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HARLEM COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS, INC.
"GOOD NEWS YOU CAN USE"

The Harlem Community Newspapers, Inc. Connecting Harlem, Queens, Brooklyn and The Bronx

COMMUNITY
HARLEM NEWS
"Good News You Can Use"

Vol. 32 No. 51 December 18 - December 24, 2025 Free

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Harlem Community Newspapers, Inc. will publish positive news and information. Our mission is to deliver "good" and informative news to our readers focusing on health, education, housing, business and employment opportunities. We look for and publish results, not problems. We promote businesses, opportunities and events happening in the communities we serve. We are dedicated to providing our readers with valuable information they can use to improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and our communities.

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PAT STEVENSON

In this week's issue, we shine a festive spotlight on Harlem as the community gathered for the annual Christmas Tree Lighting at the Harlem State Office Building. The celebration, filled with joy, music, and togetherness, marks the beginning of the holiday season and reminds us that it truly feels a lot like Christmas in Harlem. (see page 11)

Alongside these cherished traditions, we highlight the many holiday celebrations taking place throughout the neighborhood, showcasing the spirit and resilience that make Harlem unique. (see page 13)

Earlier this month, Schneps Media honored several powerful women in Manhattan and Harlem, recognizing their leadership, influence, and contributions to the community. We are proud to celebrate their achievements.
(see page 10)

Finally, we are delighted to welcome Reverend J. Loren Russell as our new Religion Columnist. Reverend Russell will bring thoughtful weekly contributions, offering insight and reflection to enrich our readers' spiritual journeys.
(see page 15)

Subscribe to our daily newsletter (it's free) - just go to our website and sign up at www.harlemcommunitynews.com.

Pat Stevenson
Celebrating
32 Years Publishing

Craig Harris' Five Om the Black Hand Side - Dec 27

Join trombonist, music director and composer Craig Harris in a special musical presentation on Saturday, Dec. 27, to honor five influential local mentors with a free performance of his "Harlem -- A State of Mind."

The concert sponsored by Community Works/New Heritage Theatre Group at 7 pm at Mount Morris Ascension Presbyterian Church, 15 Mount Morris Park West and 122nd Street, will honor Brother Leroy Baylor, the Honorable Bill Perkins, Keith Thompson, Lloyd Williams, and Ted Wilson, who served to uplift arts and community.

In tribute to these five Harlem giants, Harris and his Nation of Imagination will present the full suite premiere of Harris' "Harlem -- A State of Mind," a musical and voice piece built over nearly two decades to capture the sounds and spirit of Harlem.

Presented on the second day of Kwanzaa, the principle of Kujichagulia (Self Determination) is celebrated through remembrance and advocacy in this free event.

Major support is from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council with additional help from Harlem Community Development Corp. and Harlem Jazz Boxx.

This piece was originally commissioned by Community Works/New Heritage Theatre Group 20 years ago and how proud they are that it has grown and blossomed to tour throughout the city and beyond.

Harris, a Community Work honoree in its harlem is . . . Music exhibition at Harlem Hospital, is a jazz trombonist, composer and producer who has played with others, led his own ensembles, and recorded several albums

For more than two decades, Community Works and New Heritage Theatre Group have presented exhibitions, workshops, performances and public programming as part of a harlem is. . . project to explore the legacy of Harlem's rich cultural history towards bridging differences among neighbors and neighborhoods.

PONDER THIS! Breathe as if Your Life Depended Upon it

By Hazel Rosetta Smith

Chances are that your breathing is not what it should be, whether you realize it or not. Under the stresses and strains of modern-day life, particularly the ongoing pandemic, even a "healthy" person has trouble breathing normally. Poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: "He lives most life, who breathes most air."

The importance of breath has been an integral part of the history of humankind. In the East, the care of beathing is emphasized in the religions of the Tibetans, Indians, Chinese and Japanese, in which chanting demands intense breath concentration. The Bible emphasizes that God in creating Adam, "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul."

The quality and fullness of our breath directly affect the quality of our lives. Any hampering of normal breathing will have adverse results on our physical fitness, creativity, and ability to deal positively with stressful situations. The Latin verb spirare, meaning to breathe – is used concerning respiration, our continuous breathing and expiration, which is our last breath.

Understanding how essential an adequate system of breathing is and how caring for our breath will enhance the quality of our lives is essential. Our breathing is affected by everything that happens to us – physical or emotional strain, injury, frustration, and even remarkable success. Anything that goes on in us and around us has a simultaneous effect on our breathing. We hold our breath when shocked, we restrain it under stress, and it is stimulated by joy and intimacy.

It is the natural process of life within the system of our body. It should be natural and flow easily throughout.

Moving is one way of activating consciousness of our breathing. We move less than prior generations did. High technology and digital mechanisms have taken over so much of the work for which bodily movement was once needed and has since deprived us of many opportunities to expand our lungs.

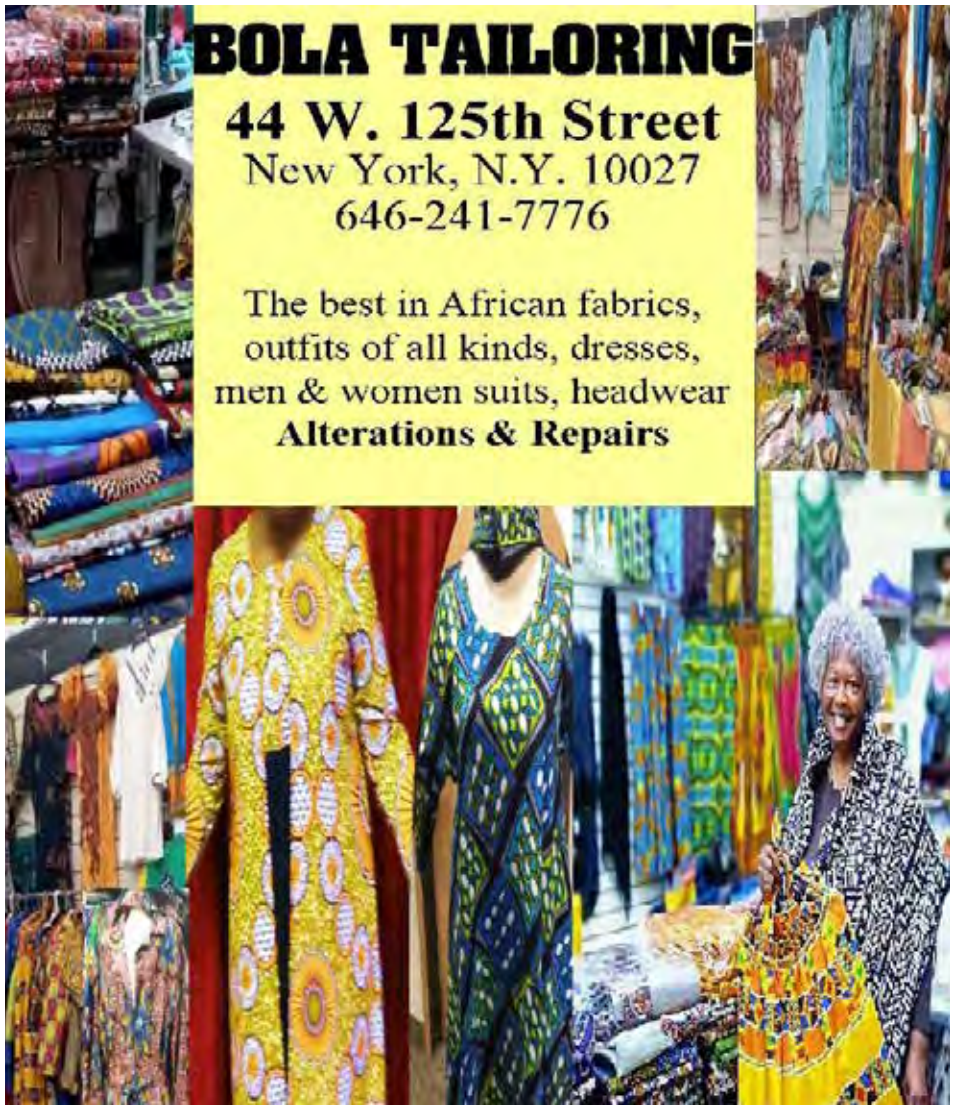
Our lives have revolved into sitting positions to accomplish most of our needs. Seldom do we have to get up to search for papers or information when they are easily at hand by just a click on a keyboard.

