

Life!

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026 SECTION B

Colon cancer doesn't care how old you are

By Cameron Williams
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Colorectal cancer isn't exclusive to the elderly. New studies from the American Cancer Society indicate rates of are moving in two different directions. The disease continues to decline in older adults while rates are rapidly rising in people 65 and younger.

The triennial report, Colorectal Cancer Studies, 2026 found that a large reason for these rates rising is due to cancers in the distal colon — the last section adjacent to the rectum. As a result, rectal cancer makes up nearly 33% of all colorectal cancer diagnoses.

"After decades of progress, the risk of dying from colorectal cancer is climbing in younger men and women, confirming a real uptick in disease because of something we're doing or some other exposure," said Rebecca Siegel, senior scientific director, surveillance research at the American Cancer Society and lead author of the report. "We need to not only significantly increase research efforts to understand the cause but also circumvent these deaths through earlier detection by educating clinicians and the general public, especially knowing the five-year survival for early disease is more than 90%."

The report indicates that colorectal cancer is the third most common type in both men and women in the United States and second leading cause of cancer-related death. For adults under 50 years of age, it is now the No. 1 cause of cancer-related mor-

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« BLACK BRILLIANCE »



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SANTA BARBARA

South Carolina native Benjamin Mays was mentor to Martin Luther King Jr. during his tenure as president of Morehouse College.

'Spiritual mentor' to MLK: SC native Benjamin Mays

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Described by Martin Luther King Jr., as his "spiritual mentor," Benjamin Mays (1894-1984) was president of Morehouse College from 1940 to 1967.

Mays was born in Epworth, South Carolina to former slaves Hezekiah and Louvenia Carter. After briefly attending Virginia Union University, Mays transferred to Bates College in Maine, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1920. The following year he was ordained as a Baptist minister. After earning his master's and PhD degrees from the University of Chicago, Mays served as dean of the School of Religion at Howard University from 1934 to 1940.

After becoming Morehouse president, Mays delivered weekly addresses at the college's chapel services. King often followed Mays to his office after those sessions to discuss theology and current events. Mays visited King and his parents at their home and became a regular guest at the family's

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« RIDES »

Lincoln's flagship Nautilus SUV is spacious, luxurious and very pricey

By Winfred Cross
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Lincoln is still Ford Motor Company's luxury brand, but it has struggled recently.

Once known for stately, elegant sedans, Lincoln now sells only SUVs and crossovers. That's not a bad thing but it puts a lot of pressure on the company because every company is selling such vehicles. Lincoln has updated its fleet to give the company its best chance of survival.

The 2026 Lincoln Nautilus is leading the way. Redesigned in 2024, it has become the brand's top seller. It sits above the smaller Corsair but right

behind the larger Aviator. The Nautilus seats five comfortably and can carry a good bit of their junk.

The Nautilus comes in three flavors: Premiere, Reserve and Black Label. The vehicle continues to be updated after being introduced in '24. Lincoln has improved the communications technology this year.

Also, Blue Cruise 1.5 — the company's hands-free driving program — now allows the car to pass a slower car without driver input. The Jet appearance package is now available on all models.

My test car was the Black Label version, which is dressed to the nines with the Jet package. It comes

with a black grille with a light bar and illuminated Lincoln logo. Bumpers are body colored and the 22-inch wheels are blackout. The vehicle is 85.4 inches wide, 193.2 inches long and 68.2 inches tall.

The interior is large enough to hold five adults comfortably but four would find the cabin more spacious. The interior is appointed with materials that feel ultra upscale. The Aurora Venetian leather seats are complimented with wood and aluminum finishings. The gear selector is a piano key configuration.

The dash is two screens that equal 48 inches across — A pillar to A pillar. These

screens display information about the car's functions. It can be configured to your liking. Below is an 11.1-inch center stack touch screen which controls, climate, some seat functions and either Apple CarPlay or Android Auto. All the screens ave vivid displays this crisp graphics.

When parked, you can access Rejuvenate which will give you a spa-like experience including a massage from the seats.

Speaking of the seats, they are maybe the most comfortable in the industry. If you can't find a comfortable seating position, I see a chiropractor in your future. All seats are heated



LINCOLN MOTOR CO

The 2026 Lincoln Nautilus has a large interior, stellar package of standard equipment and a big price tag.

and cooled. The rear middle seat will be the most uncomfortable but even that isn't bad.

This version of the Nautilus is powered by a 2.0-liter turbocharged engine with a

separate electric motor. It's a hybrid with total output rated at 310 horsepower and 295 pounds-feet of torque. The continuously variable transmission

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ANASTASE MARAGOS | UNSPLASH

Young men are more obsessed with body imagery and look to bulk up through weight training or other means.

Young men struggle with body image, too

Often overlooked, they also struggle with obsessive need to bulk up

By Rachel Moody

UNC MEDIA HUB

In his off-campus apartment kitchen, UNC-Chapel Hill sophomore Tate Mannell adds butter in a pan.

He lets it melt and sizzle before adding in country-style beef ribs. For this former lacrosse player, the primary focus of every meal is protein. He pairs the beef with a cup of rice and some Japanese barbecue sauce, one of his go-to dinners to make. Mannell started cooking for himself when he was 14, the same age he started obsessing over his body size.

Unlike with anorexia, Mannell wanted to get bigger rather than smaller. As with many teenage boys, that goal came from sports. Getting hit by players older and bigger on the field, as well as jokes from teammates, fueled his negative body image.

"It's your friends, so it's kind of funny. But it still subconsciously

ate at me," Mannell said. "Like I'd be in the gym or eating not wanting to finish a meal and I'll just think of, like, 'Oh they called you twig, they called you skinny, they called you small. Oh, I'm gonna show them.'"

When it comes to concerns about eating disorders and body image, boys and men are often overlooked. However, some struggle with an obsession over gaining muscle and bulking up. Research shows that nearly a third of teen boys in the U.S. report trying to gain weight and about a quarter report taking supplements or steroids or eating more food.

Mannell started eating as much as possible and taking creatine workout supplements. The now 20-year-old recalls gaining 40 pounds in just two months, but it wasn't sustainable. Mannell said he ate until he felt like throwing up every meal, and after that feeling went away, he would do it all

over again. At his peak during junior year of high school he was working out two to four hours every single day, often weightlifting in addition to lacrosse.

