

## Staying Connected to a Higher Power, p. 7

*"COVID & Africa," p. 2*

"He who is untrue to his own cause cannot command the respect of others."  
- Albert Einstein



## Camp Preparing 5,000 Meals

In the spirit of coming together in these challenging times, RCP Companies' Head Chef at The Camp, Chef Ruth Mercado, is preparing over 5,000 ready-to-eat casserole dishes to disperse in Huntsville as a continuation of [Operation Drumstick](#) started in Muscle Shoals.

The Huntsville distribution is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, from 5-7 p.m.

Distribution centers include: The Camp at MidCity District - 5909 University Drive NW; Woody Anderson Ford - 2500 Jordan Lane NW; Huntsville Country Club - 2601 Oakwood Avenue NW; Venue Group Office, Washington Park Downtown - 120 Holmes Ave NW; Schoel

Engineering - 7500 Memorial Pkwy SW #209; and St. Bartley Primitive Baptist Church - 3020 Belafonte Ave NW

With gracious donations from The Muscle Shoals Music Association, Forrest Wood Farms, and Merchants Grocery, The Camp has identified six distribution centers through partners across Huntsville to safely hand out a meal to anyone who would like to commune together, separately.

"I just wanted to have a way for people in Huntsville to have a meal together, anyone and everyone, together but separate," Chef Ruth said, "until the next time we can commune in the same place."

Local delivery service, Grub-South, will be transporting the prepared meals from The Camp's kitchen to each distribution center with their approved health code protocols, drivers and resources they already have in place from their food transportation service. Distribution centers are made possible by The Camp at MidCity, Woody Anderson Ford, Huntsville Country Club, Venue Group, Schoel Engineering, Saint Bartley Primitive Baptist Church, and GrubSouth.

For additional information, contact RCP Companies, Nadia Niakossary, at (256) 348-6609, or e-mail [nadia@rcpcompanies.com](mailto:nadia@rcpcompanies.com).

## CEO Joins Board of Crestwood Medical Center

Crestwood Medical Center announced recently the appointment of Kim Caudle Lewis to its Board of Trustees for a three-year term effective immediately. Lewis is the CEO of PROJECTXYZ, Inc., which she founded in Huntsville in 2002.

Mike Gillespie, chairman of the Crestwood Board, stated, "We are delighted and honored to have Ms. Lewis join our board. She embodies the spirit of community, brings a wealth of knowledge of our community's needs, as well as has tremendous business acumen and energy as we further our mission to provide exceptional care and service excellence for patients and their families."

PROJECTXYZ, Inc., has been recognized by numerous organizations including Inc. 5000 in 2014 - 2017; the U.S. Chamber Blue Ribbon Award in 2016; and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Women-Owned Business



the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA), Huntsville Hospital Foundation, National Children's Advocacy Center, and is the past chair of the Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County, the first African-American woman to hold the position.

"Crestwood plays a vital role in the overall health of our community, and I look forward to working with this team to assure that we continue to provide access to quality health care for our residents," commented Lewis.

of the Year in 2017. Lewis has been engaged in many community activities including most recently Calhoun Community College, Health Establishments at Local Schools (HEALS),

## Valley Mourns A&M Professor

The Valley community mourns the April 15 death of Dr. Richard Arthur Evans, who served as a chemistry professor at Alabama A&M University for nearly 40 years.

A native of the Turkey Creek area of Gulfport, Miss., the Tougaloo College alumnus was the first African American to earn a Ph.D. degree in chemistry from Louisiana State University.

He was a proud member of Fellowship Presbyterian Church, where he sang in

the chancel choir and men's chorus; the American Chemical Society; The Huntsville Spiritual Chorale; and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

Dr. Evans is survived by his wife of 59 years, Gloria Bolton Evans; his children Gregory A. Evans (Debra) of Hattiesburg, Miss.; Christopher A. Evans (Yvette) of Madison, Ala.; and Kimberly A. Evans of Huntsville, Ala.; and a host of other relatives and friends.



