

The Mid-South Tribune

“Where there is no vision, the people will perish.”

December 2025

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE and The Mid-South Area

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Have a Merry, Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday 2026!



First Lady Melania Trump receives the official 2025 White House Christmas tree. For the transformation of this amazing tree, see page 7. (Photo/Courtesy: The White House)

**Christmas is
a time of
celebration
and enjoying
family time
together**

By Rev. Dr. James L. Snyder

Christmas is my favorite holiday. A time of celebration and enjoying family time together.

It wasn't always my favorite holiday. There was a time when my birthday was my favorite holiday of the year. I enjoyed celebrating my birthday with presents and that amazing birthday cake that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage always made.

That is, when I reached 50 years on my birthday, it came to an end. No more celebrating getting one year older. Every day on my birthday, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would say, "Today you are one year older." And then she would laugh.

That was the last birthday I had, and I don't remember it anymore, or at least that's my story, and I'm sticking to it.

Now Christmas is my favorite holiday, and I enjoy just about every aspect of it. It's great to have my family together around the Christmas tree and sharing Christmas presents. That's a really fun time of the year.

I must confess that I do have a problem with the Christmas holiday.

I don't have any problem with gathering together and eating a marvelous Christmas dinner. The issue I have concerns the gifts. When it comes to something like gifts, I am absolutely not gifted.

Unlike The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, I really don't know how the shop. I don't know what gifts to buy for anybody in my family. Sometimes I give cash.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage starts her Christmas shopping right after the 4th of July. All summer long, she will be shopping for and storing those Christmas gifts in her craft room. Of course, I never go into her craft room because I would get lost and not know my way out. But she can figure out every gift every individual in our family deserves.

I can't sit down and name all of the family members, let alone know what they would like for Christmas.

When I was a kid, my parents would take me downtown to visit Santa Claus. I would sit on Santa Claus's lap and tell him what I really wanted for Christmas. Little did I know that my parents were right next to Santa, listening to all my Christmas wish lists?

It was amazing on Christmas Day to find out that Santa had come through with my Christmas gifts. It took me a long time to realize that Santa had nothing to do with my Christmas gifts, but they all came from my parents. My parents knew me better than I

Please see page 7

Operation Christmas Drop is Department of War's longest-running humanitarian mission in the Pacific



By Air Force Senior Airman Alexzandra Gracey

DECEMBER 9, 2025 - Leaders from the U.S. Air Force, partnering nations and community members gathered for a traditional "push ceremony," marking the official beginning of Operation Christmas Drop 2025 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Dec. 8, 2025.

The event served as the symbolic opening for the 74th iteration of the operation, the War Department's longest-running humanitarian airlift mission. It

began in 1952 after an Air Force B-29 crew flying near Guam spotted islanders waving from below and dropped supplies as an act of goodwill.

"Operation Christmas Drop delivers more than just supplies," said Aren Palik, vice president of the Federated States of Micronesia. "It delivers hope, connection and the reassurance that even across a vast ocean, we remain part of one family. It is an accomplishment that speaks to the steadfast commitment of the United States and its Pacific partners to care for our people and our communities."

The ceremony concluded with Palik, Bruce Best — known at Operation Christmas Drop as "Brother Bruce" — and Air Force Col. Richard McElhane, 374th Airlift Wing commander, loading the first official bundle into the cargo bay of a C-130J Super Hercules assigned to the 36th Airlift Squadron, operating under the 374th Expeditionary Wing.

"These bundles supply 56,000 people across 59 islands each year, but I don't think we can truly grasp that impact until we see the families wave and jump up and down in excitement as we fly by," McElhane said. "While

this is an amazing humanitarian mission, it's also an invaluable training event for participating aircrews. This training, and the work we do here, matters and translates to our readiness."

Throughout the remainder of the operation, the Air Force and partnering nations will airdrop a total of 270 bundles filled with critical supplies to remote communities across the Pacific, delivering humanitarian assistance while simultaneously conducting valuable low-level flight, precision-airdrop and logistical coordination training — skills that strengthen the ability to execute

rapid global airlift missions across the Indo-Pacific region.

"The people of the Federated States of Micronesia extend our deepest gratitude," Palik said. "Beyond the food, tools, fishing gear, school supplies and gifts, you deliver something far more valuable: the spirit of compassion that defines this Christmas season."

Watch for The Mid-South Tribune's 31st Annual Black History Edition, Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and Celebrating a Culture of Freedom!
Coming in February 2026!

“Peace on Earth and Goodwill to Men!”

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Gaylord resorts unveil extraordinary holiday decor at five iconic resorts nationwide; Christmas time comes to life with immersive attractions and festive family fun

BETHESDA, Md., Nov. 20, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Built on a tradition of extraordinary environments that bring people together, Christmas at Gaylord Hotels transforms five resorts into wondrous holiday destinations. Inside signature glass atriums, guests are surrounded by millions of twinkling lights, towering Christmas trees and elaborate festive décor. The seasonal makeover is a monumental effort showcasing Gaylord Hotels event transformation expertise. Hundreds of team members work for months, beginning when the first lights are hung in July and continuing until the final touches in November, to create immersive environments that capture the spirit of the season.

