



Meet a doctor who is a strong community advocate B1

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# Richmond Free Press

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# Stay at home

## Gov. Northam issues order through June 10

By George Copeland Jr.

Life during the continuing coronavirus pandemic is taking a fresh turn following Gov. Ralph S. Northam's stepped-up effort to stem the spread of COVID-19 in the state.

On Monday, Gov. Northam turned his request for people to stay at home into an order.

The order, which mirrors those in adjoining states and the District of Columbia, requires all residents to remain in their homes, and allows those who flagrantly disobey to be hit with a misdemeanor charge that could carry jail time.

Despite the new teeth, the order makes allowances for shopping for food, seeking medical treatment and other essential activities,

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while continuing to urge people to follow health guidelines for social distancing by staying 6 feet apart from others.

There are plenty of loopholes, including exceptions for essential businesses such as groceries and pharmacies and for individuals going to work or undertaking other activities deemed essential. Restaurants can offer take-out or curbside service.

"Go out when you need to, not when you want to," Gov. Northam, a physician, stressed during Wednesday's press briefing. "The sooner we can put this health crisis behind us, the sooner our lives can return to normal."

The order is in place until June 10, barring any future amendments or dismissals. Gov. Northam said that based on various models, the surge in cases in Virginia could come between late April and late May.

The order also brought dismay from the state Republican Party that the date will impact the GOP's June 9 primary to choose a candidate to challenge incumbent Democratic U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner.

The order comes as the number of cases of COVID-19 in the state rose to 1,484, with 34 deaths and 305 hospitalizations as of Wednesday, according to the Virginia Department of Health. Of those hospitalized, state Health Commissioner M. Norman Oliver said during Wednesday's update, 145 are in intensive care units and 108 are on ventilators.

More than half of those who tested positive for coronavirus are said to be under age 50, and the

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Sandra Sellars/Richmond Free Press

A deserted stretch of a street in Byrd Park reflects a City Hall decision to close the park gates Monday and block vehicle access to Strollers Lane, Westover Road and Trafford Road. The goal is to reduce driving inside the park and provide more space for people to move around while keeping their distance, according to the city Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities.

## Richmond family dealing with death of loved one from coronavirus

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Richmonder Paul Amos Wright had a job he loved.

And it killed him.

Mr. Wright, 78, is among Virginia's latest victims of COVID-19.

He appears to have contracted the disease while in New Jersey doing the work he so enjoyed — overseeing the training of new bus drivers for Greyhound Lines.

One of Greyhound's longest serving

employees after 48 years, Mr. Wright died Monday, March 30, 2020, at Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital, where he had been in intensive care.

His death occurred two days after another instructor for Greyhound, Phillip Deberry, 72, also of Richmond and who was with Mr. Wright in New Jersey, died at the same hospital.

Mr. Wright's death is personal to the Free Press as his niece, April Coleman, is the vice president for production of the newspaper.

But his death also exemplifies the insidious and widespread nature of the contagious virus that easily can be transmitted between people even if those carrying it are not showing symptoms.

Mr. Wright, Mr. Deberry and seven other Greyhound instructors all tested positive for coronavirus after taking part in a driver training class that began March 8 in Pleasantville, N.J., near Atlantic City. At this point, the company has not

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Mr. Wright

## Rev. Joseph Lowery, head of SCLC and dean of civil rights veterans, dies at 98



Associated Press file photo

The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, center, sits with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., left, and Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker at First African Baptist Church in Richmond during a Southern Christian Leadership Conference convention in September 1963.

Free Press wire, staff report

ATLANTA

The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery fought to end segregation, lived to see the election of the country's first African-American president and echoed the call for "justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream" in America.

For more than four decades after the death of his friend and civil rights icon, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the fiery Alabama preacher was on the front line of the battle for equality, with an unforgettable delivery that rivaled Dr. King's — and was often more unpredictable. Rev. Lowery had a knack for cutting to the core of the country's conscience with commentary steeped in scripture, refusing to back down whether the audience was a Jim Crow racist or a

U.S. president.

"We ask you to help us work for that day when black will not be asked to get in back; when brown can stick around; when yellow will be mellow; when the red man can get ahead, man; and when white will embrace what is right," Rev. Lowery prayed at former President Obama's inaugural benediction in 2009.

Rev. Lowery, 98, died Friday, March 27, 2020, at home in Atlanta surrounded by family members. He died from natural causes unrelated to the coronavirus outbreak, the statement said.

"Tonight, the great Reverend Joseph E. Lowery transitioned from earth to eternity," The King Center in Atlanta remembered Rev. Lowery in a tweet last Friday night. "He was a champion for civil rights, a challenger of injustice, a

dear friend to the King family."

Rev. Lowery, considered the dean of the civil rights veterans, co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. King in 1957 and served as its president and chief executive officer for two decades — restoring the organization's financial stability and pressuring businesses not to trade with South Africa's apartheid-era regime — before retiring in 1998.

In his work with the SCLC, he came to Richmond, Hampton Roads and other parts of Virginia several times through the years, said Andrew Shannon, vice president of the Virginia State Unit of the SCLC.

One iconic photo from September 1963 shows Rev. Lowery, then vice president of the SCLC, Dr. King and longtime King aide

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## RPS ramping up online learning

By Jeremy M. Lazarus and Ronald E. Carrington

Distance learning via computers soon could become more robust for public school students in Richmond while schools are closed.

Seeking to match Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico schools in providing online instruction that meets state standards, Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Jason Kamras and his staff are making preparations to distribute an initial 8,000 computers to homes to ensure every K-12 student is again linked to quality instruction.

Parents are being asked to complete a survey on whether their children need a computer and/or internet access so that RPS can find out the level of demand. The surveys are available at RPS food distribution sites, via text message or online at www.rvaschools.net/Page/7435. As of Monday evening, 500 parents had submitted surveys.

Without waiting for survey results and using grants and a School Board-approved shift in the use of some funds, Mr. Kamras has ordered another 3,371 Chromebooks for \$1.18 million and is looking for another \$1.6 million to order 4,629 more.

The rest of the money could come from corporate donations and RPS' share of the federal stimulus money,

he indicated.

He estimated that RPS might need up to 16,000 Chromebooks, based on Census data, though no one actually knows what resources students have, including cell phones that can use applications to connect with the online instruction that RPS currently makes available.

The goal, Mr. Kamras said, is to reach students who lack such equipment or an internet connection, and to use wireless hot spots and the 60 days of free internet service that providers like Comcast are now offering to get students connected.

At least 8,000 students and possibly more already are connected and able to take courses online, RPS estimates, but concern is about the impact of school closures on those who lack the connections.

That's a big worry for a school system that ranks among the state leaders in dropouts, absenteeism and other indicators of poor educational performance. The closure of schools appears likely to make it harder to get students to stay involved in organized learning.

How quickly the computers will be delivered is unknown. Based on the surveys, distribution is to be

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Mr. Kamras



Regina H. Boone/Richmond Free Press

### Rolling along

Everyone needs a break outdoors, particularly during this time of pandemic and orders to stay home and away from people. Rose Mukami Bartosh, 4, rolls along on her colorful bike, with her mom, Muthoni Imungi, not far behind last Sunday. The pair was spotted in the 3400 block of Fendall Avenue near Westwood Avenue in North Side.

# Gov. Northam issues 'stay-at-home' order through June 10

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highest concentration of positive cases centered in Henrico and Chesterfield counties, Northern Virginia and cities on the Peninsula.

Among the deceased are the first Richmond residents to die from the virus, two men in their 70s who recently worked in New Jersey. Health officials are currently working to trace their movements and potential contacts.

"Every loss we experience at the hands of this disease is tragic," said Dr. Danny T.K. Avula, director of the Richmond City and Henrico health districts. "I hope this news gives our community even more resolve to stay home, strictly follow the isolation and quarantine guidelines and to limit our physical interactions with others."

Last week, Gov. Northam downplayed the need for a stay-at-home order, while emphasizing that state officials are treating the presence of coronavirus as "a very dynamic situation" that requires constant monitoring.

Concern that people were not getting the message ratcheted up during the last weekend as crowds gathered at Virginia's beaches and recreational centers in clear defiance of guidelines and restrictions already in place. Even after the stay-at-home order went into effect, some residents across the state continued to ignore it and the threat of getting sick or making others ill.

"It is clear more people need to hear this basic message — stay home," Gov. Northam said.

The concern is that the number of people needing hospitalization will soon overwhelm available health care bed space and intensive care units. The virus is insidious as it is easily transmitted by contact through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People who have the virus can spread it even if they show no symptoms of illness or have a mild case. Because there is no vaccine and no mass testing for the virus, health experts and government officials are encouraging people in increasingly stronger terms to keep their distance from one another.

A Liberty University student was diagnosed with COVID-19 days after the college reopened to students over the objections of Gov. Northam and in contrast to other public and private colleges and universities that sent students home to complete their coursework online.

President Trump, who has downplayed the severity of the threat as America outpaces every other country in terms of the number of infections, was in Norfolk last Saturday to see the launch of the 1,000-bed naval hospital ship Comfort to New York. The ship reached Manhattan on Monday afternoon and seeks to aid the city's hospitals with an influx of medical staff, hospital beds and space for patients who need care but aren't infected with the virus.

Even as the Comfort was welcomed with applause, problems with other national and local health responses remain. Despite receiving this week a third shipment of face shields, gowns and masks from the national stockpile, Virginia continues having problems getting critical medical equipment, the governor said, as the state is forced to bid against other states and their own health systems for it.

Various efforts are underway to fill the gaps in equipment, testing and potentially needed bed space. Multiple colleges and health systems are working to establish temporary medical spaces to lessen the load on hospitals, with Virginia Commonwealth University converting its Honors College dormitory, formerly Metropolitan Hospital, into a temporary hospital for non-COVID-19 patients ahead of an expected surge in patients.

The governor also announced Wednesday that the Hampton Convention Center, an Exxon-Mobil facility in Northern Virginia and a site in Richmond, which was not disclosed, have been selected as temporary hospital sites by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to handle the anticipated surge. Additional sites west of Richmond also are being considered, he said.

Last Friday, Virginia's Title 32 request was approved, allowing federal funding for the state's National Guard units that are helping during the pandemic. A separate request for federal major disaster status is under consideration after being submitted Monday, officials said.

As for local elections scheduled for some jurisdictions in May and congressional primaries in June, Gov. Northam urged voters on Wednesday to request and cast absentee ballots by mail to avoid going to the polls.

But questions remain about how Virginia officials should proceed in the weeks to come.

Virginia Republicans, in a letter to Gov. Northam on Tuesday, called for vetoes of or amendments to an array of energy and

business regulatory bills approved during the recent General Assembly session, calling them an unnecessary burden on economic stability. There also are calls for Gov. Northam to veto or delay enactment of bills to raise the state's minimum wage and other pro-worker legislation that are seen as raising business costs at a time when such increases would be unaffordable.

Richmond Mayor Levar M. Stoney affirmed the city's commitment to the stay-at-home order in a statement on Monday. He ordered the closure of the city's school playgrounds and recreation areas and restricted access to the James River for recreation. He kept parks open for individual biking, walking, running and hiking. He also continued to keep City Hall and other city buildings, including libraries, closed.

"We will get through this crisis, but for the sake of our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable among us, I beg Richmonders to take this seriously," Mayor Stoney said. "We are all safer and stronger at home."

