EXTRA

Two Top Notch Professionals
by Joseph L. Amprey, Jr.

Reading is the heart of Berks County. Our healthy heart is scheduled for invigoration because Mayor elect Ed-die Moran is already making plans to bring big businesses to Reading. An often unnoticed Jewell in Reading is the Reading branch of the Young Men’s Christian Association, the Y M C A. It is a monumentally successful big enterprise in downtown Reading. There is a healthy mixture of professionals, ‘ex-cons’, and people of virtually every racial, ethnic, and economic class who make use of housing, daycare, and fitness services provided there. Many judges, lawyers, probation officers and Pennsylvania state administrators who are employed in the Citizens Center and the Court House take advantage of the proximity and free parking of the “Y.”

Two of the “Y”s most impressive professionals are Joyce Godbolt and Heather Charles who manage the “Welcome Center” or Front Desk during the morning and afternoon hours. They are articulate, intelligent, and they use their superior interpersonal skills to solve the problems encountered by the clientele. Obviously, they are there because they are the first persons one meets upon entering the building, and they handle their jobs superbly.

Lonnie Walker: A Prince of a Man

In the opening chapter of the film, and the opening chapter of the novel, The Godfather, Mario Puzo, the brilliant novelist, portrays the graciousness of Vito Corleone, a wealthy man who at the reception of his daughter honors the request of numerous persons for favors or gifts. Corleone's acts of kindness are compared to the traveler to the North Pole who lessens the load of the sleigh carried by his husky dogs by dropping food in the ice. The food is preserved by the ice and is eaten on the traveler’s return trip from the arctic north.

As the plot of The Godfather unfolds, Vito Corleone is able to ask favors of the numerous people he had helped in the opening scene/chapter of the novel and film. All of the recipients of Corleone's earlier benevolence are happy to honor his requests. Puzo draws a comparative contrast to successful people who were kind on their journey to the pinnacle of success. When their good fortunes waned, very kindly helped by those they had helped initially, conversely, according to Puzo, people who abused or manipulated others in order to become wealthy were unable to get assistance when they encountered difficulty and their lives reached low points.

I am going to predict that the current Occupant of the White House meets his predictable downfall, he will suffer immediately because of his meanness on his way to his current position.

A striking similarity to the kindness of Vito Corleone, is the black billionaire Robert Smith who earlier this year, paid off the student loans of graduates of Morehouse College, the Alma Mater of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, the phenomenally successful actor, Samuel Jackson, movie producer Spike Lee, and scores of other successful black men. Hopefully, Smith's success will continue. However, if he ever falters, imagine the scores of future successful graduates of Morehouse College who would love to return his act of kindness.

Finally, we have a similar hero who is a native of Reading now employed in San Antonio, Texas. Lonnie Walker, a basketball player for the San Antonio Spurs, who led the Reading Red Knights to the Pennsylvania State High School Championship in 2017. Last year (July 2018), Walker gave $30,000 worth of sneakers to young blacktop basketball players in Reading. More recently, last month (November 21), Walker gave turkey keys to nearly 100 families at the Doubletree Hotel. Hopefully, Walker's star will continue to rise. However, imagine the joy these families would derive from assisting him if his star would ever fade.

Walker, who just turned 21 (December 14) is a wonderful young man.
The Sensational Sisterhood
by Joseph L. Amprey, Jr

For 19 years the Sisterhood has been a monumental blessing for Berks County. This organization of professional women mentor our teens and young adults encouraging them to get a good education and work for the uplift of the community. Their president is Ramona Turpin. They are experts at FUND RAISERS. That is to say that their dances and dinners are a lot of fun and quite entertaining while raising funds (money) for good causes. Pictured below is Ramona Turpin, their president. Their most recent fund raiser, a spaghetti dinner, took place at Spartaco on November 13, 2019. They were assisted in that activity by the Reading High School cheerleaders. Both the food and the fellowship were fantastic.

Ramona Turpin
January 1 - John H. Clarke
Clarke advocated for studies of African-American experience and the place of Africans in world history. Clarke published general interest articles. In one especially heated controversy, he edited and contributed to an anthology of essays by African-Americans attacking the white writer Willow Styron and his novel, The Confessions of Nat Turner, for his fictional portrayal of the African-American slave known for leading a rebellion in Virginia.

