**A life changing experience**  
BY DEXTER L. MCCREE  
Feature Writer  
**ST. PETERSBURG** – Walking into Pinellas Park High School, Dalon Wilson was a shy, unanimated, young man full of apprehension about being a freshman. He was not in middle school anymore, where he was the big man on campus. His freshman season of football was eye-opening, if not overwhelming. The team started off with less than 35 players. It’s a far cry from the 150 players at practice, all trying out for a position on the junior varsity team. By the time the first game came around, the number was down to about 30. Many of the freshmen who played little league football, who were little league all-stars, found it difficult adjusting to the demands of high school sports. For Wilson, who played football for 5 years, going from a small middle school, stepping into a new high school was much of the same. It was a constant struggle to stay focus on the task at hand. During the journey it took to get to that achievement, she will never forget the journey it took to get to that moment. As a child, Destiny struggled to stay focus on the task at hand. She found it difficult adjusting to the demands of high school sports. For Wilson, who played little league football for 5 years, going from a small middle school, stepping into a new high school was much of the same. It was a constant struggle for her to stay focus on the task at hand. In the seventh grade, Destiny McCullum was a shy, unmotivated, young man full of apprehension about being a freshman. He was not in middle school anymore, where he was the big man on campus. His freshman season of football was eye-opening, if not overwhelming. The team started off with less than 35 players. It’s a far cry from the 150 players at practice, all trying out for a position on the junior varsity team. By the time the first game came around, the number was down to about 30. Many of the freshmen who played little league football, who were little league all-stars, found it difficult adjusting to the demands of high school sports. For Wilson, who played little league football for 5 years, going from a small middle school, stepping into a new high school was much of the same. It was a constant struggle for her to stay focus on the task at hand.
Praise the Lord! Prayer is our commun-ication to God. Whether we serve God or Jesus, we should pray the same way. ‘As you love to talk with someone that interests you, that love, and you, and your relationship with that person will grow in a natural way.’

One may find it very difficult to pray. But if we know the way to pray then we will be able to communicate our heart’s desire to God. (Rom.8:26-27)

Who would have thought that a young girl, born in East Saint Louis, Ill., would accomplish all that this woman did? She focused on what she knew and worked to achieve her goals.

In 1976 when she was born, Joyce becomes a female athlete. Joyce is a small girl. She participated in various sports and was a great talent in the field and in basketball. After graduating, she entered the University of California at Los Angeles. During her time at UCLA, she developed her passion for athletics and worked hard to become one of the greatest female athletes of all time.

Joyce is known for her versatility and her ability to excel in multiple sports. She played basketball for the UCLA Bruins and later played for the American Basketball League’s Rich- mond Renegades. Joyce is also well-known for her achievements in track and field, and her performance in the 1988 Summer Olympics.

Joyce Kersee is a role model for young people, especially those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. She is known for her dedication to helping others and giving back to her community.

Joyce Kersee’s legacy continues to inspire people around the world. Her story is a testament to the power of hard work, determination, and perseverance. She is an example of what can be achieved when one believes in themselves and their potential.

The Weekly Challenger

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Breaking the Cycle

REV. DR. ROBERT L. HARRIS, JR.

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ST. PETERSBURG — The University of South Florida College of Marine Science held its 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium and reception for Dr. Juliana A. Dado, a former assistant professor of government at the University of South Florida. She presented an in-depth examination of the stubborn persistence of poverty in communities of color, and the policies that exacerbate these problems.

Michener’s research and writings have often focused on neighborhoods, poverty and political engagement.

“A lot of the work I do is about people and policy and what happens when they come together — and what that means for democratic participation,” she said.

With a presentation of slides that drew a great picture of the still stark disparities in education, unemployment, homeownership, incarceration and wealth, Michener’s graphs all began with the common theme: race matters in America.

In each graph, the impact of race on economic community conversations revealed stark and almost devastating differences in the fortunes of African-American and Latinx Americans when compared to white counterparts.

