

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Sickle cell disease is named for the abnormal shape of red blood cells and is inherited when a person gets the gene from each parent.

Blood donations crucial for sickle cell treatment

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fusions and gene therapy. They can improve quality of life, but in the case of transfusions, blood donations are needed.

A pint goes a long way

Anthony Cotton, a member of Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, has organized a blood drive on Sept. 20 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. at 538 Bradford Drive. The goal is to get people to understand the value of donation.

"I learned that all blood donations are great, but because of the antibodies that African Americans carry to help fight the disease, you can only get that from another African American donor," he said. "So, it's a no-brainer that as an African American man, I have to do something to try to help combat the disease."

It can be difficult getting Black men to donate because of a long history of medical malpractice against people of color in the United States. Cotton recognizes this and tries to ease fears of people on the fence.

"I would say, through my experi-

ence, it's harder to get Black men to donate than it is Black women," he said, "and I understand the history now. I was born and raised in the South. But at some point, you have to have faith. I'm a man of faith, so you have to have faith that what you are doing is bigger than you."

Blood donations are the first step in helping people who need transfusions get the treatment they need. While transfusions can't completely cure the disease, it alleviates symptoms.

"The first step to the first step is making people's lives easier," Cotton said. "I just don't want fraternity members to donate blood. I want everybody to donate blood. ... I'm talking about every human being that can donate should donate because we need it. I'm a military veteran... and so I understand that when things happen, when tragedies happen, people need blood. Everybody needs to donate blood, specifically around sickle cell. We need African American donors to help make the lives of other African Americans better."

Continued from page 1B
rooted, pot it up and place it in a space that receives the sunlight it prefers.

You'll be amazed at how a bit of grooming and propagating can perk up a tired indoor garden. Share or trade extra rooted cuttings with family and friends so each of you can grow your indoor garden and memories.

*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"* instant video series and the nationally syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment* radio program.*

*Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and commissioned by Corona Tools to write this article. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.*

Beautify, expand indoor garden

Continued from page 1B

ented plants to expand your houseplant collection. It's easy to start new plants from leaf stem cuttings of various houseplants like inch plants, philodendron, pothos, dieffenbachias, dracaenas, and many more. Use a sharp knife, snips or bypass pruners to cut 3- to 6-inch-long pieces from firm, mature non-woody stems.

Remove the lowest leaf or two from the stem where roots will form. Stick the cutting

in a small container filled with vermiculite, perlite or a well-drained potting mix. Loosely cover the potted cutting with a plastic bag left open at the top to increase the humidity around the cutting while it forms roots. Set the container in a bright location out of direct sun for several weeks as the roots develop. Once

rooted, pot it up and place it in a space that receives the sunlight it prefers.

You'll be amazed at how a bit of grooming and propagating can perk up a tired indoor garden. Share or trade extra rooted cuttings with family and friends so each of you can grow your indoor garden and memories.

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Limited Fiat 500e is a fun drive

Continued from page 1B

it, traffic will catch up.

I'm not a fan of one-pedal driving but the Fiat 500e excels in that mode. The brakes are strong and allow you to scrub off speed quickly. Take your foot off the gas and the car immediately slows down because of the regenerative braking system. I feel a bit out of control, so I generally hit the brakes before the car comes to a complete stop.

The Fiat 500e has a comfortable ride which isn't common in cars this size. It takes really big bumps to upset the chassis and even

so the suspension keeps most of the bad stuff out of the car. There is a good bit of wind noise, however which is surprising considering the car's shape. A bit of tire noise creeps in as well.

I still like the car despite the limited amount of range. At the beginning of the electric era, 149 miles of range would have been OK. In 2025 I think cars should have at least 300 miles per charge.

I had to charge the car a few times during the week but the Jeep dealer near me has free high-speed charging. I did like the quick

rate, going from 20% to 80% in about 15 minutes.

The 500e comes in three trim levels: INSPiRED, ICONa and Fiat 500e Giorgio Armani Collector's Edition. Base prices range from \$30,500 to \$35,000.

Pros:

- Stylishly cute
- Great handling
- Comfortable ride
- Fast charging
- Giorgio Armani version

Cons:

- Limited range
- Inexpensive material trim
- Cramped interior

No grill, no problem for tailgate

FAMILY FEATURES

Tailgating season is in full swing, but not everyone has time (or space) to fire up a grill before kickoff.

Whether you're hosting friends in your driveway, tailgating without a truck or trying to simplify game-day prep, you're not alone.

According to Paul Zahn, entertaining expert, fall is the perfect time to rethink the traditional tailgate menu.

"You don't need a grill to impress your guests - you just need the right mix of crowd-pleasers, portability and no-fuss presentation," Zahn said. "It's all about creating a vibe that feels fun and elevated, without requiring hours in the kitchen."

The makers of Hormel Gatherings products - known for their ready-to-serve party trays loaded with premium meats, cheeses and crackers - tapped Zahn to share his five go-to tips for building a no-cook tailgate spread that scores big.

1. Lean into local favorites

"I love anchoring my events with a theme and what better way to celebrate your team than creating food and drinks that pay homage to them and their states," Zahn said. "I'm talking hometown eats with a twist."

For instance, Virginia ham fans can stack mild cheddar and honey ham between two crispy crackers, hit it with mus-

tard and boom: instant ham-and-cheese bite. Bonus points for pairing with a local brew.

