

Ditch the No Snitch Code – Long Standing Code of Silence Must End, BSO and Residents Agree



WE NEED OUR KIDS BACK IN CHURCH

RELIGIOUS LEADERS SAY

By Attiyya Atkins

When violence is at an all-time high, like it is today, many wonder “Where is God?” “Where are his people?”

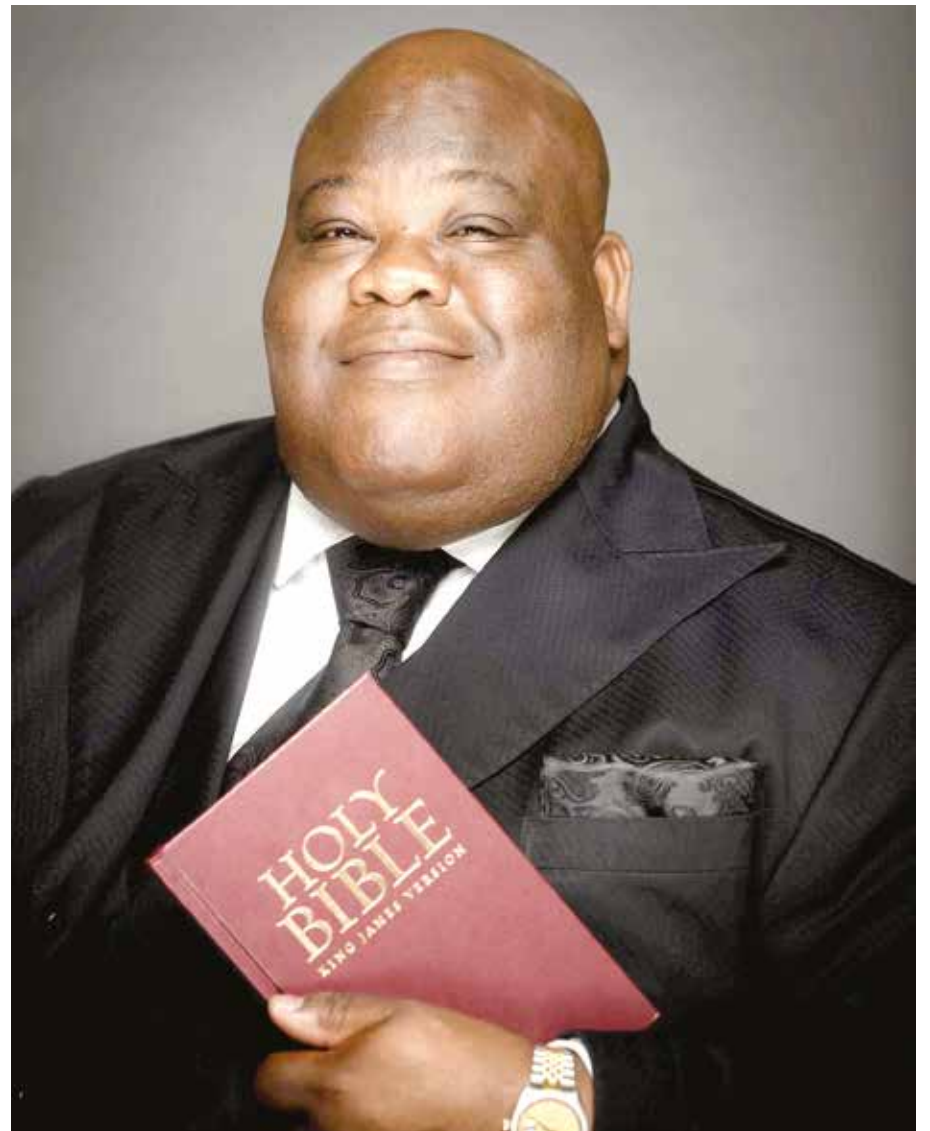
THE Florida General Baptist Convention is in transition, and one of its presidential candidates, wants churches to have more of a presence when it comes to secular issues like social justice, violence, and the state of our youth.

The Florida General Baptist Convention has been around for 146 years and member and senior pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church of Fernandina Beach, Reverend Darien K. Bolden Sr. is looking to make

■ *Kids Back, see page 11*



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The New Senior Activity Center Leaves Senior Residents Guessing When They Will Be Able to Move In

By China Boynton

The new Senior Activity Center located on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Ninth Street has been built for almost a year and local seniors are concerned, as they haven't been able to meet inside. The new center sits on four-and-a-half acres with four activity rooms, a fitness center, a warming/prep kitchen, and bathrooms.

According to the project manager for the building, Horatio Danovich, there are no delays.

“We had to wait for Broward County’s final approval of the NVAL (Non-vehicular Access Line) plans,” Danovich said.

Usually, NVAL plans take eight to 12 months to get approved and the Senior Activity Center is no exception. The NVAL is essential to reducing traffic congestion and improving safety.

“As it turned out, our construction efforts were completed before the county signed off on NVAL which is why it appears almost complete,” said Danovich.

An official opening date has not been set yet.