Muscle dysmorphia, also known as bigorexia, is a form of body dysmorphic disorder. Individuals continually feel like they aren't muscular enough, regardless of how they look.

While he's never been diagnosed with body dysmorphic disorder, Mannell said he felt like 150 pounds even though he weighed 210.

"It never affected my life, though. I never was depressed because of my body image. It was just like 'dang! I need to lock in, or I need to do this,'" Mannell said. "It's hard to say no because I definitely was like 'oh I'm small, I hate myself' in high school."

Although those with eating disorders are largely stereotyped as

Please see **YOUNG** | 2B

What you should stop doing to your hair

By Christian Carter

BLACKDOCTORS

For some, Black hair is an expression of identity and culture.

It's a representation of history and carries a deep emotional significance. Even though Black hair is a symbol of empowerment, resistance, and celebration, it has also been used as a tool of oppression. Historically, for some, Black hair has carried a profound symbolism. Different types of hairstyles like cornrows, dreadlocks, twists, afros, bantu knots, and more all have historic connections to Black pride, culture, religion, and history.

For example, in ancient African communities, hair was more than just style. Throughout the continent, a person's hairstyle could tell you a lot about who they were and where they came from. Braids and other intricate hairstyles were historically worn to signify tribal identification,

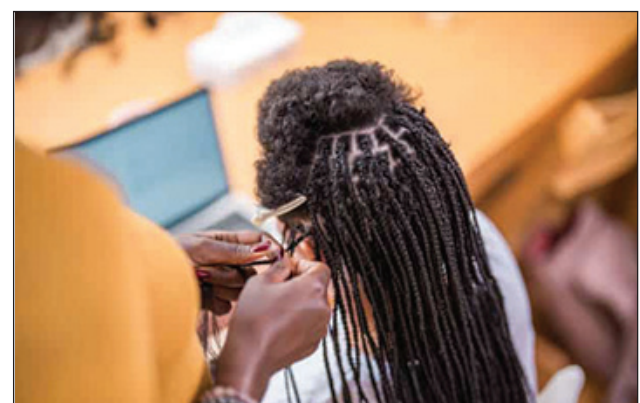
marital status, age, religion, wealth, and rank in society.

During the enslavement of Black people, braids (particularly cornrows) were used as a tool for the enslaved to escape, as cornrows were used as a map to plan out escape routes. Fast forward to the Black Power Movement, when the natural afro became a popular statement of power, pride, resistance, and a way to reclaim roots.

Black hair care has also gone through its own renaissance with haircare products popping up left and right. But with so many products and advice in the market, it's hard to tell which one we should use or leave alone.

Here are six things to stop doing to your hair. If you know what to stop doing, then you can have an idea what you should start doing.

1. Excessively manipulating hair with harsh chemi-



BLACKDOCTOR.ORG

Natural hairstyles, when done without chemicals or synthetic colors, results in healthier outcomes.

cals

Hair care products can have a ton of hard-to-pronounce ingredients in them. Here are a few that you need to be leary of and test them on your own hair.

Benzene

This is a toluene, which can damage the respiratory system, irritate the skin, and cause developmental damage in fetuses. See

"Toluene" for more information.

Diethanolamine (DEA) Triethanolamine (TEA)

These stabilize the pH of hair products and are common allergens and eye irritants.

Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde is another preservative and extremely irritating to the skin and eyes. It is a known animal

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Young men struggle with body image, too

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women, a 2019 U.S. study shows that about a third are men. But that bias makes them less likely to seek treatment and be diagnosed. Chantal Gil, the clinical director of the Duke Center for Eating Disorders, said individuals don't need to be diagnosed before seeking out help and treatment.

"We don't want to place you in a box, and we don't want to create a barrier by saying you need this label to get it because I think some people think they're not sick enough," she said. "If it's distressing, we want to help you."

Gil also said those with an eating disorder or body dysmorphic disorder can seem healthy, despite havoc in their minds and bodies.

Zach Harding, a bodybuilder and personal trainer at Gold's Gym Chapel Hill, developed the eating disorder anorexia when he was 18 years old. His weight got as low as 100 pounds before he discovered weightlifting. He started eating more and returned to a normal weight, but said it was still all with the aim of improving his appearance.

"I was in quote, unquote good health," Harding said. "But mentally, I was still in that same spot of it was all about how I looked."

Although exercise is a common compulsive behavior in those with bigorexia, Gil still encourages it for her patients because she said it's all about intention.

"If you're going to the gym because it makes you feel good and body movement makes you feel good and you really enjoy yoga, you enjoy running, you enjoy weightlifting; amazing. We want that for you," she said. "Now, it gets blurry when people start to think, 'I want to change my body, and I want to do it in a certain way.' And then it can become really unhealthy when it becomes obsessive."

When he works with clients, Harding makes sure to focus on how their body feels and performs rather than how it looks — a lesson he had to learn himself.

Bodybuilding trophies sprawl across

Harding's desk. Although he hasn't stopped weightlifting and he still has had some bad days over the past two years, he says he's been at his best mentally.

"The gym is great, but not everything relies on this. How are your relationships with yourself, with other people around you, with your family, friends, any loved ones that you have that you care about?" Harding said. "'Cause very quickly, fitness can be obsessive. And then your relationships start to fall apart too."

One of the signs someone is struggling with body dysmorphic disorder or an eating disorder is isolating themselves.

Wehazit Mussie, a UNC senior and representative for a university organization dedicated to body liberation and dismantling diet culture, said Embody Carolina aims to fight that isolation with community.

"If they are suffering from that or disordered eating, just coming together and being in this space where there's other people who do care about similar issues and you see that there's other people struggling with it, really does make you feel less alone," Mussie said.

Embody Carolina hopes to spread eating disorder education across campus. Gil said the stressful transition to college creates higher risk for an eating disorder. But for Mannell, coming to UNC-CH and leaving lacrosse behind helped ease his obsession.

He said that in high school, being athletic made him cool, but people at UNC care more about being nice and funny, which helped him focus less on his body image. At this point, Mannell said he's accepted what he looks like. He still struggles to take rest days from the gym, watches his food, and takes creatine pre-workout supplements, but he's far removed from just a few years ago.

"I'll do probably a half scoop of pre-workout. In high school, it was like, oh dude, double scoop, 600 milligrams of caffeine," Mannell said. "But, you know, I like my heart. I don't want to have a young death, so I've cut it back a bit. There's no need for that."

