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THE Anchor NEWS

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GARRETT INSTALLED TO LEAD BIBLE WAY CHURCH

Pastor Ouida Gail Garrett has entered a new season of service as pastor of Bible Way Church Family Worship Center, located at 804 Jackson Street in Marlin. Her installation represents both the continuation of a remarkable spiritual legacy and the beginning of a renewed vision for the historic congregation.

Pastor Garrett was officially installed during the All Nations State Convocation at Greater Bible Way Church in Waco on August 9, 2026. Newly elected National Bishop Stephen Johnson of Los Angeles, California, and Bishop Raymond Perry of Bryan performed the installation ceremony, joined by members of Bible Way Church Family Worship Center.

"These are big shoes to fill," Pastor Garrett acknowledged. She succeeds her husband, Bishop Lonnie D. Garrett, who faithfully shepherded Bible Way for more



PASTOR OUIDA GAIL GARRETT

than 55 years before passing away on July 16, 2026.

Bishop Garrett began preaching at 19 and served honorably in the United States Marine Corps. He attended Baylor University, McLennan Community Col-

lege and ITC Seminary in Atlanta. A gifted musician who played piano by ear, he was also the first Black graduate of the newly integrated Marlin High School. His contributions to the community are commemorated annually on March 6, officially recognized as Lonnie Garrett Day.

For 42 years, Bishop and Pastor Garrett shared marriage and ministry. Together, they visited hospitals and nursing homes, comforted families, shared Scripture and sang gospel music. With their daughter, Tanunya Roberts Adamson, they formed the Garrett Roberts Gospel Trio and recorded music that carried their message of hope far beyond Marlin.

Bishop Garrett's homegoing service was held July 28—the couple's 42nd wedding anniversary. During the

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FROM STAY-AT-HOME MOTHER TO ENTREPRENEUR

BY LINDA CRAWFORD

Viviana Ruiz Smith had earned a master's degree, but when her son was born, she chose to devote her days to caring for him. Between feeding him, changing diapers, cooking, cleaning, and spending time with other mothers, she began dreaming about a way to contribute financially to her family while remaining present for her child.

"I always wanted to invest in real estate," Smith said. "I wanted to be useful and financially contribute to my family."

Her husband's demanding career as an emergency medicine physician provided additional motivation. Smith hoped to create an income stream that might allow him to retire early if he chose. With her son often in tow, she began buying, renovating, and renting properties.

Smith's first business, Texas Star Properties, grew from a practical family decision. After settling in Waco, she and her husband purchased a duplex instead of a single-family home. They lived on one side and rented the other while learning more about the community.

Her father, a house painter, gave her advice that has guided her for 25 years: Never automatically accept the cheapest or most expensive bid. Instead, find a reasonable middle ground, inspect the contractor's work, and seek recommendations.

Smith's determination helped her balance the de-



VIVIANA RUIZ SMITH

mands of being a mother, wife, daughter, and entrepreneur. "While they were asleep, I would do paperwork, send emails, clean the house, wash clothes, wash dishes, and everything else that needed to be done," she recalled. "Sometimes, before I got a chance to sleep, my alarm would go off."

Today, Texas Star Properties provides residential and commercial rentals. Castle Heights Bijoux Event Center, created after her niece suggested transforming a commercial property into an event venue, has hosted weddings, anniversaries, quinceañeras, reunions, banquets, baby showers, and other celebrations for 12 years.

Smith also owns Heart of Waco Home, which provides six vacation homes in the Baylor and downtown Waco area. The homes range from three to seven bedrooms, with the largest

SEE **SMITH**, PG. 11

FOUNDATION HONORS FAMILIES AFFECTED BY GUN VIOLENCE

For families devastated by gun violence, the pain does not end when the shooting stops. The Montrell Phenix Cease the Violence Foundation is working to ensure that grieving mothers, grandmothers, fathers, and other loved ones do not have to walk that lifelong journey alone.

Established December 5, 2018, the foundation grew from founder Flecha Smyre's personal loss. Smyre lost her son to gun violence on November 7, 2010. Pamela, who works alongside her, lost her grandson on January 30, 2022. Joined by Denise and others who understand the needs of



FELICIA SMART

grieving families, they chose to transform their pain into purpose.

The foundation's mission is to help stop violence through public-health strategies and community engagement while bringing awareness, support, and love to affected families. Organizers hope to provide grieving mothers with emotional support and a safe space among people who understand their experience without requiring them to explain their pain.

The group will host "A Celebration of Strength, Love, &

SEE **SMART**, PG. 10

**J.L. & LINDA CRAWFORD**

J.L. and Linda Crawford are co-owners of *The Anchor News*. J.L. Crawford serves as Director of Operations and is a Bible teacher and columnist writing on faith, family, and men's issues. Linda Crawford serves as Publisher and Editor, is a motivational speaker, and is the owner of Enjoy the Journey Life Coaching Services.

DORIS MILLER STOOD FOR US—NOW WE MUST STAND FOR HIM

BY CHET EDWARDS
GUEST COLUMNIST

News reports indicate—and the Trump administration has not denied—that President Trump's Navy secretary is considering removing the name of Waco-born naval hero Doris Miller from a new aircraft carrier under construction. Whether public outrage causes this proposal to be reversed or not, it is shameful that the Navy would even consider renaming the USS Doris Miller.

Some reports have indicated that the aircraft carrier could be renamed after President Trump. Naming an aircraft carrier after a living U.S. president would defy Navy tradition. To add insult to injury, Doris Miller was a Navy hero, while Donald Trump avoided the Vietnam War draft because of a diagnosis of "bone spurs."

How could anyone justify removing the name of a respected Navy hero who died

**CHET EDWARDS**

in combat during World War II and replacing it with the name of someone who never served a single day in uniform? It defies common sense, Navy tradition and simple decency. As NAACP President Derrick Johnson has said, "This is a slap in the face to every war hero and to every service member who

has worn the uniform."

Doris Miller gave his life for his country when he and most of his shipmates aboard the escort carrier USS Liscome Bay perished in the Pacific in November 1943. Two years earlier, during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Miller—then serving as a Navy cook—helped move his wounded commanding officer to safety, manned an anti-aircraft gun and fired at Japanese warplanes, and helped rescue other sailors aboard the battleship USS West Virginia.

Many of us know the rest of his remarkable story. The Navy, eager to recognize the heroes of a war into which America had been thrust, honored Miller with the Navy Cross. He became the first African American to receive that award during an era of legalized segregation in both our country and the Navy.

Because of Miller's hero-

ism, our nation selected him to tour the country and help raise money through U.S. war bond sales. Yet, less than two years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was gone.

As our nation observes its 250th anniversary, Doris Miller's life reinforces the fundamental founding principle that all people are created equal. For more than 80 years, Miller has inspired Americans of every race and background to reach for that high ideal.

Doris Miller's service and sacrifice amid a century of Jim Crow segregation remind us of our nation's motto: *E pluribus unum*—"Out of many, one." Let us not disrespect that ideal by renaming the USS Doris Miller.