## VCU researcher asks: Could AR-12 help combat COVID-19?

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Dr. Paul Dent is frustrated that a virus-killing compound he spent years investigating is not being used as a treatment in the current coronavirus pandemic.

The Virginia Commonwealth University researcher is watching people dying from coronavirus in hospitals in Richmond and across the country. But he can't find anyone interested in testing the medication that appears to have the potential to save those who are suffering from the infection that invades the lungs.

Despite well-documented research in his VCU lab and other places showing that the compound called AR-12 can kill every kind of virus, including the SARS-style coronavirus, no clinical trials have been authorized or conducted on extremely ill patients in a last-ditch effort to save them.

Dr. Dent said that he and VCU cancer specialist Dr. Andrew Poklepovic recommended AR-12 in responding to a recent request from the National Institutes of Health for treatment ideas for coronavirus, but has not heard anything back.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also has not made inquiries about AR-12, although the research on AR-12 has been available for years and is well known in the medical research community.

Officials from the CDC and NIH, and Dr. M. Norman Oliver, Virginia's state health commissioner, have not responded to queries from the Free Press concerning AR-12 and human trials.

Dr. Dent devoted more than 11 years to investigating AR-12 and has published several papers showing how AR-12 works to destroy viruses. He is concerned that the research is being ignored at a time when he sees AR-12 as essential to preventing needless deaths.

He said he and Dr. Poklepovic are trying to reach out to contacts to see if someone might consider beginning the clinical testing process.

The first step would be to secure access to a BioSafety Level 3 lab, Dr. Dent said. "We have one at VCU, but it only works on bacteria. So we are looking elsewhere."

AR-12 was first discovered at Ohio State University. A researcher there, Dr. Ching-Shih Chen, came up with it in looking for a new cancer treatment. AR-12 is derived from the popular arthritis remedy Celebrex.

Dr. Dent, who runs an innovative cancer research lab at VCU and is widely recognized for his work, was intrigued by the discovery and was curious about the mechanism that made the drug effective after the initial explanation Dr. Chen proposed was ruled out in further testing.

Starting in 2005, Dr. Dent and his team at VCU began the work that determined how AR-12 worked. That work continued through 2016. At the time, the Zika virus was rampant, but Dr. Dent was unable to spur interest in clinical trials at the time.

According to Dr. Dent, AR-12 attacks the "chaperone" proteins that enable every type of virus to reproduce and take over normal cells. With AR-12 inhibiting the chaperones, the virus cannot form its correct shape, becomes dysfunctional and dies, he said.

In a study published in 2016 in the Journal of Cell Physiology, Dr. Dent reported on the effectiveness of AR-12 against a wide range of viruses, including drug-resistant strains of HIV, Ebola, flu, mumps and measles, based on lab research and animal studies. He also has documented its effectiveness against bacteria.

Similar research at labs in Arizona, Maryland, Argentina, Australia and Spain have confirmed the findings, published research shows. So has the U.S. Army's medical research arm, which has reported positive findings on its 2017 tests of AR-12 as a treatment for Ebola and drug-resistant strains of MRSA and E.coli bacteria.

So far, no public or private interests have sought to undertake any other clinical work with AR-12.

VCU Health officials also have not commented.

## RPS ramping up online learning

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through the RPS food delivery operation at schools or via school buses carrying food into neighborhoods.

"We are hoping to begin deploying the Chromebooks within two weeks," Mr. Kamras told The Free Press in a text on Monday afternoon. "They need to be configured for home use first."

As best as can be determined, the connection between students, teachers and instruction remains haphazard at best, with some teachers distributing paper lessons.

RPS spokeswoman Danielle Pierce stated, "In the coming days, we'll share our Spring 2020 Learning at Home Plan, which will include the use of instructional software and include daily grade-level videos, instruction by select staff and guidance on independent work and reading."

She described the learning plan as an "immediate response to the crisis at hand and not a long-term shift to the way we deliver curriculum and instruction."

For students who have home internet, RPS enables them to connect to online classes offered through Edgenuity, Gizmos, Reflex, i-Ready and Imagine Learning, with teachers able to monitor progress and step in to help students who get stuck.

"These resources continue to be available to students who already were using them during the year, and we are expanding access to various instructional software through our Spring learning plan," Ms. Pierce stated.

## Richmond family dealing with death of loved one from coronavirus

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disclosed how many of the 14 trainees were infected.

Born in Garysburg, N.C., Mr. Wright worked all his life, said his wife of 46 years, Myrtle B. Wright, who has not felt ill, but is now under quarantine until April 7. That has delayed her from making arrangements for her spouse's memorial service, which could end up being live-streamed.

"He was an awesome husband and family man," Mrs. Wright said. "He was an easygoing person who would do anything for anyone."

Mr. Wright had been involved with buses since he was 18. He first worked in bus maintenance for Trailways in Richmond and Roanoke. But after 10 years of painting buses, he got his commercial driver's license and began driving for James River Bus Co. in Richmond. He switched to Greyhound as a driver around 1972, his wife said.

The couple met when he picked up an order at Anderson's Grill on 2nd Street where she worked part time for relatives who owned it.

Mr. Wright drove for 24 years and became an instructor for new drivers. In 1997, he was one of three people Greyhound promoted to manager of driver development to oversee the training of new drivers.

Respected by his peers, the devoted company man was proud of the position, his wife said, and was always dressed in a suit and a tie, with shoes polished, to reflect that he had left bus driving behind.

"He would go to different places — Boston, New York, Jacksonville," overseeing instructors like Mr. Deberry, Mrs.

Wright said. "He loved what he did, and he loved the company. His life revolved around family and Greyhound. He never wanted to retire."

Mrs. Wright said her husband, before leaving for the latest class, expressed concern about going given the upheaval over coronavirus. He wished the company "would not have scheduled this school," Mrs. Wright said her husband told her. "He said he was kind of leery about going to the area in the North that was then the most affected."

He got to New Jersey on March 8. The class eventually was cut short after President Trump declared a state of emergency on March 17, but the virus was already making an impact. Relatives had to go and pick up Mr. Deberry, who quickly became ill.

Mrs. Wright said her husband was barely able to make the drive home. She said she immediately took him to the emergency room. He was treated, but not admitted to the hospital. He was not tested for nor diagnosed with coronavirus, Mrs. Wright said.

She rushed him back to the hospital on March 24 after he continued to decline and he was admitted to St. Mary's Hospital. By Friday, March 27, he was transferred to the ICU where Mr. Deberry was taking his final breaths.

Mr. Wright, who had been on a ventilator to help him breathe, succumbed on Monday.

In addition to his wife, survivors include two daughters, Gaynell W. Kersey and Ollie W. Jones; two sons, Curtis Wright and Travis Wright; his mother, Josephine Black; his stepfather, Marshal Black; a sister, Joyce W. Thompson; five brothers, Alfred Wright, Clifton Wright, Glenn Wright, James Wright and Michael Wright; 14 grandchildren; and 20 great-grandchildren.

## Rev. Joseph Lowery dies at 98

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Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker conferring during a SCLC convention held at First African Baptist Church in Richmond.

Most recently, Rev. Lowery was the keynote speaker at the 2006 Andrew Shannon Gospel Music Celebration and Solidarity Luncheon held in Hampton.

"He was a great friend and freedom fighter," Mr. Shannon said. "He fought for justice, freedom and equality for everybody. He stood on principle even if it was unpopular."

In one of many high-profile moments, Rev. Lowery drew a standing ovation at the 2006 funeral of Dr. King's widow, Coretta Scott King, when he criticized the war in Iraq, saying, "For war, billions more, but no more for the poor." The comment also drew head shakes from then-President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura Bush, who were seated behind Rev. Lowery on the pulpit.

In 2009, President Obama awarded Rev. Lowery the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Rev. Lowery's involvement in civil rights grew out of his Christian faith.

Born in Huntsville, Ala., in 1921, Rev. Lowery grew up in a Methodist church where his great-grandfather, the Rev. Howard Echols, was the first black pastor. His father, a grocery store owner, often protested racism in the community.

After college, Rev. Lowery edited a newspaper and taught school in Birmingham, but the idea of becoming a minister "just kept gnawing and gnawing at me," he said. After marrying Evelyn Gibson, a Methodist preacher's daughter, he began his first pastorate in Birmingham in 1948.

Like Dr. King, Rev. Lowery juggled his civil rights work with ministry. He pastored United Methodist churches in Atlanta for decades and continued preaching long after retiring. He often preached that racial discrimination in housing, employment and health care was at odds with such

fundamental Christian values as human worth and the brotherhood of man.

"I've never felt your ministry should be totally devoted to making a heavenly home. I thought it should also be devoted to making your home here heavenly," he once said.

Rev. Lowery remained active in fighting issues such as war, poverty and racism long after retirement, and survived prostate cancer and throat surgery after he beat Jim Crow.

"We have lost a stalwart of the Civil Rights Movement, and I have lost a friend and mentor," House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn of South Carolina said in a statement last Saturday. "His wit and candor inspired my generation to use civil disobedience to move the needle on 'liberty and justice for all.' It was his life's work and his was a life well lived."

Former President Clinton remembered walking with Rev. Lowery across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., on the 35th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. "Our country has lost a brave, visionary leader in the struggle for justice and a champion of its promise, still unrealized, of equality for all Americans. Throughout his long good life, Joe Lowery's commitment to speaking truth to power never wavered, even in the hottest fires."

Rev. Lowery's wife, who worked alongside her husband of nearly 70 years and served as head of SCLC/WOMEN, died in 2013.

Rev. Lowery was pastor of the Warren Street Methodist Church in Mobile, Ala., in the 1950s when he met Dr. King, who then lived in Montgomery, Ala. Rev. Lowery's meetings with Dr. King, the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy and other civil rights activists led to the SCLC's formation in 1957. The group became a leading force in the civil rights struggle of the 1960s.

He became SCLC president in 1977 following the resignation of Rev. Abernathy, who had taken the job after Dr. King was

assassinated in 1968. He took over an SCLC that was deeply in debt and losing members rapidly. He helped the organization survive and guided it on a new course that embraced more mainstream social and economic policies.

Mrs. King once said Rev. Lowery "has led more marches and been in the trenches more than anyone since Martin."

He was arrested in 1983 in North Carolina for protesting the dumping of toxic wastes in a predominantly black county and in 1984 in Washington while demonstrating against apartheid in South Africa.

He recalled a 1979 confrontation in Decatur, Ala., when he and others were protesting the case of a mentally disabled black man charged with rape. He recalled that bullets whizzed inches above their heads and a group of Klan members confronted them.

In the mid-1980s, he led a boycott that persuaded the Winn-Dixie grocery chain to stop selling South African canned fruit and frozen fish when that nation was in the grip of apartheid.

He also continued to urge black people to exercise their hard-won rights by registering to vote.

"Black people need to understand that the right to vote was not a gift of our political system but came as a result of blood, sweat and tears," he said in 1985.

In a 1998 interview, Rev. Lowery said he was optimistic that true racial equality would one day be achieved.

"I believe in the final triumph of righteousness," he said. "The Bible says weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

A member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Rev. Lowery is survived by his three daughters, Yvonne Kennedy, Karen Lowery and Cheryl Lowery.

While plans are underway for a private family service in alignment with public health guidelines on social distancing amid the pandemic, the family said a public memorial will be held in late summer or early fall.



