

Life!

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2025 SECTION B

Autumn’s near and so are these local attractions

By Nikya Hightower
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Fall is in the air. With shorter days right around the corner, here is a list of upcoming events to enjoy the seasonal switch from summer break to fall.

Family friendly events

- Patterson Farm Market offers more than 40 attractions including pumpkins, wagon rides and a corn maze. Events start Sept. 20 and run through Nov. 1. Fall Fun passes are available online and general admission online and at the gate.
- Carrigan Farms has a pumpkin picking experience that can be enjoyed by the whole family. The pumpkin patch opens Sept. 27, and tickets cost \$15 per person for ages 2 and older. Visitors can enjoy a hayride and get the opportunity to pick their pumpkin right off the vine.
- Hodges Family Farm, 3780 Rocky River Road, offers pumpkin picking, hayrides, livestock and sweet treats starting Sept. 27. The farm is pocket-friendly with no entry fee but parking costs \$5, and hayrides are \$5 per person for ages 3 and up.
- VAPA Center hosts “Dig In! Little Explorers: Costumes and Curiosity” Oct. 28, 10 a.m. at 700 N. Tryon St. Kids up to age 5 are invited to wear a costume and participate in seasonal engaged learning activities. Tickets are \$10 for a family up to four and \$5 per additional person.
- Charlotte Kids Festival is Oct. 4 from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Shoppes at University Place, 9325 JW Clay Blvd. The free event includes interactive activities, live performances, games and crafts.
- Bookpalooza, hosted by Books on the House takes place Oct. 11 from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Urban District Market, 2315 N. Davidson St. Readers and au-

Please see **AUTUMN’S** | 2B

65 or older? No prescription for COVID booster

By Anne Blythe
NC HEALTH NEWS

In an effort to tamp down confusion and frustration about who can and can't get a COVID vaccine, and whether they have to have a health care provider's prescription, state health director Larry Greenblatt has issued orders making access to the new boosters easier.

Anyone 65 and older can now go to their pharmacy without a prescription and roll up their sleeve for a jab if they want.

The same is true for people 18 and older with certain medical conditions and risk factors — a broad list that includes asthma, diabetes, obesity, cancer, depression, former or current smoking, pregnancy, many disabilities and physical inactivity.

As of Sept. 12, to receive a COVID-19 vaccine in North Carolina, one needs:

- To be 65 or older
- Or ages 18 to 64 with a preexisting condition that qualifies you for a vaccine.
- Others will need a prescription from a health care provider.

In making the announcement on Friday afternoon, Gov. Josh Stein told reporters he wanted to remove “unnecessary red tape” so people who qualified for the vaccines and wanted protection from the surge of COVID across the state could get them without a trip or call to their health provider.

North Carolina has seen a sharp increase this month in COVID detected in wastewater, according to the state Department of Health and Human Services.

“As temperatures drop, and with fall right around the corner, it’s the time of year when many people want to take action to protect themselves from viruses,” Stein said, adding that people who want a

Please see **65 OR OLDER** | 3B

«RIDES

Elantra N is a sporty offshoot of Hyundai’s popular sedan

By Winfred Cross
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

As fewer car companies offer sedans these days, Kia and Hyundai are still in the game.

Each is not only offering sedans, but sedans that are sporty or close to flat-out sports cars. Hyundai’s Elantra is one of them. You can get the pedestrian version, the spicy N-line version or the full-blown sports car called the N.

The Elantra N is a small, four-door sedan that seats five people. It differs from other Elantras in that the engine makes 276 horsepower, an adaptive, sport-tuned suspension and electronic limited-slip suspension. There is an option

for a manual six-speed transmission or the more efficient eight-speed transmission.

On a track with the automatic transmission the Elantra N has achieved 60 miles per hour in 5.5 seconds. This car is very quick. There is torque steer at launch but manageable. The steering is delightfully quick and has a lot of feedback. You can turn sharply, quickly and effortlessly. The standard summer tires have enough grip to allow you to corner like you are on rails.

The Elantra N is built to excel on a track but if you want to have fun in day-to-day driving that option has been checked as well. It

passes with ease and builds power smoothly and aggressively. Whipping in and out of traffic is a breeze and if you need to scrub off some speed, the excellent brakes will bail you out.