Fellow Wacoans, Doris Miller stood for us. Now we must stand for him by raising our voices to elected officials at every level throughout our land.

FROM THE EDITOR...

HONORING THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRE US

Each month, *The Anchor News* is honored to share the stories of people from many walks of life. In this issue, we celebrate dedicated cleaners, talented stylists, a remarkable woman pastor, nonprofit leaders, and others who strengthen

our community in meaningful ways. We hope you enjoy reading about their journeys, gifts, and service. Every story matters, and we remain committed to highlighting the people whose work, faith, and perseverance inspire us all every day.

GARRETT | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

service, Bishop J. Gregory Jones, whom Bishop Garrett had mentored, invited 42 people to give \$42 in honor of the Garretts' marriage. People responded by giving not only the requested amount but far beyond it.

The overwhelming outpouring became, for Pastor Garrett, one final anniversary gift from her husband.

"It was bittersweet," she said. "I was saying goodbye to my husband and my part-

ner of 42 years. But spiritually, I felt carried by God."

Now Pastor Garrett is moving forward with humility, faith and purpose. Her vision includes strengthening families, discipling believers, reaching younger generations and ensuring that Bible Way remains a place where lives are transformed through the love of Christ.

She does not seek to replace Bishop Garrett. Instead, she intends to build

upon the foundation they established together, carrying forward his example of compassionate service, faithful preaching and love for people.

With the prayers of the congregation and community surrounding her, Pastor Ouida Gail Garrett steps into leadership prepared by a lifetime of ministry and committed to guiding Bible Way Church Family Worship Center into its next chapter.



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PURPOSE

The Anchor News, dedicated to serving the community and surrounding areas, focuses on positive news and accomplishments of minorities.

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itor.

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CAN CHRISTIANS LOSE THEIR SALVATION?

BY REV. GEORGE STEWART,
GUEST COLUMNIST

Upon confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9), we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body. That body is the body of Christ, the Church that Jesus Christ promised would not fail. Because Jesus always keeps His promises, not one member of the body of Christ will lose his or her salvation.

Jesus prayed to His Father that not one member of His body, the Church, would lose his or her salvation. This prayer is recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 17. James 5:16-18 confirms that God answered "yes" to Jesus' prayer. John 17 is our Lord's Prayer,



REV. GEORGE STEWART

not Matthew 6:9-13. Jesus never prayed to His Father for forgiveness of His sins.

Members of Jesus' body,

His Church, will never lose their salvation because salvation was not earned by good behavior. It was purchased for us by God's perfect gift: His Son. Our salvation was not earned by good works, nor is it lost by bad works. Isaiah 64:6 says that our very best works are not enough to purchase salvation.

Salvation is the free gift God gives to humanity through faith in His Son, Jesus, and His redemptive work, manifested by confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior. We thank You, God, that Jesus—not our good works—is the author of our faith. We thank You that Jesus—not our good works—is the finisher of our faith. Amen.

NELLY'S CLEANING SERVICES BUILT ON TRUST AND CARE

Trust, communication and personal service are the foundation of Nelly's Cleaning Services

For Nelly Villa, cleaning is about much more than removing dust and clutter. It is about helping families experience the comfort, happiness and peace that come from having a clean home.

Villa, owner of Nelly's Cleaning Services, has provided professional cleaning services for 30 years. She primarily serves clients throughout the Waco area, offering standard and deep cleaning as well as move-in and move-out services.

"What inspired me was seeing the happiness and peace that cleaning brought to me and others," Villa said. "People are able to enjoy their homes clutter-free."

During a standard cleaning, Villa concentrates on kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms, carefully removing dust and debris and addressing the areas her clients need to have spotless. For first-time customers, she generally begins with a thorough deep cleaning and then establishes a routine to maintain the home.

Villa normally works independently, but when she knows a job will be especially large, she receives assistance from her brother. Clients may provide their preferred cleaning products and equipment, or Villa will supply everything needed to complete the job. She also welcomes requests for particular products that are safe for a client's household, family members and individual needs.

Trust and discretion are essential parts of Villa's work. Because she is welcomed into clients' private spaces, she remains focused on the cleaning, limits distractions and carefully respects their homes, possessions and personal information.

"I would say my trustworthiness, communication and ability to clean safely are qualities that make me stand out," Villa said.

Over the years, the pro-



NELLY'S CLEANING SERVICES

fessional relationships she has developed have grown into meaningful personal bonds. Some of her long-time clients now consider her a member of their families because of the confidence they have placed in her and her services.

Villa's own family is also the driving force behind her dedication.

"My family is my biggest 'why,'" she said. "They are the reason I get up every single day and go to work, even when it gets hard."

She is especially proud of her two children, who are both pursuing college educations—one at the University of Texas at Arlington and the other at Texas A&M University. Watching them work toward their goals keeps her motivated and determined to continue building her business.

Villa began with no clients and gradually created a dependable clientele and successful work routine. When she is not working, she enjoys remaining active, which helps her maintain the energy needed to serve others.

The most rewarding part of her work is knowing that her clients can return to clean, peaceful and comfortable homes.

"When their home is already clean, that is one less task they have to worry about," Villa said.

Potential clients may call or message Nelly Villa at 254-744-9645 to request a quote or schedule a cleaning. She is also willing to meet prospective clients at their homes, allowing them to meet her personally and discuss the specific cleaning services they need.

INNOVATION BLACK CHAMBER EMPOWERS ENTREPRENEURS

BY ANCHOR STAFF

Across Killeen, Harker Heights, Copperas Cove, Fort Hood and surrounding Central Texas communities, the Innovation Black Chamber of Com-

merce is helping entrepreneurs turn determination into sustainable growth.

Founder and President Ronnie Russell has led the organization since its beginning. He created the Chamber after see-



RONNIE RUSSELL

ing Black business owners and veterans work tirelessly without the capital networks, technology training and peer support needed to prosper.

"I wanted to build a home base that had their backs," Russell said.

The word "Innovation" reflects a departure from the traditional chamber model. IBCC emphasizes artificial intelligence, digital systems and forward-thinking strategies while honoring the cultural heritage of the entrepreneurs it serves. Its mission is to "empower, educate and elevate" Black-owned businesses so owners can create generational wealth.

Through the Innovation Business Service Center, entrepre-

Dizzy Gillespie, Bahá'í

"We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high..."

- Bahá'u'lláh

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or visit wacobahais.org

bahai.org/beliefs

NATEISHA BAKER BRINGS HEALTHY HAIR AND CONFIDENCE TO HARKER HEIGHTS

For Nateisha Baker, hair care is far more than a profession—it is a lifelong passion rooted in family tradition and creative expression. Located inside Shear Perfection's Private Grooming Suites at 600 Indian Trail Dr., Ste. 108F in Harker Heights, Texas, Nateisha brings nearly three decades of hands-on experience and deep expertise to Central Texas clients.

