

Life!

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2026 SECTION B

Testing kids’ fitness after taking away chances to be active

By Fran Smith
CENTER FOR HEALTH JOURNALISM

It's back to school this fall for the Presidential Fitness Test, a Trump administration initiative to measure children's strength, endurance, speed and agility.

But here's the important question: What are we doing to help kids get in shape?

Opportunities for physical activity have been disappearing for decades. Physical education, once a daily staple in schools, has been squeezed by poor funding, lax standards and pressure to focus on math and reading scores.

Recess time has shrunk in many schools for the same reasons, especially in low-income communities and communities of color. It may be no more than 10 minutes a day. All too often it's withheld as punishment.

Outside school, youth sports are increasingly commercialized, expensive and beyond the reach of many families.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children ages 6 to 17 engage in at least an hour daily of moderate to vigorous physical activity, spread throughout the day. More than 70% of kids don't move that much, and we can't pin all the blame on cellphones and video games.

There's no national data on children's fitness levels, and very little statewide data. Nobody really knows how strong American kids are, what percentage can run a mile, and which kids would struggle to complete even a single lap around a track.

In July 2025, President Trump signed an executive order reinstating the Presidential Fitness Test, a school fixture for decades. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. officially launched the test in June 2026. Although it's not mandatory, Kennedy said many states will soon begin administering it.

"I'm super-excited," said Renata Simril, president of the nonprofits LA84 Foundation and the Play Equity Fund. "You have to measure what's important. If you don't measure it, it doesn't matter."

You also have to invest in what's important. If the new test inspires a fresh commitment to staffing and upgrading fitness programs, facilities and education

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Capture the beauty of your garden with some flower art

By Melinda Myers
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Transfer the beauty of favorite flowers onto paper or fabric to create works of art, greeting cards and gifts for family and friends.

Pounding flowers is a fun and easy way gardeners of all ages can preserve the beauty of garden flowers.

Use watercolor or other rough surface paper when pounding on paper. Purchase ready to dye (RTD) or prepared for dying (PFD) fabric or prepare the fabric yourself. Supplies and directions can be found at most craft stores.

Prepare the space before pounding flowers onto paper or fabric. Use a large cutting board or piece of wood to protect the furniture below. Consider moving the project outside onto the sidewalk or other surface that can't be damaged by the pounding.

Cover the work surface with wax paper and secure it in place with masking tape to prevent the flower color from soaking through onto the cutting board. Cut the fabric to size and secure it or the paper to the board with masking tape.

Take a walk through the garden and gather a few favorite flowers and leaves. Look for flowers with thin brightly colored petals and leaves for the easiest and best results. Consider starting with rose, daisy, geranium, petunia, and pansy petals although any flowers and leaves can work. Remove or reduce the size of the large center of coneflowers, black-eyed Susans and similar blooms so they lay flat on the fabric. Or remove the petals, discard the center, and

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MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Dr. Kimberly Scott takes the oath of office as Mecklenburg County public health director. Scott, who succeeds Dr. Raynard Washington, had been interim director since January.

Mecklenburg’s health chief on job and future

Dr. Kimberly Scott appointed to permanent position this month

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

Dr. Kimberly Scott is Mecklenburg County's new health director, but no stranger to the department she supervises.

Before her appointment on a permanent basis earlier this month, she was interim director and before that, assistant director of the Population Health Division since 2022, where she was responsible for resources to design, implement, and evaluate programs and initiatives. She was also tasked with building relationships between the health department and community partners, increasing access to local health priority data, and overseeing the Offices of Chronic Disease Policy and Prevention, Violence Prevention, and Health Equity.

In an interview with The Post, Scott detailed how she made the transition to permanent full-time director, challenges facing public

health and community-based initiatives to improve health in Mecklenburg. Responses are edited for brevity and clarity.

CP: In terms of going from interim director to permanent full-time director what does it entail for you in terms of your career?

KS: Even after working within the Mecklenburg County Public Health Department for years and serving in this interim capacity, I think the scope can still surprise you because on any given day, our team may be responding to a communicable disease that's impacting the community or helping a mother that needs access to WIC, or providing care to our clients who are visiting our clinics, to supporting the schools with school health nurses.

Our work is so broad and so vast that no day looks the same within public health. And there's so many people that may never know the work of public health because

when public health works well, oftentimes it goes unnoticed. So, one thing that has just been just a beautiful experience for me, despite being here for so long, is to just see the broader layers of our department beyond my old scope of work, and to just see how dedicated our staff are to making sure that we are building systems so that our community can have experience, good health in the best way possible.

CP: Because you have been with the department for a while, unlike somebody who might have been hired from outside, there is no breaking in period. You already know Mecklenburg and the department intimately, so there is no honeymoon phase.

KS: I think that's true. There is an advantage to knowing our staff, our partners, and the community, and being able to step in without needing that additional time to

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Ease back-to-school chaos with some tips

FEATURE IMPACT

Everyone could use a little more magic in their everyday lives - but when it comes to back-to-school season, "manic" often feels like the more accurate word.

Between shopping for supplies, coordinating the family's schedules and trying to make sure everyone is looking and feeling their best, there's a lot going on this time of year.

While you may not be able to wave a wand and make all the stress disappear, you can use these tips and tricks - courtesy of the haircut magicians at Great Clips - to save time and add a touch of excitement to the back-to-school season.

Start routines early

Instead of waiting for the first day of school to change all your routines, guide your family into the time warp a little more gradually. Shift sleep and wake times a week or two



SHUTTERSTOCK

Creating a back-to-school tradition can help get the start of an academic year off to a fun start.

ahead of time so the early wakeups won't come as such a shock to the system. Adapt meal schedules and other daily habits the same way.