Some markers of inequity revealed that, in 2010, white families held 10 times more wealth than African-American families and eight times more than Latinx families.

African Americans were 2.8 times more likely to live in poverty than Latinx families, and twice as likely to receive a subprime loan than white families.

Even African-American and Latinx families making more than $100,000 annually were more likely on average to receive a subprime loan than a white family making less than $30,000 a year.

African-American applicants had to search twice as long as equally qualified white applicants before receiving a call-back or job offer if an employer.

As she shared the grim statistics, Michener acknowledged, “I don’t have all the answers — there are a lot of things that are large and complex.”

She published her first book, “Race, Poverty, and Public Policy,” in 2004. Her most recent book explores how these differences mean for democracy.

“Race, Poverty, and Public Policy” is about people and policy and what it means for political behavior, and ultimately what it means that the most vulnerable among us rely on this program in order to have access to what I think is a basic human right — which is healthcare — and have- ing expertise gurus that can sometimes undermine democracy,” she added.

As well as teaching the latest research, Michener travels to places like Cornell and its sister campus at New York’s first and only historically black institution, Howard University, to connect it to real people living in the real world.

She shared her personal story of growing up in a South Carolina neighborhood and relations with her family.

“I was talking to low-income black and brown people about what matters to them in their lives and how the government be- haves,” she said. “A lot of people were talking to me — they didn’t bring it to you, they did. I realized that matters to folks — being able to get healthcare and making sure that healthcare was accessible to their children.

The book outlines how experiences with Medicaid vary drastically from state to state, so the outcomes we have in Florida will significantly differ from people living in Georgia or California.

Michener said the book explores what these differences mean for dem- ocratic citizenship, “what it means for political be- havior, and ultimately what it means that the most vulnerable among us rely on this program in order to have access to what I think is a basic human right — which is healthcare — and have- ing expertise gurus that can sometimes undermine democracy.”

Her passion for bringing the conversations and research of the academic world into the real world is evidenced by her role as an area director of the Scholars Strategy Network, an organization whose aim is to bring the findings of social science researchers to people outside of the academy.

Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. St. Petersburg Chapter Honoring Educators Impacting Lives, Times and our Community SATURDAY, June 2, 2018  11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. PASADENA YACHT AND COUNTRY CLUB 6300 PASADENA POINT BLVD, GULFPORT, FL 33707 DONATION: $45.00 LADY NAOMI NESBITT PRESIDENT To purchase tickets call 727-460-9325 Legal Notice:

A Public Hearing will be held by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners in the Board Assembly Room on the fifth floor of the Pinellas County Courthouse, 100 Central St., Clearwater, Florida, by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 19, 2018, to obtain citizen views on the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Annual Action Plan Submission. The Annual Action Plan is Pinellas County’s application for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Homeless Assistance Grant funds (HOME) for the Department’s annual application for HOME Investment Partnerships (HOM) funds.

The anticipated allocation for Pinellas County’s CDBG and ESG Programs and the Consolidated HOME Program for 2018-2019 is $5,848,834, which includes grants to local entities for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as anticipated program income. The Consolidated HOME Program is carried out by the County and City of St. Petersburg.

Persons are advised that, if they decide to appeal any decision made at this hearing, they will need to file their appeal with the Florida Department of Revenue within 30 days of the hearing date. In case a record of the proceeding is required, the record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is based.

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in the hearing, you are entitled to make a request for such accommodation at the time the request is made, or as soon as a reasonable time before the hearing. If you need assistance, please contact the Office of Human Rights, 445 S. Fort Harrison Avenue, 5th Floor, Clearwater, FL, 1376 (727) 444-0622 (TTY).
A life changing experience

This was a life-changing experience and propelled me to the class room during the spring season. There were four games. Instantly I fell in love with the sport. I started to work out and train hard. Everybody around me was supportive but I felt I could trust. It's what Coach Mann expects from his players,” said Dalon.

