

Caroline group sends positive message with a formal approach to marching

BY TAFT COGHILL JR.
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

As Zavion Goodall and seven other young Caroline County natives lined up on the courthouse lawn for the “Black Positivity” rally Friday evening, a white man pulled his truck to the side of Main Street in Bowling Green to see what was going on.

After the man realized the group was dressed formally in suits, ties and skirts for the two girls, he commented that they looked great and he was glad to see them out there.

Goodall, who grew up in Caroline and later moved to Richmond, said if the group, which was all Black, had on T-shirts and baggy jeans, the reaction probably would have been much different. The Howard University sophomore and aspiring defense attorney said there likely would’ve been “looks of disgust” and the group may have received a tongue-lashing.

“It shouldn’t matter what [you’re wearing] because it’s about what’s inside,” Goodall said. “It’s about what you’re trying

to say and what you’re trying to promote. But it does matter in the eyes of some white people because they see us with our pants down and they say ‘hoodlums, thugs.’ But if we dress professionally, in their eyes, they may look more and say more good things.”

Caroline High School senior Kameron Freeman, junior R.J. Pleasants and recent graduate Tivon Tillman spearheaded the rally, where they spoke about racial injustice, the recent decision by a Louis-

ville, Ky., grand jury not to indict police officers in the killing of Breonna Taylor and other issues plaguing Black youth in the county.

There was no effort to silence the group. They received waves and honked horns from passers-by.

Maj. Scott Moser of the Caroline Sheriff’s Office discussed job opportunities with five of them and gave two girls a ride to catch up with the other marchers, who walked from the courthouse to the Walgreens parking lot and

SEE MARCH, A5

back.

Still, the group made it clear that just because others may not be dressed the same way, it should make no difference in how they're treated.

"I think all of the protests are getting the message across," Freeman said. "I'm not saying that's not the way to do it. It's just how we're going to get our message across. You've got to do what you've got to do to get heard sometimes."

The rally was planned weeks in advance, but came two days after the decision was announced in Taylor's case. While two of the officers were cleared of wrongdoing, a third was charged with wanton endangerment for recklessly firing into Taylor's neighbor's apartment.

Freeman said he doesn't believe it was a fair decision, even though Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron stated that Taylor's boyfriend also shot one of the officers.

"Six shots came through her body and no justice was done," Freeman said. "It just shows that Black men and Black women are endangered.

"I'm not surprised [by the decision], but I'm also hurt with it because we're tired," he added. "To wake up Black is not easy. We're thrown into a system where they don't love us off the bat."

Freeman, a track and field standout at Caroline, said minorities have to work harder to have their voices heard.

The gathering wasn't

only to protest racial injustice. It was also about promoting a positive image to young Blacks in the county and beyond.

The Rev. Duane Fields, who served as a spiritual advisor to the group, noted that three of the marchers are in college and the others are active at Caroline High.

"My goal was to just show a positive image of our young Black men and women and show that we're not all criminals and thugs that the media portrays us to be," Pleasants said. "I feel like we got enough looks and head-turns to show this area that rapping and sports, we're more than that. We can be doctors. We can be lawyers. We just have to have the right mindset."

Tillman and Freeman said the group also wanted to send a message to Black youth in the county to come together and to turn away from drugs and vio-

lence. They said they were alarmed by a Sept. 9 incident in Caroline in which three youth were arrested and charged with shooting three recent high school graduates.

Tillman, a Virginia State University freshman, said the violence must cease.

"I want to be used as a positive image for the younger ones coming up," Tillman said. "Don't fall into the violence and the drama. Just stay away from all of it. Keep your head on straight and do great things in life."

Taft Coghill Jr. 540/374-5526
tcoghill@freelancestar.com

CAROLINE CHURCH LEADERS WEIGH ROLE IN STATUE PROTESTS

BY TAFT COGHILL JR.
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The Rev. Melvin Covington at Calvary Baptist Church in Bowling Green isn't one to influence his congregation on political matters.

Covington doesn't put candidate bumper stickers on his vehicle, and said he declines to share his political leanings on social media.

"I don't say those things because there are some people in my congregation that lean different ways on issues," Covington said. "My call is to minister to

people, not to divide over divisive things."

But Covington said that while the issue of the Confederate monument on the Caroline County Courthouse lawn requires a political decision, he feels it's also about morality. That's why for the past two years Covington has spoken freely about the monument, stating that if it was his decision, he'd remove it because it offends some people.

"People in our society are hurting, and that needs to be a concern for us," he said.

SEE CHURCH, A9

CHURCH

► FROM A1

Covington doesn't plan to speak at the Caroline County Board of Supervisors public hearing on Tuesday at 6 p.m. at the county's Community Services Center because he's a resident of Spotsylvania County.

Other pastors in the county have spoken up and there has been discussion in the faith community about whether involvement in the matter conflicts with the church's standing as a nonprofit organization that doesn't engage in political activity.

"The Word of God calls the church the pillar and the ground of truth," Covington said. "So with any kind of issue, there is something that the Word of God has to say. So I believe it is an issue for the church to step into."