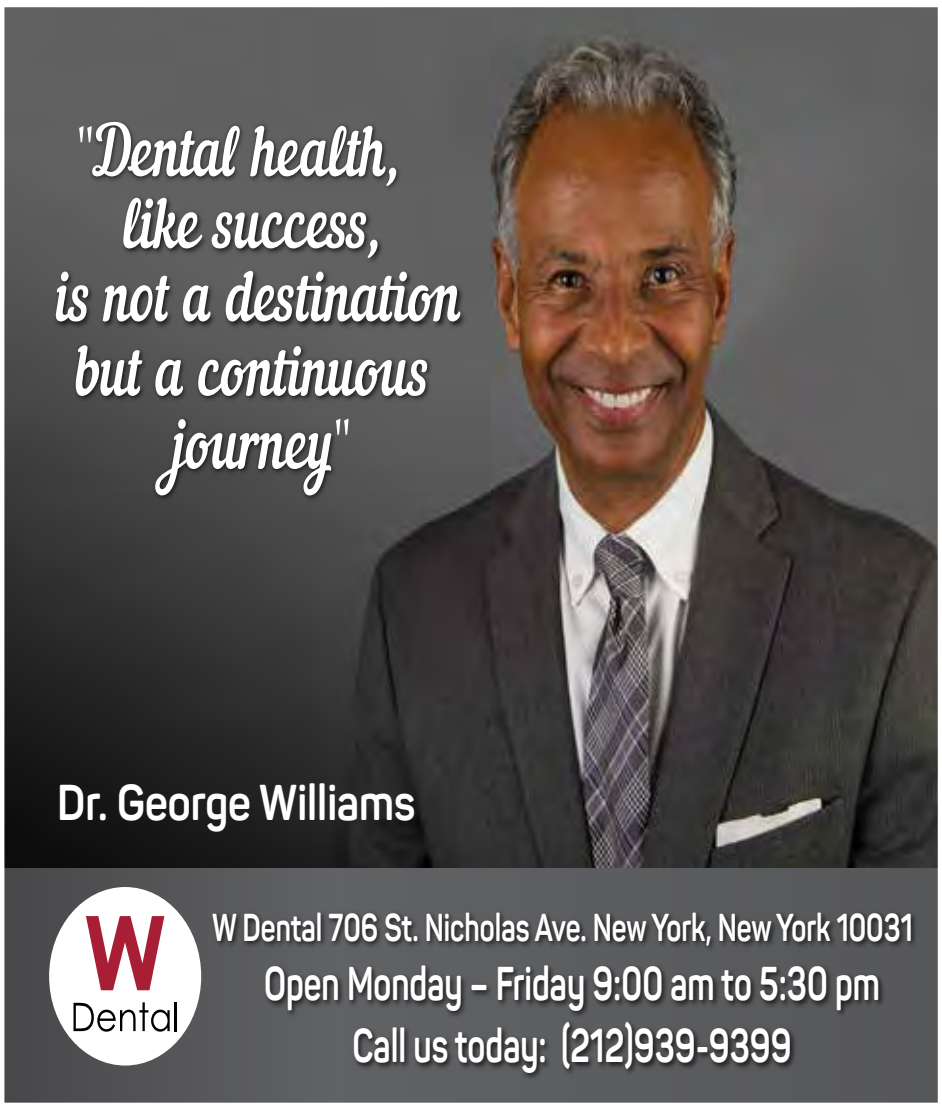
Our lungs need expansion to clear the airwaves and that is possible only through proper inhalation and exhalation. Move or you will lose the capacity.

According to a new study, all it takes is 5 minutes of breathing exercises, 6 days a week, to lower blood pressure. The study also observed a 45% improvement in how well arteries can expand in addition to less inflammation and oxidative stress, which are risk factors for heart attacks.

The greatest support for stress management is proper breathing. Take each breath as if your life depends on it….because it does.

[Hazel Rosetta Smith is a journalist, playwright, and artistic director for HSTM-Help Somebody Theatrical Ministries. Retired, former Woman's Editor and Managing Editor for the New York Beacon. Contact: misshazel@twc.com and online hazelrosettasmithg.com]





It's Not Too Late to Get Vaccinated this Respiratory Season (Statepoint)

In a time of confusion and inconsistent information, healthcare professionals want you to know that it's not too late to get vaccinated this respiratory season. Getting vaccinated helps protect against potentially serious diseases like influenza (flu), COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and pneumococcal disease.

A recent survey from the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) finds that many Americans harbor concerns about vaccine safety and effectiveness, or find the guidance on respiratory vaccinations unclear. To address misconceptions around vaccines and promote a healthy winter for you, your family, and communities nationwide, NFID is sharing these insights:

Vaccination helps prevent severe disease. Vaccination is not just about preventing infection. Most importantly, it's the most effective way to protect yourself and others against severe disease-related outcomes, including hospitalization, long-term complications, and death due to flu, COVID-19, RSV and pneumococcal disease. This means that even when vaccination does not prevent infection completely, it can make an illness milder.

Vaccines are safe and effective. All recommended vaccines undergo extensive safety testing before approval and continue to be monitored for safety and effectiveness long after they are recommended for use. In the United States and globally, vaccines are held to the highest safety standards – more stringent than those for almost all other medications. Contrary to a widespread misconception, vaccines cannot cause the diseases they are designed to prevent. While there are potential side effects, they are rare, and much less severe than the diseases vaccines prevent. The most common side effects – sore arm at the injection site, achiness and fever – are normal signs that the body's immune system is building protection.

Getting vaccinated helps protect everyone. By preventing severe respiratory illnesses, getting vaccinated reduces your likelihood of missing work or your child missing school. It reduces strain on the healthcare system and helps protect everyone, especially infants and young children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with heart disease, lung disease, or other chronic health conditions.

Recommendations are science-based. It's important to follow science-based immunization recommendations. They are based on rigorous review and ongoing research. National medical organizations composed of practicing healthcare professionals recommend these respiratory vaccines based on long-standing evidence and clinical experience:

• Annual flu vaccination is recommended for everyone age 6 months and older.

• An updated COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for those at high risk (including young children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with chronic health conditions), and anyone age 6 months and older who wants to reduce their risk for severe COVID-19 or long COVID.

• A one-time RSV vaccination is recommended for pregnant women; infants whose mothers did not get vaccinated for RSV during pregnancy should receive a monoclonal antibody to protect against RSV. RSV vaccination is also recommended for certain adults ages 50-74 and all adults 75 and older.

• Pneumococcal vaccination is recommended for children younger than 5, all adults 50 and older, and people with certain chronic health conditions or other risk factors.

Access may vary. Evolving federal recommendations directly impact the availability and coverage of vaccines. Some states and insurance companies are developing their own coverage rules for vaccines previously recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If you run into barriers, talk with a trusted healthcare professional who can help you navigate local restrictions.

Healthcare professionals are here to help. Talk with a trusted healthcare professional to learn about the benefits and risks of vaccination against flu, COVID-19, RSV and pneumococcal disease. These conversations can help you make informed decisions about your health and the health of your family and community.

More information about the 2025-2026 respiratory season can be found at https://www.nfid.org.

