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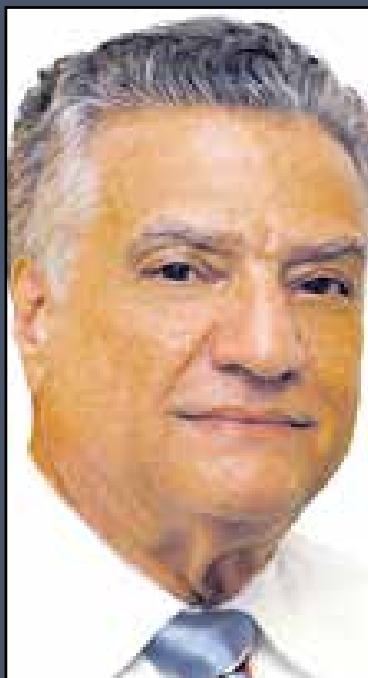
11th Annual Soul Fest

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March 15 - March 21, 2014 48th Year Volume 46 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

On the Ballot



Dr. Dwight McKenna



Ron Foreman



Marlin Gusman



Nadine Ramsey



Jason Williams

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New A.D.



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On the Ballot

Final Decisions on the Path to Progress



Candidates in the upcoming Run-off Election on Saturday, March 15 include from left to right - Dr. Dwight McKenna (for Coroner, Orleans Parish), Ron Foreman, President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute, Marlin Gusman, Incumbent (for Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff), Nadine Ramsey (for City Council Member, District C) and Jason Williams (for City Council Member At-Large District 2)

Data News Weekly Staff Report

Voters in Orleans Parish will again head to the polls on March 15th to decide who will occupy four elected seats, in addition to voting on three other issues one includes a renewal of two millage taxes by the Audubon Institute that would be used to acquiring, construct-

ing, improving, maintaining or operating" existing or future museums or parks.

On the ballot are runoffs in four races. Up for grabs are the seats for Criminal Sheriff, two City Council seats and Coroner. These races have been hotly contested affairs that's often become contentious, and in the end none of the candidates won a majority of the

votes in the Feb. 1st primary, that now set the stage for the March 15th run-off.

There also are three issues on the ballot that are being voted on: city-wide referendums on renewing property tax millages for the Audubon Commission, a new property tax break for disabled veterans, and a vote on renewing a property fee in the Lake Willow

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Cover Story, Continued from previous page.

neighborhood.

In the Criminal Sheriff's race, incumbent Marlin Gusman faces former Sheriff Charles Foti. It has been a race that has attacks coming from both sides regarding who is best suited to serve as the City's Criminal Sheriff. In the primary Gusman was the frontrunner with a twenty point margin separating him and Foti. During the primary Gusman spoke of his many reforms and innovative approaches to dealing with crime and the Criminal Justice System. He has also talked about the improvements that were made to what he called a dysfunctional jail he inherited from former Sheriff Charles Foti. In his interview with Data News Weekly he says he wants to continue to move forward making the reforms that will make the jail run more efficiently, make the streets safer and help those who are incarcerated to re-enter society to become tax-paying, law-abiding citizens.

Dwight McKenna and Jeffrey Rouse are competing to succeed

longtime Coroner Frank Minyard who has held the seat since 1974 before his recent retirement. Both are physicians, but McKenna touts his 40 years of experience as a general practitioner and surgeon. In addition to his already having held public office as a member of the Orleans Parish Public School Board, in his platform he says his experience as a surgeon which makes him more qualified than his opponent who is a forensic psychiatrist who has worked for over a decade in the mental health division for Dr. Minyard. In the primary McKenna narrowly missed getting enough votes to win earning 48% of the votes cast. McKenna has been a critic of the way Dr. Minyard has run the Coroner's Office and feels a change and new administration under his guidance will bring honesty and transparency to the office.

Attorney Jason Williams is in the run-off for City Council-at Large against former District D Councilwoman Cynthia Hedge-Morrell. In the Division 2 race Williams placed

second behind Morrell, but feels his chances are strong in the run-off. Citing the people's frustration with career politicians he has not entered the race to make running for or holding office a career, but to make a difference. In this race Williams is taking a holistic approach to government, with a platform that focuses on education, quality of life issues, law enforcement, and job skills, training and growing an economy that can lead to placing more people into the middle-class.. He feels if economic inequality and unequal access to opportunities were addressed more effectively the cCity would be a better place for all of its residents.