Colorectal cancer doesn't care how old you are — or aren't

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tality. In 2026 alone, an estimated 158,850 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed, and 55,230 people are expected to die due to the disease. The figure includes more than 200 new diagnoses a day in people younger than 65 years old.

In North Carolina, an estimated 5,050 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed, and 1,900 people will die from the disease in 2026.

Risk factors and screening

According to researchers, over half of colorectal cancers can be attributed to modifiable risk factors such as smoking, unhealthy diets, alcohol consumption, inactivity and obesity. Most are preventable and should be to lower the risk of developing the disease.

Additional cases and deaths are pre-

ventable through appropriate screening and access to high-quality treatment. Scientists found that half of people diagnosed before 50 are between 45-49 years and eligible for screening. Screening prevalence in this age group is just 37%, and three-in-four colorectal cancers in adults younger than 50 years are diagnosed at an advanced stage.

"These findings further underscore that colorectal cancer is worsening among younger generations and highlight the immediate need for eligible adults to begin screening at the recommended age of 45," said Dr. William Dahut, chief scientific officer at the American Cancer Society. "The report also shines a light on the crucial importance of continued funding for research to help discover new therapies to treat the disease and advance patient care."

SC native Benjamin Mays was 'spiritual mentor' to MLK Jr.

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Sunday night dinners.

According to King, his ministerial aspirations were deeply influenced by Mays and Morehouse professor George Kelsey.

"I could see in their lives the ideal of what I wanted a minister to be," King said in a 1956 interview. Mays said that the King he met at Morehouse was "mature beyond his years." Mays also had a lasting influence on King's intellectual life.

In "Mastering Our Fears," a sermon written nine years after King graduated from Morehouse, he drew on a 1946 newspaper column Mays wrote for the Pittsburgh Courier, which argued that Black and white people must overcome their mutual fears to improve race relations.

When the Montgomery, Alabama, police indicted over 80 boycott leaders to stop the boycott in 1956, King decided that he should remain involved in

the protest, even against the wishes of his father. While the senior King assembled acquaintances to dissuade the younger from continuing to lead the boycott, it was Mays who heard King's "unspoken plea" and strongly defended his position.

Morehouse awarded King an honorary degree in 1957, and Mays, reflecting upon King's role in the bus boycott, glowingly referred to him as a man "more courageous in a righteous struggle than most men can ever be, living a faith that most men preach about and never experience."

Mays continued to support King throughout his life, delivering the benediction at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and endorsing King's decision to speak out against the Vietnam War in 1967.

After King's assassination, Mays eulogized him

on the Morehouse campus by detailing King's consistent faith in nonviolence: "Here was a man who believed with all his might that the pursuit of violence at any time is ethically and morally wrong; that God and the moral weight of the universe are against it; that violence is self-defeating; and that only love and forgiveness can break the vicious circle of revenge."

Mays remained active throughout the 1970s, becoming the first Black president of the Atlanta Board of Education as well as serving on the Advisory Council of the Peace Corps, the board of directors of the United Negro College Fund, and the board of the National Commission for UNESCO.

By the time of his death in 1984, Mays had received 28 honorary degrees and the Spingarn Medal, the highest honor awarded by the NAACP.

Lincoln's flagship packs on the luxury and expense

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sends power to all four wheels. You can get 30 miles per gallon overall with this setup while being able to out-accelerate the gas-powered models with no problem.

Indeed, the hybrid engine give you ample power to navigate traffic with ease. Passing isn't a problem nor is getting up to highway speeds leaving an entry ramp. The engine doesn't make good noises like a dead growl, but it never gets overly raucous. It builds power smoothly and doesn't hesitate when pressed.

The ride is firm but comfortable. Bumps are soaked up with authority, providing a luxurious, quiet ride

Blue Cruise allows you to do hands free driving. I used it sparingly. I have a friend with a Tesla who finds its hands-free driving program the best thing since sliced bread. I'm not sold yet.

Lincoln's system works fine but I'm nervous about system failure on any of these programs. It worked better than expected but I came away feeling like what's

the point? Just drive yourself.

I'm convinced this Nautilus is all it should be. The Revel 28-speaker sound system is absolutely stunning. The four-year/50,000-mile comprehensive warranty is impressive. Blue Cruise and the communication package are thrown in for four years. Car washes are also free.

The price may be the deal-breaker. My test car cost \$85,875. You could go with the Premiere for a lot less money and add a few option packages to get a lot. Standard equipment is plentiful.

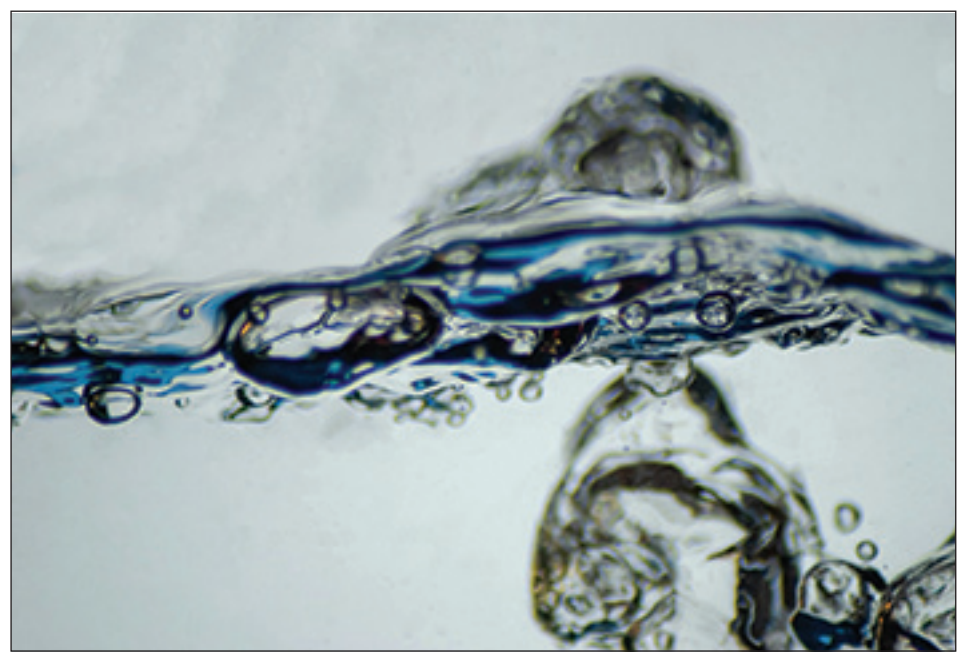
If you want to feel like money, then by all means go Black Label.

