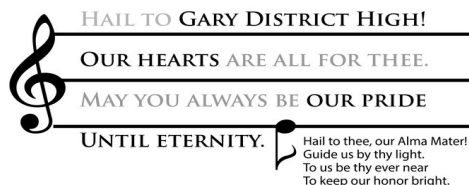


GDHAA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2021



The earliest iteration of education for black students in Gary, WV was the six-room wood-framed Gary Consolidated School that was constructed on Red Cross Street in 1913. It offered elementary and junior high education. In 1922, the school was repurposed as the Gary Negro High School for grades 7 through 12 after a building for elementary students was built nearby. On May 2, 1923, the United States Coal Commission released a report on Gary, giving the coal camp community an overall rating of 85 out of 100, one of the highest for any company-operated town in the United States. The report noted that there were separate grade and high schools for white and black children. The white grade school was the larger of the two, with eight rooms, water fountains, furnace heat and flush toilets in a wood framed structure. The school for black children was four rooms with water fountains, furnace heat and an outside privy in a wood framed building had four rooms. In 1925, Gary Negro High School burned, and a new brick structure was constructed in its place. The new two-story building, finished at a cost of \$36,000, was far larger and included ten classrooms, library, and gymnasium. Within two years, Gary's schools for black children were overburdened with an enrollment of 437. A new elementary school was completed as an addition to the high school circa 1927. By September 1938; total enrollment had increased to 650 pupils. In 1954, the

Gary Negro Grade School had an enrollment of 208 students while the Gary Negro High School (renamed to Gary District High School) had an enrollment of 508 students.

The McDowell County Board of Education allowed for voluntary integration based upon the individual district. By 1957, the number of black students attending integrated schools in the county was four times greater than the entire state of West Virginia in 1959. At the beginning of the fall term in 1958, black students were given the option of remaining at Gary District High School or transfer to the all-white Gary High School. Many of the students chose to remain at Gary District High School. In 1961, the West Virginia Human Rights Commission was formed after the West Virginia League of Women Voters, the NAACP, the Federal Civil Rights Advisory Committee, and the AFL-CIO lobbied the state legislature successfully. The Commission discovered that in 1963, there were 88 all-black schools still operating in the state. A meeting held in June 1964 by the State Board of Education found that only five counties still maintained all-black schools, including McDowell. McDowell County School Superintendent George Bryson remarked at the meeting that the county was not violating the civil rights of anyone, claiming that the county was "as integrate as any other county in the state." Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act proclaimed that any school system found practicing racial discrimination would be prohibited from receiving federal financial funds. The State Board of Education further clarified that the Civil Rights Act called for desegregation, not integration, and districts still employing voluntary integration, such as Gary, would not qualify for any federal dollars. By early 1965, it had become obvious that McDowell County would need to do more than allow voluntary integration to previously all-white schools. Shortly after a consultant had published a scathing remark against McDowell's controversial and discriminatory policies against black students, the county adopted a plan to merge its segregated school systems. Black students at Gary District High School would attend Gary High School. The building would be repurposed as an integrated elementary school. The segregated school systems were merged by the spring of 1966. By the fall, all black students in the county attended integrated schools. The repurposed Gary District High School remained open for elementary students until it merged with a school in Welch in 1975.

GDHAA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2021



A Word from The President

Greetings, Garyites! I hope that all is going well, and that everyone is staying healthy and safe. Isn't having this newsletter GREAT!! 😊 Bill Madison has done an excellent job on both copies of the newsletter that he has edited. If you like what you have seen, please do two things:

- 1) Send some news to Bill to put in the next newsletter.
- 2) Tell Bill what a great job he is doing!

2021 Annual Meeting

The Board will hold its annual meeting for 2021 in a virtual format on Saturday, July 17, 2021 at 11:00 am. As a part of the Annual Meeting, we will have a Virtual Awards Program where we will award our scholarships for this year. The Annual Meeting will be open to members of a chapter or members at large.

Scholarships and Scholarship Fund

The GDHAA Board is looking for students to apply for the GDHAA Scholarship. The application and directions are on the GDHAA website. Any high school or undergraduate college student who is a descendant of GDHS is eligible to apply for the scholarship. The deadline for applying is May 1, 2021. The link to the scholarship application is:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ab8fe81620b854268eec06f/t/5c6fe0fd7ebdb151ca240c84/1584390397303/UPDATED-2020-GDHAA-ScholarshipApplication-FormFillable.pdf>

As you are aware, when the reunions are held, part of the reunion fee is allocated for the scholarship fund. Having no reunion for two straight years means that the scholarship fund has not been able to increase. Several Garyites have made donations to the scholarship fund so that we will have monies to award scholarships. Will you please seriously consider sending a donation to the scholarship fund. No donation is too small. If you can contribute to the scholarship fund, please mail your donation to the GDHAA Treasurer at:

Mrs. Tiffany Kelsey
156 Legacy Park Circle
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

Thank you in advance for your donation!

Lastly, we are still looking for members who would be interested in being on the Board of Directors for GDHAA. If you are interested, please contact the Board Secretary, Tina Houston, at Tina.Houston@acom.com.

Again, my friends, take care and stay well! Peace, love, and blessings –

Sandra

April 1, 2021

MAYOR OF GARY, WEST VIRGINIA

Larry Hairston was elected and sworn in as Mayor for the City of Gary, WV on July 1, 2019. The City was incorporated on July 1, 1971.