2. Make it portable and shareable

"No one wants to juggle a plate and a beer," Zahn said. "Think grab-and-go."

He loads up Hormel Gatherings trays and gets creative: caprese skewers with tomato, basil, mozzarella and salami, or "jarterie" - mini jars layered with meats, cheeses and crackers. It's a creative way to serve charcuterie without the mess, and guests love the grab-and-go convenience.

3. Sweeten the deal

"A sweet treat always buttons up your tailgating fun so dessert is a must."

Please see NO GRILL | 3B



BLACK PRESS USA

A review in *The Lancet Regional Health-Europe* drew a correlation between mental health disorders and cardiovascular disease.

Mental illness linked to higher heart disease risk

By Stacy M. Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

A sweeping review published in *The Lancet Regional Health-Europe* has drawn a direct line between mental health disorders and cardiovascular disease, showing that individuals living with psychiatric conditions face not only a higher risk of heart problems but also a shorter life expectancy.

The paper, authored by researchers from Emory University, the University of Copenhagen, the University of Leeds, and others, concludes that people with depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety live 10 to 20 years less on average, mainly due to heart disease.

Bi-directional threat

The analysis shows that the connection between mental health and cardiovascular disease is not one-directional. The stress of a heart attack or stroke can trigger psychiatric disorders, while psychiatric conditions themselves set the stage for heart disease.

The risks are striking as depression raises cardiovascular risk by 72%, schizophrenia by 95%, bipolar disorder by 57%, PTSD by 61%, and anxiety disorders by 41%.

"It is important to understand that stress, anxiety, and depression can affect your heart, just like other physical factors," the paper noted, offering guidance for how doctors might begin crucial conversations with patients.

A widespread burden

One in four people will experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime, yet many go untreated and often receive poor cardiovascular care.

"Despite having more interactions with the healthcare system, they undergo fewer physical checkups and screenings and receive fewer diagnoses and treatments for CVD and its risk factors," the authors reported.

According to 2023 U.S. survey data cited in the study, more than half of those who met the criteria for a mental health disorder had not received any treatment, with even lower rates among non-White populations.

Shared risk factors

Researchers identified a cluster of overlapping drivers - poverty, trauma, social disadvantage, substance use, and poor access to health care - that amplify the dual risks of mental illness and cardiovascular disease.

Lifestyle behaviors such as smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity, and disrupted sleep patterns are also more common among people with psychiatric conditions. The biological picture is

equally troubling. Dysregulation of the stress response system, inflammation, and autonomic nervous system dysfunction are all pathways through which psychiatric disorders may accelerate cardiovascular decline.

Breaking the cycle

The study calls for a fundamental shift in medical practice.

"For the best care, an integrated approach is needed to address the complex needs of this vulnerable population," the authors wrote. "Such approach should offer enhanced support and interdisciplinary care encompassing mental, cardiovascular, and behavioral health, as well as consideration of the social needs and barriers to care."

Among the interventions reviewed, exercise emerged as one of the most effective treatments, improving both mood and heart health. Evidence shows that physical activity can deliver improvements on par with or greater than medication or psychotherapy for depression.

Mind-body practices like yoga and mindfulness, while requiring more evaluation, also show promise for improving outcomes across both mental and cardiovascular health.

Call to integrate care

The authors stressed that progress depends on healthcare systems breaking down the wall between physical and mental health. For decades, treatment has been siloed, with psychiatrists focusing on the mind and cardiologists on the body. That separation, the study finds, has left millions vulnerable.

The authors argue for expanded insurance coverage, investment in housing and employment stability, and the inclusion of psychiatric patients in cardiovascular research. Above all, they call for integrated care models that recognize the tight link between mental and cardiovascular health.

Global health priority

The stakes are enormous. The World Health Organization has set a 2025 target to reduce the global burden of cardiovascular disease. The paper argues that this goal cannot be reached without directly addressing the disparities faced by those with psychiatric disorders.

"Closing the disparity gap for individuals with mental health disorders would be consistent with the World Health Organization 2025 targets of reducing the global burden of CVD," the researchers concluded. "Reducing these disparities would also uphold the rights of people with mental health disorders to achieve the highest possible level of health and to fully participate in society and the workforce."

Duke Health sets its sights on statewide hospital expansion

By Michelle Crouch

CHARLOTTE LEDGER

For years, Charlotte's health care market has been dominated by two names: Atrium Health and Novant Health.

Between them, the two hospital systems hold a near lock on the region's hospitals, a growing share of its doctors and much of its specialty care.

Now a third player is muscling into the market.

In April, Duke Health paid \$284 million to acquire Lake Norman Regional in Mooresville, rebranding it as Duke Health Lake Norman. It's the first Duke-branded hospital outside the Triangle.

Around the same time, Duke announced a partnership with Novant to open joint campuses across North Carolina.

Although details about the partnership are tightly guarded, Novant indicated at a recent regulatory hearing that the partnership would bring more of Duke's specialty expertise, such as advanced cancer care and gastrointestinal surgery, directly into the Charlotte market.

