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MENTAL HEALTH MONTH: CONNECTIONS

MAY 2026

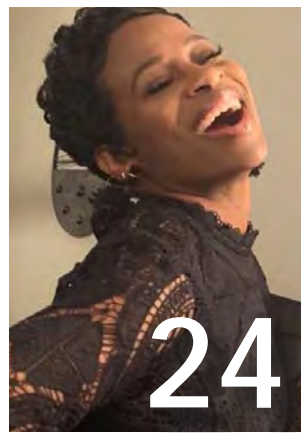


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COVER STORY
Mental Health



CONTENTS

TABLE OF

Publishers Desk By Dr. James Thomas	04
Philanthropy The Mandela 12 at The African American Museum	12
Mothers Day A Bouquet for Mom	15
Real Estate Navigating Real Estate in the Dallas Market	17
Cover Story Mental Health Month: Connections	06
Remembrance Bye For Now: Remembering Tara Cannings	24
Education UNT Dallas Launches Trailblazers Tuition Trust	26



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HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



May is always one of the busiest months of the year. Mother's Day falls in May, and it remains one of the largest holidays annually. In fact, it ranks second only to Christmas in total consumer spending. Simply put, we love our mothers—and we show it. Last year, \$34.1 billion was spent on Mother's Day, and this year it's projected to reach an all-time high of \$38 billion, according to the National Retail Federation. That's a remarkable figure. While we certainly appreciate our fathers, the numbers suggest our spending doesn't quite match what we do for our mothers.

My own mother has been home with the Lord for many years now, but when she was here, I made sure to celebrate her in a meaningful way each Mother's Day. For those of us whose mothers have passed on, this holiday can be especially difficult. It can be a time we'd rather move through quickly—at least until the pain softens and we're able to hold on more fully to the cherished memories she left behind. To all the mothers, I wish you a heartfelt Happy Mother's Day.

From there, we move quickly into graduation season—another reminder of just how full May can be. While I don't have any graduates in my family this year, many do, with children completing both high school and college. To all the graduates: congratulations. You did it.

Speaking of busy, the Supreme Court has also been active, most notably with its recent decision in *Louisiana v. Calais*. The April 2026 ruling significantly weakened the use of race in redistricting, effectively dismantling key protections within the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In this issue, we've included an insightful article from the Texas NAACP that takes a deeper look at the implications. To say this decision is concerning would be an understatement, as some states are already redrawing maps in ways that could impact upcoming midterm elections. It's a reminder of how far some will go to maintain power and potentially disenfranchise others. Still, we must remain committed to the fight—because voting is our most sacred civil right.

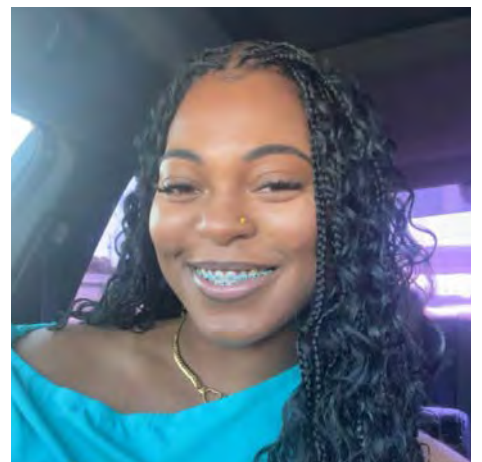
On a lighter note, I recently attended my first Derby Day event at Stonewater in Dallas, and it was a fantastic experience. The attendees came dressed to the nines—men in seersucker suits and women in elegant hats and dresses. I'm already looking forward to next year, and who knows—maybe I'll make it to the Kentucky Derby itself to see the horses run.

I also want to take a moment to celebrate my youngest daughter, Jessica—affectionately known as Jessie Mae—who turns the big 3-0 this year. Time truly flies. She has faced her share of challenges, but her faith, resilience, and determination continue to inspire many. May God continue to bless you, Jess. Your best is still ahead. Happy Birthday!

Until next time, may God bless and keep you all is my prayer.

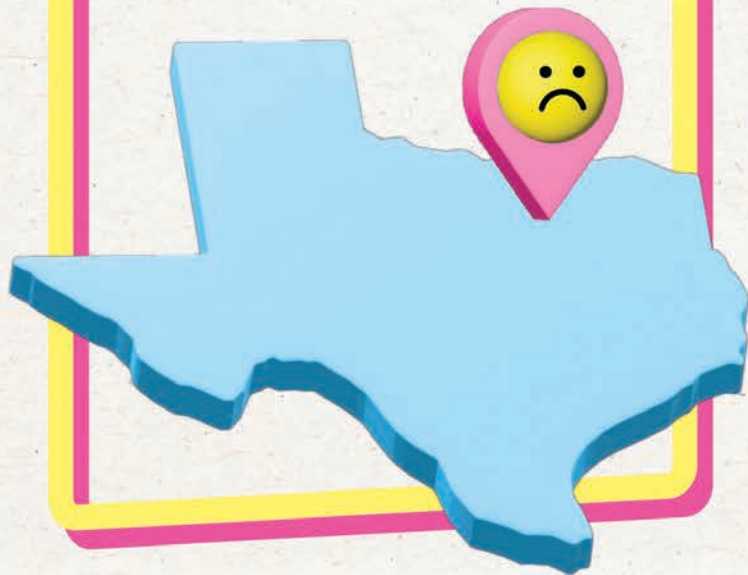
The Publisher,

Dr. James Valentino Thomas II



Jessica Thomas

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(2025 Community Health Needs Assessment)



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MENTAL HEALTH MONTH: CONNECTIONS

This month we feature Dr. Stacia' Alexander, LPC-S, Dr. Estrelita Bruce, LPC, Bree High, LPC, Umeka Wright, MA, LPC, and Melodi Parker, LPC-S, NCC. Each woman brings her own unique expertise and experience to the varied field of mental health. At a time when the demand for mental health support has never been greater, their work stands as both essential and transformative.

CONNECTION: THE CATALYST FOR MENTAL WELLNESS

DR. STACIA' ALEXANDER, LPC-S



Mental health is discussed far more openly today than it was even ten years ago. Conversations about stress, quality of life, and the pressures of modern society surface regularly as people try to understand why so many individuals are struggling. These conversations matter. Yet beneath them all is something even more fundamental: connection.

We are wired for it as human beings, regardless of how it looks across the threads of life.

Our nervous systems develop through relationships. Our identities form through belonging. Our emotional regulation is shaped through interaction with others. When connection is strong, people tend to thrive. When it breaks down, mental health often begins to suffer.

Over the course of my career, I have had the privilege of working not only with clients, but also with clinicians through mentoring, supervision, and professional collaboration. These experiences have provided a unique vantage point into the many ways connection, or the lack of it, shapes mental health.

Across specialties, clinicians encounter similar patterns. Some individuals experience spiritual disconnection, particularly during seasons when faith feels distant in times of stress or transition. Others carry the impact of trauma in their bodies, making trust and closeness difficult. High-achieving professionals and performers often face another form of disconnection: the pressure to constantly perform while ignoring their own emotional and physiological limits.

Although these experiences look different on the surface, they often point to the same underlying challenge—a disruption in connection. Whether it is connection to self, to others, or to sources of meaning and support, restoring those connections is often

where healing begins.

My work focuses not only on clinical care, but also on strengthening the systems that connect people to it. Through my book *Launching Your Dream Practice, Essential Strategies for Success*, I support clinicians in building sustainable practices that serve their communities well. Through consultation, KidsTherapyFinder.com, and partnerships with the Bridging the Gap Foundation, I help expand pathways for families to access qualified mental health professionals, often with costs covered.

Connection cannot begin if people cannot find the help they need.

Mental Health Awareness Month invites us to talk openly about the challenges people face, but it also reminds us of something equally important: healing and stabilization are possible when individuals are supported by relationships, resources, and communities that allow them to reconnect with themselves and with others.

Connection is not simply helpful for mental health. It is the foundation of it.

Dr. Alexander maintains a small private practice, is the director of the Mental Health & Wellness Center at Paul Quinn College, Professor at Amberton University, and mentor to clinicians across the field.