Nateisha's journey began early, inspired by her mother, Marjorie Dixon, who was a licensed cosmetologist, and her older sister, Camille Fauntleroy, who styled her hair for high school formals. By high school, Nateisha was assisting a friend with clients until her mother encouraged her to step into her own talent and start her own practice.

Over the past 28 years,

she has honed her craft as an experienced braider, culminating in her formal graduation from Yahweh Beauty Academy in Killeen, Texas, in October 2025 as a licensed cosmetologist.

Throughout her career, Nateisha has showcased her artistry on major platforms, participating in four showcases with Hair Wars and Battle of the Braiders. Her achievements include winning a Hair Grammy with National City's Hair Ballers salon in 2003 and presenting at the landmark 2004 showcase at the Scottish Rite Center in San Diego, California. Today, her eldest daughter, who is in high school and a vibrant online presence (@619_braid_diva) keep her aligned with the latest trends.

At her Harker Heights suite, Nateisha provides mul-



NATEISHA BAKER

ticultural hair care services for men, women, and children. Her extensive service list includes relaxers, silk presses, Jheri curls, extensions, braids, crochets, and special event styling for weddings, birthdays, and proms, complete with group discounts.

Nateisha operates on a core philosophy: quality over quantity, with hair care always coming before hair styling. She notes that the most common mistake people make is failing to keep their hair moisturized, which leads to breakage and split ends.

She advises clients to moisturize daily and protect their hair with a silk scarf at night.

For Nateisha, the most rewarding part of her work is restoring hair health and confidence for clients who had previously given up. Her chair serves as a safe, therapeutic space built on trust. Looking forward, she plans to expand her Central Texas footprint and rebrand her signature product line, Jewelz by the Diva, in spring 2027.

To book an appointment, call (702) 490-8932 or visit her in Harker Heights.

LUCY PRICE CHAMPIONS STUDENT SUCCESS AT TSTC

For more than two decades, Lucy Price has dedicated her professional life to higher education, touching countless lives across Texas. Today, as a Program Advisor for TSTC Connect—Texas State Technical College's online division—she brings a deep well of empathy, resilience, and institutional knowledge to her role, championing the very students she is so passionate about seeing succeed.

Price's journey began in East Texas, growing up in a small town before her family moved to Waco in 1987. As the youngest of nine girls in a close-knit family, her upbringing was defined by a profound sense of support and community. Raised by parents who instilled strong values, and shaped by her education in La Vega ISD, Price grew up with the steady belief that the American Dream was entirely within reach. Those early lessons in family solidarity and mutual care laid a powerful foundation for the professional she would become.

Her career in higher education spans 24 years across TSTC and McLennan Community College. She initially entered the field through public relations and journalistic writing, starting at TSTC in March 2000 before spending time at MCC as a Public Relations Specialist and an Adjunct Instructor. Her teaching experience—team-teaching develop-



LUCY PRICE

mental reading and writing where lectures paired seamlessly with hands-on labs—left a lasting impression on her perspective regarding student support. Over the years, Price's footprint at TSTC expanded across a wide array of departments, serving in capacities ranging from assessment testing and academic advising to student retention, career services, admissions advising, and student recruitment.

Today, in her role with TSTC Connect, Price's primary focus is student retention. Monitoring and supporting students' progression toward associate degrees and certificates, she helps learners navigate common hurdles like time management, study skills, and discipline—a particularly vital trait in the online learning environment. When asked what she finds most reward-

ing about her work, Price points directly to the moment it all clicks for a student. "When I see them actually do it and realize that it was doable all along!" she shares. It is that realization, fueled by the collective backing of faculty and staff, that drives her forward.

That dedication is anchored in what TSTC defines as a "Culture of Caring." For Price, education is fundamentally a helping profession. Whether she is extending a helping hand or receiving one, she believes success is built on a foundation of mutual support and genuine human connection.

Price's path hasn't been without its profound challenges. Reflecting on her greatest accomplishments, she shares with deep gratitude that she is an 11-year stroke survivor—a milestone she attributes to faith, prayer, and a dedicated network of family, friends, and medical professionals. Looking forward, her ambitions are rooted in lifting others up. While she actively mentors today, her ultimate retirement goal is to serve as an advocate for others who find themselves walking paths she has already traveled. Supported by the enduring sacrifice of her sisters and guided by a faith that shapes her compassionate, non-judgmental approach to service, Lucy Price continues to be an invaluable pillar of the TSTC community.



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JORDAN & TAYLOR FUNERAL HOMES OPENS WITH AFFORDABLE DIGNITY

For Jordan L. Taylor, CEO and founder of Jordan & Taylor Funeral Homes, funeral service is more than a profession—it is a calling that began in childhood and developed into a lifelong commitment to serving grieving families.

Taylor is now serving Central Texas through two locations: Jordan & Taylor Funeral and Cremation, 1235 Chestnut Street in Waco, and Jordan & Taylor Chapel, 402 South Main Street in Mart. Both locations are open and serving families.

Taylor remembers being fascinated as a child by the dignity of cemeteries, comforting words of ministers and compassion of funeral directors. He even held small funeral services for animals he found, offering prayers before carefully burying them. Later, he helped bury friends when tragedy struck and saw firsthand the financial strain families can experience while grieving.

"I didn't build this to run a business," Taylor said. "I built it to ensure that in our community, love and dignity are never compromised by a price tag."

Taylor received his formal mortuary education in Houston and earned two degrees



JORDAN L. TAYLOR

in Mortuary Science, including an Associate of Applied Science from Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service. He also successfully completed the National Board Examination administered through the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards.

His decades of experience include embalming, restorative care, disinterments, pre-need planning, burial insurance, funeral home management and direct family service. His insurance career also earned him President's

Club and President's Club Watch honors with Western Casualty Life Insurance Company.

Jordan & Taylor provides traditional funerals and visitations, burial and graveside services, cremation, personalized celebrations of life, veteran and military services, pre-planning, embalming and restorative care, transportation, insurance guidance and grief support.

Taylor describes his commitment as "An Advocate for Affordable Dignity—Where No One Is Turned Away."

Faith remains at the heart of that commitment. Taylor considers funeral service a ministry of presence—comforting families, listening to their stories and helping carry their burdens.

Above all, Taylor wants families to remember how they were treated.

"I want them to remember how we made them feel," he said.

Through Jordan & Taylor Funeral Homes, Jordan L. Taylor says his mission is to serve Waco, Mart and surrounding Central Texas communities with compassion, affordability, faith and dignity.

TODAY'S CHURCH MUST STAND

BY PASTOR MATTHEW REED

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul commands believers to stand:

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

Paul instructs them that God is not a respecter of persons. Whoever does good, whether Jew or Gentile, will be blessed by God. What one sows, one shall also reap.

Paul makes known to the church at Ephesus what it is struggling against:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world and against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Today's church must once again be reminded of this. We have erred by fighting one another—the Methodists against the Baptists, the Lutherans against the Catholics and so on. In doing so, we have left the true enemy of the church unscathed.