"This is good news for Charlotte and for North Carolina," said Barak Richman, a health policy expert and George Washington University law professor who formerly taught at

Bryan Blitstein, a Huntersville surgeon in private practice who is joining the Lake Norman hospital as a surgeon. "For my entire career, Charlotte has been teal (Atrium) versus purple (Novant). Duke coming in disrupts that and creates a third option. Healthy competition is good for everybody."

For now, Atrium and Novant control nearly all hospital care in the Charlotte region. Atrium commands about half of the market, while Novant holds roughly 35%, according to national financial ratings agencies.

Duke's moves won't transform Charlotte's health care landscape overnight. But the presence of a third provider could ultimately bring more choice and competition to the area's health care market and provide an alternative for the many patients who choose to drive to the Triangle for care, industry observers said.

"This is good news for Charlotte and for North Carolina," said Barak Richman, a health policy expert and George Washington University law professor who formerly taught at

Duke. "It brings competition to a market dominated by Atrium, which is healthy for patients. For people in Charlotte, it might even lower some prices."

Duke pivots to expansion

Across North Carolina, hospital systems including Atrium, UNC Health and Novant have been aggressively growing - buying up smaller hospitals and merging - to attract more patients, achieve economies of scale and boost their negotiating power with insurers.

While the hospitals promise efficiencies and better care, critics point to research that shows consolidation typically eliminates competition and drives up prices without improving quality.

Until now, Duke had largely resisted following its rivals in pursuing geographic expansion, Richman said, preferring to build its reputation as a national destination for complex care.

But that strategy is shifting. In a June 2025 bond prospectus, Duke said it was transitioning "to a regional health system."

In the financial doc-

Please see DUKE | 3B



Tailgates don't have to revolve around grilling. Try snacks that don't require heat.

No grill, no problem for successful tailgate party

Continued from page 2B

have," Zahn said, "but keep it bite-size."

His go-to is mini doughnuts in football-themed cups with whipped cream and team-colored sprinkles. Or go seasonal with apple cider doughnuts, pumpkin cookies or mini pies.

4. Don't forget the bevs

"I love creating signature cocktails for events but no one wants to be mixing and muddling drinks when tailgating with friends," Zahn said. "Make your cocktails the night before so you can actually enjoy the party."

He preps mason jars of team-themed drinks (a Bloody Mary if your colors are red and black) and loads them in a cooler with sparkling

waters, canned cocktails and local beers.

5. Go big on chips and dips

"Dips are a no-cook crowd-pleaser, and they're perfect for tailgating," Zahn said.

He serves guac, hummus and buffalo ranch with tortilla chips, pretzels and veggie sticks in single-serve disposable cups - no double-dipping, no mess.

Tailgating without a grill doesn't mean compromising on flavor or fun. With the right no-cook lineup - and a few strategic shortcuts - anyone can host a winning party this season.

For more ideas, visit HormelGatherings.com.

Duke Health aims for hospital expansion into Charlotte region

Continued from page 2B

ument, Duke leadership also set an ambitious expansion goal: to "touch 25% of the lives in North Carolina," while nearly tripling revenue to more than \$20 billion, up from \$6.8 billion in fiscal 2024.

Duke Health declined to answer questions about its plans, saying in an email: "We don't have updates to share beyond our Lake Norman announcement in April and Novant partnership announcement in March. We will include you on any related announcements moving forward."

"Duke-itzing" a hospital

Duke's purchase of the 123-bed Lake Norman hospital included nearby medical office buildings and physician offices, including nine primary care and seven specialty practices. It plans to add an imaging facility and more office space, according to its filing.

Blitstein, who will start his job at Duke Lake Norman Hospital in October, said Duke has already poured millions into the facility to upgrade its technology and infrastructure to Duke standards.

"They call it 'Duke-itzing' the hospital," he said. "They like that word."

Many Charlotte-area patients already drive to Durham to see Duke specialists, especially for cancer care, cardiology and complex surgeries, Blitstein said.

The idea now is to bring that care closer to home, he said, with the Mooresville hospital serving as "a point of access" where all Charlotte-area patients — not just those in Iredell County — can begin treatment, participate in clinical trials or get follow-up care if they are already being treated at Duke.

Duke is frequently ranked as the top hospital in North Carolina and one of the best in the country.

"The hope is to bring that level of excellence from Durham to the Charlotte market," Blitstein said. "Patients shouldn't have to drive two hours for follow-ups or routine imaging. Those can be done here, with results sent seamlessly back to their doctors in Durham."

Still, not everyone is convinced the pivot is a good one for Duke. By chasing market share, Richman said, Duke risks diluting its academic mission.

"It's not surprising that they're finally starting to do what everybody else is doing," he said. "But this country already

has way too much hospital expansion. ... If I had my druthers, Duke would not be competing with Atrium for knee replacements. They would be competing with Mayo Clinic for the most complicated brain surgeries."

Proposed Duke-Novant centers along I-77 corridor

Duke's partnership with Novant adds another layer to Duke's entrance into the Charlotte market.

In a March news release, the two hospitals said they planned to "jointly develop new campuses across North Carolina that will expand access to affordable, high-quality care," but they provided few details.

Novant and Duke declined to answer questions about the partnership, including what types of facilities they'll open or where they will be located.

However, the two hospital systems have already requested state approval to build a jointly operated hospital in Mebane, a fast-growing city about halfway between Durham and Greensboro.

