



LATE NIGHT BLAZE

REVEALS POMPANO BEACH
HAS NO FIRE RESPONSE PLAN



By Kristen Hernandez

Pompano Beach, FL – Charred chunks of building debris from Royal Atlantic Apartments, located at 110 NW 7 Avenue, are still scattered across complex grounds from a blaze that ripped apart 22 apartment units, displaced 55 residents and killed a pet cat. Black flame marks are visible on the building façade, reminding survivors of the fire that tore the roof off their building.

IT was May 15, the Monday after Mother’s Day, around 2:45 a.m. While tenants were sleeping, flames erupted somewhere in Peter Lawson’s unit. It

■ *Blaze, see page 10*



Fear in Schools: Safety, Security, and Broward County Public Schools

Clear backpacks and metal detectors to be discussed at upcoming school board meeting

By Attiyya Atkins and Kristen Hernandez

Pompano Beach, FL – The last months of the school year have been a trying time for students, parents, and teachers. Aside from the regular duties of finalizing assignments, prom, graduation, and other end-of-the-year events, schools in Pompano Beach have had their share of violent threats.

In April, a bomb threat at Pompano Beach Middle School. In May, both a school shooting threat and bomb threat at Blanche Ely high school.

While none of the threats were founded, most students, faculty, and parents feared that their public school could be the site of another mass shooting. School board member and

■ *Fear in Schools, see page 10*

2nd Annual Kodak Black Day: Car Edition is Set for Sunday, June 11, 2023, at Pompano Community Park

Pompano Beach Native Rapper Kodak Black hosts Family-Centric Day. One-of-a-kind cars are set to be on display.

Submitted by Wanda Tima

Rapper Kodak Black and Pompano Beach native is inviting the South Florida community to his second annual Kodak Black Day: Car Show Edition event on Sunday, June 11, 2023, from 12 noon to 6 p.m. at the Pompano Community Park, 1660 NE 10th Street, Pompano Beach, FL 33060. Car enthusiasts will have a chance to see some of the most impressive one-of-a-kind cars from across the nation.

In addition, car show participants can compete for a cash prize and bragging rights.

This highly anticipated family-centric event promises to kick summer into full gear with a curated kids zone, live performance by South Florida’s owned DTE- Dream Team Elite dancers, music and food, and arts and crafts from local artisans. Attendees can purchase at <https://www.kodakblackday.com>. Children under

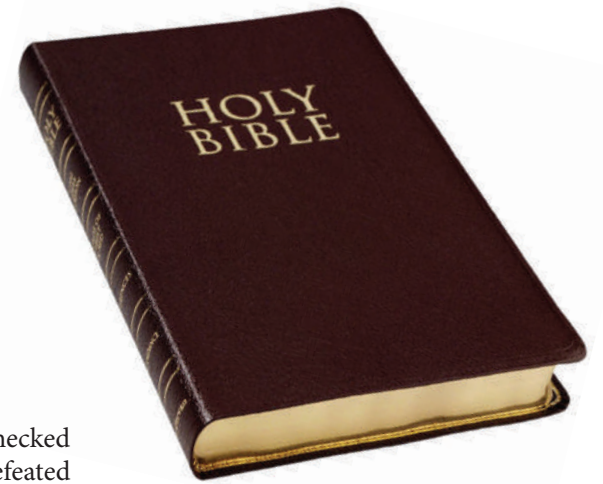
■ *Kodak Black, see page 10*





ONE MINUTE IN THE WORD

WHAT DO YOU DO, WHEN YOUR BROOK DRIES UP



land.”

Villij News

We’ve been through a lot in the last few years.

- Summer of George Floyd protests
- Covid- 19
- January 6 insurrection
- Skyrocketing Gas Prices
- Inflation
- Hurricane Ian
- Hot War Betwixt Russia and Ukraine

And our country is still divided.
Villij News

We’ve got to get to a place so deep in God, that He can trust us with trouble.

The trouble with trouble is we try to fix trouble. And as soon as we get out of trouble here comes some more trouble. The problem isn’t trouble, it’s the trou-

blemaker. And the last time I checked the record, our God is undefeated against the troublemaker.