God has shown the church how to fight against principalities, powers, the rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness: by keeping His Word and walking in obedience. We, the church, will stand when we stop at-



PASTOR MATTHEW REED

tacking one another and begin attacking the true enemy—principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places.

Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. Therefore, we must redirect our zeal and use spiritual weapons. We must arm ourselves with the Word of God. We need the proper equipment to fight this warfare: faith, truth, the gospel of peace and salvation. When we do this, we will stand.

Finally, to drive this point home, I bring to your remembrance the names of people who stood for something: Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Carl Lewis, John F. Kennedy and Dolly Parton.

As professing Christians, we should stand on, in, by, through and for the Word of God—no matter the cost. Amen.

CREATE A HOMEWORK ZONE FOR EASIER SCHOOL DAYS

SUBMITTED BY LINDA MCDONALD

Back-to-school season can feel hectic, but a dedicated homework zone can bring order to the afternoon rush. The space does not need to be large or expensive. A quiet corner or section of the kitchen can work well when it is set up with focus and organization in mind.

(1) Choose a practical location.

Look for a spot with lighting, a comfortable seat and fewer distractions.

(2) Keep supplies within reach.

Store pencils, paper, scissors and chargers in labeled cups, drawers or a rolling cart.

(3) Make room for technology.

Provide an accessible outlet and a safe place to charge devices without crowding the work surface.

(4) Add a simple paper sys-



LINDA MCDONALD
REALTOR, CRS, GRI, PMN, SRS

tem.

Use folders or wall files for assignments, permission slips and completed work.

(5) Personalize the space.

Let your child choose colors, photos or desk accessories so the area feels welcoming.

Adjust the setup as school

needs change. Younger children may need room for crafts, while older students may need better task lighting or more device storage. A well-planned homework zone helps reduce clutter, supports good routines and makes it easier for everyone to shift into school mode.

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WANDA B. GUNTER

Author, Artist &
Contributing writer
for *The Anchor News*

ASK A LIFE COACH...

WHEN FAITH GOES BEYOND WHAT SEEMS REALISTIC

BY LINDA CRAWFORD,
CERTIFIED LIFE COACH

DEAR LIFE COACH,

People often tell me that I need to be realistic about my dreams, expectations, and circumstances. However, I believe that faith sometimes requires us to trust God for what does not appear reasonable or probable. Is it foolish for a woman to believe God for something that does not look realistic?

—Faithful but Questioning

DEAR FAITHFUL BUT QUESTIONING,

What is "realistic"?

Was it realistic to believe God would help me finish my master's degree after my grant-funded job ended? Other students had to apply for teaching assistantships, yet I received a letter saying that I—who had never applied—had been awarded one. Every month, I received a stipend, although I had never requested it.

Was that realistic—or was it God?

Was it realistic that when I could not afford the \$5 honor cord for college gradua-



LINDA CRAWFORD

tion, the woman at the counter firmly said, "No money, no cord"? Then an elderly man appeared, paid for my cord, and disappeared before I could properly thank him.

Was it realistic that after driving a Cadillac rental car, my children and I began telling people I would soon own one like it? I saw one advertised and boldly declared, "One day, I am going to get that car." Then a friend called to tell me his neighbor was selling a Cadillac just like

the rental and at a discounted price. It was the very car I had seen advertised—and I bought it.

Was it realistic that when a doctor said my husband might not survive the night, I said he would because we were going to pray? That was three years ago. Today, he is doing just fine.

Was it realistic that after I suffered a stroke, doctors searching for its cause accidentally discovered an aneurysm near my heart? On a scale where 6.0 could mean rupture, this aneurysm measured 5.8. Because it was discovered in time, I underwent surgery that saved my life.

Some people might call these events coincidences, unusual circumstances, or even impossible outcomes. I call them evidence of God's provision, protection, timing, and grace.

Faith does not mean that I ignore facts, refuse wisdom, or deny reality. Faith means I do not allow today's facts to place limits on what God can do tomorrow. Realism considers what is probable based on present circumstances. Faith remembers that God is not confined by probability or present circumstances.

So, was any of it realistic? Perhaps not.

But I have never built my life solely upon what looked realistic. I have built it upon the faithfulness of God. Again and again, He has made a way where I could not see one.

Faithful, so my advice to you is to listen to wise counsel, consider the facts, and make responsible decisions—but never allow another person's definition of "realistic" to become a limit on your faith. Pray, prepare, and do what you can with what you have. Then trust God with what you cannot control. Faith is not foolishness; it is confidence that God can work beyond what you can presently see.

I am a woman of faith—not merely a woman of realism. It seems to me that you are too.

Linda Crawford, Certified Life Coach. Enjoy the Journey Life Coaching.

TO MY BROTHERS...

CHANGE AND TRANSITION

BY J.L. CRAWFORD

September marks the shift from summer to autumn. The temperature begins to change, leaves take on colors, and daylight grows shorter. Nature reminds us that change is not an interruption of life; change is part of life.

Brothers, we often resist change because we are comfortable with what we know. Even when a situation is no longer helping us grow, familiarity can make it difficult to let go. Yet every season has a purpose, and no season is designed to last forever. Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

Change is what happens around us. Transition is what takes place within us as we adjust to what has changed. A man may retire from a job, move to another city, become a husband or father, face an illness, lose someone he loves, or accept a new responsibility. The event may happen in one day, but the transition can take much longer. We must give ourselves time to understand, adapt, pray, and move forward.

Autumn also represents maturity and wisdom. The changing leaves remind us that growing older should bring reflection. We should be able to look back, learn from our mistakes, appreciate how far God has brought us, and help younger men avoid some of the roads that caused us pain.



J.L. CRAWFORD

Fall is also harvest season. It reminds us that faithful work eventually produces fruit. We should thank God for family, friendships, lessons learned, prayers answered, and even the difficult seasons that strengthened us. Our harvest may not look exactly as we expected, but there is always something for which to be grateful.

Brothers, do not fear the next season. Ask God what He wants to teach you through it. Release what has ended without bitterness, receive what is beginning with faith, and remember that your identity is not tied to one position, one possession, or one chapter.

Change may alter our circumstances, but it does not change God. He remains faithful through every transition. Walk into your next season with courage, wisdom, gratitude, and trust.

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GOD, DESTINY AND A GLASS OF WINE, AN EASY READ AND PERFECT GIFT

The best gift sometimes comes in a small package. Such is the case with *God, Destiny and a Glass of Wine*. All chapters begin with one of Linda Crawford's own "true-story" personal narratives that she later connects to a point that is relevant to this journey called destiny. The book is an easy read. Several readers have told her that they couldn't put it down once they started. It is available on Amazon.com. *God, Destiny, and a Glass of Wine* is sure to open your heart to receive healing, encouragement, and a different outlook on life.

Chapter 1: This Too Shall Pass, but When?