Mann knew that the head football coach at Lake- wood had an excellent reputation for working with African-American boys and challenging them to be prepared to go to the next level in life. “Talk about this movie was for my child,” said Mann, adding that his fa- ther, David Brown, was instru- mental in Dalon's athletic and academic suc- cess.

“My first day on the scene was summer football practice where I met Coach Kory and his staff. He told me that ‘we love the grind of it here at Lake- wood.”

The next few weeks be- fore the season started were tough for Dalon. He was feeling difficult because he didn’t have any friends and didn’t know how to define his life in that moment. The beginning of the first home game on the Spartans field, Dalon learned that he was academically eligible. “For the 2015-16 season you have to put your mind in the game so he could improve his grades.”

After football season, winter sports season. It was the first year he stayed on his feet and had a solid tackle, two sacks and had one hur- ry. He had proven his point.

The summer of his senior season was around, and Dalon became a member of the defensive line team. He had to become a starter on the defensive line and line and become one of the stars. “I was in love with the sport,” Dalon ex- plained. “My coach pulled me off the game.”

He told me that ‘we love the grind of it here at Lake- wood.”

Dalon worked hard in practice until he got another chance to play, which came in the form of a scholarship. He got accepted into Northeast High School High School. This time, he stayed on his feet and had a solid tackle, two sacks and had one hur- ry. He had proven his point.

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A walk of faith

BY DIETER MCCRIE & ALEC'A ASH

ST. PETERSBURG — Alec’a Ash (Jr), 2018 graduate of Lakewood High School, has a diverse personality that makes him smile. During the first half of his life, he had a diverse environment,“explained Alec’a. “I moved between Jacksonville, a small private school, to water Central Catholic, a hometown school where he was cool and go away, and I am very small pond. Like a little fish in a big environment,” explained Alec’a.

Alec’a was on the AVID Leadership Board for two years, three vice presidents of the club program for two consecutive years and senior class secretary. Academically, she was inducted into four honor societies: National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Society, International Thespian Honor Society and Math Honor Society.

“She chose him to bring help to his school and in my personal life,” I learned that I had to actually work hard to make sure of these organizations even,” explained this chanteuse. “I was asked to sing at the Pinel- ton High School Council Board meeting for two years, had multiple solos in the choirs program and performed in her high school musically for all four years as the lead, supporting choral or in the pit choir.

Along with her acting skills, she has received multiple excellent and superior ratings in solo musical performances and large group musical performances in both state and district theater festivals.

Alec’a grew up attending Pentecostal Temple C.O.G.I.C., and her parents made it their duty to mold a firm Christian foundation in her, which has helped her become the well-adjusting young lady she is today. One scripture that has helped her own the well adjusting young lady she is today.

“Things became even harder to adapt to and change. He wasn’t a major cultural challenge. He tore his ACL, which required surgery and therapy. His time on the injured list helped him receive a scholarship to play at Morgan State University of South Florida to further his education.

In the next 10 years, she was growing closer to God and would like to be a missionary. She also sees herself finishing medical school at the University of South Florida and starting a residency, eventually ended up back here in St. Pete.

“I have decided that I want to give back to the community that had a hand in raising me.”

COMMUNITY NEWS

A Passion to receive

PRESLEY, from front page

The Easter story of Jesus is the best story ever. It is the only story that matters. Jesus is the only person who has the answer to the question, “How can I become a Christian?” Christianity is a very personal faith. It is a faith that must be lived. It is a faith that is built on a foundation of love, forgiveness and mercy. It is a faith that is built on a foundation of hope, joy and peace. It is a faith that is built on a foundation of trust in God. It is a faith that is built on a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. It is a faith that is built on a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

“During my high school years, I was able to achieve goals through a lot of ups and downs, but I made it through.” At Morgan State, Jordan will be majoring in music and eventually will transplant in the art of physical therapy. His time on the sports field helped him to choose a career path. He is passionate about helping other athletes recover from major injuries and getting them back on the field, playing the sports that they love.

