MORRIS BROWN
REGAINS ACCREDITATION

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After two decades, Morris Brown College regains full accreditation

By MADELINE THIGPEN

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 report for America education reporter

After 20 years of operating as an unaccredited institution, Morris Brown College has been granted full accreditation by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools. Morris Brown’s “Hard Reset,” the nickname current president Dr. Kevin James has given the road back to accreditation, will begin a new chapter for the school.

“We are now working on growing the endowments and our enrollment,” said James at a press conference announcing the school’s full accreditation. “Anyone who is interested in Morris Brown College, this is an amazing place to be.”

As a fully accredited institution, Morris Brown has been reinstated to the Federal Financial Aid Program. Students will be able to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid for federal loans and federal work-study jobs.

Morris Brown stakeholders highlighted the school’s affordability at $4,250 a semester, making it the least expensive school in the Atlanta University Center Consortium.

James emphasized the school’s 141-year history of educating young, Black minds, and thanked the people who have worked throughout the last 20 years to keep Morris Brown’s doors open.

James enthusiastically praised the support of Bishop Reginald T. Jackson, chair of Morris Brown’s board of trustees. Founded by Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Morris Brown has relied on the support of the AME Church throughout its long history.

During last Friday’s press conference, James recounted the story of the school’s founding, Stewart Wiley, a layman, suggested at a church meeting that the congregation start their own college.

“These words ignited a flame in Bishop Wesley John Gaines, a former slave, who stood up and said, ‘With the help of God, we can and we will!’” James said.

James added that the school began with only 107 students and nine faculty members, but went on to grow into a renowned institution. He also praised the efforts of his predecessor, Dr. Stanley Pritchett. Pritchett led the school through the bulk of its years as an unaccredited institution, from 2002 to 2018.

Shermanetta Carter, Morris Brown’s CFO, was also highlighted as one of the key individuals responsible for helping James to right the school’s financial situation. “On my first day on the job, I was walking around this campus talking out loud to God and I said, ‘God help me. How am I going to beat a $35 million bankruptcy?’” James said.

“The loss of land, the loss of students, the loss of reputation? And God said to me, ‘Use what you’ve got.’”

Risha Clark, who serves as Miss Morris Brown College, said she almost moved to tears when she heard the news.

“I have been waiting for this for 20 years,” Clark said. She first attended Morris Brown from 1997-1999, and returned in 2019 to complete her studies.

“I saw the school at its height back then, and now I get to represent the school at its new height,” Clark continued.

Lazaro Nightingale, Morris Brown’s student body president, told The Atlanta Voice that when he was in middle and high school, he had teachers that graduated from Morris Brown, and he is proud to be part of the school’s legacy.

“It has been a long time coming; we’ve been waiting to showcase the greatness that Morris Brown College can bring into the future,” said Nightingale.

Dozens of Morris Brown alums returned to campus for the press conference and celebration of the school’s accreditation.

“It was a journey, but it was wonderful. It allowed me to become who I am today. There are things I learned here that are lessons I take with me to this day,” said Mary Crosby, class of 1989.

Nafeesah Madyun, class of 1969, said she grew out of her shell during her time in college and is glad more students will have the opportunity to have that experience.

“I am so excited and overwhelmed,” Madyun said. “It’s like crossing the finish line.”

Miss Junior Morris Brown, Jarai Boykins, said she is ecstatic that her school has regained accreditation after 20 years.

“When I came here from Memphis in 2019, I had a lot of judgment from people for going to a school without accreditation,” Boykins said.

Enrollment at Morris Brown was around 2,000 students before the school lost its accreditation in 2002. Since then, enrollment has remained around 50 students.

Georgia senator Jon Ossoff and Atlanta mayor Andre Dickens were a few of the elected officials who attended the press conference to show support for Morris Brown.

Congresswoman Nikema Williams also sent a representative to read a proclamation from Congress, acknowledging Morris Brown’s accreditation.
Honoring our nurses

The last 2 years have changed us. We mourn those we’ve lost to this pandemic, including the nurses who selflessly cared for those battling COVID-19. We see and feel things differently because of what we’ve experienced together – in health care and in our country.

Through it all, the 65,000 Kaiser Permanente nurses and more than 4 million nurses across our nation have reminded us what it means to heal, the importance of dignity and grace, and the power of hope.

This National Nurses Month we recognize and celebrate our nurses – leaders, clinicians, researchers, innovators, and scientists. We see your long hours, deep compassion, and true humanity.

Thank you for choosing to be a nurse, and for leading us through the last 2 years with your heart and professionalism. You honor those who came before you – and provide an example for those who will follow in your footsteps.

With deep gratitude,

Greg A. Adams
Chair and Chief Executive Officer
Kaiser Permanente
Ymani Wince's next chapter brings inspiring African American literature to Cherokee Street.