Before you know it, the spell will be complete and you'll be ready to roll with the regular school-day schedules.

Create a back-to-school tradition
Watching your kids' eyes light up is its own mini dose of magic that never gets old.

Start a fun new tradition to brighten their first day or week. That could be a special breakfast, new outfit, porch photoshoot, surprise gift for them to

discover in their backpacks or another creative idea personalized to your family.

Convenient, affordable haircut
A haircut can help children and parents get into the back-to-school spirit. That's why Great Clips partnered with internet ce

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« RIDES »

Hyundai Ionic 9 is a versatile, spacious, upscale and handsome electric vehicle

By Winfred Cross
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Hyundai is keeping up with its reputation of producing stylish, functional vehicles that offer a lot of bang for the buck.

Its latest is the Ionic 9, the company's largest vehicle to date. Not only is the Ionic 9 big, but it's also an EV - a three-row EV. This kind of vehicle is still rare but gaining popularity quickly. The Ionic 9 can be configured to carry six passengers if you go for the comfortable captain's chairs in the middle row or seven if you opt for the bench.

The Ionic 9 is a very handsome vehicle that avoids the slippery look by

offering a very chiseled stance. The rear mimics a Volvo XC-90's vertical brake lights, but larger. The front fascia has an LED strip that runs from side to side above the fog lamps. There is a body-colored strip separating the strip and lights. The headlamps are at the corners but are a cluster of small, square LEDs. Overall, the look is upscale and expensive.

The interior continues the upscale theme. The gauge display is a curved screen that flows into the touch screen which measures to nearly halfway across the dash. The gauge cluster is configurable, but the graphics could be a bit better. The touch screen

portion is bright but a little slow to respond. This would have been a great opportunity for Hyundai to introduce a new graphics package but that may come next year.

My test car was a Calligraphy Performance model that was nearly loaded (there's on model above this). The interior was covered grey leather and vinyl with soft touch surfaces in all the right places. Dark teal covered the seat backs with grey leather covering the seat cushions. It's an elegant look that makes the Ionic 9 look posh.

There's a bunch of standard tech that lets you know you are sitting in something special. Apple

CarPlay and Android Auto are included as is the Alexia AI assistant. You can do a lot of functions by voice control, but I look for switches and buttons first.

There are not a lot of physical buttons but then touch was easy to use. Automatic climate control takes care of multiple seating zones. My only disappointment is the Bose Centerpoint audio system. It's generally one of my favorite but I got spoiled by the Bang and Olufsen system used in a Ford vehicle I drove before.

This is a good system, but the B&O belongs in a vehicle like this.

Hyundai has optimized every inch of space in the



HYUNDAI

The 2026 Hyundai Ionic 9 electric vehicle.

vehicle to provide outstanding passenger space. Front passengers usually get the best seats and the Ionic 9 continues that trend. The driver's and passenger's seat are power operated, included a switch

on the passenger's seat to allow the driver or rear passenger to move the seat. Second row passenger's captain's chairs with the driver's side seat equipped with power controls for

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Mecklenburg’s health chief on job and future

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learn systems, which can be challenging in any role. But it’s definitely a different scope of work when we think about the vastness of stepping into broader responsibilities from an assistant to serving as health director, so I don’t take that responsibility lightly. I have been spending a significant amount of time engaging with our staff to learn more about our work and our programs to support me in thinking about how we support the entire system and network so that we can continue to do good work and build on the foundational work that we’ve done for years.

CP: Talk a little bit about the state of public health in Mecklenburg County, especially when it compares to nationally, where there is a lot of confusion or reversals in terms of public health positions by the federal government.

KS: In thinking about the state of public health in Mecklenburg County, one thing I have to share is that our team has done a phenomenal job, really ignited by COVID to expand our trust and visibility within the community, because to the point of earlier comments, you know, oftentimes when we think about public health, it’s often on the back burner when things are going well. We’ve amped up our community engagement. We have programs and initiatives that span efforts from food security support to youth development and violence prevention, and things that people might not typically associate with public health, and that’s a broad part of our community building approach to make sure that our community knows us, so that when there are issues, people trust and can connect with us, and know that we can be a valid resource for helping them make informed decisions and understand the issues that are impacting community.

CP: You’ve worked on initiatives that included data, and is because of that experience, do you consider yourself a bit of a data nerd where this is part of this is part of what makes up that experience and prepared you for this job because you have such a rich background in numbers and data and what it means to health?

KS: I think working in public health, you have to be a data nerd because in order to make informed and wise decisions, you have to understand what’s going on around you. Data is not always in the form of numbers or complex statistics, but it’s stories. That qualitative experience, making sure that we understand the number, the detail behind the numbers. Understanding what it’s like for a family to navigate not having access to transportation, to try to get to a doctor’s appointment, or to try to access food. All of those things provide rich context to understand why our community experiences health the way it is.

CP: What’s the biggest challenge for Mecklenburg and the health department, understanding that it’s more than a million people in the county. There’s more than a million stories and more than a million health data points.

KS: I think it’s a combination of things. One thing that I’d emphasize first is how quickly our community is growing. We know our community is growing rapidly. It’s diversifying very quickly, and our health department is not growing at the same speed of community. We are constantly trying to understand what that growth looks like in our community, so that we can leverage the resources we have to support our growing community. That helps us lean into our partnerships, looking at how we work with our partner network to leverage our

resources and connect to provide support services across the entire county. It’s critically important for us to have those strong partnership relationships because we know that at the pace the county is growing at our current capacity, we definitely need to lean into our support network to ensure that we meet the needs of our growing community. And beyond that, you know, public health again is always charged with making sure that we can respond to the threats of disease and other things that might impact our community.