We’re working hard to deliver the future Florida families and communities deserve, like a stronger grid for better reliability, more clean, renewable energy and new ways for you to control your energy use now — and in the years ahead.

Here’s what our investments mean for you:

RELIABLE

• Investments to strengthen and secure the energy grid

CLEANER

• Refining older, less-efficient coal plants

• Using more clean natural gas and renewables like solar

BEETTER CONTROL

• More customer control over energy use

Morgan State has landed a good one in Jor- dan. His parents, Earl and Sulire Presley, stand behind him 100 percent in all of his endeavors.
The pursuit of a journalist

BY DEXTER MCCREE

ST. PETERSBURG — When Jiana Johnson was in kindergarten, she had a glowing smile of confidence on her beautiful cookie face. She also had a gift for the written word. Jiana was a kindergartner when she produced her first news paper. She wrote a short piece on paper and folded it in half and wrote her stories. Her sources were taken right from her environment. She also watched Erica Riggins be the first to deliver a column. Riggins was an influential writer as well as an anchor for Channel 10 News anchor Margarita Nava, and the cause of theystery of the newspaper.

No longer a kindergartner, Jiana, a 2018 graduate of Lakewood High School and continues to create memorable moments. At some point, you have to realize that success starts with you. She once said: "Nobody owes you anything. You don't deserve anything unless you go out to get it." In college, there was much that was new to her. She was an English major and graduated with a Minor in Education. She also received the All Florida Scholar Award in school newspaper and radio.

On June 12, 2018, she will attend the University of Florida Scholastic Press Association (UFSPA) convention and receive the "Most Talented" reporter and editor award for her first column. "About the Necklaces." When Jiana entered Lakewood High School, she continues to pursue her love of writing. She joined the Spartan News Network as a writer and editor. She became the secreta ry of Quill & Scroll, an international journalism honor society, and participated in the Leadership Association (FFLA) and the FFLA state competition. Jiana was also recognized as one of the top 10 journalists in her senior year.

When Cameron Butts played middle hitter on the junior varsity volleyball team, he was on the path to qualify him to graduate if he continued on the path he was on. He did not notice at the time what was happening in his life. Christian recalled: "Finlay got an ace, check swing, seeing that he was not getting anywhere with his actions." Cameron transferred to Tate Hollins and his capa bility to make changes was one reason he was far be hind on credits. He found himself falling back on old habits. He continued to skip classes and particip ate in activities that would negatively affect his education. But, this time around, Cameron decided to do something different. Cameron knew that he had to become a responsible adult and he offered to his community to attend school and eventually graduate.

When Cameron watched his first column at graduation, he felt proud. "I stopped skipping and my grade point average went up on my transcript, and I was not a year, said Cameron." Cameron, still, his work was not complete. Although he had made great strides in improving his grades, Cameron would have to make another series of decisions that would ultimately make or break him.

Determined to become the champion of his own career, Cameron made a decision to forge a homecoming, and found out about Cameron's decision to enroll him in the program. With plans to continue his education, Cameron, now, will become a nurse graduate, and his mother Marcella Christian and mentor made up their team of support. He made the most of his second chance. But, he has committed to this story.

At 3:15 pm, a school newspaper and radio account featuring weekly news. More info at spnhs.org/SPN. When the young journalist was writing news articles, she was working for one of her challenging classes. She maintained a 3.5 grade point average while holding a rigorous position. With plans to continue his education, Cameron, now, will become a nurse graduate, and his mother Marcella Christian and mentor made up their team of support. He made the most of his second chance.

Jiana was the daughter of Joannita Brainer Johnson and Patrick Johnson.
BY DEXTER MCCREE  Feature Writer

DADDY’S GIRL

ST. PETERSBURG — Shantana Headley is self-described daddy’s girl, and her family would tend to agree. Opponents on the track and basketball court, not so much. When Shantana was a baby, the doctor took her out of her mother’s arms and gave her to her daddy. It’s a story that she will never live down. “He and I connect on another level. Whenever we are playing together or around each other, it is never a dull moment,” said Shantana. “He is the reason that I play tough inside in basketball.”