The N is far more comfortable than I thought, but its stiff suspension is evident on large bumps. I tried to avoid most and found the ride to be comfortable. The front seats were a bit tight for my taste but that was to be expected. They are overly supportive for aggressive driving. Hyundai may need to spend to a few more dollars soundproofing the N. There is an above average amount of wind and road



HYUNDAI

Hyundai's Elantra N is a sportier version of the popular sedan with a rear wing and more horsepower than its standard model.

noise, but you can drown a lot of it out with the Bose stereo.

The Elantra also gets different styling cues from the plain version. Red accents encircle the car's bottom while the brake calipers are also red. There is also a spoiler on the rear deck.

The N's interior is also attractive. The seats are the biggest upgrades from the

Please see **ELANTRA** | 2B



UNC CHARLOTTE

UNC Charlotte researcher Danilo Augusto Ph.D. (center) and his team earned a \$3.7 million federal grant to study autoimmune responses to disease in humans by examining portions of the human genome.

Researcher earns grant for autoimmune study

UNCC’s Danilo Augusto awarded \$3.7 million in federal funds

By Cameron Williams
cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

UNC Charlotte researcher Danilo Augusto Ph.D. has dedicated his career to autoimmune research.

Augusto was recently awarded a \$3.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health for an immunomics project using new methodology and approaches to study human immune responses and autoimmune disease.

“The disease I am working on with this grant is called pemphigus foliaceus,” Augusto said. “It is an autoimmune disease of the skin that will cause people to have blisters and rashes that are very painful.”

Augusto and his team are using

what he called a novel method by using long-read sequencing technology, a first of its kind in how it examines complex portions of the human genome. They’ll also study how it reacts with pathogens, eliciting autoimmune responses.

While there are a vast number of autoimmune diseases, Augusto says he hopes to make observations about how such diseases start, how they attack the body and similarities to how the blood cells in these individuals work, or don’t.

“The genomic region that we are studying is like a hot spot for disease association,” he said. “In this very large region, there are approximately 170 genes and about 50% of them are directly related to

the immune system. The research could have a large impact on how we understand human immune response and multiple diseases.”

The type of research Augusto and his team are conducting is called immunomics, or study of how genes affect how the body responds to different pathogens. With this type of research comes a high cost. Augusto said the grant will go a long way in helping further his research.

“The main cost of the research comes from personnel,” Augusto said. “I have one assistant research professor and two post-doctoral researchers working on that grant [money]. Their salaries will be covered by that grant, but

Please see **RESEARCHER** | 2B

Plant this fall for beautiful spring bouquets

By Melinda Myers
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

This fall plant an array of spring flowering bulbs to brighten your garden and bouquets. There are plenty of daffodils, tulips, hyacinths and alliums that will delight with an assortment of flower colors and sizes that will bloom throughout the spring.

Include animal resistant double, bicolor, and split cup daffodils that provide unique beauty and impact in floral arrangements. Create a simple bouquet with just a few stems of daffodils or an elegant arrangement of single and double flowered varieties.

Harvest daffodils when the buds show color and are perpendicular to the stem like a goose's neck. Don't worry about the sap daffodils exude, shortening the life of the other cut flowers in the arrangement. Properly conditioning the daffodils will eliminate the risk to your other spring favorites.

Consider wearing gloves as some people report itching or rashes when handling these plants. Use your hands to harvest daf-



LONGFIELD GARDENS

A bouquet consisting of unique daffodil varieties found in one of Longfield Gardens' daffodil bulb collections.

fodils for the longest stems possible and to reduce sap released from the stem. Reach into the base of the flower stem, thumb pointed down and pull up. Cut the stems of freshly picked daffodils to the desired length for conditioning. Place them in a clean container of cool water and floral preservative. Leave them in the water for three to six hours when the sap

stops flowing. Do not recut the stems before adding them to mixed flower arrangements.

Tulips have long been a favorite of gardeners and floral arrangers. Grow some taller varieties like Finola, Foxtrot, Silver Parrot Tulips and Negrita Double (longfield-gardens.com).

Gardeners growing tulips strictly for cutting will plant the bulbs in trenches

and treat them as annuals. The first-year bloom is always the biggest, but you can enjoy them cut and try for a second and third year of flowers. Just cut the stems short and leave at least two to three leaves on the plant to create and store energy for next year's bloom.