CP: You mentioned earlier that ... health isn’t the same everywhere you go. Over the years the county’s had initiatives, especially in the Black community, to deal with hypertension, and things that impact Black folks on an uneven basis. Where is the county now growing those partnerships?

KS: Especially in recent years, we have expanded our portfolio of community support programs. We still execute one of our longstanding programs, Village HeartBeat, which is a partnership with the faith community that focuses on chronic disease prevention and management for some who might already be diagnosed with chronic diseases through structured programs that provide wellness support. We provide pre- and post-health screenings so that people can know their numbers and just a variety of resources to help them on their health journeys based on the results of those health screenings. Tailored experiences might include gym memberships, access to health educators or other support resources, so that people can make healthy and informed decisions based on their individual experiences. We’ve since scaled up those programs to support a broader community beyond just our faith network.

We’ve launched a community mini grant program for organizations and faith community that are working in our priority areas to tackle chronic disease issues, anything from diabetes prevention support to making sure that people have access to healthy food, reducing tobacco exposure. We have been investing in nonprofits and small organizations, grassroots organizations, to provide them with resources to help build on the network of resources that are available to our community to support them in that capacity, we’ve also launched a new initiative over the last couple of years, which is what we call our Community Capacity Building Institute, and that’s for our smaller nonprofits that are doing great work, but they need support scaling up some of their work, or they have a good idea, but maybe they need help with coordinating a business plan, or need help coordinating evaluation resources so that they can be competitive for other funding sources and opportunities to scale their work.

CP: What’s the future of public health, specifically in Mecklenburg County?

KS: One thing that we know is certain that the future of public health is that it’s changing. It’s uncertain in a lot of ways for us right now because there are many factors outside of the control of the boundaries of a county, but what we do know is certain is that we have a strong workforce that’s ready to respond and ready to support the needs of Mecklenburg County. So, our team is constantly staying abreast of any changes that might impact our community. We are constantly thinking about how we can build our workforce to support our growing and changing community so that we can respond. That’s what public health does.



MELINDA MYERS

Use watercolor or other rough surface paper when pounding flowers onto paper.

Capture beauty of your garden with some blooming flower art

Continued from page 1B

arrange as desired.

Remove stems, sepals, or other plant parts you do not want to transfer. Place the desired parts face down on the paper or fabric and arrange as desired.

Once the design is set, cover it with several layers of paper towel or another sheet of watercolor paper. Tape the leaves and petals in place on fabric to help reduce the risk of the petals moving during the pounding process.

Gently tap the leaves and flowers using the flat side of a hammer. Next, evenly hammer from one side of the design to the other, making sure to hit every part of each plant.

Once the color is transferred, lift the paper covering and remove the crushed flowers and leaves from the paper along with the tape from the fabric. Allow the design to dry and carefully brush off any remaining plant pieces.

Set the design on fabric using an iron

set to the hottest setting without steam. This sets the colors but will not make it washable. Preserve the bright colors of works of art on paper with a UV protective acrylic spray. Be sure to read and follow label directions and apply in a well-ventilated area.

Pounding flowers is a simple way to transfer a plant’s natural dye onto paper or fabric. Plan to get together with family and friends to create works of art, greeting cards and more. For more gardening projects visit MelindaMyers.com.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the *Midwest Gardener’s Handbook*, 2nd Edition and *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses “How to Grow Anything”* streaming courses and the nationally syndicated *Melinda’s Garden Moment* TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.

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» BLACK BRILLIANCE »

Charlotte Hawkins Brown: NC education leader, school founder

By Herbert L. White
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The story of Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina is a story of Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown and over 1,000 students from across the globe who graduated during its 69 years of operation.



Brown

Brown built a legacy of teaching that focused on academic, industrial, and agricultural education, showing students what success looked like.

During 50 years as president, Brown transformed PMI from an old blacksmith’s shed into a 300-acre campus with 14 buildings.

When Brown launched the school, stu-

dents were required to give time back to the school with activities such as operating the school farm, building needed structures, including the bricks on campus, or managing the school’s cafeteria and bookstore. The school also had an influence on the Sedalia community, where its students often cared for families as the bureau of community welfare.

Palmer Memorial Institute was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1922 when few Black high schools were. By that time, Brown built Palmer into the only finishing school of its kind in the United States, which burnished its national reputation. At its height, the campus consisted of more than 300 acres and 14 buildings.

Palmer Memorial Institute was founded in 1902 as Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Institute. The school for Black students was named in honor of educator Alice Freeman Palmer, Brown’s friend and benefactor. It originally began operating

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Ease back-to-school chaos with some tips

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lebrity and magician Justin Flom, known for his mind-bending optical illusions, to help remind parents they don't need complicated tricks to make getting a back-to-school haircut a breeze.

With the Great Clips app, parents can easily check in multiple family members at once, keep an eye on wait times and get notified when it's their turn for a haircut. No illusions, no sleight of hand – just convenient, affordable haircuts that feel like much needed relief for parents.

“Our goal is to help families spend less time waiting and more time doing what matters during one of the busiest seasons of the year,” said Traci Elder, vice president of marketing and communications at Great Clips Inc. “The Great Clips app helps families save time by making haircuts fit more seamlessly into their busy schedules and at a great price, too.”

Plan outfits ahead of time

The morning rush often feels like the furthest thing from a fairytale. Take at least one groggy decision off your plate by choosing clothes the evening before – or even assembling a week's worth of outfits on Sunday and storing them in a special drawer that gives your child an instant portal

to getting dressed.