GET IN TOUCH



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@drstaciaalexander



FAITH AND CONNECTION IN QUIET SEASONS

BY DR. ESTRELITA BRUCE, LPC

There are seasons when faith feels quiet, when prayer feels distant, motivation is low, and God seems silent. As both a therapist and a woman of faith, I want to gently remind you: this is more common than we acknowledge. It is not a sign of failure; it's a signal worth exploring with compassion and curiosity.

From a mental health perspective, emotional exhaustion, chronic stress, and even anxiety or depression can impact how we experience connection, both spiritually and relationally. When your mind is overwhelmed, your ability to feel closeness can become muted. Not because God has moved, but because your internal capacity is strained and needs care. Sometimes what feels like spiritual distance is really emotional depletion needing restoration.

Scripture grounds us in truth: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18). God's presence is not dependent on your feelings. He is near, even when you don't feel Him. So what do you do in this quiet?

First, normalize the season without judgment. Instead of asking, "What's wrong with me?" ask, "What do I need right now?" This creates space

for compassion. Romans 8:26 reminds us that even without words, the Spirit intercedes.

Second, return to simple practices. A quiet prayer, a moment of stillness, or a scripture can restore connection. Consistency matters more than perfection.

Third, care for your emotional well-being as a spiritual practice. Rest, boundaries, and reflection are not separate from your faith; they support it. In 1 Kings 18 and 19, Elijah experienced deep exhaustion after Mount Carmel. God didn't correct him; He cared for Elijah by instructing him to eat and rest so he could be restored physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Finally, anchor yourself in truth, not feelings. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us that God will never leave us.

If your faith feels quiet, you are not disconnected; you are in a sacred pause where deeper healing and connection are being formed.

Dr. Estrelita Bruce owns A New Me Counseling & Consulting, LLC, and is a licensed therapist, Christian life coach, author, and speaker. She is also the founder of A New Me Self-Care Circle, a safe space for women to prioritize emotional wellness and faith.

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THE BODY'S MEMORY OF CONNECTION

BY BREE HIGH, LPC

We're wired for connection. Most of us genuinely want to feel close, safe, and understood in our relationships. But if you've experienced trauma, connection can feel confusing and overwhelming.

You might notice a pattern: part of you wants to lean in, and another part of you pulls back. You may question people's intentions, struggle to fully relax around others, or feel triggered by things you can't quite explain. If you've ever thought, "Why is this so hard for me?"—there's nothing wrong with you.

In my work with trauma, I've seen how experiences don't just stay in the past—they show up in how we think, how we feel, and how we connect with others.

Your body remembers. It holds onto the feelings and sensations that took place at the time of the trauma.

Even when you're not thinking about what you've been through, your system holds onto those experiences—learning what to watch for, what to avoid, and how to respond quickly. So, when something in the present moment feels familiar—tone of voice, distance, conflict, vulnerability—your body can react as if the past is happening all over again.

That's why connection can feel like a risk instead of a safe place.

You might shut down, overanalyze, or pull away right when things start to feel close or unsafe. These aren't random reactions—they're protective responses that once helped you.

The challenge is that those same protections can also keep you from experiencing the connection you actually want.

Healing isn't about getting rid of those parts of you. It's about helping them feel safe enough to loosen their grip.



As your system begins to process what it's been holding—at a pace that feels manageable—the intensity starts to shift. The past begins to feel like the past instead of something you're reliving in your relationships. And connection can begin to feel different—more grounded, more genuine, and, most importantly, safe.

Not something you have to brace for, but something you can actually experience.

If this resonates with you, you don't have to navigate it alone. You can learn more about my work or reach out at 214-612-0803 or email me at infobreezecounseling@gmail.com

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CONNECTION UNDER PRESSURE

BY UMEKA WRIGHT, MA, LPC

This is where relationships and connection matter. The right relationships provide stability. They help ground you and offer perspective beyond results and expectations. They create space for honesty, rest, and emotional support. But relationships rooted in pressure, comparison, or constant evaluation can increase stress and reinforce a performance-driven identity.

Taking an honest look at your circle is essential. Consider who brings calm and who adds pressure. Consider who allows you to show up as you are, not just as what you produce. Consider who supports your mental health.

Sustainable performance is not built on pressure alone. It requires support, emotional awareness, and intentional care. Long-term success is not about pushing through at all costs. It is about maintaining the capacity to perform without losing yourself.

This is an invitation to pause. If you are navigating high expectations, take a moment to reflect. Who supports your mental health when the pressure increases? Who sees you beyond your performance?

Mental health is not a weakness. It is a foundation for resilience, identity, and lasting success.

At Making It Wright Counseling & Consulting, we support high-achieving performers in building mental strength, emotional balance, and sustainable success. To connect or learn more, visit or find us on social media @MakingItWright.

High-achieving performers are often praised for their discipline, drive, and ability to deliver under pressure. This includes athletes, dancers, executives, and educators who operate in environments shaped by constant expectations and evaluation. Over time, that pressure begins to affect more than performance. It influences identity, self-worth, and mental health.

Many high-achieving performers learn early that success is tied to results. You win, you are celebrated. You produce, you are valued. Over time, those messages become internal and begin to shape how you see yourself. But what happens when performance becomes the primary way you are defined? What happens when your identity is tied to outcomes beyond your control?

As a therapist who works with athletes and high-achieving performers, I see this pattern every day. When pressure goes unaddressed, it can shift from motivation to burden. It may show up as anxiety before competition, burnout during demanding seasons, or emotional exhaustion in leadership roles. It can also create an internal narrative that says your worth is tied to your most recent performance.

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MENDING YOUR CAPACITY FOR CONNECTION

BY MELODI PARKER, LPC-S, NCC

We are a generation caught in an always on culture. Before our feet even hit the floor, we have checked emails, scrolled feeds, and negotiated community obligations. For the high impact Black professional in the Best Southwest cities, this constant link to the world is often worn as a badge of honor. But beneath the surface, there is a silent physiological tax for being perpetually on for the world while being off for yourself.

In my practice, I see it daily: brilliant leaders running on a Connection Deficit. We often assume connection is a social choice or personality trait. In reality, it is a biological capacity. To understand why we feel isolated despite being highly linked, we must look at the mechanics of the nervous system, your Internal Battery.

When your system is stuck in high alert, navigating corporate pressures, trauma, or the exhausting expectation of being the strong one, your battery enters survival mode. In this state, your body prioritizes protection over connection. It shuts down the ports required for empathy and resonance to save power for basic functioning. You aren't being distant; you are simply out of charge.





This is the core of The Mending Protocol. It is a refusal to continue The Mask, that high cost performance of strength that bankrupts our internal resources. True mending requires Active Calibration. Think of your emotional energy as a Biological Budget. Every time you perform excellence or suppress your own grief to navigate a professional space, you are making a high interest withdrawal. If you spend 90% of your budget in the boardroom, you return to your village financially and emotionally insolvent. You cannot pour from a cup that has been shattered by the grind.



Mending bonds doesn't start with a passive pause; it starts with an active realignment. By auditing our biological budget and protecting our internal battery, we stop performing connection and start experiencing it. True resonance requires a body that feels safe enough to be unmasked. Your capacity is your greatest currency.

Stay tuned for the upcoming Healing & Hustle series, a transformative workbook experience designed for leaders who refuse to choose between professional success and personal wholeness. If this article connects with you, please reach out via my website or social media.

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THE MANDELA 12: A NEW MODEL OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE LEADERSHIP EMERGES IN DALLAS

The African American Museum, Dallas announces the formation of The Mandela 12: Guardians of the Journey—a cross-sector team of African American leaders mobilizing their influence, networks and resources to support Mandela: The Official Exhibition, opening June 13 – November 1, 2026.

The Mandela 12 are leaders across sectors including finance, law, philanthropy, entrepreneurship, education and social services. Each brings a demonstrated record of community service, mentorship and civic engagement, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening Dallas through leadership that extends beyond professional success into public responsibility.

The Mandela 12 also represents a new generation of museum patrons—leaders who understand that time, talent and financial resources form the foundation of sustaining educational and cultural institutions. While not members of the Museum’s Board of

Directors, they work alongside the Museum’s Board of Directors, forming a unified body of trusteeship grounded in shared responsibility for the institution’s future.