BY KENYA VAUGHN

While putting the finishing touches on her soon-to-be-opened establishment, The Noir Bookshop, Ymani Wince picked up a weathered paperback from the shelf. It is her personal copy of Terry McMillan’s breakthrough novel “Mama.” “My stepmother gave me this book when I was 14 years old,” Wince said. “And this was her copy when she was at Jackson State University.”

“Mama” created a shift for Wince and her relationship with books and will be among those available at the soft opening of the bookstore – located at 2317 Cherokee. It was her first time reading a novel with authentic Black dialogue. She also fell in love with the layers of the story. “If anyone comes in and asks me to recommend a book, it will be this one.”

The event takes place from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 30. The store will officially open at a to-be-announced date in June, but this weekend she is encouraging the community to come by to sample some of her plans to influence the region by promoting Black culture through books – and fellowship.

The origins of The Noir Bookshop date back to 2018 with Wince’s desire to organize a community book drive. In 2020, during the pandemic hit. During the lockdown she noticed on Instagram there was this store called Black Market Vintage in New York. The owners are a couple that traveled around the world to collect Black artifacts.

“I was just obsessed.” Every time she would attempt to buy a book from them, the item would already be sold. She discovered Brittany Bond, a woman who repurposed an old ice cream cart into a portable bookstore she calls Common Books. Bond sells copies of books by women authors at various locations throughout New York City. Wince became one of Bond’s online customers.

“I saw that she had old copies of Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and I was really excited, so I started buying books from her just to keep them on the shelf for myself,” Wince said. “Whenever I would get a new book, I would take a picture and post it online.”

The response was overwhelming. Wince kept getting messages inquiring about the books. It made her think that she could do something similar in St. Louis, but with Black authors. The death of designer Virgil Abloh just after Thanksgiving in 2021 lit a fire under her. “I got into a rabbit hole of Black owned bookstores around the world,” Wince said. “I saw that she had old copies of the original James Baldwin. They had so much vintage literature that I remember a time where she didn’t have something baked and ready, whether it was a few pieces of a pound cake or a peach cobbler.”

She hopes to recreate that energy for patrons and visitors of The Noir Bookshop.

“I want them to come in and have a snack and just know that when they walk in my space that they belong there and that they can feel warm and loved, like my grandparents made me feel,” Wince said. “I want to see people’s reaction when they come through the door, because that will let me know if I hit the mark with what type of mood I was trying to set in here.”

A crowdfunding campaign is underway to ensure that The Noir Bookshop is as Wince prepares for the store to open full-time this summer.

“It’s not about me turning a profit,” Wince said. “Of course, the store needs to make a profit, but books are meant to be shared.”

She wants The Noir Bookshop to serve the region through education, inspiration and community – which are the three pillars that the store is built on.

“I want people to see themselves when they come,” Wince said. “And to know that a space like this is needed – and it exists.”
Ethnic Media Collaborative hosts Stacey Abrams forum

CRAIG ALLEN BROWN
Managing Editor, Print

The newly formed Ethnic Media Collaborative premiered its “The New Face of Georgia Speaker Series” with a voters’ forum featuring gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams.

The Ethnic Media Collaborative is a joint venture between The Atlanta Voice, Mundo Hispánico and the Georgia Asian Times. According to the Ethnic Media Collaborative, the venture is an unprecedented attempt to unite communities of color throughout Atlanta, in order to positively impact the economic and political landscapes of the city’s increasingly diverse population.

The venture is spearheaded by Janis Ware, publisher of The Atlanta Voice; Rene Alegria, president and CEO of Mundo Hispánico; and Li Wong, CEO and publisher of the Georgia Asian Times.

“The Ethnic Media [Collaborative] is a pioneering journalism effort to better inform the fastest growing ethnic communities in metro Atlanta, and Georgia,” Alegria said. “Mundo Hispánico, The Atlanta Voice and the Georgia Asian Times are the founding pillars of the Ethnic Media Collaborative.

This collaboration is the first time that platforms of ethnic media have partnered for the greater good of the people of Georgia.”

Abrams began by thanking the Ethnic Media Collaborative for inviting her, and then spoke about the benefits of diversity from a political standpoint. “When I became Democratic leader in 2010, I stood for office, in part, because I saw that we were losing ground on so many issues. But I also saw that the state legislature did not look like Georgia,” Abrams said.

“My responsibility as a state leader - first as a representative, then as a Democratic leader - was to be in solidarity. To say that our communities were linked together, not only by our differences, but by our commonalities.”

Abrams also emphasized the importance of reaching out to those communities that were often overlooked in terms of their importance in the political realm. By making efforts to more vigorously involve communities of color, Georgia now has a more diverse constituency.

“When I ran for governor in 2018, we were lambasted by many for focusing on communities of color,” Abrams said. “For saying that this could not be a conversation just about Black and white in Georgia; that this was a conversation about the complexity and diversity of our state.”