Harvest tulips when the buds are just starting to

Please see **PLANT** | 2B

Researcher earns grant for autoimmune study

Continued from page 1B

this is also very expensive from the research standpoint itself. Lab materials and some of the experiments themselves can cost a lot of money, especially when we are using research tools that are extremely advanced. We do a lot of DNA sequencing and analysis of specific single cells. This is very expensive. So, those are the main costs that the grant will cover.”

Augusto, who has conducted autoimmune research for 20 years, has reported findings that can be beneficial to physicians that treat autoimmune disease.

“We found, for example, that there’s receptors in some blood cells called natural killer cells, and those natural killer cells are specialized in killing abnormal cells,” he said. “So, we identified some of those receptors and these cells, they’re highly protective against pemphigus.”

Augusto said two other autoimmune diseases that have similarities with pemphigus are lupus and dermatitis. Often the cells work in the same way with these types of diseases, so while they aren’t the same, understanding one disease can help understand others.

“I think my ultimate goal is to actually identify specific markers that are candid for specific [gene] therapy,” Augusto said. “I’m not a physician, but at least we want to find what could be used for better therapy for this disease. The other thing is being able to identify if there is an environmental factor. We know there is something in the environment that triggered the disease, but we want to know what. Is it a virus? Is it a pathogenic virus or non-pathogenic virus? So, understanding that could also be ways we can help prevention.”

Autumn’s near, so is a calendar full of local seasonal attractions

Continued from page 1B

thors are invited to come together to enjoy a day of giveaways, book signings, and entertainment. Free.

Haunts

• The 13th Acre, 3718 Plyler Mill Road in Monroe, opens Sept. 19. Tickets are \$30 for two full-sized haunted houses. VIP tickets are \$65 and include access to the Oddities Bar and the haunted house.

They also offer refreshments and fire pits for people looking to hang out before or after their experience.

• Lake Hickory Haunts, 520 Carolina Ave. in Hickory has 13 attractions with high productions inspired by iconic horror films, escape rooms and an amphitheater for live entertainment. General admission is \$30, fast pass tickets are \$45, and

VIP passes are \$68. Ticket prices go up as the season gets busier. The haunt runs weekends from Sept. 12-Nov. 2.

• Spooky Woods, 1615 Kersey Valley Road in Archdale, is an hour long haunted attraction. Tickets vary by night. The haunted attraction includes several different themes including some recognizable horror film characters. They also offer adult beverages and snacks accompanied by a live DJ.

Adult nightlife

• Wine, whiskey and fire will be held at 11611 N. Community House Road.

The event includes live music, fire pits, whiskey and wine tasting along with four samples from grilling stations. General admission tickets are \$69, and VIP tickets

are \$99.

• Black Lagoon pop up bar returns from Oct. 1-5. The speakeasy is located 2433 South Blvd.

• Rich & Bennett Pub Crawl takes over uptown on Oct. 25 with more than 20 bars offering drink specials. Tickets range from \$10 to \$25, with a portion of the proceeds going to Carolina Breast Friends.

Cirque de Souless, a haunted circus with performances, food, art and entertainment, will be held at Bloom Movement Artistry, 6150 Old Pineville Road, Suite B. The event runs from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., and tickets start at \$13.35.

Community and giving back

• The Susan G. Komen More Than Pink Walk is Oct. 11 at Symphony Park. Participants can register online, donate or volunteer to support the fight against breast cancer.

• The NoDa Freaky 5K invites the community to dress in costume and join the run through one of Charlotte’s spookiest neighborhoods on Oct. 25. Registration is \$45 for ages 13 and up and \$15 for ages 5 to 12. Proceeds will go towards NoDa NBA community projects.

• First Tee Charlotte, in partnership with Subaru and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control, will host a Halloween family event at 10410 Cadillac St., Pineville, from 6 to 9 p.m.

Activities include trunk or treat, golf activities, games and opportunities to adopt a pet. You can register online.

Elantra N is a sporty offshoot of Hyundai’s popular sedan

Continued from page 1B

standard Elantra. They are bolstered sports seats that keep the driver and passenger in place while throwing then car about wildly. The seats also power adjustments that help find the most comfortable position. I like the illuminated N at the base of the headrests. The back seat will hold three folks, but two will be the most comfortable. The sloped roof still allows easy entry and exit.