# Front porch portraits: Life in the time of the coronavirus **B2**

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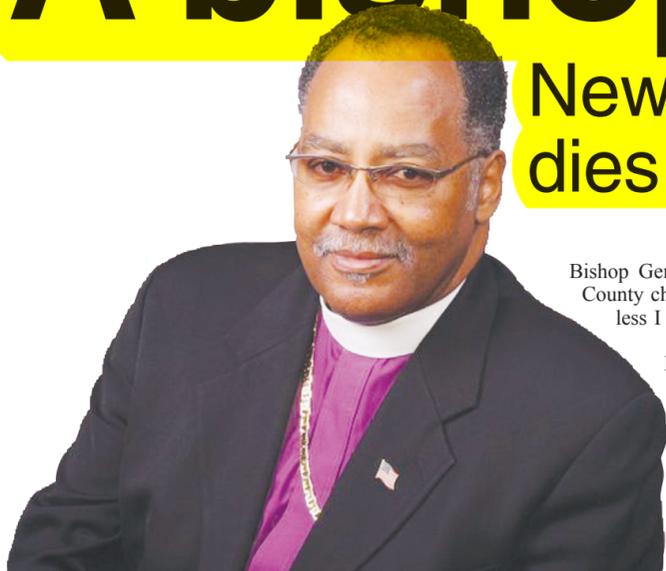
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APRIL 16-18, 2020

# A bishop till the end

## New Deliverance's Gerald O. Glenn dies of COVID-19



By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Bishop Gerald Otis Glenn vowed to keep his Chesterfield County church open during the coronavirus pandemic “unless I am in jail or in the hospital.”

Just three weeks later, the respected leader of New Deliverance Evangelistic Church joined the list of people who died from the coronavirus.

On Easter Sunday, church Elder Bryan Nevers announced “with an exceedingly sorrowful and heavy heart” that the prelate who founded the church “had transitioned from labor to reward.”

The announcement was made to members who tuned in remotely to the closed church’s live video feed.

Bishop Glenn died around 9 p.m. Saturday, April 11, 2020, in a local hospital. He was 66. His wife and the first lady of the church, Marcietia S. Glenn, 65, remains hospitalized with the virus. Her condition has not been released, but the Glenns’ daughter, Mar-Gerie Crawley, posted on Facebook that her mother is recovering.

Bishop Glenn’s death from COVID-19 drew attention from media across the nation and overseas. Much of the coverage focused on his defiance, along with other church leaders, of the social distancing recommendations by state, federal and world health officials prior to Gov. Ralph S. Northam’s March 23 executive order banning gatherings of more than 10 people.

In his final, in-person church service on Sunday, March 22, Bishop Glenn declared, “I firmly believe that God is larger than this dreaded virus. You can quote me on that.”

He repeated, “You can quote me on that” as more than 180 church members in attendance clapped in approval.

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# COVID-19 testing to begin in high-risk areas of city

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

The Richmond City Health District plans to ramp up testing for coronavirus in neighborhoods that appear to be the most at risk — low-income areas of the city that are home to many African-Americans.

Dr. Danny Avula, director of the health district, announced Monday that testing for COVID-19 will begin at the resource centers of the six largest public housing communities — Creighton Court, Fairfield Court, Gilpin Court, Hillside Court, Mosby Court and Whitcomb Court — in addition to the Southwood Apartments and the Broad Rock Community Center, both in South Side.

He said a schedule will be established for testing at one of those locations each day, with expectations that 100 to 150 people could be tested daily.

Dr. Avula said the state’s testing capacity has expanded, enabling the health district to test people who are asymptomatic as well as those who might be showing symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever,

coughing or difficulty breathing.

He said staff also is working with nursing homes and other senior residential communities in a bid to reduce the virus’ spread to a group also considered high risk.



Dr. Avula

Dr. Avula made the announcement at a briefing Monday at which he and Mayor Levar M. Stoney noted that a majority of people in Richmond testing positive for the virus are African-American.

Based on the numbers as of Monday, there are 164 confirmed cases and seven deaths in Richmond among a population of nearly 230,000 people.

However, of those infected, 62 percent, or 102 people, are African-American; 24 percent, or 40 people, are Caucasian; and about 4 percent are of mixed race or other ethnicities. He said race was not identified for the remaining 10 percent.

According to the most recent federal data, Richmond’s population is 47.8 percent African-American,

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Steve Helber/Associated Press

Dr. James Wright, medical director for Canterbury Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center, talks during a news conference last week. The health care center has recorded 45 COVID-19 deaths at the facility.

# Nursing homes on front lines battling the coronavirus

By Ronald E. Carrington

Nursing homes are hot spots for the spreading coronavirus pandemic in Virginia, with 60 of the state’s 108 outbreaks occurring in long-term care facilities, state Health Department numbers show.

Roughly 10 percent of the state’s 6,500 cases of COVID-19 and at least 45 of the state’s 195 deaths are from long-term care facilities, according to the data.

But there is a lag in reporting, state officials said Wednesday. At least one facility, Canterbury Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center in Henrico County, has reported 45 deaths as of April 15.

Gov. Ralph S. Northam announced last

week the creation of a state task force on nursing homes that will focus on boosting testing, staffing, personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies to contain and stem the spread of the coronavirus in long-term care facilities.

Dr. Laurie Forlano, an epidemiologist and deputy commissioner of the Virginia Department of Health, will direct the task force. She noted at a briefing last week that elderly people already are a vulnerable, high-risk population for the coronavirus.

“Nursing homes present added difficulties of communal spaces that make social distancing a challenge. And staff who work in multiple facilities increase the risk,” Dr. Forlano said.

The state also is tracking data on the number of positive cases and deaths in Virginia’s long-term care facilities and posting that data daily on the Virginia Health Department’s website, www.vdh.virginia.gov. However, the names of the facilities where the outbreaks have occurred are not made public.

Canterbury Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center has seen one of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks in the United States, even larger than the facility in Washington state that drew the national spotlight early on as the pandemic spread.

According to national reports, there have been more than 4,300 COVID-related deaths in nursing homes across the country.

State health officials stepped in at Canterbury to test residents and staff, and

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Creighton Court

Sandra Sellars/Richmond Free Press

# City budget amendments reflect reduced revenue anticipated from pandemic impact

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Richmond residents would not see any hikes in utility rates that would have added \$5.56 a month to the average bill beginning July 1.

Current city workers would not have to worry about layoffs or furloughs for now, but they would not see an increase in their pay either.

City departments would only be allowed to fill positions deemed critical and would have to eliminate all discretionary spending for items like magazines, training, travel and conference attendance.



Mayor Stoney

And Richmond Public Schools would see its contribution from the city shrink by \$10 million from the proposed increase of \$16 million.

Backed by what appears to be a majority consensus of City Council, Mayor Levar M. Stoney on Monday advanced large and small amendments to his budget proposal for the upcoming 2020-21 fiscal year — including jettisoning an initiative to boost the pay of public defenders and plans to hike funding to non-city organizations and nonprofits.

The goal: To enable the city to maintain a financial balance in steering through the uncharted

waters of the coronavirus recession.

In a briefing for City Council whose members mostly met remotely, city Budget Director Jay A. Brown said initial projections suggest that city revenues in the new fiscal year that begins July 1 would shrink at least \$38.5 million — or about 5 percent.

The biggest element of the spending plan — the general fund that pays for city operations — originally was projected to rise to \$782.6 million, but is now anticipated to fall to \$744.1 million.

The adjustments are similar to those being taken by surrounding counties amid the looming

# Washington NFL team drops its \$500,000 annual fee to train in Richmond

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

It is still up in the air whether the Washington NFL football team will hold its annual summer training camp in Richmond or whether there will even be a football season, given the coronavirus pandemic.

But if the team comes to Richmond to train, it won’t charge the city \$500,000 for the privilege of playing host.

That fee is being dropped, Mayor Levar M. Stoney and team officials jointly announced

on April 2.

The team also agreed to end collection of \$161,768 still due from the city’s Economic Development Authority, which manages the Richmond training center facility and the main building on Leigh Street that also houses some operations of the Bon Secours Health System.

If the team is no longer insisting on a payment, it would remove a key roadblock to a new contract to continue the relationship between the team and the city after this year.

The Washington team and the city have

not signed a new deal for the training camp to continue in 2021 and beyond, nor has the team exercised an option to extend the contract, according to Jim Nolan, Mayor Stoney’s press secretary.

“The discussions are ongoing,” Mr. Nolan stated in response to a Free Press query. “This latest development ... is an encouraging sign.”

The agreement to pay the team for training in Richmond was put in place in 2013 by former Mayor Dwight C. Jones and the EDA, and has long rankled City Council, which did not

have a say after authorizing the EDA to build a facility for the team.

Under the agreement, which was signed as the \$10 million training camp was being built and before the team held its first training camp in the summer of 2013, the EDA agreed to make an annual contribution to the team in the form of in-kind services and cash to help defray some of the incremental expense of relocating the camp to Richmond.

Please turn to A4

# Sweeping changes signed into law by Gov. Northam

Free Press staff, wire report

Democratic Gov. Ralph S. Northam has signed sweeping changes into state law that will allow people to vote up to 45 days before Election Day, remove jail time for possession of marijuana, impose new controls on gun sales and grant Richmond and other localities authority to remove Confederate statues from public property.

The changes that become effective July 1 highlight the new power of Democratic majorities in the Virginia House of Delegates and state Senate that brought passage of long-sought progressive measures that previous Republican majorities had blocked.

However, the governor called for a slow-down on one high-profile measure — the first increase in the state's minimum wage in 11 years. Low-wage workers in Virginia might have to wait another year to get a \$2.25 an hour increase in pay, from \$7.25 an hour to \$9.50 an hour.

Despite outrage from advocates and labor unions, Gov. Northam is calling for the General Assembly to postpone the approved increase in Virginia's minimum wage until to May 1, 2021, as a recession looms. The increase was to be effective Jan. 1.

The House and Senate reconvene next Wednesday, April 22, to consider amendments and vetoes the governor has made to legislation passed by the legislature earlier this year.

Amid a torrent of layoffs and furloughs because of the



Gov. Northam

coronavirus pandemic, and with unemployment skyrocketing above levels from the Great Depression of the 1930s, businesses had urged the governor to delay the wage increase to avoid increasing the financial stress on employers.

Meanwhile, Gov. Northam signed legislation creating a fine for those caught with small amounts of marijuana and turning Election Day in November into a state holiday and eliminating the Lee-Jackson Holiday honoring Confederates.

The governor's signature on legislation also means Confederate monuments could be eliminated from public property, a prospect that Henrico Delegate Lamont Bagby, chair of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, welcomed.

Following the bill's signing, Delegate Bagby wrote in a social media post that the action caps years of advocacy by caucus members and represents a victory for black Virginians

"who have struggled, and continue to struggle, in the pursuit of justice and equity."

Gov. Northam also signed bills Saturday that begin the process of replacing Virginia's statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee in the U.S. Capitol and removes from the state law defunct laws that once undergirded racial separation and white supremacy.

The bills he signed also provide for automatic voter registration by people getting licenses and conducting other business with the state Department of Motor Vehicles and remove other obstacles to voting, including a requirement to have a photo ID.

New gun control laws the governor signed — and that the Virginia Citizens Defense League is preparing to challenge as unconstitutional — include one requiring all gun sellers, licensed or not, to perform a background check on purchasers. Others restore a sales limit of one handgun a month, authorize courts and police to remove guns from people deemed dangerous to themselves or others and require owners to report the theft or loss of weapons to authorities within 48 hours.