Our text shows us that Elijah finds himself at a brook, that is deep. It’s desirable, but it’s dried up.

Villij News

I see the PLACE, He’s east of the Jordan,

I see the PROVISION, God has commanded the ravens to feed him there,

I see the PROBLEM, the brook has dried up.

And you may be just like the Man of God, dealing with a situation that has dried up.

- in a relationship that has dried up.
- at a job that has dried up.
- in a church that has dried up.
- in a business partnership that has dried up.

Villij News

Here’s three things you must do, when your brook has dried up:

- #1 Worship God
- #2 Wait on God
- #3 Get a Word from God

And that’s your One Minute in the Word. Listen I’m not out of words, 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: Has God ever given you a Word. Did you wait on it, and did you recognize that he was providing the provision for that Word?

Follow: The One Minute Preacher
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I’M in the book of 1st Kings and it’s a book of disobedience, idolatry and ungodliness. Which serves as an explanation for the Assyrian captivity of Israel, and the Babylonian captivity of Judah.

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God will either shield trouble from us, or protect us in trouble.

The text says in 1st Kings chapter 17 verse 7:

“Sometime later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the

Church Directory



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GARY MCLEOD**

Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church of Deliverance,
1401 S. Dixie Highway E, Pompano Beach, FL 33060
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**APOSTLE
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Service Sundays at 10 a.m., 7 p.m.; Fridays at 8 p.m.



**PASTOR
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Ask Annie:

Boyfriend is Selfish with Money. What Should I do?

Q: My boyfriend is so selfish when it comes to money. He makes way more than me and he wants me to pay all of my bills, which I do, I don't beg him for anything. But on top of my bills (car, insurance, phone, hair, nails) he wants me to pay all the bills for our son too. I think it's unfair and very selfish since we are together, living together, and share responsibilities. It's no baby mama on child support situation. He doesn't pay for any of our kid's stuff but is so quick to spend thousands of dollars on designer shoes and outfits. I feel like he doesn't understand me or value me.

A: Money droughts are the number one vibe killer. As a woman, I know you want to be pampered and treated to a soft life, but it seems that your boyfriend is not on the same page.

I suggest a joint account for the child. He can put it on autopay and forget about it. Now, we all work hard for our money and should be able to do with it as we please. If designer is his thing, don't be over there pocket watching. Tell him to buy the baby designer, matching outfits are great for Instagram. But at the end of the day, you can't make a man do anything he doesn't want to. So, if you talked about how you want to be treated and you want a man who pays your bills, and you're not getting that, you should reconsider. I'm not talking you into a cold bed, but you should consider that life is short and you should get what you want out of it. On the other hand, ninjas around the world are cheap AF or broke AF, so you might find yourself in the same sinking boat.

Think about it,
Annie



As I See It: "Breaking the Isms" takes Critical Thinking

By DAVID 11

Racism, sexism, terrorism are things that plague the mind of our nation. Only through community engagement will people be able to show love. Charitable and unselfish acts are the foundation of unity. Otherwise, you'll be stuck in classism with people judging one another upon status. You must know us to love us. Our country was founded on capitalism and there are other nations who want to buy all of our political and economic power, because it is up for grabs. This is the main reason for the influx of radicalism.

You might need a dictionary for this article as I attempt to push the community into critical thinking. Isms range from a mental diagnosis to a social construct. Populism could be a way to unify our minds in a progressive manner.

Materialism sounds a bit petty, but a lot of people may like to operate in favoritism

with branding and the marketability of an original thought. That's all cute, but what happens when favoritism becomes nazism? Many people feel that being a part of a superior race or a more holy religion would be an ideal existence...idealism. Always question your own motives.

Vandalism comes about when situations become unfair. Imagine economic terrorism to keep a subdivision in poverty. The one percent wants the 99 percent to always be occupied with getting money and live in fear of scarcity. A solution could be to practice minimalism, maybe, but we must always be creative with a mind of abundance. Don't be a savage, you will always survive. Become more creative with resources and thrive.