Two pastors spoke on the issue at the July and August Board of Supervisors meetings.

The Rev. Marvin Fields and his son, the Rev. Duane Fields Sr., have each said the monument needs to come down. The Rev. Joy Carter Minor, who is on the ministerial staff at St. John Baptist Church in Woodford, and the Rev. David Upshaw, who is retired, have also protested against the monument.

"It's a moral issue," Marvin Fields said. "They're making it political. But morals are deep down on the inside."

"We claim to be believers, and we might be different colors, but we serve the same God," he continued. "That's not

political. That's moral."

The Rev. Antonio Baker leads one of the largest congregations in the county, Third Mount Zion Baptist Church in Woodford. Baker, who lives in Fredericksburg, said because of the coronavirus pandemic, services haven't been held in the building in several months and he hadn't heard of the petition and movement to relocate the Caroline statue until earlier this week. Baker said he agrees with Covington that the monument should be relocated because it's not inclusive.

The Rev. Gilbert Garcia participates in Civil War reenactments and pastors Mount Tabor Baptist in Shumansville. Garcia, who is Black, said pastors are conduits of information to their members, but shouldn't tell them how to think.

He recently visited the monument to gain perspective on the issue and said he's concerned that it shows a Confederate flag facing Main Street. He also took exception to the memorial reading it honors soldiers "furnished to the Confederate States of America from 1861-65."

"There are no Confederate States of America," Garcia said.

The elder Fields, who pastors Second Mount Zion Baptist in Dawn, agrees with Garcia that the church should not make any statements as a body because individuals have various views.

He said he typically encourages his members to engage in civic action, but with the pandemic still raging, his congrega-

tion has been cautious about gathering in public to speak about the monument. Members can still write letters and call their supervisor, he said.

"When it comes to issues like this, many times in the '50s and '60s the pastors were the ones that spoke out on segregation and things like that," Marvin Fields said. "The church was the primary focus of it. I think we've gotten away from it now."

Duane Fields Sr., pastor of Oxford Mount Zion Baptist Church in Ruther Glen, strongly encourages his flock, particularly the millennial generation, to engage in social justice issues.

"It's no way we can preach about a God who loves, a Christ who saves and a God who liberates and then see people suppressed and oppressed and not have a voice," he said.

Covington said Christians have to be careful not to put too much stake in the memorial because if one becomes overly invested in it staying or going they're making the statue an "idol" and placing it above God.

He said if it's voted to be removed, county leaders should frame it as an opportunity to give it back, rather than take it down. Demonstrators held up signs at the Aug. 11 supervisors meeting urging the board to "#give it back."

"When it is given, that brings us closer together," Covington said. "But if it's taken, it takes people further apart."

Taft Coghill Jr. 540/374-5526
tcoghill@freelancestar.com

FORMER COUGAR STAR GETS THROWN A WICKED CURVE

Disorder forces Buzzzell to leave game she loves

BY TAFT COGHILL JR.
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It started with a sneeze.

Cameron Buzzzell was in Gulf Shores, Ala., with her Pensacola (Fla.) State College softball teammates last October volunteering to assist with a travel team tournament.

The week prior, every time Buzzzell sneezed she suffered a bad headache that lasted approximately five minutes.

She felt the sniffles coming on again, so she looked at her teammate and said “I’m going to get a pounding headache.”

Buzzzell was proven correct. But the issue didn’t go away in five minutes. She began vomiting. When the team returned to Florida she didn’t feel capable of driving to her apartment so she stayed overnight with a friend.

She returned home the following morning and her symptoms didn’t subside. Finally, around 8 p.m. her mother told her to go to the hospital. A friend

transported her.

The seemingly healthy freshman athlete learned she had suffered Cerebral Venous Sinus Thrombosis also called CVST—a rare form of stroke that affects five people in 1 million each year.

Buzzzell also had two other blood clots on her brain.

“Basically the clot that she had was not allowing blood to leave the brain,” said

her mother, Jenny Buzzzell–Parker. “The bleed was basically the brain’s way of trying to save itself.”

After nine trying months and seeking second and third opinions, the former Courtland High School softball standout and two-time Battlefield District player of the year was informed July 2 her career has to come to an end.

That’s the conclusion doctors formed, and Buzzzell–Parker agreed the reward

SEE BUZZELL, D2

BUZZELL

► FROM D1

does not outweigh the risk.

"I've been playing since I was 5," Buzzell said. "I haven't fully comprehended that I won't be able to play again."

GROOMED FOR GREATNESS

Softball is integral in the Buzzell household.

Her grandmother, Doris Buzzell, is a longtime coach in the Fredericksburg area and now leads the Spotsylvania High School program.

Buzzell's mother coached her at Courtland and now directs the Virginia Unity 14U travel team.

Buzzell-Parker played under current Auburn University head coach Mickey Dean at Orange High, where her mother once coached.

Buzzell-Parker was a standout for the Hornets when they captured the 1999 Group AA state championship.

She noticed special talent in her daughter early on.