Were there anything I didn’t like about the N? Yes, but nothing major. I’m older, so this felt too low to the ground for my tastes. The doors open wide but

the height made it a little difficult to enter or exit. There was also a creaking noise when I turned right, but not on every turn.

That said, I found the Elantra N to be a great driver. The car handles like nobody’s business and it’s really quick. This is a lot of sports car for a reasonable price, but it could use a little refining. It comes standard with a lot of stuff, but you don’t get adaptive cruise control. That’s not a deal-breaker because most who buy this car will want to be in control of all the power.

The N has one trim level, and it’s loaded. Standard equipment includes vari-

able sports exhaust, 19-inch alloy wheels, sport-tuned suspension, sunroof (if you go auto transmission), keyless entry, navigation system, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, wireless smartphone charging, and blind-spot warning. The base price is \$34,221 before tax and destination.

Pros:

- Gobs of power and torque
- Sharp handling
- Sporty looks
- Comfortable interior
- Excellent automatic transmission

Cons:

- Wind and road noise
- No adaptive cruise

Plant in the fall for spring bouquets

Continued from page 1B

show color for the longest vase life. Wait for double and parrot type tulip buds to be fully colored but not yet open. Remove the whole plant, bulb and all, if you do not plan on saving the plants for the following year. Store the tulips upright with the bulbs attached. Cut and rehydrate the stems in water just before arranging.

Wrap the stems in brown paper if they are cut in the garden or when you rehydrate the stems and set them in several inches of cool water for 12 to 18 hours. Keep in mind tulips continue to grow after cut so plan for this when creating your arrangements.

Harvest hyacinths for cutting as you did tulips.

Pull the whole plant, bulb and all, out of the ground if you are growing them as annuals for cutting. Otherwise, cut only the stem and leave all the leaves behind if you want the bulbs to bloom again next year.

Include a variety of alliums in your planting plans this fall. Alliums’ long and sturdy stems make them easy to harvest and arrange. Purple Sensation, Mount Everest, drumstick allium and Allium atropurpureum make excellent additions for floral bouquets.

Cutting and arranging flowers is a wonderful way to bring the beauty of your garden indoors. The more you do it, the easier it gets, and you’ll soon be sharing your flowers with friends,

neighbors, family, co-workers, and everyone who stops by to admire your gardens.

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 was commissioned by Longfield Gardens for her expertise to write this article.

Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Skinny seven-layer dip.

Fresh, flavorful ways to win your tailgate gathering

FAMILY FEATURES

It’s time to tailgate.

Load up your favorite yard games, put on your team’s colors and pack the cooler with drinks and game day foods to get in the spirit.

For some, the real action takes place before kickoff, whether you’re in the parking lot or watching from the comfort of home with fellow diehard fans. To be the star of your next tailgate or homegate, make sure you’ve got fuel for the party with convenient dips that perform at an MVP level.

This Bloody Mary Dip combines a pair of game day favorites – the taste of a morning libation with a savory snack – to calm nerves before the players take the field. It’s made and served with Dandy Celery from Duda Farm Fresh Foods, which boasts a legacy of quality, innovation and consistency in celery cultivation since 1926. Its produce is crispier, sweeter and less stringy, redefining the veggie that’s a perfect teammate for tailgate dips.

Or you can stick with a classic in this Skinny 7-Layer Dip, which layers familiar flavors like garbanzo beans, avocado and shredded cheese but pairs them with nonfat Greek yogurt in place of full-fat sour cream to create a better-for-you game day bite.

For an especially nutritious snack, scoop it using Dandy Celery, which is available year-round, packed with flavor and low in calories, making it a smart choice for snacking and cooking meals throughout the game. Plus, it’s 95% water, high in fiber to leave fans feeling full and refreshed and packaged fresh and crisp with no preservatives.

To find more ways to tackle tailgating menus, visit dudafresh.com.

Bloody Mary Dip

Courtesy of Laughing Spatula on behalf of Duda Farm Fresh Foods

Prep time: 5 minutes

Servings: 8

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 3 tablespoons pimento olives, chopped
- 2 tablespoons onions, chopped
- 2 tablespoons bacon, chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped Dandy Celery, plus additional whole sticks for serving, divided

- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon granulated garlic
- olives, for garnish
- tomatoes, for garnish
- crackers, for serving

In large bowl, combine cream cheese, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, pimento olives, onions, bacon, 1/4 cup chopped celery, salt, pepper and garlic.