"It's not too late to get vaccinated this respiratory season. If you have questions about which vaccines are right for you, reach out to your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or other healthcare professional," says Robert H. Hopkins, MD, NFID medical director. "I am confident enough in these vaccines that I have been vaccinated, as have all my family members. I encourage others to be immunized so they have the same protection I give to my family and to my patients."

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Using Technology to Better Communicate With All New Yorkers

By Mayor Eric Adams

From the very start, I have been a tech mayor, and our administration has continually expanded our use of technology to keep New Yorkers safer, stronger, and more informed. From linking our public schools to the NYPD so we can respond more rapidly to any school emergency, to deploying safety drones and expanding broadband to our neighbors in NYCHA, we have embraced the power and possibility of new technology to make life better for all New Yorkers.

But to be an inclusive and truly accessible city, we must also be the most language-friendly city on the globe. This is a global city, where you can hear hundreds of languages spoken on every street, in every store, and on every stoop, and we want to make sure that, no matter what language you speak, you can communicate with your city and learn about the services you are eligible for.

That is why, last week, I issued a directive to city agencies to evaluate how they can further incorporate language technologies into their day-to-day interactions with the public. Our goal is to improve communications with all New Yorkers, including non-English speaking communities.

To start, the city is planning to install language apps on all city-owned smart devices — more than 100,000 in total — to make city services more accessible to New Yorkers. We are also updating the NYPD Patrol Guide Policy to allow officers to use translation apps while interacting with the public. This will give our officers on the beat addressing New Yorkers' concerns about safety and quality of life another tool at their disposal to communicate with communities in addition to Language Line, which has been used since 1992.

We are also making sure this type of technology can be used to assist our families and children. New York City Public Schools has begun development on "Hello," a new app to help bridge language gaps that will be rolled out in the spring of 2026. By using speech-to-text and text-to-speech interactions, Hello will be able to give real-time translation and interpretation in the top 12 languages spoken by public school families.

There have been many dramatic developments in technology in recent years, and we are headed into a new era where tech will be integrated into our lives in all kinds of new ways. We want to make sure that this technology is implemented safely and fairly, protecting New Yorkers and their privacy even as we make it easier for New Yorkers from every corner of the globe to navigate life in our city. From finding housing and employment, to opening a small business or enrolling their children in school, language should never be a barrier to safety or access to city services.

This announcement further builds on the work we have done to improve service delivery and make New York City government more inclusive and accessible because when we embrace technology, we are able to deliver every part of our vision more effectively — making our city safer, more affordable, and the best place to live and raise a family.

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Home Buying in Harlem Be Prepared to Buy Now

By Rev. Dr. Charles Butler

Can anyone afford to buy a home in Harlem? This is the question we must consider because it is becoming increasingly difficult for low to moderate income prospective first-time home buyers to compete in today's market. Many Harlem residents are extremely frustrated over the asking prices of homes on the market in our community.

This frustration is to an extent justified because the area median income (AMI) for most of the Harlem residents is estimated to be in the low to moderate range of between $75,000 – 125,000. Most of the major financial lenders will give you a pre-approval of only 3-4 times your annual income.

What this simply means is most Harlem community residents do not earn enough money to purchase a brownstone for 2 – 3 million dollars. Most do not earn enough money to purchase a one- or two-bedroom condominium unit! So, in effect the Harlem community residents are unfortunately being priced out of the market. What we are discovering is many investors and cash buyers are purchasing much of the available housing stock in Harlem and are driving up the market values on these properties.

Obviously, there is a need for more affordable housing in communities such as Harlem. The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Department's (HPD) offers several housing lotteries for first-time low-income buyers. You can go to their website – www.nyc.gov/hpd and look under 'Housing Connect' to learn more about upcoming lotteries. These homeownership programs are so important to maintaining and preserving the integrity of our neighborhoods.

The lottery programs are subsidized by the city and will afford low to moderate income individuals and families with the opportunity to purchase either new or renovated construction condominium and cooperative units well below market value. But one of the major drawbacks facing those selected from the lottery is having the required down payment of 10% of the purchase price at the time you are approved for the purchase. HPD will give you usually 10 days to return with this deposit or you will miss out on this opportunity.

Whenever you apply for a lottery unit, do so expecting to be selected and have your finances in order. Usually, there is a stipulation in the sales contract that will not allow the buyer to sell the unit before a prescribed period otherwise they must pay back a portion of the profit to the city.

The true beauty of this lottery program is that the buyers will immediately have acquired a fair amount of equity through the purchase. This is the difference between what you owe on the property and the current market value of the property. As a homeowner, you are investing in your financial future. What is equally important is you will be making a positive impact on your community.

For more information on the home buying process contact Rev. Dr. Charles Butler at 212 281 4887 ext. 231 or email cbutler@hcci.org.

HARLEM EVENTS

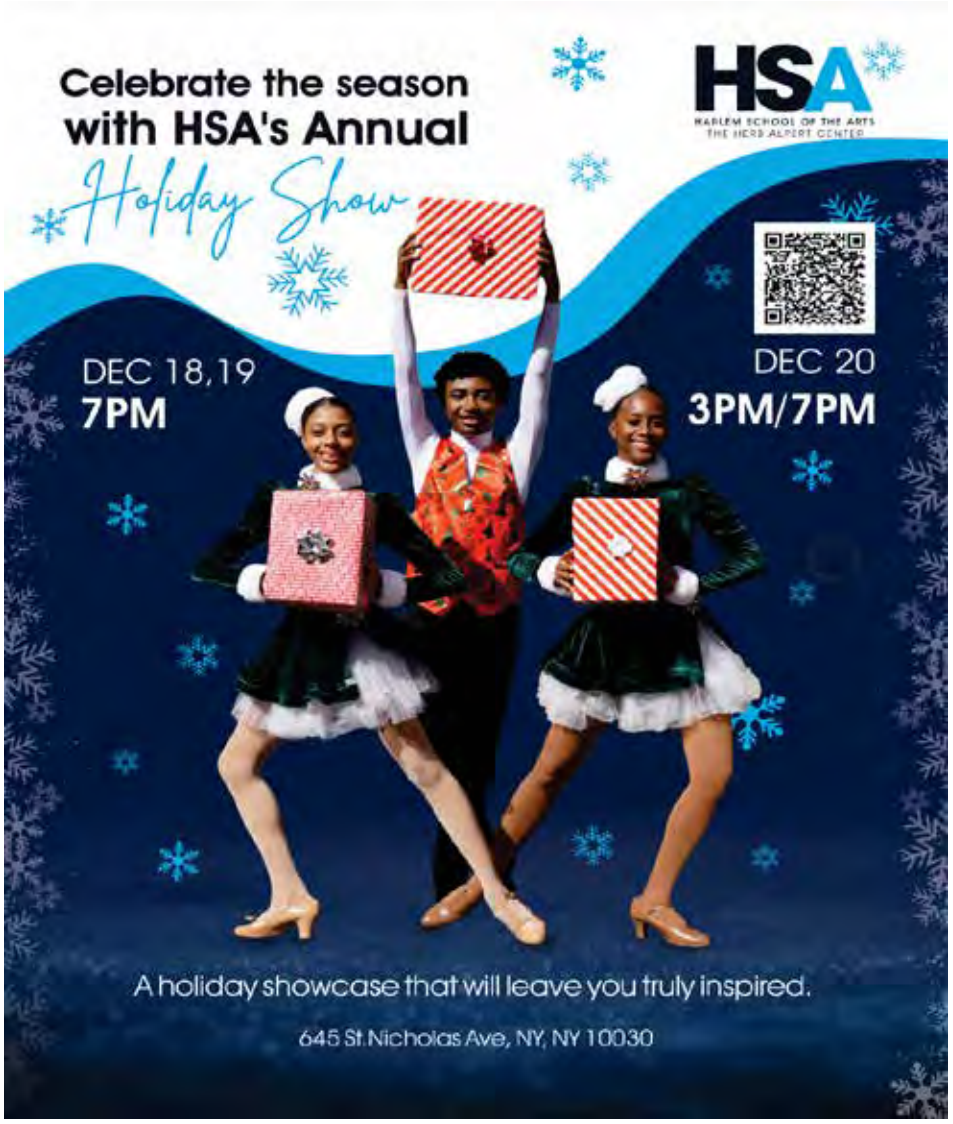
Dec 18-Dec 28, 7-10PM
Make It a Night to Remember at the Holiday Train Show at Bronx Botanical Gardens
Let roving train conductors welcome you to experience the Holiday Train Show® in a whole new light as we illuminate the exhibition for Holiday Train Nights—lively after-dark celebrations where you can sip seasonal cocktails and mocktails under the glass of the warm and twinkling Haupt Conservatory. Find card-worthy photo ops at every turn as you explore a miniature cityscape of familiar landmarks brought to life by model trains zipping to and fro. Bop along to holiday classics and Christmas pop favorites sung by performers, enjoy sweet and savory bites for purchase, or hop over to the "Bar Car"—back this year with a 21+ bar at the Hudson Garden Grill Patio. You can even get your holiday shopping done at NYBG Shop. It's the perfect night out, whether you're planning a memorable date or a wintertime gathering with friends! Tickets Non-Members – starting at $43