Pros:

- Updates continue to add luxury
- Powerful hybrid engine
- 48-inch screen is impressive
- Revel sound system
- Blue Cruise
- Quiet, comfortable ride
- Panoramic sunroof

Cons:

- Sky-high price



UNSPASH

Oral health proponents want the federal government to reevaluate research on potential health risks of fluoride in drinking water.

Oral health advocates urge EPA to use 'gold standard science'

By Anne Blythe

NORTH CAROLINA HEALTH NEWS

When Lee Zeldin, head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, announced almost 10 months ago that the federal regulator would reevaluate research on potential health risks of fluoride in drinking water, he said "sound science" would be used to "advance our mission of protecting human and health and the environment."

With the window on a key commenting period for that review closed on Feb. 27, dental organizations and oral health advocates worry that the agency will give outsized weight to studies that will deliver their desired outcome instead of relying on standard scientific practices and findings that will stand up to rigorous peer review.

"The EPA is assessing the toxicity of fluoride in drinking water, and recently announced they are using a Gold Standard Science approach and had a call for public comment," Tim Wright, professor in pediatric dentistry at the UNC Chapel Hill Adams School of Dentistry and editor in chief of the Journal of the American Dental Association, wrote in an email to NC Health News. "The toxicity review appears to have already been completed and does not include the most recent studies related to this topic, calling into question the scientific validity of any conclusions from the EPA review."

When Zeldin announced the reevaluation, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was by the EPA administrator's side at an event in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Kennedy, an environmental lawyer, has been a polarizing figure during his first year leading key national public health agencies.

Under his leadership, federal childhood vaccine recommendations have been upended and weakened; senior leaders at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the

U.S. Food and Drug Administration and on advisory commissions have been forced out; and hundreds of millions of dollars once directed toward vaccine research projects have been scaled back or redirected.

Now, this fluoride review will be delivered during a period of heightened regulatory uncertainty, intense debate about science and concerns over an ideological shift in public health policy under the administration of President Donald Trump.

"Every American should be able to count on safe, healthy drinking water when they pour a glass to drink or use it to cook a meal, especially for a child," Zeldin said Jan. 22. "The Trump EPA is working in lockstep with Secretary Kennedy and following gold standard science to guide our next steps to protect drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act."

Omission of research

In late 2024, even before Trump appointed Kennedy to his cabinet, the head of the "Make America Healthy Again," or MAHA movement, shared his thoughts about fluoride in a social media post that has gained more than 24 million views. On Nov. 2, 2024, Kennedy characterized the mineral that occurs naturally in water, soil and plants as "an industrial waste associated with arthritis, bone fractures, bone cancer, IQ loss, neurodevelopmental disorders, and thyroid disease."

Many of the same oral health advocates and organizations that raised red flags then about Kennedy's fluoride characterization are now questioning how reliable and scientifically grounded the EPA re-assessment of potential health risks will be.

They point to a goal stated in the executive summary of the Fluoride Human Health Toxicity Assessment: Preliminary Assessment Plan and Literature Survey posted by the EPA in January and the intentional omission of research underscoring ad-

vantageous public health outcomes of fluoridation.

"The new EPA toxicity assessment will focus on the potential harmful health effects of fluoride exposure and will not consider beneficial effects such as dental caries prevention," the summary states.

Achievement under fire

Local municipalities and states began adding fluoride to water in the 1940s to combat high rates of tooth decay. Researchers in the previous decade had discovered that people in areas that naturally had higher fluoride levels in their water had much lower levels of tooth decay.

In 1945 Grand Rapids, Michigan, was the first city to add fluoride to its public water supply, starting a practice that the CDC described as one of the top 10 public health achievements of the 20th century. A study launched by the U.S. Surgeon General and taken over by the National Institute of Dental Health found that by 1956, the tooth decay rate for Grand Rapids children born after the water was fluoridated had dropped by more than 60%.

There were fluoridation critics at the time, and despite bodies of scientific research showing the benefits over time, some of that resistance continues today.

Most North Carolina households that are hooked up to public water systems have fluoride in their drinking water. CDC data compiled by the United Health Foundation shows that in 2022 roughly 88% of the North Carolina population was served by fluoridated community water systems.

Some communities across the state, however, have been reconsidering whether adding fluoride is as significant a public health boon as was heralded by the CDC.

Lincoln and Union county elected officials have voted to ban the addition of fluoride to their public water supplies. But last April, the Belmont City Council rejected a pro-

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What Black people should stop doing to their hair

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carcinogen and may increase cancer risk for humans as well. Keep in mind that certain preservatives release formaldehyde. So, by extension, also look out for:

- Diazolidinyl urea
- DMDM hydantoin
- Glyoxal
- Imidazolidinyl urea
- Polyoxymethylene urea
- Quaternium-15
- Sodium hydroxymethylglycinate

Fragrance
This is a catch-all ingredient. If the manufacturer put this on the bottle, it means they don't want to tell you what else is in the product (and Fragrance is often a term used to hide Phthalates as an ingredient.)

Isopropyl alcohol
This does its job of stripping away oils from your scalp a little too well, leaving your hair dry and brittle. Ethanol, ethyl, isopropanol, propyl, and SD alcohol are also known to do this.

Methylisothiazolinone
A common preservative in hair products, linked to lung toxicity, allergic reactions, and possible neurotoxicity.

Mineral oil and petroleum

These are petroleum products that coat your hair and scalp, but can also suffocate them. These ingredients can cause acne, hindered skin respiration, imbalanced oil levels in your scalp, and skin irritation.

Parabens
Parabens are xenoestrogens, included in shampoos as a preservative. They can disrupt hormones and even pose a cancer risk. You'll see them labeled on hair products as propylparaben, benzylparaben, etc.

Phthalates
These were banned from use in toy manufacturing in California, 2009, because of links between them and cancer. However, they are still often used in hair products. They are often a hidden ingredient in Fragrance.