He grew up in Filbert #9, WV, and attended Gary District High School.

Mayor Hairston is the father of four (4) children, Tyrone, Sabrina, Trina, and the late Larry Jr. He was married to the late Shelia Swayne Hairston, and is currently married to Patricia Williams Hairston.

He is also Pastor of the Beulah Baptist Church of Big Sandy, WV.

There are currently several projects in process for the City for improvements of the Water and Sewage system(s). Mayor Hairston, Council, Recorded and Staff have applied for various other grants.

Gary City was recently awarded an ARC Grant in the amount of \$386,400, for Sewage Study and another ARC Grant for \$150,00 for Emergency Water Pumps.

The Mayor, Staff, Recorder and Council extends special thanks to everyone that made donations, extended prayers, and helped in any way to assist the City during the loss of Water in the Fall of 2020.

Gary, one of only two cities in McDowell County, West Virginia, was recently presented with an American Flag by Senator Sue Cline that will be flown at the upcoming Gary Police Memorial.

Gary will have a celebration of 50 years for the City this summer, the date to be announced later.

April 1, 2021

Focus on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to Promote Business Success
Tina S. Houston is Vice President and Georgia Metro Market leader at AECOM



Tina S. Houston, middle lady with certificate

Are we there yet?™ As someone who has made inroads in the water sector from a small coal-mining town in southern West Virginia, I am continually asking that question regarding workplace opportunity. And I continually confront the fact that however much work we have done, there is always more to do. The issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion are near and dear to my heart, so I was honored to receive the Champion of Diversity Award from AWWA National office in 2020, which originated from Georgia AWWA, and I am proud of the advances my employer, AECOM, has made in these areas. The Beginning: Obstacles, Not Acceptance My journey began in Gary, W.Va. I was the youngest of eight—five of us girls—and my path was spurred by a mother and father who would not accept failure, siblings who had achieved academic success, and my own determination to succeed. I did not experience racism; instead, I was exposed to classism and sexism. In our small mining town, men of all races and backgrounds worked together in the mines, so the issue was union versus management, not race. And again, as it was all men working together, most area women, including my mother, worked at home, taking care of their children. Sexism was a constant obstacle to my success, but my parents pushed for academic success and higher education. We were raised knowing that college was not a choice but rather a requirement, although my parents did not have the financial means to support that requirement for eight children. Buoyed by help from INROADS (www.inroads.org), I became a summer intern sponsored by Monsanto Rubber Chemicals. Armed with an academic scholarship and supported by INROADS, I started engineering school at the West Virginia University Institute of Technology in Montgomery. As I progressed, I faced myriad obstacles because my secondary-school education did not prepare me well academically for college, particularly for working toward the engineering degree I sought. Because I had to struggle to catch up to my peers, my college years were challenging. During this time, I was frequently discouraged by male peers, who often ridiculed me for asking what they thought were “too many questions.” In most instances, I was the only female and the only black person in class. However, one of my math professors often instructed my peers, “Be careful how you speak to her—you will be working for her someday. The days of hiding behind a drafting board with your head down are over. You’d better pay attention to her.” At the time, I did not fully understand such comments, as I was just fighting to reach my potential and achieve my career goals. But reflecting on it today, I appreciate the support from those who “had my back,” like my math professor and other supporters along the way.

Earning Success and Finding a Home: During my early career, my experiences with racism and sexism were discouraging and at times overwhelming. I began as an environmental health and safety engineer for an industry in rural West Virginia, moved on to construction management in rural Georgia, and then on to consulting in a major city. My success came from personal determination, family support, and hard work. “It is too hard” could never be a reason to quit. My father often said, “Quitting is easy—anybody can quit.” So quitting was not an option, but that did not stop colleagues from questioning my abilities and dedication.

Early on, I endeavored to find a workplace that would accept me as I am—a determined black wife and mother, committed to my family and career. Equity, inclusion, and diversity were never topics for discussion. In those early days, I worked for a variety of firms. Through it all, I often heard negative comments that questioned my dedication to my family. Men in the firm would ask, “Why isn’t she home with her kids?”

Many also cast doubt on my abilities, saying, “She only got that promotion because she is black.” It is not surprising that I often felt disheartened, and I almost gave in to the negative commentary, but that changed when I met with leadership staff at AECOM.

I felt welcome and part of something bigger. I wanted to make a better world and be part of an organization with shared values. That was 14 years ago, and over the course of my career since then, I have watched our firm develop an equitable, inclusive, and diverse environment by understanding that diversity is multidimensional and includes race, gender, age, religion, family structure, sexual orientation, and many other characteristics and ways of thinking.

April 1, 2021

We get to know our professionals. We meet them where they are, taking time to understand their career goals, perspectives, and passions.

Four Pillars of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Optimal diversity of thinking is achieved when there is a level playing field for all talent, and most will agree that doing the right thing makes good business. Because diversity will fail without inclusion, companies should try to give them equal focus. To accomplish this, AECOM's strategic equity, diversity, and inclusion framework provides a model that other groups can follow—one that is built on four pillars: people, culture, capability, and market.