Dec 18– Jan 2
ANNUAL WREATH INTERPRETATIONS EXHIBIT RETURNS TO NYC PARKS' ARSENAL GALLERY
NYC Parks is decking the halls for the 43rd year of Wreath Interpretations, featuring nearly 40 handcrafted, imaginative wreaths at the Arsenal Gallery. This year's unique wreaths are crafted using unexpected materials and motifs to add a touch of novelty to the holiday season. Made of inventive materials like Legos, aluminum, and packing peanuts and covering subjects like the subway system's switch to OMNY, these wreaths as diverse as the group of artists who crafted them, including many Parks em ployees. The Arsenal Gallery is located on Fifth Avenue & 64th Street, 3rd Floor This event is FREE and open to the public. For more information, visit nyc.gov/parks/art . Groups of five or more people can call 212-360-8143 or email artandantiquities@ parks.nyc.gov to pre-register

Dec 20,
NYSoM HolidayMania
Family holiday festival with games, performances, and giveaways for children and families. East Harlem Tutorial Program, located at 2050 Second Avenue, New York, NY 1002

Dec 21–31
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Season
Alvin Ailey's celebrated company performs at New York City Center, featuring iconic works and new choreography. Being held at New York City Center , 131 W 55th St, New York, NY Cost: Ticketed, prices vary

Dec 26-31
Kwanzaa Celebrations in Harlem
Cultural performances, storytelling, and community gatherings marking the seven principles of Kwanzaa.Various Harlem cultural centers (including Apollo Theater and CCCADI). Mostly free or donation-



Dec 18 Harlem School of the Arts

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am NY/Schneps Media Celebrating Power Women of Manhattan

by Pat Stevenson

Manhattan was buzzing with energy as Schneps Media hosted its highly anticipated **Power Women of Manhattan** event, a celebration honoring the fearless females who make the borough the thriving and vibrant place it is to live, work, and do business. The evening brought together extraordinary women from diverse industries, united by a shared mission: to uplift one another, foster connections, and build stronger communities.

The Power Women series, produced by Schneps Media, shines a spotlight on leaders who embody resilience, innovation, and compassion. These honorees are trailblazers—entrepreneurs, executives, philanthropists, and community advocates—whose contributions enrich Manhattan's cultural and economic landscape. The event underscored a powerful truth: when women support women, amazing things happen.

Guests were welcomed into an atmosphere of celebration and camaraderie. The evening featured networking opportunities, heartfelt speeches, and moments of recognition that highlighted the honorees' achievements. Attendees shared stories of perseverance and success, inspiring others to continue breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations. Beyond the accolades, the event served as a reminder that empowerment is contagious; each woman's success fuels the collective progress of the community.

Schneps Media, publishers of amNY Metro, PoliticsNY, The Villager, Chelsea Now, and Gay City News**,** Caribbean Life, Noticia, Bronx Times and BrooklynReporter and others has long been committed to amplifying voices that matter. Through initiatives like Power Women, the company not only celebrates individual accomplishments but also creates platforms for collaboration. By bringing together leaders across business, nonprofit, and civic sectors, Schneps Media fosters an ecosystem where women can connect, exchange ideas, and form partnerships that extend far beyond the event itself.

A highlight of the evening was the raffle, which exemplified the spirit of giving back. One hundred percent of the proceeds were donated to Life's WORC, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism. This philanthropic gesture reinforced the event's core values: community, compassion, and collective responsibility. By aligning celebration with service, Schneps Media ensured that the Power Women event left a lasting impact not only on its attendees but also on those who benefit from Life's WORC's essential programs.

The success of the Power Women of Manhattan event reflects a growing movement that recognizes the importance of female leadership in shaping the future. Manhattan thrives because of the visionaries who dare to innovate, the advocates who fight for equity, and the mentors who nurture emerging talent. Honoring these women is more than symbolic—it is a call to action for continued progress.

As the evening concluded, attendees left with more than memories of a glamorous celebration. They carried with them renewed inspiration, strengthened networks, and a shared commitment to championing one another. Schneps Media's Power Women of Manhattan event was not just a gathering; it was a testament to the transformative power of women supporting women.

In a city that never sleeps, these fearless females remind us that success is not only about individual achievement but about lifting others along the way. Manhattan is stronger, more vibrant, and more united because of them—and Schneps Media is proud to honor their legacy.

Honoree Sharon Joseph, Executive Director of Harlem Commonwealth Council

Honoree Guttman College President Elizabeth de Leon Bhargava

Victoria Schneps, publisher of Schneps Media;
Pat Stevenson, publisher of Harlem Community News

NY 1 Errol Louis, Honoree Juanita Scarlett (wife of Errol Louis) , Tanya Phillips, Guest, Victoria Schneps, Pat Stevenson

Judge Machelle Sweeting, Pat Stevenson, Tanya Philips

Monica Morales,
Honree Zenaida Rodriguez
(Regional Alliance
for Small Contractors)

The Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration Shines on 125th Street

by Pat Stevenson (photos by: Nadezda Tavodova Tezgor)

The Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration returned on Thursday, December 11, bringing holiday magic and community joy to the plaza at the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building in Harlem. The beloved tradition, which has become a cornerstone of the neighborhood's seasonal festivities, once again transformed 125th Street into a hub of cheer, music, and togetherness.

Families from across the city gathered in the crisp evening air, eager to witness the dazzling illumination of the towering holiday tree. As the countdown began, anticipation filled the plaza, and when the lights finally flickered on, the crowd erupted in applause. The tree, adorned with sparkling ornaments and shimmering lights, stood as a beacon of hope and celebration, symbolizing the start of the holiday season in Harlem.

Adding to the magic, Santa Claus made a special appearance, delighting children with warm greetings and holiday wishes. Young attendees lined up eagerly to meet him, their faces glowing with excitement as they shared their Christmas hopes. Parents looked on with smiles, capturing photos of their children's unforgettable encounters with the jolly figure.

The celebration also featured vibrant stage performances that showcased the rich cultural spirit of Harlem. Local choirs filled the plaza with carols, while dancers and musicians brought energy and rhythm to the evening. These performances not only entertained but also highlighted the artistic talent that thrives within the community. The stage became a focal point of joy, drawing cheers and applause from the crowd.

One of the evening's most enchanting attractions was the holiday train that carried parents and children around the plaza. The train ride offered families a whimsical journey through the festive setting, allowing them to take in the sights and sounds of the celebration from a unique perspective. Laughter and delight echoed as the train circled the plaza, adding a playful touch to the evening's activities.