Personalize school supplies

From preferred colors to beloved characters, all kids have their favorites. Stock them up with pens, notebooks, lunchboxes and other supplies that match their current obsessions; that way, it's more exciting to use them at school and show their swag off to their friends.

Refresh the study space

Homework time might look like less of a wizard battle if your kids have a special place to do it. Add some whimsy to their study spaces by putting up string lights, letting them pick out a new piece of furniture or art, and making their environment cozy and comfortable.

Set school year goals

As a family, take some time to figure out what each of you wants to achieve this year – and make it fun. Amp up the magic here by writing down your goals; then, keep track of progress by filling up a goal jar with shiny stars, swirly marbles or fun charms. Throughout the school year, set up different “quests” for your family to accomplish.

Discover more about back-to-school haircut magic that saves you time and money at [GreatClips.com/BacktoSchool](https://www.GreatClips.com/BacktoSchool).

Testing kids’ fitness after taking away their chances for activity

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that promote youth fitness, especially in underserved schools, it will have broad, lasting value.

But if the test becomes merely an annual drill of push-ups, pull-ups and a 1-mile run, it will repeat the flaws of the old presidential fitness tests, which were administered in various iterations from the late 1950s until 2012.

Generations of adults, myself among them, remember those tests as a dreaded ritual of performing exercises we'd never been taught or had an opportunity to practice. And we had to do them, or fumble trying, in front of the whole class.

“I'm an epidemiologist. I care about testing, I care about data. I want that all to happen,” said Hannah Thompson, director of the Nutrition Policy Institute at University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. “But we need the foundation first. Strong school-based physical activity programs — PE in particular, recess, and all those other wraparound sports — those are the critical foundation for the test. And that's really missing right now.”

Health experts call for 150 minutes of PE a week in elementary schools and 225 minutes in middle and high school. Many students don't receive anything close to that. Only five states mandate that much PE instruction, 26 states mandate half that amount and 11 have no time requirement, according to a study published in April.

PE mandates are rarely enforced or funded, so schools don't always meet even the low standards a state might set, said Chad Killian, the study's lead author and an assistant professor of kinesiology at the University of New Hampshire. Many schools have steadily cut PE along with recess, music and art to devote more of the school

day to academics and preparation for standardized exams.

It's a misguided trade-off. A CDC review of 14 studies of PE in schools found strong evidence that it improves cognitive skills and academic behavior — and no evidence that more PE time diminishes learning. The same review analyzed eight studies of recess, with similar findings: Unstructured breaks were associated with cognitive gains, improved concentration and better classroom behavior.

Physical activity also boosts mental health, a significant benefit when so many children are struggling with anxiety and depression.

“When it's well implemented, physical fitness testing is so important,” said Killian, a former elementary school PE teacher. “But if you're not having regular PE classes in order to learn about fitness, develop fitness, and practice fitness, testing loses its utility. Actually, I would say it's inappropriate. It's putting the cart before the horse. What do we want to test if we don't have conditions to learn?”

Disparities run deep in physical education. In a survey of California school districts, Thompson found that the more Black and Latino students a school had, the less likely it was to have a PE teacher on staff.

A study in Connecticut found that wealthier, predominantly white school districts, which have better facilities and more experienced teachers, have nearly four times higher fitness scores than economically disadvantaged, racially diverse districts. The state is one of the few that systematically tracks and publicly reports detailed information on student fitness.

Of course, athletic programs, teams, clubs and leagues outside school can promote fitness too. But families must have the

money and time to invest in the commercialized enterprise that youth sports has become.

As private equity has poured into the field, the pay-to-play ethos has become so extreme that a couple of states are investigating youth sports investors for anti-competitive business practices. A congressional committee held hearings on the issue in June.

Parents pay, on average, \$1,000 a year for their child's primary sport, a 46% increase since 2019, according to testimony at the hearing. They devote three hours to that sport every day their child has practice or a game.

It's not surprising that children from low-income families are much less likely than their more affluent peers to play in leagues or on teams. Sports participation among kids from low-income households fell from 36% in 2012 to 25% in 2024.

These trends make physical activity in schools all the more important. In May, the American Academy of Pediatrics released its first new guidance on school recess in 13 years, reaffirming its importance and calling for multiple breaks with a minimum of 20 minutes every day.

The revival of the Presidential Fitness Test gives journalists an opening to investigate whether schools are providing students with at least the minimum PE and recess time recommended by health experts.

How much PE do students actually receive? Are classes too packed for kids to move, or are they playing sports, learning dance, practicing yoga, working out on equipment?

Are they doing drills so they can pass the test, or engaging in activities that might inspire lifelong fitness habits?



NC HISTORIC SITES

The Class of 1943 at Palmer Memorial In Sedalia, North Carolina. PMI was founded in 1902 by Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and educated nearly 2,000 Black students.

Charlotte Hawkins Brown: NC education leader, school founder

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in an old, run-down blacksmith shed, providing education for local rural Black youth. From the beginning, Palmer emphasized both an academic and an industrial education.

The school also ran a farm that provided agricultural training. The farm made it possible for students who lacked the money to pay tuition to work for it.

The school was forced to close following a fire in 1971. Today, the site is owned by the state of North Carolina and the Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum, dedicated to telling the story of its founder, manages the remaining 12-structure campus. It is the only North Carolina state site that recognizes the achievement of Black women.

Hyundai Ionic 9 is spacious, upscale EV

Continued from page 1B

easy access to the third row. The third row can be folded electronically for more cargo room which already generous. Yes, adults can fit in the rear and have good space. If more is needed the second-row seats can move forward. No matter which seats you choose, you'll have adequate space for long-trip comfort.

