

MAR 2025 - NO 83 - PRICE \$5.99



THE FOCUS

Something For Everyone.

1ST QUARTER
2025

MLKDS WAS A
SUCCESS:
PROVIDING REAL
RESOURCES TO
THOSE IN NEED

WHAT HAPPENED
WITH SOMETHING
IN THE WATER

SHINING BETTER TOGETHER

FOCUS AWARDS, HONORING THOSE
MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

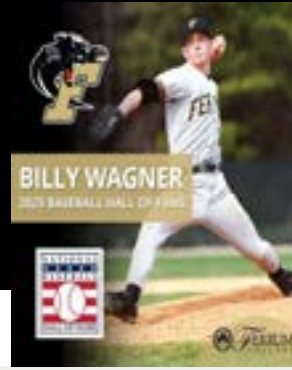
PASTOR RHODES
INSTALLED



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE
JUSTICE BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM CENTER

CULTURE | BUSINESS | ORIGINATORS

Focus Points



FERRUM PROUD
BILLY WAGNER
TO THE HALL OF FAME

All Hot News 2025



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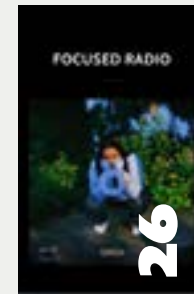


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Real People



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GEORGE FLOYD
NEWS-2019



VETERAN SALUTE
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YEARS OF
THE FOCUS



we set the culture...

editor.



Tom Page

Welcome to the first edition of The Focus magazine for 2025! As we embark on a new year, we're excited to bring you a collection of stories that highlight the vibrant spirit and community efforts throughout Virginia, particularly those connected to the Star City.

We kicked off the year with a strong start, celebrating the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through our MLK Day of Service. This event brought together volunteers and community leaders to make a positive impact in our neighborhoods. Alongside this, our annual Focus Awards honored individuals and organizations that exemplify excellence and dedication to community service.

In this edition, we dive into compelling stories from across Virginia, exploring how they relate to and influence the Star City. From innovative community projects to inspiring personal journeys, we aim to capture the essence of what makes our region unique and thriving.

Thank you for joining us as we continue to shine a light on the people and initiatives that drive our communities forward. We hope these stories inspire and engage you in the months ahead.

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

contributors.



01

Kista Thurmon

JBeC Administrator

Our statewide initiatives are put together by having great allies in different areas. Our Administrator keeps us in the know of what's going on in Tidewater



03

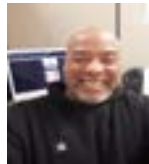
Steve Martin

WEBe Coordinator

We are able to give great financial advice from our guru. With over 30 years in the business, we help you illuminate your business



02



Mitch Hale

Project Manager

After 10 years of mastering the transportation industry, our "we got a guy" keeps everyone abreast and motivates us to stay focused



04



Nari'k Page

Project Lead

The future is in great hands. We have a team of young professionals adding to the fabric of the Justice Business Ecosystem Center

Roanoke Fashion Week 2025 SCHEDULE

THURSDAY APRIL 24TH 6PM-8PM
BUDGET CHIC CLOTHING SWAP Fashion Show
 TOWERS MALL (UPPER LEVEL NEAR ELEVATORS NEXT WILDFLOWER CAFE) 2207 COLONIAL AVE SW, ROANOKE, VA 24015
 PLEASE BRING A GROCERY BAG FULL OF CLOTHES WITH YOU TO TRADE OR DONATE.
 ALSO GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF THE VALLEY WILL BE DONATING GIFT CARDS TO OUR RESCUE MISSION ATTENDEES WHO WILL EVEN WALK THE CLOTHES THAT THEY CHOOSE IN THE SHOW.

FRIDAY APRIL 25TH 8:00PM
 The Roanoke Fashion Week and Mr. Microphone Presents
QUEEN OF THE RUNWAY 2025 Fashion Drag Competition
 ENTRY FEE \$50 \$500.00 CASH PRIZE AND CROWN
 CASH AND CREDIT BAR MIX AND MINGLE - TICKETS AT EVENTBRITE
HOTEL ROANOKE SHENANDOAH ROOM
 CONTACT MR. MICROPHONE @GRAPEVINEPRODUCTIONSINC@GMAIL.COM
 THREE CATEGORIES: PRESENTATION, CITY VIBES, AVANT GARDE

SATURDAY APRIL 26TH 12PM-2PM
FIRST EVER KIDS FASHION Show
HOTEL ROANOKE SHENANDOAH ROOM
 110 SHENANDOAH AVE NE, ROANOKE, VA 24016
 TICKETS \$15 \$20 @ THE DOOR