Mix well. Transfer to serving dish.

Garnish with skewered olives and tomatoes. Serve with celery and crackers to dip.

Skinny 7-Layer Dip

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 teaspoons hot sauce
- 6-8 tablespoons water
- 2 ripe avocados
- 1 lime, juice only
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup Dandy Celery, minced
- 1 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup onion, minced
- 1 1/2 cups nonfat plain Greek yogurt, plus additional for garnish, divided
- 2 medium tomatoes, diced
- 2 packages Dandy Radish MiniSticks
- 2 cups low-fat cheddar cheese
- 1 cup sliced black olives
- 10 cilantro leaves

In skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil and garlic until softened and lightly browned.

Add garbanzo beans and hot sauce. Cook 3 minutes, stirring frequently.

Scrape contents of pan into food processor, add 6 tablespoons water and process until smooth. Add 1-2 tablespoons water as necessary to get puree to spreadable consistency.

Transfer bean mixture to bowl to cool before assembling dip.

Cut avocados in half and remove pits. Scoop out flesh and cut into 1-inch chunks.

In food processor, process avocado chunks, lime juice and salt until mostly smooth. Set aside until ready to assemble.

In small bowl, mix celery, cilantro, onion and 1 1/2 cups Greek yogurt.

To assemble: Using spoon or plastic bag with tip removed for piping, distribute garbanzo bean mixture evenly among 10 small containers.

Add layer of avocado puree in same manner.

Sprinkle layer of diced tomatoes over avocado puree in each container. Add layer of radish sticks.

Distribute Greek yogurt mixture evenly over cups.

Divide cheese over cups then layer black olives. Garnish with dollop of Greek yogurt and cilantro leaf.



ADOBE STOCK

GLP-1 drugs, originally developed to treat diabetes, is now a popular weight loss drug. The cost of coverage, though, has insurers looking to wean patients.

Insurers struggle with GLP-1 costs; some weaning patients

By Jamie Ducharme

KFF HEALTH NEWS

After losing 50 pounds on the injectable weight loss medication Zepbound, Kyra Wensley received a surprising letter from her pharmacy benefit manager in April.

Her request for coverage had been denied, the letter said, because she’d had a body mass index of less than 35 when she started Zepbound. The 25-year-old who lives in New York had been taking Zepbound without incident for months, so she was con-

fused: Why was her BMI, which had been around 32 when she started, becoming an issue only now?

Wensley had no interest in quitting an effective drug. “Going right off like that, it’s easier said than done,” she said.

Her doctor fought to keep her on the GLP-1 agonist, the category that includes weight loss and Type 2 diabetes drugs Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, and Zepbound. But Wensley ultimately had to switch from Zepbound to Wegovy to meet her plan’s

requirements. She said she doesn’t like Wegovy as much as her old medication, but she now feels lucky to be on any GLP-1.

Lots of research suggests such medications must be used indefinitely to maintain weight loss and related health benefits. But with list prices of roughly \$1,000 a month, public and private payers are struggling to keep up with ballooning demand for GLP-1 weight loss drugs and in some cases are eliminating or restricting their

Please see **INSURERS** | 3B

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Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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A copy of the complete RFQ may be obtained by sending an official Notification-of-Interest via mail or via email to: LaElaina Taylor, Mecklenburg County Asset & Facility Management, 3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 6000, Charlotte, NC 28208 or LaElaina.Taylor@mecklenburgcountync.gov

Virtual Pre-Submittal meeting on September 25, 2025, at 9:00 am. Submittals must be received by October 16, 2025, at 2:00pm.

Upon request, this information will be made available in an alternate format for persons with disabilities by calling 980-314-2500.

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OPERA CAROLINA

Grammy winner Latonia Moore will lead the cast of "Suor Angelica and "Gianni Schicchi" as part of Opera Carolina's 2025-26 season.