People: Company leaders need to understand that their principal asset is their employees. When recruiting, embrace an inclusive and diverse team that cuts across racial, ethnic, social, and cultural groups and supports people of all genders, sexual orientations, and ages. AECOM is at the forefront in the industry for women leadership positions, and about 16.8% of leadership roles are occupied by women, which, although 5% above the industry benchmark, is still awfully low compared with other industries. Embracing racial diversity is important too, so depending on your company's reach, initiate conversations and elevate your commitment to racial equity through local, regional, national, and international actions. For example, at AECOM, we are working to ensure that all employees of color are respected and valued and that there are meaningful opportunities to grow their careers and give back to their communities.



Tina Houston (front), Center stands with her team in AECOM's Atlanta Office.

AECOM's talent review process is used to identify top leadership potential, providing career planning that builds capabilities for women and minorities to tackle new opportunities and roles. Targeted outreach efforts are used to attract, engage, and ultimately hire talent from underrepresented groups.

Culture: An inclusive culture starts at the top, with leadership setting the tone for the organization. Support for employee resource groups and mentoring programs helps employees learn about cultural differences and similarities and creates a welcoming and respectful workplace. Utilities and companies can begin to build a culture of inclusivity by encouraging employees to report any bias and inequity, and along with this, instituting policies, and procedures to follow up on reported incidents. Develop opportunities that enable all employees to meet their potential. For example, provide new hires with

mentors who can help them technically and professionally. And when an employee is struggling, ensure there are mechanisms to reach out to help them and to try to resolve any issues before the team member can spiral into full-blown disillusionment.

Capability: Utilities and companies should strive to deliver innovative solutions that prioritize the social impact of equity, diversity, and inclusion. At AECOM, I am proud that we look to develop talent so that our project teams reflect the diversity of the clients and communities we serve, and that we factor these considerations into the projects we pursue and deliver.

Market: With diverse teams working in the infrastructure marketplace, we strive to engage with business partners and clients that share our views. We are committed to communities and the environment through our support for Engineers Without Borders USA and Water for People as well as our participation with nonprofit organizations such as Goodwill, the Red Cross, and major cancer societies. But it is important to listen to your people and engage in areas that motivate and excite them while continuing to improve the organization and strengthening the communities we serve.

Amplify All Voices: Change is difficult, but change will not occur if we do not speak up and speak out. Water professionals need to understand it is our responsibility to build a better world. Along those lines, it is our responsibility to point out injustice in the workplace and to be champions of change. Those of us in positions that can make a difference need to strive to understand the issues and do our parts to improve the lives of those at work—wherever we work. Many water industry professionals are asking if we are there yet, and quite simply the answer is no. Because of this, we must continue to identify and address areas that need improvement, ensuring that the voices of all workers and stakeholders are heard. If instead we become complacent, unwilling to voice our concerns, or reluctant to accept positive changes, business and public health will suffer. However, if we remain united by the belief that infrastructure creates opportunity for everyone, continue to imagine a world where we all examine our systems and biases, and do the hard work of instituting corrective actions and identifying ways to work together within our industry and community, I believe that one day we will wholeheartedly be able to answer yes—we *are* there. The next generation expects better from us, and I am committed to making that happen.

Ms. Houston is a member of the GDHAA Board of Directors, the National Secretary, and an Advisor on the Governance Committee.

April 1, 2021



GDHAA SALUTES IT'S FEATURED GARYITE

Marvelene Swayne-Simon was born in Gary, West Virginia in 1932 and is the fifth of six children born to Monteria Mae Webster Heath and Vernon Dewey Heath. She grew up with two sisters: Vivian and Verona; and three brothers: Maurice, Howard and Douglas, all graduates of Gary Negro High School. Marvelene graduated from Gary Negro High School (Gary District), in the class of 1949, where she met her husband Lawrence Swayne. After high school, she moved to West Chester Pennsylvania to live with her aunt. Shortly after, Marvelene returned to attend college at Bluefield State and married Lawrence Swayne in 1950. Together they raised eight (8) children in Gary Bottom, in the same home where she grew up.

Mrs. Simon was an active member of Rock Hill Missionary Baptist Church, sang in the choir and volunteered when and where needed. She and her family attended church every Sunday ensuring that the family had a strong Christian foundation. She was an active member of the PTA (now PTSA) and lobbied for the rights of African American students, securing the first African American homecoming Queen of the integrated Gary High School.

Marvelene and Lawrence mentored youth in Gary and opened their home to friends and family. They spent as much time as possible with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren providing a positive influence. They attended the Gary District High Alumni Reunions on a regular basis and enjoyed seeing classmates and classmates' families. Upon Lawrence's retirement from U.S. Steel, they traveled until Lawrence's health began to decline. They then moved to Bluefield, WV in 2002 to be closer to doctors and the hospital. Lawrence and Marvelene were married until Lawrence passed in 2005. As time passed, Marvelene married her second husband, Ben Simon in 2008.

Ben and Marvelene continued the tradition of attendance at the GDHAA reunions, travel and opening their home to friends, family and descendants of Gary, WV. Ben spent time preparing the house for guests and running errands so Marvelene could focus on meal preparation. Marvelene hosted a dinner party every Thursday and invited many to dinner on Sunday, often interrupting Ben's time watching televised sports with loud conversation and laughter. Ben enjoyed the company, as he often spoke of conversations he had while pretending to watch televised sports. Ben later passed away in 2017 and even through adversity, Marvelene continues to be there for others.