The Ionic 9 Calligraphy is powered by two electric motors – one each on front and rear axles – to give it all-wheel drive. The motors are driven by a 110-kWh battery and make a combined 422 h horsepower. This vehicle can charge from 10% to 80% in about 24 minutes if you are using a Tesla supercharger. The vehicle comes with an adapter to use at non-Tesla chargers. Overall range is listed at 334 miles but the Ionic 9 can get more than that depending on drive mode and temperature factors. I charged to 90% and the gauge displayed 350 miles range.

I didn't empty the battery, but I can tell you I never feared being stranded. The Ionic 9 managed energy very well. It was also very quick and quiet on the highway. Power is available in an instant. Passing is certainly no problem and quick lane changers are insane. The steering may be a bit too tight but just by a touch.

Ride quality is great. I found the vehicle to be comfortable on a variety of sur-

faces. Bumps and thumps are suppressed as well as noise. Tire noise varies depending on the road surface, but it never gets loud. Wind noise is surprisingly low considering the wedge shape.

I'm still not completely sold on electric vehicles but with each passing vehicle I review I can see why buyers are adopting this type of transportation. The Ionic 9 is a winner, despite a few flaws.

The Calligraphy model is expensive, but you get a lot of creature comforts for the price. You can drop down to the entry level S model and still get a lot of the best functions. Power would drop to 215 horses but step up to the SE and get AWD and 303 horses. If the Calligraphy is what you want, it starts at \$74,990.

Pros:

- New for 2026
- Handsome, block styling
- Loads of horsepower
- Quick passing power
- Abundant passenger space
- Long list of standard equipment
- Quiet, comfortable ride
- Exceptional build quality
- Quality interior materials
- Safety features galore
- Useable tech

Cons:

- Steering could be better
- Stereo needs fine tuning

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LEGAL NOTICES



LEGAL NOTICE

Request for Letters of Interest and Statements of Qualifications for Specialty Vehicle Awning – Design & Installation

RFQ No. 27-003

The County of Durham, North Carolina requests Letters of Interest and Statements of Qualifications for Specialty Vehicle Awning – Design & Installation to be received on August 25, 2026, at 2:00 P.M., Eastern Time, in accordance with applicable provisions of North Carolina General Statutes and Durham County Ordinances and policies.

SITE VISIT:

The site visit will be held on August 6, 2026, at 10:00PM. The address is 1409 Seaton Rd, Durham NC. An electronic copy of this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) can be obtained from Durham County's eBid System located under Bid Opportunities at <https://dconc.gov/Finance/Purchasing/Bid-Opportunities> Proposers can download a copy of the solicitation and all addenda without registering in the system.

However, in order to **automatically** receive email notifications of solicitations and addenda issued by the Purchasing Division, Proposers **MUST** register in the eBid system.

The County reserves the right to accept or reject such proposals as appears in its judgment to be in the best interest of the County.

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POOL PHOTO

Duane Davis, center, stands with his attorney Michael Sanft, right, as prospective jurors enter the courtroom during the fourth day of jury selection for his murder trial Aug. 13, 2026, in Las Vegas. Davis was indicted on murder charges for his role in the killing of rapper Tupac Shakur in 1996.

At Tupac murder trial, details in dispute

By Jessica Hill
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — A prosecutor said Monday that while few have been willing to speak about the 1996 killing of Tupac Shakur, Duane “Keffe D” Davis is the “one person who has a hard time being silent.”

“Let’s be clear, Duane Davis did not pull the trigger. But he did plan the shooting in retaliation of the beating of his nephew,” Chief Deputy District Attorney Binu Palal told jurors at the start of Davis’ Las Vegas trial. “Remarkably, you will learn that from Duane Davis himself.”

Davis, 63, is charged with murder with a deadly weapon with the intent to promote, further or assist a criminal gang in Shakur’s death. He pleaded not guilty. His lawyer in the defense opening called the prosecution’s narrative “fiction.” If convicted, Davis faces life in prison.

Palal showed jurors video of Shakur’s entourage attacking Davis’ nephew Orlando “Baby Lane” Anderson outside the boxing match at the MGM Grand hours before the shooting on Sept. 7, 1996.

Davis spent the next two hours planning how to get even, said Palal, and Shakur was gunned down “in an act of revenge.”

What he told investigators in 2008

In a 2008 interview with a federal task force investigating the killing of Shakur’s rival, the Notorious B.I.G., Davis instead talked about the Shakur shooting. He described handing a gun to the men in the back seat of a white Cadillac that fired on a black BMW with Shakur and Marion “Suge” Knight inside.

As prosecutors played audio of Davis explaining the moment Shakur was

Please see **AT TUPAC** | 6B

Daniel Caesar brings spiritual vibe to NYC

By Dwight Brown
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

4 stars

A choir sings with angelic voices as R&B, neo-soul and alternative R&B artist Daniel Caesar prepares to take the stage. That’s how a warm, soulful summer night begins at the Barclays Center in downtown Brooklyn. That’s when a mellow, evangelical R&B worship service starts. With a glow.

They came by the thousands and the arena is packed. Crowded with a multicultural assortment of fans who know the words to his songs and appreciate his brand of bliss. Before he enters the stage, 18 singers in white robes assemble, as if they’d just come from Thursday night choir practice, to do this singing gig and raise their voices. Beautiful harmonies, animated bodies moving and swaying. Establishing a spiritual presence. Something like church. Holy like gospel. Rooted in rhythm and blues but dispensed in the most ethereal way. Romantic and heavenly at the same time.