I was almost out of breath by the time I made it to the car. Though it was just a few feet away, it seemed like 100 miles. I had parked my car in the backyard to hide it from the bank. Let's face it. It was an old piece of stick-shift junk, but it was all I had, and I was behind on the payments. But tonight, in my panic to get out of the house, maybe the backyard wasn't so smart. Dressed in a gown, house shoes, and a thin jacket, I gripped the keys that were pinned inside my bra. Oh yes, my bra. That was the safest place to keep my valuables,

like my car keys and what little money I had. I had learned a lot in my 29 years. With lightning speed, I dashed out the back door, tripping over the threshold, but still holding my balance and determination. Thank God my boy was spending the night with a friend. It was pitch-black dark outside, as I had no time to flip on the outside lights. I just needed to get out. Once inside my car, I let out a sigh, unaware that I had been holding my breath. Quickly locking the car doors, I knew I was on my way. The car was run down and bent up, but it was my path to freedom tonight and my only means of transportation. I'll never forget it. It was a gray and black Toyota, well....a fading gray and a fading black, a hatch back, about 8 years old at the time, and a stick. Ha! A stick. That could be a holdup since I was still in the learning stage, but I could handle it. I tried to crank the old trap, but it just clicked. I tried again, combining my efforts with a plea. "Please God, I need my car!" Just as the motor turned over, I heard that dreadful sound, a swatch-type sound, like an old screen door dragging. My God! He knew I was going to try to get away. He knew, so he had un-



LINDA MASON CRAWFORD

locked the hatch back, ahead of time! He was in the back so fast; all I could do was bite my lip and jerk forward. "Stop the car, Lynn, and give me the money!" he yelled, as he swiftly crawled into the back seat. He lurched through the bucket seats so fast that my head literally seemed to spin, like the girl in the Exorcist. Grabbing the steering wheel, he yelled again, "Gimme the money, Lynn!" The Exorcist...I was sure that his voice changed. But tonight...no, not tonight. I kept driving, the car swerving across into the other lane and back again as he, too, gripped the wheel. We came within inches of hitting

a minivan. I saw headlights of an 18-wheeler that we also barely missed as we sped into the oncoming traffic. Hands pinned to the wheel, I was driving to my pastor's house, and no one was stopping me. That was the life I lived for most of my 16 years of marriage to a crack addict, one that was much different from my single days of the quiet, country, church girl. I had never touched drugs in my life. I smoked only one cigarette that nearly killed me. And here I was, 29 years old, married to a drug addict. I had so many similar stories to contend with, jumping fences to get my car back from the drug dealers, standing toe-to-toe and nose-to-nose with dealers who threatened to kill me if I didn't leave them alone about getting my car back, knocks on the door in the middle of the night from thugs demanding money my husband owed them, stealing my own car back and driving backwards, trying to miss the flying bullets. You name it; I just about dealt with it. Many times over the years, I walked into my house to find that every piece of furniture and every appliance was gone—sold in exchange for drugs. I remember waking up one

Christmas Day to find that my babies' gifts were gone, sold for drugs. Once, I frantically searched the streets of Tampa because my husband put our 6-year-old out of the car since it was "too dangerous to take him to the crack house," he said. This was before the days of cell phones. I don't even remember how I found my baby boy. I could go on and on, but the only thing that matters is that one day, I accepted the truth that I had to forgive if I expected to move on with my life. I have since come to grips with the truth that my now ex-husband was a good person, who loved people. When he was straight, he would give away his last. When he was not, he would take another person's last. I literally saw him take his shirt off and give it away. Once he pulled off his watch and gave it away, and then took my watch and gave it away, too. He had a heart of gold, but in addiction, he was the devil. Still, I had to find a way to forgive. I owed it to myself, my children, and my God.

To order *God, Destiny, and a Glass of Wine*, paste the following into your browser: <https://www.amazon.com/Destiny-Glass-Linda-Mason-Crawford/dp/069211761X>.

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LOUISE BRADSHAW CONTINUES A LIFE OF SERVICE

After serving McLennan Community College for 42 years, Louise Bradshaw thought she was retiring. Instead, God was preparing her for another opportunity to serve.

Bradshaw is now a Lobby Specialist/Receptionist at TFNB Your Bank for Life. She answers telephone calls for six locations, connects callers with the appropriate employees and welcomes customers visiting the bank's Elm Avenue location.

"I didn't stay in retirement for two months," Bradshaw said. "I was not looking for a job. It found me. That's why I call it a divine assignment."

Bradshaw began her MCC career as a library assistant and was later promoted to information desk supervisor. She supervised circulation desk employees and library technicians and helped hire support staff and student workers.

She especially enjoyed helping students achieve their educational goals.

"I loved the hum of a busy campus, the excitement of first-day jitters and the atmosphere of higher learning," she said.

After more than four de-



LOUISE BRADSHAW

cadences, however, Bradshaw felt a spiritual pull toward a new journey. She retired from MCC on January 20, 2020, and began working at TFNB on March 3.

Her pastor, Dr. Jimmy D. Hunter of Toliver Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, encouraged her to apply. Bradshaw was intrigued by TFNB's commitment to serving East Waco, a community that had reportedly been without a bank for more than 100 years.

Her extensive experience assisting library patrons prepared

her well for banking. Both roles require listening carefully, asking appropriate questions and treating each person with respect.

"People are people," Bradshaw said. "We are more alike than not. We all need, want and expect respect and kindness."

Whether she is connecting a caller with the wire department, helping someone reach a loan officer or offering a customer a warm cookie and water, Bradshaw approaches every task with a servant's heart.

Her guiding lesson came from *The Purpose Driven Life*: "It's not about you."

Bradshaw said TFNB employees operate like a family united by their commitment to superior customer service. To her, "Your Bank for Life" is more than a slogan—it is a promise to meet customers' financial needs throughout their lives.

She encourages other retirees who still have something to contribute to remain open to new opportunities.

"As long as you have breath in your body, serve somebody else," Bradshaw said. "Ask God to order your steps, show you the way and walk with you."

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RUSSELL | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

neurs receive individual guidance on launching and operating businesses. New owners can test ideas, form an LLC, establish business banking, prepare budgets and develop step-by-step launch plans. Established companies receive assistance with loan packaging, commercial and municipal contracting, technology upgrades and connections to financial partners.

IBCC also offers practical AI training, funding guidance, Monday broadcasts on KRGV 98.5 FM, business strategy clinics, Funding Fridays, Skills & Meals and AIICON, its AI conference. Partnerships with city leaders, financial institutions, educational organizations, regional business groups and The Village United extend its reach.

Russell identifies access to capital as the greatest challenge facing local Black-owned businesses. Owners also need stronger back-office systems, contracting knowledge and digital marketing skills that move them beyond word-of-mouth promotion.

Fort Hood is central to the Chamber's work. Russell sees veterans, transitioning soldiers and military spouses as disci-

plined leaders with valuable experience and strong entrepreneurial potential.