Everybody appears professional until it's time to put it on paper and be accountable. To the



community who want change, write it all out. A thought-out written process will strengthen a purpose instead of weakening it with doubt. We need better stories, because a legacy of trauma becoming a best seller is not a good trajectory for futurism. The mental state of a group determines their output. Break the

isms! It's saddening to see society so hurt and stuck in escapism, using sex and drugs to calm their reality.

We need better writers with the ability to communicate. We must always promote literacy so I will respectfully press pause on rap music for this part. Screen writers, grant writers, legislative writers and policy writers are the keepers of power.

Nowadays when speaking on "inclusion," most people want socialism to be a fair way of life. But wait! Think about the ambitions of narcissistic leadership. Socialism can birth totalitarianism, for example DeSantis vs. Disney. In a lot of ways, while trying to find social equality - the roots of individualism are always pulled, leaving a person with no way to grow.

Freedom! Words have the power to spark manifestation.

I can't agree on "speak things into existence" all the time, but I know passwords give access and a speech can be a formula for a solution.

Broward, don't you worry. There are people committed to bringing truth. Breaking the isms is the way to achieve mental, spiritual then physical sovereignty. On Monday, May 15 at Old Dillard Museum an event was held for Florida's Emancipation in 1865. The follow up event was a tribute to Malcolm X on his birthday Friday, May 19 at the same location, Old Dillard Museum. We will keep the value of Black native struggles in a righteous, honorable way to never be forgotten. Time to cherish our stories, and we got you with the Wordsmith, Darius Daughtry; the Historian, Emmanuel George; and myself, the Cultural Arts Ambassador, David Miller.

Thank you for reading.

Year-Round Schooling Pilot Program Could Reach Broward County

Tallahassee, FL – The new year-round school pilot program will effectively change the way children in the state celebrate their summer pastimes. If implemented, it could change the 2024/2025 school schedule.

INITIALY, HB 891 was introduced by Rep. Patricia Williams, D-Broward County, who represents District 98 in Deerfield Beach, Pompano Beach and Lauderdale Lakes.

“Number one, this bill could help every child that participates. Number two, we have lost years due to COVID for education. Number three, crime increases during the time our children are out of school in the juvenile-kids age range,” Williams said to the House panel. “During the summertime, a lot of children lose what they have learned during the year. This is additional time that they will have educating themselves and actually staying out of trouble.”

Currently, only about 4% of students across the United States are learning on a year-round schedule. The state requires students to spend 180 days inside the classroom. The year-round model would spread breaks throughout the year, effectively changing summer vacation. If Broward County participates, schools could implement the typical 45/15 model, or 45 days in school followed by 15 days of break.

Rosalind Osgood, D-Broward County, is on the Senate Pre-K-12 Education Committee. During a recent meeting, she said, “For many families



living in poverty, this provides a safe opportunity for children during the summer, and it also helps with the learning loss that takes place during summer months for both high-performing and low-performing students.”

School districts can apply to the Florida Department of Education to participate in the pilot program, which is established for a period of four years to help the board study the benefits and make decisions regarding instituting the program throughout state public elementary schools. The state

education commissioner would select five school districts to participate in and “to the extent possible those districts would represent a variety of demographics, including an urban, suburban and rural school district.”

“There are districts across the nation that are implementing this idea, and the benefits are paramount,” executive director of the National Association for Year-Round Education, Dr. David Hornak said. He spoke about the benefits to staff, as well as students. “They are more energized; therefore, they

are going to engage their students in a deeper level, which turns them into better behaved students, more productive aca-

demic time, and the wins continue. Students will still have a six to eight week summer and come back recharged.”

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PHOTO OF THE VICTIM:
GIOVANTE LINDER

THAT OCCURRED ON
MAY 19, 2023 AT ABOUT
10:37 P.M. AT
625 N.W. 19TH STREET,
POMPANO BEACH FL.
THREE VICTIMS WERE SHOT IN
A DRIVE-BY SHOOTING.
ONE OF THE VICTIMS WAS
LATER PRONOUNCED
DECEASED.

ANYONE WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE IDENTITY OR LOCATION OF THE SUSPECT(S) IS ASKED TO CALL CRIME STOPPERS.

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Pd by CSTF



On scene, emergency crews located the victim, a two-year-old child, suffering from what appeared to be an apparent gunshot wound. The toddler was transported by fire rescue to an area hospital and pronounced deceased. PPP met with officers on scene.