## COVID-19 testing to begin in city

Continued from A1

40.4 percent Caucasian and 6.7 percent Latino.

"This follows a trend seen across the country," Mayor Stoney said. "While the virus does not discriminate by race, creed or gender and knows no boundaries, this highlights the disparity in health and health care that has been ever present."

He said the virus' impact tends to be greater in poorer communities where there are more underlying health conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, that make people more vulnerable to serious infections.

Mayor Stoney said he did not know when the emergency would end. There

have been conflicting projections of when the infections would peak in Virginia, from late April to mid-August, creating uncertainty.

"What we know is that we haven't yet reached the apex and have not started going downhill," Mayor Stoney said. "Our best weapon is to stay home if you can, and to wear masks if you cannot and wash your hands thoroughly and often."

Meanwhile, with schools closed statewide through the end of the academic year, Richmond Public Schools is stepping up its efforts to link students to online learning.

RPS Superintendent Jason Kamras said that along with creating a robust package of educational programming and classes at RPS@home for parents and students to

access, the school system this week began distributing laptop computers to students who need them.

He said RPS received 12,000 requests for computers through a survey and will move to fill all of them, starting with high school students. He said distribution to middle school and elementary students would begin next week, with all distributions following health guidelines.

He noted that RPS also is serving 13,000 meals a day Monday through Friday through 55 distribution sites across the city, thanks to staff and volunteers helping to reduce hunger.

Details on RPS food pickup sites: [www.rvaschools.net](http://www.rvaschools.net), then click on "Meal Distribution Sites."

## A bishop till the end

Continued from A1

He told the congregation and those listening from home that "people are healed" in the sanctuary. He also pronounced himself "essential" in explaining why he was violating safety protocols by allowing "way more than 10 people" into the service.

"I am a preacher — I talk to God," he said.

By the following week, he was showing signs of illness, his family said, and was back and forth to hospital emergency rooms. He was not initially tested for COVID-19, his family said.

According to media reports, Ms. Crawley said Bishop Glenn was not alarmed initially because he had diverticulitis, an intestinal inflammation that often caused fevers and infections.

He repeatedly was sent home from the emergency room until his condition led to him finally to be admitted, tested and confirmed as sick from the coronavirus, along with Mrs. Glenn, about a week before his death.

Tributes poured in, including from two former Virginia governors and current U.S. senators who have known him for years.

"Bishop Glenn was my great friend for more than 20 years," Sen. Mark R. Warner wrote in a statement. "He was an extraordinary spiritual and community leader, and we will miss him very much."

In 2002, Sen. Warner surprised Bishop Glenn by inviting him to deliver the invocation at his gubernatorial inauguration. During his tenure as governor, Sen. Warner also tapped Bishop Glenn to lead a task force focusing on initiatives to reduce crime in minority communities.

"He was a friend and a pillar of Richmond's faith community," Sen. Tim Kaine stated on social media. "May all do as much for so many."

Bishop Glenn was elevated to a bishop in November 2006 when he was inducted into the College of Bishops of the Church of God in Christ with which his church is affiliated.

A former police officer in Portsmouth, Bishop Glenn was a native of Kingsville, Texas, and came to Virginia around 1957 after his mother married and moved to Petersburg. A barrel-chested man with a powerful speaking voice who openly wore his faith and was outspoken on various issues, he credited his late mother, Joan P. Andrews, with encouraging him to become a minister.

"We loved to play church when I was growing up," Bishop Glenn said in a Free Press interview published in January 2015. "I would always end up as the preacher, and I would preach to one of my cousins and the other cousin would sing. My mother always encouraged me and told me I would make a good preacher."

A U.S. Army veteran, he launched his church in his living room in 1995 with his wife and 20 charter members. The church quickly grew and held services at George Wythe High School for several years until the congregation secured land at 1701 Turner Road, where the sanctuary was built and opened in 1998.

At one point, the church reported 2,000 members, but recently reported about 750 members. So far, there has been no announcement of a successor.

Bishop Glenn had a wide-ranging career outside the church, including serving nearly two years as director of the state Department of Juvenile Justice under former Gov. Jim Gilmore. He quit abruptly Dec. 1, 1999, amid conflicts with the board overseeing the department that operates state prison centers for youths.

Bishop Glenn said at the time that he decided to quit because his hard work was not appreciated by the Gilmore administration.

Four months later, he drew attention when he led a boycott of county malls after the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors declared April as Confederate History and Heritage Month. Joined by others, the protest appeared to reduce the number of shoppers and also brought the county unwelcome attention when white supremacist leader David Duke came to promote shopping.

The protest ended after the county offered conciliatory words and virtually ensured Bishop Glenn that the resolution fiasco would not be repeated.

Ironically, Bishop Glenn said that just as he and Chesterfield officials reached their agreement, he was forced to resign as a volunteer chaplain for the Chesterfield County Police Department. He had been the first and only African-American pastor among the dozen working with police to comfort relatives of accident and crime victims.

Bishop Glenn said he was told he had become too controversial because of the protest. He said he resigned as chaplain when he was told he would have to take a 90-day leave of absence and undergo a review of his fitness by a chaplain board.

Final arrangements to celebrate Bishop Glenn's life were pending at the Free Press' deadline.

## Nursing homes on the front lines

Continued from A1

found that 84 residents and 35 staff members were positive for COVID-19.

According to media reports, Canterbury's medical director, Dr. Jim Wright, said the facility's staffers who have tested positive for coronavirus can work with patients with the virus without fear, based on the assumption that people who have tested positive may have immunity from getting the virus a second time.

Officials said that Canterbury has stepped up health security measures and are closely following guidelines offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as state and local health departments.

Dr. Danny Avula, director of the Richmond and Henrico County health districts, said long-term care facilities receiving federal dollars for Medicare and Medicaid have requirements for elderly people in their care during the pandemic, including restricting visitation, isolating patients testing positive for the virus and screening staff every day for COVID-19.

On Monday, Gov. Northam was asked about any state policies regarding nursing home notifying families of their loved ones'

conditions during the pandemic.

"At the facility level, obviously there's going to be variation in practice," Gov. Northam responded. "However, our local health departments and COVID-19 task force will continue to recommend that facilities keep families informed with timely, accurate information. We are contemplating how to empower elderly facilities with the right communications tools and strategies."

Guardian Place, a senior facility on Hamilton Street in Richmond, confirmed that a resident tested positive for COVID-19 and is currently on the campus.

Vice President Maryanne Lee stated in an email to the Free Press, "Upon notification, Guardian Place's administration took immediate actions, increasing disinfecting of certain common areas, although the resident was not believed to have visited these areas. We remain in contact with the Health Department and will continue to abide by their directives. There is nothing more important than the health and safety of our residents and staff members."

Delores Roane, who moved into Guardian Place two months ago, said residents were asked to wear a mask, not to go out unless necessary and have no large

gatherings in common areas, including no partying.

"At 72, I don't do any partying," Ms. Roane said with a chuckle. "All of the social areas where we would sit and talk have been locked down and the chairs are now stacked up against the wall."

She said she takes a walk almost every day. The facility's weekly social programs, she said, have been shut down, along with the twice weekly transportation service.

"We mainly call each other and stay in our apartments," she said. Her son, she said, picks her up on occasion to take her grocery shopping or will drop off what she needs. Grocery stores, she added, also deliver.

Ms. Roane said she will follow the directions of the facility in order to stay healthy.

Gov. Northam underscored the sacrifice many people are making during this difficult time of pandemic to keep from catching the virus or spreading it to others.

"If we stop what we're doing too soon, it is clear that we will have a second peak," the governor said. "That could be worse than what we're dealing with right now. I appreciate our citizens' vigilance, perseverance and obeying the guidelines."

## City budget amendments reflect reduced revenue

Continued from A1

downturn, with Henrico County slashing \$100 million and Chesterfield County cutting \$50 million from anticipated revenues for the next fiscal year.

Dr. Brown cited projected revenue declines of 5 percent to 15 percent on an array of taxes, including those imposed on real estate, vehicles, restaurants, hotel rooms, concert tickets, business income, plus other revenue reductions.

But he said there are still too many unknowns, including the amount the city will receive in federal support, when the pandemic will end and how quickly Richmond might bounce back — likely requiring at least monthly budget reviews and adjustments.

Still some people, including at least two who might challenge Mayor Stoney in the November election, believe City Hall is too optimistic about how quickly a recovery will come after the pandemic ends and that far deeper cuts in city spending are needed.

Attorney and political strategist Paul Goldman, who is weighing a run, called the mayor's revamped budget proposal "fiscally irresponsible" in continuing wasteful spending.

Councilwoman Kim B. Gray, 2nd District, an announced mayoral candidate, said she believes Mayor Stoney's

budget amendments are based on a "best case scenario" but that the city should be presenting a budget reflecting "a worst case scenario."

Others on council, including Vice President Chris A. Hilbert, disagreed.

Ms. Gray, for example, is forecasting a far bigger drop in meal tax revenues than the city, based on her conversations with restaurant owners.

Dr. Brown said the city is projecting that revenues would shrink only \$4.7 million from the previously anticipated \$47 million, which includes about \$9 million to pay the cost of three new school buildings.

That's "unrealistic," according to industry veteran Michelle Williams, co-owner of the 25-year-old Richmond Restaurant Group, which has closed all eight restaurants and furloughed more than 400 employees.

She projects that as many as 150 to 200 of the city's more than 800 restaurants will never reopen as result of the financial losses.

Those that do, and she is preparing for her restaurant group to be among them, will be fortunate to do 50 percent to 60 percent of their pre-virus business in the first year after the threat ends, she said. It will take time to reopen, she said, and she anticipates a drop in patron numbers, in part due to the huge job losses that will make eating out a luxury for more people,

new wariness about being in crowded places and a virus-induced rise in home-cooked meals.

Ms. Williams acknowledged that national fast food operations that promote carryout service appear to be attracting more customers, but she said the sit-down restaurants that put Richmond on the national food map are starving if they are managing to stay open. She said those operations are seeing 75 percent to 90 percent reductions in business in providing delivery and carryout service.

Instead of considering the amount of tax to be gained, Ms. Williams said, the city ought to be offering help to this important sector of the city's economy and waive collection of meals taxes at least through June to allow the money to be used by restaurant owners and operators to pay rent, bank loans and cover other survival costs.

So far, Mayor Stoney has proposed waiving penalties and interest on late payments between April and June, far short of what Ms. Williams believes is needed.

While her group currently has the financial strength to keep the city's tax dollars separate, she said others are facing the terrible choice of spending the meals tax money to protect their restaurants or paying it to the city and going out of business.

"All of us need forgiveness on the taxes," she said.

## Washington NFL team drops its \$500,000 annual fee to train in Richmond

Continued from A1

The EDA later indicated that the team made it a condition of coming to Richmond. There also were internal concerns that rejection of the payment would mean the city had invested in a facility the team would walk away

from.

Last year, the council notified Mayor Stoney that it would not approve any new contract between the team and the city unless the payments were removed. At the time, Mayor Stoney agreed with the council and said that he "would not support an

extension of the agreement were the city to have to continue making a cash contribution," Mr. Nolan stated.

The contract modification has been under discussion among the parties for many months, according to the announcement, and comes at a time when the city is focusing its

resources on helping local businesses and residents respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The money saved by not paying the team is being used by the EDA to fund its small business loan program, the announcement stated.

"We're pleased we were able to

negotiate this relief for the city," Mayor Stoney stated. "We value the investments and contributions the team has made in our community and look forward to continuing our work together this year and further exploring ways to grow our partnership."