Gaylord Opryland Resort, Cascades Atrium

At each dazzling resort, Gaylord Hotels delivers an all-under-one-roof holiday experience featuring up to 17 hours of festive entertainment and attractions. Every activity is thoughtfully designed to immerse guests in the season's spirit, with stunning décor and themed atmospheres that create lasting holiday memories. Step into a winter wonderland with offerings including Gaylord Hotels original Christmas ICE!™ experience, pop-up Bavarian Christmas villages, spectacular festive light shows and family-friendly holiday scavenger hunts. For more information or to book a seasonal stay, visit <https://www.christmas.gaylord-hotels.com/>.

Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville, Tenn.

A beloved holiday tradition in Music City, Gaylord Opryland glows with more than five mil-



Gaylord Opryland Resort, Cascades Atrium. At each dazzling resort, Gaylord Hotels delivers an all-under-one-roof holiday experience featuring up to 17 hours of festive entertainment and attractions. (Photo/Courtesy: Gaylord Hotels)

lion lights, 15 miles of garland, thousands of poinsettias and an ornately decorated 48-foot Christmas tree. The resort's horticultural team begins hanging outdoor lights in July, with the full transformation completed by early November. With nightly tree lightings, festive fountain shows and a breathtaking nativity scene, the resort continues to enchant guests with timeless holiday magic. Explore more at <https://www.christmasatgaylordopryland.com/>.

Gaylord Rockies Resort near Denver, Colo.

Set against the backdrop of the Colorado Rockies, this resort transforms into a cozy alpine wonderland with thousands of sparkling lights, oversized wreaths and garland stretching

more than three football fields. Guests can enjoy holiday-themed pop-ups like Mistletoe Village's Yuletide Street Market, sip festive cocktails at Sippin' Santa and stroll through the Festival of Trees — a dazzling display benefiting local causes.

The resort's pastry team will also debut a 12-foot-tall gingerbread house, a life-size mountain cabin crafted with more than 2,000 pounds of cookies and candy. Explore more at <https://www.christmasatgaylordrockies.com/>.

Gaylord Palms Resort near Orlando, Fla.

Gaylord Palms dazzles with more than three million lights, 100 elaborately decorated trees and 25,000 ornaments. The Christmas Tree Trail winds

through the resort's 4.5-acre indoor garden atrium, with themed trees that pay tribute to Florida's diverse regions. Highlights include floating trees in the Everglades Atrium and island trees in the Key West Atrium, set within the 161,000-gallon Key West Lagoon. Each night, the atrium's 13,500-square-foot LED light curtains come alive with a synchronized light show, creating tens of millions of unique colors set to a festive soundtrack. Explore more at <https://www.christmasatgaylordpalms.com/>.

Gaylord National Resort near Washington D.C.

Gaylord National showcases the spirit of the holidays with more than two million twinkling lights and a 50-foot Christmas tree suspended in the atrium. The grand

lobby features trees adorned in deep blues, a tribute to national pride and timeless elegance. Guests can also explore a whimsical gingerbread display, showcasing edible artistry that captures the imagination. Explore more at <https://www.christmasatgaylordnational.com/>.

Gaylord Texan Resort near Dallas, Texas

Everything's bigger in Texas, including Christmas. Gaylord Texan features two million twinkling lights, 15,000 sparkling ornaments, two 25-foot-tall toy soldiers and a towering 54-foot-tall Christmas tree. Guests can enjoy magical miniature train sets and a host of festive holiday activities and experiences that bring Lone Star charm to the most wonderful time of the year.

Explore more at <https://www.christmasatgaylord-texan.com/>.

Wake up in a winter wonderland and enjoy endless hours of Christmas entertainment and activities with an overnight stay in a spacious room or suite. The ideal way to experience everything the season has to offer — all under one roof. Learn more and book at <https://www.christmas.gaylordhotels.com/>.

ABOUT GAYLORD HOTELS

Gaylord Hotels, part of the Marriott portfolio of brands, brings people together in extraordinary ways across its six destination resorts. Purpose-built to host exceptional meetings, events, and celebrations of all sizes, Gaylord Hotels offers a unique, all-under-one-roof experience with more than 3.2 million square feet of meeting space, expansive atriums, five water parks, full-service spas and a wide range of dining and shopping outlets. Gaylord Hotels provides unforgettable experiences, including the beloved holiday tradition, ICE!, which brings classic Christmas stories to life in more than 2 million pounds of hand-carved ice. Gaylord Hotels are in prime locations across the country, including Gaylord Opryland in Nashville, Tennessee; Gaylord Palms in Kissimmee, Florida; Gaylord Texan on Lake Grapevine, Texas; Gaylord National on the Potomac in National Harbor, Maryland; Gaylord Rockies in Aurora, Colorado; and the newly opened Gaylord Pacific in Chula Vista, California.