Beyond the entertainment, the event carried a deeper significance. The Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration has long been a symbol of unity and resilience for Harlem. It brings together people of all ages and backgrounds, reminding the community of the importance of shared traditions and collective joy. In a season often marked by hustle and bustle, the celebration provided a moment of pause, a chance for neighbors to connect, reflect, and embrace the holiday spirit together.

As the night drew to a close, the plaza glowed with festive lights and the warmth of community spirit. The event served as a perfect kickoff to the holiday season on 125th Street, setting the tone for weeks of celebration, shopping, and gatherings. For many, it was more than just a tree lighting, it was a reaffirmation of Harlem's vibrant culture and enduring sense of togetherness.

The Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration continues to be a cherished tradition, one that brings joy to families and strengthens the bonds of community. With Santa's laughter, the sparkle of the tree, and the rhythm of performances, Harlem once again proved that the holidays on 125th Street are truly magical.

Greater New York Links, Inc. & Harlem Advocates for Older People Sponsor a Community Equipment Giveaway Fair

By Michelle D. Stent

The Health and Human Services Facet of the Greater New York Links, (GNY) and their community partner, Health Advocates for Older People (HAFOP) sponsored an Older Adults Equipment Giveaway Fair, hosted by Abyssinian Baptist Church. The giveaway aimed to help seniors live comfortably and independently at home. The Fair welcomed local community residents, focusing on seniors and those with mobility challenges. HAFOP donated all the equipment which included:

Canes and Crutches
Shower Chairs and
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(Chucks)

A great deal of equipment seniors need for their daily life activities is quite expensive and often not covered by insurance. Giveaway Fairs help seniors access equipment for comfortable home living. Attending seniors found equipment and other helpful items to support independent living at home as long as possible.

The GNY Links Health and Human Services is sincerely grateful to HAFOP, a long-term member of the Community Partnership founded by Health and Human Services. Providing new, safe equipment and products for older adults, in addition to all HAFOP's support on forums, seminars and multiple panels attests to their friendship and long-standing support for the programs given by the Partnership.

In addition to providing equipment, HAFOP gave a panel discussion on usage and home safety. Josh Krasner, Coordinator of HAFOP's Home Safety Fall Prevention Program, reported that up to 80% of older adults live alone without proper safety devices, increasing their vulnerability to various risks. Patricia Baker, Equipment and 87th Street Office Coordinator for HAFOP repeatedly stated that safety in the home is especially important to independent living.

The incidence of falls increases progressively with age. Each year, about one-third of older adults fall, and 10% fall multiple times; for those over 80, nearly half experience a fall annually. Bathroom falls are extremely serious, and Mr. Kraser gave practical examples of safety assessments including having bars in bathrooms. The importance of a motion alert device for home safety was highlighted. They both discussed problems with navigating hallways as well as watching out for wires in the home and around apartment buildings.

Donna Jones, Patricia Francia, Deborah Whitfield, Michelle D. Stent, Assemblyman Jordan Wright Athonda Joy McLean, Gerri Warren Merrick.

Participants learned a lot as well as the Links members who attended: Michelle D. Stent and Rhonda McLean, Co-Chairs of the GNY Links, Health & Human Services Facets, Patricia Francis, Gail Monroe-Perry, Deborah Whitfield, Donna Jones, Gerri Warren Merrick and Jillian James, GNY Links Program Chair.

A major highlight of the afternoon program was Assemblyman Jordan Wright who greeted and spoke with the attendees.

The Links, Incorporated is a 75-year-old volunteer service organization of concerned, committed, and talented women who, linked in friendship, enhance the quality of life in the larger community. The organization is concerned primarily with enriching, sustaining and ensuring the identities, culture and economic survival of African Americans and persons of African descent. To contribute to the formulation of a positive, productive, and culturally diverse society, The Links, Incorporated also focuses on education, cultural enrichment, health and wellness and civic involvement. This focus is implemented through strategies such as in public information and education, economic development, and public policy. Harlem Advocates for Seniors (H.A.S.) is a senior-led coalition with the mission to unify seniors, service providers and community leaders in support of issues and concerns affecting seniors living in the Village of Harlem.

In 2010, The GNY Links Health & Human Services (HHS) formed the Elder Community Partnership in response to the identified needs, issues and problems of the Greater Harlem senior community. Over the years the Partnership has provided educational seminars to inform and empower seniors to recognize and cope with the complexities, causes and symptoms related to growing older. The Partnership programs have grown to include healthcare, wellness, Medicare updates, home safety and lifestyle changes.

Links: Gail Monroe-Perry, Michelle D. Stent, Jillian Joseph, Patricia Francis, Rhonda Joy McLean, Gerri Warren Merrick

Jackie Robinson Park Conservancy's 28th Annual Tree Lighting and Toy GIveaway Brings Holiday Magic to Harlem (photos by Nadezda Tavodova Tezgor)

The Jackie Robinson Park Conservancy (JRPC) once again lit up Harlem with joy, generosity, and festive cheer during its 28th Annual Tree Lighting and Toy Giveaway. Held in the heart of Harlem, the beloved community tradition drew hundreds of families together for an evening that celebrated the spirit of the season while offering vital support to neighbors in need.

This year's celebration was marked by special appearances from Ms. Manhattan, Ashley Staggers, New York City Council member Yusef Salaam, and Tobius Simmons, who delighted children and adults alike in his role as Santa Claus. Their presence underscored the event's importance as not only a holiday gathering but also a symbol of community unity and resilience.

Beyond the dazzling tree lighting and toy distribution, the Conservancy expanded its offerings to address food insecurity among Harlem families. Thanks to the support of the West Harlem Development Corporation, households were able to enjoy comforting meals and take-home food packages during the holiday season. The generosity of local businesses added to the warmth of the evening: 145th Street Super Foodtown provided staples and refreshments, Ma Smith's Bakery Café offered sweet treats, Lucille's donated pizza, and Kingston Jamaican Bakery shared Caribbean favorites. Sudsy Water Laundry and Dry Cleaning continued its annual tradition of support by donating much-needed supplies, ensuring that families could celebrate with dignity and comfort.

Adding youthful energy to the festivities were students from Frederick Douglass Academy, located at 2581 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. Serving as Santa's elves, the students helped distribute toys and spread smiles throughout the evening. Their enthusiasm embodied the spirit of giving and highlighted the importance of youth involvement in sustaining community traditions.

Sonya Simmons, Chair of JRPC, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the many volunteers whose dedication made the event possible. She extended appreciation to Diane Waters, Jodie Trapani, Siedah Mentor, "JIM" Mentor, Sara Bartlow, Gigs Taylor Stephens, Peg Guillon, LaChena Clark, Dena Manradge, and Vanessa Potter Wool for their tireless service. Simmons also acknowledged the continued support of the NYC Parks Department, whose partnership remains essential to the Conservancy's success in hosting this annual celebration.

Riverside Hawks Gala

By Audrey Bernard,
Society Editor

Earlier this month, the Riverside Hawks program, a staple in the Harlem community since 1961, held its annual gala at the Mandarin Hotel.

The organization's mission is to improve the lives, academic opportunities and career prospects of young people, utilizing sports as a vehicle. Almost 70% of the participants come from either Harlem, Washington Heights or the Bronx."The room was packed," said board member Erika Irish Brown, chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer and global head of talent at Citi. While two of the program's teams were honored, "the focus was really on the girls."The program is excited by the success of the girls' teams overall. The program currently has 109 female participants from elementary to high school. Combining training and academic support makes them college ready. Last year's graduating seniors are now playing collegiate basketball at Division I schools like Rider, Fairleigh Dickinson, Fordham, Hofstra and St. John's. Brown hopes all the current participants are gaining leadership skills and learning how to be a team player.