“And it worked. We tripled Latino turnout. Tripled [Asian American and Pacific Islander] turnout. Increased Black turnout by 40%. We reflected the values and...the composition of Georgia.”

Abrams appears to be well supported in her bid for Governor of Georgia. As of April 30, her campaign has received $11.7 million in donations in three months.
HEART failure is the number one cause of death in the country, contributing to approximately 287,000 deaths a year. It’s a condition that occurs when the heart can’t pump enough blood to meet the body’s needs.

Dr. Alanna A. Morris is an associate professor in the cardiology division at Emory University’s School of Medicine. From her experience as a cardiologist, Morris has seen the many different ways that a person can develop heart disease.

“It could happen as a result of a heart attack; it can happen as a result of a family history; it can happen from drug use. There’s all sorts of causes,” Morris said. “But at the end of the day, what happens is the heart is not able to meet the metabolic needs of the body. And so because of that, patients feel short of breath. They feel very fatigued. Fluid often accumulates in their legs or their bellies. They have difficulty sleeping, and they just aren’t able to carry on sometimes [with the] normal activities of daily living.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are certain medical conditions that can increase one’s risk for heart disease, such as coronary artery disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity. Unhealthy behaviors like smoking tobacco, not getting enough physical activity and eating fatty, sodium rich foods can also raise the likelihood of heart disease.

Over six million Americans are currently living with heart failure. Although heart failure affects people of all ages, genders and races, it doesn’t do so evenly. This health condition is more common in Black Americans and adults over the age of 65.

“When she’s not caring for patients, Morris is also an avid researcher, whose interests include investigating race and gender as a catalyst for the health disparities in heart failure and cardiovascular disease. One of her papers, featured in the American Heart Association (AHA) Journal, states that “African Americans’ rates of death are 2.6 and 2.97-fold higher, respectively, than White men and women. Similarly, the rate of heart failure hospitalization for African American men and women is nearly 2.5-fold higher* when compared with white Americans.

While the relative rate of heart failure hospitalization has improved for other racial minorities, the disparity between Black and white patients has not decreased during the last decade. Researchers have used access to care and socioeconomic status as traditional explanations for racial disparities in heart failure outcomes, although contemporary data suggests that factors like genetic susceptibility and implicit bias may play a larger role.

“Black and Latina women tend to develop heart failure and heart disease about 10 years earlier as compared to their white counterparts,” Morris said.
“So, we tend to see these health disparities…affect Black and Latino communities at a higher rate.”

In Morris’ opinion, to begin understanding why minority women have heart failure earlier, one must first better understand structural racism and the social determinants of health, which are the conditions in the environments where people work and live, and how these factors impact their health and quality of life.

Despite having a higher body mass index (BMI) on average, Black women are less likely to attempt weight loss than White women. Morris’ research implies that weight perceptions vary by race due to cultural differences in ideal body image and that hair maintenance may be a unique barrier to physical activity for Black women in particular.

Living in more impoverished areas or in food deserts is also associated with an increased risk of heart failure. “We know that this country was sort of designed and founded in a way that kept people of color in communities that lacked resources that had more pollution, [and] had less access to what I call the ability to promote health,” Morris said. “And because of that, we see those risk factors like high blood pressure, diabetes, [and] obesity tend to be more prevalent in communities of color. I think for women of color, there are other factors that are extremely important, including what we call the gender determinants of health. So for example, women often sort of bear the burden of taking care of children and other dependents and loved ones who may fall sick with illness. Because of that, women often don’t take care of themselves.”

Tannie Coward was diagnosed with congestive heart failure seven years ago. She initially believed that she had an upper respiratory infection, and went to urgent care before being sent to a larger hospital. “It’s been an up and down journey,” Coward says. “I have good days, and I have bad days. For the first couple of years, it was pretty overwhelming, to say the least. Upon my initial diagnosis, I was told that I needed to quit my job, my career that I had for 33 years. And I also had to shut down my business as a wedding and event planner. So this was definitely life changing for me.”

The idea that worked best for Coward was making lifestyle changes. After learning that she had heart failure, she began to exercise more, and she changed her diet. She recommends that individuals diagnosed with heart failure find support groups that can assist those living with the difficult condition.

“It’s important that women with heart failure, especially Black women, have the right support network in place to help us feel our best,” Coward said. “We’re always taught to be strong, and that we can surpass anything, but it’s important that we understand that our support can come from family, friends, doctors, advocacy groups—anything that helps us feel our best. And to me, it’s just important that women of color understand that we too need help. We too need support, and there are places that we can get that support from.”

Morris has joined an initiative called Hear Your Heart, to empower women living with heart failure to take control of their health.

“This type of campaign, that really speaks directly to patients, is something that’s really important to me because it...intertwines very much with the clinical practice that I participate in, as well as the research that I’m focused on, which is really trying to improve outcomes for patients of color, women of color,” Morris said.