For more information, visit www.gaylordhotels.com.



When Christmas brings you the best & worst and delivers you the bonus of the Great Recession, can you keep your family together?

“Forgiving Christmas” is a contemporary novel wrapped in symbolic twists and the reality that ‘life’ happens and what happens transcends all seasons.

Available on Kindle and in print at Amazon.com and other retail outlets.

Also, “Forgiving Christmas” by Arelya J. Mitchell and narrated by Janine Santana, is available on Audible at Amazon.com

Forgiving Christmas

A Contemporary Novel

By Arelya J. Mitchell

Autumn Bailey Entertainment and Ty Walker’s Braveheart Entertainment partner with Assembly Studios to power a new era of independent filmmaking in Atlanta, Georgia

ATLANTA, Dec. 9, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Independent film powerhouses Autumn Bailey Entertainment (ABE) and Ty Walker's Braveheart Entertainment have announced a major production partnership with one of Atlanta's most advanced and expansive film campuses, Assembly Studios, managed by Universal Production Services.

The collaboration marks a significant milestone in Georgia's rapidly evolving film landscape—uniting two leading creative producers known for acclaimed projects such as *On a Wing and a Prayer* and *The First Noelle: The Maynard Jackson Documentary* with Assembly's cutting-edge infrastructure to scale independent film and television production across the state. Together, the companies aim to build a sustainable model for high-quality, character-driven storytelling that blends artistry, efficiency, and innovation.

ON THE PARTNERSHIP
"Both of our companies have always focused on stories that feel real," said Autumn Bailey-Ford, founder of Autumn Bailey Entertainment. "Independent filmmaking is about truth, emotion, and community—building stories that matter and giving them space to thrive. Partnering with Assembly Studios, owned by Gray Media, and Universal Production Services means creating a foundation where those voices can be nurtured, amplified, and seen on a global stage. Together, we're not just expanding production capacity—we're investing in the creative soul of Georgia and the next generation of visionary filmmakers."
Ty Walker, founder of Braveheart Entertainment, added, "Braveheart was founded on a commitment to bold, elevated storytelling — work that chal-



lenges convention while remaining deeply human at its core. Assembly Studios offers not only the infrastructure but the creative synergy to expand that vision on a larger scale, without ever compromising the authenticity that defines our films. This partnership represents a meaningful evolution in how stories are told, how opportunities are created for the next generation of filmmakers, and how the independent film movement continues to redefine itself. We're proud to help lead that transformation together."

ASSEMBLY STUDIOS ON THE ALLIANCE

"Autumn Bailey Entertainment and Ty Walker's Braveheart Entertainment partnership with Assembly leverages the Southeast's most advanced production ecosystem — combining world-class stages, cutting-edge technology, and a full-service infrastructure that supports everything from large-scale tent-poles to independent filmmakers," said Dan Biersdorf, Vice President of Universal Production Services at

Assembly Studios. "Together, we're building opportunity, amplifying new voices, and redefining what TV and filmmaking can achieve in the South."
"Independent filmmakers need room to build big ideas, and that's what Assembly delivers," added Justin Campbell, Vice President, Studio Operations Assembly Atlanta. "ABE and Braveheart's vision is exactly what these stages were designed to support — empowering creative teams with the space and resources to develop remarkable stories in Georgia and bring them to audiences everywhere."

A STRATEGIC MOVE FOR GEORGIA'S FILM FUTURE

Located 30 minutes from Hartsfield-Jackson Airport and 15 minutes from downtown Atlanta, Assembly Studios features 22 world-class soundstages, exterior filming locations, and on-site Set Lighting & Grip, Costume House, Sign Shop, Transportation and more, positioning it as a premier destination for film, television, commercial, streaming productions and special events.

The partnership will further streamline costs and logistics, empowering independent filmmakers to deliver cinematic storytelling with both creative freedom and economic efficiency.

KEY INITIATIVES UNDER THE PARTNERSHIP

- **Expanded Production Slate:** Multiple new film and television projects each year.
 - **Immersive Storytelling Innovation:** Integration of emerging tech and new production methods.
 - **Talent & Training Pipelines:** Mentorship and educational programs for Georgia-based creatives.
 - **Expansive Storytelling:** Highlighting a broad range of narratives and viewpoints.
- With more than 40 years of combined experience, Autumn Bailey Entertainment and Braveheart Entertainment have built reputations for producing cinematic, socially conscious, and commercially successful stories that bridge art and audience impact. Operations under the new partnership will officially begin at

Assembly Studios on January 1, 2026, with production on the inaugural slate launching in Q2 2026. A kickoff celebration introducing the collaboration to Atlanta's creative community is set for December 2025.