The Senior Citizens Club currently meets at the E. Pat Larkins Center, however current members are not too satisfied with the new center.

Resident Roger Wells and his wife like to attend the Senior Citizens Club to play dominos with their friends and they will be joining the group that’s moving to the new center.

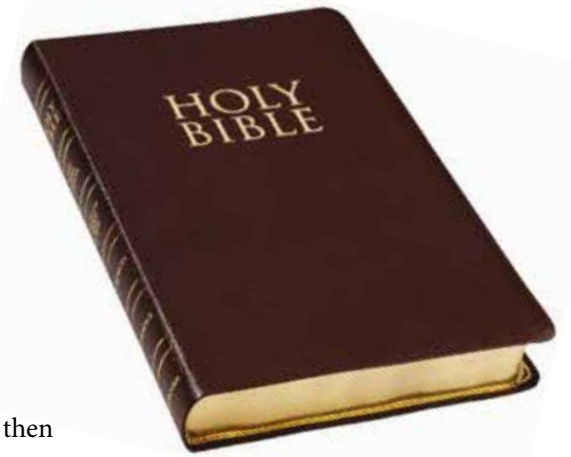
“We toured the building and I think it’s too small,” said Wells. “For every-

■ *Senior Activity, see page 11*





ONE MINUTE IN THE WORD



GET OFF MY BOAT John 21:6

cle in your path is actually a gift, meant to move you in a different direction.

The text says in John Chapter 21 verse 6, Jesus said throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find fish.

VILLIJ NEWS

If you got the right people in your boat, then this will be a year of achievement...this will be a year of action...this will be a year of addition...this will be your year of assets...and this will be your year of abundance.

However, you will not experience the top five if you got the wrong five in your boat.

(Here's why)

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If they don't share your vision, then put them off the boat.

If they're always trying to be vindictive, put them off your boat.

VILLIJ NEWS

Eagles don't fly with vultures, and eagles don't land with pigeons. Here's three principles from the text to experience abundance in your life today.

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#2 Respond to the Command: Just do what Jesus says.

#3 Receive the Catch: Don't get it twisted, Jesus put you in position, that's why you have a position.

And that's your One Minute in the Word.

I'm not out of Word but I am out of lines. Until the next issue, know this I'm pulling for you and I'm praying for you. God Bless you. Stay Connected.

Life Question: Have you been able to witness God's work? Where and how?

Follow the One Minute Preacher on YouTube @ TLG Fashion

Instagram @The1MinutePreacher

I'M in the Book of John and he eloquently writes that God speaks to us in the only way we could truly understand, by becoming one of us.

VILLIJ NEWS

Sometimes what looks like an obsta-

Church Directory



BISHOP GARY MCLEOD

Bishop Gary McLeod, Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church of Deliverance, 1401 S. Dixie Highway E, Pompano Beach, FL 33060

Service Sundays at 11:45 a.m.; Tuesdays at 7 p.m.



PASTOR ROBERT STANLEY

Pastor Robert Stanley, Hopewell Baptist Church, 890 N.W. 15th Street, Pompano Beach, FL, 33060

Corporate Worship Service Sundays at 9:30 a.m.



APOSTLE JOHN L. MOHORN JR.

Apostle John L. Mohorn Jr., Word of Living God Ministries, 149 N.W. 26th Ave, Pompano Beach, FL 33069

Service Sundays at 10 a.m., 7 p.m.; Fridays at 8 p.m.



PASTOR HENRY AND LADY BELINDA GOODWIN

3835 N. Andrews Avenue, Oakland Park, FL, 33309

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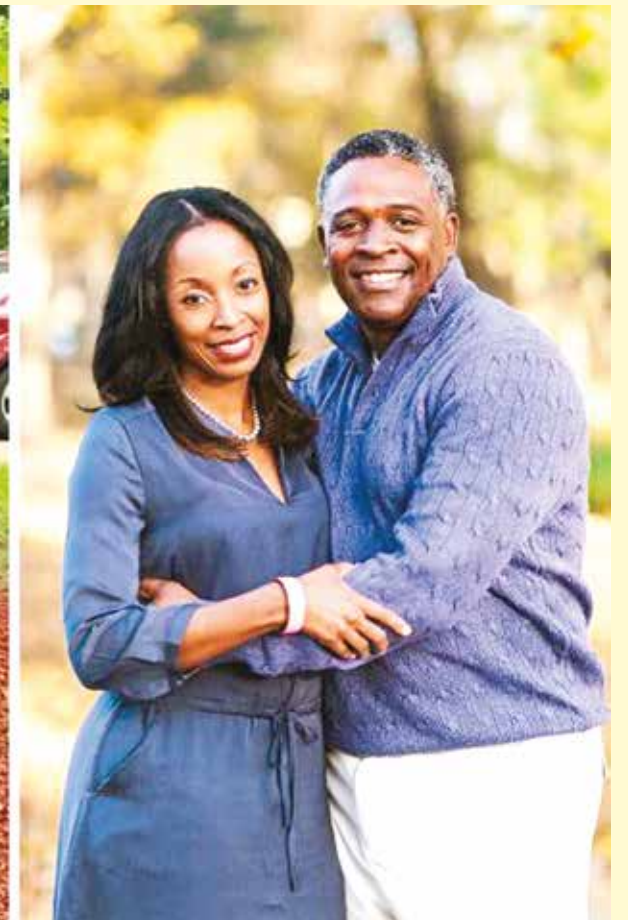
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Ask Annie