## The Valley Weekly

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## Perspectives on EGO-holism

by tim allston

### The Coronavirus Crisis Leadership “Vaccine”?

#### E Pluribus Unum (“Out of Many, One”)

“And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” -Ecclesiastes 4:12 KJV

King Solomon here seemed to be forecasting some 2300 years forward and observed rightly the challenge accepted by select U.S. governors in combating this current coronavirus crisis.

In the absence of consistent, credible and empathic federal leadership in creating a comprehensive national response to this pandemic, select governors acting as “silver-mettle leaders” are filling that void by providing creative regional alliances.



In a previous column, “Coronavirus Crisis Object Lesson: Silver-medal Governors Became Gold-medal Leaders,” <http://valleyweeklyllc.com/ValleyWeekly03272020V6N29.pdf>, I singled out several of the nation’s second-tiered leaders as silver-mettle leaders.

#### What’s a “Silver-Mettle Leader”?

Silver is the second-most precious metal, mettle is the character, fortitude and courage shown during demanding times, and leaders are persons exerting influence; therefore, a silver-mettle leader or “silver-mettle-ist” is a person of influence (leader) in a number-two position (silver) whose actions exhibit character, fortitude and courage (mettle).

#### Hopi Indian Saying: “One finger can’t lift a pebble.”

Just last week, there were two examples of governors combining their efforts:

“Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced an agreement on a shared vision for reopening their economies and controlling COVID-19 into the future” <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/washington-oregon-and-california-announce-western-states-pact>; and

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo aligned with the governors from New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Massachusetts and Rhode Island to create a regional plan for reopening their businesses and schools, so that their people can return safely to work <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/13/nyregion/new-york-coronavirus-reopen-plan.html>.

From these examples, I ask: Do you, from your subordinate position in your organization (e.g., family, workplace, social group or place of worship), influence people by serving them with character, fortitude and courage (Dorothy Bernard: “Courage is fear has said its prayers”)?

Then you, Silver-Mettle-ist, are joining the ranks of Governors Cuomo, Whitmer, Inslee and Newsom!

Life Coach tim allston is the author of the free book, *7 Steps to Manage Ego Problems: The How-to Guide for “Someone Else,”* downloadable now at [www.GetEgoHelpNow.org](http://www.GetEgoHelpNow.org).

# Why Africa Has So Few Coronavirus 2019 Cases

With a high percentage of Black Americans contracting and succumbing to COVID-19, have you wondered how Africa is faring during this global crisis? Well, if the numbers are any indication, it appears to be doing a lot better than the United States.

Considering that Africa’s 54 countries are spread across 11.7 million square miles and houses an estimated 1.3 billion people, it would seem that COVID-19 cases would be exploding there. But they aren’t.

As of April 3, the entire continent only had 7,182 cases, with South Africa leading with 1,505 and Sierra Leone with the least at two cases.

By comparison, East Asia, where COVID-19 first emerged in China, had 96,665 cases as of April 3 according to the Johns Hopkins University & Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center.

Why does a continent as large as Africa have so few COVID-19 cases compared to the rest of the world? Perhaps the answer lies in its preparedness.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in February, when it was first indicated that this pathogen was a threat to global health, it lent its support to African governments by deploying thousands of COVID-19 testing kits to countries throughout the continent.

First, to those countries that were identified as having a high volume of travel to China and later

to other nations. Egypt, and then Algeria, were the first African countries with confirmed cases. Once learning of their status, the WHO sprang into action and went from readiness and prepare to response mode.

In addition to testing kits, countries were sent personal protection equipment and vital infection prevention and control equipment. The procedures for handwashing and social distancing were shared. The WHO also deployed experts on the virus throughout the continent to assist with containment and reduce widespread infection.

Yet, the U.S. is not nearly as large as Africa in land mass or population, but as of April 3, there were 257,773 cases of COVID-19. The most in the world compared to Africa with 7,182.

What happened that the U.S. now leads the world in COVID-19 cases and Africa has so few in comparison? Here’s how the response to the virus rolled out.