"We want people to understand what Riverside is, and that it's not just basketball," said Brown. "This year, we really wanted to talk about the success of the girls' program. … With increasing opportunities in women's sports, we've seen the same for our teams at Riverside. Our teams [of all ages] are winning big tournaments. They're a growing group of confident scholar-athletes.

"That's the ABCs of Riverside: academics, basketball and community," she added. "We have a track record of young men who have gone to prep schools, to college, [and] to the NBA. Now, we have that growing pipeline on the young women's side."

In addition to the teams, the 2023 gala honorees included Dr. Monique Couvson, CEO and president of Grantmakers for Girls of Color; Alexander Smalls, an award-winning chef and author (introduced by Sheila Johnson, owner of the Washington Mystics); and the corporation GCM Grosvenor, a global leader in alternative investments.

Brown noted that Couvson is a former basketball player who has taken an interest in the Riverside Hawks. "Knowing what being involved in sports does for young women, their futures, everything from their body images to their ambition to their competitive spirit," Brown said. "She gave an inspirational speech about the data around what's not happening for our young women of color and why we need to invest in them."

We are excited to announce this year's focus is on the Hawks' girls' basketball program. We salute and pay tribute to our female student-athletes exceptional strength and academic success. Whether they pursue basketball or another professional career, the Riverside Hawks' holistic approach and programming prepares participants to face and overcome all challenges. We hope you will lend your support. The Annual Gala is our largest fundraising event of the year, and proceeds from the event assist us in enhancing the Hawks' programs. We currently have 109 female players in the program: 46 in high school, 43 in middle school, and 20 in elementary school. 100% of our female student-athletes graduated high school in 2023 and are headed to college or post-graduate prep schools. The Class of 2023 has full scholarships to universities, including Rider, FDU, New Haven University, and the University of Bridgeport. The Class of 2024 is being recruited by many schools, including Canisius, St. John's, FDU, New Hampshire, Adelphi University, Plattsburgh, Albany, St. Peters, Saint Joseph, Loyola, Fordham, Northeastern, Monmouth, Fairfield, Hofstra, Delaware, Merrimack, Columbia, and Dartmouth to name a few.

100% of our student-athletes graduated high school in 2023.

100% of our 2023 graduates went to college or post-grad prep schools.

Since 2020, our students have received over $5 million in college scholarships and grants (over four years) and over $550,000 in prep school scholarships.

Spotlight on Our Female Athletes

We're thrilled to spotlight the Hawks' girls' basketball program this year. We are incredibly proud of our female student-athletes, celebrating their unmatched resilience and academic successes. Our training and academic supports ensure they can conquer any challenge, whether their dreams lie in basketball or other professional arenas.

Our program currently has 109 dedicated female students from elementary to high school.

The Class of 2023 has full scholarships to universities, including Rider, FDU, New Haven University, and the University of Bridgeport. Our Class of 2024 high school students are being recruited by many schools, including Canisius, St. John's, FDU, New Hampshire, Adelphi University, Plattsburgh, Albany, St. Peters, Saint Joseph, Loyola, Fordham, Northeastern, Monmouth, Fairfield, Hofstra, Delaware, Merrimack, Columbia, and Dartmouth to name a few.

Your support can make a difference:

Our Annual Gala is our largest fundraising event, with its proceeds directly fueling the enhancement of the Hawks' academic and community-focused initiatives.

Join us in our mission, and together, let's continue to uplift and empower the next generation.

Honorees Jermel Thomas, Troy Millings and Rashad Bilal (Photo by Johnny Nunez (WireImage)

BET President Scott Mills presents award to honoree Erika Irish Brown (Photo by Jonny Nunez-Wire Image)

Honoree, Coach of the Year, Zach Kuba

-Executive Director Aswan Morris with head of Riverside Hawks Development Team, Paul Coty.

Honoree Rashad Bilal with his father and his son

The Gift of Love

By Reverend J. Loren Russell

Romans 5:1-5, 8 (NKJV)

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

One of the most well-knowns scriptures in the New Testament, if not the entire Bible is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." It is even more significant during this season of Advent, the time leading up to the universal celebration of the birth of "His only begotten Son."

Advent (coming) is officially observed over the four Sundays leading up to the perfect gift of love given on Christmas day, the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One candle is lit on each of those four Sundays.

1. Hope – To remind us that God keeps His promises. He promised a Savior, and He sent one.

2. Preparation – Reminds us to be prepared to receive the Lord.

3. Joy – Reminds us to remember the multitudes of angels that joyfully announced the birth of Christ.

4. Love – Reminds us that it was out of His incredible love that God sent His only begotten Son.

There is one more candle, the Christ Candle, traditionally lit on Christmas Eve to remind us that "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5). All who believe are its recipients.

This perfect gift from God assures believers that the pressures and problems of life do not have the final word, because God intended this gift for us. Advent reminds us of the birth of His only begotten Son—a gift given to secure eternal life for all who believe. It is God's bold announcement to the world that in Christ we receive the perseverance that molds our character and strengthens our hope. And this is our confidence: the perfect gift of God's love conquers hatred, overturns unjust powers, heals our brokenness, and stands victorious over every human crisis.

As we enter this season of giving, let us also be generous in offering what God has given to us. Someone's eternal life may hang in the balance.

Be Blessed!

Rev. J. Loren Russell is the Clergy Officiant at the Evangelical Church of God and associate minister at Goodwill Baptist Church, both in the Bronx. He is the President/CEO of The JLR Company/J Loren R Consulting, LLC for Church Financial & Strategic Consulting (718-328-8096). He writes this column and produces and host's "Matters of Faith: The Radio Show" on Monday nights from 8:00 – 10:00 PM on The Matters of Faith YouTube channel. Be sure to Friend, Like, and Share the column and the channel. Email us at mattersoffaith.mof@gmail.com. Order your copy of Matters of Faith: The eBook at www.smashwords.com/books/view/993177.

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URBANOLOGY: The African Unconscious

By William A. Rogers

"The African Unconscious" by Edward Bruce Bynum is a well-researched scholarly work that follows the development of the early human race which began in Africa and migrated throughout the world.

The foundations for many of the cultures and religions that we know today can be traced to early Egypt. The Ta-Seti the world's oldest known civilization for many years was considered the mother of ancient Kemet (Egypt). There is now research that shows that there were twelve Nubian Kings who ruled in the Middle East before the first Egyptian dynasty.

When we talk about the golden years of ancient Egypt, we now understand the great minds that developed the science, religion and technology were Nubian. This knowledge was erased from European history (or his-story) by scholars who Bynum describes as "sophisticated prostitutes" and during that time the big money was in capitalism, slavery and the expansion of Europe into Africa and the Americas.

In time according to Bynum it became inconceivable in the West that black Nubian Africans could have made the great accomplishments of early Egypt. To this day many still believe that the early Egyptians were white or mixed, but not black.

A fine example of this attempt to change history can be found in museums that have exhibits of ancient Egyptian art. The noses of many of the figures are disfigured or completely missing.

When Napoleon marched through Southern Egypt and discovered the Great Sphinx, one of the greatest monumental sculptures of the ancient world; carved out of a single ridge of limestone he had his artillery shot off the Nubian nose. Even though it was suppressed for centuries the knowledge of ancient Egypt still holds an unconscious present in the culture of the Western world.

The politics of religion forced this knowledge underground yet the majority of great minds in the arts and sciences were members of secret societies who studied Hermetic philosophies of ancient Egypt, Da Vinci, Newton, Shakespeare, Jung, and Marx to name a few.

The Founding fathers of America were mostly Masons or Rosicrusians. Thomas Jefferson was a Rosicrucian, Benjamin Franklin was the grand master of the Philadelphia Masonic Lodge, and George Washington was initiated into a Masonic lodge in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Washington D.C. our nation's capital has many relics and references to the wisdom of an ancient society led by Africans who were Nubian, even our American currency has symbols of ancient Kermit. Is it any wonder why this information until only in recent times was keep away from Africans in America. Some will read this and say so what?