A senior citizen herself, Marvelene volunteers at the nursing home and takes meals to many senior citizens who want homemade southern comfort food. Marvelene always has enough love and material things to share. She will give the shirt off her back or the food in her pantry, if she thinks you are truly in need.

Marvelene once stood in line at a hardware store and overheard a conversation that someone needed a hot water heater. She purchased the hot water heater; had it installed and never claimed the good deed she had done. Marvelene is certain that God will always give her what she needs if she gives to others. Marvelene stands on faith and lives by example.

Over time, Marvelene lost many classmates, friends, and family. Her travel is lessened but her heart remains the same, full of love and laughter. But with faith and maintaining her relationship with God, Marvelene has become the surrogate Mother to most that grew up in Gary Bottom. She starts her day with phone calls from her friends and her extended family. She earned the nickname "Momma Simon", sharing stories of the past and offering encouragement to those in need. She helps many through their hardships, even though she experienced great loss herself. Marvelene recently lost her fifth child, her daughter, Lavern Arnett, but she remains strong. The outpouring of love received during the loss of Lavern is truly overwhelming and a testament to the life that Marvelene lives.

Mrs. Simon is encouraged about the future and continues to encourage others. GDHAA salutes, Marvelene Swayne-Simon for her courage and tenacity. Marvelene is a servant of God, giving of self and helping those in need.

GDHAA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2021



Thanks to Ginny Presley Robertson, a graduate of Gary High School for the many pictures she publishes on Face Book of various classes, as well as shots of Gary and Welch West Virginia. This Young Lady posts pictures, almost daily, to which all Garyites can relate. Below is an example.

Ginny studied English Language Arts at Concord University, Business Administration at the University of Maryland Global Campus. She is married to Don Robertson, and they live in Lutherville, Maryland, about 12 miles north of Baltimore.

Ms. Robertson is known around the nation.

- President at Ginny Robertson, LLC
- Former Assistant Vice President Mortgage Loan Servicing at Chevy Chase Savings Bank
- Former Customer Manager at EB Mortgage Corporation
- Former Customer Service Manager at Commercial Credit Company
- Former Owner at Live Your Life on Purpose
- Former Facilitation & Sales at Context Associated
- Former Vice President of Commercial, Residential & Consumer Servicing at Fairfax Mortgage



April 1, 2021



Generations of people have known that McDowell County's native Ergie Smith is a legend. It has not always been easy. He has dealt with integration of public schools, being turned down for a coaching job, and re-entering the coaching profession after a seven-year hiatus. But he looks back with gratitude. "You often hear him use the word "blessed" because he feels like everything, we get is a blessing". It is not so much what he did, but it is what God provided him with. Member of four halls of fame, Smith coached for about 30 years in McDowell County, starting at the segregated Gary District High School (GDHS), and concluded in 1989 as boys' basketball coach of the Mount View Golden Knights. As co-coach with James Wilkerson, Smith coached the 1956 GDHS football team, and the 1956 GDHS boys' basketball team to state black schools' championships. In his first year back in coaching, at the integrated Gary High School, he guided the Coaldiggers to the 1973 State Basketball Class AA Title.

Coach never experienced a losing season, and his Win-Loss record as a coach was 504-206. His record includes 15 County titles and 10 Regional Championships. As a baseball official, he worked World Series game on the Little League and American Legion level. Collegiately, he was the umpiring chief for the West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference for 12 years and was also a football and basketball official for high school games. In his playing days, he was named "All-State" among WV's black schools as a running back for Kimball High School in 1947 – a year in which he lettered in four sports and was Captain of the Football and Basketball teams. At Bluefield State College, he was Team Captain, the Big blues' leading scorer and leader in rushing. In his senior year, he earned First-Team All-League honors and was selected as an All-American among African American football play by the Pittsburg Courier. Though his days as a player, coach and official are behind him, Smith is still active in his community, his church and on behalf of his alma mater, Bluefield State College.

Athletics is what I did, Smith said. Stating that he was "really proud" of his awards, he ranked the following at the top:

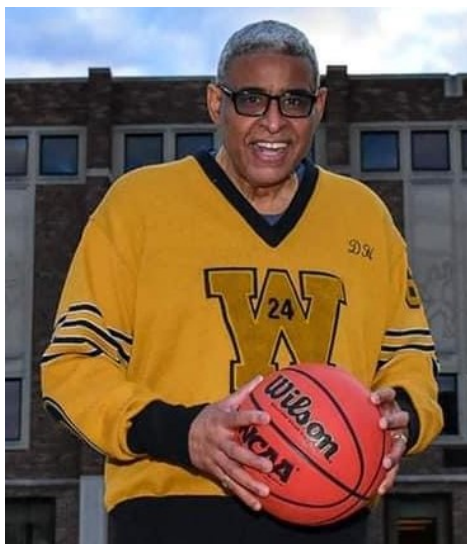
- A lifetime member of the NAACP, Smith served on the McDowell County Board of Education and was named "The County's Citizen of the Year".
- Hall of Fame honors from Bluefield State, McDowell County, the WV All-Black School Sports and Academic Hall of Fame and this year's Sports Legend Honor
- Having the Basketball Court at amount View High School named for him
- Receiving the Martin Luther King, Jr. Living the Dream Award in 2010
- Honorary Doctor of Humanities Degree from Bluefield State College in 2013, and
- Kimball High School alumnus of the year.