In the District C council race, former Judge Nadine Ramsey, who served on the Orleans Parish Civil District for 12 years with two of those as Chief Judge is running against Jackie Clarkson. Who has been a longtime fixture in City and State politics, previously, holding the seat in District C and also serving as councilwoman-at-large.

Ramsey feels that she can bring a fresh approach, outlook and vision to District C. At the top of her agenda is fighting blight, crime, finding new ways to spur economic development and providing better employment opportunities for the citizens of New Orleans, especially for young people where the numbers of unemployed are at record highs. She touts her record as a judge saying she was effective and efficient while on the bench and will bring these same qualities to the council if elected. In the area of police reform, she says she will work full-time to have the mandates of the consent decree fulfilled, fight for better pay for officers and work to remove the two-year college or military service for new recruits because it excludes some who would potentially be candidates to become NOPD officers.

Also on the ballot is The Audubon Commission, which controls Audubon Zoo, Audubon Park, the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas and other local parks and facili-

ties, they are asking voters to renew two millages, totaling 4.20 mills, for 50 years. The taxes collected currently bring in about \$11.9 million a year for a host of things including: acquiring, constructing, improving, maintaining or operating" existing or future museums or parks.

Another city-wide ballot issue would double the homestead exemption, from \$75,000 to \$150,000, of a house's appraised value for veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 100 percent, or for their surviving spouses if they continue to own and occupy the house. Proponents of this measure say loss of revenue to the City and other agencies would be small.

Finally, voters in a single precinct in New Orleans East will decide whether to renew a \$300 annual fee for three years on each lot in Lake Willow to support the activities of the Lake Willow Subdivision Improvement District. The fee generates about \$52,200 a year.

#19
Jason Williams
CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

“We must bring prosperity to all of New Orleans. City leadership should be an ally, not an obstacle.”

JASON, HIS WIFE BRIDGET, AND CHILDREN ZOE AND GRAHAM

Movies in the Park Begins 2014 Season

The New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) kicks off the Spring 2014 season of Movies in the Park, featuring family-friendly, free outdoor movie screenings at NORDC playgrounds for residents across the City.

Movies will begin at sunset (7:15–7:45 p.m.), weather permitting. Movie goers are encouraged to arrive early to visit with family and friends and participate in



“Move before the Movie,” fun fitness activities with instructors from the Fit NOLA Parks program (www.nola.gov/fitnolaparks)

Movies in the Park is free and

open to the public. Movie goers are welcome to bring lawn chairs, blankets and picnics. Proceeds from concessions sales support the mission of the host organizations.

The spring 2014 season kicks off on Friday, March 14 with “Iron Man 3” at East Shore Playground, 14600 Curran Street. Concession sales benefit the East Shore Booster Club. Move before the movie with Fit NOLA Parks instructor David

Darangue (Step N’ Slide) who will lead a group line dance.

The full schedule is available at www.nola.gov/nordc.

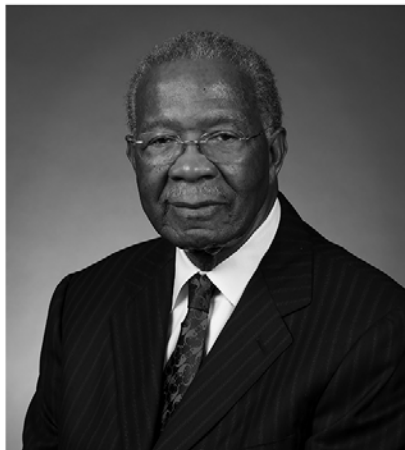
“Since 1947, New Orleans residents have gathered at NORDC playgrounds for programs and activities that foster strong communities,” said Victor N. Richard III, NORDC CEO. “Movies in the Park, an innovative partnership between NORDC and booster clubs and

community organizations, continue that tradition by welcoming residents to gather at the playgrounds with friends and family to watch movies under the stars.”

Participants under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult. No pets, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, firearms, weapons, smoking, or cooking will be allowed during the event.

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NORDC Movies in the Park Spring 2014

Movies will begin at sunset (7:15–7:45 p.m.), weather permitting.