Duke's financial filing also outlines plans for the hospitals to jointly develop a network of outpatient centers across the state, including along Charlotte's I-77 corridor. The sites would offer primary care and such specialty services as cardiology, neurosciences and cancer, along with laboratory and imaging services — and potentially surgery, infusion and urgent care services, according to the filing.

The move comes as the North Carolina legislature has moved to loosen the state's certificate of need regulations for ambulatory surgical centers beginning this November, which would make it easier for hospitals to open them in urban areas.

At an August hearing where it requested state approval for more operating rooms, Novant also hinted that Duke specialists may perform surgeries and do other work in Novant hospitals.

Matthew Hanis, a Charlotte-based consultant and expert in the business of health care, said the partnership gives Novant a credibility boost by tying it to Duke's research and academic reputation. That could help Novant compete with Atrium, which partnered with the Wake Forest University School of Medicine to recently open Charlotte's first medical school, Hanis said.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Budget restrictions don't have to restrict bringing a sense of style to any room.

Budget-friendly ideas to freshen up indoor spaces

FAMILY FEATURES

Whether you're fatigued by seeing the same decor every day or simply looking for an opportunity to refresh indoor spaces with an appealing mini makeover, rethinking your favorite room in the house doesn't need to be an expensive ordeal.

Even if your budget is tight, you can still make small changes to transform a room. Consider these ideas:

• Bring stylish flair to your space with a new color scheme. Rather than replacing all the furniture, which can be costly, focus on smaller accessory pieces such as pillows and

decorative items. Create variety by using multiple hues of the same color or mixing two or more complementary colors.

• Introduce new accent furniture. Smaller and less cost-prohibitive than centerpieces like a couch, for example, accent pieces such as end tables or a coffee table can provide subtle changes to the look of a room. You could also opt to refinish a piece of furniture you have on-hand to create a look that's all your own.

• Morph your room by simply rearranging what you already own. Adjusting the orientation of your furniture and decor can let

you see your favorite room from a whole new perspective.

• Whether it's a flea market find, such as an old window frame that you paint and add a display shelf to the base, or a series of photos from your favorite vacation destination, adding some DIY art can not only update your room, but make it more personal, too.

A new look for your favorite room can go a long way, so find ways to update your space for a comfy retreat you can enjoy. Find more ideas at eLivingtoday.com.

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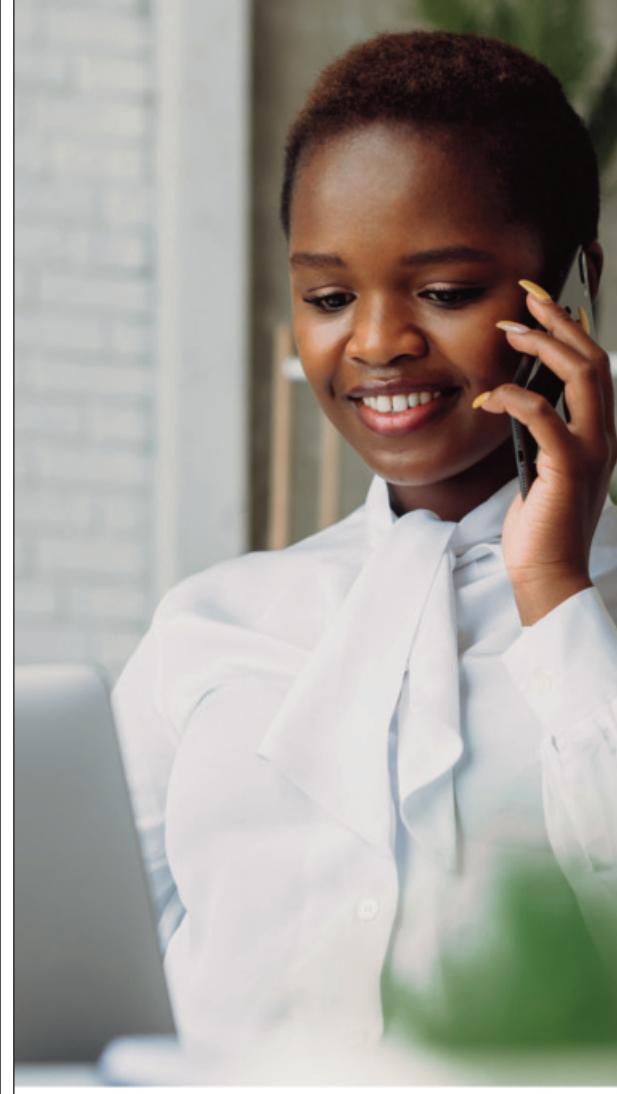
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BOOK REVIEW

Clever tale about a real space craze

By Douglas K. Daniel

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Talk about fake news: In 1907 a New York Times banner headline declared, "There Is Life On the Planet Mars." Upping the ante the next year, the stodgy Wall Street Journal claimed "proof" of "conscious, intelligent human life" on our red neighbor.

A decades-long cultural phenomenon is revisited in the "The Martians: The True Story of an Alien Craze That Captured Turn-of-the-Century America" by science writer David Baron. He explores how a society on the cusp of reality-piercing scientific advances — global radio communications, X-rays, Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity among them — bought into what in hindsight seems downright silly.