He said, "I try to give back, as much as I can. It is a reciprocal sort of thing. Giving back makes me feel good. I hope I make others feel good that I am trying to give something to, but it makes me feel good to give it.

(From Bluefield Daily Telegraph)

GDHAA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2021



The weekend of March 6, 2021, there was a Celebration Retirement of # 24 jersey of David Hamilton who remains to hold the record for the most points scored and most rebounds at West Virginia State University (WVSU) from his years playing 1965 – 1969. The University did a tremendous job honoring the legacy of a man whose story began way before he stepped foot on the campus of WVSU. Dave Hamilton as a 7th grader, practiced with 11th & 12 graders and it was the words of those, he looked up to, that motivated him to take his talents to the next level. Being one of 12 born children, he was accustomed to hard work and commitment. His father would do his chores so he could get extra practices. As a 9th grader, the incomparable Coach Ergie Smith & James Wilkerson wanted him on the Varsity Team at Gary District High School (GDHS) (an all-black school) to help take the team to a championship. His left-handed jump shot led him to average over 24 points per game. Dave graduated from GDHS in 1965.



A tragic accident in the Saw Shop cut two (2) of his fingers off on his left hand. But that did not stop him or his dream. After Surgery, he returned to the court with a bandaged left hand but used his right hand until his left hand healed. That dream of a championship would become a reality his senior year in high school which led to Morgantown, WV in a highly intense championship game in a racial atmosphere. That 1965 championship was the FIRST title for any McDowell County team in any sport in WVSSAC history!

He would then go on to attend the Historically Black College and University (HBCU), West Virginia State along with his brother, Allen Hamilton, and the rest is History. They dominated the paint and boards, and it was not bragging, it was confidence! He scored 2698 points with 2098 rebound. His basketball talents were matched by a moral excellence that is unparalleled. He refused to be inducted into the McDowell County Hall of Fame until the entire team was inducted. He, along with his brother Allen are in the

McDowell and West Virginia State Hall of Fame.

His name will FOREVER hang in the basketball gym and in the memories of West Virginia State University.

We Garyites are so proud of you, David.

Thanks to all who made his weekend an absolute treasure!

GDHAA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2021



Taeler Rose Bell, daughter of Ronald and Shirlitta Bell. Her Dad graduated from Gary High School in West Virginia in 1976. His Birthday is on April 10, 2021. Happy upcoming Birthday Ronald.

This young lady is currently an 11th grade student at Gwynn Park High School in Brandywine, Maryland.

When she was five years old, she was given the honor and privilege to meet the 44th President of the United States; Barack Obama.

In 2013, she won “Little Miss AKA”, in the Tea Rose Category. Taeler has been a part of the American Businesswoman Association (ABWA) since she was a youngster, thanks to her Aunt Delores.

Taeler Rose is a Liturgical Dancer at Mt. Ennon Baptist Church in Clinton, Maryland. Thanks to Gwynn Parks High School, she was given the opportunity to join, and become a student member of the Fire/EMS Cadet Program to train to become a Firefighter/EMT. While she enjoys this High School Program, she dreams of going to a Historical Black college and University (HBCU) and become the “Misses” of that school. Taeler also anxiously awaits joining a sorority.

At this point she has not decided her Career Path, nor made a choice of the HBCU she will attend. Both decisions will be made within the next two months.

April 1, 2021



Stephen Hamilton is an artist and arts educator living and working in Boston Massachusetts. He has been accepted into the Harvard University African and African American Studies Program as a PhD candidate. His work incorporates both Western and African techniques, blending figurative painting and drawing with resist dyeing, weaving, and woodcarving. Each image is a marriage between the aesthetic perspectives and artistry of both traditions. As a Black American trained in traditional west African artforms, he treats the acts of weaving, dyeing, and woodcarving as ritualized acts of reclamation. he uses traditional techniques and materials native to West Africa to reclaim ancestral knowledge dissociated from Africans in the Americas, during the transatlantic slave trade. The work explores and heavily references the Black body in pre-colonial African art history, creating visual connections between the past and the present. This forms a body of work, which serves as a conceptual and visual bridge between the ancient and modern worlds. Through this, he explores elements of black identity through time and space on its own terms.

Through visual comparison of shared philosophies and aesthetics amongst Black peoples, he seeks to describe a complex and varied Black aesthetic. These visual and philosophical connections and cultural analyses form his visual language. The pieces created depict African thought and culture as equal to, yet unique from, its western analog. This work stands in stark contrast to the pervasive negative associations, which have become synonymous with Black culture. his work, therefore, bridges dialogue between contemporary Black cultures and the ancient African world through an asset-based lens.

Stephen is the grandson of Mary Hale Hamilton, GDHS Class of 1958

April 1, 2021



Dr. Courtney A. Liferidge, recently earned her Doctorate from Capella University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, in Advanced Studies in Human Behavior. Presently, she teaches online courses in counseling with Northern Vermont University. Her family and friends are extremely proud of her and her continuing efforts to make positive changes in this world.

Courtney is the granddaughter of Wanda Hale Jones, GDHS Class of 1959.

In addition to teaching, Courtney also serves as the Site Director for a day treatment program, leading a team that provides social and emotional support to children in grades kindergarten through 8th graders, that struggle with behavioral issues.

Dr. Liferidge has been in the social and human services field for close to ten years. In this capacity she, works with children, adults, and the senior population, in various capacities from direct care, program management, community engagement and marketing.