The committee includes Karl Biggers (Chairman), Dorian Goodwin (Vice Chairman), Jason Harkey, Antonio Kidd, Sienzhi Kouemo, Mark Malveaux, KC Nlemchi, Matthew Osborne, Trey Pugh, Byron Sanders, Ian Shaw, and Rodney Thomas.

Collectively, the group seeks to position the exhibition not only as a cultural event, but as a civic moment supported by leaders who understand how institutions, communities and resources intersect. KC Nlemchi, who serves on the leadership team of a major Dallas sports franchise, brings additional perspective on how corporate and sports organizations can contribute to civic and cultural initiatives, including meaningful support for the Mandela exhibition.



L-R: KC Nlemchi, Jason Harkey, Ian Shaw, Antonio Kidd, Karl Biggers, Jethro “Trey” Pugh, Sienzhi Kouemo, Matthew Osborne, Rodney Thomas Jr., Mark Malveaux, Dorian Goodwin, Byron Sanders (not pictured)

For more information about the museum or the Nelson Mandela Exhibition, contact Margie Reese
African American Museum
mreese@aamdallas.org



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OFFICIAL TEXAS NAACP STATEMENT ON THE SUPREME COURT RULING IN THE LOUISIANA VS CALAIS

Today's Supreme Court rulings—both the decision in the Calais matter out of Louisiana and the reversal of the prior decision protecting fair Texas Congressional districts—strike at the heart of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and the Fifteenth Amendment. Together, they accelerate the erosion of minority voting rights and undermine the Court's legitimacy as a neutral guardian of constitutional democracy.

Section 2 promises that voters of color will have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. The Fifteenth Amendment forbids racial discrimination in voting. By narrowing these protections in practice and excusing maps and policies that dilute minority political power, the Court has placed form over constitutional substance. In doing so, it disregards the lived realities of discrimination in Texas and across the South, where electoral structures can entrench power by minimizing the voices of Black, Latino, Native, and Asian American communities.

We said when the Court last addressed the Texas Congressional Map that the decision did not merely redraw lines on a map—it redrew the boundaries of who counts in our democracy. Today's rulings compound that harm. The Court's departure from core voting-rights guarantees is not an isolated misstep; it is part of a pattern that diminishes the franchise, invites defiance of federal civil-rights

norms, and signals to map-drawers that racial vote dilution will be tolerated. That message emboldens those who would silence communities of color and weakens the judiciary's standing as an institution committed to equal justice under law.

These decisions will be remembered among the worst in the Court's history—akin to *Dred Scott* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*—in their willingness to subordinate constitutional equality to expedience and in their enduring damage to the Court's credibility. When the Supreme Court retreats from the clear text and purpose of the Fifteenth Amendment and the Voting Rights Act, it does not achieve neutrality; it chooses a side—the side of diminished representation and democratic backsliding.

Our organization will not relent. We will continue to fight in court, in the Legislature, and in communities across Texas to secure maps and policies that reflect the strength, growth, and diversity of our state. We call on Congress to restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act, on state leaders to honor the Constitution's guarantees, and on every Texan to demand a democracy where every community's voice is heard and every vote counts equally.

The stakes could not be higher. Democracy in Texas depends on it.



A BOUQUET FOR MOTHERS

BY: KEESHALA HENDERSON

“If love is as sweet as a flower, then my mother is that sweet flower of love.” —Stevie Wonder

A bouquet of flowers is a glimpse of nature’s beauty wrapped into a single presentation representing love and so are you Mothers. A mother’s love is pure, protective and is the strongest energy in human form. This is evident in your unwavering positive desires, hopes, dreams and prayers for your children...there are no boundaries. You are the root and foundation of your family and God’s loveliest masterpiece. If mothers are synonymous to a bouquet of flowers representing love, then grandmothers are angels on Earth. Grandmothers, you are indeed best friends, secret keepers and teachers full of wisdom, often parenting part-time or full-time.

Thank you for your intuition to know when your children and grandchildren need you even before they have uttered a word. Thank you for teaching us, molding us, encouraging us, accepting us, listening to us, covering us in prayer and your unconditional love. We want to give you a bouquet of flowers for Mother’s Day and beyond and thank you for being a sweet arrangement of blossoms in our lives.



DERBY DAY AT STONEWATER

Derby Day at Stonewater was an absolute blast! Inspired by the tradition and style of the Kentucky Derby, cities across the country embraced their Derby best this year—and Dallas was no exception. Stonewater was filled with sharp seersucker suits, elegant dresses, and extravagant hats that brought the spirit of the Derby to life. Guests enjoyed a lively mix of old-school and new-school music that kept the crowd moving all day long. While we may not have been at the actual Kentucky Derby, Stonewater delivered an experience that felt just as close—including a live horse at the event! It was truly a memorable and fun-filled occasion.



NAVIGATING REAL ESTATE - DALLAS COUNTY

BY: KEESHALA HENDERSON

Spring generally signals the catalyst to peak home buying season when housing inventory, demand and urgency increases. Although the current housing market landscape is off to a delayed start, 2026 is projected to be a better year to buy a house compared to the 2023-2025 period, as the market is “normalizing” and shifting from a seller’s market to a more balanced market. Check out Dallas County and Southern Dallas’ market insights:

Top 5 Dallas County Residential Single Family Sales Closed by City, Ranked by Hotness

City	Hotness Ratio*	Pending Sales	Sales	Sold to List Price Ratio	Days on Market (DOM)	Active Listings	Months Inventory
Richardson	51.7	89	96	96.3%	46	172	2.2
Lancaster	40.6	26	26	92.1%	83	64	2.7
Grand Prairie	40.4	107	83	95.2%	60	265	3.0
Cedar Hill	39.7	52	46	94.9%	63	131	3.5
Mesquite	37.0	155	120	93.4%	88	419	3.7

*Hotness Ratio is Pending Sales as a percentage of Active Listings

Sales Closed by City for Single Family Residence - March 2026

City	Average Price	Median Price	Median Price Per Square Foot	Days on Market (DOM)	Months Inventory
Balch Springs	\$215,921	\$217,500	\$160.61	42	4.2
Cedar Hill	\$386,663	\$325,000	\$157.99	63	3.5
Dallas	\$818,940	\$568,750	\$264.69	52	4.1
DeSoto	\$380,608	\$349,999	\$158.73	79	3.9
Duncanville	\$287,588	\$260,000	\$165.48	60	3.1
Garland	\$320,292	\$295,000	\$173.46	56	3.4
Glenn Heights	\$369,008	\$350,000	\$175.21	95	3.4
Grand Prairie	\$378,482	\$350,000	\$174.86	60	3.0
Lancaster	\$273,692	\$285,000	\$138.32	83	2.7
Mesquite	\$307,136	\$300,000	\$164.00	88	3.7
Richardson	\$502,859	\$482,500	\$223.11	46	2.2
Seagoville	\$298,238	\$296,490	\$148.32	86	4.8

Data produced by: Texas Real Estate Research Center at Texas A&M University Data: North Texas Real Estate Information System/Data Relevance Project 4/7/2026.

What Does The Median Sales Price Mean?

The median sales price in real estate is the midpoint price of all homes sold in a specific area during a given period, where half sold for more and half sold for less. It is a key metric, often called the median list price (when referring to active listings) or median sales price because it reflects the typical home value and helps you understand how much you should expect to spend on a home in a market. It is a more accurate reflection than the average sales price, which can be skewed by extremely high or low-priced outliers. The higher the median price of the homes, the more expensive the market is overall. A rising median sales price often signals strong demand

and potential competition for buyers, while a stable or falling price may indicate a more balanced or cooling market.

Buyers, the median sales price is a starting point for your offer. Other factors to consider are price per square foot, comparable sales, days on the market, inventory levels and market trends.

According to MetroTex Association of REALTORS®, as of March 2026, the median sales price for homes in Dallas County was approximately \$375,000, down 1.3% since March 2025. On average homes in Dallas County were on the market for a total of 89 days (days on the market = 60 and days to close = 29) with 4.2 months of inventory.