His proudest accomplishment is watching struggling businesses secure funding, hire employees and thrive. His long-term vision is to make Killeen, Harker Heights and Central Texas known for high-revenue, technologically advanced Black-owned enterprises that remain in families for generations.

Membership includes business advising, directory visibility, radio interviews, networking and community promotion. Memberships will pause from Oct. 1 through Jan. 1 while IBCC enhances its services and platforms.

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FUN-FILLED SCHOOL DAYS

BY MONA DUNKIN

Dr. William Glasser, founder of the Quality School concept, believed that nature gave us a gene that craves fun and that this need for fun is satisfied through learning. Think about it. Children are born explorers, wanting to know what is out there and testing everything to discover what it looks like, tastes like, feels like, sounds like or smells like. The reward for this fun is knowledge.

The philosopher Socrates viewed education as a spontaneous process. Although schools are important, learning has as much to do with life and experience as it does with books and classrooms. Teachers plant ideas and cultivate imaginations. All a teacher can do is provide information and explain its application.

Attitude is a major factor in successful learning. Education prepares us for an unknown future. Developing a love for new information encourages children to love learning. Our technological progress has grown exponentially because we, as a nation, refuse to settle for the status quo.

There is a direct correlation between a poor attitude and low achievement. A nega-

tive attitude breeds frustration and produces stress. Choose to change your perspective on learning; see it as a challenge to be met and overcome. Monitor your self-talk. Purposefully tell yourself things such as: "I enjoy learning. I will understand this. I feel good about increasing my knowledge. Math is fun."

Learning involves not only obtaining knowledge but also knowing how to use that knowledge and retrieve it later. A disinterested student might ask, "Why do I have to know this anyway?" Knowledge will make you a more interesting person and the world a more interesting place. In the movie *Beyond the Blackboard*, a teacher told a disgruntled student, "Because when you know it, then it is yours."

Learning is fun. Reflect on your most enjoyable days. They were probably enjoyable because you were learning something. Perhaps you were improving a skill, enjoying nature or strengthening an interpersonal relationship. The bottom line is that you were learning, and the reward was enjoyment.

The healthier a person's self-esteem is, the easier it is for that person to learn. Poor



MONA DUNKIN

learning is often more closely related to a low self-image than to a lack of ability. People are influenced by their self-image; the way you see yourself affects the way you behave. The key word is "self." It does not matter what others believe about you; what matters is what you believe about yourself.

Each person is wonderful, special, unique and important. Trouble comes when we expect others to treat us as though we are wonderful, special, unique and important. The more you recognize your own good qualities—and the more you recognize what is

good in others—the more likely you are to perform accordingly. Life will reward you in kind.

Make your school days meaningful by wanting to learn and always doing your best. Get a good night's sleep so that you will feel refreshed and ready for fun. When needed,

be sure to ask your teacher for help. Your teacher is your friend and partner in learning.

Invite Mona to speak to your group. You will be entertained by her humor, challenged by her gift for uncommon insights and motivated by her thought-provoking poems. Call 254-749-6594.

SMART

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Remembrance" at 6 p.m. Saturday, October 24, at Floyd's Audio Capital, 1313 Dallas Street in Waco. The free public event will honor four area women who have lost a child or grandchild to gun violence: Natalie Bradshaw, Kesha DeGrate, Linda James, and Ida McLennan.

Organizers want each honoree to know that she is loved, supported, and not forgotten—and that her child continues to be remembered. They plan to make the celebration an annual event, randomly selecting four women or men each year from submitted names.

The foundation emphasizes that the trauma of gun violence continues through missed birthdays, holidays, financial

changes, and countless family "firsts" without a loved one. Grief, they said, can last a lifetime.

Over the next five years, the organization hopes to see a rapid decline in gun violence and violence of every kind throughout Waco and Central Texas. Donors, volunteers, sponsors, and community partners are needed.

"This is our story today, but it could be your story tomorrow," organizers shared. "No one is exempt from the threat of gun violence."

To volunteer, sponsor the event, nominate a future honoree, or learn more, contact Flecha Smyre at Ceasetheviolence@yahoo.com.



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GOD IS MINDFUL OF THE LITTLE RED BIRDS

BY APOSTLE DR
FANNY MINNITT

Sometimes He uses a rose bush.

Last year, my husband and I watched two little red birds build a nest in the only pink rose bush in our yard. We have several red rose bushes, so we wondered why they chose that one. Soon, three tiny eggs appeared, and we found ourselves watching the birds care for them with surprising attention.

Then this year, the red birds returned.

This time, my husband noticed one of them flying toward the rose bush carrying a piece of plastic-like paper.



APOSTLE FANNY MINNITT

The bird carefully worked it around and partly inside the nest.

That caught my attention. Here was this tiny bird using what was available to strengthen and protect its home. It reminded me that God placed remarkable wisdom even in the smallest parts of His creation.

Then the hawk came.

The hawk was much larger and clearly interested in what was inside that rose bush. Yet the thick branches and thorns made it difficult for him to reach the nest. What amazed me even more was watching one of the little red birds position itself behind the hawk, keeping watch.

It was small, but it was not careless.

It was vulnerable, but it was

not without protection.

That scene made me think about how often we overlook the quiet ways God reveals Himself.

We look for Him in the spectacular, but sometimes His message is right outside our window.

The rose bush offered shelter.

The thorns became protection.

The discarded plastic became useful.

And the little bird knew enough to stay alert.

Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." — Matthew 10:29

KJV

If God is mindful of a sparrow, surely He is mindful of us.

Perhaps the place you are in right now does not look ideal. Perhaps it even feels uncomfortable or surrounded by thorns. But what if God is using that very place to protect, prepare, or position you?

Those little red birds reminded me that God wastes nothing and overlooks nothing.

Not the bird.

Not the nest.

Not the rose bush.

And certainly not you.

"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." — Matthew 10:31 KJV

THAT VOICE MAY NOT BE YOUR GRANDCHILD

The telephone rings, and a frightened voice cries, "Grandma, I need your help." The caller may claim to have been arrested, injured in an accident or stranded far from home. The voice sounds familiar, and the situation appears urgent. However, the person on the telephone may be a criminal using artificial intelligence.

Voice-cloning technology can reproduce a person's voice from a short audio sample. That sample might come from a social-media video, voicemail or other recording posted online. With this technology, a scammer may sound remarkably similar to someone you love.

Family-emergency scams succeed by creating panic. The caller may say that money must be sent immediately for bail, medical treatment, an attorney or transportation. A second scammer might join the call pretending to be a police officer, doctor or lawyer. Victims are often instructed not to tell anyone because the situation is embarrassing or confidential.

Secrecy and urgency are two major warning signs. Requests for gift cards, cryptocurrency, wire transfers or payment-app transfers are also reasons to stop. These payment methods can be difficult to reverse once the money has been sent.

The Federal Trade Commission advises consumers not to trust a caller simply because the voice sounds familiar. Hang up and telephone the

loved one directly at a number you already know. If that person cannot be reached, contact another relative or trusted friend who can help verify the story.

