (Syra McCarthy) are in a struggle. He is violent toward her as he rapes her. Something the woman shouldn’t have to endure. Something a child should never see. But she does. And she may be called to testify in a criminal investigation.

What happens for the next 114 minutes is a regurgitation of this incident and how it affects Josephine, her dad and mom Claire (Gemma Chan, “Crazy Rich Asians”). But mostly Josephine. At her age she can’t digest what she’s seen. Her behavior regresses from happy-go-lucky and inquisitive to bursts of sadness, fear and anger. It’s



SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

Gemma Chan, Mason Reeves and Tatum Channing in “Josephine.”

tragic. The script and director don’t sugarcoat the chain reaction. Rape is a gruesome crime. But in this case, the narrative is following a witness’s journey to recovery and not that of the victim.

Everything on view seems well thought out by de Araujo. Josephine’s pain doesn’t go away and is manifested in her use of adult language, school fights, obsessive behavior and emotional turmoil. It’s like the script listened to child psychologists and added all the symptoms a kid would have after observing something brutal. Adding to the feeling of angst, uncertainty and bewilderment are the loving parents who, try as they may to help her heal, are at a loss. So much seems real, that many audience members will wonder if this storyline is based on a real-life event. It is. A similar incident happened to the filmmaker.

This is an astute, emotionally involving and unsettling crime/drama/thriller, with a heavy emphasis on disrupted family dynamics. Reeves, a child who has never acted before, seems quite adept at making the

witness/survivor seem authentic in her constant distress. Credit de Araujo for masterfully guiding the novice actor. But kudos to Reeves for embodying all the script could imagine.

All the emotions the kid is feeling are on her face, in her actions and the way she speaks. She’s wounded and looking for answers. Josephine to mom: “Were you ever raped?”

The screenplay also sensitively paints a portrait of two formerly confident parents who are now out of their comfort zone, grasping for remedies and totally confounded. Tatum, as the dad who was once well in charge and now lost, frustrated and angry, embodies all the traits of an imperfect man trying to cope. Physically fit and strong-willed but mentally and emotionally inept for what lies ahead. This is one of the most nuanced characters Tatum has ever played. The steadiness that Chan brings as Claire is an anchor to the other two actors, the other two characters. Tight ensemble acting by all, especially supporting actors Ettinger and McCarthy, is restrained or as vol-

Please see **EDGY** | 6B

Marquee: Moonchild at Knight Theatre

Continued from page 5B

2026 Project Preview at Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. Shows 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. March 7. Tickets available at middlec jazz.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: tix.blumenthalarts.org.

March 25

Selwyn Birchwood ("Electric Swamp Funkin' Blues") at Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. at 7 p.m. Tickets: middlec jazz.com.

April 3

Keyboardist Nicolas Cole ("Blue Magic") takes the stage at Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. at 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Tickets: middlec jazz.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

April 11

Two-time Grammy nominee Maysa ("Milestones") returns to Charlotte for two shows at Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. Programs are 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Tickets: middlec jazz.com.

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.

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

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.



Lalah Hathaway co-headlines with October London in a takeover of Owens Auditorium on Oct. 2.

Edgy psycho-drama 'Josephine'

Continued from page 5B

atle as it should be.

The San Francisco setting, with its winding streets, Victorian houses and, of course, Golden Gate Park, is a refreshing location. A city with a more hometown feel than New York or L.A. The clothes San Franciscans wear tend to be more North Face and Patagonia than those worn in NYC, and that's something costume designers Bridget Bruce and Jillian Johns understand.

The sunshine, clouds and interior lighting play into the visuals better because cinematographer Greta Zozula captures that very odd S.F. juxtaposition between sunny days and foggy ones. The action of the crime, the mood of the indoor scenes and the investigation that leads to courtroom drama are

pulled together in the most attention-keeping ways. Nothing seems out of place, including the timing of each scene (editors Anisha Acharya, Nico Leunen, Kyle Reiter). Strong, dissonant string music at the film's end churns as if it's trying to throw off a nightmare (composer Miles Ross).

Adult viewers should expect to feel anxious and disturbed for the duration. The subject matter is heavy in itself. What makes it more intense is that a child is involved. Someone who can't speak for herself, understand her condition or know how this trauma will affect her for the rest of her life.

That brings up a touchy question: How will playing this kind of role affect Reeves for the rest of her life? Even assuming that she's a smart urban kid

who's seen a lot on the streets of San Francisco and the internet, the casting of a child is questionable.

Do responsible parents make an extremely disturbing drama a part of their kid's life? How will acting in this role shade Reeves's being, relationships and notions about sex, violence and crimes against women? It's a troubling thought. Some viewers will wonder if they would ever let their kids do what Reeves's parents did. It's a debate.

This is a riveting family drama about a kid placed in a peculiar situation by providence. She can't forget what happened. And neither can the other witnesses. The audience.

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

'Sinners' win at SAG Awards sets up intrigue for Oscars night

Continued from page 5B

supporting male actor for "One Battle After Another" and Amy Madigan won best supporting female actor for "Weapons."

The 75-year-old Madigan, who had never before been nominated by the guild, was visibly surprised. Partway through her winding and charming acceptance speech, she looked down at the statuette.

"It's like when you were little and you had the Barbie and then you got Ken and whipped down his drawers and went, 'Hey, that's nothing,'" joked Madigan before apologizing for getting distracted.

A posthumous prize for Catherine O'Hara

Catherine O'Hara posthumously won best female actor in a comedy series for her performance as a movie executive in the showbiz satire "The Studio." O'Hara died at the age of 71 on Jan. 30 from a blood clot in the lungs. At the Shine Auditorium in Los Angeles, the crowd stood in a standing ovation for O'Hara after she was announced as the winner.

