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The Real Views



Dec. 27, 2024

Natchitoches Parish

Vol 22 Issue 12

Forever Remembered: Marcus James Sowell Jr.'s Legacy

1 Year Anniversary of his murder in Natchitoches that remains unsolved

Marcus James Sowell Jr. (MJ) was family-oriented; he loved riding and caring for horses. They were therapeutic to him, and he loved other animals as well. MJ was a loving, caring son; he was a good father, brother, cousin, grandson, godson, friend, uncle, and no stranger. He was an excellent athlete from little league to twelfth grade. He was a loving, caring, respectful young man. Coming up as a little boy, he was troubled, but when he became a father, it changed him into a better young man. He leaves behind two boys, Marcus James Sowell III (5) & Kaiyre' Amire' Sowell (1).

My son was not perfect, and I didn't say raising him wasn't a handful, but despite it all, his legacy will live on, and justice will be served. No one had the

right to steal my son's life from me cowardly like they did. Marcus was taken away from me and my family. No matter what circumstances that might have been. I will not rest, sleep, or be satisfied, or at PEACE about anything until someone pays for this sense-

less act. If you see something, say something because it just might be you one day who might need someone to speak up for your loved one. Now, be blessed. To the person responsible for this senseless act, trust me, you won't get any rest.



Forever Remembered: Marcus James Sowell Jr's Legacy

Mj my Godson it's been a year since God called you home to be by his side. although it hurts so bad I thank God every day that he gave you his son to us if only for a short time. Your work down here was done but your memory, your legacy lives on though us and your kids I Love you always Rest in heaven, sing with the angels and hold a place up there for us . Until then rest on my baby.- Doretha


For those that don't or didn't know my grandson if you ever needed a smile look at MJ. If you needed a good laugh look at to MJ, if you needed a shoulder to cry on or a listening ear there was MJ. If you needed a ride or die that was your boy MJ he was groomed like that. You are well missed grandson. Love Granny Alison



The last tight hug I got from you was Christmas Eve not knowing that would be the last time I saw you alive. Christmas night you were robbed from us much too soon. You may be gone physically but you are very much alive in our hearts. Love you always my lil' big cousin. You are forever loved and forever missed. Fly high MJ. Your cousin Jeanine



I love you dearly MJ & and miss you It's been rough lately. Godmother Monia



The Real Views

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Elections have Consequences III

By: Marvin Blake Jr.

On November 5, 2024, Donald Trump was elected for the second time as President of the United States of America. He will be sworn in on January 20, 2025. In addition, republican will control U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate.

As the country moves forward in 2025, the executive, legislative and judicial (**Supreme Court**) branches of government will move forward with a **Conservative Republican Agenda**. The economic policy that will be promoted and used has been called **Supply Side Economics** which is a macroeconomic theory that promotes lowering taxes and decreasing regulation for large corporation which in turn will trickle down to workers, which in my opinion is nothing but **hogwash!**

After the inauguration, Donald

Trump and the Republican controlled congress will begin tax cuts for the richest Americans or top 1%. To go along with the tax cuts, I am sure that the president and the republican congress will try and cut federal programs that include education (**Pell grants**), HUD (**Section 8 housing assistance**), health care (**Affordable Care Act or Obama Care**) and social programs or entitlements that include (**SNAP or Food Stamps**).

As so, who is at fault for where the country is at the end of 2024? In my opinion, everyone that did not vote in the last presidential election have only themselves to blame. Because people like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, the Koch Brothers and other millionaires and billionaires did what they needed to do to put



Donald Trump back in office to get what they wanted and that is less taxes and regulations.

To close, nothing is etched in stone. Any and everything can change. As the country moves into 2025,

now is the time to begin preparing for the **2026 Fall Mid Term Elections** in America. Donald Trump isn't going anywhere until 2028, but every member of the U.S. House of Representatives and some senators will be up for re-election in 2026. Next time around, is you do not like where the country is now, please register to vote and encourage other to do so also. In

addition, when elections come again, make sure you vote and your friends and family members also.

NOTE: Supply Side Economics proponents says that if government gives multimillion dollar corporations huge tax breaks, then in return the corporation will pass on the tax savings to workers where everyone will benefit. Big corporations usually do one of two things when government tax breaks or given. First, they pass the savings in less taxes to their shareholders and secondly put the savings into their checking, savings, or investment accounts.