Friday, March 14

“Iron Man 3” at East Shore Playground, 14600 Curran St. 70126. Hosted by the East Shore Booster Club

Friday, March 21

“Despicable Me 2” Taylor Playground, 2600 S. Roman St. 70125. Hosted by the Taylor Booster Club

Friday, March 28

“Monsters University” at Conrad Playground, 3600 Hamilton St. 70118. Hosted by the Conrad Booster Club

Friday, April 4

“The Smurfs 2” at Lakeview Playground, 5501 Gen. Diaz Ave. 70124. Hosted by the Lakeview Booster Club

Friday, April 11

“Dolphin Tale” at Joe W. Brown Park, 5601 Read Blvd. 70127. Hosted by the Joe W. Brown Booster Club

Friday, April 18

“The Blind Side” at Norwood Thompson Playground, 7200 Forshey St. 70125. Hosted by the Norwood Thompson Booster Club

Friday, April 25

“Cars 2” at Sampson Playground, 3100 Louisa St. 70114. Hosted by Pilgrim’s Rest Baptist Church

Friday, May 2

“Akeelah and the Bee” at Cut-Off Playground, 6600 Belgrade St. 70114. Hosted by the Cut-Off Booster Club

Friday, May 9

“Frozen” at Lemann Playground, 537 N. Claiborne Ave. 70112 Hosted by the Lemann Booster Club

Friday, May 16

“Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2” at Stallings Gentilly Playground, 2700 Laperyouse St. 70119 Hosted by the Stallings Gentilly Booster Club

Re-Elect **Sheriff**
Gusman



Please
VOTE
SATURDAY,
MARCH 15th
For
Marlin Gusman
#3

“IT’S IMPORTANT FOR
ALL OF US!”

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Eleventh Annual Soul Fest

Biggest Celebration of African-American History

Audubon Institute's Soul Fest – A Celebration of Soul was held last weekend presented by AARP. Music, food and fun was the setting at the Eleventh Annual Soul Fest March 8 & 9, 2014. Thousands of visitors throughout the weekend converged upon the Audubon Zoo for one of New Orleans' biggest celebrations of African-American history. The two day family-oriented event featured live musical performances by local Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, and Gospel artists at the Capital One Stage. It was a tremendous success and Data was there!!!



Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events

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The Audubon Commission Millage Renewal, What is it Exactly?

Data Staff Report

Because we are going to the poll on Saturday to make important choices, Data News Weekly is providing you with this quick FAQ session on the Audubon Commission Millage Renewal question. Data sat down with Ron Foreman, president and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to ask the questions you want to know, and have them answered for you the voter and taxpayer. It is imperative that we make wise decisions when casting our votes, and this will help you to understand the referendum and make your choice accordingly.

Q. We hear a lot that Audubon Nature Institute is a responsible community partner. What does that mean to you?

A. To me, that means that Audubon is doing everything possible to fulfill the mission of our robust

community relations program. About 14 years ago, a group of our board members, business partners and employees came together to create a five-pronged program that has become a model for community outreach in our industry. The five tenets are Visitation, Education, Hiring, Purchasing/Business Opportunities and Special Facility Usage.

Q. You mentioned Purchasing/Business Opportunities as one of the tenets Community Relations program. Can you expand upon that?

A. One aspect of the program that I'm most proud of is our commitment to minority and women-owned businesses. In 2013, we spent more than \$5 million with DBE's and WBE's. Each year we strive to increase that figure. In 2013, we entered into business with 9 new diverse suppliers. We also

abide by state and city rules and include minority contractors in building projects and we try to exceed the percentage mandates where possible. We are a proud member of the Louisiana Minority Business Council as well as the Women's Business Council South and participate in their annual expos.

Q. Do you have any programs in place to ensure that minorities are included in the hiring process?

A. Yes, we are committed to ensuring that our workforce is diverse. We believe that a diverse workforce strengthens our organization and makes us a better team. One of our hiring goals is to strive to have at least 20% of our new hires and promotions in management positions be minorities.

I'm proud to say that in 2013, we met and exceeded that goal with 23.5% of hires and promotions being minorities. We attend job fairs,

post positions on a variety of on-line career websites, work with career services departments at local schools and have a variety of strategies to recruit potential applicants who are minorities. Our Vice President for HR, Toni Mobley, was cited by the National Diversity Council for her successful efforts to coach, develop and mentor women and diverse leaders throughout the state.