A POWERFUL INVESTMENT IN BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH - AND ONE NORTH TEXAS SURVIVOR'S MISSION TO BE HEARD

BY: ANGELA LANG

In communities across Southern Dallas, conversations about health often begin with lived experience — the stories of mothers, daughters, and neighbors determined to create change. That spirit is reflected in a new \$500,000 grant awarded to the American Cancer Society to expand recruitment for the VOICES of Black Women® study, a groundbreaking national effort aimed at understanding cancer risk and outcomes among Black women.

The funding from Communities Foundation of Texas will help accelerate outreach across North Texas, where cancer survivor and advocate Diann Smith has become a leading voice encouraging women to participate.

For Smith, the study's mission goes far beyond research.

“The study is more than just a study,” she said. “It really is a commitment by the American Cancer Society to understand and improve the health of Black women here in DFW and across the nation.”

Led by researchers Dr. Alpa Patel and Dr. Lauren McCullough, VOICES of Black Women aims to enroll more than 100,000 Black women nationwide between the ages of 25 and 55 who have never been diagnosed with cancer. Participants share insights through online surveys, helping researchers better understand how lifestyle, environment, and lived experiences influence cancer outcomes.

That focus on real-life experiences is one of the reasons Smith believes the initiative is so important.

“They're really digging into lifestyle, environment, and what we're doing day to day,” she said. “That's groundbreaking, because that's how you get to the source of what's different.”

A breast cancer survivor, Smith's advocacy is shaped by profound loss. After supporting her through treatment, her daughter, Deetra Horne, was later diagnosed with breast cancer and passed away at 40 years old. Today, Smith channels that grief into purpose — leading community conversations, supporting survivors through her Hope is Dope: Pink Sisterhood, and encouraging women to prioritize their health.

Her personal story mirrors the urgency behind the study's mission. Black women continue to face

higher death rates and shorter survival times for many cancers, despite advances in treatment and early detection.

“I'm so thrilled to see that we're finally moving in this direction,” Smith said of the study's focus on Black women. “In order to really kick cancer's butt, we have to have the research — not just for treatment, but so we can live longer and be here for our families.”

The new grant will support community-driven engagement strategies and public awareness efforts across North Texas, helping recruit women from diverse backgrounds to join the study.

Participation is intentionally simple. Eligible women complete surveys online from their homes, contributing about an hour each year — a low-barrier approach Smith hopes will encourage widespread involvement.

“I just want to tell the ladies, let's do this,” she said. “We can leave a legacy for our sisters, our children, and our community.”

For Smith, legacy is not just a word — it is a promise she made to her daughter.

“She always wanted people to have the best life they possibly could,” Smith said. “Every time I touch someone else's life, I think of her and what she gave.”

As enrollment expands across Southern Dallas and beyond, Smith hopes more women will see their participation as an opportunity to shape the future of cancer prevention and care.

“This is a call to action to all Black women,” she said. “You have an opportunity to impact your family, your community, and generations to come. Without research, we will continue down the same path — and we deserve better.”

Enrollment for the VOICES of Black Women® study is now open at voices.cancer.org.

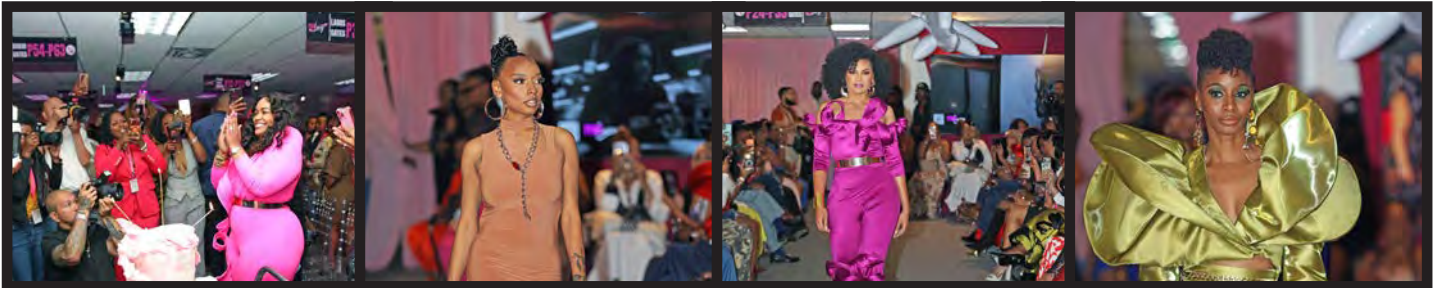


PINK LUCY TAKES FLIGHT WITH SOLD OUT SHOW, ANNOUNCES PARIS FASHION WEEK DEPARTURE FOR FALL

BY: LEAH FRAZIER

Dallas fashion label Pink Lucy presented its Passport Hautee fashion show on April 19, and it was a first-class, premium experience. Guests received plane tickets upon arrival, were greeted by Pink Lucy flight attendants, and took off with announcements buzzing from the flight deck, and laughter from event emcee, DeDe McGuire. Travelers were transported via global-inspired looks from glitzy destinations spanning Dubai, New York, Miami, Lagos and Paris. The show was stylishly sold out, with a room that included many of Dallas' best-dressed including lifestyle influencer Dr. Keith Harley, Anita

Hawkins, Tammy with the Tea, Annia Jenkins, Kim Alexander, Tashara Parker, and many more. The size-inclusive label, founded by Louisiana-native Tiffany Walker, proved once again why the brand has achieved its longevity—colorfully displaying unapologetic flair through bold prints, patterns, and undeniable artistry. The designer celebrated her birthday that evening, and culminated the event with a stellar landing, announcing that the brand will take flight once again in October to present at Paris Fashion Week.



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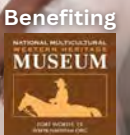
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THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD: ON RASHID JOHNSON'S A POEM FOR DEEP THINKERS

BY DARRYL RATCLIFF

At the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Rashid Johnson's *A Poem for Deep Thinkers* unfolds as a constructed environment where materials accumulate meaning rather than illustrate it. The exhibition resists the autonomy of individual works, advancing through repetition, layering, and return until the objects begin to operate less as discrete artworks and more as a system under pressure.

Johnson's practice is anchored in a tightly held set of materials: shea butter, black soap, plants, ceramic vessels, books. None are neutral.

Shea butter, tied to West African economies sustained largely by women, is a substance of care. It heals, protects, and softens the body. In Johnson's work, it refuses stability. It cracks, collapses, and congeals, holding form only temporarily. Black soap, associated with cleansing, absorbs light rather than reflecting it, turning surfaces dense and unreadable. Plants signal growth but also dependency. Books, often by Black thinkers such as W.E.B. Du Bois, do not simply reference an intellectual lineage. They embed it, making thought structural.

These materials circulate throughout the exhibition, but they find their clearest articulation in Johnson's signature grid-based works.

Large-scale paintings composed of tiled surfaces hold repeated, mask-like faces, often referred to as his "anxious men." Built through layering and erasure, these figures emerge from black soap and wax, scratched into visibility and partially submerged again. They are not portraits. They are compressions, looping eyes, fractured features, forms that feel both insistent and unstable.

In adjacent mosaic works, broken tiles, mirror fragments, and found materials extend that logic into a tactile register. The surfaces resist coherence. Reflection appears in shards. The viewer is returned to themselves only in pieces, never fully.

These works remain the clearest articulation of Johnson's practice because they sustain tension without resolving it. Identity is constructed, but also constrained. The surface becomes a site where

accumulation produces both form and fracture.

At the center of the exhibition, Antoine's *Organ* (2016/2026) expands this logic into space. A steel grid supports plants, books, video monitors, and a functioning piano. The structure reads as a living archive, part greenhouse, part stage, part system of maintenance.

Nothing here is self-sustaining. Plants require light. The piano requires activation. The installation depends on continuous care. Someone has to tend it. Care is not symbolic. It is labor, visible and ongoing, built into the work's operation.

There is real ambition in this move. Johnson translates his material vocabulary into an environment that models how culture persists through repetition, upkeep, and collective input. But this is also where the work tightens. When each material arrives already charged, interpretation narrows. The system risks becoming overdetermined.