Seth Rogen, co-creator of "The Studio," accepted the award on her behalf. He recalled a passionate collaborator who would, the night before a scene, invariably send a polite email with suggested rewrites. Rogen said O'Hara "showed that you could be a genius and you could be kind."

"If you have people in your lives who don't know her work," Rogen said, "show them O'Hara dancing to Harry Belafonte in 'Beetlejuice,' show them O'Hara hurting her knee in 'Best in Show' and doing that amazing thing where she hobbles around, and tell the people as they are laughing that that's Catherine O'Hara and we were lucky that we got to live in a world where she so generously shared her talents with us."

A ceremony that skirted politics

The ceremony, presented by the actors guild SAG-AFTRA, were hosted by returning emcee Kristen Bell, who kicked off the show on a light, song-and-dance note de-

spite the war in Iran and entertainment industry upheaval. Sean Astin, SAG-AFTRA president, offered a "a prayer for peace" in his remarks.

The Actor Awards were the biggest Hollywood bash since Paramount reached an agreement to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery for \$111 billion. The merger, which awaits regulatory approval, sent shock waves through Hollywood. Netflix chief executive Ted Sarandos, whose company lost out to Paramount competing bid, walked the red carpet in jeans.

The win for "Sinners" insures that Warner Bros. will head into the Academy Awards with the two clear best picture favorites in it and "One Battle After Another" — an awards-season coup for a studio set to be sold.

Before the ceremony began, the award for best stunt ensemble went to a Paramount release: "Mission: Impossible — The Final Reckoning." Among the TV awards, "The Studio" won for comedy series and "The Pitt" won for drama series. Individual winners included Keri Russell ("The Diplomat"), Rogen ("The Studio"), Michelle Williams ("Dying for Sex"), Owen Cooper ("Adolescence") and Noah Wyle ("The Pitt").

A Harrison Ford tribute

Harrison Ford was honored with the SAG-AFTRA Life Achievement Award, a prize presented with warm sarcasm by Woody Harrelson. The 83-year-old actor said he was humbled.

"I'm in a room with actors, many of whom are here because they've been nominated to receive a prize for their amazing work, while I'm here to receive a prize for being alive," said Ford, who called it "the half point" of his career.

Ford teared up for much of his speech, reflecting on a career that he noted was "not an overnight success." He called the award "very encouraging."

"I'm indeed a lucky guy," said Ford. "Lucky to have found my people. Lucky to have work that challenges me. Lucky to still be doing it."

Oprah delivers news to 'Kin' author

Continued from page 5B

honor to be one in that number."

The announcement does not mention Winfrey's partnership with Star-

bucks, its stores the setting for interviews since "Oprah's Book Club: Presented by Starbucks" was launched in 2024. Spokespeople for Starbucks and

Winfrey confirmed the partnership ended late in 2025, but declined comment on why. Winfrey previously had a multiyear deal with Apple TV+.

MOVIE REVIEW

Doctors brave chaos in Gaza

By Dwight Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

American Doctor

3 stars

You know you're brave when you go into Gaza in 2025, in the middle of a war with mass casualties, and try to save lives.

That was the calling of three American doctors of different ethnic backgrounds who were willing to risk their safety to bring care to those in need: Thayer Ahmad is an emergency medicine physician of Palestinian descent based in Chicago. Mark Perlmutter is an orthopedic surgeon from North Carolina, a Jewish-American. And Dr. Feroze Sidhwa is an American trauma and critical care surgeon based in Stockton, California whose family is from Pakistan.

They're doctors by profession, humanitarians by calling. All spend quality time at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, the largest healthcare center on the southern Gaza Strip.

Director Poh Si Teng and a courageous camera crew (Ibrahim Al-Otla, Chris Renteria, Arthur Nazaryan and Ramzy Haddad) record their mission abroad and their speeches, conversations and pleas in The States. The team's use of natural lighting, perfect framing and smart composition almost seems intuitive.

As a team they capture candid and profound thoughts. Personal viewpoints: "I'm a doctor who doesn't want to see babies who look like my baby killed anymore." Survivor's

guilt: "When you leave Gaza you feel like you have no right to leave. You feel shame." Outrage from Mark, who says his father provided aid in death camps during WWII, may be the most exacting: "... Stop grabbing land from people who've lived there for a millennium... Evil of Zionism...Cruelty."

Wherever they go, whatever they see is captured on film—from the corridors of Nasser Hospital, one of the last functioning medical centers in Gaza, to operating and triage rooms filled with the wounded. The images are harrowing: maimed children, rows of bodies, the relentless aftermath of bombardment.

Viewers are confronted with the same chaos the doctors endured — bombs exploding nearby as they worked amid the rubble of collapsed homes, apartment buildings and stores. Yet even that proximity to danger cannot equal the suffering experienced daily by Gazans themselves.

The doctors carry those memories with them: the lives they saved, the ones they couldn't, the patients they left behind and those who didn't survive.

Editors Christopher White and Ema Ryan Yamazaki trim the footage down to a succinct 91 minutes. Composer Suad Bushnaq creates the right kind of score for a documentary that's so filled with agony, rage, love and bravery. The subject of the Israeli-Hamas war, its be-

ginning, middle, end and aftermath, is a debate that will rage for decades. Films like this give the conflict personal perspectives — outsiders' observations.

The Charlotte Post

Women's History Month Event

Book Talk



March 28, 2026
6:00pm

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Charlotte, NC 28269

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