The group chants the chorus of the song “Rain Down,” the tune Caesar sings with the British musician Sampha. They plead, “Lord let your blessings rain down. Lord let your blessings rain down, on me.” Right from the beginning of the evening, you know this is not going to be your traditional soul-music concert. Caesar has a feel that is a delicate blend of heart, soul, mood, love and ethereal moments. Nothing aggressive or crass, like in the hip-hop or rap vein. He’s a quiet refuge for young

Please see **DANIEL** | 6B

« ON THE MARQUEE »



MIXED METAPHORS

Mixed Metaphors Productions presents “Dauntless: An Ode to 2916” Aug. 20-30 at QC Family Tree’s Marian Wright Edelman House, 2916 Parkway Ave.

Immersive ‘Dauntless: An Ode to 2916’ takes stage

Also: Anthony Hamilton at Lowcountry Jazz Festival in Charleston, SC

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

The latest events, productions and exhibits in Charlotte and beyond:

Aug. 20-30

Mixed Metaphors Productions’ “Dauntless: An Ode to 2916” at QC Family Tree’s Marian Wright Edelman House, 2916 Parkway Ave., explores joy as a force for good through a mix of theater, immersive art installations, and music.

Tickets are on a sliding scale starting at \$28 each at Humanitix.

Aug. 21

Ruha Benjamin: Technology, Savior or Slayer, 7 p.m., The Pearl, 915 Pearl Park Way.

Harvey B. Gantt Center presents the MacArthur Fellow and scholar leading a conversation on artificial intelligence, creativity, race, and the

future of society. Cost: \$10 (plus fees); free for Harper-Roddey Society members; free for students with valid ID (registration required).

Aug. 22

Rockingham-born comic Kashuna Perfected bringing her comedy home with “But No Baby,” an interactive show with a baby shower without offspring. Showtime is 4 p.m. at Redlands Acres in Rockingham.

Admission is free with advance registration at butnobaby@gmail.com.

Aug. 29

“Trouble so Hard – Song & Stories of Slavery, Freedom & Civil Rights,” 7 p.m., Galilee Ministries, 3601 Central Ave.

The live performance is free, but registration is necessary at trouble-

sohard.com/reserve.

Sept. 4-6

Lowcountry Jazz Festival, Gaillard Center, Charleston, S.C.

Performers include Anthony Hamilton, Lakecia Benjamin, Keiko Matsui, Rick Braun and Jonathan Butler. Tickets: gaillardcenter.org.; information: lowcountryjazzfest.com.

Sept. 18

New Generation Tour at Bojangles Coliseum.

Multi-platinum artist Young Thug makes his first headlining run since 2019. Special guest Nav. The tour will also showcase the label’s newest signees, Tezzus, Diamond*, 1300saint, Iyrus, Yume, Biggs, and Unky.

Tickets available at newgenerationlive.com.

Please see **ANYTHING** | 6B

‘The Rivals of Amziah King’ a Southern fried flick with too many overindulgent ingredients

By Mark Kennedy
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

It turns out that the honey business isn’t as sweet as it sounds: In the new movie “The Rivals of Amziah King,” beekeepers steal from each other, poison rivals’ insects and rip folk off.

“It’s not full of kind people,” the title character warns.

“The Rivals of Amziah King” isn’t as sweet as it thinks it is, either. Instead of picking a single variety to explore, the movie is a maddening mishmash of genres — blending Quentin Tarantino’s sudden brutality, a coming-of-age tale, a heist flick, a revenge fantasy and a sweet, music-filled country hoedown.

Matthew McConaughey returns to the big screen playing the title character in what can only be called Matthew-McConaughey-turned-up-to-11 mode, pure Cheshire Cat smile, rascally wink and butters, Southern gentlemanly charm. Suspenders and scruff on, cowboy boots snug, McConaughey is the one who makes everyone’s life instantly better just by showing up.

Written by Andrew Patterson and James Montague and directed by Patterson, “The Rivals of Amziah King” follows McConaughey’s honey-producing King as he negotiates his patch of rural Oklahoma until he inexplicably leaves the movie at the hour mark and hands it off to Angelina LookingGlass, making her film debut.

We meet King ordering chicken fried steak sandwiches and cherry Cokes as he plays the banjo in a quartet of musicians at a beloved food joint. That gets interrupted when authorities need his knowledge to find out who abandoned \$250,000 worth of honey barrels on the road and King starts to investigate. Then someone gets a chunk of their skull — including ponytail — ripped off in an industrial accident and that takes over. Settle in, the whiplash is just beginning.



KYLE KAPLAN | BLACK BEAR

This image released by Black Bear shows Matthew McConaughey, left, and Angelina LookingGlass in a scene from “The Rivals of Amziah King.”

King soon connects with his former foster daughter — that’s LookingGlass, fierce and preternaturally grounded — who he gets to mansplain in the local ways, like what to eat at the potluck (“There’s a story in every dish”), life lessons (“Patience is better than being smart”) and beekeeping (“Every queen is a survivor”). Bees here, if you didn’t already get from the clunky writing, represent community, sharing and caring.

Cinematographer M.I. Littin-Menz’s camera techniques never settle down in this movie, like a puppy forever pulling on its leash. Early sequences employ frozen shots irritatingly dropped into the mix and later we have furious close-ups, quick cuts, quirky flashbacks, ethereal river sequences and lingering poetic images of close-up bees like from a documentary, a kinetic approach that seems not to have much

faith in the actual story keeping viewers’ interest alive. Music supervisor Winslow Bright swamps many scenes with loud choirs, loud banjo and loud strings.