Q. What are some of the education opportunities at Audubon?

A. Audubon at its core is all about learning. We are very aggressive with our efforts to make sure that every child and family has access to our world-class attractions. More importantly, we want to create opportunities for children to learn about our animals and appreciate nature.

In 2013, we hosted more than 80,000 minority and underserved visitors as part of a group or field

trip. In addition, our outreach vehicles presented information about animals and nature to more than 24,000 underserved students last year. More than 12,000 visitors received complimentary group admission last year alone.

Q. What kind of events and programs do you host to attract the African-American audience?

A. Some of the events and programs we host are Get Yah Praise On which is a gospel celebration during Black History Month; Soul Fest, a celebration of African-American culture; we are proud to be the host site for the annual UNCF Walk for Education and for the sheriff's annual Easter Egg Hunt. At Soul Fest, we honor and pay tribute to outstanding African-American community leaders that are trailblazers in our community each year. This

Audubon/Continued
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Audubon Soul Fest



The Audubon Soul Fest was a tremendous success and brought out a wide variety of music lovers to enjoy the activities. Pictured above from left are: Linedda McGiver AARP, Corey Hebert, M.D. (Emcee), CSM Veronica LaBeaud who is the first African-American Female Command Sergeant for Louisiana Army National Guard, Ken Carter who is the first African-American Elected Tax Assessor Orleans Parish, one of the First African-American students to integrate Loyola University at New Orleans, and is the first and only African-American President for LA Association for Justice, Sharon Carter Sheridan and Chimene Grant, Audubon Nature Institute Vice-President of Marketing

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Data News Weekly's Endorsements in the March 15th Election



Terry B. Jones
Publisher,
Data News Weekly

Data News Weekly in our role as "The People's Paper" encourages you to go out and vote. These are our endorsements.

Criminal Sheriff- Marlin Gusman

Marlin Gusman has been on the frontlines of a recovery reforming the jail and initiating programs that work. He took over what was a dysfunctional jail that warehoused inmates and in some instances made them worse upon release. Gusman

has been tough yet compassionate and giving a broader vision to keeping the streets safe from dangerous criminals, yet providing the programs necessary to help those released become productive citizens. Since becoming Criminal Sheriff, the jail has moved into better practices that reflect the way things are done in the 21st Century and is more effective and efficient. We must continue our momentum forward and not go back to the days of former Sheriff Foti, and vote Marlin Gusman back into office that's proven despite the many challenges he's faced that he is a competent and capable leader well-equipped to run the jail.

City Council-at-Large Division 2-Jason Williams

Jason Williams is a forward thinking progressive voice that is needed on the council. He has a

bold vision that is well suited for the council-at-large seat. Williams believes that the people should have a stronger voice in decisions being made by the council. He feels that there is sometimes a disconnect between the citizens and those who are elected and he plans to change that if elected. While he believes crime is a problem, he feels that better educational and economic opportunities are the answer. He feels as we at Data News feel that we cannot arrest our way out of this issue, but the solution lies in providing better opportunities for our citizens to move into the middle-class. To accomplish this he believes that training local people for the well-paying jobs that are coming into the City it is essential to train people to fill those slots. Jason Williams is young, articulate and intelligent. He is a bridge builder that we feel can bring diverse communities and

constituencies together under one umbrella, and in these fractured and contentious times post-Katrina this is what the City needs.

City Council District C-Nadine Ramsey

Nadine Ramsey is a change agent that can give District C the leadership it deserves. After serving 12 years as a Civil District Court Judge two of which she was Chief Judge has the necessary combination of administrative and people skills to reach all those residing in the district. In these changing times the City needs new voices that can connect citizens to their elected representatives. Today we need new leaders who put the citizens first and not their own political agenda. Nadine Ramsey is someone who can give the people a voice on the council. She is someone we feel can work with others on the council and

bring a new and different perspective that is good for the process. Something that hopefully leads to the disenfranchised having a voice and being empowered. We endorse Nadine Ramsey because we feel it will help the voiceless of District C have a voice down at City Hall that will advocate on their behalf.