January 26 - Bessie Coleman
Bessie Coleman (January 26, 1892 - April 30, 1926) was an early American civil aviator. She was the first woman of African-American descent, and the first of Native-American descent, to hold a pilot license from the Federation Aeronautique Internationale on June 15, 1921, and was the first black person to earn an international pilot’s license.

Oprah Winfrey was born into poverty in rural Mississippi to a teenage single mother and later raised in inner-city Milwaukee. She has stated she was molested during her childhood and in early teen became pregnant at 14; her son was born prematurely and died in infancy. Winfrey was then sent to live with the man she calls her father, Vernon Winfrey, a barber in Tennessee, and landed a job in radio while still in high school. By 18, she was a co-anchor for the local evening news. Winfrey’s often emotional, extemporaneous delivery eventually led to her transfer to daytime talk show arena, and after boosting a third-rated local Chicago talk show to first place, she launched her own production company and became internationally syndicated.
1. Who is this retired NBA All star, nicknamed the Admiral, who was considered by his peers to be a scholar and a gentleman?

2. Who was the first black golfer to play in the Ryder Cup in 1979?

3. Who was author of “Roots” and the coauthor of “The Autobiography of Malcolm X”?

4. Who composed the music for “Lift Every Voice and Sing”, and for whom is this song a “National Anthem”?

5. Who is this famous biologist who was awarded the NAACP Spingarn Award in 1915?

6. Who holds the National Football League (NFL) records for the most points and touchdowns in a single season, and when did he set both of these records?

7. What is the full name of this entertainer who was known as the “Fresh Prince of Belair” in the hit “TVsituation-comedy” of the same name?

8. Who was this Nobel Peace Laureate of 1984?

9. Who is the multi-talented superstar who played the role of “Chicken George” in the “TV-miniseries, 'Roots'”?

10. Who is this former track and football star at UCLA who was the first black to play Major League Baseball?
History Making Sis-
ter Are District Justices
by Joseph Amprey

In November 2017, two prom-
inent African American women, Tonya 
Butler and Carissa Johnson, made his-
tory by being elected as District justices 
in the city of Reading. Both had already 
made impressive contributions with 
their careers as public servants. 

Butler, a lawyer who has already 
served as a public defender, an assistant 
solicitor, and as an adjunct professor at 
Albright College. She is a graduate of 
Albright and the Law School of Widener. 
She is also the proud mother of Wesley 
Butler, who is now a starting guard on 
the basketball team at Kutztown Uni-
versity. Most Reading residents know 
Wesley Butler as the former standout 
guard for the Reading High school bas-
ketball team.

Johnson is a graduate of Al-
vernia University where she earned a 
Bachelor’s Degree and Widener Univer-
sity where she earned a master Degree 
in Business Administration. Johnson 
is a former treatment counselor at the 
Berks County Jail System.

Carissa Johnson
Tonya Butler

Bradley is Leading Youth Unprece-
dented Heights

One of the Reading most important 
assets is Youth Build. Established in 2009, UCS Youth Build 
unleashes the positive energy of youth 
adults to rebuild their communities and 
their lives, breaking the cycle of poverty 
with commitment to work, education, 
community, and family. UCS Youth 
Build is a full affiliate of Youth Build 
USA and participates in several initiative 
including AmeriCorps which give stu-
dents the opportunity to earn education-
al awards by completing services hours. 
Located at 1251 North Front Street, Youth 
Build addresses the educational needs 
of youth who have not graduated from 
high school. It provides participants who 
complete program with a High School 
Equivalency or GED.

In July 2019 Youth Build hired a new 
executive director, Ryan Bradley, who’s 
sterling credentials. He is certified re-
covery specialist, a former consultant for 
COCA, and a former operations man-
ger of the Community Education Center’s 
ADAPPT House of Reading. Bradley is 
using his numerous contact for unpre-
cedented expansion of Youth Build which 
will include a nursing program and 
expansions of its construction training 
program.

Listed below are the requirements for 
youths interested in taking advantage of 
Youth Build’s free GED Program.

- Be at least 17 years old, but not older 
  than 24 years on the first day of classes.
- Not have a high school diploma or GED.
- Successfully complete UCS Youth Build 
  5 step enrollment process.
- Interested persons should call 610-374-
  3319
Black billionaire Robert F. Smith is investing in the futures of Morehouse men. According to the institution, Smith—who leads Vista Equity Partners—has donated $1.5 million to the historically Black college.