Q : I'm interested in bringing another person into our bedroom. Me and my partner have been together for 17 years and I've grown so used to my spouse that at times it gets a little boring. The same positions, the same sounds, the same outfits. I'm at a point where I want more and as I see more of my family passing away due to age and illness, I'm ready to explore a more poly lifestyle. How should I tell my partner?

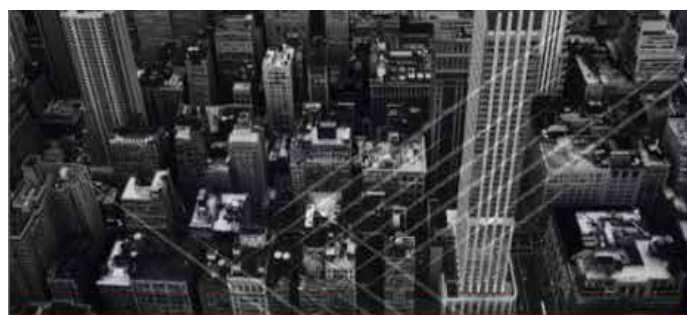
Sincerely,
Spicing it Up

A : Before you bring someone else into ya'll mess, make sure your partner is satisfied. I can't tell from the question if you are a man or woman, gay or straight, but my advice to all of ya is that don't bring someone else into your business unless your partner is crazy about the things you do in bed. Because it takes two, so if you say your partner is boring. You are probably a little boring too. If you can't make the first partner happy, how you finna make the next one happy? And to me, it just sounds



like you wanna do a little cheating. You have grown old with your current partner that means you should feel comfortable asking for what you want. Pull out the toys, sex swing, blow up dolls, whatever you're into, but don't bring

no one into your bedroom until the first one is satisfied. You are setting yourself up for a poly-disaster. I said don't do it.
-Annie




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News For The Black Community

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PRESS

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**POMPANO BEACH'S BLACK
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REPORTING THE NITTY GRITTY ABOUT THE CITY

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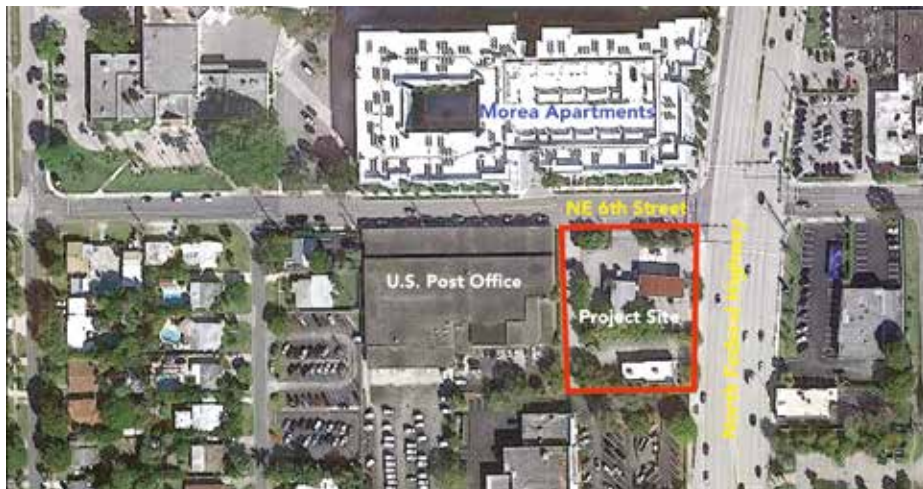
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New Hilton Hotel May Be Coming to Federal Highway

A new 9-story hotel may be coming to Federal highway just east of the post office that sits at 1950 NE Sixth Street. The proposed hotel would require the nearby Citgo gas station to be demolished. If approved, the Homewood Suites by Hilton hotel would have 163 rooms and a parking garage.



Ditch the No Snitch Code – Long Standing Code of Silence Must End, BSO and Residents Agree

By Kristen Hernandez

Communities in Pompano Beach are under attack. Gunfire and deadly drive-by shootings are claiming lives, while witnesses keep their mouths shut.

ON Saturday, March 18 on short 5th also known as NW 5 Ave., a dice game gone wrong took the life of a 26-year-old man.

Shattered glass and a bullet hole riddled black Nissan SUV sat at the intersection near NW 5 Ave. and NW 8 St. This shooting comes just weeks after a triple drive-by murder, also in the NW section, that claimed the lives of a young man and pregnant woman.

“Our communities are under siege,” said Pompano Beach Mayor Rex Hardin at an emergency commission meeting in response to local gun violence. “When something like this happens, it tears at our fabric.”