That's My View!



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The Reason for the Season

By: J. Chris Guillet, Attorney at Law

We have spoken mostly of “law” this year, and of people in prisons, and the children and families of those persons, and how we all interact with that unusual, sometimes interesting, and usually difficult system known as the American criminal justice system, particularly as that system is practiced here in Louisiana. Our State of Louisiana—this year—declared through its new legislation that its legal system is based in part upon the Ten Commandments, which the State now requires to be posted in each state classroom. Most people in the South already know that the Ten Commandments come from the Old Testament of the Bible, and

many of those same persons also know that there is a New Testament in that Bible too. The New Testament is about Jesus of Nazareth, and sometimes people read up about Jesus in December. Jesus of Nazareth was born into poverty, with no social connections. In his seminal 1949 work, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Dr. Howard Thurman, the great Black theologian, began his inquiry by observing that not only was Jesus a Jew, which—at that time—was a minority group dominated by a much larger, controlling group, but also, specifically: “Jesus was a *poor* Jew.” Jesus’ poverty was central to Thurman’s understanding of who Jesus was, and why he was important. Thurman stated his purpose simply: “Many and varied are the interpretations

dealing with the teachings and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. But few of these interpretations deal with what the teachings and the life of Jesus have to say to those who stand, at a moment in human history, with their *backs against the wall*.”

In the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel, shortly after Mary learned that she would give birth to Jesus, she announced in the *Magnificat*: “My soul magnifies the Lord . . . He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.” Echoing this eternal message, Professor James Cone explained in his 2011 magnum opus, *The Cross and the Lynching*

Tree, that the real “scandal” of the Gospel was that “salvation [would be] available only through . . . solidarity with the crucified people in our midst [.]” which understanding was “not a faith of intellectuals or elites of any sort.” Dr. Cone continues: “The cross, as a locus of divine revelation, is not good news for the powerful, for those who are comfortable with the way things are, or for anyone whose understanding of religion is aligned with power.” Dr. Cone reminds us: “Christ was not crucified on an altar between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves.” Christ was to be found, “as always, where men were enslaved and trampled under foot;” Christ would be found “with the suffering[.]”

Continued on Page 11...



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J. Chris Guillet, Attorney at Law



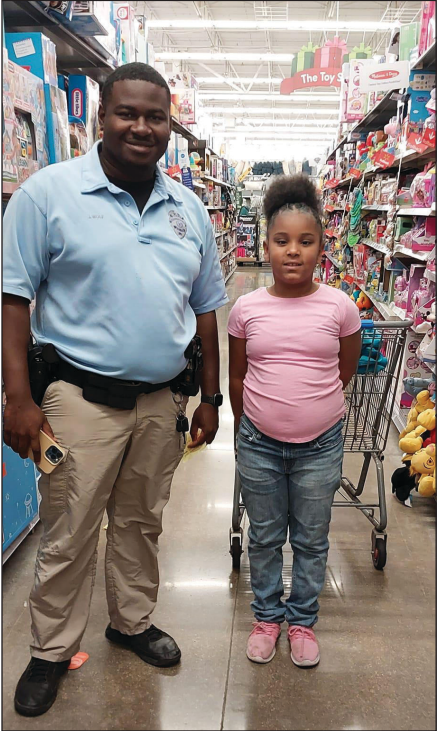
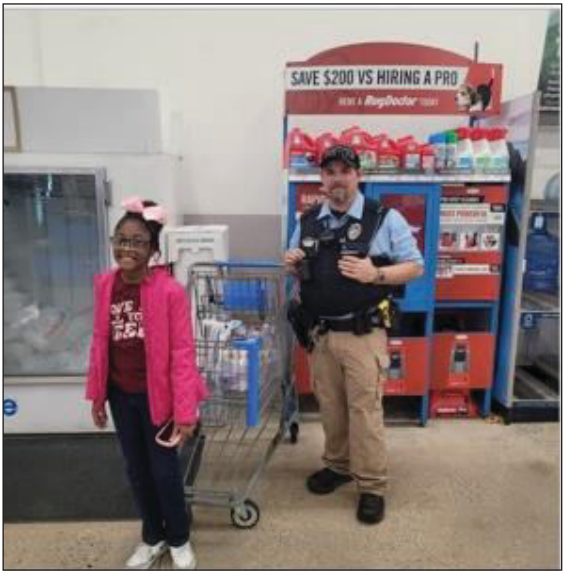
Cane River Branch of Magnolia State Peace Officers holds annual Shop with a Cop Event

