

Sports, Entertainment, Arts & Media News

Stephen A. Smith, Anthony Anderson, Phylicia Fant, and Adam Blackstone step up for the 7th Annual HBCU Week Awards Gala to help launch major scholarship initiatives

WILMINGTON, Del. — HBCU Week Foundation welcomed some of the nation's most influential leaders across entertainment, sports, business, media, and higher education to Wilmington, Delaware, for its 7th Annual HBCU Week Awards Gala at the historic Hotel DuPont. Co-hosted by HBCU Week Foundation Founder **Ashley Christopher** and Emmy Award-winning actor and Golden Globe nominee **Anthony Anderson**, the evening celebrated excellence, leadership, and the transformative impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities while unveiling two new initiatives that will expand opportunities for future generations of HBCU students.

Among the notable attendees were **Anthony Anderson**, ESPN personality **Stephen A. Smith**, Grammy Award-winning producer and music director **Adam Blackstone**, Amazon Music executive **Phylicia Fant**, entrepreneur and music executive **Robert "Don Pooh" Cummins**, and media personality **Loren L. Rosa**, who returned to support the Foundation following her recognition as an honoree at last year's gala. The evening also welcomed corporate executives, educators, elected officials, HBCU leaders, alumni, and advocates committed to advancing educational access and excellence.

This year's honorees represented a remarkable cross-section of leaders who continue to shape culture and inspire future generations. Adam Blackstone received the Trailblazer Award for his extraordinary contributions to music and entertainment as a Grammy Award-winning producer, Emmy Award-winning music director, and Tony Award-nominated orchestrator. Phylicia Fant was honored with the Leadership Award for her groundbreaking work as Global Director of Black Music and Culture at Amazon Music and her long-



Anthony Anderson, Stephen A. Smith, Adam Blackstone, and Phylicia Fant were among those who gathered for the 7th Annual HBCU Week Awards Gala which premiered two new scholarship initiatives. (Photo/courtesy: HBCU Week Foundation)

standing commitment to elevating Black artists and culture on a global scale. Robert "Don Pooh" Cummins received the Living

Legacy Award in recognition of his impact as an entrepreneur, restaurateur, music executive, and cultural visionary whose in-

fluence spans multiple industries. **Robert O. Wright III** was presented with the Rising Star Award, honoring his achieve-

ments as a Division I student-athlete and emerging leader whose dedication, character, and commitment to service embody the future of the HBCU community. A highlight of the evening came when the HBCU Week Foundation announced the launch of two new scholarship initiatives designed to expand access and opportunity for HBCU students and graduates. Among them was the HBCU Week Sports Scholarship, inspired by the extraordinary leadership and generosity of Rising Star Award recipient Robert O. Wright III. At just 20 years old, Wright pledged \$25,000 of his own money to help establish the scholarship, making him one of the youngest major contributors in the Foundation's history. His investment reflects a deep commitment to ensuring fellow student-athletes have the resources needed to excel academically, athletically, and professionally.

HBCU Week Foundation also unveiled the HBCU Week Treasurer's Fellowship Graduate Scholarship, which will support HBCU graduates pursuing advanced degrees in business, finance, economics, public policy, accounting, and related fields. In addition to financial assistance, the fellowship will provide mentorship, leadership development opportunities, and access to industry professionals, helping cultivate the next generation of financial and civic leaders. Together, these initiatives represent the Foundation's continued commitment to creating pathways for success and investing in the future of the HBCU community.

"The HBCU Week Awards Gala is a celebration of achievement, purpose, and possibility," said

Ashley Christopher, Founder of HBCU Week Foundation. "This year's honorees embody excellence in its highest form, and we are proud to recognize their accomplishments while simultaneously investing in the next generation of HBCU leaders through these new scholarship initiatives. Robert's decision to invest in other students at such a young age is a powerful example of leadership in action and reflects exactly what HBCU Week is all about."

The evening featured a star-studded red carpet, special tributes, inspiring remarks, and memorable moments that highlighted the lasting impact of HBCUs on culture, business, entertainment, sports, and society. As HBCU Week Foundation continues to expand its reach and impact nationwide, the gala served as both a celebration of achievement and a powerful reminder of the importance of investing in future generations.