The funds will go towards scholarships for students and the addition of a new outdoor study area on the Atlanta-based campus. The scholarships will be dispersed through a new scholars program which will be named after the prominent philanthropist and businessman. The rest of the donation was used to purchase land near the school's Ray Charles Performing Arts Center for the development of a park.

"Robert F. Smith's donation of $1 million for student scholarships will have a profound impact on the lives of deserving young men who have the desire to attend Morehouse College, but lack the resources," Morehouse President David A. Thomas said in a statement released by the college. "We appreciate his generosity and his investment in a generation of students who will follow in his footsteps as global leaders and entrepreneurs."

Smith's business acumen has made him a power player in the realm of entrepreneurship. His software and technology investment company Vista Equity Partners had $43 billion worth of capital commitments and owned over 50 software enterprises as of 2018. Using his resources to give back is nothing new for Smith. He is the National Museum of African American History and Culture's largest private donor.

"This museum says that we African Americans are at the center of it all. And now there is a creative and elegant building that is not just a temple, but is alive," he said in an interview with the Washington Post about his donation. "This is a way of preserving our history for generations and ensuring that the stories of our families continue to be told, generation after generation."
On November 2, 2019 the Caribbean Community Group produced a Book Bonanza at Gallow Hill Center for the Arts at 139 North 5th Street in downtown Reading. This event featured 5 local artists who talked about and signed copies of their most recent books.

Andrea Bailey discussed her book, "Don’t Rob Me...." Bailey is a dynamic Christian minister who is most inspirational. Charlie Haynes is a barber who for many years train virtual every barber in Reading in his Barber School which recently sold. Reading had more per capital barbers than any city in America, thanks to Charlie Haynes. Haynes is also notary public, a realty and a prolific writer. On November 2nd he present his most recent book "Making a Difference," which is an inspirational story by an inspired man who has been blessed by God to touch many other people in the city of Reading. David Nazario, native of Reading, is a writer, speaker, editor, and adjunct professor at Reading Area Community College. He discussed his book, "Make one Your Religion: How to Succeed by Doing What You Love." He is a living example of the popular saying. Find a profession you love and never work a day in your life. Finally Shantay Mercedes Watson an author, spoken word poet, and dance mesmerized those in attendance with her discussion of her book, "Audacity," the story of her overcoming societal, circumstantial and self-imposed odds. These pages reveal a personal narrative of abandonment, rejection, bullying, suicide, molestation, rape, spiritual abuse, grief, hopelessness, wilderness, survival, faith, resilience, courage, love, strength, healing, forgiving, revival and victory.

Kudos are in order Monae Eastman, who coordinated this event for her fellow members of the Caribbean Community Group and the talented aforementioned authors.
By Vernon A. Williams

Every day, there is another horrible, discouraging news story directly or indirectly impacting African Americans. Usually brutal. Usually confrontational, harsh, dismissive and heartless; enough to make the average person worried about the future.

As I lamented the most recent every day social and political atrocities – which will be replaced with new tales of woe before this column goes to press – something surprising and powerful came over me; the revelation, Curtis Mayfield sang, "We're A Winner."

If I was the late comedian Robin Harris, the thought would have been, "We don't die – we multiply." If I was Maya Angelou, it would have been, "And still we rise." If I was Isaiah 54:17, the thought would've been, "No weapon formed against us shall prosper."

If at that moment I had been Martin Luther King Jr. that thought could best be summed: "Truth crushed to earth will rise again. We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right – truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne. Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown, stands God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

Then despite all the shooting and police beatings and hate-filled politics and daily dirt of discrimination, and the teaching of even the children of oppressors to despise God's children, and all of the ugliness that we endure on a regular basis as a people, we are irrepressible because we are in the will of the Creator.

If you need evidence, look no further than African American billionaire Robert F. Smith, who, speaking to 400 graduating seniors at Morehouse College in Atlanta that his family's gift to theirs was paying off a total of $40 million in student loans to let them start their careers free of massive debt.

Queen Latifah announced plans to return to her New Jersey home to build a $14 million housing complex in her old neighborhood. Billionaire Oprah Winfrey donated a half million dollars to a Newark school for an after-school program three nights a week for a safe student gathering place, complete with commercial-size washers and dryers for their use.