Maybe that’s because as soon as you’ve settled down for one genre, it gets hijacked by the next. Warm and extended moments of communal song — the great T Bone Burnett had a hand in some of the outstanding Americana tunes like “Quill” with McConaughey exuberant, and “Johnny Come Outside” — are undercut by seeing kids smash their heads on school bus roofs or a cool Western-like tracking of a honey-stealing local rascal that is marred by his horrific, boiling-to-death murder. There are so many montages of honey production that viewers may qualify for a beekeeping certificate.

Great turns are produced by Kurt

Please see **THE RIVALS** | 6B

Anything Goes Tour at Ovens Auditorium

Continued from page 5B
Sept. 19

Emmy award-winning journalist *Don Lemon* and comedian and radio host *D.L. Hughley* extend their DL + DL 'Anything Goes' tour to Ovens Auditorium at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$55 to \$197 and are available at Ticketmaster.

Together, the pair delivers a comedy-meets-politics live experience where no topic is off limits.

Sept. 25-26

"*Bugs Bunny at the Symphony*" brings Looney Tunes favorites to the big screen with original scores performed live by Charlotte Symphony. Showtimes are 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 25 and 3 p.m. Sept. 26.

Conducted by George Daugherty, the program features animated classics including "What's Opera, Doc?" and "The Rabbit of Seville," with the orchestra performing in sync with the action on screen.

Sept. 25-27

Festival in the Park Fine Arts & Crafts Festival and Traditional Arts & Crafts Festival, Freedom Park.

Since 1964, the juried arts festival has brought popular music, arts and crafts and family entertainment to visitors from around the South. Artist applications are online at festivalin-thepark.org.

Oct. 1

Mariachi El Bronx, 8 p.m., Carolina Theatre.

After a 10-year break, the eight-piece band is headlining a tour. Special guests Bedouin Soundclash and Max Diaz.

Tickets \$37-\$65 at ticketmaster.com and thecarolina.com.

Oct. 8

Martin Lawrence, Ovens Auditorium. Due to demand, the comic adds

Charlotte to the Y'all Still Know What It Is! Tour. Select dates on the tour will feature special guest appearances from comics Nate Jackson, Karlous Miller and Desi Banks. Loni Love and Benji Brown are set to appear at every stop. Tickets available via Ticketmaster.

Oct. 10

Daley, Neighborhood Theatre at 8 p.m.

The British singer, songwriter and creative artist has worked with Stevie Wonder, Damon Albarn, Marsha Ambrosius, Robert Glasper, Jill Scott, Pharrell Williams and Jessie J. He's worked his way to Billboard chart success in the U.S. and critical acclaim from the Grammys, BET and Soul Train Awards.

Tickets: neighborhoodtheater.com.

Nov. 12

Best-selling author *Walter Mosley* is among the literary heavyweights highlighting Verse & Vino, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation's top fundraiser.

The showcase at Charlotte Convention Center's Crown Ballroom includes authors Lucy Foley, R.F. Kuang and Isaac Fitzgerald. Library advocates and book lovers will gather to raise a glass to the joy of reading, the library system's impact and the larger community. Proceeds fund Library Foundation initiatives.

Tickets are available at foundation.cmlibrary.org/verse-vino.

Nov. 14

Boney James, Knight Theater, 7:30 p.m.

The contemporary jazz artist is live in Charlotte for one night only. The concert includes an intimate show of with classic favorites and live music magic.

Tickets: blumenthalarts.org.

At Tupac Shakur murder trial, details are in dispute

Continued from page 5B

shot, members of Shakur's family, including his stepbrother Maurice "Mopreme" Shakur, stared ahead and listened intently from the audience.

Palal told jurors Davis held onto a visceral hatred for Shakur for decades that drove him to speak.

He said as early as 1998, the defendant talked to the FBI and admitted he had been in Las Vegas the night of the shooting. He spoke again in 1999 to the FBI and said again he was in Las Vegas then but denied responsibility.

In 2009, he admitted to his role in the killing in an interview with Las Vegas police, Palal said.

"And now 30 years later, we're going to ask you to finally hold Duane Davis accountable," Palal said.

He also showed jurors the 2019 memoir that Davis co-authored, "Compton Street Legend," that the prosecution will use and that the defense fought to keep out of the trial, along with several of the defendant's interviews.

How Davis' legal team is defending him Davis, wearing a blue suit and tie, watched the presentation while sitting next to his attorney. He sat quietly with his hands folded on the table in front of him, occasionally nodding along as his attorney spoke.

"The state has just told you what they believe is the evidence in this case," attorney Michael Sanft said to jurors in his opening. "What they are telling you, they are representing as fact, when it's really fiction."

Sanft said Davis wasn't previously charged for the 1996 killing because law enforcement knew that he was "full of crap."

"There's no facts," he said, to back up what Davis said in his book.

The defense attorney also pointed to missing documents in the original investigation and distrust between Los Angeles and Las Vegas police departments. He pointed out that the Compton Police Department was shut down in September 2000 due to corruption.

He called one detective's work "biased," "sloppy" and "incomplete." He said retired Detective Clifford Mogg read portions of Davis' book into the record as if it were fact but said Mogg didn't verify claims in it.

Most eyewitnesses didn't live to trial

The story of the drive-by shooting has long gripped the hip-hop community,

partly because no one was charged until Davis was indicted in 2023.

The other three men riding in the Cadillac have all died in the years since.

"When he says he's the only person who can tell what happened, he's right," Palal said.

Shakur remains a cultural icon and is considered one of the most influential and versatile rappers of all time, despite dying at 25. He was nominated for six Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2017.