For more information about HBCU Week Foundation and its scholarship initiatives, visit www.hbcuweek.org or follow @HBCUWeek on social media.

About HBCU Week Foundation
HBCU Week Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging high school students to enroll in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, providing scholarship opportunities, and creating pathways to educational and professional success. Through strategic partnerships, innovative programming, and community engagement, the Foundation continues to elevate awareness and support for HBCUs nationwide.

Watch for The Mid-South Tribune "250" Special Edition to Celebrate America's 250th Birthday!

The Downtown Memphis Commission announces Independence Day on the River, July 4th for drones & fireworks

MEMPHIS, TN — The Downtown Memphis Commission announces Independence Day on the River for a drone and fireworks show, taking place on Saturday, July 4, 2026, from 6:00 to 9:00 PM. Independence Day on the River was voted USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice Top Ten Best 4th of July Celebrations for 2025.

This free event will take place in Tom Lee Park—activated with three stages featuring live entertainment, food trucks, games, vendors, and festive activities for all ages.

The night will conclude with a drone show at 9:00 PM, followed by a fireworks spectacular, launching over the river and visible from across Downtown. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets and enjoy a dazzling display over the Mississippi River.

Admission is free, but attendees are encouraged to RSVP to receive event information and updates. Visit www.downtownmemphis.com

TAILS
What: Independence Day on the River
Where: Tom Lee Park
When: Saturday, July 4, 2026, 6:00–9:00 PM
Drone Show & Fireworks Show: 9:00 PM
Admission: Free
Live Entertainment (6:00–9:00 PM)
Age Requirements: Individuals under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian

ENTRANCE & SAFETY INFORMATION
Gates Open at 5:30 PM.

Entry into the park requires security and weapon screening for all attendees

There will be five designated entrance points into the event. Locations include:

- Intersection of Beale St. and Riverside Dr.
- CutBank Bluff at Vance Avenue
- Bluff Walk at Huling Ave and Tennessee St.

- Bluff Walk at W Butler Ave and Tennessee St.
- Intersection of Riverside Dr. and W Georgia Ave

What Guests Can Bring: Water, Clear bags (any size), Small purse (4.5"x6.5"), Lawn chairs & blankets, Strollers & Wagons, Food & non-alcoholic beverages

Prohibited Items: Backpacks, firearms, knives, explosives, fireworks (including sparklers), or weapons of any kind, tents or large umbrellas, bicycles, skateboards, scooters, or any motorized vehicles, alcohol, coolers, pets (only trained service animals assisting individuals with disabilities are permitted)

STREET CLOSURES
To ensure a safe and walkable event experience, the following streets will close on Thursday, July 2 at 8:00 AM and will reopen on July 5th.

- Riverside Drive, between Union Ave. and W Georgia Ave.
- Beale Street between Riverside Drive and Wagner Place

Coach Smart adds duo of Alvin Su and Harrison Shaw to 2026-27 Roster... from sports page 3

ships.

Shaw comes to Memphis after a decorated career at Booker T. Washington High School where he won the 2025 Oklahoma 5A Individual State Title by a dominant six strokes, making history as both the first state champion in his school's history and the first African American golfer to win

an individual state title in Oklahoma history.

The Tulsa, Okla., native was the 2025 Oklahoma Junior Golf Tour Spring Shootout Champion, as well as a standout performer at the OJGT Lincoln Park tournament. A long-time competitor on the junior circuits, Shaw also claimed both PGA Junior Sec-

tional and Regional Championship titles during his junior career.

For complete information on Memphis Tigers Golf, visit www.GoTigersGo.com and follow the team's social media channels on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Email entertainment and sports news releases and photos to MSTsports@prodigy.net



COMPLIMENTARY MILITARY TICKETS AVAILABLE for FedEx St. Jude Championship, August 12-16

As part of their unwavering support of the military members for their bravery and service, Big River Steel is again offering complimentary Grounds+ admissions to FedEx St. Jude Championship for all active-duty, retired, reserve, veterans and National Guard personnel. Valid military identification and credentials are required.

For more information, visit FedExChampionship.com/military