ABOUT AUTUMN BAILEY ENTERTAINMENT

Founded by Autumn Bailey-Ford, Autumn Bailey Entertainment is a full-service film and television production company dedicated to authentic storytelling that uplifts, inspires, and entertains. Known for producing *On a Wing and a Prayer* (Prime Video) and *The First Noelle: The Maynard Jackson Documentary*, and executive producing the *Barbershop* series for Amazon/MGM, ABE continues to champion diverse voices and innovative creators across the independent landscape. www.abentertainment05.com

ABOUT BRAVEHEART ENTERTAINMENT

Led by producer Ty Walker, Braveheart Entertainment is a global entertainment company built for the bold—crafting cinematic stories with international scope and emotional depth. From elevated features to smart reality formats, Braveheart projects are defined by authenticity, innovation, and cross-cultural appeal. Walker's credits include executive producer on the sci-fi feature *Xeno* and producer on the action film *Die Hart* for Amazon. www.braveheart-ent.com and [@bvrhrt.ent](https://www.instagram.com/bvrhrt.ent) on Instagram.

ABOUT UNIVERSAL PRODUCTION SERVICES AT ASSEMBLY STUDIOS

Universal Production Services provides high-quality production services and stage facilities across the US, UK, and Europe for all feature, television, commercial and streaming productions. Universal Production Services is a unit of NBCUniversal, one of the world's leading media and entertainment companies in the development, production, and marketing of entertainment, news, and information to a global audience. NBCUniversal owns and operates a valuable portfolio of news and entertainment television networks, a premier motion picture company, significant television production operations, a leading television stations group, world-renowned theme parks, and a suite of leading Internet-based businesses. NBCUniversal is a subsidiary of Comcast Corporation. Please visit universalproductionservices.com/atlanta

ABOUT ASSEMBLY STUDIOS

Assembly Studios is a state-of-the-art film and television production facility located in Doraville, GA. As part of the Assembly Atlanta campus, Assembly Studios offers 22 world-class sound stages and top-tier production amenities. Owned by Atlanta-based Gray Media, Assembly Studios is designed as a hub for creativity, sustainability, and public engagement within the entertainment industry. The campus also features filmable exterior locations and full-scale production services, crafted to meet the demands of today's film and television productions. Learn more at assemblyatlanta.com.

Lifetime continues its tradition of ‘It’s a Wonderful Lifetime’ of holiday specials

All new premiere movies will also be available day after premiere on TVE/VOD, and Lifetime Movie Club will offer 70 library titles starting 10/24 to stream commercial-free! Holiday Movie Favorites By Lifetime (FAST Channel) with library titles that will air throughout the holiday season.

Talent Around the Tree This Year Includes
• *Brandy Norwood, Kane & Katelyn Brown, Loretta Devine, Debbi Morgan,*
• *Arielle Kebbel, Tyler Hilton, James Lafferty, Vivica A. Fox, Jackée Harry, Sy’rai Smith, Nischelle Turner, Jeffrey Bowyer-Chapman, and others in All-New Holiday Movies*

LOS ANGELES, CA – The countdown to the holidays is on as Lifetime announces its full holiday movie slate for the network’s annual It’s a Wonderful Lifetime programming event, kicking off Saturday, November 29th with 12 new movies, every Friday and Saturday! The slate’s highlights include Loretta Devine in *Deck the Hallways*, the story of family reviving old traditions while embracing some new ones, *A Pickleball Christmas* starring James Lafferty and Zibby Allen in which a tennis star returns home for Christmas, and the return of perennial favorites Vivica A. Fox and Jackée Harry in *The Christmas Campaign* and Nischelle Turner in *A Runaway Bride for Christmas*.



Vivica A. Fox is one of the many popular stars to make “It’s a Wonderful Lifetime” of holiday specials. (Photo/Courtesy: Lifetime)



“Do You Fear What I Fear” stars Ciara Hanna and Josh Henderson. (Photo/Courtesy: Lifetime)

These movies join the previously announced and highly anticipated movies *Christmas Everyday*, starring Brandy Norwood, Debbi Morgan and Sy’rai Smith and *Thank God: Christmas at Keller Ranch*, executive produced by Kane and Katelyn Brown and starring Arielle Kebbel and Tyler Hilton.

As part of this season’s offerings, beginning 10/27 through 12/31, and featuring special holiday-themed playlists through the entire holiday season, Lifetime will be presenting 100 beloved holiday titles on the Lifetime website and app, as well its video-on-demand (VOD) partners. All new premiere movies will also be available day after premiere on TVE/VOD, and Lifetime Movie Club will offer 70 library titles starting 10/24 to stream commercial-free! *Holiday Movie Favorites By Lifetime* (FAST Channel) kicks off on 11/1 with library titles that will air throughout the holiday season. Additionally, for those looking for some chills and thrills this season, LMN is kicking off a December event with premiere thriller *Do You Fear What I Fear*.