From the beginning, when China first sounded the alarm, the U.S. failed to act quickly to prevent the spread of this virus starting with the shortage of testing kits for the virus. In fact, the US has not tested a third of its population to date.

Could the dismantling of the National Security Council unit that focused on pandemics, the group of people who would have seen COVID-19 coming and prepared us before it arrived, been a mistake?



On Jan. 20, the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the U.S. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) put in place strict guidelines to develop testing kits for the virus. In order to maintain high quality tests, the FDA only allowed some state and public labs to have the test. Only 90 testing kits, distributed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), were circulated to those labs leaving out researchers, hospitals and universities around the country who were ready to develop test kits as reported on March 30, 2020, in *The Washington Post*. As luck would have it, the CDC’s test kits had problems.

Still, the FDA did not lift the restrictions on who could make the kits. While this failure with testing kits delayed the testing of people who were now being exposed to the virus, the Trump Administration was denying that there was a problem at all, telling the nation the virus was

contained, when in fact that was far from the truth.

On Feb. 29, the FDA lifted the restrictions on who could develop the test, but, by that time, the virus had begun to spread throughout Washington state. Even with these new tests being developed, the CDC guidelines said only certain people could be tested, people coming from Wuhan, China, and people who had been in contact with someone that tested positive for the virus, leaving many Americans not knowing if they carried the virus.

There were failures at numerous levels in the U.S.’s response to this virus. Had this country’s preparedness response been as focused and developed as Africa’s, could there be fewer cases here and our COVID-19 numbers more like Africa’s?

Africa has shown the world how preparing to fight a pandemic is done having had ample practice with prior epidemics.

- BlackDoctor.org

# Johnson High Alum, Physician Addresses Rep. Sewell's Town Hall

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**The Valley Weekly**

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Dr. Selwyn Maurice Vickers, a J.O. Johnson



High School alumnus who currently serves as senior vice president for medicine and dean of the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine (since 2013) was part of "TerriTalks," a Facebook

Live conversation on health disparities with U.S. Congresswoman Terri Sewell recently.

Recorded live on April 15, the session delved into why the Coronavirus is disproportionately impacting African Americans, which Sewell placed among a long list of "systemic disinvestments in the black community." She added that diseases had only placed spotlight health disparities that have been going on for years.

Vickers, a USA Today contributor, also noted in a piece prior to the Sewell interview that the national crisis of COVID-19 "magnifies disparities and inequities" in American society. While anyone can be infected by the disease, he noted that the pandemic's effects, as well as the government and health care response to it "do not

impact everyone equally." On a state-by-state basis,



Vickers reported that COVID-19 deaths were more than double their propor-

tion within a given state's population. For instance, in Illinois and Michigan, where blacks make up about 15 percent of each state's population, black deaths from COVID-19 topped 40 percent. Blacks made up an unbelievable 70 percent of the deaths in the state of Louisiana, where they only represent a third of the population.

He attributed the shocking disparities to well-known inequities in health care, housing and food. These inequities, he reported, manifest themselves in high incidents of high blood pressure, diabetes and kidney failure.

He called for renewed commitment for expansion of health care to those underserved and not insured.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how profoundly health care access and health outcomes

are linked with an individual's employment and income status in the United States," stressed Vickers in his USA Today article. "Many African Americans and other minorities can't stay home because they work in sectors like health care, government, transportation and food supply that are now

deemed essential. In cities, minority populations are still riding public transportation in large numbers to go to work, yet another unavoidable exposure risk." Doctors must refer a patient for testing, said Vickers, and this further exposes health disparities in Coronavirus testing, since many African Americans do not have a primary physician.

When such things as test kits are limited, that usually translates to lesser access by the underprivileged and underserved, said Vickers. The doctor

recommended refining government and health care responses to: 1) Meticulous recording demographic data on virus spread and mortality; 2) enhancing diversity in current and emerging therapies and clinical trials; 3) provision of transportation or onsite testing to vulnerable urban and rural communities; 4) communicate messages to minority communities through trusted leaders; and 5) commit and organize nationally, regionally and locally to address the medical and social issues that have created and sustained the preexisting COVID-19 health disparities.