SUNDAY APRIL 27TH 4PM-5PM
CITY VIBES Designer Competition
FINALE FASHION SHOW
 \$100 VIP - \$60 GOLD TICKET \$35 GENERAL ADMISSION
 VIP SEATS INCLUDE FRONT ROW SEATING, A TRING BAG, LIVE COMPLEMENTARY DRINK, ALL VIP ACCESS
 PHILLY FASHION WEEK AND FASHION BEACHES WEEK ARE TEASING UP TO PHILLY ONLY DESIGNER TO PARTICIPATE IN PHILLY DESIGN WEEK.
HOTEL ROANOKE CRYSTAL BALLROOM
 110 SHENANDOAH AVE NE, ROANOKE, VA 24016
 SHOWTIME 5PM-7PM



The Ripple Effect: How Festival Cancellations Impact Communities

by Kista Thurmon

The announcement of the cancellation of the Something in the Water Festival in Virginia Beach, orchestrated by the renowned artist Pharrell Williams, sent shockwaves not just through the city but across the entire Tidewater region. This festival, which had quickly become a cultural and economic staple, leaves an indelible void affecting numerous sectors and stakeholders.

Economic Reverberations

The economic repercussions of the festival's cancellation are felt most acutely by local businesses. During past festivals, the region witnessed a substantial influx of visitors, with hotels, eateries, transport services, and retail shops experiencing significant revenue increases. For Virginia Beach and the wider Tidewater area, this event had become a pivotal component of their annual tourism revenue. With past iterations of the festival generating millions in local economic

activity, the abrupt halt means businesses must recalibrate their financial forecasts and staffing needs. For smaller establishments, this could mean the difference between thriving and surviving.

Employment Disruptions

The festival's cancellation doesn't just affect businesses but also a complex web of workers who depend on these events for their livelihood. From event production teams and security personnel to local temporary workers and artisans, the absence of the festival means a loss of expected income and opportunities. Many of these individuals are part of the festival circuit and rely on such events for financial stability. The sudden change throws a wrench into their economic plans, causing significant distress.

Cultural and Social Losses

Beyond the financial implications, the Something in the Water Festival had become a cultural landmark. It provided a stage for artistic endeavors, cultural exchanges, and community solidarity. The cancellation deprives local artists of a crucial platform for exposure, stifles opportunities for cultural celebration, and removes a significant avenue for community engagement and bonding. The shared experiences and memories created during past festivals have not only entertained but also strengthened community ties and fostered educational initiatives.

Long-term Implications

The long-term consequences of the festival's cancellation could ripple through the community and the broader event industry. With potential increases in insurance rates for future events, organizers might find it more challenging to plan and execute new festivals. Local businesses might become wary of expanding or hiring in anticipation of future events, and the community's reputation as a cultural hub could suffer, impacting future tourism prospects.

Recovery and Adaptation Strategies

To mitigate the adverse effects of the cancellation, the community could adopt several strategies. Developing a series of smaller events throughout the year could help distribute eco-

we are the New Focus.

nomical risk while maintaining cultural vibrancy. Exploring virtual or hybrid event formats could keep community engagement alive, minimizing logistical hurdles. Establishing community support funds could provide a safety net for affected workers and businesses, helping them weather financial uncertainties.

Personal Reflection and Anticipation

As a concert-goer eagerly awaiting this year's Something in the Water Festival, the cancellation is particularly disheartening. Last year's event was unfortunately marred by inclement weather, adding to the anticipation for this year's festivities. The prospect of enjoying live performances by diverse artists and immersing myself in the vibrant atmosphere was something I, along with many others, was looking forward to. The festival held the promise of unforgettable experiences, cultural enrichment, and a sense of unity among attendees. Its absence this year is a poignant reminder of the void left in both the cultural and social fabric of the community.

Looking Ahead

While the cancellation of the Something in the Water Festival presents significant challenges, it also offers an opportunity for Virginia Beach and the Tidewater region to reassess and fortify their event planning strategies.

we set the culture...

By recognizing and addressing the full spectrum of impacts, the community can cultivate a more resilient event ecosystem that benefits all stakeholders. Open communication between organizers, local authorities, and community members, coupled with adaptable approaches, will be crucial. This ensures that even when faced with setbacks, the community is equipped to pivot and uncover new opportunities for cultural and economic growth.



Transform Your Workplace with the Power of Belonging, Respect, and Empathy

Drawing from over 30 years of experience as an educator, school leader, therapist, nonprofit administrator, Chief of Equity, Diversity & Opportunity, and board member in both public and private sectors, Dr. Monica R. Manns explores the fundamental human needs that shape workplace culture.

In this groundbreaking book, Dr. Manns introduces the C.A.R.E.E. Framework—a practical, results-driven model designed to cultivate truly inclusive environments. Culture of Consciousness, Acceptance (Belonging), Results Orientation, Engagement, and Empowerment form the foundation of this transformative approach.

Through personal reflections and professional insights, this book equips readers with actionable strategies to navigate complex professional landscapes, foster meaningful dialogue, and implement lasting change. Whether you're a leader, manager, educator, or professional seeking to build a more inclusive, empowered workplace, this book provides a roadmap to creating cultures where every individual feels valued, heard, and empowered to thrive.