A Consumer alert from the Memphis Safe Task Force ... pass it on

Real Officers Have Nothing To Hide. If In Doubt, Ask To Verify

Below is public guidance on how citizens can verify whether an individual is a legitimate law enforcement officer. This guidance reflects the ongoing commitment of the Memphis Safe Task Force and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) to ensure accountability and build safer communities through transparency and collaboration, particularly as plainclothes officers and unmarked vehicles are currently operating in Memphis.

Key Safety Tips for the Public

- **Proper Identification:** Real officers will identify themselves, state their agency, and explain the reason for the stop. They carry both a badge and agency-issued ID — always ask to see both. Officers should provide their badge number and agency name (Sheriff’s Office, Police Department, USMS, FBI, TBI, etc.). Be cautious if they refuse.
- **Uniforms & Equipment:** Radios, marked vehicles, and standard gear are common indicators. Even in plain clothes, officers must identify themselves once enforcement begins. If the officer is in an unmarked vehicle and you feel unsafe, request a marked unit to respond.
- **Verification Options:** If in doubt, call 911 or the agency’s non-emergency line to verify the officer’s identity and purpose. Legitimate officers will wait until credentials are confirmed.
- **Behavioral Cues:** Legitimate officers explain the reason for the stop and will never demand money, request wire transfers, or ask for personal financial information, passwords, or social media access.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** If something feels off, drive to a well-lit, public location such as a busy store parking lot before stopping.
- **Compliance in High-Risk Situations:** If you are unlawfully armed or sought for a violent offense, the safest and most responsible course of action is to comply with law enforcement commands and then seek these verification steps. Compliance protects lives and ensures the situation is resolved safely.

Watch for The Mid-South Tribune’s 31st Annual Black History Month Special Edition Celebrating America’s 250 Years of Freedom! Coming in February 2026

GRAMMY Award-winning saxophonist Kirk Whalum launches Weddings by Whalum, a ‘Marriage and Music Experience’

MEMPHIS, TN — Soulful saxophonist, ordained minister, and twelve-time Grammy® Award nominee Kirk Whalum is bringing his signature sound and heartfelt spirit to a new stage — the wedding altar. In October, Whalum officially announces the launch of Weddings by Whalum, a bespoke wedding and vow-renewal officiant service blending deep spiritual meaning with the unforgettable power of music.

Known around the world for the rich, gospel-rooted tenor sax that graced Whitney Houston’s iconic “I Will Always Love You,” Whalum now shares his wisdom from 45 years of marriage and a lifetime of ministry to create utterly unique ceremonies. Each couple he marries is encouraged to “discover each other’s real name” — a concept Whalum draws from a treasured encounter in South Africa, reminding couples they are each Cherished in the Creator’s eyes, and called to live into that truth for life.

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An American music icon and minister, Memphian Kirk Whalum launches “Weddings by Whalum” for unique marriage and music experience.

a concept Whalum draws from a treasured encounter in South Africa, reminding couples they are each Cherished in the Creator’s eyes, and called to live into that truth for life.

“Love,” says Whalum, “but-tressed by mutual respect and empathy, is the one truly important thing. Everything else is secondary. For Ruby and me, 45

years together have been through the fire, but that fire forged the bond that makes marriage sacred.”

From intimate gatherings to grand celebrations, Whalum offers personalized officiating that reflects a couple’s story, traditions, and spiritual character — performing weddings of any size thanks to his Masters of Art in Religion and deep experience in



both ministry and music. He has officiated over a dozen weddings and numerous vow renewals, including ceremonies for more than 50 couples at once. The Signature Weddings by Whalum Offerings Couples can choose from three exclusive experiences:

- **The Promise** — Official ceremony including personal words of wisdom (approx. 45 minutes)
 - **I Will Always Love You** — Ceremony with personal words of wisdom and Whalum’s iconic saxophone performance of “I Will Always Love You” (approx. 60 minutes; subject to AV setup)
 - **Epic Cool** — Ceremony with Whalum’s sax performance of “I Will Always Love You” followed by a 45-minute live band set of Whalum’s catalog (approx. 105 minutes total)
- Music plays a central role in Whalum’s ceremonies, not just as celebration but as a lifelong tool for connection. “Music can soften hearts, create space for calm dialogue, and remind couples to dance together through the years,” Whalum says.

Booking & Availability
Kirk Whalum’s Weddings by Whalum requires a minimum of 30 days’ notice for booking, with 3 months preferred. As Whalum continues to tour actively, dates are subject to his touring schedule.

Whalum’s marriage ministry is an extension of a distinguished career that includes over 25 solo recordings, collaborations with Barbara Streisand, Al Jarreau, Luther Vandross, Quincy Jones, Larry Carlton, and more. An in-demand educator and host of the daily podcast Bible In Your Ear, Whalum continues to inspire audiences worldwide — now with the chance to create an “ever-green life together” for couples starting their journey. For booking inquiries, visit: info@prominentglobal.com

More About Kirk Whalum
Kirk Whalum is a Grammy Award-winning saxophonist and composer renowned for his soulful, passionate sound rooted in his Memphis gospel upbringing. He developed his distinctive tenor sax voice through experiences in the Houston nightclub scene, where jazz pianist Bob

Kirk Whalum is a Grammy Award-winning saxophonist and composer renowned for his soulful, passionate sound rooted in his Memphis gospel upbringing.