Witnesses describe the night Tupac was shot

Retired Las Vegas police officer Garry Dale was the first of the 35 to 45 witnesses the prosecution plans to call at the trial expected to last about a month. He recounted how he and another officer stopped a car carrying Knight and Shakur because the vehicle didn't have a license plate. They let the pair go with a warning.

About 10 minutes later the two officers responded to a call about a shooting and found Shakur being pulled from the car by EMTs, Dale said. Knight had been grazed by bullets, but told the officers to take care of Shakur, he testified.

Dale jumped in the ambulance and tried to get Shakur to tell him who shot him. The retired officer said that Shakur said something like "no, we'll take care of it."

Another witness, Ingrid Stokes, testified that she and her friends were heading home from Las Vegas when they encountered Shakur and Knight, who was friends with a woman in Stokes' group.

Knight invited them to a nightclub, she said, and they decided to meet them there.

The car Stokes was riding in was one lane over and a car length ahead of Knights' vehicle, when they heard gunshots while stopped at an intersection, she said.

Stokes said they feared more gunfire and drove away, almost hitting a white four-door vehicle in the process.

When they returned to the scene, police treated them like suspects, she said, and made them sit on the sidewalks. She was scared to talk about the case, worried about poor treatment from law enforcement and the potential for retribution from the unknown shooter.

"Snitches get stitches," she said.

Associated Press journalists Ty O'Neil in Las Vegas, John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio, and Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

'The Rivals of Amziah King' has too many ingredients

Continued from page 5B

Russell as a lethal local kingpin who schmoozes his way past the law, and Jake Horowitz, a former Marine who knows how to plan a theft with military precision, mostly shirtless. One brazen theft here is of "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" and, however you liked that movie, you realize now how hard it was to actually pull off.

Patterson likes to remind viewers of his Oklahoma bona fides, but much of the

overlong movie was shot in Alabama. And that hints at what's wrong with "The Rivals of Amziah King" — it just doesn't feel authentic, either in place or in story. Forget honey, it sort of leaves a vinegary taste behind.

"The Rivals of Amziah King," a Black Bear release that hits theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "language and some grisly images." Running time: 130 minutes. Two stars out of four.

Daniel Caesar brings spiritual vibe to Brooklyn concert hall

Continued from page 5B

adults trying to connect with their spiritual side. Not through religion but through popular music. And he obliges, gracefully and with pleasure.

The sparse stage is set up with instruments on the left side and the choir on the right. Neither face the audience, instead they face each other. A large screen on the back wall is filled with live images from the stage as an obtrusive cameraman with a rig walks around taking close-up shots of the performers.

He relays what his lens captures to the screen for all to see, from those in the standing-room-only pit, to the main floor and balconies. The same big images, giving the vast, cavernous hall a certain intimacy. As does the headliner.

Caesar, healing from a fractured foot, enters on crutches, wearing an orthopedic boot. He hobbles to the mic to sing or sits at keyboards facing the choir and not the audience. And sometimes he stands as best he can with a guitar strapped over his shoulder. It's as if nothing is going to stop him from delivering his set list, and certainly not an injury.

His manner is closer to that of a determined minister ready to give a love sermon than a pop star performing. Quite the achievement for a humble, Toronto-born singer of Jamaican heritage.

His greatest hits are the soundtrack of young people's lives these days, whether they feature Caesar solo or with musician pals like H.E.R. Their hit "Best Part," which was a Grammy-winning acoustic R&B duet, helped the singer become a worldwide sensation. The soft melody. The soothing words: "You're the coffee that I need in the morning. You're my sunshine in the rain when it's pouring... If life is a movie, then you're the best part."

And so, the cascade of poetic songs begins and doesn't end until the house lights come up. Hits like the forceful love song "Superpowers," tender ballad "Always" and heartfelt "Get You" are performed throughout the evening. The latter song is particularly expressive: "Through drought and famine, natural disasters my baby has been around for

me ... Kingdoms have fallen, angels be callin' none of that could ever make me leave." No wonder lovers are holding hands and friends are singing lyrics together.

Showing his knowledge of the past and respect for his father, Caesar explains the reason for him covering the classic Jamaican hit "Many Rivers to Cross." "My dad preferred Jimmy Cliff to Bob Marley." That's a controversial thing to say to most of the world who only think Marley is the voice of Jamaica. But if you're from Jamaica, as Caesar's dad is, you know that Cliff is as iconic.

And with that, the choir hums the tune and Caesar starts the song: "Many rivers to cross, but I can't seem to find my way over. Wandering I am lost. As I travel along the white cliffs of Dover." The 57-year-old classic allows the 31-year-old Grammy-winner to deliver his strongest vocal performance of the evening. Seated at the keyboards, resting his broken foot, his voice soars to the rafters like Superman. Strong enough to carry all listeners to an emotional climax.

The size of the venue works in the concert's favor. Dark and dotted with lights from cellphones, it feels like you're watching it all in a big cave, or a darkened amphitheater. Smiling faces all around look wistful and hopeful. That's the calming energy that's radiating from Caesar and his ensemble inside. Hard to believe the world outside is so chaotic. In here, the crowd responds to the warmth, personal anecdotes, sense of humor and musicianship.

Caesar is on his worldwide "Son of Spergy Tour," which is named after his hit 2025 album. It's a 30-stop, Asian and North American sojourn and well worth the price of admission. So many young people are going to see him, and there's a good reason. He's taking them on a spiritual, R&B journey that's as loving and positive as it is uplifting, communal and deeply personal.

Let the choir sing amen. Amen!
Visit NNPA News Wire entertainment critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.



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