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MLK DAY OF SERVICE EVENT

Legal Aid

Hunter Hartley of the Legal aid office provided great information on renters rights and other topics.



TAP/ Army

There were many other community resources available on this day of service. Many of the programs from Total Action for Progress (TAP) were present with their clients. Our Army recruiter stayed all day with information on how to join the armed services for those eligible.



John Fishwick

Mr Fishwick and members of his firm came to the afternoon session to answer questions and provide guidance

In underserved communities, access to justice can be a privilege that many simply cannot afford. A lack of resources, systemic inequities, and barriers to quality legal representation have long perpetuated cycles of disadvantage, especially for those who have encountered the criminal justice system. Felonies and barrier crimes, which often result in criminal records, can significantly impact an individual's future, limiting access to hous-

Kevin Wilson

Attorney Kevin Wilson came down from his main office in DC to support this great effort in his hometown.



ing, employment, and even education. Free legal advice, offered through legal clinics and pro bono services, can serve as a critical resource in helping individuals navigate these challenges, reduce disparities, and ensure fairer outcomes for all. The Importance of Free Legal Advice in Underserved Communities

The Hidden Burden of a Criminal Record

A criminal record can be a life-altering consequence for anyone, but its effects are especially devastating in underserved communities. Felonies, or even lesser offenses marked as barrier crimes, can create lasting obstacles that severely limit opportunities. In many states, having a criminal record can disqualify individuals from securing housing, finding stable employment, or qualifying for financial aid to pursue education. These barriers can make it extraordinarily difficult to reintegrate into society after serving time, leading many people to fall into cycles of poverty, homelessness, or even recidivism.

For those who face charges, the severity of a felony conviction or a "barrier crime" (crimes that disqualify individuals from obtaining certain professional licenses or positions) can overshadow their potential, regardless of whether they were fairly represented in court. The realities of inadequate legal representation—whether due to cost, lack of resources, or the overwhelming caseload of public defenders—leave many defendants with minimal legal advice or insufficient defense.

Legal Clinics and Pro Bono Services: A Lifeline for the Underserved

One solution to this disparity is the expansion of free legal advice through legal clinics and pro bono services. Legal clinics, often run by law schools, nonprofit organizations, or community-based groups, offer individuals in underserved communities the opportunity to receive free or low-cost legal consultations. These clinics can assist with everything from navigating the criminal justice system to sealing or expunging records, which can offer a second chance for those who want to move past their mistakes.

Pro bono legal services, provided by volun-

teer lawyers and firms, can also make a significant difference. Many attorneys and firms donate their time to represent individuals who cannot afford legal counsel. This can help ensure that those facing felony charges or dealing with the aftermath of a criminal conviction have access to the kind of representation that could potentially change the trajectory of their lives. Pro bono legal teams can also advocate for policy changes to reduce the long-term consequences of criminal records and push for reforms that make the justice system more equitable.

Addressing Disparities in Legal Representation

The disparities in legal representation—particularly for low-income individuals—are not merely a matter of access to a lawyer, but also a matter of quality. In the U.S., public defenders are often overwhelmed by caseloads, with some handling hundreds of cases at once. As a result, many defendants receive inadequate legal counsel during their trials, which can lead to wrongful convictions or unnecessarily harsh sentences. Even for those who are lucky enough to afford private legal services, the high costs can often result in compromised defense strategies or quick plea deals out of financial necessity.

Legal clinics and pro bono services address these disparities by offering quality, dedicated legal support without the financial burden. Through these avenues, individuals facing criminal charges or trying to overcome the stigma of a criminal record are given a better chance at a fair trial or an opportunity to move forward with a clean slate.

Reducing Recidivism and Fostering Rehabilitation

Access to quality legal advice also plays a crucial role in reducing recidivism. When individuals are able to navigate the legal system effectively, they are more likely to engage in rehabilitative programs, secure employment, and avoid the revolving door of incarceration. Legal clinics and pro bono services can assist in sealing criminal records or obtaining post-conviction relief, which often leads to better employment



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prospects and housing opportunities, contributing to a more successful reintegration into society.

Furthermore, free legal services can help individuals better understand their rights and responsibilities, preventing future legal troubles and fostering self-empowerment. By helping clients navigate the complexities of the criminal justice system, legal advisors can act as a bridge to a more stable and secure life.

A Call for Broader Access to Legal Support

Free legal advice through legal clinics and pro bono services is not just a tool for individual justice but a crucial step toward dismantling broader systemic inequalities. By providing quality representation to those who would otherwise go without, we can help ensure that individuals in underserved communities have the chance to rebuild their lives and overcome the barriers that criminal convictions often impose. Without equal access to legal resources, the cycle of disadvantage will continue to perpetuate itself. It is time for society to recognize that providing legal counsel to the underserved is not just a matter of fairness—it's a matter of creating a more just and equitable future for all.