Coroner-Dr. Dwight McKenna

Dwight McKenna has the competence and experience to be the City's next Coroner. With forty years as a general practitioner and surgeon he will bring integrity and transparency to an office where this has not always been the case under longtime Coroner Dr. Frank Minyard. It is time to not simply make cosmetic changes that are not substantive by continuing the same

**Endorsements,
Continued on page 9.**

Hip Hop Connection Respect Begins with Us



By Jineea Butler
NNPA Columnist

What are we talking about? We talking about fiction or we talking about fact? You talking about fiction? Hold up pardon my back...

Excerpt from Jay - Z, What We Talking About.

I've been at a lost for words lately watching all the New World Order-like advancements unravel before our eyes. From Stand your Ground to Stop and Frisk, war is being waged on those who refuse to follow the 'logical' standards of our society. And there have been a long list of murders, both old and new: Jordan Davis, Trayvon Martin, Oscar Grant, murder and Ramar-

ley Graham. Why have people lost what little respect they had for our community? Why have they turned their backs and begun to raise deadly guns again?

Another sign of the times is that the NFL has to ban the N-word so people, including men of color, won't continue to wreak havoc on those around them. Municipalities are stepping up to place some limits on unacceptable words and behavior.

Mound Mall in central Indiana, for example, has placed a ban on wearing raised hoodies while shopping. This is to insure that mall security can see your face. Many municipalities are banning sagging jeans because no one wants to see our men's underwear, dirty or clean.

But why should others do what we should be doing for ourselves?

While the NFL is moving to outlaw the N-word, we have an out of control epidemic in our community of young people calling each other the N-word and fighting for the ability to use the derogatory language.

Even some esteemed Black sports writers have defended us of the derogatory term in columns and in panel discussion, including a recent one hosted by ESPN.

For the second consecutive year, Young Money Cash Money Billionaires produced content during Black History Month that desecrated the images of our celebrated ancestors. All of the urban reality shows highlight stereotypical images of us fighting, usually for no justifiable reason, and Black women who end up being scandalous homewreckers.

Do you think these images do not play out in how people perceive our culture?

People are anticipating tension and confrontations when interacting with us. They are turning their noses up at the thought of what we might do. Turning down our business because of the probability of what might happen. How are they anticipating our moves when they never met us before? In fact, they have me us - on television, overhearing our conversations on the

train, the music we produce, the disrespect we allow, the violence in our communities, the number of high school drop-outs, the outrageous AIDS rates, the nasty attitudes.

Do you need me to go on? Are you telling me that they have no right to feel some type of way about the behavior they are witnessing? No right to feel that they have to protect themselves and their family from what they believe to be a harm to their lives or livelihood?

Don't get me wrong: I am not saying that people should be able to arm themselves and get away with murder. However, I am saying we play a role, often a negative role, in how others look at us.

When do we arm ourselves with the tools and the skill sets that will prepare our families to survive and prosper generations in this society? Why don't our topics of discussion extend beyond the latest episode of Scandal? To borrow from Jay-Z, What are we talking about? More importantly, what are we doing?

Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt,

Sandra Bullock and even relatives of Mitt Romney have all adopted Black children. They are doing that while millions of Blacks, even those who can't bear children, show no interest in providing loving homes to Black children stuck in orphanages or bouncing from one group home to another.

Meanwhile, we support all of the [you fill in the city] "Housewives" on TV, we buy CDs that insult Black women and we basically send a message to the world that we're fine with how we are perceived and portrayed. But if we are going to demand respect from others, we must first command respect among ourselves.

That's what we should be talking about.

Jineea Butler, founder of the Social Services of Hip Hop and the Hip Hop Union is a Hip Hop Analyst who investigates the trends and behaviors of the community and delivers programming that solves the Hip Hop Dilemma. She can be reached at jineea@gmail.com or Tweet her at [@flygirladyjay](https://twitter.com/flygirladyjay)

Xavier University of Louisiana Names Jason Horn as New Athletics Director

Senior Vice President for Administration Ralph Johnson has announced the appointment of Mr. Jason Horn as the new Athletics Director (AD) at Xavier University of Louisiana. He will join the athletics staff effective March 31, 2014.

Horn comes to Xavier from the University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) in Detroit, Mich., where he has served as Associate Athletic Director for External Affairs since 2011, overseeing the areas of event management, marketing, licensing, development, fundraising, ticket sales, social media, branding, and media relations, as well as supervising several sports. During his tenure he also served as UDM interim Director of Athletics for more than seven months.