After the tragic murders in Collier City of Dayvon Johnson, Delana James and her unborn baby on February 26 on NW 27 Ave., local officials held an emergency commission meeting to hear residents’ concerns and address the families of the victims.

Residents demanded solutions. “I’m calling for immediate action,” resident Maria Macklemore said. “I’m requesting the city designate the intersection of NW 4 St. and NW 27 Ave. to be a “Drug-Free Zone.” Because of its proximity to two churches and a convenience store, this would allow placement of cameras at that intersection. It would also allow enforcement of a “No Loitering” ordinance.”

Broward Sheriff’s Office Captain Daryl Stallings addressed residents in tears. “I live here, too, and I have a vested interest in this community.” He spoke about an operation im-



plemented a few months back when a deputy was stationed in front of the corner store on NW 27 Ave. He mentioned that those committing crimes moved their dealings to NW 2 St., forcing Stallings to divert resources just days prior to the shooting.

“This incident was unexpected,” said Stallings. “We didn’t see it coming. Sixty-two shots

were fired with a fully loaded, high powered weapon across several blocks.”

“In the case of the drive-by, only five people came forward,” said Stallings. “We need your help. We do care.”

BSO Sheriff Gregory Tony posted a video on Instagram on March 15 to address residents. “One of the more egregious atrocities that can occur is

shootings, specifically the one in Pompano Beach. District command has been working aggressively to solicit tips from the community and we’re increasing the reward to \$10K,” Tony said.

“It’s troubling to me, having grown up in the inner cities, about the code of silence when it comes to violence. People don’t want to be considered a

snitch and put themselves in harm’s way. This has to come to an end.”

Mayor Hardin made it clear that no solution is “off the table” adding, “Yes, there are things we can do.”

Residents offered the city commission suggestions such as placing a BSO sub-station directly across the street from

■ *Gun Violence, see page 8*

POMPANO BEACH FISHING VILLAGE STEALS TOURISM FROM LAUDERDALE BY THE SEA

Lauderdale By The Sea Pier Waters Deemed Unsafe for Swimming or Snorkeling - "Steer Clear of the Pier," said Lauderdale By The Sea Mayor Chris Vincent

By Kristen Hernandez
Tourists who have stayed in Lauderdale by the Sea for decades are instead flocking over to discover all that's changed in Pompano Beach. The growing popularity of the newly renovated Fisher Family Pier and creation of the Fishing Village along Pompano's beach has finally matched the vibrancy and atmosphere of Lauderdale By The Sea.

IN September of 2022, Hurricane Ian tore through South Florida and took the center section of Lauderdale by the Sea's Anglers fishing pier with it, creating a danger zone for swimmers. The unfortunate damage to Lauderdale By The Sea's star attraction has created an opportunity for Pompano Beach to become the next trendy vacation destination of northern Fort Lauderdale.

"For public safety concerns, steer clear of the pier," said Lauderdale By The Sea Mayor Chris Vincent at the January 10 city commission meeting.

"The pier being incapacitated is a big part of our town agenda. No one should swim within 300 ft of the pier, it's not a smart thing to do. Something could fall on an unsuspecting swimmer and there is still concrete and rebar in the water."

Lauderdale By The Sea was already beginning to compete with Pompano Beach during the early days of COVID restrictions, when Lauderdale By The Sea was forced to stop their monthly outdoor party, Friday Night Dancing. Although the city commission voted to temporarily begin them again, the loss of the privately-owned pier may have also damaged their tourism and may have long-term revenue ramifications.

"Right now, our town is suffering a little bit due to the pier being shut down," said Mayor Vincent. "I've recently spoken with a family my wife has known for 35 years who've been coming to vacation in Lauderdale By The Sea. For the first time, they're taking their family to Pompano."

The ongoing growth of the city of Pompano Beach has been on a steady upward trend. With downtown Pompano



in the early stages of a new, multi-million-dollar beautification project to create a bicycle and pedestrian-friendly area along the Dixie and Atlantic Blvd intersection, Pompano Beach is gaining its own distinct personality that will

firmly cement its place as an amazing destination and wonderful place to live.

"Now, they [tourists] are discovering Pompano Beach and what's changed," said Mayor Vincent. "They're visiting their pier and they are

booking those new hotels and vacation rentals across the street."