*We believe the COVID-19 pandemic is radically exacerbating the deadly consequences of racial and socioeconomic disparities in health and health care in America, creating a crisis within a crisis.*

- Dr. Selwyn M. Vickers

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# Washington in One Minute



Here are the happenings in Washington, D.C., this week:

1) The House and Senate have extended their recess through May 4, 2020; however, this week they are expected to approve legislation providing additional funding for small business loans and other coronavirus relief items. Reportedly, congressional leaders and the Trump Administration have agreed on: \$300 billion for Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, \$50 billion for Small Business Administra-

tion Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), \$75 billion for hospitals, and \$25 billion for COVID-19 testing.

2) Last Thursday, President Trump announced a 3-Phase Plan for restarting the nation's economy, implementable on a statewide or county-by-county basis at the discretion of the nation's governors, although it urges states not consider reopening until coronavirus cases decline for 2 straight weeks and there is robust testing program in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including emerging antibody

testing. Go here for the full plan: 3-Phase Plan. The President also announced that he has created a bipartisan panel of 32 congressmen and 65 senators – the “Opening Up America Again Congressional Group” – to advise him on the need for additional funding for small business relief, international and domestic supply chains, ways to energize the economy, surprise medical billing, clarifying the difference between essential and non-essential workers, mental health, expanding access to COVID-19 diagnostic and anti-body tests and the availability of personal protective equipment.

3) On Saturday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada and the U.S. had agreed to extend the U.S./Canadian border closure for nonessential travel for another 30 days.

4) On Saturday, Sens. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) sent a letter to Federal Reserve

Chair Jerome Powell asking him to change the criteria for the \$500 billion in CARES Act authorized funds it has pledged to buy short-term municipal debt from all states and those cities with at least 1 million inhabitants and counties with at least 2 million inhabitants – known as the Municipal Liquidity Facility program. The senators assert that the Fed is denying the vast majority of the nation's local governments direct access to funding through arbitrary limits. Read the letter here: Powell letter.

5) Last Friday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) named Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA) to the 5-person Congressional Oversight Commission, mandated by the CARES Act to oversee \$500 billion in big business aid being distributed by the Treasury Department. Republican and Democratic leaders in the House and Senate each name one member of the panel, with the chair being

selected in a joint decision by Sen. McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). Other chosen members of the panel to date include Rep. French Hill (R-AR) and ex-Senate staffer Bharat Ramamurti. Speaker Pelosi has yet to choose her member for the panel, but announced last week that she will establish a new select committee to conduct oversight of the entirety of new spending in the CARES Act. Sen. McConnell announced that Senate Banking Committee Chair Mike Crapo (R-ID) will take the lead on oversight of the CARES Act in the Senate.

6) The U.S. Supreme Court announced last week that it will hear oral arguments in 13 cases on May 4-6 and May 11-13 by telephone conference, including challenges to “faithless elector” laws, which require presidential electors to vote the way that state law directs; 2 cases on the Trump Administration's expansion of the religious exemption

from the Affordable Care Act's birth-control mandate, and 3 cases pertaining to President Trump's tax returns and financial records. The court will make an audio feed available to the public through a media pool, providing real-time audio of oral arguments for the first time in its history. For a full list of the May cases, go here: SCOTUS cases

7) Last Thursday, a new Gallup poll showed a 6-point drop in President Trump's approval rating down to 43%, the sharpest drop Gallup has recorded for the Trump Presidency so far. At the same time, Congress' approval rating jumped 8 points to 30%, its highest mark since 2009. The poll further found that only 30% of Americans are satisfied with the way things are going in the U.S., marking a 12-point drop since early March. The poll of 1,017 adults was conducted April 1-14, 2020, with a margin of error of + 4%.