"I am elated that Mr. Horn will be joining the Xavier community," said Johnson. "His professional accomplishments are remarkable and he has extensive and successful experience in athletics operations. He will be a tremendous asset as we position all aspects of the Xavier athletics program for enhanced success."

Horn replaces Xavier's retired AD Dennis Cousin, taking over an athletics program that has achieved unparalleled success competing in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).



Xavier University's newly appointed Athletic Director Jason Horn

During the past 10 years Xavier teams have won 53 Gulf Coast Athletic Conference or NAIA unaffiliated group championships and qualified 36 times for NAIA National Championships in basketball, cross country, tennis, track and field and volleyball. During that same stretch, 125 of 130 senior student-athletes under the current head coaches received degrees from Xavier or are still enrolled.

XU facilities also received a major upgrade last year with the completion of the XU Tennis Center and the new Convocation Center, which hosts all of the University's inter-

collegiate basketball and volleyball games.

Horn's professional career spans nearly 20 years in the field of marketing and promotions, ticketing and sales, holding positions with Northwestern State University, the University of Central Florida, Bowling Green State University, the National Basketball Association's (NBA) Development League, Palace Sports and Entertainment, Conference USA, and the 1996 and 2002 Olympic Games.

Prior to his work at UDM, he served as Northwestern State University's Assistant Athletic Director for Marketing and Promotions for two years. At Northwestern, he was directly involved in marketing, revenue generation, event management, branding and licensing. He also provided oversight to the ticket office, equipment services and was involved in event scheduling. He helped manage and heighten awareness of the university's athletic website, social media and licensing programs, setting new school records for revenue and customer and fan traffic in each quarter. He also helped develop season and group ticket sales strategies resulting in overall revenue increase for all ticketed sports.

From 2006-08, he was with Central Florida as the Assistant Athletic

Director for Marketing and Promotions, where the marketing team's ticket sales strategies in 2006-07 led to a 21-percent spike in basketball attendance, 58 percent in baseball attendance and 32 percent for softball. In 2007 alone, more than 7,000 new football season tickets were sold generating over \$1.4 million in new revenue.

At Bowling Green State University, he created and planned season and group ticket sales strategies that created a 40-percent increase in football season ticket revenue and an overall all-sports ticket revenue increase of 21 percent. He developed and maintained corporate contacts for partnerships, event sponsorships and promotions and hired, trained and evaluated marketing and game-day staff members.

Horn's work history has also

included the NBA Developmental League for the Mobile Revelers (2001-02) as their Director of Marketing and Community Relations, the Detroit Pistons (1996-97) as an account executive for corporate sponsorships and the New Haven County Cutters (2004-05) minor league baseball team as an assistant general manager.

A University of Michigan (UM) graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, Horn started his career as a UM Basketball Operations Assistant. He was born and raised in the Detroit, graduating from Southfield Lathrup Senior High School. He is a member of the National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators.

Endorsements, Continued from page 8.

regime with one of Dr. Minyard's minions as would be the case with Dr. Jeffrey Rouse. It is time to make a full scale change to the office and the way it operates, so it is necessary to change its organizational culture to make it an office that is accountable to the people and restore a semblance of credibility and public confidence to the office given the recent issue with the Henry Glover Case. The next Coroner has a large job ahead of them bringing the office up to speed for the 21st Century and the person best suited for this task is Dr. Dwight McKenna. A trusted name in our community and a man who knows where we've been, but has a vision of where we need to go to make this office and our City what it can be moving forward.

Audubon Commission Millage Renewal-Yes

The Audubon Institute and Commission continue to do an excellent job of doing more with less. It provides great facilities and programming to our young people and serves as an extended hand of educational outreach for our youth; in addition to providing family friendly places where people can go to enjoy our City. In our rebranding of the City in not only being known as a great destination for adults, but also a place to bring families, it is important that we continue to invest in these cultural and educational treasures in our City. The Audubon Commission controls Audubon Zoo, Audubon Park, the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas and other local parks and facilities, they are

asking voters to renew two millages to be used for acquiring, constructing, improving, maintaining or operating existing or future museums or parks. We would like to reiterate that this is money well-invested in a great resource for our city that will merit great returns. As we move forward we must consider quality of life issues such as this, and we must do our part and renewing this millage is a step in the right direction and is as important as investing in our schools. We must recognize as we move forward sometimes before others come to invest in our City we must do some things ourselves, and this is one of those times, so we support the millage renewal.