Members of the Cane River Branch of Magnolia State Peace Officers Association held their annual Shop with a Cop event at the local Walmart on Saturday, December 14th. The Cane River Branch takes pride in working with today's youth at every opportunity, and this event was no exception. Our members

carefully reviewed applications to select students who excel academically, demonstrate good behavior, and are active in their communities. These students truly deserve to be rewarded for their efforts. Parents were notified in advance and asked to meet members at our local Walmart at 9:00 a.m. on event day, De-

cember 14th. After a brief speech and prayer, the students were paired with an officer (no parents allowed) and given the freedom to shop for items of their choice. Students were encouraged to purchase a small gift for each member of their household and spend the remainder on themselves.

Walmart went above and beyond to support the event, providing store personnel in the toy section and treating the children to doughnuts and hot chocolate at the conclusion of their shopping spree while waiting for their parents to return. Students, officers, and store manager gathered for a picture before and after the event.





Count it all Joy, Let Go!

By: La'Quinta Scott-Favors

We are approaching a New Year in numbers but a different day in reality! This past year has had a lot of people in a chokehold. A lot of people go through situations not understanding why they have not only been chosen to experience heartache but trusted to go through trials and tribulations. Life throws curve balls, and as much as we want to fix it, we must remember to let go of things that we have no control over, placing it in the hands of the Lord. I'm not big on New Year resolutions, but I do want to encourage you to learn to let go. If the situation is no longer bringing you peace, let it go! If you are compromising your peace for anything or anyone, let it go! It's okay to shift, the most important thing is that you are surrounded with individuals that can make sure your peace is protected and your peace

matters. Being surrounded by individuals who love you and can pray for you through those tough times when you don't have the words to open your mouth will change your life. Monthly, weekly, and daily, we see tragic circumstances unfold in the world and even in our own Parish. That alone shows that change is needed. I strongly believe that if you shift some things around, remove some people from your life, and get attached to your tribe, you will knock the New Year out of the park! From the beginning to the end of 2025, you should own it and own it with peace and prosperity! Philippians 4:13-14 says, 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for



the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Apostle Paul is encouraging us to focus on the future and not dwell

on the past! Sometimes we don't want to forget what's behind us, but what's behind us can hinder what's in front of us! Those past mistakes and failures that others are dwelling on that stopped you from moving

forward guess what, the Lord has already forgiven you, and their opinions about you do not stop the Lord favor that's on your life! Don't allow that to stop you this year; let go, let God keep your heart pure, and accomplish everything that you missed this year! Do it big, do it differently, and do it with your genuine tribe that's called to you!

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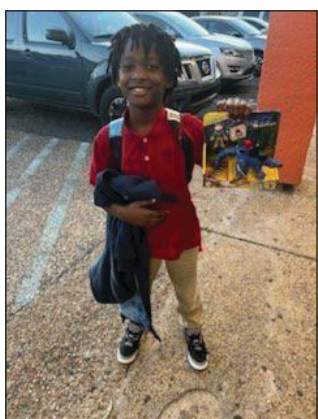
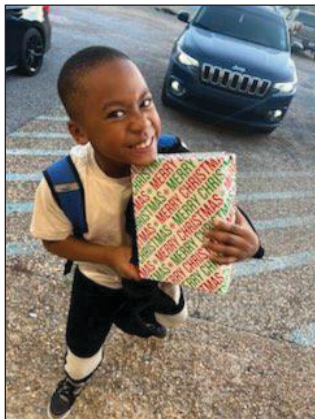
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Christmas at the Boys and Girls Club



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- To improve access to education
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"CHANGING ONE CHILD AT A TIME"

The Emma Robinson Williams Education Foundation (ERWEF) is spreading holiday joy by supporting our community partners with Christmas Toy and Book donations! This season, we are living our mission, "A Collaborative Approach, Changing One Child at a Time," by ensuring every child experiences the magic of the holidays.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and supporters, we are able to make a difference, one gift at a time. Together, we can light up a child's world with the gift of learning and play.

We're grateful for our community partners and the opportunity to share in this season of giving.