PPP ATTENDED THE FUNERAL OF GIOVANTE LINDER, WHO WAS FATALLY SHOT MAY 19, AND SERVED FOOD TO THE FAMILY

First Graduating CDL Training Class Gets Ticket to a Whole New World

By: Kristen Hernandez

Thanks to a first-of-its-kind collaboration between Broward College, Florida Panthers and FleetForce Truck Driving School, the fastest growing industry in America is now accessible to a new generation of aspiring CDL truck drivers. FleetForce's first graduating class received their certificates and licenses during the first week of May, offering graduates of the program a ticket to an industry with a starting salary of \$80,000 annually.

DURING the ceremony, CEO of FleetForce Tra Williams, reminded students and family members why licensed truck drivers are the link in America's supply chain. "At some point in March 2020, every person here stood in the toilet paper aisle and realized how important [truck] drivers are to even the simplest things we can't live without."

The generational retirement of "OG" drivers, people who've been with just their rig and the road for decades, has severely impacted the ability of everyday goods to appear on grocery store shelves. The American Trucking Association, or ATA, reported that 1200 truck drivers



each week retire. To meet Florida consumer demands, the state will need a 20% slice, approximately 220,000, of the 1.1 million drivers (about the population of Montana) needed across the country each year.

Williams provided the new CDL with a picture of their importance. "Now add in our food, education, buildings over our head, even the concrete around us. The trash beside your street gets picked up by CDL drivers. Kids are picked up by CDL licensed school bus drivers. This list starts to get scary when you realize that every aspect of our lives is impacted by this."

To welcome the first graduating class into their new career, Rob Stevenson, Florida Panthers EVP of People and Facilities said, "The Panthers smartly recognized they're in a massive export community. They had the ability to contribute to their constituents in a meaningful way and offered their empty 10-acre parking lot to FleetForce Truck Driving School. We rely on so many things truck drivers provide and take them for granted every day. While we're

sleeping, they're driving. It's an honor for the Panthers to have a micro impact for Broward and a macro impact for Florida economy."

Short-haul CDL truck driver, Jim Williams, quit his 22-year-long career after witnessing constant layoffs, switched gears and traded a suit for a rig. "I wouldn't change what I do for anything. It's freedom, being on the road."

Williams had words of encouragement and advice for new CDL drivers. "The most dangerous part of the job is other cars cutting you off, and that's what causes deadly traffic accidents. Always leave yourself an



"out" – meaning if someone cuts in front, leave yourself room. Trucks slow down like a train."

Broward College was able to secure Florida state legislative funding so students could have means to fully cover program tuition. In less than two months, aspiring drivers could be on the road to a financially lucrative and secure career.

"Lack of finances shouldn't be a barrier for students," Dr. Mildred Coyne, Senior Management at Broward College said. "And funding should never have to be a reason to not follow your dreams."

Our access to everyday household items and goods

would come to a complete stop without the women and men who drive commercial trucks. And graduates of FleetForce's first training class contained more women than ever before. Newly CDL licensed, Gabreille Estime, proudly followed in her father's footsteps as part of the newest generation of truck drivers. She was all smiles as she was handed her certificate.

"I hear trucking is supposed to be a brotherhood," Estime said. "But me and the rest of these females are going to change it to a sista-hood."

Classes begin every Monday. www.fleetforcetruckdriving-school.com 888-303-8754





The Freedom of Juneteenth

By Attiyya Atkins

This is the first year that Juneteenth is celebrated as a holiday by Broward County government. Juneteenth is short for June 19th, the day in 1865 when the slaves in Galveston, Texas found out that they were free. The message, while pertinent, was two years too late as President Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed the slaves, on January 1, 1863.

THE Emancipation Proclamation called for all enslaved people to be “forever free.”

While Black people across the nation can attest that true freedom seems like lightyears away, Black people have made signifi-

cant progress in the quest for personal, financial, and emotional freedom. In 1866, the freed slaves in Texas began celebrating their freedom on “Jubilee Day” on June 19. The tradition continued with annual festivals, barbecues, and other activities.