NFX - Justice Business Ecosystem Center Rallies the Community Together to Answer the Call

On Monday, January 20, 2024, The Justice Business Ecosystem Center rose to the occasion. As a tribute to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, the Non-Profit Organization hosted its first MLK Day of Service - Expungement Event in the beautiful and historic Hotel Roanoke. Roanoke native, Attorney Kevin Wilson, spoke with attendees of the event on a range of topics. Most received consultations on criminal matters resulting in convictions on their record that have caused significant barriers to obtaining opportunities that could improve their overall quality of life. Kevin Wilson currently practices out of Silver Springs, Maryland. He is experienced with litigating criminal cases to personal injury cases and estate planning. Kevin was honored to return to his hometown to volunteer his services to a community that he is passionate about. John P Fishwick and his legal team of experts consulted with attendees on Federal - Criminal Matters and Civil Rights Law. Outside of his legal practice, John Fishwick is an advocate for criminal justice reform and regularly speaks on issues related to law enforcement, public policy, and fair trial rights. Hunter Hartley presented information to attendees about Fair Housing and Tenants Rights on behalf of The Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley. With the epidemic of homelessness rising across the Country, equipping the community with knowledge surrounding landlord / tenant issues was a highlight of the day. In addition to free legal advice, attendees were able to talk with representatives of agencies providing community resources for a range of other services.

NFX - Web Academy, Family Services of Roanoke Valley, TAP, Fralin Free Clinic, Brightview and Life Force all set up exhibits to highlight the services they offer and talk with attendees about their intake processes.

The Justice Business Ecosystem Center is incredibly grateful for its sponsors, volunteers and participants that made the National Day of Service event possible. Dates for future events offering free legal services will be announced here and on all NFX Media Platforms. Stay connected and stay focused.

PROJECT CONNECT



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Carolyn H. Coles
Project Connect*
Medicaid/FAMIS Outreach Specialist
Phone: 540-344-5156 x131
carolync@bradleyfreeclinic.com

Carolyn's position is funded through a grant from the Virginia Health Care Foundation with funding from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services and the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

CAROLYN COLES
PROJECT CONNECT ENROLLMENT SPECIALIST



Pharmacy



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Vaccines



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Primary Care



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we set the culture...

we are the New Focus.

TRAVEL CAN GIVE GREAT PRESENT OF EMOTIONS

Life at 70mph

Mitch Hale drove this country for the past 10 years. Now he is focused on bringing new energy to the community that raised him.



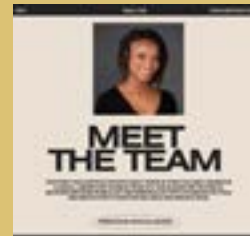
PERFECT TRIPS

Building Community from Within

As a 52-year-old truck driver, I've spent a significant part of my life crisscrossing the highways, my world a blur as the miles rolled by, a yearning grew within me as the miles rolled by, a desire to slow down and invest in the place I call home: Roanoke. Roanoke is a city with great bones, a place rich in history and potential.

Meet our NFX

TEAM



Precious McCollugh
Board Member
since 2022



Denashia Dunnville
Board Member
since 2024

“These are the people who have laid the foundation for our community, and they deserve to live with dignity and comfort.”

Life on the Road



Repairing and Rebuilding

It's a city that has seen its share of challenges, but it's also a community ripe with opportunity. As I transition from life on the road to a more grounded existence, my focus has shifted to hometown initiatives that can help strengthen our community from within.

Cultivating Community Policing

Another area where I've turned my attention is community policing. It's easy to feel disconnected from the people who are meant to protect and serve us, but building trust and collaboration with local law enforcement can create safer neighborhoods. By organizing community meetings and fostering open dialogues, we can bridge gaps and work together to address the unique challenges

WE ARE ABOUT COMMUNITY BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT

we set the culture...

our community faces. It's about building relationships and ensuring that everyone feels heard and valued.

Supporting Growth Through Skill

Roanoke's potential lies in the hands of its residents. By encouraging skill development and craftsmanship, we can create a culture of excellence that permeates every aspect of our community. Whether it's through vocational training programs or local workshops, providing opportunities for people to hone their skills not only benefits individuals but also strengthens the local economy. When we do things with skill and do them well, we set standards that inspire others and elevate our community.

Building from Within

The road has taught me the value of perseverance and adaptability. Now, I'm taking those lessons and applying them to my efforts in Roanoke. The journey ahead is about more than just physical repairs or policy changes; it's about nurturing a spirit of collaboration and empowerment. It's about investing time, energy, and resources into our city's future and encouraging others to do the same.

Roanoke has the bones to become something truly remarkable. By focusing on initiatives that repair, cultivate, and support, we can build a community that thrives on its collective strength and shared values. As I step off the road, my commitment is to contribute to this vision—a vision where everyone has the opportunity to grow, succeed, and feel at home.