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The Reason for the Season

By: J. Chris Guillet, Attorney at Law

Continued from Page 5...

Jesus of Nazareth famously—or rather, during his own time, infamously—sought out the company of poor people, outcasts, women, tax collectors, and other people that polite society would rather not encounter, much less treat with respect or understanding. In the sixth chapter of Luke, Jesus announced in the Sermon on the Plain—“Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” Later in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus recounted the familiar, but seldom-examined, story of the Good Samaritan, the timeless tale in which a foreigner is left to die on a road, fortunately helped by a single friend, while priests and other dignitaries pass by on the other side of the road, avoiding him. This story was Jesus’ response to the question from an expert in the law: “*Who is my neighbor?*”

The Christmas Season actu-

ally begins on December 25 and lasts until the Epiphany (this is the “twelve days of Christmas”). Many Christians’ understanding of the importance of the Christmas Season centers on their faith in Jesus being the Way to Heaven and everlasting life. Yet the specific emphasis of the Incarnation—the birth of Jesus—concerns the idea of God becoming Man, of the infinite becoming physical, of God being physically present and located within time. In fact, during Jesus’ earthly life, his actions were indeed often focused on the physical and tangible: healing the sick, comforting the outcasts, being physically present and encountering people, including particularly poor people. This is the emphasis that counsels attention to our fellow Man, right here—right now. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: “The preacher must be concerned about the whole man. Not merely his soul but his body. It’s all right to talk about

heaven. . . . But you’ve got to talk about the earth. It’s all right to talk about long white robes over yonder, but I want a suit and some shoes to wear down here. . . . [A]ny religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that cripple the souls . . . is a dry, dead do-nothing religion in need of new blood.” This Christmas and New Years’ Season—even with those Ten Commandments on the wall—it’s OK to read straight through that Old Testament and right on to the New Testament. Maybe 2025 will bring a better understanding of the meaning of all of these

issues, and their relationship with the law, and with the systems that govern us all. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

J. Chris Guillet grew up in Natchitoches and graduated from Natchitoches Central in 1987. He has practiced law since 1999. Chris currently serves as a part-time public defender for Sabine Parish. He formerly served as a public defender for Natchitoches Parish, Red River Parish, and Rapides Parish. He also served as an Assistant District Attorney for Red River Parish from 2008 through 2017, and for Natchitoches Parish from 2017 through 2023. He maintains a civil practice and a criminal defense practice.





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Dolled Up Presents The 9th Annual Doll Drive

A little bossy event featuring Miss Merry Christmas 2024



Photo Credit: Star Clark







BOARD PROUD OF 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NATCHITOCHES, LA — At its annual meeting on December 17th, 2024, the Outpatient Medical Center (OMC) Board of Directors reviewed a report card on its 2024 Strategic Health Plan. The report card showed much progress, especially regarding patient satisfaction and community advocacy. OMC is grateful for its board members who volunteer their time serving the nonprofit organization which provides primary health care to low income,

underserved, and any-one. OMC appreciates the community's support of its mission to serve those with greatest need.

OMC is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that serves medically underserved areas in Natchitoches, Leesville and Tallulah. OMC offers a Sliding Fee Discount Program that allows eligible low-income patients to receive discounted services. Eligible patients are never refused services due to the inability to pay.



Left to Right: Dr. Mark Guidry (CEO), Ronnie Evans (Treasurer), Arthur Ward (Vice President), Diane Jones, Melvin Holmes, Berteal Rogers, John E. Winston (Secretary), Thomas Roque (President)



Candid Conversations Topic: Gun Violence and Its Solutions

Hosted by: Maria Mangum and Tiberlee Barnum

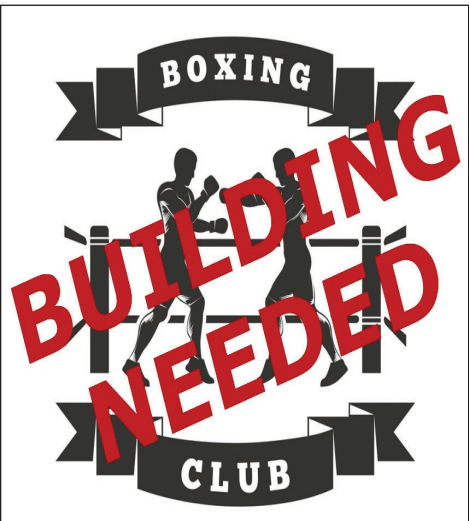


Photo Credits: Erick Wilson, RTSS Photography



Mobilizing Leaders to Empower Communities

Michael McClanahan, Louisiana State President NAACP National Board of Directors Visits Natchitoches