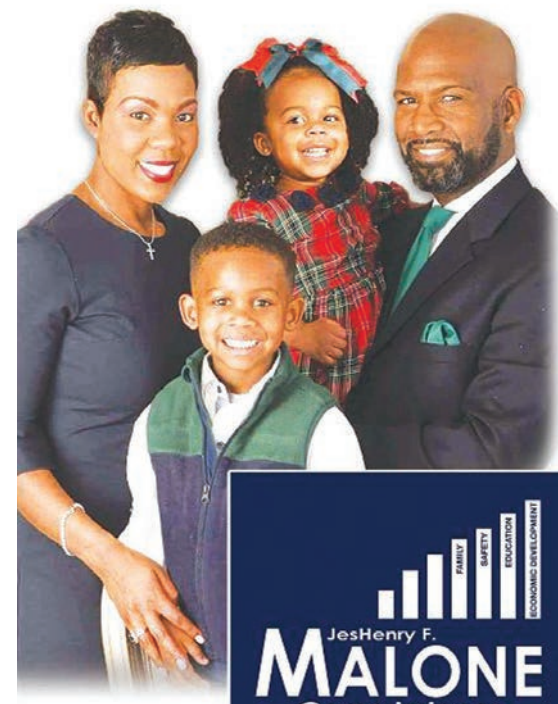
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- Moved our county forward by helping to bring Mazda Toyota to our county.
- Will continue to fight for our quality of life including our schools and recreation.
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# Champion Game Plan for Life by Preston Brown

## FROM ANXIETY TO ACCEPTANCE

Matthew 28:8 says, *So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.*

Have you ever been anxious about something that you were not sure of? Like when will they open the economy back up, so we can get back to work? Or, when will we receive our stimulus checks so we can pay our bills? Or, perhaps, when will things get back to normal so we can go back to church?

Anytime that we are not sure of the future, it will certainly cause us to be anxious, because there is no doubt that the lives that we have created

for ourselves are important to us.

So, each of us, in our on way, are facing this fear of an unknown future.

The unknown future will always make us feel afraid and anxious, like we see with these two women in our scripture reading. Perhaps they were unsure of how things would turn out without Jesus being in their lives in the physical sense.

Today, we are living in a time when we are unsure of how things are going to turn out. So, it's easy to understand how how we can be anxious about the future.

However, I believe that now is the time to move from anxiety to acceptance, because it will help all of us move into this "new normal" that God has for



our lives. It is time to accept the fact that God has a great plan for all of us, and we don't have to be afraid, because we serve a risen savior and He's in the world today.

You see, the moment we accept this fact, we can all face our tomorrows without fear or distress. The moment we accept this fact, we will have the peace and the joy that Jesus died for us to have ... Stay encouraged, my brothers and sisters!

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# Valley Deaths

**NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME - 2501**

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Public Viewing for **MS. KIMBERLY BAILEY** (b. 1981) was held Friday, April 17, at the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Graveside service for **MRS. AGRIPPA DAVIS BASS**, formerly of Huntsville, Ala. (b. 1924) was held Thursday, April 16, at Northside Cemetery.

Public viewing for **MRS. TRACEY ("BALLIE") HIGH BOLDEN** (b. 1970) was held Thursday, April 16, at the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Memorial service for **MR. JAMES EARL BARNARD** (b. 1962) was held April 14, in the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel with The Reverend Endia J. Scruggs officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. SUSIE GREEN** (b. 1938) was held Saturday, April 11, in the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel with Elder Ronnie Patton officiating.

**ROYAL FUNERAL HOME - 4315 Oakwood Avenue - Huntsville, AL 35810 - (256) 534-8481**

A Celebration of Life for **Dr. Richard Arthur Evans** (b. 1938) was held at the Royal Chapel of Memories Tuesday, April 21, with Rev. Gregory J. Bentley officiating.

Public viewing for **MR. ALEXANDER VAN KEETON** (b. 1992) was held Sunday, April 19, at the Royal Funeral Home.