ELECT #8

Dr. McKenna

CORONER

Let's Make History.

Elect Our First African-American Coroner.

Over 40 Years of Experience as a Surgeon and General Practitioner.

St. Augustine High School

Xavier University

Howard University

Meharry Medical College

Dr. McKenna is the Officially Endorsed Candidate of the Democrat Party.

Endorsed by:

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US Congressman

Dale Atkins
Clerk of Court

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Councilman Dist. 8

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Darren Lombard
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Ways to Close the Nation's Wealth Gap

By Charlene Crowell

Today, middle class households feel the same financial stress that low- and moderate-income families have borne for years, says new research by the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED), a national nonprofit organization working to alleviate poverty and create economic opportunity. In its report, *Treading Water in the Deep End*, CFED analyzes the financial security of American households and public policy responses to the financial crisis.

"As millions of Americans struggle to save for emergencies, investing in their futures is increasingly out of reach," states the report.

Liquid asset poverty is defined in the report as a household budget that is so tight that any unforeseen

expenditure such as a car repair or medical expense cannot be managed without incurring debt. The financial insecurity of America's liquid asset poor is CFED's focus of findings.

The report found that the majority of the nation's liquid asset poor are employed (89 percent), White (59 percent) and have at least some college education (48 percent). Even among middle-income households, defined as those earning \$56,113 to \$91,356, 25 percent of these consumers do not have enough savings to cover living expenses for three months.

Further, the majority of consumers in 37 states and the District of Columbia do not have credit scores high enough to be eligible for the lowest available lending rates for short-term credit. In Mississippi, more than 69 percent of consumers



have subprime credit scores, making it the worst state in the nation.

The highest levels of liquid asset poverty are concentrated in nine Southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. In Alabama, more than 62 percent – almost two out of three consumers – do not have a personal financial safety net. Nevada is the only state outside of the Deep South among the 10 worst rankings for liquid asset poverty.

As CFED analyzed state and local policy responses in the wake of the nation's financial crisis and recession, it created a policy scorecard that measured state responses to 67 policy areas. State and local concerns with growing economic

inequality launched programs to raise the minimum wage, encourage long-term college savings plans and courted unbanked consumers to become a part of the financial mainstream.

For lifting 9.4 million people out of poverty in 2011, the report praised the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). In addition to this federal program, 25 states and the District of Columbia enacted their own versions of EITC that ranged from 3.5 percent to as high as 40 percent of the federal credit.

"For the first time, these rankings allow us to draw a line in many states between the strength of policies and outcomes for family economic security," states the report. The data shows that policies aimed

at decreasing poverty and creating more opportunities for low-income families can make a real difference."

Even with these public initiatives, growing costs of higher education continue to lead to even higher levels of student debt. According to the report, the average student debt for college graduates grew from \$27,150 in 2011 to \$29,400 in 2012.

Additionally, both employer-sponsored retirement plans and homeownership levels respectively dropped a percentage point from 2010 to 2012. Nationwide in 2012, retirement plans slipped to 44 percent.

For consumers of color, CFED's report reads much like the familiar financial refrain of earlier research:

Two out of three households of color are liquid asset poor, lacking a financial cushion to respond to financial emergencies;

Only 42 percent of consumers of color were homeowners; while White homeownership now stands at 72 percent; and

The median net worth for consumers of color amounted to \$12,377 – only one-tenth of the median net worth of White consumers – \$110,637.

The Center for Responsible Lending (CRL) advocates that homeownership remains the best investment vehicle to help low-wealth families to build wealth and grow into the middle class. Research by the University of North Carolina Center for Capital found that families who received responsible, low-down payment mortgages are successfully repaying their loans and amassed an average \$21,000 in home equity even during the financial crisis.

"Without improved policies at all levels of government that help families earn more, save more, and build more assets, the yawning income and wealth inequality gap in the United States will widen, rather than narrow," CFED concluded. "Inaction consigns millions to persistent financial insecurity, diminishing their economic future and the future of the nation as a whole."