In Pompano Beach, it’s celebrated with an annual Blues and Sweet Potato Pie Festival held at Apollo Park, 1580 NW 3rd Ave., Pompano Beach. This year’s event will be held on June 17 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free. There will be spoken word performances, dancers, live bands, kids game area, and the famous sweet potato pie bake-off.

Juneteenth became a federal holiday in 2021, but this year in Broward County it is celebrated as a county holiday, with government buildings being closed. Juneteenth is the longest running African American holiday.



As the Northwest’s Population Grows, Will Crime?

By Attiyya Atkins

District 4 is changing at a rapid pace. As buildings go up, Commissioner Beverly Perkins is concerned that crime rates will rise as well. At a meeting held on May 24 at E. Pat Larkins Center, Perkins brought in developers who will be changing the face of District 4 and representatives of the Broward Sheriff’s Office to discuss how to deal with current and future crime waves.

With 11 new developments coming to District 4, BSO Captain Darryl Stallings expects up to 20,000 new residents. With that population increase, it is likely that crime will increase as well.

“My plea to you guys is if you hear something,” Stallings said. “Tell us. We will put investigation efforts to solve these cases. It’s not just Pompano, we’re seeing this all over.”

Perkins suggested that Pompano needs the help of another agency to control its crime.

“We have a lot of seniors in the area and that’s my concern as well,” Perkins said. “My mom likes to keep her garage door up. I tell my mom to keep it down because we don’t live in that kind of neighborhood anymore. That bothers me.”

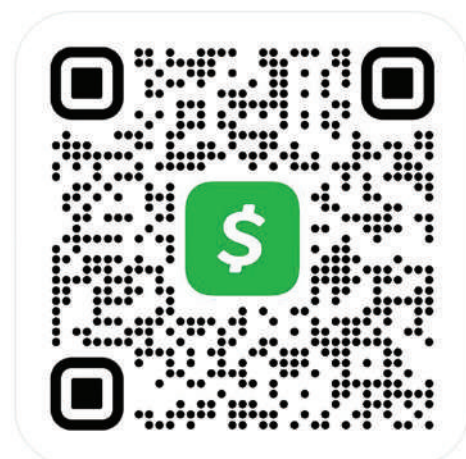
Perkins said that BSO has brought in its community outreach team, bike team, and other teams to Pompano to no avail. “We’ve brought in all these resources and the killing hasn’t stopped... maybe [BSO] is overwhelmed or we need to bring someone in to help us.”

Stallings said, “It’s not a BSO problem it’s our problem... the crimes will continue in the northwest because the people are not talking.”

He mentioned a shooting in Liberty Park where four people were injured, one died, and no one revealed any information about the shooter to the police.

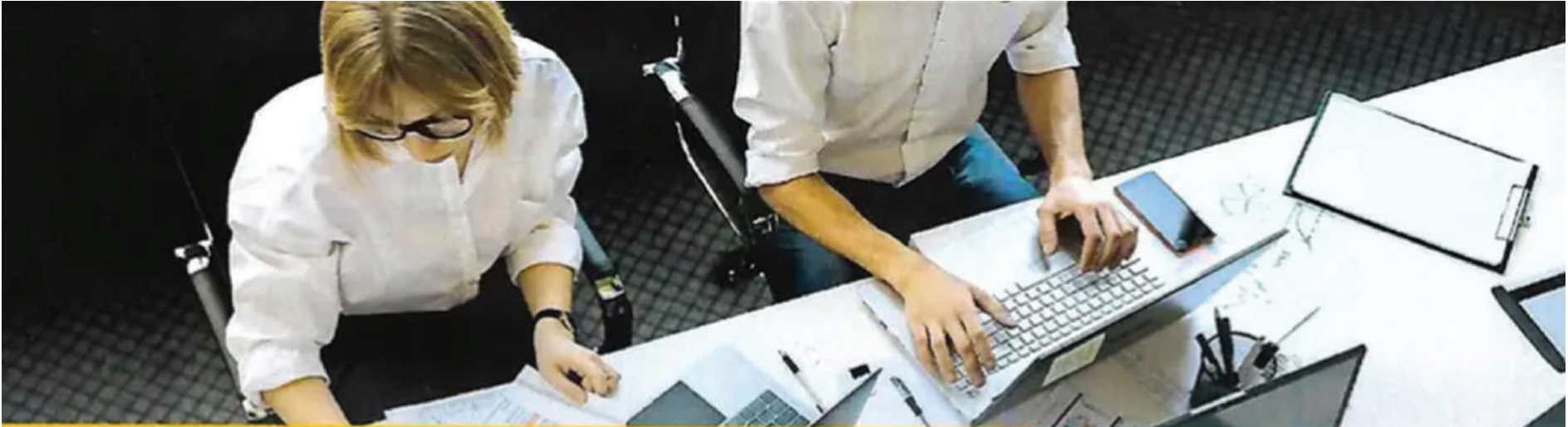
Residents seemed to agree with Stallings. They have seen police officers at basketball courts and football fields talking to people and building relationships, but it comes down to how safe residents want to feel in their community. A resident at the meeting said, “We in the community need to see it and say it. We can’t put it all on the police, at the end of the day we have to get involved and help them.”