What Christmas Means to Me

By: Nikki Madison


I find that Christmas is the perfect time to reflect and remember the importance of life. Not just the good but also the ups and downs that we've faced throughout the year. I love taking time, looking at photos, and having conversations with the people that I love about the things that brought us joy and peace and the challenges we overcame this year. Even though we still have obstacles that we are still working through, we still have a reason to be grateful. This time of year, especially, I appreciate the goodness of God's mercy in my life and all the things I want to be better at, and I pray that my New Year is better than my last. I love making memories with the people that I love and cherish. The parties are nice too. Everything about the holiday brings me



joy. Also, be sure to reflect on all that is good, but don't cause your days to become too overwhelmed. Make time and space for everyday life situations that can happen during the holidays, even if it's only a few minutes a day. I get to enjoy the season with family and friends who bring me joy all year round. Spending quality time with the people I love fills me with so much joy and happiness. I know sometimes holidays can be stressful for some and also a time for some people to remember their loved ones that are no longer with us. I am grateful for all God has blessed me with this year. Relationships are not to be taken for granted. Treasure them all. Make new memories and cherish the old ones. Traditions are important. Make this holiday season one to remember. Life is precious, and it should be appreciated and celebrated.



**The holiday season is
a perfect time to reflect
on our blessings and
seek out ways to make
life better for
those around us.**



2025
New Year. Healthier You.


As we look ahead to the New Year, let 2025 be your year of health. Listen to your body and get the care you need. Timely care along with early detection and treatment can help prevent serious illnesses. NRMC and our clinics are here to help you achieve optimal health.

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Be Proactive. Get Screened.

Knowing the causes and risk factors, as well as getting regular screenings, can help lower your risk. Cervical cancer is preventable and curable.

Lower your risk, call 318.214.5773 to schedule your screening today.

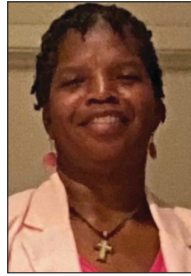
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That One Perfect Gift

**By: Evangelist and author,
Bonita Moses Arnold**



Let us be mindful how we handle smaller things, those who are less fortunate than we are. There is still hope for them. When I was born reigning 4 oz. The mud-wife instructed my mother, Elena Moses, & my grandmother, Georgina “Mama Shug” Moses to put me in a shoe box saying, “There is no hope, she’s too tiny, she has pneumonia “. But because of the faith they had in our Lord & Saviour, Jesus Christ, they knew there was

hope. Just as God made promises to Abraham in Hebrews 6:14-15 KJV. “Saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, & multiplying I will multiply thee”. 15). “And so after he had patiently endured, he over as ones the promise”. So, as it was given to Abraham, it was also given to his seeds, myself, because of the hope my mother and MSMs Shug had. That’s how I’ve grown spiritually in believing in God, through his son Jesus, that whatever I ask in Jesus’ name, believe it, & I will receive it.



Mama Shug would always say...

“If you want the Lord to bless you then you need to learn how to be a blessing to others. Kindness can never hurt, but it can help.”



Are you at risk of or have you been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes?

Black Women's Health Imperative offers **Change Your Lifestyle. Change Your Life. (CYL²)™**, a support system to prevent or manage type 2 diabetes.

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- Managing medications
- Preventing complications
- Making lifestyle shift



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- Respond to food triggers
- Get support for lifestyle shift
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**Class starts
in Spring!**

See if it's right for you at:
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Attorney Howard Conday and his spouse NJH Principal Mrs. Alexa Bernard-Conday give back to the Village of Natchez and Shekinah Glory Ministries







NSU Alumna's Company Growing National Profile with Mission to Celebrate People of Color

NATCHITOCHES — What began with a Black Santa printed on gift wrapping paper is now a fast-growing business getting national attention with products that include apparel, tote bags, blankets, wall art and more.