Announcing season 76 for Opera Carolina

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

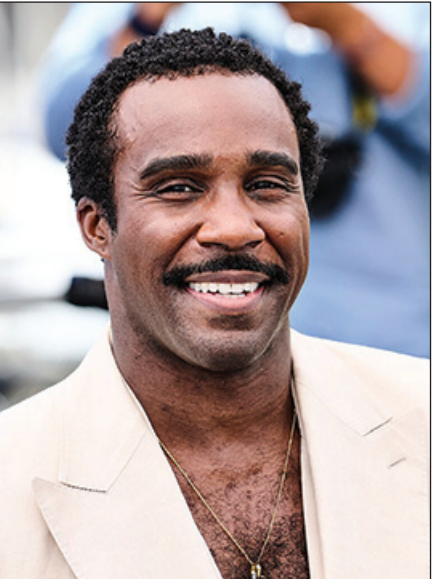
Opera Carolina's 76th season is an ambitious lineup of operas, concerts and community initiatives.

The company's leadership is shaping the season to merge tradition with innovation in opera. Tickets are available at operacarolina.org, on sale for Opera Carolina subscribers and will be available to the public on May 1.

"We're excited to offer an amazing lineup of programming and events that spotlight not only what we're bringing to the stage but also how Opera Carolina is connecting in the community," general director Shanté Williams said in a statement. "Audiences can expect powerhouse performances, compelling stories, and a lot of fun from notable voices from opera houses around the world alongside our group of impressive local talent and upcoming artists."

Said Claudio Ferri, who will debut as artistic director: "Our 76th season reflects Opera Carolina's bold vision for the future Our vision is to broaden Opera Carolina's status amongst the international opera network by presenting world-class productions, co-productions, artists and management."

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WIKIPEDIA

Tramell Tillman is the first Black man to win an Emmy for outstanding supporting actor in a drama series for his role in Apple TV's "Severance."

Tramell Tillman makes Emmys history with his 'Severance' win

By Itzel Luna
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Tramell Tillman is the first Black man to win an Emmy for outstanding supporting actor in a drama series for his role in "Severance."

Tillman spoke backstage Sunday about the "beautiful work" that scores of Black actors have done before him, including the late Andre Braugher and Michael K. Williams.

"I've been taken by their work for years and I've borrowed from them, so I'm just honored to be in the class," Tillman said.

Tillman, 40, thanked his mother in his acceptance speech, who he told reporters backstage "was there for me when no one else was and when no one else could be. There's nothing like a mother's love."

His win brought a total of eight Emmy awards for "Severance," which led nominations this year with a total of 27

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APPLESAUCE GROUP

The eighth annual A Vibe Called Fresh festival returns with staples like roller skating, local art and food vendors as well as the first DJ battle for the Applesauce Group Westside World Wide championship besl.

Mash it up: DJ battle added to westside fest

A Vibe Called Fresh pays homage to neighborhoods culture and history

By Herbert L. White
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A westside street festival has a fresh addition.

The eighth annual A Vibe Called Fresh on Sept. 20 from 1-7 p.m., will include Mashup Madness, a three-round DJ competition with some of Charlotte's best telling stories through music mixes, and transitions in front of a panel of judges.

Competitors for the Applesauce Group Westside World Wide championship belt are:

- B-Man, a classic hip-hop lover whose sample transitions have earned endorsements from Questlove of The Roots, Grandmaster Flash and DJ Jazzy Jeff.
- DJ Diesel, whose high-energy sets are popular among HBCU partygoers.
- DJ Fannie Mae, co-founder of

Sainted Trap Choir and Charlotte FC's official DJ. Her sets have been seen by millions online and led to appearances on "America's Got Talent" and Super Bowl LVIII.

Round one starts at 2 p.m., followed by the second at 4 p.m., and the finale at 6 p.m.

"This is another step in proving that 'Westination Charlotte' is a place where creative and cultural innovation thrives," said Winston Robinson, founder and executive director of Applesauce Group, the festival's non-profit founder. "We've hosted symphonies, live visual art battles, and cultural exchange jams. Now we're adding a competitive twist to show how DJs - storytellers of the culture - can take us on a journey through music in a way that feels fresh, fun, and deeply connected to our community."

The free festival includes skating and free rentals, karaoke, food and small business vendors, local art and a spades contest.

Other attractions include:

- Food vendors serving up the best plates in the city
- The second annual Tommie Robinson Invitational, a live paint visual art battle curated by Ricky Singh
- Community partners offering empowering tools and services)
- Local small businesses showcase of goods and creativity
- Family-friendly contests and creativity activations

On The Net
Applesauce-Group.org

Black cinema at Toronto International Film fest

By Dwight Brown
BLACK PRESS USA

As Toronto International Film Festival turned 50, it rolled out the red carpet for 291 films from around the world.