Morris hopes to help more women feel confident educating themselves, asking questions and advocating for their health. Hear Your Heart’s website has free resources and videos for anyone who is interested in improved heart health.

In terms of protecting oneself from developing heart failure in the first place, Morris believes prevention is key. She describes the best thing that women can do for themselves is to modify their lifestyle. Morris advocates for staying physically active, and eating diets that are high in fruits and vegetables. She further advises against consuming large amounts of sodium and animal proteins.
Diseases don’t discriminate.

Now more than ever, diversity and inclusion are vital to clinical research. And with more volunteers, medical advancements can become even better. Visit medicalheroes.org to learn more.

A sincere thank you to all medical heroes from the following organizations:
Fifteen years ago, at the age of 42, Israel Robledo was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Shocked, he spent the next nine months coming to terms with his diagnosis. “I was married, I had three girls at home. I was working as a schoolteacher. And I was thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, my life is over,’” he says. “I only knew about older people having Parkinson’s.”

But, after that first nine months, Robledo realized that being a victim didn’t suit him. So, he decided to be proactive and became a patient advocate for those with Parkinson’s disease, working to ensure transparency and diversity in clinical research. Robledo, who is Hispanic, is one of 18 members from underrepresented communities offering their experience to biotechnology company Biogen.

Community Advisory Board Helps Biogen Promote Diversity in Clinical Research

The CAB’s role is two-fold: Help inform Biogen team members on issues regarding race, ethnicity, associated health disparities and awareness initiatives, as well as help Biogen to better communicate with underrepresented communities on points of concern and barriers to accessing clinical trials.

“In forming a Community Advisory Board that is really diverse in membership — representing not just different races and communities, but also individuals who identify with living conditions and disease areas that Biogen researches — we have the opportunity to listen and learn,” explains Kate Wilson, Biogen’s Head of Health Equity in the Patient Engagement, Equity and Transparency team.

Clear Messaging

Through ongoing conversations on messaging, tone and images, Biogen and CAB members have worked together to create honest and transparent communications geared toward underrepresented communities, their healthcare practitioners and their caregivers. “CAB members were co-developers of these materials,” notes Wilson. “They had seats at the table, and had direct input and feedback. That is how we built our messaging.”

CAB members have provided hundreds of points of feedback on sharing information to patients, ranging from trial descriptions to logistics (such as whether a patient is reimbursed for their travel expenses or paid for their time) to whether a person needs to reveal their immigration status — a real concern for many people and something that Biogen now addresses in its assets. “In all of our materials, we make sure that patients know that information about immigration status will not be collected in any Biogen clinical trial,” says Wilson.

Robledo credits the company for its approach of making direct, immediate changes to communication materials based on CAB members’ input. “I’ve been a patient advocate with many pharmaceutical companies, but none have been like Biogen,” he says. “When other companies ask for patient input, they say, ‘This is what we’ve done. Tell us if you like it or not.’ But Biogen says, ‘Tell us what we need to change so that it impacts the patient community the way it needs to.’”

The final products are, as Robledo says, “pretty darn good. I take pride in saying these materials are something that we came up with. Providing a voice is why I became a patient advocate.”

Looking to the Future

The CAB and Biogen’s work towards building diversity, equity and inclusion into its clinical research is garnering industry attention, winning the 2021 Global Pharma Patient Champion Award. And Biogen’s recent addition of voices from other underrepresented communities points toward its continued efforts to better understand the needs and challenges among various populations. The end goal: to better develop potential medicines that are safe and effective for all.

“It’s our way of ensuring that a diverse voice is heard and built into our clinical development and the way we approach drug development,” Wilson says. “When we look at the work ahead of us to really improve representation in our clinical trials, it’s so critical that we’re involving the diverse communities and voices in that process.”
Improving Representation in Breast Cancer Clinical Trials & Developing Better Medicines for All

The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on communities of color, has been a painful reminder of the racial and ethnic disparities that have long existed in our country. In the United States, Black people tend to have higher rates of chronic and progressive conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer, and face greater obstacles when it comes to prevention, detection, and treatment. This is especially true in the breast cancer space.

- Black women are often diagnosed at later stages and can often have a worse prognosis [1]:
  - Black women face a 20% to 40% higher mortality rate despite overall rates of breast cancer in Black and white women being about the same [2];
  - Black women have a 39% recurrence rate and a 52% higher relative risk of death compared to white women [3]; and
  - Historically, Black women have been underrepresented as participants in breast cancer clinical research [4].