The idea of life on other planets had been orbiting the public imagination ever since the realization that the Earth wasn't alone in the solar system. As Baron explains, advances in telescopes provided breakthrough views of an alien landscape that led to unbridled theorizing in extraterrestrial life, even civilization, all sparked by an innocent misinterpretation.

While several astronomers in the late 19th century had observed the large patches of different colors and shades on our closest heavenly neighbor, Italian Giovanni Schiaparelli published them on a map. Projecting Earth-like characteristics, he connected Mars' larger, darker areas thought to be oceans, with thin, linear features he labeled "canali," Italian for "channels." Misreported in English as artificial waterways, "CANALS ON THE PLANET MARS" headlined The Times of London in 1882.

From there, Baron tells a compelling story in which mankind's greatest power, compelling storytelling, unleashes a tenuous scientific observation that drives premature speculation, and a thin veneer of logic spawns runaway flights of fancy. Incomprehensible experiments and complex mathematics — boring! — unlocked the secrets of the atom. But the "Mars craze" hooked popular culture with an exciting and understandable narrative. Given someone must have constructed those canals, are Martians folks like us?

No one was more spellbound than a Boston Brahmin armed with a Gilded Age fortune, Percival Lowell. Following a distinguished stint as a diplomat in the Far East, Lowell devoured the emerging Mars debate in print in the early 1890s. Dedicating his life and resources to further study of the nearby planet, the 39-year-old travelled to Flagstaff in the Arizona territory — the elevation and dry climate improved telescopic performance for the namesake observatory he financed — to spend countless nights peering at the cosmos.

Over the following years, Lowell did more than anyone to gather what he claimed was visible evidence of engineering on Mars. Though an amateur scientist, he deployed his Harvard erudition to write well-received books and deliver sold-out lectures, all to broaden the acceptance of the canal theory and the possibilities it opened. Most trained, reputable astronomers refused to speculate on the dark markings and did not think they held water — literally or figuratively. Where others were content to acknowledge a lack of reliable data, Lowell stated, "Imagination is the soul of science."

It is the soul of science fiction as well. While many envisioned a hardy Martian society clinging to life thanks to massive public works projects, author H.G. Wells conjured aliens with "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarding this earth with envious eyes." His 1897 classic, "The War of the Worlds," brought the Martians across the void to his own London suburb where he gleefully imagined them "killing my neighbours in painful and eccentric ways."

In Wells' climax, nature's microbes decimated his Martians, but Baron deftly explains how human nature may have birthed them. Despite purportedly bigger and better sightings of the canals in 1907 — prompting the newspapers "of record" to finally accept Lowell's claims — the scientific community eventually rallied to convince the public that the rectilinear structures he championed were merely optical illusions.

With the most honorable intentions, Schiaparelli, Lowell and their disciples subconsciously perceived Mars like a planet-size Rorschach test and thereby joined their ancient forebears who connected the dots in the night skies to create constellations animated with myths.



Benjamin O. Davis Jr., (left) commander of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II, is the subject of the one-man play "Ben Davis – Watch Him Fly" written and starring J. Leon Pridgen II.

Soldier's story: Stage play salutes Tuskegee Airman

One-man play 'Ben Davis – Watch Him Fly' Sept. 20 at Carolina Theater

By Herbert L. White

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J. Leon Pridgen II is bringing an overlooked American hero to the stage.

Pridgen wrote, produced and stars in the one-man play "Ben Davis – Watch Him Fly," a tribute to the commander of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II that will debut at Carolina Theater Sept. 20. Tickets are available at carolinatheater.com. The production comes from a place of reverence and appreciation for Pridgen, an actor and author who served with the 82nd Airborne Division.

"I'm a military kid as well," said Pridgen, who grew up in Fayetteville. "My father was a career soldier. I have great uncles who were part of the first class of Black paratroopers, so in my house, the Harlem Hellfighters, the Buffalo Soldiers, Benjamin Davis, the Tuskegee Airmen, they were talked about. To me, it seemed like that should be something that everybody knows."

Pridgen, who lives in Mooresville, is a veteran of stage and screen. His movie credits include "The Program" alongside Halle Berry and Omar Epps; the daytime drama "As The World Turns" and the romantic comedy "Heaven Sent" now stream-



Davis



Pridgen

ing on PureFlix and Prime. His original brush with playing Davis was for a movie project that fell through.

"Several years ago, I thought I was going to play him in a film," Pridgen said. "The way I work as an actor, I like to study and understand who the people are. Well, the more I found out

about him, the more I really wanted to know about him because not only was he the commander of the Tuskegee Airmen, he was the first Black man to attend West Point in the 20th century."

Davis, whose father Benjamin Sr. enrolled at West Point in the 19th century, led the Tuskegee Airmen during a time when the military was segregated by race and hostile to the prospect of Black combat pilots. Under his command, the Army Air Corps (forerunner to the Air Force) unit distinguished itself over the skies of Europe, especially as escorts who never lost an Allied bomber to Axis fighters.

Davis' story — from West Point, where he endured four years of silence from cadets and teachers alike to the pinnacle of leadership as a three-star general — was worthy of sharing. Pridgen decided a traveling one-man production was the best move.

"When I looked at it, I said, 'How can I tell this story?'" he said. "I'm not

looking at just one place, I'm looking at moving it to different areas and traveling it. And when you start to look at budgets, and what does it take to move a 12-person cast, and then the crew, and then the stage manager, or if I do a one-man stage play where I'm able to at least get this part of the story out."