Over 11 days, features, documentaries and shorts were screened and enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of film lovers. Black directors, actors and their films left lasting impressions in unique ways. These are just a few:

Hedda
3 stars
Writer-director Nia DaCosta ("Candyman") ambitiously interprets the classic 1891 Henrik Ibsen play "Hedda Gabler." Her version sets the main character Hedda (Tessa Thompson, "Creed") in 1950ish England on a grand estate, in a mansion living with her new husband George (Tom Bateman). They throw a party to impress the upper crust, but really they've run out of money and are desperate for him to land a job as a professor.

His duty at the party is to impress a guest who might become a possible boss at a university. Her's is to sabotage his competition for the position, the author Eileen Lovborg (Nina Hoss). The venom flows as freely as the champagne.

Says the professor and potential boss, "I'm gonna shoot whoever slept with my wife." Hedda warns, "You're going to run out of bullets!"

DaCosta steers the wicked tale in the right directions. Greatly aided by Thompson, whose performance is sharp as a razor blade. Terse, witty dialogue propels the storyline as well as sneaky tricks, embarrassing incidents, drunken debauchery and outlandish behavior.

Unkind words are said. Drinks are thrown. The antics are beautifully shot (cinematographer Sean Bobbitt, "12 Years a Slave"), especially a fireworks scene.

The settings (production designer Cara Brower) are as sumptuous as the costumes (Lindsay Pugh). There are lulls in the pacing, and some may wish that all the scenes were consistently tight and venomous.

Otherwise, devilish fun is rarely this beautiful. FYI, it looks like the driveway to the mansion goes both ways. So does "Hedda."

Laundry
2.5 stars
In 1968 South Africa, the horror of apartheid reigns, and this Black family is living through it. Their anchor is a laundry owned by the family patriarch Enoch (Siyabonga Shibe). It's a business



TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Tessa Thompson in "Hedda."

he wants to pass on to his 16-year-old son Khuthala (Ntobeko Sishi). That's the plan. Except, the heir wants to be a musician.

Regardless, both their lives are made difficult by operating a black-owned business in a white racist neighborhood. Affiliations with racist town officials are tentative on a good day. Degrading on a normal one.

Filmmaker Zamo Mkhwanazi recreates the period well. But most of the sets look sterile. Too clean. Not lived in. A lot of the performances are never as deep-rooted and emotional as they should be to reflect the harrowing times.

Mkhwanazi based the story on her grandfather's laundry business, which was taken from him by the apartheid government.

Her fervent desire to tell a story about middle class people who were robbed of their businesses and dignity is evident in every frame. Nicely shot by Gabriel Lobos, though the lighting could have been more intimate and editing tighter (Christine Hoffet).

Reminds viewers how far South Africa has come and may make some wonder how that country, after all it went through, chose truth and reconciliation over vengeance.

My Father's Shadow
4 stars
"May the four colors of the earth bless me. I will see you in my dreams."

Writer/director Akinola Davies has a way with words that's poetic. Also, a

feel for sensitive and compelling storytelling, which pervades all that's delicately drawn in this father/son allegory.

Two young brothers, Remi (Chibuike Marvelous Egbo) the outspoken one and Aki (Godwin Chiemerie Egbo) the introvert, live in a rural town. They love each other even when they're bickering. The day they reunite with their estranged dad Folarin (Sopé Dirisu, "Gangs of London"), there is a monumental shift in the father/son relationship.

Especially when he takes them to the big city of Lagos in 1993 and they experience the perils of a very volatile election, military rule and big city dangers. It's a humanizing experience for all. Folarin: "My own father had many wives. Before he died he told me the only job a man has is to take care of his family."

Davies weaves this fable with the help of his cowriter and brother Wale Davies. They establish the bond between the brothers in ways that are universal. Then they pair them with an absentee, philandering and yet loving dad. That's when their true genius kicks in.

Folarin says all the things a dad who hasn't done his job thoroughly would say if he was honest about his feelings. And Remi asks him all the questions a son would ask a father who wasn't there.

As forgiveness takes center stage, the

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Ntobeko Sishi. in "Laundry."