Retinol
This is very common in skin and beauty products but has potential associations with developmental and reproductive toxicity. While it is usually safe to use, it might not be safe to use during pregnancy.

Retinyl palmitate
Considered a gentler version of retinol, but it is often added to personal care products in greater concentrations than retinol in order to be effective.

It still has potential associations with developmental and reproductive toxicity, and has been found to enhance photo-

carcinogenicity (heightening the risk of cancer when exposed to UV rays.)

Sulfates
Sulfates strip oil and dirt out of your hair so well, they deplete the naturally produced sebum that moisturizes your hair. While sulfates can be beneficial for hair that gets oily quickly or has looser curls, they're usually a no-no for naturally curly hair.

Common sulfates: Sodium lauryl sulfate, sodium laureth sulfate, ammonium lauryl sulfate

Synthetic colors
Synthetic colors such as D&C Red 27 or FD&C Blue 1, are derived from petroleum or coal sources. These synthetic colors are suspected to be carcinogenic, skin irritants, and linked to ADHD in children.

The European Union has banned the use of these ingredients, which is a big red flag.

2. Excessive heat styling
Applying heat to Black hair, while possible, requires extreme caution as it can easily damage the hair due to its naturally delicate structure. This includes flat ironing or curling irons. If you're unsure, consult a professional stylist familiar with styling Black hair.

Key points to remember when applying heat to Black hair:

Use heat protectant
Always apply a heat protectant spray or serum before styling with heat tools to create a barrier against damage.

Lower heat settings
Opt for lower heat settings on your styling tools, as high temperatures can severely damage Black hair.

Section hair properly
Divide your hair into small sections to ensure even heat distribution and prevent excessive heat exposure to any one area.

Minimize styling time:
Limit the amount of time you spend styling with heat tools to reduce potential damage.

Consider hair type
Different textures within Black hair may require different heat settings and styling techniques

3. Tight hairstyles without proper care.
Pulling hair too tightly into braids, ponytails, or buns without considering the tension on the scalp can cause hair loss.

When going into any braids, weaves, twists, wigs, etc. for an extended amount of time with dry damaged hair you will come out of those styles with guess what? Dry, damaged hair.

Before any alternative styling involving the use of extension hair, your hair

should be clean and deep conditioned with a quality moisturizing conditioner (if you think your hair needs a protein treatment before installation, it is not the time for a "protective" style).

Alternative styles are best suited for those whose hair is in a healthy, hydrated state. Those with weak, thirsty, brittle or damaged hair should avoid these styling options at all costs.

4. Ignoring moisture needs.

Black hair naturally tends to be drier, so neglecting to use moisturizing products regularly can lead to dryness and breakage.

Remember, hydrated hair is protected hair.

According to hair experts, "Hydrated hair, which is when hair is the strongest, is when the hair is best protected." Acquiring hydrated hair requires

a thorough regimen of cleansing and conditioning with water-soluble, water-based products with botanically-based ingredients.

Using traditional "protective" styling as a means of protecting your hair from the elements won't matter if you're not keeping your hair hydrated regularly.

5. Comparing your hair routine to others.

This includes some of the hair influencers and celebrities you follow. Pay close attention to those celebrities that say you "have to use this" or "this is the only product we should use..." Every person's hair is different—even if you fall into the 4C or 4A or whatever hair texture category you fall into. Like many things in life, what may work for you may not work for the next person. So it's up to you to decide.

This life of comparison doesn't just happen over-

night. It creeps up on you after a while of studying and liking a person's hair or hairstyle without acknowledging the unique beauty of your own.

Comparing your hair or yourself is just bad anyway. It can lead to:

Low self-esteem: Comparing yourself to others can make you feel inadequate or "less than".

Anxiety, depression, and chronic stress: Comparing yourself to others can lead to a cycle of negative self-talk, which can make it harder to focus on your strengths.

Unhappiness: Comparing yourself to others can make you feel unhappy.

6. Cancelling products just because someone else doesn't like them.

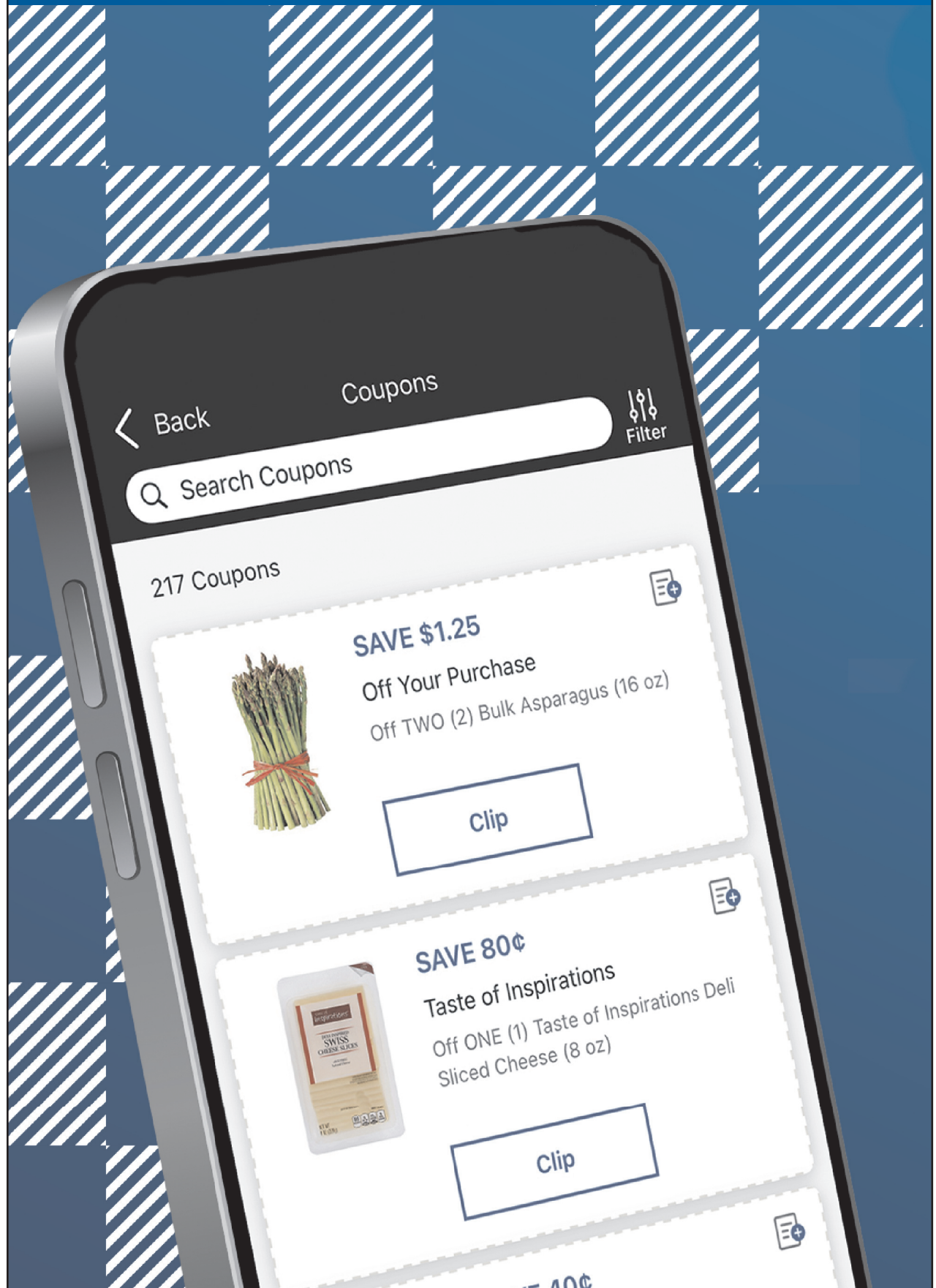
"You still using that? We canceled them!" is what one of my friends said to me when I started to pull out a jar of popular edge