"There's other visions of what's going to happen as we move on and things expand, so as we're able to do more, we're going to definitely do more. This is a show that is very simplistic in the fact that it's three set pieces, so it doesn't take a whole lot to travel — a table, a chair and a box — but there are visual elements and an immersive experience."



Watch the full conversation with J. Leon Pridgen II on The Creatives Podcast on The Post's YouTube page.

My father was a career soldier. I have great uncles who were part of the first class of Black paratroopers, so in my house, the Harlem Hellfighters, the Buffalo Soldiers, Benjamin Davis, the Tuskegee Airmen, they were talked about.

J. LEON PRIDGEN II, writer and star of 'Ben Davis – Watch Him Fly'

Liftoff for Discovery Place Science exhibit

By Herbert L. White

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Discovery Place Science is taking flight with an aerospace exhibit.

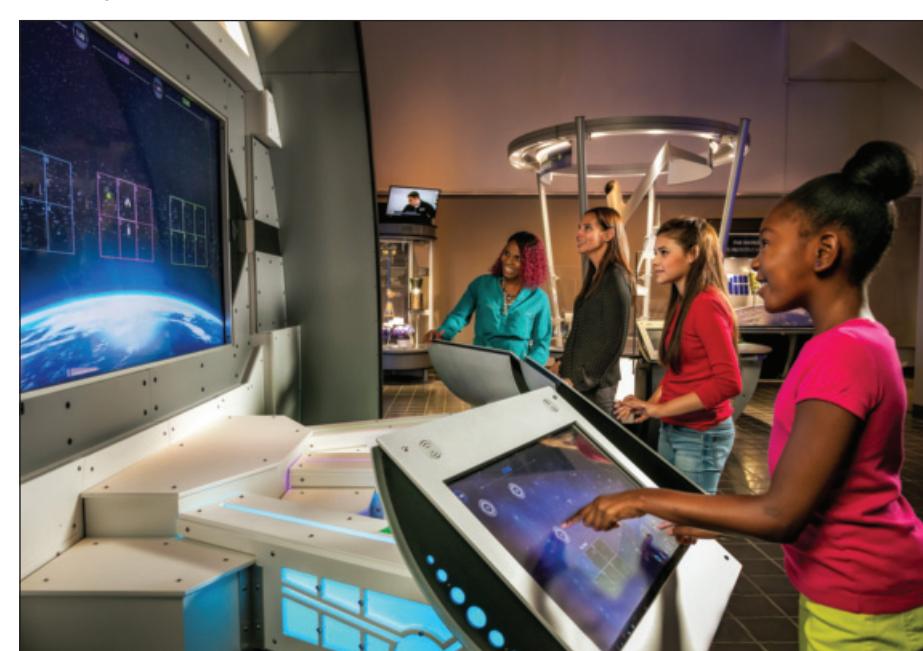
The Oct. 18 opening of "Above and Beyond" journeys explores the cosmos with an interactive exhibit produced by Evergreen Exhibitions in association with Boeing, through a collaboration with NASA and the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

The exhibit, which goes through April 19, 2026, recognizes innovations that have shaped flight — from the Wright brothers to space exploration and aviation technology.

"Above and Beyond" isn't just an exhibition, it's an experience designed to inspire wonder across generations," said Catherine Wilson Horne, Discovery Place's president and CEO. "This exhibition invites our community to discover how aerospace innovations have shaped our world, from the earliest days of flight to the cutting edge of space exploration. It's a chance to dream bigger, think farther and imagine what comes next."

The exhibit is a hands-on exploration of air and space travel through simulations, design challenges and storytelling of the history and future of aerospace. "Above and Beyond" starts in a wraparound immersive theater, then spreads into five galleries with distinctive themes and interactive stations. Among them are:

- Riding a simulated space elevator to the edge of space
- The design and testing of a supersonic jet in a virtual high-speed flying challenge
- A motion-sensing group flying ex-



Journey into outer space and explore cutting-edge solutions to see if you can eliminate the most orbital debris surrounding Earth in "Above and Beyond," an exhibition opening at Discovery Place Science on Oct. 18.

perience that simulates the forces of flight

• The science of lift, drag and propulsion through augmented reality

• Sparking an interest in the wonder of aerospace at an early age is a priority of Boeing, and the 'Above and Beyond'

exhibition provides future engineers, pilots or astronauts with an interactive glimpse into how they can achieve their dreams and inspires them to pursue careers in science and technology," said Todd Citron Ph.D., chief technology officer and vice president and general manager of Boeing Research &

Technology.

"Above and Beyond" will be open daily and Discovery Place Science will have programming highlighting aeronautics from flight mechanics of animals to early airplanes and the future of space exploration.

Programs include building hydroponic gardens for growing food in space; hands-on engineering challenges in the forces of flight and the roles of aviation maintenance technicians; and how the forces of pressure, suction, force and air pressure impact where we live.



Bill Cosby is talking about a society that profits from negative images of Black people in an interview with Black Press USA.

Bill Cosby talks prison, freedom and erasure

By Stacy M. Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

Bill Cosby said his widely criticized admonition that young Black men should "pull their pants up" was less about fashion and more about a system that profits from negative images of African Americans.