Her mom is no slouch either. She has always had Shantana’s best interest at heart. Every scholarship meeting or educational opportunity that she was offered, her mom was there to make sure she had the tools to succeed in life. Both parents, Avril and Maxine Headley, were so proud to see their little girl graduate from The Boca Ciega High School earlier this month, and the moment was just as special to her brother Shayon. “Growing up, my brother was my best friend and still is to this day. He can literally talk to him about anything, and he sometimes has to worry about what he says,” said Shantana. “His birth is the one who pushes her to do better in all that she does.” Shantana said she could never do something halfway with him; he makes her give her all. “And that’s how it should be.”

In middle school, she was not involved in sports, but she had natural athletic skills, and her dad and brother took note. They encouraged her to pick up a basketball. Once she learned to play the game, she took it to new heights. As the basketball team tryouts started in her sophomore year, Shanta nes felt nervous.

She questioned if she was good enough to make the team since she was competing against players who had been acquainted with one another for years and had built a bond. Her brother encouraged her to give it a shot, as she did. “Tryouts came around, and I am looking good,” bragged Shantana. “I have a high 3.5 grade point average and I have God on my side.”

She seriously asked for head Coach Cheryl Green to open the door. Both she and her coach were ecstatic. Shantana went on to become a leader in the program, taking the Lady Pirates to the Pinellas County Athletic Conference final four straight years. Her 12th-grade season had the most memorable moments for her. As a senior leader in basketball, she was the Lady Pirates’ leading scorer and made the Pinellas County All-Star team while keeping a 3.5 grade point average and being a member of the National Honors Society and Math Honors Society.

She also attended at St. Anthony’s Hospital, South Branch Library and the Ronald McDonald House. She is involved in AKA National Achiever Society and Pure Expressions Dance Ministry. At Bogie, she attended the Center for Wellness and Medical Professions where upon graduation she obtained her certified nursing assistant certification, received a medical magnetic duplex along with a standard high school diploma.

This fall, Shantana will be heading to St. Leo University where she will major in healthcare management. Daddy’s girl is growing up.

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She also attended at St. Anthony’s Hospital, South Branch Library and the Ronald McDonald House. She is involved in AKA National Achiever Society and Pure Expressions Dance Ministry. At Bogie, she attended the Center for Wellness and Medical Professions where upon graduation she obtained her certified nursing assistant certification, received a medical magnetic duplex along with a standard high school diploma.

This fall, Shantana will be heading to St. Leo University where she will major in healthcare management. Daddy’s girl is growing up.
ST PETERSBURG – A group of founding members announced the incorporation of St. Petesburg’s first cooperatively owned grocery store. This group of citizens arose and formed out of the New Deal for St Pete, a locally based community group that reflects the actual needs and wishes of city residents.

The New Deal for St Pete grew out of the People’s Budget Review that surveyed 1,400 residents on how they would like to see our city’s resources used. One of four points revealed was for funding cooperative business development, emphasizing the need for a community-owned grocery co-op.

A small group interested in the idea of a grocery co-op came together and attended the “Up and Coming Grocery Co-op Conference” in Milwaukee in March. This once a year conference, attended by 60 grocery co-ops, is a high energy, one-stop-shop for forming, opening and running food co-ops.

This loosely formed group, now identified as the One Community Grocery Co-op and includes Erica Harding, Judith Turner and Leigh Davis, returned home with a new mission and with one of the four $1,100 scholarships given out to attend next year’s conference. These new founding members returned home to start the process, which on average takes three years to open its doors.

Florida has two other grocery co-ops, New Leaf in Tallahassee and Ever’man’s in Pensacola. The One Community Grocery Co-op is the third known grocery co-op in Florida and the first in St. Pete.