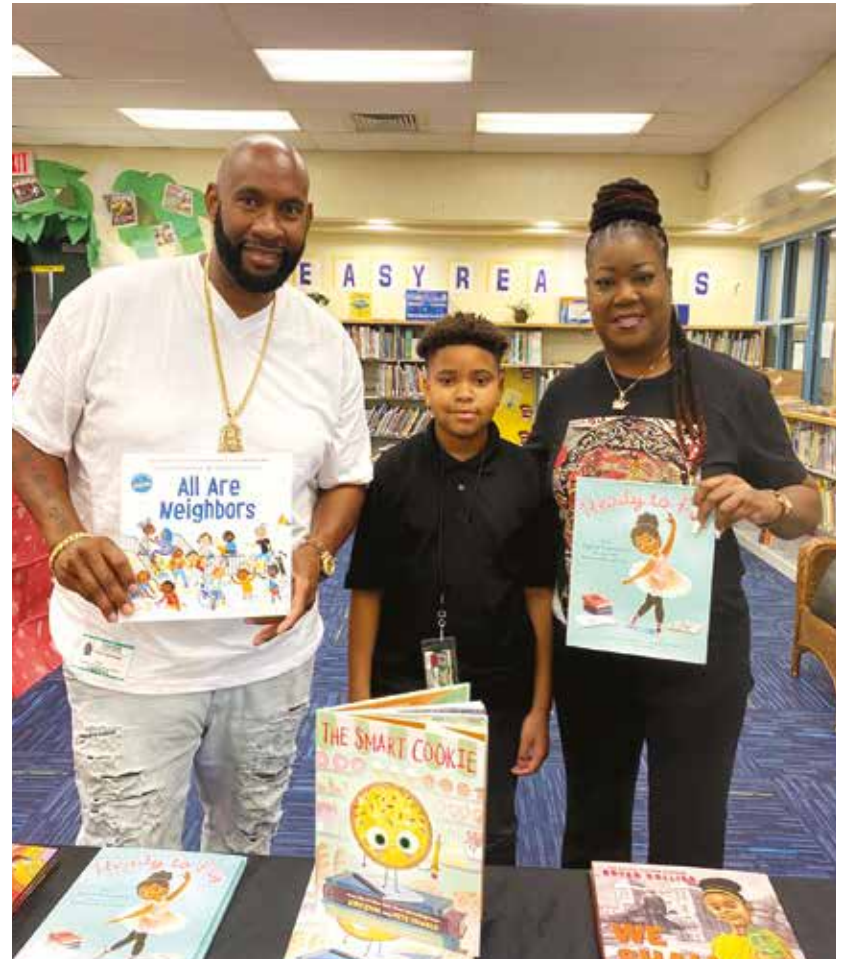
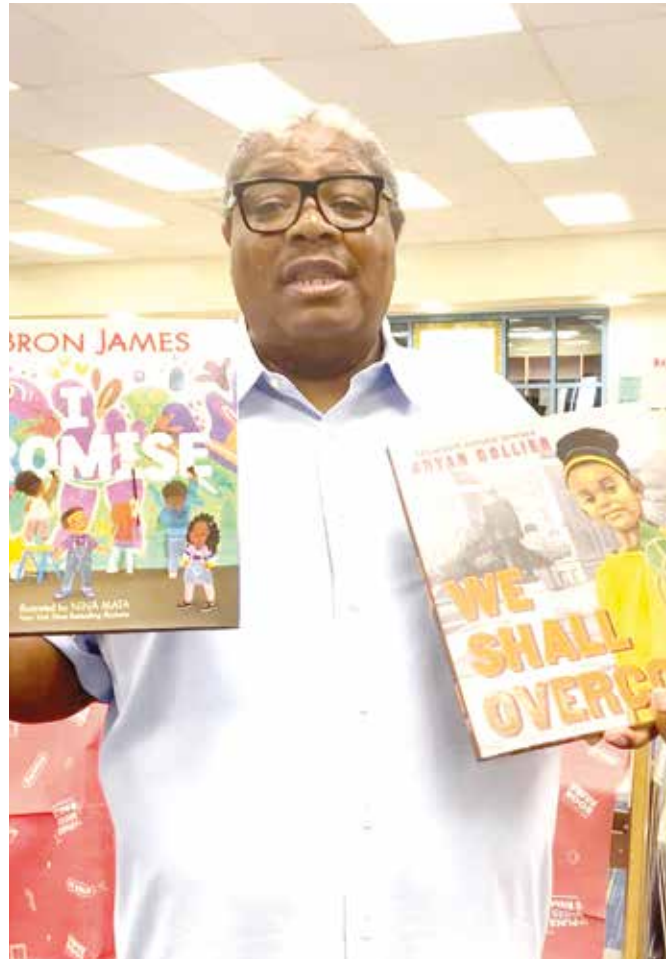
Residents who've yet to visit the rebuilt Pompano Beach fishing village can check out what's new on their website or better yet, take a visit.



READ TO ACHIEVE BOOK TOUR: ENCOURAGING YOUTH LITERACY

By Attiyya Atkins

It's time for kids to get out of the phones and into the books, said rapper and local leader Travis Gammage, also known as T Dogg. T Dogg hosted the second annual Read to Achieve book tour with its first stop at Deerfield Beach Elementary. He teamed up with Sybrina Fulton of the Trayvon Martin foundation, Pastor Pelt, Mr. Sands, and community leader Terry Scott. The book fair is unlike the traditional scholastic book fair, the



“NOW, I do less donating to little league football and more donating to education, because the chance of everyone getting into the NFL is very slim,” said T Dogg. “But if I can put knowledge and education in them, it’s major.”