"But what was it they used to say? They not only did that, but what got a lot of attention was the shoes, the untied laces, and then the pants down around the crack. And if this is the attention, then it's something put towards you like they would put drugs into the neighborhood. They would lace the marijuana. They are putting us under siege," Cosby said during a candid interview on Black Press USA's "Let It Be Known."

He tied those images directly to incarceration.

"No prisoners had or were allowed to have their pants around the crack. No prisoners were allowed at Phoenix to go around with untied shoelaces," he said. "So, I just felt this was a move by people who didn't want to be tied up to have a picture. They would rather have a picture of a youth doing nothing, not studying, and having his pants lowered."

The remarks came in Cosby's first wide-ranging interview about his prison experience, the longstanding NBC rumor, media's portrayal of his life, and the erasure of Black history.

Refusing to sign away innocence

Cosby, famously known as "America's Dad," served nearly three years at Pennsylvania's SCI Phoenix following a 2018 conviction on an aggravated indecent assault charge.

In 2021, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that his trial and conviction were illegal, ordered his release, and barred any retrial. He said prosecutors offered him a way out — if he admitted guilt.

"My lawyer came to me and said, the district attorney is offering you to sign a paper saying you did it, and that you would be, you wouldn't have to do prison time," Cosby recalled. "And I told my lawyer to continue with the trial, don't stop the trial. I wasn't signing any papers or anything."

Even in prison, Cosby said, the same deal was dangled before him. "Sign the paper and go to these classes, and then we will let you go," he said. "Well, my signature would be in a sealed envelope, and nobody could open it. So anyway, it was all set up from way in the beginning."

Life at Phoenix

Cosby recalled his first hours inside. "When I entered Phoenix for the first time, I could not see," he said. "And there were regulations such as taking off your clothes and switching to other things, and then the search for some things that you might have." He said he was kept alone at first. "I was by myself except for a guard or two around the area," he said. Later, he was moved onto a unit with "convicts who really and truly had done some things like murder, rape, and et cetera, et cetera." He described the food as barely edible. "It was just that the food was so salty, and it was just that the food appeared from, if you fixed it or it could be written how it's fixed, it wouldn't be healthy for human consumption," he said.

Inside, Cosby also became a speaker at peer programs like "Mann Up" and "Men of Valor." Because the men talked so much about their faith and reverence of Jesus Christ, Cosby said, "As you leave this prison, whatever you go out and become... make Jesus smile."

The release

Cosby described being asleep in his cell when word came.

"A resident... said, 'Mr. Cosby, Mr. Cosby, you have to wake up. You can go home. You can go home,'" he said.

A white female officer with the rank of major came to push his wheelchair out. "I said, 'This is not like driving Miss Daisy. And she said, 'Who's Miss Daisy?'" Cosby recalled. He said as he

was wheeled down the corridor, he heard applause from two levels of cells.

"It was enough to have all of these fellows clapping," he said.

The NBC rumor

Cosby addressed the decades-old claim that his downfall stemmed from an attempt to buy NBC.

"I have no evidence to that effect, and nothing comes up to it," he said. He recounted a Wall Street meeting with financiers that ended in rejection. "The reason for rejecting us for the loan was that they, the people loaning the money, didn't know anything about television," he said.

Still, he said, the rumor consumed media attention.

"Media was the most egregious because I have never been hassled so much in 'are you going to buy NBC?'" Cosby said. He pointed to an article suggesting he would "hire his friends" if successful.

"That gave me an idea of how these people were protecting things from, and I think it was a wink that this fellow was writing about... well, he's going to bring all his Black friends," he said.

Media erasure and 'The Cosby Show'

Cosby said there was a deliberate effort to erase his achievements.

"I heard from a source that a person went on TV and said, let nothing good be said about Bill Cosby," he said. "From that point on, every source that I know of in the media only printed negative things." He defended the cultural impact of "The Cosby Show."

"Media didn't like the fact that the Huxtables were that," he said. "They said they were rich, which they're not. That's middle income. He's a doctor, she's a lawyer. And they don't have a maid or a butler or anything like that."

He recalled a moment when executives considered removing a small set detail. "It just said, abolish Apartment," he said of the sign on Theo's door. "And somebody said to me, well, they want to take that sign down. I said, if you do, you can take the show with it."

Wealth, family, and health

Cosby recalled a conversation with his daughter Erin when she was nine. "She said, Dad, are we wealthy? I said, no, we are rich, but we're not wealthy," he said. "Wealthy people can afford maintenance. Rich people can afford to buy things, but there's still a bill, and when can you pay if you're rich?"

He credited his wife, Camille, for preserving his life and health. "She has continuously said it's what you put in your mouth, and if you eat clean, then your brain will be clean, and your body, and your blood," Cosby stated. "She makes sure that we eat like that, and that's why, at age 88, I'm cancer-free, and I don't have any ailments of forgetting things." When Cosby would call his wife from prison, she remained very protective of her husband of more than 60 years. Camille Cosby understood that every phone call at SCI-Phoenix was recorded, and she refused to allow officials to see any vulnerability. "Whenever I called her, I just badly wanted to tell her how I felt," Cosby recounted. "And, she would say, 'just be quiet.' She didn't want me to say anything."