Families can prepare before a scam occurs by selecting a private family verification word or question. Choose something that cannot easily be discovered online. If someone calls claiming to be in danger, ask for that word. However, direct contact with the relative remains the safest verification method.

Never provide Social Security numbers, banking information, passwords or verification codes to an unexpected caller. Do not allow threats or emotional pressure to force an immediate decision. A legitimate police department, court or hospital will allow you to confirm whom you are speaking with.

If money has already been sent, immediately contact the bank, card issuer, wire-transfer company or payment service. Ask whether the transaction can be stopped or reversed. Save telephone numbers, messages, receipts and other evidence.

Most importantly, remember this rule: Slow down and verify. Taking five minutes to contact another family member could prevent the loss of hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Suspected fraud may be reported at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

Source: Federal Trade Commission Consumer Advice.

BREAKING NEGATIVE THINKING PATTERNS

BY LINDA CRAWFORD,
CERTIFIED LIFE COACH

Have you ever heard someone say, "I'll try it, but it will never work"? My question is: Why try it if you have already decided it will fail? We often defeat ourselves with our words before we ever take the first step. Our mouths announce failure, and then our minds begin looking for evidence that failure is inevitable.

Another familiar expression is, "Ask. All they can do is say no." Why approach the situation expecting rejection? Yes, the answer could be no, but it could also be yes. Instead, say, "I am going to ask because the answer may be yes." That simple change opens the door to hope and possibility.

Negative thinking patterns often sound harmless: "Nothing ever works out for me." "I'm just not good at that." "I always mess things up." "People like me never get opportunities." When repeated often enough, these statements become beliefs. Those beliefs then influence our decisions, confidence, relationships, and willingness to try.

Breaking the pattern begins with listening to yourself. Pay attention to the words "always," "never," "can't," and "won't." Ask yourself, "Is this statement completely true, or am I speaking from fear, frustration, or an old disappointment?" Then replace the negative statement with one that



LINDA CRAWFORD

is both hopeful and honest. Instead of saying, "I can't do this," say, "I have not learned how to do this yet." Replace "Everything will go wrong" with "I will prepare carefully and handle problems if they arise."

Positive thinking does not mean pretending that obstacles do not exist. It means refusing to let a possible problem become a guaranteed defeat in your mind. Faith, preparation, and wise action can exist together.

The next time you hear yourself predicting failure, stop and choose different words. Your words shape your expectations, and your expectations affect your actions. Do not talk yourself out of an opportunity before it arrives. Speak with courage, take the step, and leave room for something good to happen. You may discover that

the outcome is far better than you imagined it could be.

Linda Crawford, Certified Life Coach. Enjoy the Journey Life Coaching.

SMITH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

accommodating as many as 19 guests.

She considers every satisfied customer, compliment, referral, and five-star review evidence of success. Along the way, mistakes taught her to read, attend workshops, take classes, listen to others, and continue learning.

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is simple but powerful: "If you try, you may succeed or you may not. But if you don't even try, there is a 100 percent chance you won't succeed."

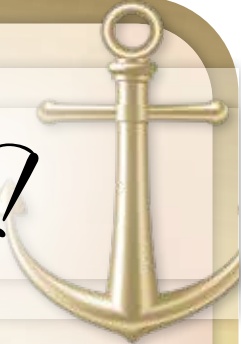
Looking ahead, Smith remains guided by faith. "My goals are to be and do all that God purposed in my life," she said. "I'm happy doing what I do, and I'm happy to do whatever God brings my way."

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SEPTEMBER: HEALTHY AGING FOR EVERY AGE

BY DR. SHAMONICA TRUNELL

Add life to your years. When we hear “healthy aging,” we often think about older adults. However, healthy aging begins long before our senior years. The habits we establish throughout life help determine how well our bodies will serve us later.

Instead of asking, “How can I live longer?” ask, “How can I live better?” Growing older is a privilege. The goal is to maintain the strength, mobility, independence, mental sharpness, and joy that allow us to enjoy those additional years.

SIX WAYS TO ADD LIFE TO YOUR YEARS

(1) Keep Moving

Walking, stretching, strength training, swimming, dancing, and gardening can improve muscle strength, mobility, balance, and heart health. You do not have to become an athlete. Choose movement you enjoy and make it part of your routine.

(2) Build Strength and Protect Your Balance

Strong muscles support your joints and help you perform everyday activities independently. Add age-appropriate strength and balance exercises to your week. If you have health concerns or problems with falling, consult your



DR. SHAMONICA TRUNELL

healthcare provider first.

(3) Nourish Your Body

Make colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats, and water regular parts of your diet. Protein helps maintain muscle, so include it throughout your day. Remember to stay hydrated.

(4) Exercise Your Brain

Read, learn something new, complete a puzzle, play an instrument, take a class, or try a new recipe. Stay socially connected, too. Relationships with family, friends, and faith communities support emotional well-being.

(5) Practice Prevention

Do not wait until something feels wrong to address your

health. Preventive visits and age-appropriate screenings may identify concerns earlier. Ask your healthcare provider about blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, vision, hearing, bone health, and cancer screenings. Your schedule should be personalized.

(6) Make Room for Joy

Health is more than laboratory numbers and appointments. It is laughing with your grandchildren, traveling, worshipping, enjoying hobbies, spending time with friends, and welcoming another day. Include gratitude, purpose,

rest, and joy in your wellness plan. You are not simply staying alive; you are building a life you want to keep living.

MONTHLY SELF-CARE CHALLENGE

This September, choose one daily activity for your body, mind, and spirit:

- Body: Walk or stretch for 20 minutes.
- Mind: Read, learn, or complete a puzzle.
- Spirit: Pray, practice gratitude, call someone you love, or reflect quietly.

At month’s end, ask: “Do I feel stronger, more connected,

or more intentional than I did 30 days ago?” That is progress worth celebrating.

DR. SHAMONICA’S PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTHY LIVING

“Growing older is inevitable, but how we care for ourselves matters. Move your body, challenge your mind, nourish yourself well, stay connected, and keep finding reasons to enjoy the life you have been given.”

Until next month, be well, live intentionally, and remember—your health is your greatest wealth.

SEPSIS: KNOW THE SIGNS AND ACT QUICKLY

Sepsis can begin with an ordinary infection and quickly become a life-threatening medical emergency. It occurs when the body has an extreme response to an infection, triggering a chain reaction that can damage tissues and organs. Without prompt treatment, sepsis can lead to organ failure and death.

Infections that cause sepsis frequently begin in the lungs, urinary tract, skin or gastrointestinal tract. Pneumonia, urinary tract infections and infected wounds are among the conditions that can become dangerous if the infection spreads or

the body reacts severely.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 1.7 million adults and more than 18,000 children in the United States develop sepsis each year. At least one in five adults and one in 10 children who develop sepsis die during hospitalization or are discharged to hospice.