Knowledge is power would be my first response. There is a conscious and/or unconscious relationship to Africa in all members of the human race. It is important for Africans thoughout the world to learn the wisdom developed by their Nubian ancestors; wisdom that has been used and kept secret for the purpose of control. The ancient Egyptian phrase "Know Thy Self" was considered the first step towards enlightenment.

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HERBS ARE NATURE'S MEDICINE

Healing Foods in the Kitchen - Part II

By Zakiyyah

Most of the illnesses and dis-eases we experience are a direct result of the types of foods we eat, and don't eat. We have lost connection with the very source of what was created to give us optimum health. A few of the most powerful sources of natural medicine are herbs, essential oils, and our foods.

SAGE is used to decrease breast milk yield and give it tonic properties. It treats all digestive ailments, especially flatulence and lack of appetite. Sage can allay excessive bleeding when applied topically on all forms of wounds, and as a drink or gargle, it treats sore throats, and ulcerated mouths.

BAY LEAVES: to treat nail fungus, soak nails in a strong decoction; for indigestion, take a tea with meals; for rheumatism and sprains use the essential oil or tincture applied externally (more effective when used with heat). To use as a toothache remedy, place the oil on a cotton ball on the side of the cavity, and to treat vaginitis/uterine infection, make a strong decoction as a douche.

Our foods, water, the Sun, crystals and gemstones, and the very Prana we breathe (energized life force) are all at our disposal as remedies for whatever might ail us. Our body already knows how to heal itself – we just need to relearn how to let it.

MAKE NATURE'S MEDICINE YOUR OWN

This information is to help balance your body's natural healing energies, and is not intended as diagnosis, treatment or cure. Email: theherbalist1750@gmail.com; phone: 347-407-4312; blog: www.herbsarenaturesmedicine.blogspot.com.

Answers to Crossword on page 17

N	A	A	C	P	■	I	M	P	■	■	B	L	A	H
E	L	G	A	R	■	B	O	A	■	W	A	I	V	E
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C	A	R	T	E	R	■	A	P	E	S	■	S	L	Y
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L	Y	R	E	■	■	E	R	A	■	R	A	T	E	S

See answers on pages 16

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STATEPOINT THEME: YEAR-IN-REVIEW

ACROSS

1. W.E.B Du Bois' org.
6. Rascal
9. Ho-hum
13. "Pomp and Circum stance" composer
14. Tropical constrictor
15. Forgo
16. Tequila source
17. + or - atom
18. Reason by deduction
19. *Trade war "weapon," pl.
21. *2025 MLB World Series winners
23. ____-tzu
24. C&H crop
25. Dunce
28. Western necktie
30. Catch in a snare
35. Ginger cookie
37. Master of his castle
39. Use a razor
40. British slang for donkey
41. Arch and ball locations
43. Winglike
44. March celebrants
46. *Arthur Sze, 2025 ____ Laureate
47. Dam-like structure
48. *Beyoncé's "Cowboy ____," 2025 Grammy winner
50. King Kong and Curious George, e.g.
52. Like a fox
53. What Pinocchio did
55. *Florida Panthers won this org.'s '25 championship
57. *"Wicked: ___ _ ____"
61. *Late environmentalist and chimpanzee expert
65. German submarine destroyer
66. *2025 Ryder Cup loser
68. Manuscript sheet
69. Brazilian coins
70. Roll-your-own one, for short
71. To the left, on a boat
72. Orpheus' instrument
73. Geological time period
74. They are cut by Federal Reserve

DOWN

1. At room temperature, bar order
2. Algae, sing.
3. Petri dish filler
4. Raise trivial objections
5. Ready to be assembled
6. Avian wader
7. Farm sound
8. China's goodwill "____ diplomacy"
9. Collision, onomatopoeically speaking
10. *Taylor Swift's "The ____ of a Showgirl"
11. Affirm solemnly
12. Third-person possessive pronoun
15. Makes broader
20. Why do they fall in love?
22. *Aryna Sabalenka's seed
24. Auto contents
25. Pertaining to osmium
26. *2025 Academy Awards Best Picture winner
27. Faquir, alt.spelling
29. Pilot's stunt
31. Spring event
32. Pneumonia symptom, pl.
33. Be of use
34. *Blue Origin's 2025 singing passenger
36. Boll weevil, e.g.
38. *____Seek
42. Shorthand typist, for short
45. Serfs
49. 2016 Olympics host, for short
51. Ram's horn at a synagogue
54. Draw a conclusion
56. Parkinson's disease drug
57. Roll up
58. Heed
59. Lion sound
60. Dorothy's last name
61. *Lady of "The Mayhem Ball"
62. Tons (2 words)

See answers to Suduko on page 18

	9			4			5	3
	4		2					
6							4	
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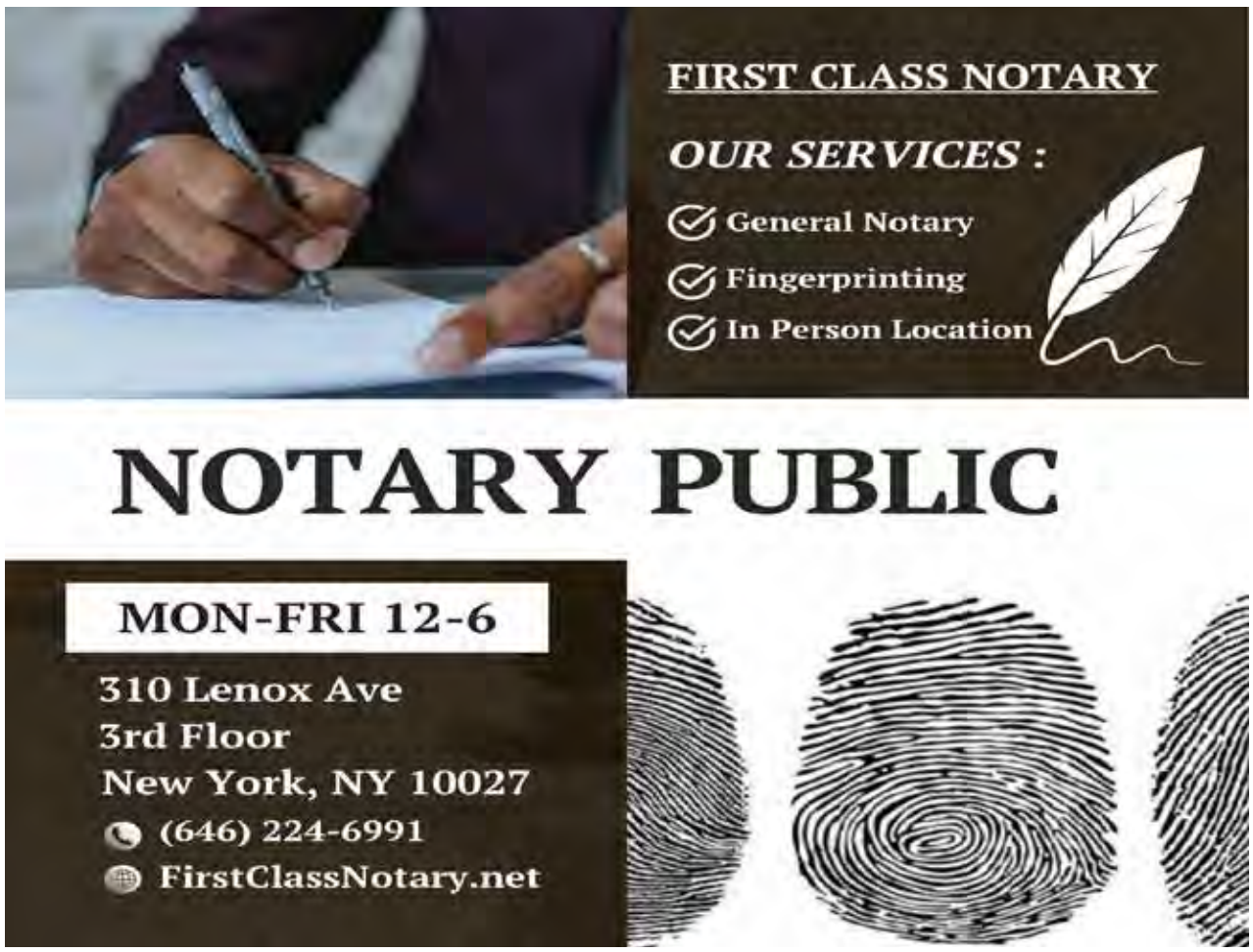
Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.