Meet board chair of Senior Connections **B1**

Lady Panthers coach headed to Detroit **A10**



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# Richmond Free Press

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## Revival linked to COVID-19

Deaths of 6 Metro Revival attendees may be connected to the coronavirus

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

A three-night revival in early March that brought more than 1,200 people from across the Richmond area to Cedar Street Baptist Church of God in Church Hill each evening appears to have helped spread the coronavirus in the African-American community.

Concerns about a connection

**Related stories inside; Photo Feature on B2**

between the virus and the 2020 Metro Revival sponsored by the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Richmond & Vicinity from March 9 through 11 have been rife among participants and Cedar Street church members.

Those concerns have now been validated by a Richmond Health District official and the release of information that had

been shared largely among African-American ministers who are members of the conference and those who participated in the revival but not made public.

"There were some small outbreaks within the larger outbreaks among the revival choir and another group from Cedar Street Baptist," Dr. Danny Avula, director of the Richmond City and Henrico County public health districts, stated April 24 in an email response to a Free Press query.

"Multiple lab-confirmed positive cases were identified from this church or from exposures at the revival," Dr. Avula stated.

While church members shared information with the Free Press about six participants who have died since the revival,



Dr. Avula

Dr. Avula stated that only one of the deaths has been confirmed as resulting from COVID-19.

"That may be the case," said one member of Cedar Street church. "No one has provided a cause of death for most of those who have died, and their deaths might be from unrelated reasons. We just don't know, but it has worried us."

Dr. Avula said the link between the virus and the revival turned up after one sick Chesterfield County resident tested positive.

Public health investigators found the connection based on interviews with people who had come in contact with the Chesterfield resident, Dr. Avula said. The Virginia Department of Health, through its local offices, then worked with the organizer of the revival to notify the pastors and others who attended.

The Cedar Street church members who spoke with the

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Regina H. Boone/Richmond Free Press

City Council President Cynthia I. Newbille listens intently during a news conference Tuesday before the opening of an outdoor COVID-19 testing site near Creighton Court in the East End. Behind her, medical personnel from the Richmond City Health District suit up to administer the tests.

## Dozens turn out for free testing at city sites

By Ronald E. Carrington

Zohao Maziri took short, painfully slow steps Monday as she fought the cool, windy weather to get tested for COVID-19 at Hillside Court on Richmond's South Side.

The 34-year-old Henrico County resident, a retail worker, began showing symptoms six days earlier of the virus that has infected nearly 15,000 people statewide and claimed the lives of 522 others.

Her pain was evident in her eyes that peered out just above the colorful mask she wore to cover her nose and mouth. State officials have urged people to wear face masks in public to stop the spread of infection.

"I have body aches, difficult breathing and weakness, as well

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Ronald E. Carrington/Richmond Free Press

At the Hillside Court testing site, participants received COVID-19 kits that containing a face mask, hand sanitizer, a reminder lapel button and condoms.

## Racist memorabilia puts Trammell in the hot seat



Ms. Trammell

her kitchen cabinet went viral, igniting a Twitter storm about the jar, its meaning and her racial insensitivity.

The "Mammy Jar," an Aunt Jemima-like caricature, is a ceramic figure of an obese black woman wearing an apron, with a kerchief on her head and her hands on her hips.

The photo, enlarged to focus on the jar, was tweeted by RVA Dirt, and has drawn comments from scores of people, including Ms. Trammell's City Council colleague, Dr. Michael Jones, 9th District, who said she needed to account for the racist iconography in her home.

Ms. Trammell issued a statement of apology. She declined a Free Press request for an interview.

"The figurine was given to me about 35 years ago and it has been on top of the kitchen cabinet ever since," her brief statement read. "I never thought much about it, but I do now realize that it is a hurtful item to many people," she stated. "For that reason, I have taken it down and discarded it. I apologize for the hurt I may have caused."

Mayor Levar M. Stoney, whom Ms. Trammell often publicly criticizes during City Council meetings, also commented on Twitter, saying: "I was raised by a woman who worked in the homes of white

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By Reginald Stuart

As a longtime member of Richmond City Council, Reva Trammell has come to be known as a reliable and outspoken advocate for the poor and elderly in the city's 8th District. She has a reputation for challenging her political peers to govern and enact policies that protect the least powerful.

So she was stunned recently when a photo she posted on Facebook that included a "Mammy Jar" sitting atop

her kitchen cabinet went viral, igniting a Twitter storm about the jar, its meaning and her racial insensitivity.

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Mayor Levar M. Stoney, whom Ms. Trammell often publicly criticizes during City Council meetings, also commented on Twitter, saying: "I was raised by a woman who worked in the homes of white

## Federal unemployment checks ease money worries for newly laid off during pandemic

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Just a few weeks ago, journalist-turned-bartender and server Lyndon German was feeling desperate.

In the past year, the 26-year-old Mechanicsville native has seen his reporter jobs in Hopewell and Petersburg end as a result of newsroom cutbacks, and now his restaurant job in a popular local café has disappeared as a result of COVID-19.

"My roommate worked in a mall operation, and she also was laid off" after non-essential brick-and-mortar operations were forced to close, Mr. German said. "We worried about where

the money would come from to the pay the rent and other bills. I tried looking for a job, but I didn't find a lot of opportunity in this environment."

For the moment, however, the desperation has disappeared now that unemployment money is hitting both their bank accounts.

Across the country, millions of unemployed people are suddenly in better shape financially thanks to Congress' creation of a \$600-a-week unemployment benefit that will last through July 31.

Those payments are not just for ordinary workers but also are going to members of the so-called "gig economy" who work as independent contractors in performing work not on a standard payroll.

The \$600 a week is big jump from the typical unemployment available in most states. In Virginia, the maximum payment is less than \$400 a week, with most people qualifying for about

Please turn to A4



Mr. German



Regina H. Boone/Richmond Free Press

## Working it out

Virginia Union University running back, Andre Mack, 23, works out with his 5-year-old nephew, Ka'Reem Moore, on Tuesday in the 700 block of 30th Street in Church Hill. The youngster wants to play football like his uncle, a junior at VUU. The coaching and workout sessions also keep Mr. Mack in shape until the Panthers practice again in August, according to Mr. Mack. Until then, Mr. Mack is finishing his college courses online and having Zoom meetings with his teammates.

## Oprah to keynote #Graduation 2020

Free Press wire report

Just when high school and college seniors across the country were starting to think all was lost for their graduation ceremonies canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic, one of the richest and most influential women in the nation comes to the rescue: Oprah Winfrey.

The 66-year-old media tycoon and global philanthropist is joining with Facebook and Instagram to give the Class of 2020 a star-studded,

Please turn to A4





A “Mammy Jar” sits atop a kitchen cabinet in a photo City Councilwoman Reva M. Trammell posted of herself and a friend on her Facebook page. The ceramic figure was circled in the photo by someone who saw the post on social media.

## Racist memorabilia puts Trammell in hot seat

Continued from A1

people. This image isn’t just ‘hurtful to many people.’ Call it what it is — just plain racist against Black people. Now that you know better, do better.”

Since its appearance after the Civil War in the mid-1800s, the mammy has been used as a stereotype of the African-American woman, according to arts and culture, history and sociology authorities.

The mammy character “served the political, social and economic interests of mainstream white Americans” before the end of legalized racial segregation, according to studies of racist artifacts by the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Michigan.

The mammy has been produced in cookie jar forms, as ashtrays, toys, postcards and candles, among other things. Once discarded as unwanted, undesirable memorabilia of a bygone era, it is now considered by some to be a prized collectible like the black lawn jockeys rooted in the era when many jockeys were black men.

Ms. Trammell’s possession of the mammy cookie jar with its racial history is not so unusual, said Dr. David Pilgrim, an applied sociologist and creator of the Jim Crow museum who also serves as chief diversity and inclusion officer at Ferris State University.

“Hundreds of thousands of Americans have racist objects in their homes” Dr. Pilgrim told the Free Press, noting that includes well-known personalities around the nation who own mammy figures. “People collect for different reasons,” Dr. Pilgrim said. He offered a list of reasons why mammy figures are considered desirable, ranging from their rising value in recent years to harvesting the objects to destroy them to gathering them for nostalgia’s sake.

“For some people, mammy represents a non-offensive, almost nostalgic reminder of the past,” said Dr. Pilgrim, an Alabama native who grew up in New York City’s Harlem, graduated from Jarvis Christian College in Texas and earned his Ph.D. at Ohio State University. “For me, it symbolizes the residue of enslavement and racial segregation.”

He said he would not make any assertions about Ms. Trammell whom he does not know nor has he ever met, noting that he has read media reports about her having a Mammy Jar.

“Good people do bad things, and some of the bad things they do are racist,” he said.

“The question is how humble we are ... A person is judged by the totality of their work,” he said, not an act itself. “Good people make mistakes,” he said.

“The way I look at it is it’s an opportunity to have a deep, even painful, discussion about race.”

In her brief statement, Ms. Trammell did not suggest a need for more conversation about race in her majority black district.

“My track record is one of deeply respecting my African-American 8th District family and all others,” she stated. “I dearly love all of my citizens and I am dedicated to serving the fine citizens of Richmond’s 8th District of all races and backgrounds.

“I pray that everyone stays safe during this Coronavirus pandemic. Let’s move forward together.”

## Revival linked to COVID-19

Continued from A1

Free Press on condition of anonymity said no such notice was given to them. All had taken part in the revival.

“All we know is that Cedar Street was closed and was being disinfected,” another member of the church said.

The revival featured Dr. Lance D. Watson, pastor of The Saint Paul’s Baptist Church, and took place just before Gov. Ralph S. Northam declared a coronavirus-related state of emergency on March 12 and urged everyone to limit gatherings to 10 or fewer people.

Although Gov. Northam did not issue an official order until March 23 banning large gatherings, including church services, most churches in the area canceled Sunday services on March 15 and began holding them online after that. Only a small fraction ignored the warnings that holding traditional services could spread the virus.

Based on the health district’s investigations, Dr. Avula stated in a follow-up message that church services were not a major source of the spread.

“Early on, church gatherings accounted for a few of our confirmed cases, but most churches shut things down by the second (and definitely the third Sunday) in March,” he stated.

“We are still getting our arms around the data, but I feel like our cases (in Richmond and Henrico) fall into a few large buckets,” he stated.

Those large buckets include: Initially, travelers to other communities who got infected and then brought it back to the Richmond area; residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities; and people who have ongoing exposure through the workplace.

He noted those findings are being backed up in the new testing being conducted in public housing and other low-income communities in Richmond and Henrico.

He stated Monday that health district testing last week at the Southwood Apartments in South Side indicates that the workplace may be a bigger contributor to the spread of the virus. He noted that of the 69 people tested at the affordable housing complex near Southside Plaza, 12 people tested positive, or 17.4 percent.

Across the state, about 15 percent of those tested are found to be positive for the virus, he said.

Within Richmond, about 60 percent of those who have tested positive for COVID-19 and 93 percent of the people who have died are African-American.

## Federal unemployment checks ease money worries for newly laid off during pandemic

Continued from A1

\$250 a week or less based on their regular earnings.

With the state benefit added to the federal payment, the total benefit is now putting between \$850 and \$1,000 a week into many families’ accounts — a raise for many, although not for all workers hit by recent layoffs.