Her mission is to impact structural change that will help to improve the services that diverse and disenfranchised groups receive.

April 1, 2021



“The Froe Triplets”

Colin, Marley, and Evan Froe are the triplet children of Edgar and April Froe, the grandchildren of Otis and Diann Froe Jeffries, who was in the last class to enter Gary District High School in 1965 before integration. The great grandchildren of the late Orietha M. Smith who graduated from Gary District High School in 1949 and the cousins to Dr. Sandra Harris who is the National President of the Gary District High School Alumni Association. The Triplets’ great grandparents are the late James and Marcela Giles, both Graduates of Gary District High School.

Colin, Evan, and Marley affectionately known as the “Froe Triplets” are Seniors at Atlanta Classical Academy in Atlanta, Georgia and looking forward to attending college in the Fall. The Triplets are very much individuals and have chosen to separate once they graduate from High School and attend colleges in three different parts of the country. Colin will attend The College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio as a Posse Scholar where he will major in International Business and Economics. Evan will attend Middle Tennessee State University where he will study The Music Industry with an emphasis in Audio Production and Marley will attend Union College as a member of the Track Team where she will major in Biochemistry with hopes of attending Dental School after graduation.

The Triplets have done well academically, achieving High Honors for most of their High School Career and are highly active in school as well as several leadership and community service organizations which has helped them to prepare for college including: The Atlanta Chapter of Jack and Jill, Leaders of Tomorrow sponsored by the National Black MBA Association and The Key Club.

April 1, 2021



Gail Cecil Churchill

Tanya Madison Morrison

Ronald Bell

Earl Simon

Patrice Cunningham

Teka Swayne Grimes

Andaiye Scott Madison

Jackie Moore

Carla Faye Watson

Cynthia Cunningham

GDHAA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2021

Happy Heavenly Birthday

Rev. Dr. Tanya Madison Morrison



Tanya Denise Madison Morrison was born April 1, 1963, to William (Bill) and Norma Allen Madison in Washington, DC. She transitioned to be with The Heavenly Father on January 27, 2017. Tanya was granted a full scholarship to Northeastern University in Boston, MA, where she earned (at the top of her class) a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice. She went on to earn a Juris Doctorate from Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C., an International Law Studies Certificate from the University of Nairobi in Kenya, East Africa. She pursued other continuing education certifications in entrepreneurship law and real estate. In 2015 Tanya became a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Metaphysics, Sedona, AZ, she was earlier ordained “Minister”.

On May 17, 2016, a random visit to the ER at George Washington University Hospital revealed a 6-cm mass on her lung. How did a healthy vibrant, 53-year-old nonsmoker and non-drinker, who walked her two 100-pound dogs 3 miles daily, did yoga, drank green juice, and ate healthy food end up with lung cancer? Only God know! In less than a year, her entire body was consumed with deadly cancer, and she, and the family were told that she would pass at any moment. Tanya indicated that she had spoken with God and the two of them agreed that she would

be and do more in Heaven. She then told the family she was ready to go. Being an awesome writer, and Minister, she said that she did not want a whiney, crying funeral instead, she wanted a “Going Home Celebration.” During the service She wanted her little girlfriend and, Special Niece, Aurielle Madison to read this poem that she (Tanya) wrote:

**“I am home in heaven, dear ones.
 Oh, so happy and so bright.
 There is a perfect joy and beauty
 in this everlasting light.
 All the pain and grief are over
 ever restless tossing passed.
 I am now at peace forever,
 safely home in heaven at last.
 Did you wonder I do calmly?
 trod the valley of the shade?
 Oh, but Jesus’ love illuminated
 Every dark and fearful glade.
 And He came Himself to meet me
 in the way so hard to tread.
 And with Jesus’ arm to lean on,
 could I have one doubt or dread:
 Then you must not grieve so sorely
 For I love you dearly still.
 Try to look beyond death’s shadows.
 Pray to trust our Father’s will.
 There is work still waiting for you,
 So, you must not idly stand.
 Do it now, while life remaineth.
 You shall rest in Jesus’ land.
 When that work is, all completed,
 He will gently call you home.
 Oh, the rapture of that meeting.
 Oh, the joy to see you come!”**

April 1, 2021

KASMIN CLARENZ ENGLISH HOLT BEATS COVID-19



As the United States honors the one-year anniversary of Covid-19 on our shores, Kasmin Clarenz English Holt, granddaughter of John Cline English and Greta Jean Neal English (1951), beat COVID-19. On March 17, 2021, Kasmin, 34 years old who lives with asthma and fibromyalgia, was released from Sibley Hospital in Washington, DC after a 10 day stay. Her treatment included Remdesivir, the broad spectrum anti-viral treatment, steroids for lung inflammation and antibiotics for Covid-19 related pneumonia. Three days prior to her diagnosis, Kasmin received her first of the Moderna vaccine. Thus, she thought her symptoms of sore throat, muscle aches and a 104.3 fever were due to the vaccine only to find out she was Covid positive. After attempting to manage her care at home, her mother, Kathy, rushed her to the hospital on Sunday, March 7 when her oxygen levels dropped drastically.