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The MTA encourages vendors who have not done business with us to register for our bidders list using MY MTA Portal for vendors at **www.mymta.info.** Registered vendors can search for procurement opportunities across all MTA agencies and receive invitations to bid or propose on the types of goods and services they can provide. Certified minority and women-owned businesses (M/WBE), service-disabled veteran-owned businesses (SDVOB), and disadvantaged businesses (DBE), are strongly encouraged to compete for MTA opportunities. Visit our website at **https://new.mta.info/doing-business-with-us** for detailed information and guidelines.

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"Let Me Be Real With You" by Arshay Cooper

Review by Terri Schlichenmeyer, Harlem News contributor

The hole you're in is a deep one.

You can see the clouds above, and they look like a storm; you sense the wind, and it's a cold one. It's dark down there, and lonesome, too. You feel like you were born there – but how do you get out of the deep hole you're in? You read the new book "Let Me Be Real With You" by Arshay Cooper, you find a hand-up, and bring someone with you.

In the months after his first book was published, Arshay Cooper received a lot of requests to speak to youth about his life growing up on the West Side of Chicago, his struggles, and his many accomplishments. He was poor, bullied, and belittled, but he knew that if he could escape those things, he would succeed. He focused on doing what was best, and right. He looked for mentors and strove to understand when opportunities presented themselves.

Still, his early life left him with trauma. Here, he shows how it's overcome-able...

We must always have hope, Cooper says, but hope is "merely the catalyst for action. The hope we receive must transform into the hope we give."

Learn to tell your own story, as honestly as you know it. Be open to suggestions, and don't dismiss them without great thought. Know that masculinity doesn't equal stoicism; we are hard-wired to need other people, and sharing "pain and relatability can dissipate shame and foster empathy in powerful ways."

Remember that trauma is intergenerational, and can be passed down from parent to child. Let your mentors see your potential. Get therapy, if you need it; there's no shame in it, and it will help, if you learn to trust it. Enjoy the outdoors when you can. Learn self-control. Give back to your community. Respect your financial wellness. Embrace your intelligence. Pick your friends and relationships wisely. "Do it afraid."

And finally, remember that "You were born to soar to great heights and rule the sky."

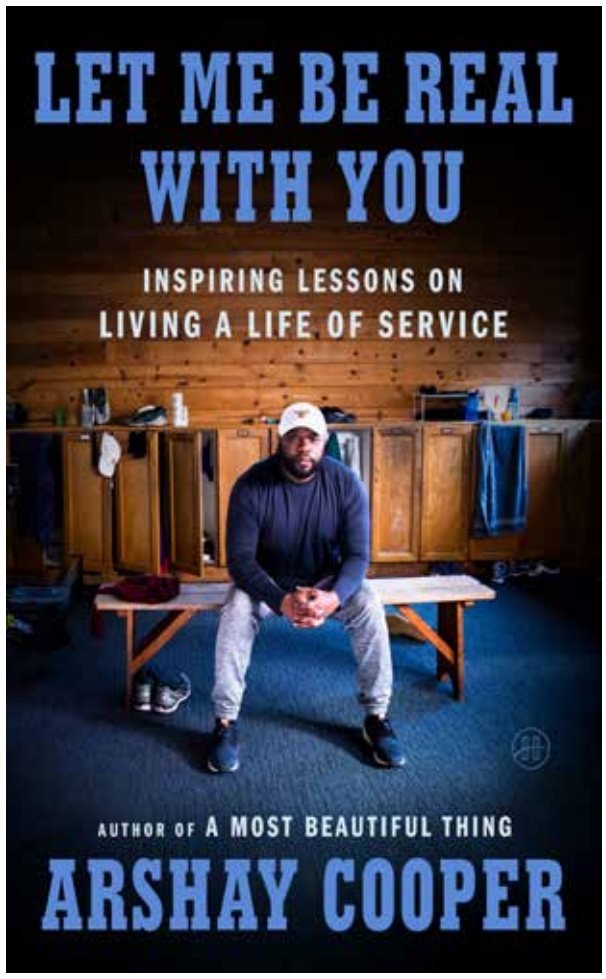
You just needed someone to tell you that.

At first look, this book might seem like just any other self-help offering. It's inspirational for casual reader and business reader, both, just like most books in this genre. Dig a little deeper, though, and you'll spot what makes "Let Me Be Real With You" stand out.

With a willingness to discuss the struggles he tackled in the past, author Arshay Cooper writes with a solidly honest voice that's exceptionally believable, and not one bit dramatic. You won't find unnecessarily embellished stories or tall tales here, either; Cooper instead uses his real experiences to help readers understand that there are few things that are truly insurmountable. He then explains how one's past can shape one's future, and how today's actions can change the future of the world.

"Let Me Be Real With You" is full of motivation, and instruction that's do-able for adults and teens. If you need that, or if you've vowed to do better this coming year, it might help make you whole.

"Let Me Be Real With You"
by Arshay Cooper
c.2025, HarperOne
$26.00
240 pages



SUDOKU ANSWERS

2	9	8	1	4	7	6	5	3
5	4	3	2	6	8	7	1	9
6	1	7	3	9	5	2	4	8
3	6	1	9	5	2	4	8	7
7	5	4	8	3	1	9	2	6
8	2	9	6	7	4	5	3	1
9	7	2	4	8	3	1	6	5
4	8	5	7	1	6	3	9	2
1	3	6	5	2	9	8	7	4

Manna's
RESTAURANT

Soul food, Salad Bar, and Breakfast

7 Days 8am-9pm

Serving the Harlem Community since 1984-

St Nicholas Avenue, corner of 126th Street
212-749-9084

Serving Breakfast 8am-11am
Grits, Scramble Eggs, Bacon, Sausage (Beef, Turkey, Pork),
French Toast, Waffles, Home Fries, Corn beef Hash, home made Salmon Cakes
Fried Fish and Grits, Fried Chicken, Home made rolls, Croissants, Fruit Salad

Lunch/Dinner Menu 11am-9pm
Fried Chicken, Baked Chicken, Jerk Chicken, BBQ Chicken, Smothered Chicken, Lemon Chicken, Sesame Chicken, Hot/Honey Wings, Fried Wings, Curry Chicken Bee/Vegetable Lasagna, Ox tails, Meatloaf, Roast Beef, Swedish Meat Balls, BBQ Pork Ribs, Pineapple Glazed Ham, Smothered Pork Chop, Roast Turkey, Baked Salmon, Fried Whiting Crab Cakes., Chicken Parmesan, Eggplant Parmesan, Baked Ziti, Pepper Steak, Fruit Salad, Banana Pudding, Peach Cobbler, Cakes, Make your own Salads, Fruit, Macaroni Salad, Tuna Salad, Pasta Salad, Calamari Salad, Beet Salad, Potato Salad. Macaroni & Cheese, Collard Greens, Candied Yams, Rice & Beans, Vegetable Fried Rice, String Beans, Corn, Steamed Cabbage, Sautéed Spinach, Jambalaya Rice, Black Eyed Peas, Mash, Potatoes, Plantains, Corn Bread, Deviled Eggs.