Still that money is meaningful for the nearly 500,000 people who have filed for unemployment in Virginia and the more than 26 million who have filed across the country, boosting unemployment to near 17 percent of the workforce since mid-March. That’s a record surge and huge reversal after unemployment nationally had fallen below 4 percent.

The unemployment figures are even worse for African-Americans, whose occupations are among the hardest hit during the pandemic and whose percentage of unemployed people has long been double that of the white population.

Scott Garrett, co-owner of Lift Coffee Shop in Downtown that is now closed, has been impressed at the help the federal unemployment benefit is providing to his employees. But he, like other business owners, expects that to yield a potentially

sharp increase down the road in the premium for unemployment insurance he pays to help fund the state program.

Mr. Garrett said he had to lay off 13 employees when the shop was shut down because of the coronavirus precautions under the governor’s executive order. He said many of his employees now “are making more than they did when they were working.”

That’s the case for Elton Christian, who was laid off as a cook when the Hull Street restaurant where he worked closed.

His wife, Audrey Christian, said, “I’m definitely feeling better about our situation.”

Before the federal unemployment checks began arriving, she said she was waking up in the middle of the night worried about how she would cover health insurance premiums that had become unaffordable with just one income.

She struggled at first to get her husband enrolled on the unemployment website. But with help from state Sen. Joseph D. “Joe” Morrissey, the roadblock was lifted and now she said the unemployment checks, which amount to more than her husband’s regular paychecks, have temporarily eased her money worries.

She was not alone in facing glitches to

sign up for unemployment as computer systems in states across the country were overwhelmed by the sudden surge in applications — from a few thousand to tens of thousands.

That was the case for the Virginia Employment Commission, which took in 493,501 applications for unemployment benefits in the five weeks between March 16 and April 18, with more than 100,00 applications pouring in during at least one seven-day period.

The department appears to have overcome the glitches, with complaints about signing up now easing as the number of filings has fallen to around 83,000 a week.

Mr. German had no problems filing for benefits. He said the money is “a relief,” even though he knows he’ll have to include the unemployment benefits as income on next year’s tax return and the payments will come to an end weeks from now.

He is keeping his fingers crossed that the pandemic will end, the economy will crank up and he can go back to work because August and September and the rest of the year are coming, he said, and he doesn’t want to start worrying again about where to find the rent money.

## Wait continues for federal stimulus check

Laverne Cousins, like millions of others, is still waiting for her \$1,200 stimulus check.

The 31-year-old Richmond native is disabled and survives on \$803 a month she receives through Social Security’s disability and supplemental income programs and food stamps.

“I really need the money,” Ms. Cousins said. “Everything I get now is going to pay rent and utilities. There’s nothing left over. I haven’t been able to buy any clothes or shoes or anything else. It’s just hard, and this check would be such a godsend.”

She may finally get her federal stimulus check in a week or two.

The IRS, which is distributing the money that Congress approved in March, said it has taken time to interconnect computer systems and upload files from Social Security to automatically deliver checks to recipients even if they do not file taxes, like Ms. Cousins.

The tax agency has indicated in response to inquiries

from individuals, members of Congress and reporters that the distribution is likely to start during the first week of May for those receiving some type of Social Security benefits.

Ms. Cousins could be among those who receive their checks early as she has a direct deposit bank account for her monthly Social Security payments.

However, those who still get paper checks from Social Security may not receive the stimulus payment until July or August, the IRS has noted, because of the extra processing time required.

Those individuals will be in the same boat as people who paid the IRS by check for taxes owed or get a paper refund check rather than using direct deposit. These individuals also are still waiting.

The IRS has largely completed issuing checks to people who paid taxes in 2019 and/or 2020 and listed a direct deposit account on their tax forms. — JEREMY M. LAZARUS

## Dozens turn out for free testing at city sites

Continued from A1

as a difficult time working, Ms. Maziri said. “I have been self-quarantining with my husband, but he has no symptoms.”

The test completed, Ms. Maziri slowly shuffled her way out of the building in Hillside Court, the wind attempting to topple her with every small step she took.

She said she was told to follow the instruction sheet given to her by the city Health District and that her test results would be back in three to five days. She said she didn’t know if she would be hospitalized.

Among the instructions on the sheet:

- Stay home until you no longer have a fever without use of fever-reducing medication or other symptoms for three days.

- Distance yourself from others while you are sick. As much as possible, stay in a specific room away from other people in your home.

- Avoid sharing personal and household items such as drinking cups and utensils; use a separate bathroom, if available.

- Restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care.

- Do not go to work, school or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing or taxis.

- Please monitor your symptoms. If they worsen, call your health care provider/primary care doctor and tell them your symptoms. If you do not have a primary care doctor, please contact an urgent care center near you.

- Seek prompt medical attention at a local emergency room if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing, unable to keep fluids down).

With African-Americans being dis-

proportionately stricken and killed by COVID-19 in Virginia, public health officials responded by scheduling a series of free public testing events in low-income and predominately African-American communities in Richmond and Henrico County that began last week.

In Richmond, where about 60 percent of the 303 positive cases for the coronavirus and 13 of the 14 deaths have been African-Americans, 69 people were tested at the city Health District’s first event in Richmond held last week at Southwood Apartments in South Richmond. Twelve of them tested positive for the coronavirus, officials said.

On Monday, Ms. Maziri was one of 42 people tested at Hillside Court, where people of all ages, some using walkers and canes, lined up in front of the testing building before the 10 a.m. opening.

On Tuesday, those numbers grew, with 115 people tested for the virus in a shopping center parking lot near Creighton Court public housing complex in the East End.

Gov. Ralph S. Northam, Mayor Levar M. Stoney and City Council President Cynthia I. Newbille arrived at that test site early to see the operation and to urge people in high-risk communities to get tested.

“I hope we’re in the peak of it now, with 800-plus new cases today,” Gov. Northam said. “I just hope those numbers start going down.”

He attributed the increase, in part, to the state’s growing testing capacity, which has reached about 4,000 per day.

Still, only about 1 percent of 8.5 million Virginians have been tested. According to the state Health Department’s data, 85,307 people in the Commonwealth have been

tested for the coronavirus.

At Hillside Court, Emmett Jafari brought his two grandchildren to get tested. His teenage grandson, he said, has mild headaches and other COVID-19 symptoms.

“There is so much you don’t know about this” virus, Mr. Jafari said. “I wanted to make sure I was safe than sorry.”

Ivy Turnage, 56, and Donna Barnes, 60, also wanted to make sure they are safe from the virus. Ms. Turnage said she has headaches and has lost her sense of taste, but not her sense of smell.

While Ms. Barnes said she was exposed to the virus at an assisted living facility, where she works.

“The only symptoms I had was being more tired than normal,” she said. “I just want to make sure.”

They both said getting a test would calm their fears, even as they wait several days for the results.

Everyone tested was given a COVID-19 kit containing a mask, hand sanitizer, information about the virus and condoms.

Health officials said the state lab, Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Virginia health systems provided the testing materials, while the team that helped administer the nasal swab tests were members of the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps.

Testing will continue from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, April 30, at the Calhoun Center in the Gilpin Court public housing community.

Walk-up testing is available, although officials request that people call the health district’s hotline at (804) 205-3501 to make an appointment. The testing is targeted to the uninsured and underinsured who are showing symptoms of the virus.

## Oprah to keynote #Graduation 2020

Continued from A1

multi-hour graduation event beginning 2 p.m. Friday, May 15, with Ms. Winfrey delivering the commencement address.

Called #Graduation2020: Facebook and Instagram Celebrate the Class of 2020, it may not be the pomp and circumstance students in the Class of 2020 were expecting, but the sparkling details released Tuesday by organizers make it sound bigger and better.

Ms. Winfrey, who is known for her parties — everything from her ritzy “Legends Ball” to her luxurious garden, birthday and pajama parties — will be bringing some of her friends who also will offer words of wisdom and inspiration to the Class of 2020. Among them will be champion gymnast Simone Biles, comedian-actress Awkwafina and actress Jennifer Garner. Miley Cyrus and Lil Nas X will perform.

More special guests also are expected.

“As students head toward graduation, it’s not the day they might have imagined — no processions, no diploma handoffs, no parties,” Marne Levine, Facebook’s vice president of global partnerships, business and corporate development, wrote in a blog post announcing the event. “But graduating is a tremendous achievement, and worth pausing to celebrate even in these circumstances.”

The #Graduation2020 event will be broadcast on Facebook Watch, with some segments posted to the @instagram account on Instagram, along with the social media accounts of the contributors, according to the announcement.

Before then, the platforms also will roll out graduation-themed stickers, filters and effects, along with ways families and friends can host private virtual celebrations using the new Facebook Rooms feature.



**Meet local president of Jack and Jill of America** B1



**InLight**  
B2

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# Richmond Free Press

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**COVID-19 survivor Rev. Morris R. Gant Jr. credits faith, prayers and medical care for getting him to the other side of pandemic**

## Forward by faith

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Tens of thousands of people across Virginia and millions across the nation have been infected with COVID-19 — and the data show the vast majority recovered without feeling much effect.

So how bad can this virus be? Just ask the Rev. Morris R. Gant Jr., 62, who is living proof of the agony that those hit hardest can endure — if they live.

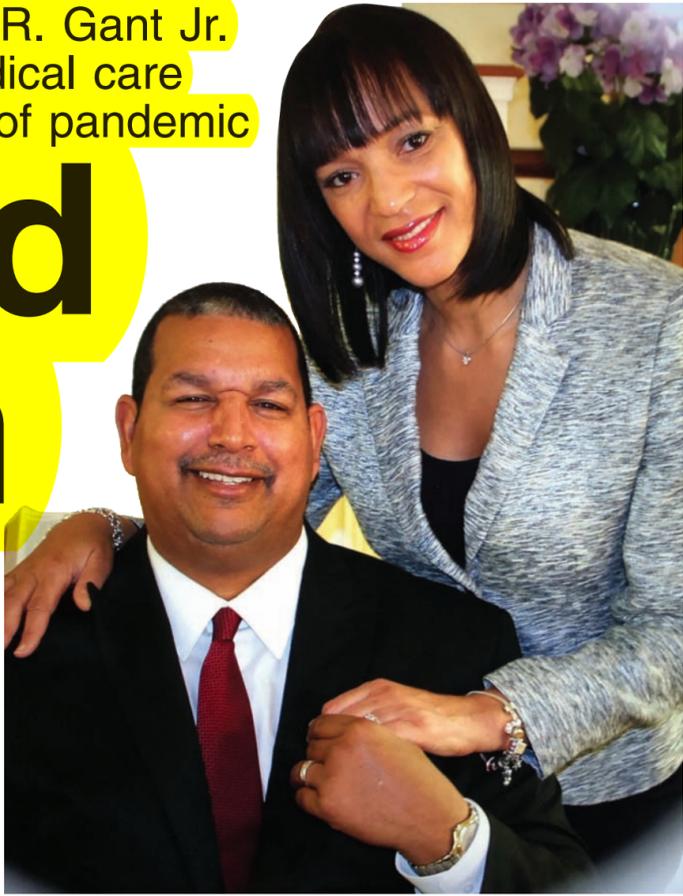
The Richmond area resident and former pastor of Guildfield Baptist Church in Powhatan County is still recovering from the viral infection that left him hospitalized for 64 days. He spent 24 days of those days unconscious, breathing with the help of a ventilator.

Rev. Gant was among the first people infected as the virus entered Virginia in mid-March. His survival is being called a miracle by his loved ones, as most people who went on ventilators in the first months did not make it.