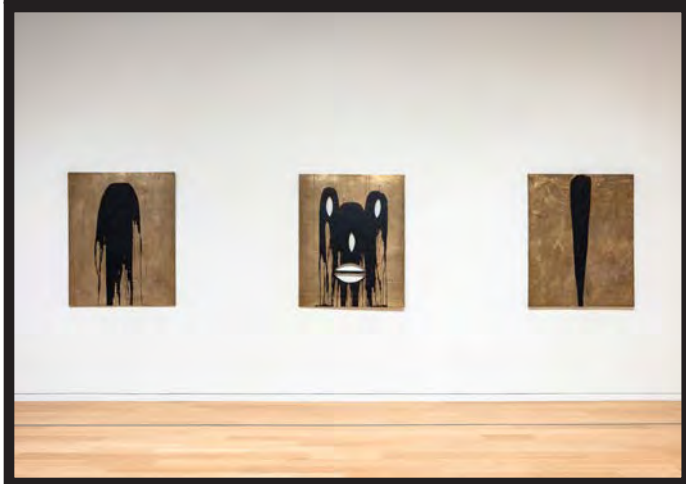
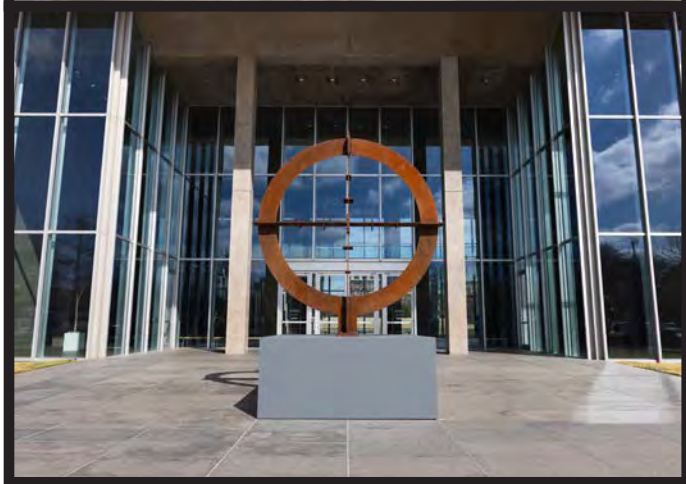
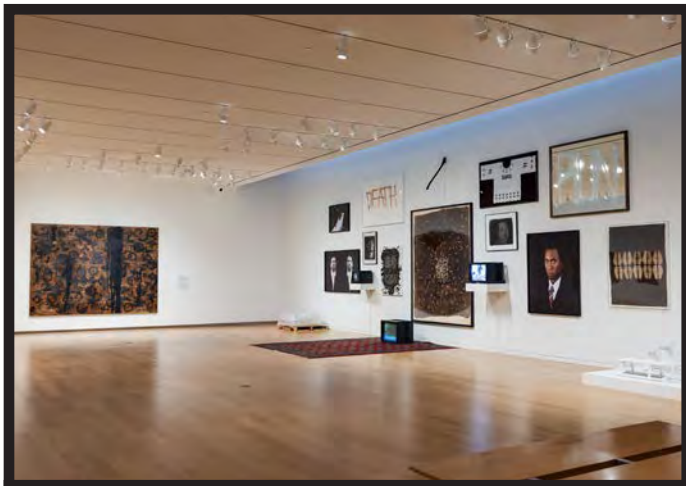
The exhibition is most alive where that system falters.

In a series of bright yellow heads formed from shea butter, the material begins to fail. The forms slump, split, and collapse under their own weight. Structure gives way to entropy. These works resist the discipline that governs the grids. They refuse to hold.

Here the exhibition's underlying tension becomes clear. Johnson builds systems to organize meaning and make it legible. But the materials he chooses carry histories that resist containment. They shift, break down, exceed their assigned roles.

The center does not disappear. It strains.

A Poem for Deep Thinkers is most compelling when its symbols exceed legibility, when repetition produces instability, and when structure reveals its limits. In these moments, the work moves beyond recognition into a space where meaning remains provisional and always at risk of coming undone.



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Wangechi Mutu, *The Seated III*, 2019. Bronze. 82 7/8 × 37 3/4 × 33 3/4 inches. Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, The Friends of Art Endowment Fund and Museum purchase. © Wangechi Mutu

Curtis Corbins Book Signing Event

It was a night of inspiration and excitement! The energy in that room was pulsating through everyone who was in attendance. Curtis Corbins book, *So What! Don't Make Excuses, Make Moves* is a book about taking action, about not making excuses but making moves! If you're an entrepreneur or just someone who needs some motivation to get going in life, then you need to get this book today!



Photography by Charles "City" Gbadebo-IG @SosoCITY

MICHAEL' IS A HIT-AND DALLAS IS FEELING MJ'S MAGIC AGAIN, THANKS TO SHANNON AND BRYCE HOLMES

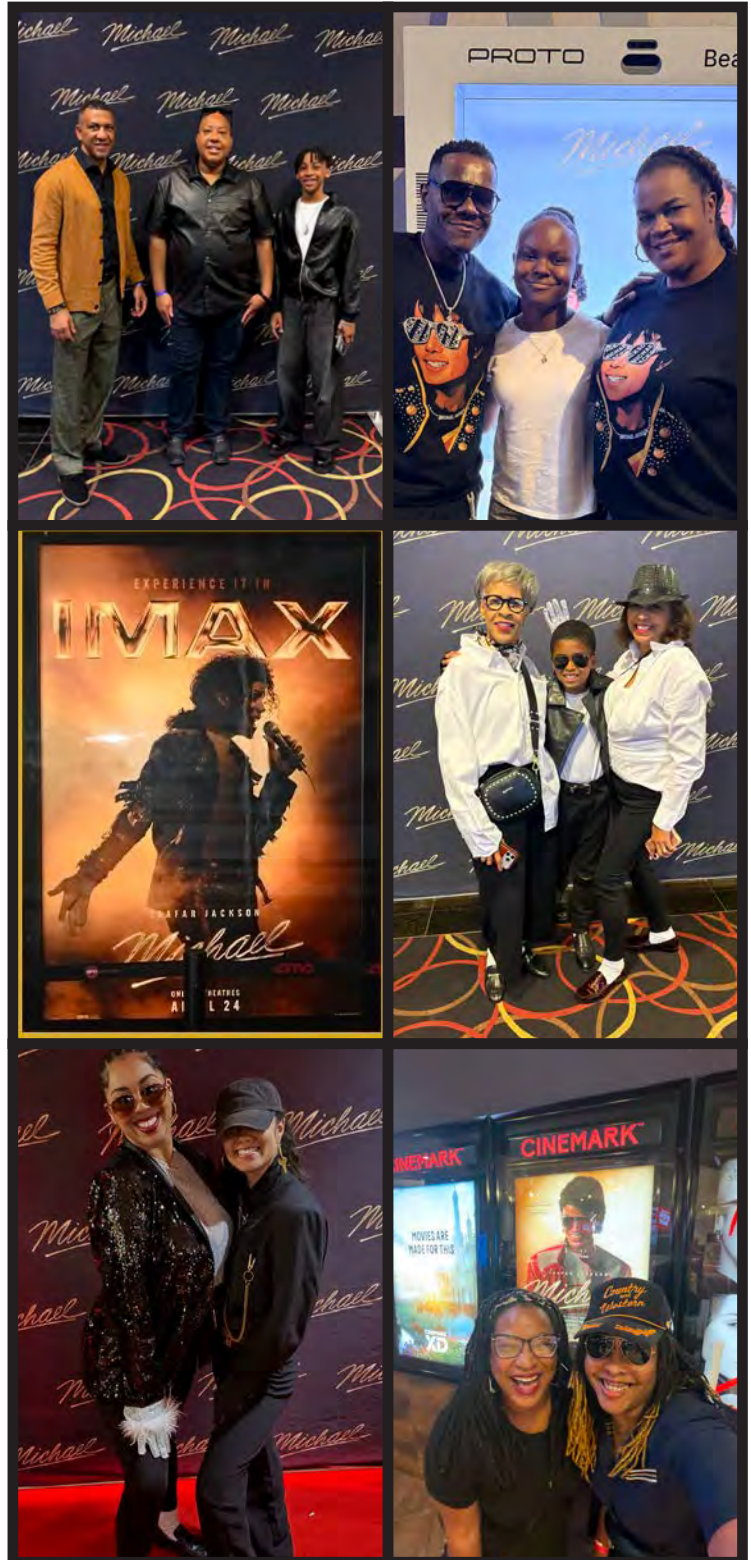
BY: LEAH FRAZIER

Despite the critics, the fans and community have spoken, and the new Michael Jackson biopic "Michael" is a box office hit! Raking in a whopping \$423 million since its April 24 debut, the recent movie has old and new fans moonwalking to the theaters for not one, but multiple viewings. Starring Jaafar Jackson, Colman Domingo, Nia Long and Juliano Valdi, the movie follows the journey of Michael from his younger years to the beginning of his "Bad" superstardom in 1988. The flick has sparked global nostalgia and a whisp of Michael mania, as filmgoers dressed up as their favorite MJ character, even dancing and singing along to the film's tracks.