Charlene Crowell is a communications manager with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.

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SAT Officials Hope to Score High in Eliminating Racial Bias

By Jazelle Hunt
NNPA Correspondent

Administrators of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) have announced with great fanfare that they are overhauling the standardized tool that helps determine whether an applicant will get accepted into the college of his or her choice. But in revamping the test, SAT officials are facing a test of their own.

"The redesign is trying to get a sense of what students learned in high school...and trying to help students demonstrate their critical thinking skills instead of just picking an answer. And that's all well and good," said Michelle Cooper, president of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, a college-access policy think tank. "But the real question is, are all students getting the same opportunity to learn those skills before they get to college? Students, especially low-income Black students, often go to schools that are under-resourced. Will they have ever been exposed to the type of questions to be asked on this test, or will it all just reinforce the bias we already see?"

In part because of what some perceive as racial and cultural bias – along with poor schools – many Blacks don't do well on the standardized test.

Last year, only 15.6 percent of African American students who took the SAT reached or exceeded College Board's 'SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark' score of 1550 (out of 2400 possible points). According to College Board, the nonprofit education giant that created and develops the

exam, this score is associated with a 65 percent chance of earning a college freshman year GPA of a B- or higher. This figure was up from 14.8 percent in 2012.

Averaged scores for individual sections of the SAT were lowest among African American test takers, hovering around 430 (out of 800) per section. The average scores for their White and Asian American counterparts were in the mid- to upper-500s. Everyone else's scores – Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, "Other" Latinos, and students identifying as "other"—averaged about 450 and above.

Although the test's intended use is to assess college readiness, researchers, educators, and policy makers allege that it has had a hand in creating the access disparities it now intends to fight.

For example, there are the test-prep courses and books that give students an edge—if they can afford it. College Board's online course is currently \$69.95 and the book is \$31.99; another popular option is Kaplan's SAT classroom prep for \$699, or if on a budget, its online course is \$299.

"Testing is a big money-making industry at this point. The SAT is inherently flawed," says Okaikor Aryee-Price, who taught eleventh grade for 11 years and now teaches seventh grade while pursuing a doctorate in Instructional Design. "Standardized tests came out of the eugenics movement, to say that people of color were not as intelligent as Whites. They're not used the same way anymore, but they still test the same things. These

access gaps were intentionally created."

Even post-secondary institutions have begun to wonder whether the SAT is worth their time. According to a list compiled by the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, more than 800 colleges and universities have gone "test-optional" or "test-flexible" (meaning it is either only partially counts toward admissions considerations, or not at all). The list includes highly ranked institutions such as New York University, American University, and University of Texas at Austin.

However, the majority of colleges and universities require SAT scores (or its competitor, the ACT) as part of the application. Many schools (and organizations) also use these scores as thresholds for awarding grants and scholarships.

Still, College Board says the redesign is in direct response to these and other questions and criticisms.

According to College Board data, African Americans have consistently had the lowest average score on the essay portion since 2005, when it was added to the test. The new SAT makes the essay portion optional. Students will still have to write the essay—it simply may or may not count toward their score, depending on the discretions of their intended colleges, and their high school district.

According to Patte Barth, director of the Center for Public Education for the National School Boards Association, the essay option will

likely get mixed reviews.

"School systems right now are already under pressure anyway with all these changes related to implementing [K-12] Common Core standards," she explains, adding that 45 states and the District of Columbia are mired in the curriculum transition. "To the degree that the SAT is better able to align to what high schools are teaching, alleviates one issue—because if the curriculum teaches on thing and then teachers have to stop to teach another thing for this test it is frustrating."

The essay section is designed to more closely resemble actual high school and college assignments, and will now be based on analyzing a reading passage. The prompt itself will be disclosed to students in advance and will remain constant from exam to exam; only the reading material will change each time the test is taken.

The essay section was changed and made optional for two reasons: There is no data to suggest that one essay is predictive of college success; and because there was no consensus among college admissions officers regarding the value of the essay.

Other changes to the test include eliminating questions on flowery "SAT vocabulary words;" abandoning point deductions for incorrect answers; and shrinking the focus of math sections to more common branches (i.e. algebra and word problem-solving).

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Audubon, Continued from page 7.

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