The Road Ahead

Life at 70 mph taught me to appreciate the journey, and now, as I slow down, I'm excited to see where this new path will lead. I invite you to join me in building a stronger, more vibrant Roanoke. Let's work together to harness the potential of our community and create a future that we can all be proud of. After all, the road may have been my past, but Roanoke is my future.

by Mitch Hale



SWS Counseling Services, LLC

TEEN MOM SCHOLARSHIP

Are you a graduating teen mother attending Roanoke City Public Schools? (WFHS, PHHS, Forest Park Academy and Noel C. Taylor) If so you may be eligible for a \$500 scholarship to support your future endeavors.

HOW TO APPLY

- 1. Must be a graduating teen mother from one of the listed schools.
- 2. Write an essay detailing your experiences and challenges as a teen mom and how that has impacted your life.
- 3. Submit via email include full name, address and phone to email below.

DEADLINE: MAY 31, 2025

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New Year w NFX FOCUS AWARDS



24/7

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CELEBRATING THE CHANGE MAKERS OF 2024

Through strategic initiatives and collaborative efforts, NFX had driven significant change, creating communities that thrived with vibrancy and resilience.



Recognizing the great work of influencers of the Star City and Giving Vision for the future

(left) Andy Brady of Brady's Distillery recognized as a Star Influencer

(below) Nari'k Page addresses the attendees with FY25 plans

A Celebration of Triumphs:

The "New Year with NFX Dinner," held at the illustrious Hotel Roanoke, was nothing short of an enchanting evening, heralding the dawn of 2025 with a vibrant celebration. As guests arrived, the air was thick with excitement and anticipation, setting the perfect tone for a night devoted to honoring past triumphs and envisioning future possibilities.



The evening commenced with an eloquent welcome from Brandon Evans. His speech, a tapestry woven with themes of unity, growth, and shared victories, resonated deeply with the audience. It was a call to acknowledge the journey of the past year while gazing forward to the endless potential that lay ahead.

2024: A Year in Review: Steve Martin then graced the stage, captivating the audience with the 2024 Impact Report. His presentation was a vivid tableau of NFX's vast achievements

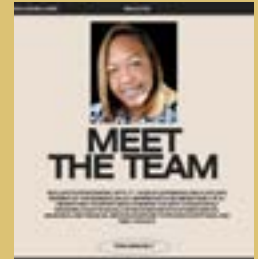


Talent in the Star 2024 winner Kamaya Andrews sings a song for the audience

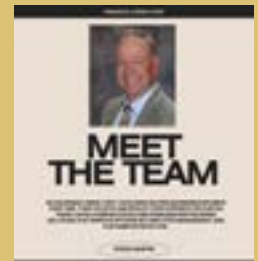
No one asked us to take on the challenges that keep us from our goals. We just decided to!

Meet our NFX

TEAM



Toni Jennings Board Member since 2022



Steve Martin Board Member since 2020



New Year with NFX Dinner



we set the culture...

across diverse sectors. Through strategic initiatives and collaborative efforts, NFX had driven significant change, creating communities that thrived with vibrancy and resilience. The audience, filled with pride, absorbed each word, their minds reflecting on the monumental strides made.

Strategic Visioning:

Nari'k Page led a pivotal session on aligning board members with committees, a strategic move to leverage the strengths of each individual. This alignment was designed to ensure that NFX's forthcoming projects were approached with precision and innovative thinking. The discussions were animated, embodying the progressive ethos that is the hallmark of NFX.

A Culinary Delight:

Dinner was an exquisite affair, a gastronomic journey that tantalized the palate and complemented the evening's sophisticated ambiance. Each dish was a masterpiece, crafted with skill and creativity, offering a sensory delight that perfectly matched the night's elegance.

Recognizing Excellence:

The awards segment was a highlight, honoring those who had made significant contributions to their communities. The Top Influencer Awards celebrated leaders in small businesses, nonprofits, and the arts, while the Star Impact Awards acknowledged pioneers in leadership, education, economy, and culture. These winners, chosen for their dedication and remarkable impact, shone as beacons of inspiration.

Artistic Showcases:

Entertainment reached its zenith with spellbinding performances by Kamaya Andrews and AhRiya Mahloni. Kamaya, with her soulful voice and commanding stage presence, captivated the audience, each note a testament to her extraordinary talent. Meanwhile, AhRiya's performance was a visual feast, her graceful movements weaving a narrative of creativity and cultural richness. Together, their artistry elevated the evening, reminding everyone of the power of the arts in community building.

Looking to the Future:

In his closing remarks, Thom Page inspired attendees to carry the momentum of the evening into the new year, emphasizing the importance of fostering deeper connections and collaboration. As the event drew to a close, the room buzzed with lively discussions, innovative ideas, and a unified commitment to making 2025 a year of unparalleled impact.

In essence, the "New Year with NFX Dinner" was an unforgettable celebration, a tribute to past achievements and a hopeful glance toward the future. It was a poignant reminder of the transformative power of community and shared vision. With renewed vigor and an unwavering commitment, NFX stands poised to continue making a positive, lasting difference in the world.

YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO DO HOLIDAY WEEKEND NOW



JULY 5, 2025



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INSTALLING
PASTOR
Rhodes

WE HAVE THE BEST STORIES OF THOSE MAKING A DIFFERENCE



PASTOR JEREL RHODES INSTALLED AS SENIOR PASTOR

In a ceremony filled with heartfelt emotion and spiritual significance, Pastor Jerel Rhodes was officially installed as the Senior Pastor of Kingdom Life Ministries. The sanctuary was alive with excitement and anticipation as the congregation gathered to witness this pivotal moment in the church's history.



The day was perfect, the sun shining warmly as if to bless the occasion. Inside, the praise team sang like angels, their voices lifting the spirits of everyone present. It was a fitting tribute to a man who has been part of the church community since his childhood.

Pastor Jerel Rhodes' journey to this moment has been one of dedication and service. Growing up in Kingdom Life Ministries, he was nurtured by a community that recognized his potential early on. After graduating high school, Jerel pursued higher education, earning a degree in counseling. For nearly three decades, he worked as a school counselor, shaping the lives of countless young people. Now, he steps into his new role, embracing the call to be a spiritual counselor to his congregation.

The installation service was a family affair, with Pastor Rhodes' wife and children playing integral roles. His children moved the congregation to tears as they recited his favorite poem, capturing the essence of their father's journey and the love that binds their family. It was a moment that underscored the deep personal and spiritual connections that Pastor Rhodes has cultivated over the years.

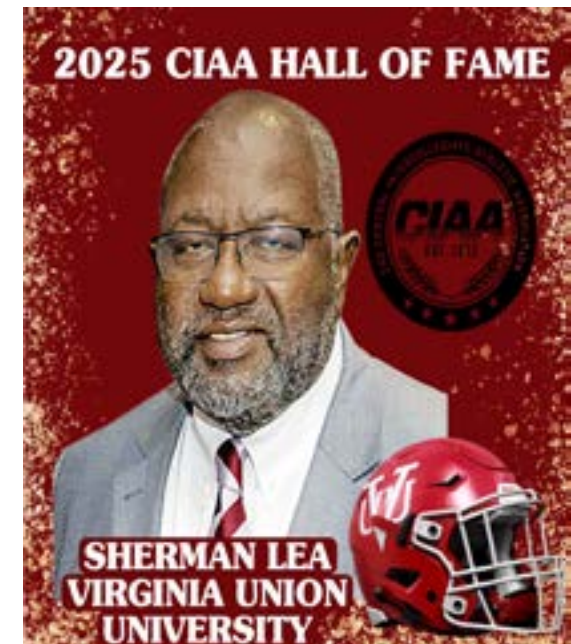
Beyond the walls of the church, Pastor Rhodes has made a significant impact on the wider community. He founded the Renaissance Academy, an organization dedicated to preparing young men for the challenges of adulthood, guiding them toward successful futures both in college and in life. Additionally, his leadership in the Virginia Wolverines AAU football program has opened doors for many young athletes, helping them secure college scholarships and further their education through sports.

Pastor Rhodes' installation as Senior Pastor marks a new chapter for Kingdom Life Ministries. His vision for the church is one of growth, outreach, and continued service to the community. With his deep roots in the church and his unwavering commitment to helping others, there is no doubt that he will lead with wisdom and grace.

As the congregation looks to the future, they do so with confidence, knowing that Pastor Rhodes is not just a leader but a beloved member of their spiritual family. His journey from a young church member to Senior Pastor is a testament to the power of faith, community, and perseverance.

Kingdom Life Ministries, under Pastor Jerel Rhodes' guidance, is poised for a future filled with hope and promise, ready to make an even greater impact on the lives of those it touches.

by Nari'k Page



WILLIAM FLEMING HIGH SCHOOL

ALL CLASS REUNION



SNEAKER BALL 2025

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 2025
9:00PM - 1:00AM

ROANOKE SALEM CIVIC CENTER

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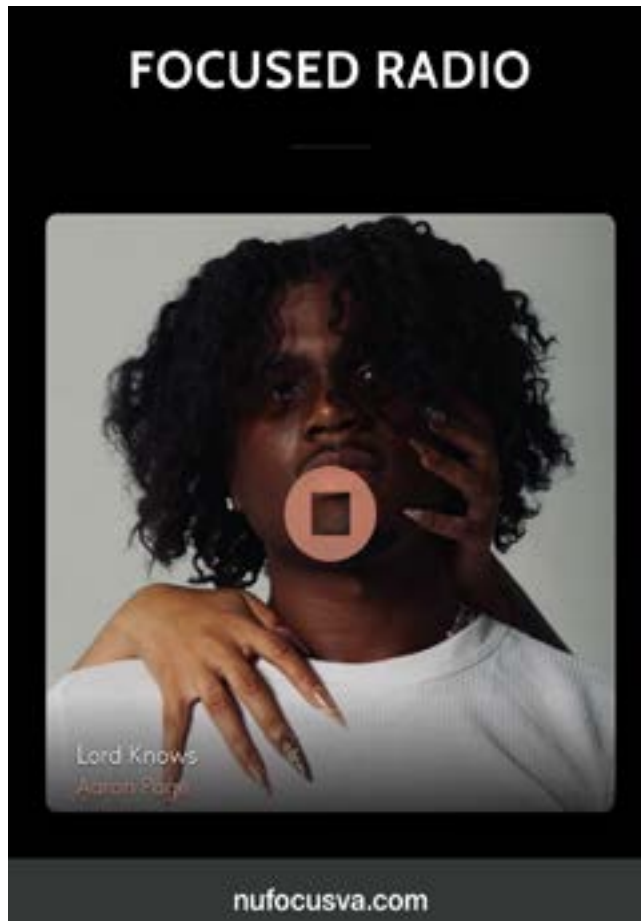
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The Ever Evolving Soundscape: From Super Bowl Stages to Indie Waves