James discovered him and helped him secure a recording deal. Whalum has released over 25 solo albums, including the highly successful For You and the Gospel According to Jazz series. He is famously known for performing the saxophone solo on Whitney Houston’s iconic 1992 hit “I Will Always Love You” from The Bodyguard soundtrack. Aside from his solo career, Whalum has worked with legendary artists like Barbara Streisand, Quincy Jones, Luther Vandross, and Al Jarreau. An ordained minister with a Master of Arts in Religion, Whalum balances his music career with ministry, education, and community service, frequently incorporating his deep spirituality into his performances and recordings. He is also a member of the jazz group BWB and hosts a daily podcast called Bible In Your Ear.

Mac McAnally featured in Country Music Hall of Fame and museum’s new exhibit “Muscle Shoals: Low Rhythm Rising”

NASHVILLE, Tenn., December 2, 2025— One of music’s most well respected singers, songwriters, and musicians, Mac McAnally is featured in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum’s newest exhibit, “Muscle Shoals: Low Rhythm Rising,” open now through March 2028. Dedicated to the songs and musicians who came out of Muscle Shoals, Alabama, the exhibit honors the legendary recording studios that became havens for aspiring artists and songwriters. McAnally became a studio musician in Muscle Shoals during his teenage years, hailing from

McAnally was awarded the Academy of Country Music’s Poet’s Award earlier this year for his monumental impact on lyrics and music throughout his six-decade career. In 2025, he’s spent 74 dates on the road, proving there’s no slowing him down.

nearby Mississippi. He notably played a 1967 Martin D-18 Acoustic Guitar, which is featured in the exhibit. He also participated in a filmed interview with museum curators, which is played on video screens and interactive elements throughout the exhibit, along with his songs.

The exhibit is open now and houses 5000+ square feet of artifacts from fellow Muscle Shoals artists including Aretha Franklin, Duane Allman, Pops Staples, and many more. For more information on the museum’s “Muscle Shoals: Low Rhythm Rising” exhibit, visit countrymusichalloffame.org.

"One of the great blessings of my life is the fact that the professional part of my musical career began (and continues) in Muscle Shoals. The legendary magic of



Respected songwriter-musician Mac McAnally is featured in Country Music Hall of Fame Museum that examines the roots of the Muscle Shoals studio. (Photos/Courtesy: Country Music Hall of Fame)

the music coming from there doesn’t need or require any more validation from me, but I owe so much to the place and its amazing cast of characters that I’m gonna preach its praises as long as I’m breathing,” says McAnally.

McAnally was awarded the Academy of Country Music’s Poet’s Award earlier this year for his monumental impact on lyrics and music throughout his six-decade career. In 2025, he’s spent 74 dates on the road, proving there’s no slowing him down. The unprecedented 10-time

CMA Musician of the Year remains steadfast in his love for music and storytelling, and continues to inspire the next generation of musicians with his heart, charm, and timeless words that have shaped American music from the very beginning. A member of five Hall of Fames, McAnally struck gold alongside his studio musician work, becoming one of the most respected singer/songwriters in the history of the genre. He’s penned hits for top acts including Alabama, Kenny Chesney and Jimmy Buffett, while also lending his art to projects by Toby Keith, Dolly

Parton, Keith Whitley, Hank Williams Jr., and George Strait, just to name a few.

About Mac McAnally

Mac McAnally’s journey is one of divine providence and musical mastery. With an astonishing 10 Country Music Association Musician of the Year awards and a place in the Nashville Songwriters Hall, the Mississippi Musicians Hall and the Alabama Music Hall of Fames, McAnally’s contributions to the world of music are nearly unparalleled. Born into a family of Gospel mu-

sicians in a dry county, McAnally’s early years were steeped in the rich traditions of Southern music, sacred and secular. Those humble beginnings paved the way for a career marked by extraordinary talent, deep humility and unwavering dedication. As a songwriter, McAnally has penned chart-topping hits for Alabama, Kenny Chesney and Jimmy Buffett, while his musical abilities have enriched albums by Country Music Hall of Fame inductees Toby Keith, Dolly Parton, Keith Whitley and George Strait. Despite the numerous accolades and collaborations with

music royalty, McAnally remains grounded in his love for the art itself. For the soft-spoken creative force, music is not a career, but a calling—a testament to the joy of melody and the power of storytelling. With each note he plays and every lyric he writes, McAnally continues to inspire and uplift people around the world, leaving an indelible mark on the fabric of American music.

For additional information, visit MacMcAnally.com.

Have a Safe and Merry Christmas and a Very Blessed 2026!

Wilson County-Tennessee State Fair gets International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) Awards following 2nd largest attendance in fair history!

Make your plans to attend the 2026 fair August 13-22.