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Attiyya Atkins

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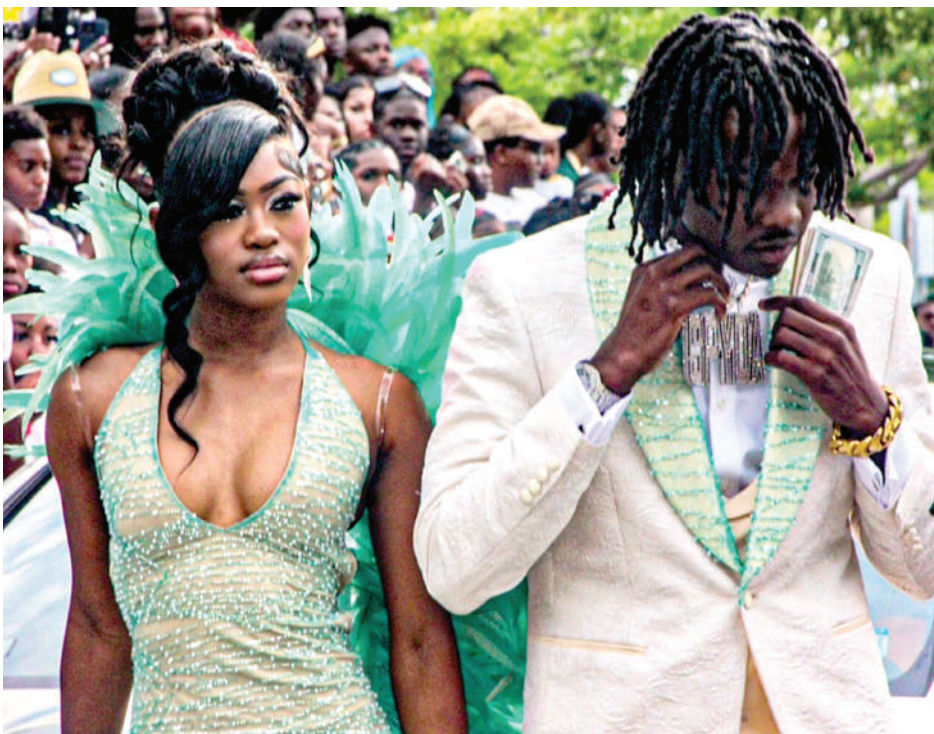
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Blanche Ely Prom 2023



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📞 5615283617

📷 shotbybigc_

👤 Christian Holston

Fear in Schools

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former Blanche Ely student Torey Alston wants to help eliminate that fear and plans to do more to keep staff and students safe within Broward County Public Schools.

"In the past year alone, I have seen 500 weapons enter our schools, including several in the Pompano Beach community," Alston said. "This is absolutely concerning to me, which is why I am open to a series of solutions to turn this around so Broward can be the safest school district in the country."

The Broward County School Board will host a town hall meeting on Monday, June 12, focused on school safety, ahead of its regularly scheduled school board meeting on June 13 to approve the use of clear

backpacks. The June 12 meeting will be held at Plantation High School, 6901 NW 16 Street, Plantation 33313 at 6 p.m.