Anyone can develop sepsis, but certain people face greater risks. They include adults 65 and older, infants, people with weakened immune systems and individuals with chronic illnesses. People who have re-

cently been hospitalized, undergone surgery or experienced a serious illness may also be more vulnerable.

Recognizing the warning signs can save a life. Symptoms may include clammy or sweaty skin, confusion, extreme pain or discomfort, fever, shivering, feeling unusually cold, a rapid heartbeat, a weak pulse or shortness of breath. A person may not experience every symptom.

Families should pay particular attention when someone with an infection suddenly becomes much sicker, seems confused, has trouble breathing or complains that something feels seriously wrong. Do not wait for every symptom to appear. Seek emergency medical assistance and tell the healthcare professional that you are concerned about possible sepsis.

Sepsis cannot be diagnosed at home. Medical professionals use an examination and laboratory tests to look for infection and organ damage. Treatment must begin quickly and may include antibiotics, intravenous fluids and other measures to protect the organs.

People can reduce their risks by controlling chronic illnesses, practicing good hygiene, caring properly for wounds, receiving recommended vaccinations and obtaining medical care when infections are not improving.

When an infection is present, remember this simple advice: watch closely, recognize sudden changes and act quickly. Asking, “Could this be sepsis?” may help medical professionals consider a condition in which every minute matters.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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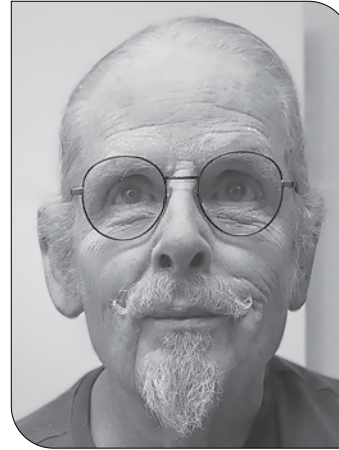
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JAZZ GREAT "DIZZY" GILLESPIE — FOLLOWER OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

BY MICHAEL JONES

John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie was the youngest of nine children, born in South Carolina in 1917. He began learning piano at the age of four. Since his father was in a band, he was around many instruments as a child. At the age of 12, Dizzy had taught himself to play the trumpet. By the late 1940s and '50s, he was known the world over as a composer, bandleader, educator, and singer who, with saxophonist Charlie Parker, co-founded bebop and modern jazz. A virtuoso known for harmonic complexity and Afro-Cuban jazz fusion, he influenced legends like Miles Davis, Clifford Brown and Arturo Sandoval. His bent-bell trumpet, puffed cheeks, and onstage antics made him an icon, earning Grammy, Kennedy Center, and NEA Jazz Master honors.

Dizzy's performances with other musicians, demonstrating his fantastic horn techniques and showcasing his charming demeanor, were not only entertaining but inspiring. But his musical prowess only reveals a single facet of this fascinating man; he was also a spiritual being, attracted to the writings



MICHAEL JONES

of Bahá'u'lláh —the prophet and founder of the Bahá'í Faith. The untimely death of his friend Charlie Parker, who died in 1955 at the age of 34 following a long period of drug addiction, triggered a spiritual quest which shortly led Dizzy to some of the Bahá'í Faith's writings.

Becoming a Bahá'í influenced Gillespie's life in every way. He wrote that it gave him "a new concept of the relationship between God and man—between man and his fellow man—man and his family. ...I became more spiritually aware, and when you're spiritu-

ally aware, that will be reflected in what you do."

Dizzy's life reflected these great words from the writings: "Music is a praiseworthy science at the Threshold of the Almighty, so that, in a most wondrous melody, ye may raise such hymns of praise to enrapture the Concourse on High. By virtue of this, consider how much the art of music is admired and praised. Strike up such a melody and tune as to cause the nightingales of divine mysteries to be filled with joy and ecstasy."

The life of this jazz legend, who died in 1993 at age 75, and the importance of music to our spiritual existence, cannot be even remotely contained within the confines of this short article. The legacy of Dizzy's music will endure for future generations to enjoy. His timeless songs and the joyfulness of his music will continue, inspiring, uplifting and feeding our souls. Many of his performances can be found on YouTube.

To investigate Bahá'í life and activities in Waco, visit our local Bahá'í website at wacobahais.org. You are also invited to visit the global information site at bahai.org/beliefs.

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TURNING 65? KNOW YOUR MEDICARE OPTIONS

BY MARGARET IVORY

Turning 65 is an exciting milestone, but it can also bring a new set of questions—especially when it comes to Medicare. If your 65th birthday is approaching, now is a good time to begin learning about your Medicare choices rather than waiting until the last minute.

One of the first questions many people ask is, “When do I need to sign up for Medicare?”

For most people who are newly eligible because they are turning 65, the Initial Enrollment Period is a seven-month period. It generally begins three months before the month you turn 65, includes your birthday month, and continues for three months afterward.

However, everyone’s circumstances are different. If you are still working and have health insurance through your employer or your spouse’s employer, different rules may apply. This is one reason it is important to understand your situation before making a decision.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHOICES

Medicare has several different parts.

Medicare Part A generally helps cover inpatient hospital care, skilled nursing facility care, hospice care, and certain home health services.

Medicare Part B generally helps cover doctors’ services, outpatient care, preventive services, and certain medical equipment and services.

After enrolling in Original Medicare, you may also need to consider how you will handle prescription drug coverage and expenses that Original Medicare doesn’t fully pay.

Some beneficiaries choose Medicare Advantage, also called Medicare Part C. These plans are offered by private insurance companies approved by Medicare and provide Medicare Part A and Part B benefits. Plans may also include prescription drug coverage and additional benefits.

Another option is to remain with Original Medicare and consider a Medicare Supplement (Medigap) policy to help with certain out-of-pocket expenses. Prescription drug coverage can be purchased separately through a Medicare Part D plan.

There isn’t one Medicare



MARGARET IVORY

choice that is best for every-

one.

Your doctors, prescriptions, preferred hospitals, travel habits, health-care needs and budget can all be important considerations.

DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

Medicare terminology can sometimes feel overwhelming. You may hear words such as premiums, deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, formularies, provider networks and maximum out-of-pocket limits.

You don’t have to understand everything overnight.

Start early, ask questions and compare your choices carefully. Most importantly, don’t select a plan simply because a friend or relative likes it. The coverage that works wonderfully for someone else may not be the best fit for you.

I’M HERE TO HELP

If you’re approaching 65 and have questions about Medicare, I would be happy to help you understand the Medicare options that I am authorized to offer.

There is no charge to

speak with me, and requesting information does not obligate you to enroll in a plan.

Whether you’re wondering when to enroll, whether you need Medicare Part B, how Medicare works when you’re still employed, or what your coverage choices are, getting answers early can make the transition much easier.

Turning 65 should be a milestone to celebrate—not a reason to worry about Medicare.

Margaret Ivory, Licensed Medicare Insurance Broker, 254-313-7413.

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