The music industry is experiencing an electrifying moment, with cultural shifts and groundbreaking achievements shaping

the landscape. From Kendrick Lamar's jaw-dropping Super Bowl halftime show dominating conversations to Beyoncé making history with her Grammy win for Best Country Album, the boundaries of genre, influence, and artistry continue to expand. These mainstream moments capture headlines, but beyond the spotlight of industry giants lies a thriving world of inde-

pendent music—where innovation, authenticity, and raw talent redefine the sound of R&B, Hip Hop, and Soul.

In this vibrant underground scene, indie artists are proving that success isn't solely dictated by major labels or radio airplay. Instead, they are carving their own paths, amassing dedicated fan bases through streaming platforms, social media, and live performances. With platforms

like Focused Radio amplifying their voices, these artists are not just alternatives to mainstream music—they are pioneers shaping the future of the industry.

Aaron Page: The Crooner with Swagger

One name making undeniable waves in the indie circuit is Aaron Page. His ability to blend deep, introspective lyricism with smooth, infectious melodies has made him a standout presence in the R&B world. His hit track "Lord Knows" is more than just a song—it's an experience. With emotionally charged storytelling wrapped in rich instrumentation, the track resonates deeply with listeners, while its visually stunning video adds another layer of artistry to his work.

Not stopping there, Aaron Page's collaboration with Breez Kennedy on "The Girl You Are" showcases his ability to fuse heartfelt narratives with captivating melodies. The track is a perfect example of his knack for balancing traditional R&B elements with a modern touch, creating a timeless sound that keeps audiences hooked. Whether through his smooth vocal delivery or his charismatic presence, Page continues to establish himself as an artist to watch.

Gee-Lit: A Name That Speaks for Itself

From opening up during Something in the Water Festival in Tidewater to rubbing shoulders with industry heavyweights like Kehlani, Gee-Lit is proving that indie artists can hold their own alongside mainstream giants. Her music exudes an effortless cool, blending confidence with vulnerability in a way that captivates audiences.

Her tracks "Jan 18" and "Ain nun" have quickly become underground anthems. Whether it's the hypnotic production, the clever wordplay, or the undeniable groove, her music has an infectious quality that turns any space into a dance floor. But beyond the beats, Gee-Lit's artistry



we set the culture...

lies in her ability to tell stories—stories of love, resilience, and self-discovery—all wrapped in a sonic package that feels both deeply personal and universally relatable.

Her live performances are nothing short of electric, radiating an energy that commands attention and solidifies her place as one of the indie scene's most exciting voices.

The Indie Music Landscape: A Fusion of Authenticity and Innovation

The beauty of the indie R&B, Hip Hop, and Soul scene lies in its limitless creativity. Unlike the constraints often found in commercial music, independent artists have the freedom to experiment, push boundaries, and stay true to their artistic visions. Whether it's through deeply personal storytelling, genre-blending production, or a commitment to social commentary, these artists are redefining what modern music can be.

Aaron Page and Gee-Lit are just two examples of the incredible talent bubbling beneath the surface. They, along with countless other indie artists, bring an unfiltered rawness that resonates with listeners seeking more than just radio hits—they crave music that speaks to the soul.

Focused Radio: The Home of Indie Excellence

For those eager to stay ahead of the curve and discover the next big thing in R&B, Hip Hop, and Soul, Focused Radio is the ultimate destination. More than just a platform, it's a movement—one dedicated to amplifying the voices of independent artists who are redefining the industry.

Whether you're looking for underground hits, soulful ballads, or innovative rap anthems, Focused Radio delivers the freshest and most authentic sounds in indie music. By championing these artists, the platform ensures that the pulse of the indie scene remains strong, dynamic, and impossible to ignore.

Tap Into the Future of Music

The mainstream music industry may have its giants, but the heart and soul of the culture thrive in the indie scene. With platforms like Focused Radio providing a stage for these incredible artists, fans have access to a world of music that is as diverse as it is groundbreaking.

So, plug in, press play, and immerse yourself in the indie revolution—because the future of R&B, Hip Hop, and Soul is being written right now. And trust us, you won't want to miss a single note.