The mission of Mah Melanin, founded by Northwestern State University alumna and entrepreneur Ardean Miller-Marbley, is to celebrate diversity and people of color. Mah Melanin is the first Black-owned business to partner with Sam's Club on sams.com and was featured on The Today Show's 2024 holiday gift guide. A collaboration with Hallmark and Lowe's is underway. Miller-Marbley started the company in 2020 after a lifetime of longing to see faces of color on gift wrap, greeting cards and other items, especially during the holidays.

Growing up in New Sarpy near New Orleans, Miller-Marbley knew from a young age that she wanted to launch a business. She earned her undergraduate degree in business in 2014 as an on-line student while working full-time. After graduation she earned a master's degree in engineering management from Louisiana Tech while researching pathways to launching her company.

"The first thing that I came up with that I wanted to give to the world which was a Santa. I decided to create an African American Santa that was realistically right and what the Santa would look like if he was to walk into a household for black and brown communities," she said.

Miller-Marbley worked with a graphic designer to bring the image to life and Ken the Black Santa Claus was born.

"We were able to bring in some of the culture and the characteristic of the culture by having his gold chain, the matching S shoes and his gold rimmed glasses. We decided we would introduce him to the world in a way that would set it off."

Her website went live in August 2020 and by December she was selling products through Lowes.com.

"There's a social media post that I've seen, and it goes something like, 'Keep talking about your business first because

someday someone will hear it,' and that's exactly what I did on social media," she said. "I literally spoke about the business every day. I posted every day. I sent messages to individuals that I knew. I utilized social media in a way that most businesses were not utilizing it at that time, and it just literally blew up overnight. It's been going strong ever since. We've been recognized by celebrities. We've been highlighted on NBA.com. We've had partnerships with Legalzoom. I've actually spoken to Legalzoom employees on the importance of and the impact that their job has on entrepreneurs."

She is currently finalizing designs that will be available through Sam's Club in more stores and more states in 2025, working with a licensing agent and preparing to expand into different segments of apparel and other products. She also takes time to mentor others through speaking engagements

and working one-on-one with individuals to discuss business strategies. Seeing Black images on products and supporting Black-owned businesses resonates with people, she said.

Miller-Marbley, who was a Dean's List student at NSU, said her experience taking on-line classes at NSU was just as valuable as if she had been on campus. Dr. Begona Perez-Mira was a particularly important mentor.

"I get emotional when I speak about her. She was the one that was always patient, making sure I understood everything. Even after I completed her course, I'd call her for advice. She made sure I was where I need to be mentally. The program as a whole definitely helped me get where I am now."

She recalled working on a class project in which the assignment was to develop and pitch a new business model. Miller-Marbley's team developed a plan for a service that would deliver food, medicine and other purchased goods from a store to a consumer's home.

"That experience helped to really expand my mind and think of how big we could go," she said. "It helped shape the trajectory of the Mah Melanin process."

She also learned as much as she could about how to proceed with a start-up.

"I was researching and looking at opportunities that were out there and moving towards the process at my own pace. A lot of businesses and entrepreneurs want to hurry up and go fast, but I took time to actually do the research and understand my market and the type of characters I wanted to create. I needed to understand the language of the business, locate my manufacturer and move into production. It takes time.

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs: "Consistency is everything so remain consistent. I definitely will say, believe in you and your goal and your dream and passion and work on it every day."

Information about Mah Melanin is available at <https://mahmelanin.com/>. Information on Northwestern State's School of Business is available at <https://www.nsula.edu/business/>.



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New Year Fellowship Program
New Beginnings Baptist Church #2
815 5th Street Natchitoches

Pastoral Aide Ministry
Sunday, January 12, 2025
3:00 P.M.

Theme: “A Time to Reflect and Renew”

Scripture: *Isaiah 43:18-19a “Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold I am doing a new thing...”*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:
We greet you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We cordially invite you to our New Year Fellowship Program. Our guests are Pastor Clarence Reed and the Eastern Star Missionary Baptist Church family of Alexandria, La. Come with a heart and mind to worship, praise, and fellowship in the Lord, expecting God to do something special in your life as we celebrate the new year.

Yours in Christ:
Reverend Cedric R. Jones
Pastoral Aide Ministry President

Natchitoches Community Improvement Foundation (NCIF)

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Victor Pinkney		Jelisa Howard
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*High level basketball development coaches and professional fitness personnel make up the staff.

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Goldonna Christmas in the Park

The Village of Goldonna hosted its 29th annual Christmas in the Park on Saturday, December 14th.