The book fair was started by T Dogg’s son, Trayven Gammage, who is now in the third grade at Deerfield Elementary. Last year, Trayven helped a few of his friends by buying them books at the book fair. That act of kindness was the catalyst for the Read to Achieve Book Tour. Unlike the Scholastic book

fair, students can pick out books that they would like to read, and T Dogg and his partners will pay the bill. Nearly 100 kids received free books at the book tours first stop. Trayven and his father plan to take the book to other schools in Deerfield and Pompano Beach, including Markham Elementary, Sanders Park Elementary, Pompano Elementary and others.

Trayven said the event is important because giving back is important to him and “reading helps you learn more.” He likes to read in class and at night. He hopes his peers develop a passion for reading like him.

Some of the books at the fair like “We Shall Overcome” by Bryan Collins and “I Promise” by Lebron James, teach a message of uplifting the black

community, which community activist Terry Scott says Governor Ron DeSantis doesn’t want to see in our schools.

“I’m glad to see that our kids are picking up books like this,” community activist Terry Scott said, “We shall overcome, what a statement... It shows that we may have little hurdles, but we will get through them together... and thank God for those

who are supporting a worthy cause such as this.”

Sybrina Fulton, partner in the Read to Achieve Book Tour, enjoyed helping the kids. “Today was one of those feel-good moments, when you can help out kids, it makes us feel good as adults,” she said. “Reading is fundamental so why not help out our own community and help out our own kids.”

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Attiyya Atkins
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Gun Violence

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the problematic store. However, many agree that this sub-station must be different than the one previously in place, which only had a holding cell. Residents requested that officers be permanently stationed there and actively patrol that neighborhood.

Other solutions offered by the public were adding speed bumps to the NW 27 corridor in order to slow speeding vehicles. Someone mentioned designating problematic sections of Collier City as a Blue Light District, or an area with high drug and crime rates. Another suggestion was to implement a Nuisance Abatement ordinance, which would require property owners to repair those



conditions deemed a nuisance within a reasonable time frame.

“My heart is heavy for this community. I hear you and it’s

our problem, too,” said Commissioner Allison Fournier, who was also in tears. “We must solve these crimes. We have to stop this

cycle with our kids. They should be looking forward to the future and have hopes and dreams. It’s a collective, these are our kids. We owe you more. I’m so sorry and I hear you.”

BSO cannot effectively protect the community if residents don’t speak up and offer tips. “If you’re looking for us to cut down and reduce crime rates, we need your help,” said Tony. “I’m begging for your help.”

BSO hopes the increase in reward funds will help bring justice to the families left shattered by the senselessness of

this crime.

The days of the street code of silence must end in order for our communities to stay safe.

“These are our cities, and they shouldn’t be overrun by thugs, gangbangers and criminals who are willing to shoot up 60 plus rounds, recklessly killing innocent people. If you know something, say something. Get involved in the safety of your community,” said Tony. “Call crime stoppers and we don’t have to put your name out there. Reach out to us at 954-493-TIPS (8477).”



Tiger Trail Festival Presents “Let’s Talk About It” - An Open Dialogue to Combat Gun Violence

By Kristen Hernandez

The Tiger Trail Festival of Pompano Beach called on local and state government officials, community leaders, residents, and high school students to have an open and frank conversation regarding the wave of gun violence that has washed over the city. Brave young adults asked difficult questions and helped to offer real, actionable solutions to the growing problem. Pompano Beach Mayor Rex Harding, District 4 Commissioner Beverly Perkins, and Broward County Mayor Lamar Fisher attended.

CHAIR for the Gun Violence Forum Committee, Kimberley Washington, opened the discussion. “Today’s occasion is to talk about gun violence as a community and to understand our role.”

Mick Desrameaux, licensed mental health counselor, noted that in 2018, there were 223 firearm related deaths in Broward County. “As someone who works with hundreds of youths exposed to gun violence, I’m asking all Pompano Beach officials to join together to tackle this issue,” Desrameaux said. “Our studies show that one in eight kids aged 14 to 17 reported having witnessed a shooting. Witnessing gun violence causes an increase in mental health issues in our youth, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD and

disruptive behavior in school. This affects every community across the nation.”

Reckless gun owners are fueling the illegal gun trade that powers violent crime. Gun locks were given out during the forum by the League of Women Voters of Broward County. The Lock It Up Program is giving away 25,000 gunlocks, free of charge.

“A gun is stolen every 90 seconds,” said Barbara Markley, co-chair of the Gun Safety Committee. “Eight out of 10 school shooters accessed their guns from home. Lock up your guns.” To request a free gun lock, email gunsafety@lwwbroward.org.

A group of mothers who’ve lost children due to gun violence shared their stories. All their cases have gone cold. One-

shi Blue is one of those mothers.

Brian Bernard “BJ” Wallace Jr was shot and killed on Valentine’s Day in 2019. Blue was celebrating her husband’s birthday and wedding anniversary, so she allowed BJ to head to Apollo Park to play some cards with his friends. As an aspiring electrician, BJ was about to begin a new job at a Broward County school and was excited to start a new chapter.