Kasmin remains grateful for the incredible care she received from the doctors and nurses and for the prayers from around the world directed to and for her from every major faith tradition. Never one for organized religion, Kasmin has a renewed sense of purpose, zest for life and understanding of the power of prayer and religious practice - something her grandmother, Viola Maxwell English, and mother have prayed about. Kasmin, an executive in senior management for DC Government under Mayor Muriel E. Bowser, has worked from home for the past year and has had extraordinarily little contact with the outside world. So, word from the wise, BE VERY CAREFUL. Unable to trace where she picked up the virus, we can only assume it was from her grocery store or the local bodega or her apartment building. We have seen first-hand how one with pre-existing conditions are very vulnerable. Remember to follow the guidelines of the CDC - wash your hands, stay socially distant and wear two masks.

We thank all the family and friends, many alumni of Gary District High School, for all their kindnesses including cards, prayers, flowers, and fruit baskets. And in the words of The Archbishop Desmond Tutu - "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness". We are moving through this as nations come together to beat this virus. Let us do our part to move from the darkness to the light and be free of COVID-19.

Kathy English Holt, mother of Kasmin Holt, daughter of John & Greta English.

April 1, 2021

OSHUN



Bill and Norma Madison's granddaughter Niambi is one half of the world renowned performing group OSHUN. The ladies of **OSHUN**, Niambi and Thandi recent graduates of (Clive Davis' Music Program), NYU, create music, visuals, and experiences in honor of the divine feminine, carrying the name and traditions of the West African goddess, OSHUN.

The name OSHUN is a female angel adopted and worshiped in all Afro-Brazilian religions. She is the goddess of the fresh water of rivers and waterfalls; of wealth and prosperity; of love; and of beauty, the goddess is also responsible for marriage and other relationships. she is also called the "Lady of Gold".

The group OSHUN creates music ranging from Hip-Hop/Soul to Spiritual and has amassed a following of over a million people across social media, streaming platforms, international touring, with millions of views on YOUTUBE. Their supporters span various cultures, ages, and experiences and they have been recognized by Billboard, Rolling Stone, The FADER, Viceland, NPR, Essence, REVOLT, Paper Magazine and Vogue and more. OSHUN has self-released multiple cult classic projects while selling out shows and playing major festivals throughout the U.S., Europe, Brazil, and East Africa.

On the heels of their pilgrimage to the sacred OSHUN Grove in Nigeria, the queens Niambi and Thandi are preparing for the upcoming release of their highly anticipated sophomore album *vol.2*. Visit their website www.oshuniverse.com or on Instagram @OSHUN.

April 1, 2021

NEW GDHAA NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBER – DASSA J. GILES

Dassa J. Giles is a member of the West Virginia Chapter, and the daughter of GDHS Alumni James and Marcellia Giles, sister of James “Vickie” Giles, (Class of 1961) and Dolly Giles Rosenbalm (Class of 1963). Dassa holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration with a minor in Accounting and Finance from HBCU Wiley College, Marshall, TX in 1983.

Her academic achievements and business and financial acumen rapidly lead her to professional employment in the corporate offices of some of the most iconic and recognizable companies in the United States. In 2004, she made the decision to follow her heart, and made a career change. This change would allow her to pursue her passion for helping others while also serving in a role that would benefit the community. She became an English/Language Arts (ELA) Teacher for the Dallas County Juvenile Justice Charter School District. There she led the District’s ELA Department, and was a classroom teacher for at-risk youth. These youth were those who had been incarcerated and/or adjudicated because of poor life choices.

She retired from Dallas County in 2016, after an award winning and stellar career teaching underserved youth and moved back home to West Virginia to be closer to her family.

As a Diamond Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., her work in the community has been unsurpassed. She is a Charter Member of the Metropolitan Dallas Alumnae Chapter. She has been a four-term chapter president, and currently serves as the President of the Bluefield Alumnae Chapter. Her leadership in the sorority has been at the local, state, regional and national levels. Her community service work has led to her serving on the board of several non-profit organizations. Such as, but not limited to: Board Chair of the Shirley A. Fridia Development Center, Board Chair of the Comer Creek Homeowners Association, Board Member of the City of Garland, Texas Multicultural Commission, Board Member of the Clean South Dallas Foundation as well as the Chair of the Myrtle Street Jazz Festival.

Her work as a volunteer and community advocate has led to her serving as a mentor for the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Welfare to Work Program, AIDS Arms Foundation, Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS, East Dallas YWCA, and the Union Gospel Mission.

Since moving back to West Virginia, Dassa has routinely volunteered her time and expertise to assist the administration of the GDHSAA. She hopes to leverage her experience as an educator, project manager, and community service volunteer to play a direct role in the growth, success, and sustainability of the National Gary District High School Alumni Association Board of Directors.

April 1, 2021

FEATURED YOUNGSTER OF THE QUARTER

Markus Walker Heath Robinson has thrived over the past year despite the pandemic. At 3 1/2 years old, he already possesses the joyful spirit and warm smile (complete with ever-present dimples) of his grandmother, Margo Walker Heath, graduate of GDHS in 1958. Though he never met his Grandma he is surrounded by pictures of her and hears lots of stories of her so that he will grow up knowing what an incredible person she was.

When the family's lives suddenly shifted to staying at home last March, Markus quickly adapted feeling happy to have more time at home with mom and dad. Even though his mom, Marnique Heath Robinson, was busy leading projects as a partner in the Washington, DC office of STUDIOS architecture while dad, Kenyattah Robinson, managed the impacts of the pandemic on local businesses and residents as President and CEO of Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District, Markus never stopped smiling. He has enjoyed being able to run over and give mom and dad a hug in between virtual school sessions, something he was not able to do while attending school the previous year.