Following the second-largest attendance in history of the Fair, the 2025 Wilson County – Tennessee State Fair documented its success and competed for top honors against fairs from around the world in the Annual IAFE Awards. Over a couple months, the Fair assembled comprehensive entries highlighting every aspect of the event – from its theme and sponsors to events, activities, educational programs, innovative competitions, exhibits, commercial, agriculture, concessions, communications and year-round activities held on the Fairgrounds beyond the official Fair dates.

IAFE award recipients were selected from the 2,093 entries submitted by member fairs of all sizes across the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. Entries were evaluated by fair industry professionals with awards presented during the 2025 Virtual Awards Show. The Wilson County – Tennessee State Fair earned a total of 16 awards across five categories, including five first-place awards and two prestigious Best of Division Awards.

Awards received include:

Agriculture Awards: (Best of Division Award)

- 1st Place — Any other agriculture program/exhibit: Sprout & Stroll - A Specialty Crop Immersive Exhibit
- 1st Place — Agriculture Individual Photo (Misc.): Dressed in patriotic style, this young exhibitor and his cow took part in the Dairy Cattle Capers competition at the Fair - honoring America's dairy farmers while celebrating America 250!
- 2nd Place — Agriculture exhibitor participation incentives and retention programs: Beginner Youth Showmanship Clinic for showing goats and sheep

Commercial Exhibits & Concessions Awards:

- 2nd Place — Marketing and Promotion of the Fair Food Competition

Communications Awards:

- 2nd Place— Scripted Videos: Wilson County - Tennessee State Fair song and promo video
- 2nd Place— Online Advertisement: Promotion of our Fair Pricing and Daily Specials
- Competitive Exhibits Awards: (Best of Division Award)**
- 1st Place —Use of Theme Throughout Multiple Divisions of Competitive Exhibits:

“Goin’ Hog Wild & Bacon Memories at the Fair!” & “Year of Pork” Fair Theme and Agriculture Commodity

- 1st Place — Display Method and/or Prop: State Fruits & Vegetables Exhibit

- 2nd Place —New CLASS of Competition: The Great Bacon Toss
- 2nd Place — Strategy or Tactic to Engage Overall Competitive Exhibits Participants: Basket Weaving Workshop
- 2nd Place - Special Contest: Pig Tail Hair Contest
- 3rd Place — New DI-

VISION of Competition: Bluegrass Competition - Youth

- 3rd Place — New Competitive Exhibits Contest with New Partner/Sponsor: Tennessee Garden Party - Charcuterie Showdown sponsored by “Downton Abbey: The Grande Finale” movie

Non-Fair Facility Usage Awards:

- 1st Place — Non-Fair Event Designed to Educate: Farm Days education about pork Headquartered in Springfield, Missouri, the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) is a voluntary, nonprofit

organization founded in 1885 by a small group of fairs. Today, the IAFE represents more than 1,100 fairs worldwide and over 900 members from allied industries. For more than a century, the organization has remained committed to promoting and advancing the growth, education, and excellence of agricultural fairs, shows, and expositions.

The 2026 Wilson County – Tennessee State Fair will take place in Lebanon, TN from August 13-22, 2026.

We'll see YOU at the Fair!



Picture: The Wilson County – Tennessee State Fair team (left to right) Myle Crowder, Robin Holcomb, Anna Cate Kulas, Helen McPeak, Terry McPeak, Shari Bazydola, David Hale, Lanah Hale, Lyndon LaFavers, Felicia Johnson, Jane LaFavers, Phyllis Webb and Johnnie Webb attended the IAFE Convention in Denver, Colorado, from November 29 to December 3, 2025. New fair dates for 2026 are August 13-22. (Photo/Courtesy: Wilson County-Tennessee State Fair).

Herb Alpert shares his reshaped rendition of the holiday classic, “My Favorite Things”

Legendary musician, artist, record label executive, and philanthropist Herb Alpert has released his rendition of the holiday classic “My Favorite Things.” The track is the latest to release off his new album *Christmas Time Is Here*.

On “My Favorite Things,” Alpert reshapes the Rodgers and Hammerstein standard by shifting its original time signature. The change gives the melody a sashaying energy, anchored by an infectious bassline. His trumpet states the tune in a straightforward yet radiant voice, elegant and unpretentious, with a clarity that makes the piece linger long after it ends. “It’s a beautiful song that was written in 3/4 time,” he explains, “and I found a way to do it in 4/4 time that feels very original and fun to listen to.”