gel when we were getting ready to go out. I then proceeded to ask her why "we" canceled them and she couldn't give a definitive reason why. She used language like, "I heard..." and "somebody told me..." but she never actually had a real reason that I could trace back.

Sometimes, we as people need to be more investigative with our own information and research it with credible sources and then make a decision for ourselves, not just based on what someone heard. There could be a number of reasons for negative press on a product including competition, the company may be getting ready to go public, or even a potential sell to a major corporation. Either way, it's good to do your own research before you flat-out stop using something that has been good for you.

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Oral health advocates urge use of science

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posed fluoride ban, highlighting debate that has gone on for decades.

Dueling interpretations

Modern fluoridation critics spotlight an August 2024 National Toxicology Program monograph that concluded "with moderate confidence" that higher fluoride exposure, specifically 1.5 milligrams per liter and above, is associated with lower IQ in children. That level, though, is more than double the optimal 0.7 milligrams per liter concentration recommended for U.S. community water fluoridation.

Detractors of the monograph highlight that 17 of the 19 studies considered were performed in China, Mexico, India and Iran, where fluoridation levels tend to be higher than those in the United States.

Although state and local governments primarily determine fluoridation in community water systems, the EPA sets mandatory maximum safety standards to protect against potential health risks. A change in those standards could pose significant legal, operational and public health challenges.

In January, the American Dental Association, which represents nearly 160,000 dentists across the country, urged the EPA to use "peer-reviewed, scientifically tested evidence" in its review process.

"As the EPA reviews the science under the Safe Drinking Water Act, we urge Administrator Zeldin and his team to implement an objective, evidence-based process utilizing all the latest peer-reviewed, valid and reproducible research on IQ and neurocognition to reach an objective conclusion," Richard Rosato, a New Hampshire dentist and the association's president, said in a statement. "The ADA and leading scientific experts continue to affirm that optimally fluoridated water is a proven, safe, and effective way to protect the public's oral health."

The association stated that the EPA's announcement last year to reconsider the health impacts of community water fluoridation initially "was encouraging."



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« ON THE MARQUEE »

Mike Phillips on saxophone at Middle C

By Herbert L. White
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The latest events from stage, screen and exhibits in Charlotte:

March 20

Saxophonist Mike Phillips plays 2026 Project Preview at Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. 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.

You can watch the entire feature-length film as the symphony performs the score live.

Tickets: tix.blumenthalarts.org.

March 26

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

March 27-29

Charlotte Symphony Orchestra presents Dvořák's "New World." Music director Kwamé Ryan leads the Orchestra in Dvořák's tribute to his Czech homeland and the musical influences he found in America.

Soprano Janai Brugger adds vocals for works exploring themes of home, nostalgia, and longing, including "The Trees on the Mountain" from Floyd's Susannah and Barber's Knoxville: Summer of 1915.

The program starts at 7:30 p.m. on March 27 and March 28 and 3 p.m. on March 29.

Please see **HISTORIAN** | 6B

« MOVIE REVIEW »

Ryan Gosling answers the call in 'Project Hail Mary'

By Dwight Brown
BLACK PRESS USA

Project Hail Mary

3 stars

He's a space cowboy.

Well, not exactly. He's an eighth-grade science teacher who's lost in space.

If you're going to strand an audience in the heavens above with a thespian, many would choose Ryan Gosling. Why? He's got charm to spare ("La La Land"). He's self-effacing ("Barbie"). Has a great sense of humor ("Step Brothers"). And can command the screen ("Half Nelson").

So, when author Andy Weir, who wrote "The Martian," finished his new book "Project Hail Mary," he got Gosling attached to the project. The rest is "his story." Screenwriter Drew Goddard ("The Martian") wrote a hefty, long-winded screenplay that directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller ("Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse") brought to the screen. Clocking in at 156 minutes, not every single second seems accounted for (editor Joel Negron, "Thor: Ragnarok"). Some stretches in space drag and could have used a menacing meteor shower or another bolt of energy. Also, the film has trouble finding its rightful ending. Yet still, nearly every frame carries charm—sweetness, vibrancy or urgency.

Ryland Grace (Gosling) wakes up in a spaceship, bewildered. What the hell? All on board are dead. It's just him. Grace wonders, "I can't be the only one here!" Why is this happening and where is he? That's a good question for Grace and his fellow passengers—the audience.

Slowly he pulls himself together and unravels his precarious situation in bits and pieces. For those along for the ride in theater seats, the details unfold gradually, through flashbacks. Not cryptic ones. Clear recollections that set the story, characters and mission in place while emphasizing what's at stake.

As Grace's journey continues, his vessel comes in contact with another. Or at least some other object. A connection is made. Eventually, a mysterious being asserts itself, giving Earth's representative an opportunity to engage. Grace calls on all his people skills to break the ice with someone/something that isn't human.