On the night of February 14, BJ left home and never returned. During the card game, a couple of men approached the teens and demanded the game money. They opened fire as the friends scattered about the park, using shatter point bullets to cause maximum damage. BJ was shot in the back. He died the next day. His case is unsolved.

“If we’re honest with ourselves, we know where the violence is at. Some of us know it’s in our own family,” said Mikellange Olbel, CEO of Community Based Connections. “It’s always a problem when it’s at your front door. But when it’s not at your front door, you don’t have anything to say. If we love our neighbors, then we ought to be doing the right thing. You might say, ‘But Mike, there’s a no snitching policy, but I guess it applies when it’s not your family. Today, the no snitching policy must die, so your daughter, son, nieces, and nephews can live.’”

Broward County Public Defender Gordon Weeks quoted the second amendment. “A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a

■ *Tiger Trail, see page 8*



SNIPES and DJ Khaled Announce New Concept Store

The We The Best Snipes Store Brings Game-Changing Shopping Experience to Miami

Sneakerheads and streetwear enthusiasts, get ready for a game-changing shopping experience.

The We The Best Snipes store is set to open its doors on Collins Avenue in Miami, marking the first time a artist and sneaker retailer have joined forces to create a brick-and-mortar space.

THE We The Best Snipes store will be a true reflection of South Florida's sneaker and streetwear culture. With the latest SNIPES apparel and exclusive co-branded merchandise, this concept store will offer a one-of-a-kind shopping experience. Visitors will be entertained with a live DJ, a sound booth for up-and-coming artists, and a showcase of the hottest apparel from local Miami fashion designers.

A Black Vision for Pompano's NW Development

As Pompano builds at an unstoppable pace, it takes vision to truly keep the culture while evolving. I see that everybody is not happy with the Innovative District construction in the downtown area near Dixie highway. Currently, I can arguably say that there's more traffic on 10th St. than ever before with more touristy attractions to come. We in the Northwest have been throwing parties and car shows across Dixie Highway unifying the city in our own special way,

It shouldn't be a surprise that independent black-owned businesses are part of the fabric of NW Pompano Beach. Let's revisit MLK Boulevard. Thrift stores, tire shops, beauty supply stores and barbershops. As

my friend, the owner of Bojo's Seafood Kitchen would say "the real is back!"

I think about the David McMillon restaurant and Mr. Able's black-owned gas station at times. It's only right we keep the legacy alive. I'm proud of the young Pompano rapper Kodak Black for purchasing a historical piece of land on MLK. A decade ago that property was the central hub for Collier City and Cross Town. Names like Clint Car Wash, Hookup Squad, Cut on Wheels would come through, and even the Kolyon Studio was where you would share "PNoS-tyle" 2012.

I personally would like to see an exclusive high end recording studio, a Sniper Gang urban



fashion store (in the Nipsey Hustle, Crenshaw way) and a beauty salon accompanied by a police sub station next to it all.

Imagine quality Exit 36 tourist style commerce on the boulevard. Developing this West portion of the old Hammondville Road would be a true innovation district that represents our NW culture and style.

Just my thoughts on current news, past greatness, urban development and all this construction going on in the NW section of Pompano Beach. I'm not sure if the downtown Pompano we are creating is the best area for the joint innovative district, and if it truly reflects the legacy of the Northwest.

Hey, I am only the self proclaimed, Cultural Arts Ambassador. DAVID 11

If you'd like your opinion to be featured in As I See It, email VillijNews@gmail.com.

Kids Back

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that change.

If elected as president of the Convention, he says the organization will be a voice for the voiceless in Florida and beyond.

"We're fighting for social justice," Bolden said. "We need to reclaim our young people to give them some direction or some hope."

Although not church related, Bolden says that national issues like the murder of Tyre Nichols and Philando Castile at the hands of police officers and other crimes warrant the church's attention. "In a general sense, these types of crimes are atrocious and shouldn't be happening in our community, we need to discuss these issues and have a stance."

In addition to reducing community violence, Bolden wants the church to be more involved

in voting rights, voting registration, getting children back in church and helping people who have criminal records.

Bishop Gary McLeod of Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church of Deliverance in Pompano Beach, who is also a member of the Florida General Baptist Convention, agrees. The recent drive-by shootings and violence within the city limits have caused alarm and concern within the Pompano Beach community.

"We are not used to that," McLeod said. "You see it in Miami, far off, and other communities with higher populations. It could be attributed to the city growing...the bigger the city, the more ills come along with it."

McLeod agrees with Bolden about the importance of church in children's lives, and how



God-fearing children are less likely to make dangerous decisions.

"It is very critical that we get the young people back in

church," McLeod said. "There's been a downslide in the number of people attending church, and that's in part due to parenting. When we were young, if

our parents didn't go to church, they made sure we went, whether through a family member or a church van. Today, parents would rather sleep in on Sunday, and so will the kids."

