

HARPER FAMILY RECONNECTIONS RECAP

Hello. If you didn't make it to the Sunday, August 27 Harper Family Virtual Reconnection Event here's what you missed.

1. Attendees (in alpha order by first name)

Beverly Harper (MD), Bill Lee, Billy Roy, Brandon Addison, Cathy Harper Hogan, Cynthia Ford-Davis, Delores Harris, Faith Harper, Janice Smith, Julia Wilkins, Lance James, Linda Edwards, Lisa James, Nikia Davis, Raynita Addison, Sekea Murray, Sylvia Ford-George, Tamera Addison, Tina Lee, and Will Davis.

2. Icebreaker: The icebreaker was in the form of a PowerPoint titled: *Harper Facts — Do You Know...*

[CLICK HERE to review PowerPoint](#) .

3. Welcome & Why We're Here

It's been a while since our last family reunion. And in thinking about all the hard work that went into our first and subsequent reunions, it's time for us to get back to getting together and celebrating the family.

4. Prayers

As we've done traditionally during our family reunions, we said a prayer for family elders, those who have passed, and those who are sick and shut-in: Anne Whisonant, Bernard Harper, Betty Harper, Elsie Copeland, Fred Murray, Penny Hogan, Norma & Lacey Smith, Norman Lee.

5. Who and What's New + Family Updates

Attending family members identified what's new and happening with them and their branch of the family since 2019 and covid.

Beverly Harper (MD) has 12 grandchildren now, her granddaughter braids hair, and she is still advocating for her Big Girls Ministry; **Billy and Tina Lee** have moved in with Melissa and Jordan; **Billy Roy** graduated from Southern New Hampshire University with a Bachelors in Human Resources Management; **Brandon Addison** is married, he and wife Tamera reside in Texas; **Cathy Harper Hogan** is singing soprano on a choir, Penny Hogan—her mother-in-law who attended our reunions is paralyzed. Cathy also appreciated the reference she received that resulted in her being interviewed in AARP magazine where she spoke about adding healthy activities to a family reunion. [CLICK HERE for a link to the article](#); **Cynthia Ford-Davis** has a new grandbaby, Zoey Davis; **Delores Harris** is singing alto on a choir; **Faith Harper** reported her nephews are doing well and ready for the new school year; **Janice Smith** is working at Center in the Park in Philly assisting senior citizens; **Julia Wilkins** is a widow—her husband Elvin passed in November 2021; **Linda Edwards** is singing alto on her church choir; **Lisa James** has retired as a special education school teacher, she is now working part-time as a substitute in the Cheltenham School District. Her husband Lance James is legal counsel for SEPTA; **Nikia Davis** reported that she, husband Will and son Joaquin were blessed with a baby girl, Zoey, in 2019; **Raynita Addison** announced that her youngest son—Maurice Battle, Jr., just graduated high school and has enlisted in the Army; **Sekea Murray** reported that her Mom Cindy is doing well, her Dad Fred has been diagnosed with dementia and prostate cancer, Fred's Mom Udell recently passed, and her niece Tahirah was just dropped off at Kutztown University for her freshman year of college. Sekea also mentioned that she went on a holiday cruise at the end of

2022/beginning of 2023, and was surprised to find out when boarding that Raynita had signed up for the same cruise.

6. Other Updates:

A. Harper Cabin – Brookside Nature Center – Wheaton, MD

Sylvia spoke with the current Program & Facility Manager, Suzanne Bode, who by chance had attended the HFR 25th Reunion at Brookside. Suzanne noted that they have been completing structural renovations on the facility as a whole, and periodic cleaning and repairs at the Cabin. Suzanne was excited to hear from the family, and is looking forward to interacting with us again. She says that 2024 is a milestone anniversary for historic sites in MD—of which the Harper Cabin is included, and there may be an opportunity for the family to be involved. She also said they're open to having the family come out at any time.

FYI: Our previous contacts Priscilla Taylor has retired, and Quame DeJonge, Naturalist Aide and Guide still works for Montgomery Parks, but at a different location.