Through allyship with community partners and leaders in communities of color, Pfizer is focused on continuing to improve diverse representation in breast cancer clinical trials. Most recently, Pfizer partnered with the Tigerlily Foundation to launch Health Equity, Advocacy and Leadership (HEAL) sessions to advance education around clinical trials for Black women with cancer. The program focused on:

- Shedding light on the breast cancer journey for women of color.
- Improving access to breast cancer clinical trials for women of color.
- Building trust and enhancing the relationship between breast cancer patients and their care providers.
- Educating women of color on clinical trials and strengthening their capacity to increase awareness and participation in breast cancer clinical trials.
- Identifying barriers and determining solutions that can improve access to breast cancer clinical trials, with the hope of sharing these learnings in other treatment areas.

“Race, literacy, financial barriers, access, social, systemic and hereditary backgrounds should not be determinants of life and health equity,” said Maimah Karmo, President, Tigerlily Foundation.

“There are significant opportunities to strengthen engagement among the Black community, healthcare providers and medical organizations, toward improving health and health outcomes. In order to bring about change, we have banded together with colleagues and friends to advocate for increased access and awareness of breast cancer research for women of color. We are excited to partner with organizations, like Pfizer, to work to transform systems globally – with one vision – to champion Black breast cancer as a social justice issue and eradicate as many barriers as possible that lead to loss of life for Black women.”

Race, ethnicity, age, and sex can all impact how different people respond to the same medicine or vaccine. This is why diversity among clinical trial participants is so important. The more diverse a group of clinical trial participants, the more we can learn about the safety and efficacy of a potential medicine or vaccine for people who have characteristics like those of the participants. Participation is entirely voluntary and for those in a position to give it, it is a gift.

As a leading global pharmaceutical company, Pfizer is committed to working with Tigerlily Foundation and communities of color to help reduce health disparities. The HEAL sessions provided an inspiring forum that reinforced old and uncovered new commonalities, obstacles, unique experiences of Black patients, and the gaps in access to clinical trials as an option to consider. Each session allowed Pfizer and patient advocates from the Tigerlily Foundation to have open and honest dialogues on the disparities for Black women living with breast cancer, and uncover potential solutions and tools for patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and clinical site staff.

Carmen White, Pfizer Director, Multicultural Participant Experience said, “I’m so thrilled that the Tigerlily patient advocates, also known as ANGEL Advocates, are among our partners whose insights are being applied to Pfizer’s effort to improve the overall trial experience for future patients. I left each HEAL session moved and motivated.”

Equity is one of Pfizer’s four core values. From medical grants aimed at actively reducing the disparities in care, to resources for patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals to navigate their unique cancer journeys and treatment decisions, Pfizer has made it a priority to be inclusive, act with integrity, and ensure every person is seen, heard, and cared for.

Representation matters in clinical research because it ensures that medicines and vaccines in development benefit all. The HEAL project demonstrates one way Pfizer is doing its part in ensuring women of color are represented in clinical trials. To learn more about joining a clinical trial, please visit pfizerclinicaltrials.com/learnmore. With your help, breakthroughs for all are possible.

References
3. Black Women Have Higher Risk of Recurrence Than Other Ethnicities, Oncology Times: January 5, 2019 · Volume 41 · Issue 1 · p 24 doi: 10.1097/01. COT:0000552839:22529.72
Albany State selected for ‘Retool your School’

Albany State University is one of 30 HBCUs that won money from Home Depot’s Retool Your School competition.

The competition is open exclusively to HBCUs, after the schools enter the contest they are divided into three clusters based on size. The top ten schools with the most votes in each cluster are then awarded their grant based on the number of votes they received.

This year cluster three, schools with 1,200 students or less, had more votes that clusters one and two combined for a total of 5.5 million votes.

Albany State placed 5th in cluster one, earning them an $30,000 grant to go towards campus improvements. Albany State was the only Georgia school to win money this year.

Out of 59 HBCUs that participated, in the competition 30 schools were awarded grants ranging from $20,000 to $75,000. This year Home Depot awarded a total of $1 million in grants.

Representing Albany State at the winners’ announcement ceremony Home Depot held at the Gathering Spot was Dr. Stanley Pritchett, President of the Atlanta Metro chapter of Albany State’s national alumni association.

“We are honored for Albany State to be recognized for the work that has been done to get the students involved, get the faculty and staff involved and the outstanding alumni all over the country involved in a project such as this,” said Pritchett.

He added that Albany State is among the smaller schools in cluster one with around 5,000 students. Other schools in the cluster like Florida A&M University and Prairie View A&M have around 9,000 students.

Home Depot introduced the competition in 2009 and since then has provided over $5 million in campus improvement grants to nearly 70 percent of all HBCUs. The grants have been used in the past to renovate residence halls, upgrade health facilities and build outdoor classrooms.

Each year Home Depot also awards Campaign of the Year. For the second year in a row Alabama State University won the award.
Thinking about starting a business? Here are 5 things to consider

More people are choosing to become entrepreneurs and chart a path of their own in the pandemic. In fact, one million more new business applications were filed in 2021 than in 2020 - the highest total on record - according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

If you are ready to dive into small business ownership, having a plan, understanding your credit health, and building a strong foundation can set you up for success — and help you sustain and grow what you are working to build today.