Buzzell made her mark at Courtland right away. She batted .441 as a freshman and was named first-team all-district and All-Area. She earned each of those honors all four years of her career.

She tied the Virginia High School League record with three home runs in a game as a sophomore.

"Just a natural athlete at the plate," Buzzell-Parker said. "She's just a well-built, strong kid who played the game really hard."

Buzzell wasn't fond of pitching but she did so for the Cougars, including her senior campaign in 2019 when she tossed every pitch.

Pensacola State, a highly regarded junior college program, wasn't her first option but she signed with the Pirates and was prepared to spend two years there before moving on to a Division I or Division II program.

"Her recruiting process was strange because she was a late pickup for us," Pirates head coach Lyndsey Angus said. "She had planned to end up somewhere else but as fate and the world would have it we got blessed with Cam when she came to Pensacola. What she brought athletically pales in comparison to what she brought as a person ... I have never coached a player that's just so grateful, along with the talent, in my career."

ASOLIDSTART

Angus was just getting a peek at what Buzzell brought to the table in a 2019 fall league.

She started at second base for the Pirates and pitched a few innings. She competed in contests

against Alabama, Auburn and North Alabama, among others. Her first hit was a double off the fence against Auburn, where her mother's mentor Dean has been the head coach since 2017.

Dean and Buzzell posed for a photograph together after the game. It was one of the final times Buzzell would suit up.

"I felt like I was getting better," Buzzell said of her progression. "But I wasn't able to complete it."

That incomplete feeling won't go away.

After Buzzell was rushed to the hospital, doctors initially thought she would require brain surgery. But she was started out on a heparin drip to treat the blood clots and they were effective. She was in intensive care for seven of the 11 days she was in the hospital.

She didn't want to return to Virginia upon her release, so her mother stayed in Florida with her for a month while the Spotsylvania County community pitched in to provide meals for her fa-

ther and younger brother back home.

Buzzell returned home in December and a doctor at George Washington University advised her not to go back to school the next semester. Buzzell didn't heed the recommendation.

"In true Cam fashion, she refused and she powered through," Buzzell-Parker said. "She cranked out a 4.0 [GPA] last semester."

EFFECTSSTILLINGER

Buzzell has been told she'll likely be on blood thinners the rest of her life. The doctors at George Washington said her career would likely have to end and that was confirmed after multiple opinions. Buzzell said she was searching for someone to give her the go-ahead but accepted the finality of her career from a doctor at the Virginia Cancer Center.

"He said if I get hit with the ball I have a high risk of internal bleeding," Buzzell said. "He said if I get hit in

the head it could be really dangerous and life threatening ... He was like, 'You can go to another doctor but whoever tells you that you can play is not making a wise decision.'"

Buzzell is still on the road to recovery.

She had to cancel a math class, although it was previously one of her stronger subjects, because the stroke caused her to forget numbers. She's experienced short-term memory loss but that's gotten better in the past couple of weeks.

She sometimes loses sensation in her fingers and toes and will randomly drop everything she's carrying. Her legs swell whenever she stands for an extended period of time. She's on medication to prevent migraines. Up until last month she estimated she was having five migraines a week.

She was cleared to run two months ago and she's also back to lifting weights. She's not as swift as she once was but is focused on completing two miles per day, alternating between running and walking.

"I'm definitely not as strong as I used to be," she said. "But I will get back to running two miles straight."

PIRATESWON'TWAVER

Angus said Pensacola State will continue to honor Buzzell's scholarship as long as she chooses to remain there. The school does offer an opportunity to complete a four-year degree. Angus said Buzzell can also be a part of the coaching staff and prepare for a future coaching career.

"She has her [scholarship] money as long as she needs it," Angus said.

Buzzell said she plans to return to Pensacola State for at least one more year as a team manager, but her

ultimate goal is to finish her final two years at an urban university.

Her mother said the family is indebted to the coaches for sticking by Buzzell during a tumultuous time. Angus immediately headed to the hospital when Buzzell first arrived and stayed there 30 hours until Buzzell-Parker's flight landed the following day.

The coaching staff has also accompanied Buzzell on every trip to the doctor's office, including for routine bloodwork. Buzzell-Parker said the staff has been "the biggest blessing we've ever come across."

"Cam didn't do anything to be in that position," Angus said. "We'd never want anybody, never mind a player far away from their family in the fall of their freshman semester to be going through something like that. So the team rallied around her. The coaching staff rallied around her. It was very upsetting."

Buzzell and her teammates are finding solace in that she's still with the program.

Her mother is enjoying this summer with her daughter as an assistant coach of the Unity. She said while it would've been ideal for Buzzell to continue the family's softball tradition, she's more concerned about her as an individual.

When Dean first learned of Buzzell's plight, he reminded the family: softball is what they do, it's not who they are.

"For me, I wouldn't say I'm devastated," Buzzell-Parker said. "I'm devastated for my kid. But I do feel that something great is going to come out of this for her. We don't know what it is yet, but I see good things in her future."

Taft Coghill Jr.: 540/374-5526
tcoghill@freelancestar.com