And in case you need more convincing that Black America is continuing to thrive, consider these amazing success stories of young people around the country:

Rawlin Lee Tate Jr., an 18-year-old graduating senior at Woodlawn School in Georgia, is the first African-American male valedictorian with a 4.7 GPA. Not only has he never received lower than an "A" in any class, he has never had a single test score of less than 98. He has earned $1.2 million in scholarships.

Simone Askew this year became the first African American woman selected First Captain at the United States West Point Military Academy. The Fairfax, VA woman is the first to hold the position, also known as the academy's highest leadership role. The 20-year-old founded the Black Student Union.

Alexis Peterson and Taykeetria Rogers this year became the first Black female Valedictorian and Salutatorian at Junction City High School in Arkansas. Peterson, the valedictorian, plans to attend Northwestern State University and Rogers, the salutatorian, Louisiana Tech.

18-year-old Brittany Reaves walked across the stage as a magna cum laude graduate of Fayetteville State University—earning her bachelor's degree in History. She completed the equivalent of four academic years in one year, completing the rest of her required credits at Cumberland International Early College High School in South Carolina.

Indiana's Warren Central High School Senior Brandon Warren was named one of America’s Top 10 Youth Volunteers of 2018 in a Washington D.C. ceremony hosted by Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. He was selected from more than 29,000 nominees for organizing WeLiveIndy to protest youth violence after his closest friend was shot and killed.
The struggle will continue. But occasionally, we need to look at the shining stars in the galaxy and insist on living their best lives.

The struggle will continue. But occasionally, we need to look at the shining stars in the galaxy and insist on living their best lives.

These are just a few examples. There are too many to mention. The binding message of each is, though the oppressor tries relentlessly to hold us down, harness our dreams, subdue our enthusiasm and force us into inferior thinking, too many young people are rejecting the notion and insist on living their best lives.

The struggle will continue. But occasionally, we need to declare the victory even as we wage one battle after another. Sometimes we just need to accent the positive and just shout out loud that nothing will deter us from our destiny. Absolutely nothing.
OUR CHURCH DIRECTORY

In our February edition, we will begin the publication of a church directory: Please email (drumnewspaper,reading@gmail.com), Fax (610-372-2448) or mail (The Drum, P.O. Box 12711, Reading, PA 19612) photos of your church, your pastor, and services times. Thank you.
The Caribbean Community Group

One of Berks County’s greatest treasures is the Caribbean Community Group. It is a non-profit, non-religious organization with individuals from the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia. It was founded in July 2008 by its president, Gary Joseph, a proud native of Haiti. Their goals are to facilitate the long-term sustainability as well as humanitarian help for communities in need. They foster a climate of growth and personal development through the implementation of their activities and programs.

BETHEL AME’S INSPIRATIONAL YOUTH EXPLOSION

On Saturday, November 16, 2019, Bethel AME held its 24th annual Youth Explosion, an event in which youths from other Berks county churches join the youths at Bethel in empowering expressions of dance and musical praise of God. Most of our most successful governmental leaders, actors, and singers developed their skills in church. Participants included Team FGI and Expressions of Praise from Spring Valley Church of God, the Chosen Ones of Union Baptist Church, Stephen Bailey of Action Chapel, and the Bethel AME Youth Choir. Brother Maurice Irvin of Bethel performed a special Gospel Rap.

Kudos are in order for their pastor, Rev. Alberta Jones and Ms. Mildred Gilyard who chaired this activity.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

How do you celebrate the Christmas and New Year’s? It was asked at Washington Presbyterian Church in Reading, PA.

Sharon Davis: “Christmas with a house full of people and New Year’s is small and quiet.”

Alexis Green: “Small family gatherings.”

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Sharon Davis: “Christmas with a house full of people and New Year’s is small and quiet.”

Alexis Green: “Small family gatherings.”
We are excited about our renaissance of the DRUM. THANK YOU VERY MUCH for all of the encouragement. Our goal is still to celebrate the numerous positive contributions of Blacks in Berks County. Please be ever mindful that we can love all people (Red, Yellow, Brown and White) because we love our black and beautiful selves!

To our readers we are repeating our two continuous requests: 1 CALL (610-372-5049) FAX (610)372-2448 OR EMAIL (readingdrumnewspaper@gmail.com) good news about the achievements of our SISTERS and BROTHERS! 2 SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS!

FROM ALL OF US TO ALL OF YOU

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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