Forming a grocery co-op can be a complicated process; the Food Co-op Initiative, specializing in grocery co-op development, provides their consulting service at no charge and has been invited by the group to help with the process.

About One Community Grocery Co-op

Founding members have grown to include leader Erica Hardison, Royce Wheeler, Rick Coleman, Judith Turner, Winnie Foster, and Sheral Redwood-Adams. They meet weekly at Pinellas Technical College in the newly formed Food System Center to plan the next steps for building membership.

Florida Cooperative Empowered Economic Development teaches classes monthly at the city’s business assistance center known as the Greenhouse, 440 Second Ave. N and their satellite location at the Enoch Davis Center, 1118 18th Ave. S.

One class per quarter offered is “Steps to Starting a Grocery Co-op” from 6-8 p.m. This class reviews the process that needs to be followed, along with examples of food co-ops and updates on One Community Grocery Co-op.

To learn more about joining the grocery co-op, as a member, board member or a committee to help the process, please contact Judith Turner at (727) 765-2054 or Floridaed@gmail.com.
COMMUNITY NEWS

NCNWs’ Taste of the World Food Festival 2018

BY CYNTHIA JENKINS
Contributor

ST PETERSBURG — The St. Petersburg Metropolitan Section of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW) held their Taste of the World Food Festival at the Vista Recreation Center last month to overwhelming success.

The recreation center was transformed to an international culinary delight, filled with more than 50 succulent and savory foods that represented six countries including the United States, China, Jamaica, Spain, Italy and Cuba.

The Taste of the World Food Festival drew a capacity crowd, packing the house with hundreds of youth and families from around the Greater Tampa Bay area. Eventgoers appreciated the cultural diversity, brightly colored and printed fabrics and flags. Friendly salutations and the aroma of scrumptious foods filled the room.

More than the delicious food, the event provided a perfect climate for peace, happiness and laughter, great conversations and high spirited fellowship. But let’s not forget about the real reason it was so special — the partaking of specialty dishes that everyone said was “finger-licking good.”

With a nod to the NCNW’s founder, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, sweet potato pie was on the menu, which was said to be her favorite.

Entertainment for the afternoon included soothing music with island soul sweet steel drums by Chris Garner, while Terrell “DJ Tamik” Riley kept the good times going with the latest and greatest sounds.

The Black Pearls, NCNW’s youth group, presented a synopsis of all countries represented and harmonious sounds, and songs of praise rendered by Voices With Visions singers captivated and engaged audience participation.

The food festival is one of many ways the St. Petersburg Metropolitan Section brings communities of all cultures together. They underscore the wealth of resources, diverse families, as well as preserving the traditional values and strengths that they all have in common.

The list could go on. You’ve brought us over! For every trial, you’ve seen us through! Once again God showed up and showed out! Many thanks to the phenomenal 2018 Food Festival committee under the leadership of Chairperson Mae Welch, Co-chair Cynthia Jenkins and the Food Festival Committee members. Gwendolyn Anderson, Allene Gammage-Ahmed, Sandra Lee, Dorothy Milton, Joanne Rainey and Valerie Williams. Also, thanks to the chairs and their team of each country.
On God’s mission

BY INDHIRA SUERO

ACOSTA

ST. PETERSBURG – At the age of 10, Lucy Oliver Williams lost her father in an accident. That event broke her but also brought her closer to God, which has led her on a journey to fulfill His mission.

New head of the Women’s Ministry at Mt. Zion Progressive Missionary Baptist Church, where the Rev. Louis Murphy Sr. tends his flock, she moves effortlessly between the church’s corridors as comfortably between the women still suffering the effects of black Americans so depressed. We struggled with so much anxiety, low self-esteem, we have all that among us and we put on a facade that we got it together. Some of these women, like a broken women. Through the Women’s Ministry, Williams and her nine siblings. She re- members staying after Sunday school and listen- ing to her favorite scripture at Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Williams said it was the effects of brokenness from abuse years after they were subjected to it. The trauma of sexual, physical and physiological wounds people to the depths of their soul.