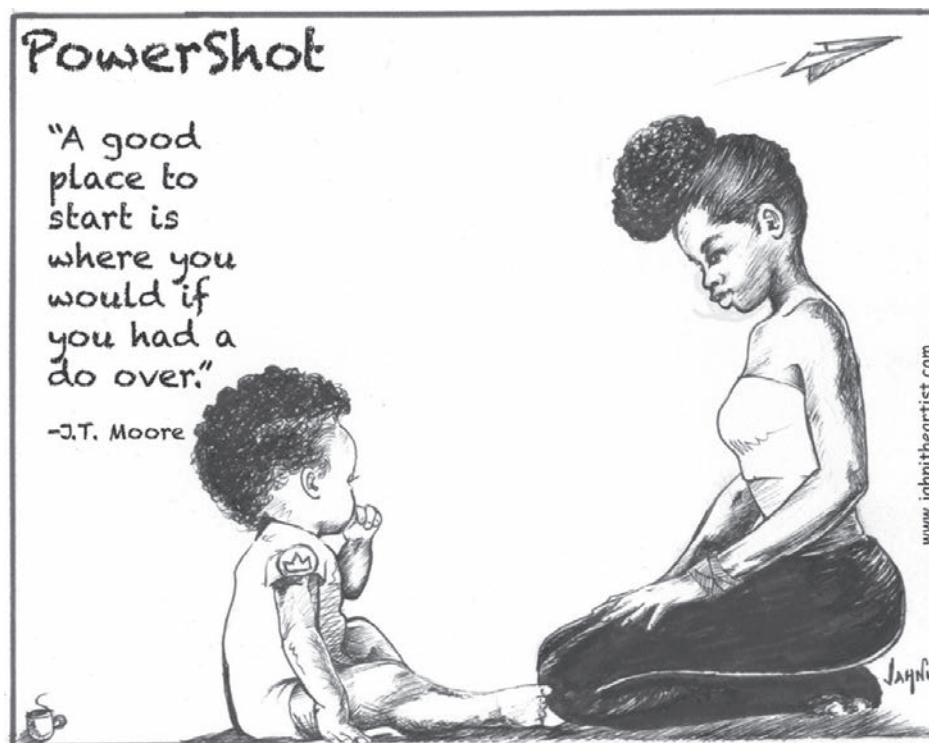
Public viewing was held for **MRS. IDELLA McCRARY POPE** (b. 1932) Saturday, April 18, at the Royal Funeral Home.

Graveside service for **MRS. IDA MAE RAGLAND** (b. 1943) was held Thursday, April 16, at the Faith Memorial Park (8100 Madison Blvd, Madison, Ala.) with Dr. Tiwirai Kufarimai officiating.

Public viewing for **MRS. BETTIE JEAN JACKSON** (b. 1936) was held Tuesday, April 14, at the Royal Funeral Home.

**SERENITY FUNERAL HOME - 2505 University Drive NW - Huntsville, AL 35816 - (256) 539-9693**

Graveside service for **MS. ANGELA FLINT** (b. 1970) was held Thursday, April 23, in Deposit, Ala., with Rev. Daniel J. Richardson officiating.



*"Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school."* - Albert Einstein

## Unsure whether you can retire? Let's talk.



**Lillian B Henderson**  
Financial Advisor

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## The Valley Weekly COVID-19 Assistance

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[labor.alabama.gov](http://labor.alabama.gov)

**MADISON  
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HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT**  
(256) 539-3711

**LATEST COVID-19  
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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

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# Called 2 Preach

by Pastor/Founder Michael D. Rice  
Grace Gethsemane Mission Church

## That Didn't Work

Proverbs 1:5-6

The entire instruction read like this: That didn't work. Make sure your Bluetooth device is discoverable, then try again. These are the words that appeared as I sought to "connect" my Bluetooth device to my computer. By all indications, it had been "paired,"

but not "connected." Upon clicking upon the icon that said, "connect," it was after a few seconds passing that this message popped up; that didn't work. What was the missing element? Obviously, according to the second part of those instructions, my device was not discoverable. That means that my computer and my device were



not communicating, and the device was not in proper alignment to my computer so that it was "in range."