“The early days of building a business are exciting and also come with many questions,” stated Shea Taylor, an Atlanta-based Diverse Small Business Consultant with Chase. “In addition to the steps below, surrounding yourself with good support will be crucial throughout your business journey. I work with businesses that have already been established, and know many of them have these questions when they first started.”

Here are some expert tips Taylor shared:

Put it on paper. Every new business should start with a business plan. Even if your start with the basics, this document is a blueprint for how to build and maintain your company, which is helpful to have on hand once you begin to get into the nitty-gritty of getting your operation off the ground. This 5-steps checklist can help you take important actions before you open.

Build and protect your credit. Knowing your credit score and how it works is a building block for your overall financial goals. A free resource to learn more about credit scores is available at chase.com/financialgoals. In the early days, your personal credit score can open the door to initial capital like a small business credit card. Keeping it strong can help you maintain your personal AND your business’ financial health. As your business grows, the financial health of your business is what will allow you to access other capital and funding, yet both your personal and business credit information could be considered as part of the mix when creditors evaluate your needs. To build credit in your business’ name, set up a small business credit card account, pay vendors and suppliers on time, and be mindful of cash-flow and liquidity, among other things.

Separate personal and business accounts. Many business owners start their companies with their own money, but it is very important to practice the habit of keeping personal and business finances separate. Starting a small business checking account or opening a business credit card can help you keep track of spending and will also help establish the credit profile for your business and simplify your accounting and help you when it’s time to file taxes.

Think about expenses. Start-up costs can vary and it’s easy to get lost in the numbers. Getting a clear picture of how much startup money you will need is essential to avoiding cash-flow problems until your business starts turning a profit. You may need to hire staff, purchase equipment or get an office or warehouse space to run your company. There are many ways you can finance your start-up or small business, including a business loan, credit card, line of credit, equipment financing, and small business grants. Determining the best financing option depends on your credit, how quickly you need the money and the long-term effects it may have on your business. Speak with a banker first. They are there to help guide you.

Ask for help. When you’re ready to get started or grow your business, consider having conversations with your local SBA small business development center (SBDC) which delivers free tools, counseling and training to entrepreneurs. Seek out licensed experts in banking, legal and tax who can help build your company’s infrastructure as you launch. Chase offers free workshops - virtual and in-person - in Atlanta through its chamber and community networks.

Bonus tip: The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) offers information on the process of registering your business name with state and local governments. There are liability protections, contract opportunities, as well as legal and tax benefits you can miss out on by not registering your business. For example, as your business expands, you can apply to become a supplier to larger businesses.

If you are ready to start a money talk, schedule a meeting with a banker. A few tips for the conversation include:

• Discuss your business plan
• Ask for advice on ways to manage expenses and access capital, and
• Ask about available resources and support.

You can learn more about how Chase can help at www.chase.com/communityteam.

For more tips and insight on how to make the most of every (business) opportunity, visit the Chase Business Resource Center or a branch/community center near you.

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NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK BEGINS MAY 2.

How can we help?