Dallas attorney Shannon A. Holmes and his son Bryce Holmes (who played "Little Michael" in the original MJ the Musical), hosted two advanced screenings for the film in Dallas, welcoming in the community and proving singlehandedly why the love for Michael Jackson will never die. On the scene was local leaders such as Clarence Hill, award-winning harpist Jess Garland, celebrity stylist Shawn Florence, City of Plano Councilwoman Shun Thomas, WNBA sports agent Lamonte Harris, For Oak Cliff staff & families, and more.

"I'm truly grateful that my firm had the opportunity to co-host this special event alongside my son and share it with such an amazing community," Shannon A. Holmes said. "Moments like these remind us why community matters. Go see 'Michael'!"

"Michael" officially opened in theaters on April 24, and hints at a sequel are already swirling. Visit Michael.Movie to scout the latest showtimes and locations showcasing the film.



BYE FOR NOW

A MOTHER'S DAY REFLECTION ON THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF TARA CANNINGS

BY ANGIE RANSOME-JONES



She was the kind of person your heart never lets you forget – authentically kind, beautiful, vibrant, and full of a contagious energy, with a smile that felt big and strong enough to open up the heavens.

Today, Tara Canning's presence is felt in a different way. At the very place she once stood and a workstation she occupied for years, flowers gather and cards lean against one another with handwritten notes that mostly read We Miss You Tara – all speaking to a loss that words can't adequately express. It's a quiet testament to the countless lives she touched, and a reflection of just how deeply she was woven into the fabric of a community.

So even if you didn't know Tara personally, chances are you know of her, either through the posts and videos that filled your newsfeed or maybe even through the many connections revealed in the days following her passing. Weeks later, and especially in the midst of Mother's Day, her presence is felt in the quiet pause that comes with the realization that a life as bright as hers was lost too soon. But for those who knew her best, that loss still feels fresh...

Tiara Towns, Cannings's eldest daughter, is now the unspoken voice of the family. One of six of Tara's living children, alongside Javarie, Zaria, Tenaya, JaQuan, and Zada; she also carries the memory of their brother, Cornelius "Silk," Towns, who preceded their mother in death at the tender age of 18, but who she always included among her seven "Royals."

Now, just weeks after their mother's passing, Towns says she and her siblings have returned to

their routines, which has helped as the reality of a life with her sets in.

"I don't know if it's really fully kicked in yet," Towns says. "The hardest part has been adjusting to how quickly life moves forward. Sometimes I wish the world would stop for a second so we can catch up. But life just... keeps going."

When asked how they've managed, her answer is simple.

"Our mom prepared us for this. It helps having each other to call, talk and keep each other lifted."

That closeness, she says, was intentionally orchestrated by both their mother and father. And while this Mother's Day will feel different without the mom who spoiled them, her love will always be felt.

"Our mom was the blueprint for love," Towns says. "Her support was top tier. No matter who you were or what you were going through, she poured into you. That's just who she was. The love didn't stop with us. It extended to complete strangers."

For some of those strangers, that love became life changing. One of them was Nikki Cox.

What began as a neighborly connection in Cedar Hill grew into something deeper, shaped by unimaginable loss. After losing both her son and daughter just two years apart, Cox found herself trying to rebuild a life that no longer felt recognizable. Then one night in 2020, in the isolation of the pandemic, she reached a breaking point.

"I was contemplating suicide," she recalls.

At 2 a.m., she called Tara and within minutes, her friend Tara was at her door with no hesitation and no questions asked – just her calming, comforting presence.

"She took me to Prayer Mountain," Cox says. "We stayed for hours just crying, praying, and talking until the sun came up. That night... it saved my life."

That moment became the turning point that planted the seed for what would later become God's Grace While Grieving, a ministry Cox launched in March 2026. And although Cannings passed just days before the official launch, her presence is tied its foundation. It was through Cannings, Cox says, that she began to understand how pain can give way

to purpose.

In every space she entered, Cannings carried that same ability to reach people where they were; even at the Cedar Hill post office, where she became more than a familiar face.

“She uplifted everybody,” coworker Wanda Garner recalls.

In every space she entered, Tara carried that same ability to reach people where they were. She started as a mail carrier years earlier but it wasn’t until she returned after an injury and began working at the side Dutch door, where customers came to pick up packages, that something shifted. That small window became more than just a place for package pick-up, Garner says. Instead, it became a place of connection. Because Cannings had a way of seeing people beyond their circumstances, often speaking life into them and calling out who they were becoming before they fully saw it themselves; something Garner experienced firsthand.

“She used to remind me all the time that I was powerful, worthy, chosen. Her nickname for me was ‘Wonder Wanda.’” Even on her final day of life, nothing seemed out of the ordinary except for one quiet moment they shared when during their daily prayer time when Garner says she felt led to open her eyes.

“I saw one tear fall from Tara’s eye,” she said softly. “Just one. Later that day, Tara left work the same way she always did by saying, ‘I love you, my sister, bye for now.’”

Garner added, “And I said, ‘I love you too, see you tomorrow.’”

But that tomorrow never came.

I met Tara in 2018 through a mutual friend, just one of the many lives she had quietly touched. What started out as a Facebook friendship turned into a one that felt both easy and intentional. Also like Garner, as we drew closer over the years, she nicknamed me “Super Angie” because in her mind, she believed that I could do anything. And over time, with her encouragement, I believed (and still believe) I could too! I had the privilege of helping tell her story in “Overcoming,” An Anthology, which I compiled in 2019 with my co-contributor Dr. Catrina Pullum, where she shared her journey through love and loss after the passing of her son, Silk, and the faith that carried her through it. She always said she would write her own book in which she would include testimonies of those whose loved ones foreshadowed their own “untimely” passings, much like her son Silk and her second husband, Shannon Cannings. And she was at the finish line. The contributors had completed their

chapters and although there was still work to do, we weren’t worried because we thought there was time...

The last time I spoke to Tara was the day she passed. Our call disconnected, and I assumed her phone had died. I had no idea it would be the last time we would speak on this side of heaven. She didn’t say her signature farewell, “bye for now.” And somehow, that’s what sticks with me.

Tara poured into countless lives, quietly and selflessly. She never sought recognition because she was A TRUE servant leader. And although we will miss her, we are still left trying to make it make sense... because the truth is, it doesn’t. Because sometimes, as Pastor Frederick D. Haynes III, who wrote the Foreword for her book, entitled “Bye for Now,” so eloquently put it at her homegoing service:

...because sometimes, the math just ain’t mathin...

Death has a way of interrupting life—of getting in the way when we’re on our way to something good, something meaningful. It messes with your mind. It hurts your heart. It shakes your spirit...

We know that it’s not about the quantity of life—but the quality of it. And Tara’s life was full. Full of love. Full of service. Full of faith. A life poured out into others... A good life. And a good life is long enough...

So, I thank Him for allowing me to meet Tara and for our heart-to-heart talks, the laughter and the time and the space He allowed me to share with her and for the way she covered me and my prayer partners so thoroughly with a faith that felt strong enough to open up the heavens... just like her smile. She was the kind of person your heart never lets you forget. And even now, she is still present but just...in a different way.