Justice Business Ecosystem



Building is what we do

Providing much needed resources and support mechanisms with equity, diversity, and inclusion in mind to minority owned as well as all other disadvantaged businesses to assist them to achieve success within the first two





NFX 2024 IMPACT WAS TRULY FELT

As the WEBe Coordinator, it's an honor to stand before you tonight and share our achievements over the past year. The Workforce + Entrepreneurship = Business Enterprise Academy, fondly known as WEBe, is dedicated to sparking commercial and economic development throughout Virginia. It's a responsibility I take to heart as the Project Lead for this initiative.

My role revolves around building bridges—connecting job seekers and budding entrepreneurs with stakeholders who can open doors to tangible opportunities. With my decades of experience in financial planning, my aim is to provide our participants with practical, strategic guidance. Sometimes, that means having honest conversations about when it's best to dive into entrepreneur-

ship, and when staying the course with a 9-to-5 might be the wiser choice.

Reflecting on this past year, I was deeply involved with many projects in our impact report. It's been a privilege to witness firsthand the ripple effects of our efforts in Roanoke and the emerging vibrancy in the Allegheny Highlands community.

In 2022, we were grateful to receive a grant of \$30,000 in ARPA funding that jump started our WEBe Academy. This past year, I'm pleased to announce that our hard work has resulted in a total giveback to our community. We have distributed over \$30,000 in grants and contract opportunities to our cohort directly and supported other organizations

we are the New Focus.

along the way. Beyond financial support, we proudly maintained two full-time and five part-time employees, generating over six figures in revenue through services provided. This is the benchmark we aspire for each business that graduates from our academy.

And now, it gives me great pleasure to present the 2024 Impact Report, showcasing the fruits of our labor and dedication.

shop held in November provided participants with insights into fostering entrepreneurial mind-sets among youth as a compelling alternative path for success. The December "Marketing to Youth" session built on these foundations, equipping service providers with strategies to effectively reach young audiences. Both workshops were well-received, facilitating networking and collaborative communities.



Impact Report for NuFocusedX LLC (NFX) – 2024 Highlights

1. Engaging Youth Workshops (November & December): NFX, in collaboration with WEBe Academy and TAP/This Valley Works, led two impactful workshops aimed at empowering youth service providers in the Roanoke Valley. The "Engaging Youth through Entrepreneurship" work-

2. What's Good, Roanoke Campaign (January-July): As part of the holistic strategy to uplift and strengthen Roanoke families and youth, NFX subcontracted with 5 Points Creative to manage social media efforts for the What's Good, Roanoke Campaign. This campaign, a joint initiative with the City of Roanoke and the Gun Violence Prevention Commission, focused on addressing gun violence through commu-

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nity empowerment.

3. Roanoke Fashion Week Sponsorship (April):

In a strategic move to support local businesses, NFX served as an Event Sponsor for the 6th Annual Roanoke Fashion Week. The grand finale was successfully hosted at The Hotel Roanoke's Ballroom, marking a significant milestone for both the event and the participating stakeholders.

4. Tomorrow's Leaders Summer Youth Work Program & Talent in the Star Competition (June-August):

This summer, NFX, in partnership with TAP, provided a transformative arts camp for middle and high school students, culminating in the Talent in the Star competition. The program offered artistic exploration and workforce training, positively impacting both attendees and the broader community. Community engagement was further bolstered by collaborations that provided workforce skills and a supportive platform for youth expression amid regional challenges.

5. Sickle Cell Awareness Month Grief and Loss Yoga Workshop (September):

NFX facilitated a yoga workshop through Life Force, focusing on wellness techniques and grief support for those impacted by Sickle Cell disease. This event exemplified NFX's commitment to directly improving community health and wellbeing.

6. TAP Covington Workshops and 2nd Chances Trainings (June-October):

Building on their local success, NFX extended their reach into Covington, offering workshops and training through TAP. These initiatives aimed to enhance skills and provide new opportunities for personal and professional growth within the community.

Throughout 2024, NFX has demonstrated a robust commitment to community development and youth empowerment across diverse initiatives. By fostering collaboration, creativity, and practical skill development, NFX contributed to a sustainable and impactful change in the Roanoke Valley and beyond. Looking ahead, NFX plans to further expand these successful programs to broader communities, reiterating their dedication to nurturing tomorrow's leaders.



Chef Clayton's **DELICIOUS**
Weekly Specials

SPECIALS

TUESDAY
• Chopped Steak & 2 Sides

THURSDAY
• Double Cheeseburger
🍟 Fries 🥤 & a drink

WEDNESDAY
• Grilled BBQ Pork Chops & 2 sides

540-795-9165
11:30 AM-2:00 PM

TOMORROW'S LEADERS
PROUDLY PRESENTS THE 3RD ANNUAL

TALENT IN THE STAR

JUNE
10TH
-AUG 7

SUMMER

Arts Camp

-2025-



FREE ENROLLMENT

END OF SUMMER TRIP

EMERALD POINTE
WATER PARK

TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS
10a-2p

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tomorrow's
leaders

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