Visit www.chase.com/smallbusinessweek

Shea Taylor, Chase Diverse Small Business Consultant
PERFORMANCES

The Strength of a Woman featuring Ms. Pat - May 6, 8 p.m. Buckhead Theatre, Atlanta.
CAU’s Jazz Under the Stars w/ Jeffery Osborne/ CAU Jazz Orchestra - May 7, 7 p.m. CAU Quadrangle. www.cau.edu.
Give Them LaLa: The Brand New Tour - May 7, 8 p.m. Center Stage Theater, Midtown Atlanta.
An Evening of R&B: Mario, Lloyd and Bobby V - May 7, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
Peach Music Festival: An Evening of Jazz - May 8 7 p.m.  Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
Tank - May 14, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
Marlon Wayans - May 14, 7:30 p.m. Center Stage Theater, Atlanta
Kenny G - May 15, 8 p.m. Atlanta Symphony Hall, Atlanta
Departure - A tribute to Journey - May 15, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
Itzak Pearlman with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra - May 20, 7 p.m. Atlanta Symphony Hall, Atlanta
Nick Cannon’s MTV’s Wild N Out - May 20, 8 p.m. Cellairis Amphitheater @ Lake-wood, Atlanta
Dave Matthews Band - May 21, 7:30 p.m. 2002 Lakewood Way, Atlanta.
Will Downing (w/ Wade Four Concert Series) - May 21, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
War/Ohio Players - May 22, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
Gipsy Kings - May 28, 8 p.m. Cadence Bank Amphitheatre at Chastain Park, Atlanta.
Lalah Hathaway - May 28, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
R&B Only: Erykah Badu/Miguel/Wale/ Ann Marie/DVSN/Dende/Lucky Dave/ Lloyd/Meta and others. - May 28, Lakewood Amphitheatre, Atlanta
Cameo - May 29, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
Bonnie Rait - June 3, 8 p.m. Cadence Bank Amphitheatre at Chastain Park, Atlanta.
BareNaked Ladies - June 4, 7 p.m.Cadence Bank Amphitheatre at Chastain Park, Atlanta.
Dooble Brothers, 50th Anniversary Tour - June 7, 7:30 p.m. Ameris Bank Amphitheater, 2200 Encore Parkway Alpharetta, GA 30009. 404-733-5013
Indigo Girls - June 9, 8 p.m. Cadence Bank Amphitheatre at Chastain Park, Atlanta.
Coldplay/H.E.R. - June 11, 7 p.m. Mercedes Benz Stadium, 1 AMB Drive NW, Atlanta. Mercedesbenzstadium.com
Manhattan Transfer - June 11, 7 p.m. Ri-alto Center, Atlanta.
Leds/Roberson - June 11, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
Steel/Winwood/ Shorty - June 14, 7:30 p.m. Cadence Bank Amphitheatre at Chastain Park, Atlanta.
Kid Rock/Grand Funk Railroad - June 15, 7 p.m. Lakewood Amphitheatre, Atlanta.
Southern Soul Blues Festival - June 18, 7 p.m. Cadence Bank Amphitheatre at Chastain Park, Atlanta.
Gregory Porter - June 18, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Ma-bleton. 770-819-7765.
Ringo Starr and his All-Star Band, 8 p.m. Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, 2800 Cobb Galleria Parkway, Atlanta.
Trombone Shorty - June 22, 8 p.m. Cadence Bank Amphitheatre at Chastain Park, Atlanta.
Taylor Dane - June 25, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Ma-bleton. 770-819-7765.
Patti LaBelle/Downing - June 25, 8 p.m. New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark, N.J. An Online Event, Sponsored by Music Festival Online, See Facebook events.
Brian Culbertson - June 26, 7 p.m. Mable House Amphitheater, 5239 Floyd RD., Mableton. 770-819-7765.
The Masked Singer - June 26, 7:30 p.m. The Fabulous Fox Theatre,660 Peachtree St., Atlanta.
Backstreet Boys - June 28, 7:30 p.m. Ameris Bank Amphitheater, Alpharetta.
For the full schedule, see the FULL SCHEDULE at https://theatlantavoice.com
You say challenged, I say blessed beyond belief

BY JAMES A. WASHINGTON
The Atlanta Voice

There is a perspective in our faith that I subscribe to and it is that our suffering is an integral part of God’s plan to ready us for the struggle of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Suffering in some ways is a prerequisite for strengthening one’s spiritual muscle. We all know how hard it is to respect the opinion of someone who has led the so-called “charmed life” or someone who was born with the proverbial silver spoon in a cavity free mouth.

It’s hard, if not impossible, to listen to someone talk with certainty about things they’ve never seen or places they’ve never been. My belief is that God teaches in a manner few of us will ever truly understand. I honestly believe that when He chooses you—when it’s your time—He has a unique way of communicating who’s really in charge. And, if the truth be told, it ain’t us. That’s right!

When God is talking to you, you eventually come to know it. Take notes on this: Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but (rather) painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11)

As far as I’m concerned, we’re all in training, believe it or not, to fight in God’s war. Whether being forged in a fiery furnace or stuck in a tailspin of perceived despair and hopelessness, each one of us is being battle tested in anticipation that one day, we will be called to arms.

This struggle, these experiences, they bring about wisdom; a spiritual wisdom from a spiritual perspective that I believe must be shared. It must be.

Otherwise, God keeps you in a perpetual classroom where life constantly gives you a new place to go to the bathroom. You haven’t learned anything, so life keeps kicking your... well, you get the picture.

When you finally realize the one trying to tell you something is God, then a wondrous thing begins to happen. You listen more intently and learn more eagerly. Like the child who discovers walking leads to the joy of running, or the baby who discovers his own hand, the possibilities seem endless.

The mind says, “tell me more.” The spirit says, “thank you Jesus.” At that very moment, it is my belief that God lets us know we’re able to withstand, overcome, rise above and win the battle of carrying the message of salvation.

Christ is the savior. At that moment, we also move from being in the classroom to being on the battlefield where Satan keeps score. You remember those days back in school when you actually studied and were prepared for the test? Confidence oozed from you.

When God has been the lesson planner, the study partner, the instructor, it doesn’t matter how much Satan wants it to be a Netflix Night. “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12)

Our job then is to recognize and represent; recognize the hell we’re going through is not without purpose. The most important message of the day is to understand who (Jesus) has suffered the most and why.

“It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

May God bless and keep you always.