Fight over Black history

Cosby warned against efforts to remove Black history from classrooms and museums. "If you remove those things, you remove the spirit of our achievements," Cosby said. "It's not going to be Wilma Rudolph winning any races there, but Wilma Rudolph, who was born obviously, it was polio that attacked her, and she still was an Olympic champion."

He continued, "The spirit of success and the continuation of being told that you are dumb, to be told that you cannot compete on any level with people, with white people. What story are they going to tell? I think they never wanted to pay the slaves, and they never forgave us for that."

OUT & ABOUT

PHOTOS BY DANIEL COSTON | FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST



Kia Millican, Reggie Celestine, Michelle Kirby and Charles Kirby at the annual BBQ and Blue Jeans on Sept. 6. The event benefited the non-profit organization, Pal's Place.



Anthony Gill, Marcus Lucas and Mat Gibson enjoyed the annual Panther luncheon, held at Le Meridien Hotel on Aug. 28.

'Seen & Heard' traces struggles of Black representation on TV

By Stacy M. Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

Issa Rae is once again betting on Black, this time by turning the lens on the complicated history of African American representation on television.

Her new two-part HBO documentary, "Seen and Heard: The History of Black Television," debuted Sept. 9 on HBO and HBO Max, and it doesn't shy away from exposing both the breakthroughs and the betrayals that have defined Black TV. The project, which began development in 2019, features powerhouse voices including Oprah Winfrey, Tyler Perry, Tracee Ellis Ross, Shonda Rhimes, Ava DuVernay, and Norman Lear.

Together, they recount the triumphs of Black storytelling and the persistent roadblocks that have too often stripped creators of the rewards their work built.

"We wanted to make a comprehensive history and showcase, with evidence, that this is how they built the success of their networks on our backs, and we almost don't have anything to show for it as a result. It's tragic, and history repeats itself," Rae said during a keynote conversation at South by Southwest.

She explained that she was inspired early by sitcoms like "Moesha," "Girl-

friends," and "Martin," but grew disillusioned in the 2000s when those shows vanished and reality television, often humiliating and exploitative in its portrayal of Black women, dominated screens.

Rae recalled an infamous moment on "Flavor of Love" where a contestant was denied a restroom break and degraded on camera.

"This is humiliating, and this is all Black women have on television right now," she said, adding that the disappearance of scripted Black shows pushed her to start creating her own work.

"It makes such a difference when you're thinking about something as small as set design," Rae told "CBS Mornings," stressing how details like a Black character's bedroom or hairstyle can determine whether a story feels authentic. "Watching it myself and hearing some of these stories for the first time inspires me."

"The end of that documentary inspires me to do more and get my shit together."

"Seen and Heard" is hailed as both a celebration of resilience and a reckoning with exploitation, reminding audiences that visibility is not enough if ownership and respect remain out of reach. "It makes such a difference when Black creators control their own stories," she said.

Star Trek plans packed lineup for franchise's 60th anniversary

By Itzel Luna

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Not many franchises have fueled society's timeless fascination with the boundless possibilities of a utopian future like "Star Trek."

Next year the sprawling franchise will add more shows, Lego sets and even a Rose Parade float in a yearlong celebration of its 60th anniversary.

The hefty lineup of "fan-central" celebrations was announced by the franchise on its 59th anniversary Monday, known as Star Trek Day. The projects are the first wave, Paramount said in its announcement.

"The 60th anniversary celebrates 'Space for Everybody,' extending an open invitation to celebrate the future that "Star Trek" aspires to — a future of HOPE, a future of EXPLORATION and a future where we rise to the challenge to BE BOLD," the announcement read.

The sci-fi franchise began with the TV series created by Gene Roddenberry that debuted in 1966 and has since sprawled into a multi-billion dollar cultural

phenomenon.

Today, fans, known as Trekkies, have enjoyed countless movies, spinoff shows and video games.

Set in the Milky Way a couple hundred years in the future, the series followed the crew behind the starship USS Enterprise. Their journey led them to, "Boldly go where no man has gone before," as William Shatner, who played Captain James T. Kirk, famously said at the top of every episode.

Celebration starts at Rose Parade

The yearlong celebration will kick off on New Year's Day, with a float in the Rose Parade in California. The float "will reflect values of hope, inclusivity, exploration and unity," the franchise representatives wrote in a statement.

The float will also feature the upcoming new series "Star Trek: Starfleet Academy" set to launch in early 2026 on Paramount+. The show will center on a group of young cadets who navigate the responsibilities of becoming Starfleet officers all the while juggling new friendships, love interests and enemies.

Paramount gave a first look of the show, which

starts actors Holly Hunter and Paul Giamatti, during a Comic-Con event in late July.

The franchise also announced "Star Trek: Scout," a new original, animated YouTube-first series. Created by Nickelodeon Digital Studio in association with CBS Studio, the show is the first preschool extension of the franchise. It follows three 8-year-old friends as they train to become future Starfleet Explorers.

The first two episodes of the 20-episode run were released Monday, and the rest will roll out into the next year.

A new scripted podcast, "Star Trek: Khan" also released its first episode Monday. New episodes will air weekly and chronicle Khan's descent into the iconic villain introduced in the 1982 film "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan."

New partnerships

Following the longstanding success of Lego partnerships with similar franchises like "Star Wars," the company will partner with Paramount for the first time to bring "Star Trek" to life.