Black cinema at Toronto International Film fest

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narrative captures your heart and doesn't let go. Scenes of the three on a beach are reminiscent of sequences from the Oscar winning film "Moonlight."

Gorgeously filmed by cinematographer Jermain Canute Edwards, from the quiet moments to scary ones when soldiers dressed in olive green uniforms patrol on a truck and sneer. Entire cast is perfectly clothed by costume designer P.C. Williams in western and African garb.

Footage is edited by Omar Guzmán with certain precision. The music by C.J. Mirra and Duval Timothy is wondrous. A meditation on fatherhood, political strife and the frailty of life that's touching beyond words.

Youngblood
2.5 stars

His soul is on ice.

Dean Youngblood (Ashton James) is a young celebrated Canadian hockey player who needs a second chance. He's given that the day he becomes a rookie on the Hamilton Mustangs team. Unfortunately for him, his cold-hearted coach Murray (Shawn Doyle) is aloof, and his new team hazes him. In the back of his mind, the teachings of his stern dad (Blair Underwood) guide and propel him forward.

Those missives also set him up to be

suspicious of all and assume that the world is stacked against him.

Filmmaker Hubert Davis knows the subject matter well. He won TIFF's People's Choice Award for Best Documentary for his stirring documentary "Black Ice" back in 2022. That perceptive filmmaking revealed the tribulations of Black hockey players in Canada.

It was a project that familiarized him with the challenges of a talented minority players who struggle to get treated fairly. This project is a twist on the 1986 Rob Lowe movie of the same name and with a similar subject matter.

Davis works well with James and Alexandra McDonald, who plays his love interest. Underwood is consistently tough as the taskmaster father. Everyone loves a sports movie. But it's harder when the narrative seems so focused on the trials of the protagonist and not enough on the triumphs.

That's the flaw in a script credited to Josh Epstein, Kyle Rideout, Seneca Aaron and Charles Officer. A flaw that nulls some of the good work the director, cast and production crew do. But not enough to entirely block the film's goals.

Visit film critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.

Opera Carolina announces programming for 2025-26

Continued from page 5B

The season will kick off Nov. 1 for "A Night to Remember" at Belk Theater, with a tribute to Puccini's heroines, in partnership with the Puccini Festival of Torre del Lago. The company will team up with Mint Museum Uptown Nov. 9 for its first-ever 9/11 commemorative concert with a performance of Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater."

Opera Carolina will bring three masterpieces to the main stage next season:

- Music director and principal conductor Stefano Vignati will open the season with "Suor Angelica" and "Gianni Schicchi," both by Giacomo Puccini, in January.
- Grammy-winning singer Latonia Moore leads the cast along with Italian voices Daniela Barcellona, Natale De Carolis, and Eric Ferring.
- Denyce Graves perform the title role and direct Gian Carlo Menotti's drama "The Medium," in April.
- "The Magic Flute," a co-production with Italy-based Teatro Sociale di Como will revive its collaboration with the International Lyric Academy with an all-star cast at Central Piedmont Community College's Halton Theater in June.

Also:

- Bella Notte, the company's major fundraiser, moves to New Year's Eve.

The Bel Canto Incanto Concert Series features a roster of performers from other opera houses including two of the best opera vocalists in Erin Morley and Lawrence Brownlee on May 2.

Tramell Tillman makes Emmys history with his 'Severance' win

Continued from page 5B

nodes. Britt Lower also took home best lead actress in a drama for the show. The Apple TV+ thriller series, centers on an office where workers' memories are surgically divided between their work and personal lives.

Tillman plays Seth Milchick, the floor manager who is considered one of the show's main antagonists, given his loyalty to the company, Lumon.

Milchick's Blackness was integral to the character's

storyline, Tillman said, adding that he hoped to portray the character as "a man that was aware of his race and aware that he was in a place where he was one of few."

The second season explored "how race folds into the world of Lumon," he said.

"I never wanted to lose sight of that and I'm grateful that I was a part of a team that also didn't want to lose sight of that," Tillman said.

Tillman studied medi-

cine as an undergrad before he found his passion for acting, a career that he was told "leads to a dead end."

"I was actually inspired at [historically Black] Xavier University by so many of my classmates who are now doctors and dentists, how they were pursuing the thing that they're passionate about, and I said, 'Well, if they can do that, why can't I do what I'm passionate about?'" Tillman said.

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