God's Grace
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Healing happens here... through God's Grace.

UNT DALLAS LAUNCHES TRAILBLAZER TUITION TRUST, COVERING FULL TUITION AND FEES FOR ELIGIBLE TEXAS STUDENTS.

The University of North Texas at Dallas (UNT Dallas) today announced the launch of the Trailblazer Tuition Trust, a transformative new program that will cover full tuition and mandatory fees for up to four years for eligible Texas high school graduates pursuing their first bachelor's degree at UNT Dallas. The announcement was made by Dr. Warren von Eschenbach during his Investiture as the fourth president of UNT Dallas, opening a defining new chapter in the university's 15-year history.

"UNT Dallas remains committed to providing access to those for whom higher education historically has been out of reach," Dr. von Eschenbach said. "Universities are about people and community. We are a beacon of hope and promise for many. This is the transformative power of education."

Delivered before faculty, staff, students, alumni, civic leaders and members of the UNT System Board of Regents in Campus Hall at the UNT Dallas Student Center, Dr. von Eschenbach's address positioned the Trailblazer Tuition Trust – benefiting Texas families with a total income of \$100,000 or less – as the centerpiece of a renewed institutional mission: making a four-year-university education attainable for Texas families, while preparing graduates for purposeful lives and resilient careers in a rapidly evolving workforce.

"UNT Dallas seeks to be the leading regional university in southern Dallas, Ellis County and beyond by delivering a holistic experience that integrates career-ready skills, leadership development and experiential learning throughout the curriculum," said Dr. von Eschenbach.

What the Trailblazer Tuition Trust covers

The Trailblazer Tuition Trust will cover full tuition and mandatory fees for up to four years — or eight consecutive semesters — for graduating Texas high school seniors enrolling at UNT Dallas to pursue their first bachelor's degree. Funding is

delivered through a combination of federal, state, and institutional grants and scholarships, ensuring eligible students can complete their degree without the burden of tuition costs.

To be eligible, students must:

- Be a graduating Texas high school, senior enrolling at UNT Dallas in the fall semester
- Be a Texas resident graduating from a Texas high school
- Be eligible for the Federal Pell Grant
- Be eligible for Priority Texas Grant funding
- Have a total family income of \$100,000 or less
- Be admitted to UNT Dallas and have a valid FAFSA on file by June 1, 2026

Eligible students will be considered automatically — no separate application is required. To renew the award each year, students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA at UNT Dallas, remain in good academic standing, and stay enrolled full time (a minimum of 12 credit hours) in both fall and spring semesters.

"UNT Dallas has invested in bold strategies to grow enrollment, advance student success and community impact," said State Sen. Royce West.

The Trailblazer Tuition Trust builds on the proven model of programs like the Dallas County Promise, expanding tuition support to qualifying students from across the state of Texas. UNT Dallas will work closely with high schools, school counselors, and community partners to ensure prospective students and families understand how to take advantage of the program. More information is available through the UNT Dallas admissions office at admissions@untdallas.edu.

More than a degree: a holistic educational

experience

Affordability is one piece of a larger vision. Dr. von Eschenbach has been clear that the priority at UNT Dallas is a holistic educational experience — not simply earning a credential or training narrowly within a chosen major but cultivating the full range of capacities students need to lead meaningful lives. That means rigorous academics paired with critical thinking, ethical reasoning, communication, civic engagement, and the personal growth that happens in classrooms, residence halls, student organizations, mentoring relationships and service in the community.

Within that vision, the university is building an innovative curriculum and a multi-disciplinary education model designed to prepare students for AI-proof jobs – careers that draw on uniquely human capacities like creative problem-solving, ethical judgment, leadership, and the ability to work across fields and across difference. That investment is taking shape in distinctive programs, majors and course offerings that set UNT Dallas apart, blending the liberal arts with applied disciplines and connecting students directly to employers, civic institutions and community partners across North Texas.

“We need to create an educational ecosystem that supports students in their personal, academic, social and cultural growth. We need to future-proof our students by instilling in them enduring and authentically human skills that employers seek, such as resilience, empathy, self-awareness and character,” Dr. von Eschenbach said.

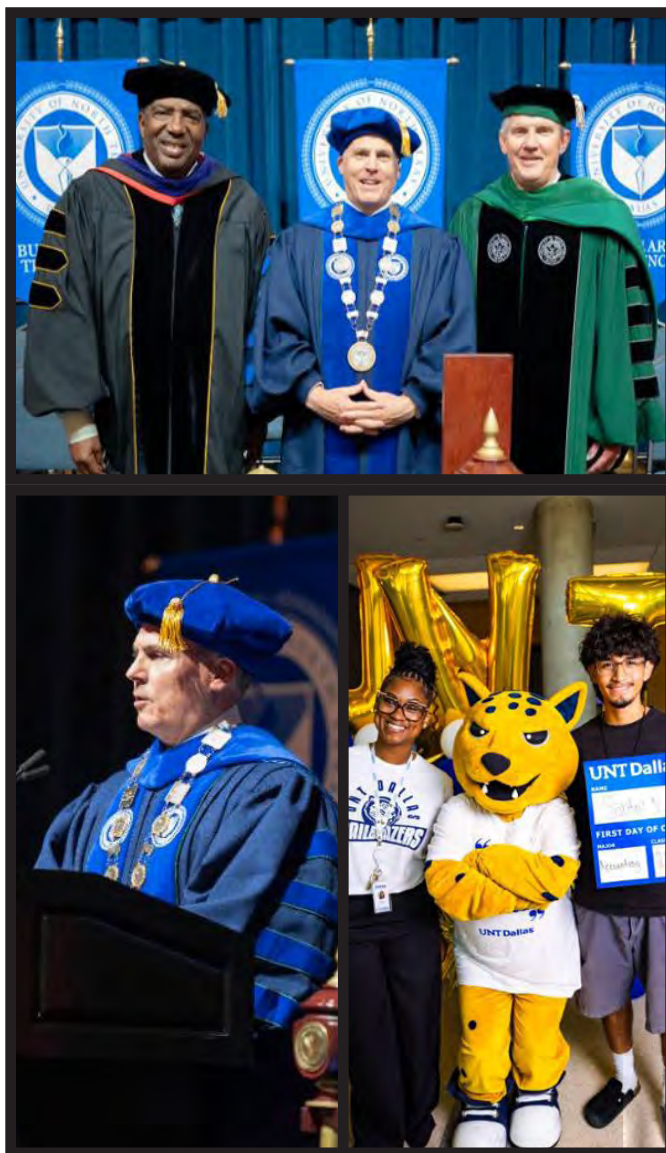
Recent milestones reflect that direction: the establishment of the university’s Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, the recent opening of a \$100 million STEM Building, expanded health professions programming in collaboration with UNT Health Fort Worth, and continued investment in experiential learning and industry partnerships across North Texas.

Community, belonging, and shared prosperity

Equally central to Dr. von Eschenbach’s vision is the conviction that a university must be a place of genuine community and belonging – where students feel seen, supported and rooted in something larger

than themselves. Research and experience alike show that students who feel they belong are more likely to persist, graduate and thrive after college. For a university whose students often balance work, family responsibilities and the demands of a degree, that sense of belonging is not an amenity; it is a precondition for success.

What happens on campus does not stay on campus. When students experience belonging at UNT Dallas, that experience radiates outward – into the southern Dallas neighborhoods that surround the university, into the families who watch a first-generation student walk across the commencement stage, and into the local businesses, schools, and civic institutions that gain confident, capable graduates as employees, neighbors and leaders. A university anchored in community strengthens the community in return.





THE RISE OF PREBIOTIC POP: WHY GUT HEALTHY BUBBLES ARE EVERYWHERE

BY CAROL TAYLOR, MCN, RDN, LD, REGISTERED DIETITIAN AND JOURNALIST

Prebiotic sodas are popping up on grocery shelves, promising health benefits with the same satisfying fizz as traditional soda. Sales have risen as shoppers cut back on sugar-rich products and embrace alternatives that feel more natural than some zero sugar substitutes. They offer indulgence without guilt in familiar flavors. Are the health benefits real or is it just a health halo?