“Different varieties of brokenness show up on Williams’ doorstep. Some are in the shape of a bad childhood, or a broken marriage and some take the form of a dysfunctional family life. On top of it all, silence takes control of these women, like a stalking enemy. “That’s what makes the majority of African Americans so depressed. We struggled with so much anxiety, low self-es- timate. We have all that among us and we put on a facade that we got it together. Some of these women, like a broken women. Through the Women’s Ministry, Williams and her nine siblings. She re- members staying after Sunday school and listen- ing to her favorite scripture at Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Williams will continue to do what God has planned for her, and the women of St. Pete will be the better for it.

This story is part of a 50-article series honoring black women in the Tampa Bay area.
COMMUNITY NEWS

Never give up on greatness

BY DEXTER MCCREE
Feature Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — No matter what obstacles you face, your greatness is not regulated by your circumstances but by your drive, determination and dedication to succeed. This is something that Tameika Johnson knows well.

After a long, transformative journey, Johnson has triumphed, graduating from St. Petersburg College with an Associate of Arts Degree despite all the odds against her.

Johnson did well during her high school years, however, circumstances would cause her to slightly alter her life’s course. It’s a journey, and it’s just life.

During her sophomore year of high school, she dropped out to have her first child. Motivated by her new arrival, she allowed her bundle of joy to fuel her to continue to achieve her goals.

Determined to complete her education, Johnson enrolled in vocational school, earned her GED and went on to obtain her Home Health Aide certificate. She began working in the field almost immediately.

While life seemed to be progressing, things took a turn for the worst in her early 20s. What she would experience would serve as a wake-up call and one of the most transformative lessons in her life.

“I was charged with a felony, and I lost out on a lot of opportunities,” said Johnson. “My family’s life was disrupted and I knew then that I needed and wanted to change my life.”

Despite her circumstances, education remained a priority. Though many years had passed and more children were born, she never lost sight of her dreams to earn a degree.

“My children were getting older, and I wanted to be a role model for them because I know education is important,” explained Johnson. “I walked into the St. Pete College Midtown Keene Center, and my college journey began.”

However, life became overwhelming midway through her college journey and she almost gave up everything that she had worked so hard for. Surrounded by people who also recognized her greatness, help was on the way just when it all seemed to be falling apart.

“I wanted to walk away from everything, but Professor Ian Wilson stepped in and sought assistance for me because he saw my potential,” Johnson revealed.

“Through SPC’s BayCare counseling, I was able to get the help I needed to continue my education,” Johnson continued. “Tameika’s drive is the exact force needed to fulfill her destiny,” stated Wilson.

It’s Johnson’s drive that has allowed her to raise a family and persevere despite financial issues, setbacks and disabilities while in college. She conquered with all odds against her, and Wilson wasn’t the only one to notice.

“Tameika’s confidence and determination have led her to many successes,” said Lisa M. Gould, SPC accessibility coordinator. “Future triumphs are inevitable for her!”

As she continues on her journey, she reminds herself to never take no for an answer. Johnson is a role model to her kids and those who have been through similar situations.

It’s noteworthy that when you strive for greatness and never let life’s hurdles get in the way, you will achieve everything you set your mind to—and then some.

“Never give up on greatness,” Johnson concluded.
Rev. Louis M. Murphy Sr.
Queen Street Church of God in Christ
Wednesday   YPWW Bible Study – 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday        Morning Prayer – 9 to 10 a.m.
Sunday         Sunday School – 9:30 a.m.
Wednesday Small Group Bible Study

Donn & Jean Victory Christian Center Church
ministries at Victory Christian Center, please call (727) 321-0911.