Of course, the preacher in me had an "ah hah" moment

and the Spirit reminded me of the times in my own life that my Bluetooth device (the ears of my heart), were not discoverable; therefore some things that I tried regarding life decisions led to the discovery that that didn't work.

The writer of Proverbs says that wisdom cries out in the street and that a wise man (woman) will hear and increase learning ... but

fools despise wisdom and instruction. God is a God of mercy; meaning that even when mistakes are made, His matchless mercy says, make sure your Bluetooth device is discoverable, then try again. The enemy of our souls would love for God's people to get stuck on *that didn't work*.

God's grace says, *try again*.

*"Most people would sooner die than think; in fact, they do so."*

- Bertrand Russell

### Spotlight on Our Elders ... Featuring

## Mrs. Dorothy B. Johnson

Mrs. Dorothy B. Johnson is the true essence of a lady-quiet, dedicated, loyal, dependable, loving, a leader, unselfish, and always willing to help others. She was born and grew up in rural Dodge County in Eastman, Ga., with nine other siblings, working on their family farm. She relocated to Huntsville in 1961 to pursue a job at Alabama A&M University.

Her family is the apple of her eyes and if you want to see a big grin on her face, just ask her about her grandsons. She will be happy to tell you about their latest accomplishments and achievements.

Mrs. Johnson obtained her B.S. degree in home economics from Fort Valley State University, her M.S.

degree in clothing and textile and psychology from Purdue University, and her Education Specialist degree from Auburn University.

Dorothy, sometimes called "Dot," is a retired educator from Calhoun Community College after teaching and supervising for 31 years. In her honor, Calhoun Community College Child Development Center named its library the "Dorothy B. Johnson Learning Library" for her dedication and commitment to the child development program. Also, while at Calhoun, Dorothy earned many awards and honors.

Mrs. Johnson has been very involved with her church, Fellowship Presbyterian



Church, for over 50 years. For her dedication, unselfishness, and hard work in ensuring the kitchen in the Fellowship Hall was equipped with the state-of-the-art commercial appliances, the Fellowship Hall was named the Dorothy B. Johnson Fellowship Hall.

Mrs. Johnson joined Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., on April 1, 1954.



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### MADISON COUNTY COMMISSION

PARTNERSHIP FOR MEDICATION ACCESS

SeniorRx helps seniors lower their prescription drug costs by enrolling individuals in Patient Assistance Programs directly through the pharmaceutical companies. If approved, this allows individuals to receive their name-brand prescriptions for free or at a discounted cost.

#### Qualifications:

- A Madison County Resident\*
- 55 years old or older OR have a disability at any age and have been deemed disabled by Social Security, applied for disability, or have a doctor's declaration of disability OR are in the 24-month Medicare waiting period
- Take medications daily for a chronic condition
- Meet pharmaceutical company maximum income requirements (differs by company)



#### 2020 Federal Poverty Guidelines

250%	1/Household	\$31,900
	2/Household	\$43,100
300%	1/Household	\$32,280
	2/Household	\$51,720
400%	1/Household	\$51,040
	2/Household	\$68,960

Funding is provided by the Madison County Commission and the Alabama Department of Senior Services through the TARC/AG/AA Agency on Aging



**APRIL 24 - CEDRIC ANTONIO KYLES - Best known as "Cedric The Entertainer," the Jefferson City, Mo., native is an American actor, stand-up comedian, and game show host, who also co-starred with Steve Harvey on The WB sitcom "The Steve Harvey Show."**  
- BlackinTime.info

# AAMU Steps Up Assistance to Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19

Enter one pandemic and, within a single month—the span of many payrolls—it is readily confirmed that not only are millions of individuals living paycheck-to-paycheck, but so, too, are many of the businesses that employ them.