Beginning at the start of the 2023/2024 school year, public schools in Pompano Beach and across the county will require students to carry clear backpacks and bags. This new rule will apply to all students from Pre-K through 12th grade.

"Providing safe learning environments that are conducive to student learning is of the highest importance, not just for Broward County Public Schools but for school districts across the nation," BCPS Interim Superintendent Earlean C. Smiley said in a statement. "This added layer of security is a game-changer. It will allow

school security personnel and everyone on campus to quickly spot and report if someone has brought a prohibited item to school, and it will also help serve as a deterrent."

The school district is cracking down on any possible means a person could use as a hideaway for weapons. Lunch boxes, purses, duffel bags, fanny packs and any other type of bag must also be transparent. Mesh and colored backpacks are not allowed, even if they are transparent.

There are few exceptions to this strict rule:

- A small non-transparent pouch for personal hygiene items
- Thermal food containers carried inside a clear lunch box
- School-approved sport

specific carry cases for athletic equipment

- School-approved instrument-specific carry cases for band equipment

Jennifer Walker, doctor's assistant and parent of two teenagers attending Dillard High School, reacted to news of the rule. "I should be focused on patient care but instead, I'm constantly checking my phone to see if my babies are okay. Every day, there's some kind of brawl outside school grounds and this clear backpack thing might help a little, but school officials do nothing to protect kids right outside the school gates. A young girl was recently run over several times by someone right in front of the school."

Walker is considering tak-

ing her daughter out of public school due to safety concerns.

Alston assures residents that Broward County Schools are safe overall, but more can be done.

"As a parent, I understand how other parents feel when they get that alert that there has been a bomb threat, or a weapon found on campus. I understand what it feels like in those moments when you don't know what's going on, when you don't hear from the administration and/or your child. I want to make sure that when parents drop off their kids to our public schools, they can be assured that they are in the safest environments possible and those are the kinds of solutions that I will support," Alston said.

Kodak Black

continued from page 1

ten are free. There will be a strict no-backpacks policy for those attending the event. For additional details about the bag policy, visit <https://www.kodakblackday.com/bag-policy>.

Kodak Black is basking in the success of a few key milestone moments; his music was featured on the Fast X soundtrack; his fifth studio album *Pistolz & Pearlz* via Atlantic Records was just released, and his first-ever short film is screening in select cities. In addition, fans are excited

about seeing him on tour this summer with Lil Durk.

He was raised by his Haitian mother, Marcelene, and grew up in Golden Acres, a public housing project in Pompano Beach. Kodak Black's philanthropic spirit is known throughout the community as he knows firsthand the financial difficulties some face.

Kodak Black's connection to his Haitian heritage and community runs deep. He and WMIB's 103.5 The Beat radio personality Stitchiz and her non-profit organization

Tu Es Belle will partner with 441 Nissan, West Palm Beach, to present a high school graduating student with a car at the Kodak Black Day event.

"We are excited to be able to present a car provided by 441 Nissan in West Palm Beach to a deserving high school student at this year's Kodak Black Day. It was a long road to get to this point, but God is good and does answer prayers. The student has a high GPA and is active in his community. He will be so surprised. I can't wait, says Stitchiz.

In 2021, former Broward Commissioner Dale Holness presented Kodak Black with a proclamation at a charity basketball game in Coral Springs, stating that June 11 would forever be Kodak Black Day. The proclamation spotlighted some of Kodak Black's charitable work and professional accomplishments over the past years. Humbled by this gesture, Kodak Black committed to hosting a community event every June 11, which also happens to be his birthday.

"Kodak Black Day is for my community. I want them to come out and enjoy the day, check out some dope cars, and enjoy the food, music, and entertainment. This is my thank you to the community for sticking with me on my journey," says Kodak Black.

Kodak Black gained initial recognition with his single "No Flockin," released in 2014. His debut album, *Painting Pictures*, peaked at No. 3 on the U.S. Billboard 200 and included the Billboard Hot 100 top 10 single "Tunnel Vision."

Blaze

continued from page 1

wasn't until the smoke was thick and black and surrounding his bedroom that Lawson woke. "I wasn't drinking, and I don't smoke. I was just asleep and suddenly there was smoke everywhere and the fire was spreading fast," Lawson said.