He added: "Even when building churches in this age, we need to add a school component. In white neighborhoods, most of their churches have schools. They have churches with education in mind, we built our churches as fellowship halls...We have to add the component to draw our kids, we have to get our hands in the mix and grab our kids back and get these kids back to deter this crime rate. Kids as old as 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 have committed some of these shootings and mass shootings. We have to get our young people back in church," McLeod said.

Tiger Trail

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free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.' Put in context, it means the government should regulate those that have access to those guns."

Weeks mentioned that Governor Ron DeSantis has talked about wanting citizens to carry guns without a permit, without safety training and without background checks. "Reach out to your local politicians. Your voice can make a difference if you vote. We must be active in the political process if you really want to tackle this gun issue... Every single person can be an ambassador to fight gun violence," Weeks said. "We need to continue to praise these young people and lift them up. They are the future change makers."

Voter suppression tactics have been around for decades but gone are the times of the jellybean jar. "The jellybean jar was a test black folks had to pass by guessing the amount jellybeans and if you guessed cor-

rectly, you could vote," said Kevin Eason, former District 4 city commission candidate. "We cannot go backwards. I urge you to read and vote for the entire ballot. Be an educated voter."

Gun violence is on the rise and parents must take an active role in educating their children on the scope of these issues. "It all starts at home," said Eason. "I give my kids a safe zone every Friday night where the kids can say whatever they want on any topic. The only rule is that I cannot get mad. If you're not creating a safe space, you become part of the issue. If your kids aren't talking to you, they're talking to someone else and who knows what kind of advice they're getting. And please, monitor their social media accounts. Friend them and be involved."

Tiger Trail Festival is a cultural celebration of the rich African American history of Pompano Beach residents. To watch a replay of the powerful discussion, visit the Tiger Trail Festival website.

Senior Activity

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thing that we like to do I feel some of the activity rooms seem very small."

The Senior Citizen Club has 200 members and meets up at the E. Pat Larkins Center every Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. The original club was started years ago by Pompano Beach resident Greg Walker and met at Mitchell Moore

Recreation Center, but when it grew to 200 members it was eventually moved to the E. Pat Larkins Center. The club offers activities like swimming, sewing, chorus, and various field trips to different places around town like the local pool and other events.

Consuelo Lewis, senior recreation supervisor for the City

of Pompano Beach, says that she gets inquiries almost every day about the new Senior Center.

"Everyone at the seniors club is extremely anxious and excited about the benefits of the new building because when the E. Pat Larkins center is rented out, the Seniors Club has to move to the smaller room."

According to the City of

Pompano, the new activity center won't be rented out for private functions for at least two years after the seniors move in.

"I think it's really good that they won't be renting out the new space for a few years because it's hard to fit so many members in one small room," said Senior Club member Margaret Experience.

Club member Joann Smith said that they originally didn't want to move too far west.

"Originally we wanted the location on Third Ave and Eighth Street, but now that the building is built looks very nice and now, we can't wait to move in."

The Senior Club is for ages 55 and up. For more information contact 954-785-4585

Letter From the Editor

LOVE ISN'T ALWAYS KIND

Love is the most romanticized emotion. Heck, we have a whole commercial holiday dedicated to the idea of love. But really what is love? Love as defined by your standard dictionary is a feeling of intense affection.

SOUNDS beautiful. But ask a mother, love is labor and sacrifice. Ask a father, love is protection and guidance. Ask a child, love is sharing snacks and spending time together. But I'm asking for our community, what is love? Community love is unity. While all love is different, all types of love have something in common – they aren't self-serving. I'm compelled to speak to you about love today even though Valentine's Day has passed for the sake of our communities and our children. Last month I had the pleasure of speaking to the students

at Sanders Park elementary school for career day. We talked about the village I aim to build with the grace of God through Villij News, and we discussed our communities and potential news stories. Some talked about the high cost of toys and petitioning Broward County schools to give students less homework, but a vast majority of the students talked about safety and the crime in their communities. They all had heard about the shooting on NW 27 Ave. in Collier City. They knew about the number of bullets, the deaths, and the worse part (or best part) is that they felt they knew how to stay safe during a shooting because they have lived through or been close to one before. These are third graders in the best country in the world... telling me stories as if they lived in a third world country. Now, I love the kids and I love my community, but I was taken aback by their stories. These kids are listening, these kids are watching, and as



a community what are we showing them. That black lives aren't worth a damn? That killing our brothers and sisters is justified? That another day, another shooting? That we are above God? As a community, we need to speak up. Gun violence is killing mommies, daddies, and children. But it's also messing us up mentally. We laugh, but we are in pain. I have seen not only how bullets destroy a family, but also how keeping secrets puts more salt on the wound. Let's love on our community, and help

solve some of these local murders. I used to wake up and cry, wrap myself in my brother's blanket (it smelt just like him), and stare out the window, waiting for him to come home. A few bullets made sure heaven was his new home. The last words my brother said to me were "I got you," and I replay those words over and over again. That was his way of saying I love you.

If you know something about any murder you can contact Villij News anonymously. We want to help.

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