Markus loves books and looks forward to daily story time. He learned his alphabet and how to spell his name before he was 2 years old. He is now learning to spell and read basic words. He has always been musically inclined and loves to sing (Marnique and Kenyattah are hopeful he will inherit a voice like his pop-pop, Marcellus Heath). Markus loves to play musical instruments too and this summer he will begin classes to learn to play his ukulele.

GDHS Alumni Association Scholarship Program

The Gary District High School Alumni Association (GDHAA) Scholarship Program was established several years ago to provide financial assistance to off-spring students of Garyites desiring to pursue higher education. Continuing education was constantly encouraged, not only by family members, but by Principal Joel E. Height and the teachers from the Gary District High School faculty.

In years past, the Scholarship Program was funded by donations by the Reunion attendees and a percentage of the total dollars received from the Garyites who attended the past Reunions.

All of us were greatly disappointed that the Pandemic caused cancellation of the 2020, and 2021 GDHAA Annual Reunions. We had planned some wonderful activities for our visit to the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Hopefully, we will be able to carry out those plans next year. Of course, it will depend on the impact of Covid-19 at that time.

There will a be virtual National GDHAA meeting in July of this year, and a Scholarship will be awarded to a student chosen, based on his or her application submitted before May 1st.

As you are aware, when the reunions are held, part of the reunion fee is allocated for the scholarship fund. Having no reunion for two straight years means that the scholarship fund has not been able to increase. Several Garyites have made donations to the scholarship fund so that we will have monies to award scholarships.

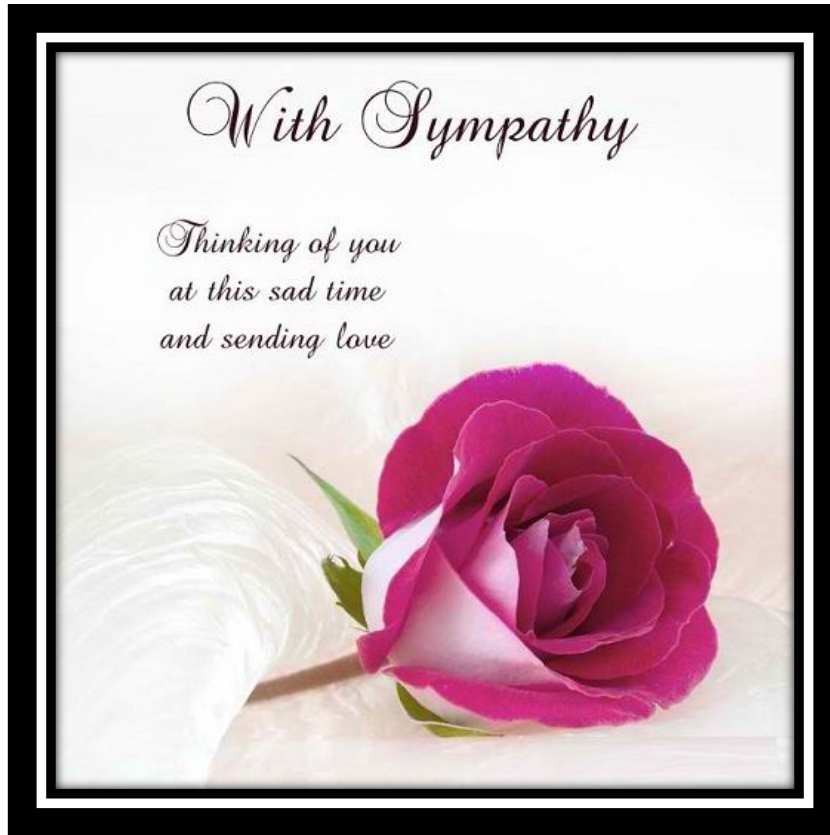
- Floyd Andersson \$550.00
- Vivian Anderson and Monterz Scott \$500.00
- Glenda Lottier and John M. Hairston \$500.00
(In honor of their Mother Ferne Hairston)
- Dr. Sandra Harris (National President) \$250.00
(In honor of her mother, Eleanor Browning Harris [class of 1943], her cousin, Virginia "Honey" Smith Kemp [class of 1954])
- Director Bill & Norma Madison \$500.00
(In honor of their Daughter, Rev. Dr. Tanya Madison Morrison)

Will you please seriously consider sending a donation to the scholarship fund? No donation is too small. If you can contribute to the scholarship fund, please mail your donation to the GDHAA Treasurer at:

Mrs. Tiffany Daniel
156 Legacy Park Circle
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

Thank you in advance for your donation!

April 1, 2021



Your Loved One who transitioned and was a student or dependent of a Gary District High graduate, leaves a legacy through their walk of faith that does more than point us back to a wonderful life remembered. It also points us forward in hope to an amazing celebration that is to come.

Within the months of February, March, and April 2021, the following individuals, transitioned to be with the Heavenly Father:

- ❖ Doris Holloway-King
- ❖ Ronnie English,
- ❖ Col/Ret. Vandy L. Miller,
- ❖ Cheryl (Geter) Grace,
- ❖ Carmen Anderson Goode, and
- ❖ Peggy Cloyd.

There may have been others.