B. Jones-Hall-Sims House – National Museum of African American History & Culture, Washington DC

We reached out to Paul Gardullo, Museum Curator at the *National Museum of African American History and Culture* regarding the Jones-Hall-Sims House and rumors that the house may have been moved. He emailed the following text:

It is nice to hear from you again. The Jones-Hall-Sims house is definitely still on display in the History galleries of the museum and is the first object that greets people when you ramp up from the "Slavery and Freedom" exhibition into the exhibition that focuses on the era of segregation entitled "Defending Freedom, Defining Freedom." It will remain so with no plans for change.

We have begun a new virtual offering known as the "Searchable Museum" and the exhibition that showcases the house and Jonesville is planned to be available in the next year. You can please visit the Searchable Museum [here](https://www.searchablemuseum.com) (click the link below) and share with your friends and family who may not be able to visit Washington, DC.

<https://www.searchablemuseum.com>

With my best wishes,
Paul

C. An Invitation – Family Connections LLC

The Harper Family was invited to take part in the testing of a new beta program that will make it easier for family reunion planners to plan their family reunions. Sylvia was shown the prototype along with other National Family Reunion Institute board members. She then contacted Harper planning team members and received a go-ahead for our family to participate. Key features include:

- Automated Save-the-Date Notices
- Automated Reunion Invitations and Announcements.
- Automated RSVP and Reminders
- Create Reunion and Family Photo Albums
- Build Your Family Tree
- Share Family News

In September Sylvia will send info to family members inviting them to take part. Family members must log on and create their own profiles. If needed we can arrange a virtual demonstration by Family Connection LLC for family members.

7. Family & Reunion Legacy and Succession – Where do we go from here?

The following topics were discussed.

- A. **Harper Family Tree:** Needs updating. Sylvia spoke with Keisha after the meeting and she is willing to continue updating our family records.
- B. **Family Research:** We need research three ways: the past, present, and review of DNA research results.
 1. Sammy and FedX's research uncovered our oldest known family member Alfred and his two sons, John and George. But who are Alfred's parents, wife, and other children (*because we know back in the day people had more than two*)?
 2. When we looked at the current family tree, we noticed 30 missing names (and believe there could be more).
 3. Several family members have done DNA testing. Reviewing the results could help uncover some of our missing pieces. Janice Harper works with several genealogist at Philly's Center in the Park and volunteered to help with the genealogy and DNA research. Additional volunteers are needed.
- C. **Family Contact Information:** We need to update family members contact information as email and home addresses have changed, and home phones have been replaced with cell phones.
- D. **Family Social Media:** Social media is one of the ways the younger generations of Harpers keep up with one another. In order for our goal of continuing our family legacy to succeed, we need to meet and communicate with family members where they are, and social media is one of those places.
 1. Facebook – We do have a private family Facebook account, OneHarperFam, where periodic posts are made. We need a dedicated family member who will make posts on a regular basis, and engage with family members more.
 2. Instagram – Many of our family members are on Instagram. We should create a family Instagram account to help us connect with more younger family members.

E. **Harper Family Reunion:** All attendees want to see our reunion tradition restored.

1. We need additional planning team members and would like to have each family branch represented.
2. We'll meet again to start discussing where, when and fresh ideas.

F. **Family Newsletter:** While we were planning our very first reunion, we had a family newsletter that helped us get to know more about the family and each other. Sylvia would like to re-establish the family newsletter on a quarterly or bi-annual basis—*if we can get some volunteers to help with it.*

The newsletter would include family updates like those on the Icebreaker PowerPoint, and be a more timely update on family members.

G. **Family Game Night:** This idea came up after the meeting. We'll inquire to see how many family members would be interested in a Virtual Family Game Night. Lisa said she would take the lead on this initiative.

H. **Next Steps:** Following are next steps identified for moving forward. During the meeting it was suggested that we set-up committees for different activities so that work can be done on multiple activities at the same time. Some leads have been identified, others are needed.

1. Schedule next meeting:
Suggested dates: Sunday October 8th, 15th or 22nd
2. Identify leads for the following activities/committees. Leads to identify next steps for the committee.
 - a. Family History Research (Janice Smith)
 - b. Social Media (Sekea?)
 - c. Family Newsletter (SFG)
 - d. Family Game Night (Lisa James)
3. Identify someone from each branch of the family to do the following:
 - a. Secure contact info for family members (email, cell phone, addresses)
 - b. Confirm elder family members phone and home addresses
4. Send *Family Connections LLC* info to family members for review and sign-up (SFG)
5. Follow-up with Suzanne Bode of the Harper Cabin (SFG)