As the often-deadly COVID-19 virus has mandated social distancing and the outright closure of many Tennessee Valley businesses, large venues, as well as operations dependent on close contact with other human beings, several small businesses throughout Huntsville and beyond have been forced to reckon with the consequences of having almost zero revenue coming in.

While innovation abounds, to say that small businesses are panicking would be, indeed, an understatement. To say that there is help for them and that this help has always been there would be, well, just fact. For more than a decade, Alabama A&M University's Center for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Economic Development (CEIED) has been the catalyst for relationships joining small businesses, local chambers, cities, contractors, investors, community organizations and academia.

Operating under the auspices of the College of Business and Public Affairs (COBPA), CEIED is directed by Dr. Teresa Orok, who also heads the AAMU Small Business Development Center. Simply, Orok works to increase the success rates of small businesses within her

service sector, as well as to boost profitability, provide feasibility studies, and offer a smoother transfer of technology.

“Since the onset of COVID-19 in our community, CEIED and COBPA have supported over 700 small businesses, faith-based organizations, non-profits, banks and financial institutions across Alabama,” stated Orok. “My schedule has been non-stop supporting the diverse economic ecosystems from dusk to dawn each day.”

For instance, she has held two sessions with the Jefferson County Alabama SBA District Office, over 250 small businesses, faith-based organizations, non-profits and state-elected and appointed officials.

Moreover, Dr. Orok recently participated in a webinar sponsored by the Mobile (Ala.) Senate and House Democratic Legislative Delegation designed to provide information to small businesses that would help them recover economically during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was jointly sponsored by Alabama State Senator Vivian Davis-Figures and Representatives Barbara Drummond, Napoleon Bracy, Adline Clarke and Sam Jones. Orok was joined by representatives from the Alabama Bankers Association and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Dr. Del Smith is dean of the AACSB-accredited business college at AAMU. In a dual role as executive director for economic development since 2017,



OROK

SMITH

Smith has been making inroads in the development of AAMU as an economic player in the thriving North Alabama region. Toward that end, COBPA issued a well-promoted white paper in January 2019 calling for the state's education system to adequately prepare workers for automobile jobs of the future. Respectfully received, the report's impact continued to ripple through trade magazines well into the late spring.

One short year later, Smith was providing an overview on an 11-acre development project that could include hotels, retail shops and food establishments to complement a multi-functional event center in AAMU's southwestern quadrant. He was recently selected to chair the economic development committee of Alabama United, a group of African-American leaders convened by the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs. With a final draft deadline of June 6 fast approaching, the committee is charged with presenting the Governor with recommendations

and strategies to achieve economic development parity in Alabama.

Thus, in coordination with CEIED, Smith works feverishly to form strategic initiatives, to cultivate rela-

tionships, and to convene the regional stakeholders best able to accelerate business development. He also plays an integral role in promoting business incubation; stimulating commercialization of intellectual property and technology; and even aligning university graduates with local and global workforce demands.

Despite its hectic schedule, CEIED coordinates a free, now-virtual seminar series for small businesses with the Chamber of Commerce that highlights topics ranging from accounting strategies and supply chain management

to employee motivation and cybersecurity.

On a continuing basis, Orok provides support to the Huntsville business and non-profit community, with the Alabama SBA District Office, over 200 small businesses, faith-based organizations and nonprofits in support of State Representatives Laura Hall and Anthony Daniels and the State of Alabama economic development agenda.

Both Smith and Orok will remain engaged in addressing the many concerns of small businesses and select organizations as related to the CARES Act.

-Jerome Saintjones



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MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

#### Requirements for receiving the scholarship:

- Student must be an African American male
- Student must have been officially admitted to a college/university
- Student must reside in the Huntsville/Madison County/Florence/Lauderdale County area
- Student must have a minimum 3.0 GPA
- Student must have demonstrated a high degree of respect for self and others, a commitment to learning, and community involvement
- Student must include a transcript
- Student must include two (2) letters of recommendation. One from a school official and one from a community leader
- Application deadline: May 22, 2020

For Additional  
Information Contact:

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