It was an all-day event in downtown Goldonna filled with fun, music, and various activities.

Several Disney characters made an appearance during the day to take pictures with the kids and families.

Santa and Mrs. Claus were welcomed to town and met with everyone to take photos with the children.



Photo Credit: Brandi Coutee





The Coach De Foundation, NPSO and We are King David Presents the 5th Annual Country Christmas: The Toy Drive



Photo Credit: Erick Wilson/RTSS Photography





Shiloh Baptist Church & New Beginnings Baptist Church # 2 Share the Holiday Spirit with a Local Nursing and Rehab Center

Pastor Carlos Donaway

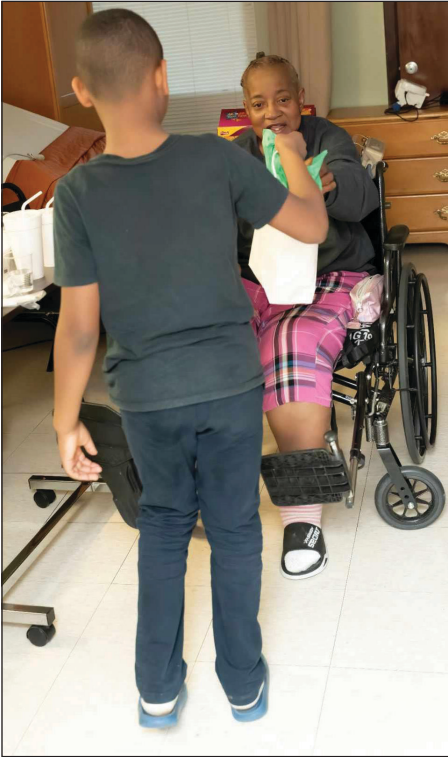
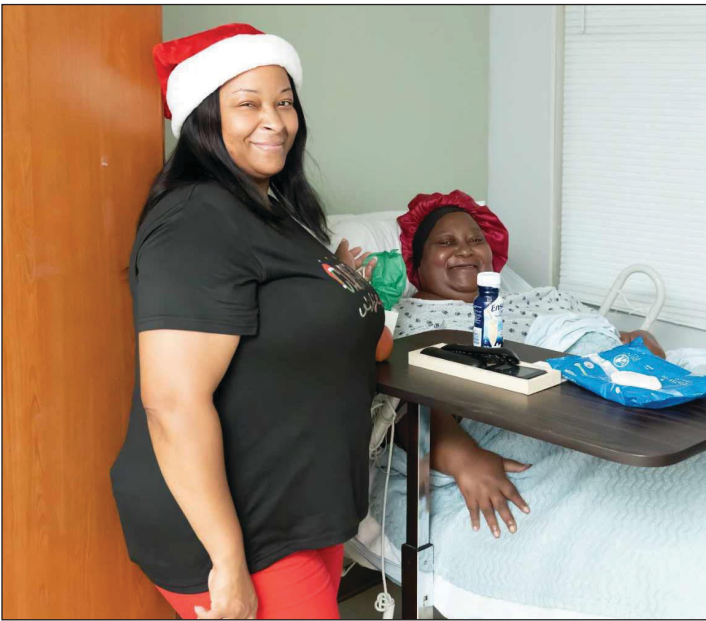


Photo Credit: Erick Wilson/RTSS Photography





First Baptist Church - North Street hosted “Miracle on North Street”

44 children within the community were blessed during this Christmas Season

Pastor J’Rel West



Gate Outreach and My Father's House Church Hosted a Christmas Celebration



BOM Gives Back to the Community



BOM donated to Fountain of Life Church for their Youth Big Buck Contest. Pictured left to right: BOM's Lily Rivers, Katie Jordan, and Sarah Flowers.

"Honoring Two Exceptional Young Ladies" co-hosted by the Emma Robinson Williams Education Foundation (ERWEF) and the Krewe of the 9 Mardi Gras Krewe



Photo Credit: Dr. Ross Williams

Pictured: 2024 Miss Merry Christmas Queen Layla Johnson and Christmas Belle Ayla Payne

Preston Durr Sponsors a Holiday Shoe Raffle



Holiday Community Meeting to Tackle Rise in Crime Amongst Natchitoches Teens



Hosted by: Tee Johnson, Jason Brock, Robert Jackson



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