“God’s House To The City”

Rev. Rickey L. Houston, Pastor
Church Of Christ
St. Petersburg, FL 33712
825 20th Street South
Home: 896-8006
www.Victorychristiancenterchurch.org

Sunday Worship Service 9:30 a.m.
Sunday School 8:30 a.m.
Sunday Bible Class (All Ages) 10:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship 5:00 p.m.
Mid-Week Worship: Wednesday 7:00 p.m.

Don’t Miss It!
VBS
Preschool children to adults are invited to take part in this fun-filled Bible Program. There will be plenty of crafts, games, snacks, and—most of all—Bible training to inspire everyone to excel in everything they do!

Place: First Baptist Institutional Church
3144 3rd Avenue S, St. Petersburg, FL 33712
Date: June 4-15, 2018
Time: 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Let your love be to your broth- ers: ye lovers, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. ... If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. - 1 John 4:19-21

McCarteney, the Rev. Dr. Doral R. Pulley, Pastoral Leader, in his Sunday morning sermon, addressed the need for action. He noted that many people have felt the call to action, but that it is often difficult to know how to act. He encouraged the congregation to continue to pray for guidance and action, and to seek out opportunities to make a difference in their communities and the world. He reminded the congregation that we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and that we have the power to make a difference.

In addition to the sermon, the service included music, communion, and prayer. The service was a time of reflection and renewal, as the congregation sought to deepen their understanding of their faith and their role in the world. The service ended with a call to action, encouraging the congregation to continue to be a light in the world, to love and serve others, and to make a difference in the lives of those around them.

The service was a powerful reminder of the importance of faith, action, and service, and challenged the congregation to continue to be a light in the world, to love and serve others, and to make a difference in the lives of those around them.
“They have shown me the need for additional educational services,” she expressed. Twenty-year-old Jakara Fitzpatrick presented First Class Adventures, an after-school transport service for parent and students. His idea stemmed from his mother being a single parent and working two jobs. “She wasn’t always able to balance our demanding schedules. Watching her struggles, First Class was born.”

Marquis Matt, the 24-year-old mastermind behind Natural Endings Interment Solutions, acknowledged that his family’s experience in the funeral business paved the way to his conception of an eco-friendly burial solutions company. Rolando Sims, an 18-year-old entrepreneur with a mobile auto detailing business, also mentioned his family’s influence. “I got started from working with my family of car washes and outside cleaning up the house.”

Funded by Bon Secours Health Systems, 2020 CATCH Lite is one component of the 2020 Plan’s vision to reduce poverty by 30 percent in south St. Petersburg by the year 2020. “I am truly honored to be able to provide this to young entrepreneurs because this is really an important moment for a lot of them in their businesses,” noted Deborah Figgers-Sanders, co-chair of the 2020 Plan Taskforce. She feels the program has helped the participants to blossom and the competition pushed them to prepare.

“There was that little extra stress to do it right, knowing that they were doing it in front of people and people who might want to invest in their business,” Figgers-Sanders said, adding that the whole exercise was transforming for them as well as informative for the community.

Albert Lee, president and CEO of the Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation (TBBBIC), which offers the CATCH Program, said he was very impressed with what he saw. “Most of them were well prepared, and I really believe that many of these are going to be businesses that we’re going to see. And I’m certainly looking forward to them potentially coming to us as clients.”

Tahisia Scantling, an independent business consultant with the TBBBIC who led the three St. Petersburg CATCH cohorts, was excited about the opportunity this program affords young entrepreneurs.

“We hope that they will continue to expand and grow their businesses and eventually come back to the Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation for funding,” said Scantling.

The five judges for the evening were Jessica Elierman, Greenhouse Manager for the City of St. Petersburg, Chitra Naidu, Bon Secours Health Systems, J. P. DuBuque, St. Petersburg Area Economic Development Corporation, Annie Tyrell, Annie’s Beauty Supply, LLC and Ramon Hernandez, Callaloo Group, LLC.

We wish all the participants in this year’s Catch Lite Program great success in the future, and we’re looking out for big things from each of you!

To reach J.A. Jones, email jones@theweeklychallenger.com.