While on the ventilator in a drug-induced coma, he suffered a host of additional medical problems that were potentially fatal — two strokes; blood poisoning; and liver, heart and kidney damage that required around-the-clock dialysis. He also contracted double pneumonia and had blood clots.

Even after Rev. Gant came off the ventilator, it took him an additional three weeks before he could use a walker and

Please turn to A4



Courtesy of Gant family

The Rev. Morris R. Gant Jr. and his wife, Lynda, share a moment as he continues his recovery from the devastating effects of COVID-19. She never gave up hope that he would return home and led prayer circles in efforts to aid his recovery while he was hospitalized.

## COVID-19 outbreak Mayor, others quarantine

By George Copeland Jr.

A rash of new COVID-19 cases, outbreaks and quarantines have emerged following the election, underlying the continuing threat of the virus locally, statewide and across the nation.

Mayor Levar M. Stoney announced Monday on a social media post that he and his staff have gone into quarantine after a member of his campaign team tested positive for COVID-19.

The campaign staffer, he tweeted, had interacted with the staff at the Richmond Voter Registrar's office, where city Registrar Kirk Showalter announced earlier Monday that three employees had tested positive for COVID-19 last week after Election Day.

City health officials said Wednesday that number is now nine, with three to five other people in the registrar's office experiencing symptoms and getting tested for the virus.

Also impacted is former mayoral candidate Alexis E. Rodgers, who also stated on social media that she would be quarantining "after being in the registrar's office and near individuals who have since tested positive."

And three officers with the Richmond Police Department also are in quarantine awaiting results of their COVID-19 tests after possible exposure from interacting with staff at the registrar's office.

Ms. Showalter said that 90 percent of her staff is now under quarantine until Nov. 17, with only four out of 40 workers reporting to the office this week.

She said the Laburnum Avenue building was deep cleaned on Nov. 6 and was cleaned again this week.

City and state health officials are working with the office to conduct contact tracing, and it does not appear that the public is at risk.

Ms. Showalter said that because of her office's reduced capacity, it was uncertain whether she would be able to finish certifying hundreds of provisional ballots ahead of Tuesday's reporting deadline to the state Department of Elections.

She said her office had informed state election officials of the situation.

"We will have all figures in before midnight online except the provisional ballots," Ms. Showalter said Tuesday in an email. "I am hoping to finish the research of the provisional ballots (Wednesday) for the board to review on Thursday."

Please turn to A4

## President-elect Biden calls for healing as Trump tries to block transition

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Democrat Joe Biden is calling this "a time for healing" in claiming victory in the 2020 presidential election.

"Folks, the people of this nation have spoken. They've delivered us a clear victory," the 77-year-old president-elect said Saturday evening from Wilmington, Del., as he stood with his running mate and future vice president, U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris, who will be the first woman, first Black and first South Asian to fill the nation's second highest office.

In the wake of the knock-down, drag-out battle for the top office against President Trump, Mr. Biden urged Americans to come together.

"Let's give each other a chance. It's time to put away the harsh rhetoric, lower temperature, see each other again, listen to each other again," he said. "It's a time to heal."

That may be tough in a nation that appears to be engaged in a political civil war, cleaved between the red Republicans and blue Democrats.

Though counts continue in some parts of the country and



Sandra Sellars/Richmond Free Press

Aiden Porter holds up a Biden-Harris campaign sign Saturday in celebration of the Democrats' victory in the presidential election. The 4-year-old stood at the base of the Lee statue on Monument Avenue, where he was celebrating with his mother, Jasmine Howell.

with states yet to officially certify results, Mr. Biden, a former senator and former vice president, declared victory after multiple news organizations on Saturday reported that he had won Pennsylvania and its 20 electoral votes, giving the Democratic ticket the 270-vote

majority in the Electoral College needed to beat incumbent President Trump.

Early analysis shows that high numbers of Black and Latino voters went to the polls, most notably in key

Please turn to A4

### Free COVID-19 testing

Free community testing for COVID-19 continues. The Richmond and Henrico County health districts are offering testing at the following locations:

DATE	LOCATION
Thursday, Nov. 12, 9 to 11 a.m.	Stonewall Avenue RRHA Senior Building 1920 Stonewall Ave., South Side
Friday, Nov. 13, 1 to 3 p.m.	Eastern Henrico Health Department 1400 N. Laburnum Ave. Eastern Henrico Drive-thru testing only for those pre-registered.
Monday, Nov. 16, 2 to 4 p.m.	Parham Road Baptist Church 2101 N. Parham Road, Western Henrico Drive-thru testing
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 10 a.m. to noon	Eastern Henrico Health Department 1400 N. Laburnum Ave. Eastern Henrico Drive-thru testing only for those pre-registered.

Appointments are encouraged by calling the Richmond and Henrico COVID-19 Hotline at (804) 205-3501 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Testing will be offered while test supplies last. The Chesterfield County Health Department also is offering free COVID-19 testing at the following locations:

- Faith and Family Center, 7900 Walmsley Blvd., 4 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 12 and Nov. 19.
- Chesterfield Health Department, Smith-Wagner Building Multi-Purpose Room, 9501 Lucy Corr Circle, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 14 and Nov. 21.
- Walmsley Boulevard United Methodist Church, 2950 Walmsley Blvd., 4 to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17 and Nov. 24.
- Second Baptist Church, 5100 W. Hundred Road, Chester, 10 to 11 a.m. Friday, Nov. 13 and Nov. 20; and 2 to 3 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16, Nov. 23 and Nov. 30.
- St. Augustine Catholic Church, 4400 Beulah Road, 11 a.m. to noon Wednesday, Nov. 18.

Testing is encouraged for those who have COVID-19 symptoms. The testing is free, and no reservations are necessary.

Details: Chesterfield County Health Department at (804) 318-8207. The Virginia Department of Health reported on Wednesday a total of 196,506 positive cases of COVID-19 statewide, along with 13,273 hospitalizations and 3,741 deaths.

The number of new coronavirus cases has exceeded 1,000 daily for the last week, officials said.

According to Virginia data, African-Americans comprised 23.7 percent of cases and 27.2 percent of deaths for which ethnic and racial data is available, while Latinos made up 26.4 percent of the cases and 9.2 percent of deaths.

Locally, as of Wednesday, 5,840 cases and 78 deaths were reported in Richmond; 7,043 cases and 243 deaths were reported in Henrico; and 7,849 cases and 120 deaths were reported in Chesterfield.



Ms. Jordan

## 2nd District surprise: Katherine L. Jordan declared winner of City Council seat after election night miscount

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Katherine L. Jordan is in, and Tavaris J. Spinks is out.

A week after the Nov. 3 election, newly posted certified results show Ms. Jordan, 46, decisively won the 2nd District City Council race.

She will replace Councilwoman Kim B. Gray, who lost in her bid to unseat the mayor.

Ms. Jordan's unexpected victory — one of the substantial corrections to results — was the only change in the outcomes the Free Press reported last week in Richmond's local elections based on unofficial results.

As of Wednesday, Richmond Voter Registrar Kirk Showalter, hampered by a coronavirus outbreak in her office, was completing

a review of more than 900 provisional ballots that she expected to be finished before Friday. But those votes, if accepted, are not expected to change the results.

Unofficial results last week showed Ms. Jordan, an urban and environmental planner, losing by 26 votes to Mr. Spinks, an information technology specialist.

That changed late Tuesday when Ms. Showalter, who had rejected making updates during the post-election canvass of results, finally posted official counts.

Those changes showed Ms. Jordan won by 1,234 votes.

In the updated tally, Ms. Jordan received 7,195 votes, or 54.3 percent of the 14,186 cast early or on Election Day in the district, while Mr. Spinks received 5,961 votes or 45 percent, with 103 write-in votes comprising the rest.

Election observers indicated that at least 1,000 votes first reported for Mr. Spinks ended up being shifted to Ms. Jordan.

A bit surprised by the turnaround, Ms. Jordan said, "It appears definitive that I have been selected to represent the 2nd District on City Council.

"This was a hard-fought election against an opponent who ran a great race. I am honored and humbled by the outcome. I look forward to serving the people of this district to the best of my ability."

Meanwhile, the official results confirm that Mayor Levar M. Stoney was re-elected to a second term as were seven council incumbents and another newcomer, Ann-Frances Lambert, who won a three-way race in the 3rd District to replace outgoing Councilman Chris A. Hilbert.

Ms. Jordan will add to female domination of City Council. In January, the newly elected governing body will include seven

Please turn to A4

# Richmonders react to Biden-Harris victory

By Ronald E. Carrington

People around Richmond celebrated with jubilation Saturday the election of Democrats Joe Biden as president and U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris as the first woman, first Black and first South Asian vice president.

Brenda Nichols, a semi-retired music educator with Henrico County Public Schools and Virginia Union University, was elated when she learned Saturday of the Biden-Harris victory.

"I am so excited for America to see what Kamala Harris will expose to the world. What a great example she is for my five female grandchildren, as well as other African-American women of all complexions, colors and hues."

The Washington Park resident is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, which Sen. Harris pledged while a student at Howard University. Ms. Nichols said her daughter, Dr. Colita N. Fairfax, also an AKA and a member of Norfolk State University's faculty, was at Howard at the same time and was acquainted with Sen. Harris.

"We (the AKAs) take such pride and joy that Sister Kamala has proven the fact that we can achieve all things," Mrs. Nichols said. "We are grateful that she possesses the ability to be humble and trained to do this work she is privileged to do for America with incoming President Joseph Biden."

She said she has now witnessed two historic national elections — the election of President Obama, the nation's first Black



Mrs. Nichols



Mr. Dunbar



Ms. Rodenburg

president, and Sen. Harris.

"If you persevere, the goal will happen," Mrs. Nichols said of the historic elections. "We have to not just pray, but do works to make something happen."

Justin Dunbar, 34, who retired from the military and now works with Capital One, had goosebumps about the election's outcome on Saturday.

"It really matters to have a commander-in-chief with respect for American institutions, as well as for both political parties," Mr. Dunbar said. "It is incredibly important for a president, coming from one party, to represent everybody regardless of political party."

Mr. Dunbar, a South Side resident, is of Asian descent. He said he has a godson who is African-American.

He said as a member of the military, he worked with people of all races. He believes it's important for youngsters to see people in office who look like them.

"You don't understand how important representation matters until you see it," he said, "like in the movies 'Crazy Rich Asians' or 'Black Panther.'"

Mr. Biden and Sen. Harris are signs of hope, he said.

Charlotte Rodenburg, an adjunct professor in Virginia Commonwealth University's Art Department, sat on the porch steps of her North Richmond home, relief and happiness flooding her face. A "Black Lives Matter" banner was attached to her porch railing.

She and her husband, Josh, have two daughters, Xena, 7, and Zelda, 4. She was ecstatic that a woman will become vice president in the new year.

"We are in unprecedented times and it was important to let the process unfold in a way we (Americans) have never seen before," she said.

"Mr. Biden is the total opposite of President Trump. Mr. Biden is for love and togetherness, as well as working across the aisle.

"The silver lining is that we have discovered how much hate is still in America. And we can now start addressing some of this systemic racism in our country," she said.

## President-elect Biden calls for healing

Continued from A1

battleground states, including Michigan, Arizona and Georgia, enabling Mr. Biden to overcome, albeit narrowly, a Republican surge on Election Day.