As with any introduction, there's an exchange of names, IDing each other and a lot of staring. It's hard to describe the being, and anyway, its physicality is not important. Discovering why each is

Please see **RYAN** | 6B



PBS NC

Cyanca, who grew up in Smithfield, North Carolina, now calls Charlotte home.

Small town roots powers Cyanca's big-time sound

From Smithfield to Charlotte, North Carolina native a rising neo-soul star

By Nikya Hightower

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Growing up rural shaped Cyanca's neo-soul sound.

The Charlotte-based vocalist, who is profiled on the PBS NC series "Shaped by Sound" on April 9, immediately thought of her roots in Smithfield, North Carolina, where her southern upbringing and church played influential roles.

"That was one of the first places I was introduced to sound and that's one of the things that's molded me throughout my career," she said.

Growing up, Cyanca said bonding time with her dad introduced her to hip hop and other music genres.

"He would teach me about artists like A Tribe Called Quest and he would teach me the integration between fashion and hip hop," she said. "I would have on some Adidas and he's like, you ever heard of Run-DMC?"

Through the stage design Cyanca wanted to visually express important moments from her upbringing. The set will feature an altar, cultural figurines and memorabilia often

seen in Black households showcasing the early influences that shaped her.

Cyanca said she played around with elements that will show her countryside.

"Growing up in a very small town with little resources, you learn how to make something out of nothing and work with what you got," she said. "I think the main thing for me was to tell that story of who I am beyond the music and how I got to music through those avenues."

With Charlotte's growing arts scene, Cyanca credits the city for being a steppingstone in her career through the community she found.

"I've built a lot of connections through Charlotte, so I say Charlotte really propelled my career in a lot of ways," she said.

Season 2 of "Shaped by Sound" spotlights 13 North Carolina artists in half-hour programs. It's a platform for artists to share their stories. Cyanca is taking the opportunity to introduce herself as an independent artist.

She shared that traveling to New

York City gave her the opportunity to get on the music radar and have access to get record labels to reach out.

"It's really important because North Carolina doesn't have a strong ecosystem for music in my opinion," Cyanca said. "But with PBS, I think it bridges that avenue to just say that 'Hey, there is talent here and there's great talent here.'"

Cyanca hopes her episode makes a good representation of her home state.

"I want them to feel a sense of home from North Carolina, from the hospitality, from the church upbringing to the love that we have here, the community that is so strong in North Carolina," she said. "Especially in a Black woman, someone who's built it from the ground up independently with the help of my friends, my family, my community, my fans. I hope they see inspiration. I hope they see magic and they think that they can do anything they put their mind to, specifically for a little Black girl out there."

Black culture, classical music mix in showcase

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Armenta Hummings Dumisani is getting a huge birthday gift a couple of months early.

The Gateways Music Festival in Winston-Salem on April 19-22 honors Dumisani, the classical music showcase's founder ahead of her 90th birthday on June 27. Dumisani, the creative force behind a community for Black classical musicians, launched the festival in 1993 in Winston-Salem.

"At Gateways, Black culture and classical music are not in conversation from a distance — they're inseparable — and you don't just hear it, you feel it. It moves through the room, connecting people across time,

tradition and lived experience," festival

President and artistic director Alex Laing said in a statement.

"That spirit began with Miss Armenta — her vision, her insistence on excellence and her belief that Black classical artists deserve a home in this music. We are honored to pay tribute to her because every time Gateways convenes, we're carrying her legacy forward, building community and showing what Black artistry makes possible across generations."

The showcase's programming including a concert honoring Dumisani's contributions and featuring the Gateways Chamber Orchestra and Brass Collective, with performances by Amadi Azikiwe, Marcus Thompson, Damien Sneed and Jas Ogiste. Works by Black composers Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Margaret Bonds and George Walker are included as well as those of Johann Sebastian Bach and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

There will be free public programming including the Young Musicians Institute: Brass Day, a high-impact community workshop led by the Gateways Brass Collective; Masterclasses for strings, brass and piano at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts; and a piano recital with Howard University professor Damien Sneed, an Emmy-winning conductor, composer, pianist and music professor whose career has earned recognition across clas-



GATEWAY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Patricia Reeves, Dennis Carter and Hassan Anderson at the Gateway Music Festival.

sical, operatic and interdisciplinary circles.

Additional festival offerings include the Dr. Paul J. Burgett Lecture and Community Conversation, led this year by National Association of Negro Musicians' 2025 Competition winner Mira Walker, Gateways Brass Collective in concert, and The Family Dinner: A Gateways Reunion, an intimate gathering celebrating the community of artists and supporters first envisioned by Dumisani.

The Gateways Music Festival calendar. All public events free with RSVP.

April 19

Gateways Brass Collective at Centenary United Methodist Church, 11 a.m. Gateways Brass Collective joins Centenary for worship service.

April 20

Dr. Paul J. Burgett Lecture and Community Conversation: Mira Walker, Piano, Forsyth County Central Library, 2 p.m.

Presented in partnership with the National Association for Negro Musicians, pianist and 2025 NAMM scholarship competition winner Mira Walker offers a lecture-recital exploring the Chicago Black Renaissance through works by Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, Betty Jackson King and Irene Britton Smith. Piano recital: Damien Sneed, Win-

ston-Salem State University, 7 p.m.

The Emmy Award-winning pianist, composer and conductor presents a recital, including selections from his forthcoming Apple Music Classical release.

April 21

Gateways Brass Collective concert, United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church, 6:30 p.m.

The Gateways Brass Collective traces the impact of Black artistry across the musical landscape, performing works by Margaret Bonds, Dizzy Gillespie, Anthony Barfield and Jeff Scott.

April 22

Young Musicians Institute: Brass Day, Centenary United Methodist Church, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

Gateways Brass Collective leads young musicians through technique workshops, ensemble playing and collaborative music-making in a dynamic, inspiring environment.

April 23

Gateways in Celebration: A Concert Honoring the Legacy of Armenta Hummings Dumisani, Centenary United Methodist Church, 7 p.m.

Concert featuring violists Amadi Azikiwe and Marcus Thompson performing Bach's Brandenburg Concerto as well works by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Margaret Bonds, and Damien Sneed.