Structure damage was so great that it seems unlikely residents will be permitted to return anytime soon. Florida state fire marshals are investigating, and the cause is yet unknown. Residents have been unable to sift through the smokey remnants that were once their lives to retrieve anything salvageable.

"It's the scariest thing you can imagine to be in a dead sleep and suddenly you're in thick smoke and you can't breathe," Ryan Melkiel said, resident and survivor. "It's only because our phones were near the bed that we were able to at least grab that. There was no time for anything else, not even slippers."

Broward County Chapter of American Red Cross came to the aid of survivors within 30 minutes of the fire, and helped with food, water and snacks. A triage tent was set up at Mitchell Moore Park and survivors that needed shelter

for the night were given a \$150 card. The next day, the temporary shelter was closed.

"It was the middle of the night, so we spent the night at my sister's," Michelle Hicks said, tenant and fire victim. "But the next day, we went to Mitchell Moore and Red Cross was gone. Now, I've got nowhere to go."

Tiffany Gonzalez, Director of Communications for South Florida Red Cross explained the fire recovery process. "Each city in Broward County, except Pompano Beach, has a city response plan for large fires. Typically, we work

together to provide ongoing assistance for those who've lost everything. Red Cross responded and provided immediate assistance. There were 55 displaced, but only 10 wanted to go to the initial shelter. The rest decided to stay with family, friends, or took immediate assistance and got a hotel room. The shelter was closed but each of the 10 individuals got assigned a case worker to assess their individual needs."

District 4 City Commissioner, Beverly Perkins, also immediately arrived at the scene of the fire and witnessed

firsthand the severity of losses resulting from the blaze. At a recent CRA meeting, Perkins recognized that Pompano Beach was the only city without a fire response plan and wants to begin to implement one to deal with the aftermath.

Gonzalez urges anyone who still needs help to contact the Broward Chapter of Red Cross. "We still have open cases. If anyone needs assistance, they can always call 954-797-3800 to be connected with a case worker," Gonzalez said. "This way residents can get the assistance they so desperately need." www.RedCross.org



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Letter From the Editor

GROWING THROUGH IT

I like to garden, but I'm not consistent. I'm guilty of planting a seed and not watering it and letting nature take its course. Whenever I do pick up a shovel, I will say that gardening makes me feel connected to the Creator.

it's here for me when I need it.

But the lesson I want to share with you is the one of my tomato. I've been trying to grow tomatoes forever and I only get one fruit. I'm not dedicated to it, and I'll be the first to admit it. I want the fruit without the work and time and time again the Creator shows me that is not the way to go. My most recent tomato plant didn't get much attention from me. The excitement faded once the seed was in the ground. I forgot about it until it started to grow. And it made me think, there's something inside of all of us that we have forgotten to water. It could be your bank account, it could be your relationship, it could be your kids. For me, it was my lifestyle. I had got so caught up in my daily duties – going to work, raising kids, being a wife, that I hadn't watered what made me feel whole.

I learn so many lessons from the earth. My mint plant taught me not to let certain things out the box – uncontained mint will ransack your whole garden. Basil taught me resilience because it pops up whenever it wants, and you can smell its strength. The hibiscus taught me the beauty of flowering, that is until an iguana eats it. My mango tree taught me not to expect too much as it hasn't grown an inch in an entire year. My aloe taught me that



After the roots took on the tomato plant, the stem started to harden, but it was still very weak due to a lack of water. Until about two weeks later I looked at it and I saw a green growth pushing through. I was so happy to see fruit even though, I didn't treat it right. I'm so happy to be me, even though I don't treat myself right. The lesson here is deeper than the soil. It's actually in my soul. Sometimes you neglect your duties, and you still get fruit, but not as much fruit if you stayed dedicated.

I could have been a master gardener by now! Ha! With that, I hope in this summer season you stay dedicated to the fruit that you want to reap. This goes for graduates of high school, college, elementary, and middle school; those starting new careers, and those starting new ventures. You need consistency to cultivate, water yourself and watch your fruit grow.

Rooted,
Attiyya Atkins

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