Here's what to know about prebiotics, what benefits prebiotic sodas are supported by scientific evidence, and how to decide whether paying more than \$2 for a 12 oz can is worth it for you.

The Nutrition Facts on Prebiotics

Dallas-based Poppi and Olipop helped popularize prebiotic sodas, and mainstream beverage companies such as Pepsi have since moved into the market.

According to its website, Olipop is “a new kind of soda that’s good for you and tastes good” while providing digestive support through the addition of soluble fiber and other prebiotic ingredients, similar to what other brands tout, to support a healthy gut. Let’s focus on what sets them apart from regular soda – prebiotics.

Prebiotics are nondigestible carbohydrates (often fibers) that pass through the small intestine and serve as food for microbes in the gut. They are found in a variety of foods including bananas, onions, garlic, asparagus, soybeans, some whole grains and Jerusalem artichokes.

Prebiotics have been shown to improve absorption of calcium, improve blood sugar control, support the immune system, and reduce risk of colorectal cancer, which is on the rise among young adults.

Inside the Can

Prebiotic sodas add benefits by including inulin often from chicory root and agave and cassava root and apple cider vinegar. Research suggests inulin can help keep bowel movements regular and may help with satiety, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar. Too much inulin too quickly, though, can cause gas, bloating, cramping, and diarrhea, especially in people who already have digestive issues like irritable bowel syndrome. When adding more fiber like inulin, it’s best to start low and go slow.

Prebiotic sodas often claim the same benefits associated with higher fiber intake. While prebiotic fibers are well-studied in general, the research is thinner on prebiotic sodas, especially for long-term

outcomes. Some consumers say they notice they feel less bloated after meals and full longer when they consume a prebiotic soda daily.

Whether the amount and type of added fiber in a single can is enough to meaningfully move the needle for long-term health remains to be seen.

Are Prebiotic Sodas Right For You?

Prebiotic soda may be a good option if you want a lower-sugar treat and you tolerate higher-fiber foods well. If your usual diet is low in fiber — few beans, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, jumping in with two cans of prebiotic sodas a day could cause gas and bloating — so start with a small amount and increase gradually.

Whole foods remain the best way to meet fiber needs: about 25-30 grams per day for women under age 50 and 38 grams per day for men. Those over 50 need 22-28 grams per day.

Prebiotic sodas aren’t a cure-all — they can be a better choice than traditional, but they’re best viewed as an occasional add-on, not a nutrition strategy. If you want real gut and metabolic benefits, build your diet using vegetables, fruit, beans, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean proteins.



THE LATINO CULTURAL CENTER PRESENTS “THE GOALS OF PAINTING” BY JAZZAMOART AND “EL MUNDO ES UN JUEGO” BY RODRIGO DE LA SIERRA

ON VIEW NOW THROUGH MAY 22, 2026



The Latino Cultural Center in collaboration with the Latino Arts Project present two new exhibitions, “The Goals of Painting” by renowned Mexican artist Jazzamoart, and “El Mundo es un Juego”, a sculptural work by the internationally acclaimed Mexican artist and architect Rodrigo de la Sierra. Both works are curated by cultural consultant Elena Catalan. The shows are free and open to the public and will be on view through May 22, 2026.

“The Goals of Painting” explores the vibrant intersection of art and soccer through the work of Jazzamoart. His connection to the sport as an artistic theme began in 1986, when the National Institute of Fine Arts invited artists to create works in Mexico related to soccer. This exhibition reflects on soccer as more than just a game and focuses on the global phenomenon that unites cultures, sparks dialogue and inspires creativity.

The presentation of “El Mundo es un Juego” coincides with the major exhibition “The Goals of Painting”. The cultural exchange by both artists celebrates the intersection of art, humanity, and the global spirit of play as Dallas prepares to welcome visitors and soccer fans from across the world.

“El Mundo es un Juego” is a bronze and iron sculpture featuring de la Sierra’s iconic character, “Timoteo”. Curated by Elena Catalán, this piece introduces the public to Timoteo, a figure that has become a global symbol of contemporary human reflection. The work captures a playful yet poignant stance. Though he lacks a mouth and distinguishing physical features, Timoteo “speaks” through irony and humor, acting as an unmasked observer of the contradictions within modern society.

YOU HAVE INSURANCE. SO WHY IS IT STILL SO HARD TO GET CARE?

BY: KARREN HODGE

Why Health Insurance Matters

Health insurance is what is typically seen as a gateway to care and for many, this represents the security of knowing when something goes wrong with your health, you have access to care when needed.

This is mostly true but having coverage doesn't always equal getting care.

Having health insurance improves access to services and reduces financial burden, and can support better health outcomes.

Despite this, many insured people face challenges accessing the services they need. The gap between being covered and being cared for is real and impacts how and when people seek treatment.

Why You Might Not Get Care Even if You're Covered

There are several barriers that prevent the insured from receiving care.

High out of pocket costs

Insurance doesn't eliminate costs. Deductibles, copays, and coinsurance can still be significant especially for those with high-deductible health plans. This causes out-of-pocket costs to be a deciding factor and can potentially cause someone to delay care or skip care because it isn't affordable at the moment.

Limited Provider Networks

When a provider is out-of-network, patients face higher costs or might need to find a new provider. This makes it harder to build long-term relationships with healthcare professionals.

Provider shortages

In some parts of Dallas County, access to providers in primary care and mental health services remain uneven. The Dallas County Health and Human Services cites disparities in provider availability and access continue to affect underserved communities.

Long Wait Times

Some patients are waiting weeks or months for appointments, particularly in specialty care. A delay

in care can lead to worsening conditions, increased anxiety, and more complex health issues over time.

Inaccurate Provider Directories

Finding a provider can already be difficult but out of date insurance directories can make it more complicated than it should be. Patients may call offices that are listed as "in-network" only to find out that the provider is no longer accepting new patients or no longer participates in the plan. This can create frustration and discourage people from continuing their search for care.

Limited Coverage for Necessary Treatments

All services are not covered equally. Some treatments, therapies, or medications may be excluded or require approvals.

Being Underinsured

Just because you have coverage does not mean you have adequate coverage. Some people have plans that cover some costs but still leave them responsible for a large portion of the cost. This is often referred to as being "underinsured" and can create similar barriers to being uninsured.

A Final Thought

Health insurance is a vital part of the healthcare system. Real access to care depends on what happens after coverage begins. Because in healthcare, being covered is important but being able to actually receive care is what truly makes the difference.





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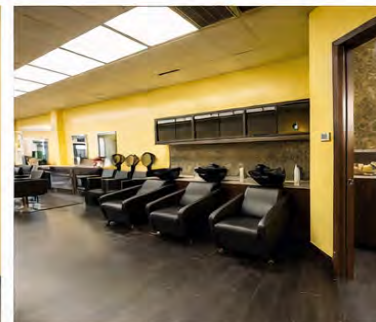
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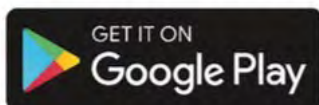


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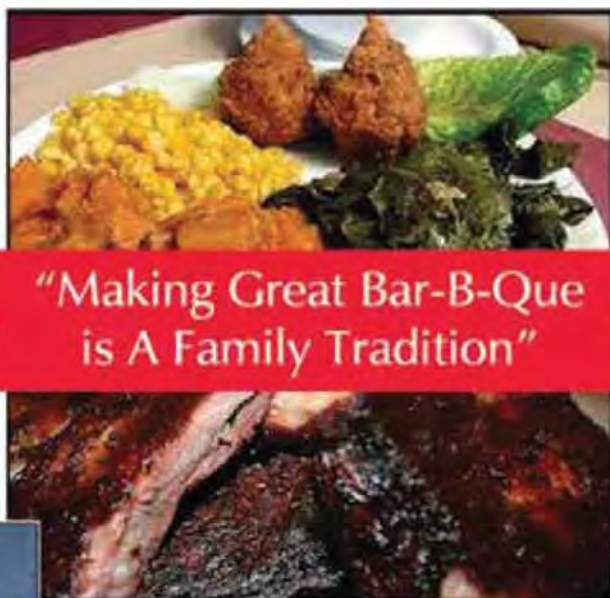
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