If the votes are confirmed and certified, the divisive President Trump, who has undermined the office and turned lies and insults into badges of honor, would be the first sitting president to lose re-election since George H.W. Bush in 1992.

Still, President Trump has yet to concede. On Wednesday, he was still declaring himself the winner backed by a chorus of GOP sycophants echoing that theme. He also is blocking Mr. Biden from gaining resources or cooperation to begin the transition. And he has joined with the likes of Sen. Lindsay Graham of South Carolina and Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas to try to undermine the results with claims of election fraud without any evidence — even in states where Republicans control the legislatures, such as Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

That message is being heard loud and clear by Trump supporters who are dismayed their hero did not win.

While there was jubilation over the

outcome of the presidential race in places like Richmond, Atlanta, Detroit and Washington that strongly backed President-elect Biden, there were counter-demonstrations in Trump country where people are holding up "Stop the Fraud" signs and banners.

Recounts are likely in several key states, including Georgia, where a hand-count has been ordered of every presidential ballot after President Trump failed to win. The final, official result of the election also will take time as President Trump's legal team files a wave of lawsuits seeking to make the outcome appear illegitimate — though he has yet to find a judge to accept any of his team's arguments.

It looks like Mr. Biden scored a big victory. According to national data, a record 150 million people participated in the election, with Mr. Biden leading in the popular vote. Currently, he has about 77 million votes to about 72 million for President Trump, a record for both winner and loser.

The total turnout also hit 66.3 percent of the electorate, the highest level since 1908.

But that still means 75 million registered voters did not cast ballots.

As various election watchers have noted, the projected Democratic landslide never materialized and that is likely to leave

Mr. Biden and Democrats in a far weaker position after he takes office Jan. 20.

Notably, Republicans kept control of legislatures in Texas and other key states that Democrats hoped to flip and the winners now will be able to use new 2020 Census data to retain power through gerrymandering and new voter suppression laws.

Even worse, Democrats gained a net of just one new U.S. Senate seat, according to results from around the country, not the three needed to gain control of the Senate, which votes on presidential nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court, all federal courts and other top government positions.

Democrats' only chance to get to 50 Senate seats so that Sen. Harris could break ties when she takes over in January as vice president and presiding officer of the Senate is to win both Georgia seats. Runoffs are to be held for both Georgia Senate seats on Jan. 5.

While Mr. Biden narrowly won the state, the smart money is betting that Republicans will win both seats, giving the GOP a 51-49 margin. If that happens, Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky will remain majority leader and could ensure that Mr. Biden faces the same gridlock he created to thwart President Obama.

## COVID-19 survivor credits faith, prayers and medical care

Continued from A1

go to the bathroom by himself.

"I couldn't wipe my booty or stand up next to my bed," he said, in recalling how even his hands wouldn't work.

Rev. Gant credits his faith with seeing him through, along with the power of his extended family's prayers and the medical care he received at Bon Secours-St. Francis Medical Center in Chesterfield County during a time when physicians and nurses were just learning about COVID-19 and best treatment practices.

"It's been an ordeal," he said. Even now, he must take steroids to improve his breathing as his lungs were scarred.

His thinking and memory also have been affected by what is called "long haul syndrome," that can include lingering brain fog, fatigue, shortness of breath and joint and chest pain. When he gets tired — and he still tires more easily — he said he often cannot remember the name of everyday items, such as a comb or kitchen utensils.

It is still a mystery why some people are

infected, some shrug off the disease and some get hammered. Rev. Gant's wife, Lynda C. Gant, for example, never contracted the disease even though she stayed close to her husband while he was infectious.

However, Rev. Gant's cautionary tale shows the worst can happen and explains the emphasis being put on wearing masks and keeping at least 6 feet away from others.

Avoiding the disease is one of the best ways to prevent becoming one of the rapidly rising statistics of people who are hit or hospitalized with COVID-19 — like Rev. Gant — or who succumb to it.

A big man who migrated to Virginia from his native Philadelphia, Rev. Gant is a former Richmond Police officer who later worked for 16 years for United Parcel Service before turning to the ministry.

At 43, he began his career change when he entered the seminary at Virginia Union University, where he earned a master's degree in theology. He then spent a year at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital in Fort Worth to earn

certification in clinical pastoral education.

Since then, Rev. Gant has served primarily as a hospice chaplain, specializing in comforting the dying and helping their families during the process. In 2013, he added to his workload by becoming pastor of Guildfield Baptist and its 50-member congregation.

His COVID-19 story began in March within a week or two after the virus was first detected and Gov. Ralph S. Northam declared a state emergency on March 12.

Rev. Gant is not sure when or where he came into contact with the virus, although he believes it might have happened when he visited a nursing home resident in Chesterfield County.

He said the nursing home was checking temperatures, but it was still very early in the pandemic and masks were not such a big deal. He said he started getting sick within a few days. When his temperature rose to 102.3, he went to a nearby hospital.

He said he returned home after a doctor told him there was little to be done.

"You can be miserable here or miserable at

home," he said he was told.

Because testing was extremely limited, he was not yet diagnosed with the coronavirus.

At home, Rev. Gant said his condition continued to deteriorate. "I couldn't hold my head up," he said. "I constantly leaned over with my head down. I had no energy, and I had a hard time breathing."

His wife, using a small medical device to measure his blood oxygen level, persuaded him to go to a hospital when his oxygen level fell to 80 percent, or 13 percentage points below normal.

Mrs. Gant drove him to the hospital. He said a doctor saw him in the emergency room.

"He asked if he could pray for me," Rev. Gant said. "Those are the last words I heard before I woke up 24 days later."

Rev. Gant said he finally was able to walk to the bathroom on his own after about 40 days in the hospital. He said he looked in the mirror and saw a bearded figure with unkempt hair. "I almost didn't recognize myself," he said.

Rev. Gant would remain isolated from his family through his six-week stay at St. Francis, followed by another three weeks at the Sheltering Arms Institute Physical Rehabilitation Hospital. He was able to touch his wife's hand and face for the first time when he was discharged.

While he was unconscious, his wife would make a video call to him daily, with the hospital staff holding an electronic tablet close so he could hear her voice. She also alerted the extended family that organized prayer circles.

Mrs. Gant never wavered in her certainty he would recover.

She said the palliative care doctor daily would "talk about the high probability that my husband would die and that I needed to make a decision on whether I wanted them to resuscitate if something went wrong."

"I politely told him that I believe in the power of God, the power of prayer and that God was going to heal him and bring him home," she said.

Mrs. Gant said she also told the physician "that we are a praying family, that I have a village of saints that are praying for him. We bombarded God with specific prayers. Twenty-four days after he was admitted to the hospital, he woke up," she said.

"He is a miracle. We experienced a miracle."

## COVID-19 outbreak quarantines mayor, others

Continued from A1

Mayor Stoney said in his tweets that he and his staff are in quarantine following guidance from the Richmond Health District and City of Richmond employee protocol.

"My staff & I are well prepared to serve the residents of Richmond from home. It's the safe, responsible thing to do while (Richmond City Health District) traces possible exposures stemming from the Registrar's Office. This should serve as a sobering reminder that the pandemic is still very real," the mayor wrote.

"Just because it's not in the headlines doesn't mean it's no longer a threat. Please, monitor yourself for symptoms and take advantage of the resources offered by our Health District."

Similarly, the Henrico County Voter Registration and Elections Office and the Henrico Department of Public Works also reported an outbreak of COVID-19 on Tuesday. Seven employees have tested positive, one is awaiting test results and officials have begun contact tracing

and rapid testing.

Another 10 cases were reported at seven Henrico County schools since last week. And Chesterfield County also is facing three more COVID-19-related deaths at Tyler's Retreat at Iron Bridge, for a total of 19 deaths at the retirement community.

The state Health Department reported on Wednesday a cumulative total of 5,840 cases and 78 deaths in Richmond; 7,043 cases and 243 deaths in Henrico County; and 7,849 cases and 120 deaths in Chesterfield County.

In a Tuesday media briefing, Gov. Ralph S. Northam and other state officials expressed concern over the continuing spread of the coronavirus throughout the state, where Southwest Virginia is now being hit particularly hard with a positivity rate of 9 percent.

State figures posted Wednesday show 196,506



Mayor Stoney



Ms. Rodgers

positive cases in Virginia, 13,273 hospitalizations and 3,741 deaths reported by the Virginia Department of Health.

"You should take precautions around anyone who does not live in your own house," Gov. Northam said. "Yes, even if they are your family."

State officials said antigen tests are continuing to be distributed statewide, along with 700,000 bottles of hand sanitizer and 850,000 masks that have been circulated throughout Virginia so far.

The state also has signed contracts with three companies to increase the amount of daily testing by 7,000.

"Virginians, you have done an exceptional job over the past eight months in responding to this crisis," Gov. Northam said. "And I know you're tired. I'm tired. The new normal is still ahead of us."

## Katherine L. Jordan declared winner of City Council seat

Continued from A1

women and two men.

Returning members will include current Council President Cynthia I. Newbille, 7th District, who is expected to face a challenge for the council's top leadership position; Andreas D. Addison, 1st District; Kristen N. Larson, 4th District; Stephanie A. Lynch, 5th District; Ellen F. Robertson, 6th District; Reva M. Trammell, 8th District; and Michael J. Jones, 9th District.

The results in the contests for School Board seats also were undisturbed, portending a potential shake-up in board leadership and a change in the majority in control of policy decisions.

As previously reported five incumbents were re-elected, along with one former board member and three newcomers, including Mariah L. White, who upset incumbent J. Scott Barlow in the 2nd District.

Other newcomers include Stephanie M. Rizzi, who won a four-way race to succeed Dr. Patrick Sapini in the 5th District; and Nicole Jones, who was unopposed after incumbent Linda Owen did not see re-election in of the 9th District.



Ms. Showalter

In the 6th District, voters settled a three-way race to replace outgoing incumbent board member Felicia Cosby by electing their former representative, educator Shonda Harris-Muhammed.

Returning School Board members include Liz B. Doer, 1st District; Kenya J. Gibson, 3rd District; Jonathan M. Young, 4th District; Cheryl Burke, 7th District; and Dawn C. Page, 8th District.

The official results also corrected Richmond's vote totals, boosting the numbers by about 8,000 people from preliminary results. In all, about 112,000 voters participated, a 7.6 percent increase over the 104,000 voters who participated in 2016.

In addition to the 2nd District, miscounts also turned up in the 8th District City Council race, won by Ms. Trammell. At least two precincts had faulty results, leading challenger Amy C. Wentz, who finished second, to initially refuse to concede.

Ms. Wentz conceded on Wednesday after new results appeared

to confirm that Ms. Trammell, an 18-year council veteran, won a majority of the district's votes.

In a statement, Ms. Wentz said, "This has been an incredible ride." She noted wins in three of the district's six precincts.

Speaking with the Free Press, Ms. Wentz also called for an audit of the city's election operation, citing both the errors in the unofficial results and expressing concern about the accuracy of some of the numbers in the official results.

She called the initial miscounts and the potential problems she spotted in the final results "unacceptable."

Asked to comment, Ms. Showalter stated that she was aware of the erroneous totals reported in the 2nd and 8th districts. However, she stated her office's long-standing policy has been to keep preliminary results unchanged until the canvass is completed, rather than updating the preliminary results if mistakes are found as the tapes of results from voting machines are checked.

"No updates are made on a piecemeal basis so we can ensure that every precinct is correctly reported and that the final results are correct and accurate," Ms. Showalter stated.