Historian Ibram X. Kendi at Carolina

Continued from page 5B
 Tickets: tix.blumenthalarts.org
March 28

"Chain of Ideas: An Afternoon with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi," Carolina Theatre, 2 p.m.

Kendi, a historian and leading antiracist scholar, is a professor of history and founding director of the Howard University Institute for Advanced Study, an interdisciplinary research enterprise examining global racism. Tickets are \$68-\$82 and available at Ticketmaster.

April 3
 Keyboardist Nicolas Cole ("Blue Magic") takes the stage at Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. Tickets: middlecjazz.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 a show at Middle C Jazz, 300 S Brevard St. Tickets: middlecjazz.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.

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

May 2
 R&B icons October London and Lalah Hathaway take over Owens Au-



Grammy nominee Maysa returns to Charlotte on April 11 for a show at Middle C Jazz.

ditorium, 2900 E Independence Blvd. for a concert event celebrating love, soul and timeless music. Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets at 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.



Ibram X. Kendi will speak March 28 at Carolina Theatre.

Charlotte lands Stellar Awards music showcase

By Herbert L. White
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Gospel music's grandest event is heading to Charlotte.

The 41st annual Stellar Gospel Music Awards will be televised Aug. 15 at Spectrum Center as the finale of a week of related events. The showcase brings artists, music leaders and gospel fans from across the world to the host city. The Stellar Awards, which launched in 1985 in Chicago, are the longest running African American gospel music awards show on television. Previous host cities include Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Nashville, and New York City.

"Bringing the Stellar Awards here is not only a natural fit, but it allows us to expand the reach and impact of gospel music in a city that embraces both tradition and innovation," Don Jackson, founder of the Stellar Awards and chairman and CEO of Central City Productions said in a statement. "Charlotte's faith community and vibrant culture make it

an ideal host for this celebration of gospel music."

The program will be shown nationally on BET, Bounce, Stellar Network, and syndication networks, where it reaches a combined television audience of more than 3.6 million viewers. Digital platforms engage millions more.

Details regarding ticket sales, artists and community events will be released later.

The showcase includes Stellar Plus events from Aug. 12-14 that feature fan experiences, industry conferences and community activities across Charlotte.

"Hosting the Stellar Gospel Music Awards is a tremendous opportunity for Charlotte," said Steve Bagwell, CEO of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority. "This event will bring thousands of visitors to our city, shine a national spotlight on Charlotte's vibrant culture and create meaningful economic impact for our hospitality community."

The Charlotte Post presents
Conversations: HER Story
 West Boulevard Library | 2157 West Blvd.
 All programs start at 6 p.m.

MARCH 3
 Ayisha Cravotta

MARCH 10
 Monique Couvson Ed.D.

MARCH 17
 LaRita Barber

MARCH 24
 Deborah Mann Gibbs

"The Voice of the Black Community"

Ryan Gosling pours humanity into 'Project Hail Mary'

Continued from page 5B
 in the middle of oblivion is the objective. They meet, they court, they converse and work on a common problem.

Weir's touching story and Goddard's sensitive script and dialogue have a disarming effect on all who witness this meeting of beings. Both are from different spectrums. Both bent on saving their worlds from destruction. The bonding and working together on view is a lesson in humanity that's timely. Lord and Miller give the proceedings a light, humorous touch with bits of pathos, fear and hope. Viewers' emotional reactions will follow the lead given by the characters and narrative. Most will enjoy the journey, as commanded by Gosling, their guide.

The spaceship with its nooks and crannies is a marvelous place to be stranded (production designer Charles Wood, "Guardians of the Galaxy"). Whether Grace is in astronaut gear or boring teacher clothes, costume designers David Crossman and Glyn Dillon clothe him appropriately for all settings. Interior shots of the ship, explosions on earth and intimate scenes between human and nonhuman characters are fascinating because cinematographer Greig Fraser ("Dune") shoots it all like it was a life-or-death matter.

Cleverly, the sound track includes Elton John's "Rocket Man," David Bowie's "Starman" and a score by Daniel Pemberton ("Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse") that's energetic or mysterious with haunting choral music. The only recent space-themed movie that rivals this pro-

duction quality is "Gravity," Alfonso Cuarón's Oscar-winning sci-fi drama. It was a serious film. This is pure entertainment.

Still, the heart of the movie is an ordinary teacher with a PhD in molecular biology. Gosling plays Grace as sheepish, brave, humble and crazed throughout. Almost like if you were drafted for an immensely important task you thought was way above your pay grade, but its success was bigger than your fears and anxiety.

He's the everyman and believable in the part from beginning to end. His character is diametrically opposed to that of the pragmatic, Dutch administrator who was selected by the United Nations to form the mission. Eva Stratt (Sandra Hüller, "Anatomy of a Fall") is all business. She doesn't just recruit Grace; she trafficks him against his will.

Grace jokes, "I put the 'not' in astronaut!" Focused and not letting anything get in her way, Hüller knows her assignment and gets under the skin of the stern-face leader. Her heartlessness is countered by the Clark character (Lionel Boyce, "The Bear"), who's assigned to shepherd the very nervous science teacher. Milana Vayntrub, Ken Leung, Liz Kingsman and James Ortiz, who supplies the voice of Rocky the not so human being, round out a cast that knows their parts and do the work.

The science behind what's happening to Earth might be beyond some filmgoers. Especially young ones. All they need to know is that humanity is in trouble and providence has picked an unlikely person

to save all. That's it.

Grace is in space for a reason and Gosling tells us so. His mission is a duality. Help mankind live another day. Show how breaking barriers, cooperating and showing mutual respect can lead to friendships that last beyond 156 minutes.

Credit filmmakers Lord and Miller for the buoyant feel that never subsides and the science lesson that goes down easy. Praise Gosling for carrying the film and taking inquisitive folks along with him. But that's what space cowboys do. Or science-teachers.

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

Women's History Month Event
Book Talk

Dr. Monique Couvson
 Author, Documentarian, President & CEO of G4GC

Dr. Jimmeka Anderson
 Founder & Executive Director
 Black Girls Film Camp

Date: March 28, 2026
 Time: 6pm
 Location:
 Charlotte Post Event Center
 5118 Princess St. Charlotte, NC 28269

Ticketed Event. Secure Tickets on Eventbrite
<https://WHMDrMoniqueCouvson.Eventbrite.Com>
 RSVP: 704.376.0498

Free Admission | VIP Available