ENTERTAINMENT

May Is chock full of concerts and activities

BY STAN WASHINGTON
The Atlanta Voice

If high gas and food prices haven’t eaten up the last bit of your stimulus check, you may want to use those remaining funds to attend a few of the many concerts that will hit Atlanta this month.

There are so many concerts on tap in metro Atlanta that you could be out every weekend evening this month. Most of the musical acts have been off the stage for two years, and they are anxious to perform live again.

This is just a sample of what’s scheduled. (See more information online with The Atlanta Voice Arts & Entertainment Calendar.)

The Decatur Arts Festival in downtown Decatur is back with more artists, music, food and activities for the kids. Friday, May 6 - Sunday, May 8. North of Atlanta, the Dunwoody Arts Festival will run May 6-8 in Dunwoody.

The following weekend in North Atlanta, the annual Chastain Park Spring Arts & Crafts Festival runs May 14 – 15 (44469 Stella Dr. NW).

Known for his solo R&B hits and his affiliation with the 70s group LTD, Jeffery Osborne presents his jazz side at Clark Atlanta University’s annual Jazz Under The Stars, held on campus, Saturday, May 7.

The Mable House Amphitheater in Mableton (west of Atlanta) will show off its soulful side all summer long. It kicks off the first weekend in May (7) with Atlanta’s own Bobby V, Mario and Lloyd. The very next day it hosts the Peach Music Festival: An Evening of Jazz. R&B singer Tank performs on the 14th, followed by the silky smooth voice of Will Downing on the 21st.

It’s a good thing there is no roof over the Mable House stage, because the funk bands War (“Slippin’ to Darkness”) and the Ohio Players (“Heaven”) take the stage the next day on the 22nd. Cameo (“Single Life”) will close out the month at Mable House on the 29th.

Maybe you are in the mood for a dance performance. The Atlanta Ballet presents “Strike Your Fancy (13-15th) at the Cobb Energy Center in Cobb County. Marlon Wayans will bring his brand of comedy to the Center Stage in Atlanta on the 14th. The renowned violinist Itzak Pearl performs with the Grammy award winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra on the 20th. But if that is a little too tame, you can wild out with Nick Cannon and his Wild ‘N Out crew that same night at the Lakewood Amphitheater.

The long-running top rock group The Dave Matthews Band (who sells out everywhere they play) will grace Atlanta on the 21st at the Lakewood Amphitheater.

The last weekend in May ends with a BANG! My favorite Latin group, Gipsy Kings, returns to the Chastain Park Amphitheater on the 28th. The Atlanta Caribbean Festival will take place in downtown Atlanta and Forest Park. Lalah Hathaway performs at Mable House (28th). Over at Lakewood, you will find Erykah Badu/Miguel/Wale/Ann Marie/DVSN/Dende/Lucky Dave/Lloyd/ Meta and others (28th).

As much as I would like to avoid the crowds and the traffic that Memorial Day Weekend, you will find me at Piedmont Park for the free annual Atlanta Jazz Festival, sponsored by the City of Atlanta. The festival features a stellar line-up of Atlanta-based and national acts. Check out this line-up: Saturday, May 28, 2022: 1 pm – Keibl Williams and The Wolfpack 3 pm – T.C. Carson 5 pm – Tia Fuller’s Intersections 7 pm – Masego - 9 pm – Herbie Hancock


Monday, May 30, 2022 - 1pm – Julie Dexter 3pm – Naia Izumi 5 pm – Makaya McCraven 7pm – Kathleen Bertrand 9 pm – George Benson

You will have one week to rest up because June is also chock full of sights, sounds, food and fun. Enjoy!
DETROIT – The all-new Hyundai Tucson N Line is not all new. It is a sportier model of the Tucson crossover.

It is a whopping 6-inches longer and a half inch wider and taller.

Under the hood is a 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine that made 187 horsepower and 178 pound-feet of torque. It was mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission.

The new SUV embodies what Hyundai designers call ‘Parametric Dynamics’ with kinetic, jewel-like surface detailing that emphasizes Tucson’s distinct identity. This works around hard buttons, a hoodless digital gauge cluster, and multi-air ventilation, a temperature-adjusting system providing diffused airflow on the front passengers. This indirect, diffusing ventilation system reduces potentially unpleasant airflow and is unique in the automotive industry.

The Tucson had a multi-grained interior. It is spacious. Climate controls were almost perfect, the Tucson’s multi-air ventilation system provides diffused airflow in the back, smart cruise control with stop and go, satellite radio, streaming, tilt and telescoping steering wheel.

There is a full menu of equipment. The sticker price is $33,670.

The interior offers three new technologies, including a 10.25-inch full-touch screen exempting of hard buttons, a hoodless digital gauge cluster, and multi-air ventilation, a temperature-adjusting system providing diffused airflow on the front passengers. This indirect, diffusing ventilation system reduces potentially unpleasant airflow and is unique in the automotive industry.

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