Across twelve tracks, Alpert brings his unmistakable sound to a wide range of material on *Christmas Time Is Here*, including classics such as José Feliciano’s “Feliz Navidad” and Vince Guaraldi’s title theme from A Charlie Brown Christmas to modern hits such as Mariah Carey’s “All I Want for Christmas Is You.” It continues a holiday tradition he first established with 1968’s Christmas Album, which topped the Billboard chart three years in a row (1968–70), with his version of “The Christmas Song” climbing to #3 and remaining in the Top 10 for four weeks. The album remained among the Top 10 holiday sellers well into the 1970s, cementing its place as a seasonal favorite. Nearly five decades later, 2017’s The Christmas Wish achieved similar success, reaching #1 on iTunes for over four weeks, #1 on Amazon’s Holiday Jazz sales chart for three weeks, and earning placements on multiple Billboard charts — including #3 on Contemporary Jazz Albums and #5 on Current Jazz Albums. This new collection takes a more intimate, groove-driven approach. “I pick out the order just by instinct,” Alpert says — an honesty of process that matches the natural ease of his sound.

He previously shared his new version of “Jingle Bells.” It sets the tone with a rollicking, keyboard-inflected groove and a hustling melody. Alpert’s trumpet rides on top, swinging through the arrangement and punctuated by playful “oohs” and “ahhs.” Driven by a New Orleans bounce with second-line swagger, the track radiates holiday cheer. As Alpert puts it, “Now and then Christmas songs run through my head, and I jot them down to see if I can record them in a way that they haven’t been heard before.” That instinctive approach keeps the song fresh, a version that feels timeless, buoyant, and alive with possibility.

Above all, Alpert hopes the music connects. “I hope the listeners feel that these holiday songs are presented in a way that they haven’t been heard before... and makes them feel good,” he says. With *Christmas Time Is Here*, he once again brings invention and generosity to the holiday songbook, adding to a body of Christmas music that has become an enduring soundtrack to the season.

After months of sold-out shows across the country, Alpert’s tour with his iconic Tijuana Brass Band, which has been reformed for the first time in over 40 years, continues on with more dates coming up this fall. He’ll close out the year with back-to-back shows at Los Angeles’ Dolby Theatre, before picking back up again early next year. Newly added stops in 2026 will include shows in New Orleans, Austin, Nashville, Montreal, San Francisco, and beyond. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit his website.

Christmas Time Is Here follows

Please see page 6

Georgia singer-songwriter Clover County announces her debut headline ‘Finer Things Tour’ which begins in Feb.

Releasing Finer Things (Deluxe) On January 23,

New Single “Suitcase” Out Now

“...[a] collection of Americana ballads beefed up with a bit of alt-rock toughness [and] coated with a pop sheen...” - **FLOOD Magazine**

DECEMBER 9, 2025: Emerging Georgia singer/songwriter Clover County has announced her debut headline Finer Things Tour, which will begin in February and will take her through Los Angeles, Brooklyn, Nashville and more. Tickets are now on sale. She will also rejoin Sam Barber for a slew of dates next year, following a widely acclaimed run with Barber earlier this year. For a full list of dates, visit clovercounty.com.

To accompany this announcement, Clover also shared that Finer Things (Deluxe), the deluxe edition of her debut album that came out earlier this year via Undercover Lover Records / Thirty Tigers, will come out on January 23. The LP features two new songs and an acoustic version of fan favorite “Virginia.” She previewed the deluxe with the release of gentle new single “Suitcase,” produced by Brad Cook (Waxahatchee, Snail Mail, Bon Iver).

On the new song, Clover shares: “Not too far off from John Denver’s ‘Leaving on a Jet Plane’ or Townes Van Zandt’s ‘I’ll Be Here in the Morning,’ ‘Suitcase’ is an apology to a lover for leaving — again (and again, and again). In my version of this very unoriginal story, I’m not actually plan-



ning on coming back this time. I’m pleading — hoping this person will come with me, find their own purpose in this wild, selfish journey by my side. It breaks my heart to keep going it alone but that’s exactly how it always ends.”

Clover released Finer Things in September to widespread acclaim from press including FLOOD Magazine, No Depression and Holler who named the LP the #17 Best Country Album of the Year. Produced by Carrie K (Noah Kahan, Maggie Antone, Koe Wetzel), the album is a coming-of-age soundtrack that explores romantic, familial and platonic love with a winking charm and an observing eye. Now, she’s expanding the world of Finer Things further with the forthcoming deluxe release.

About the deluxe, Clover says: “‘Airpark’, ‘Suitcase’ & ‘Vir-

ginia Slim (From The Garage)’, are three songs that feel wholly authentic to who I’ve become this year as a writer — they’re cheeky, evocative and they all blissfully over-romanticize the inevitable experiences in modern love. Working with producer and pal Brad Cook pushed me to be honest with the delivery of these recordings — smudging the edges just a little to ensure every word was crystal clear. Nathan Stocker (Hippo Campus) etched his magical signature underneath each track with tasteful and playful layers of guitars. I’m confident that these final stories are the perfect way to tie the bow on my first album.”

Since the release of the standard LP, she’s kept busy, making her Austin City Limits debut and touring with Madi Diaz, Sam Barber, Willi Carlisle and Sydney Rose. She’ll close out

the year on a run of dates with Shakey Graves before beginning her headline tour next year. “I feel so fortunate to be heading out on my first headline tour to celebrate the release of my first album, Finer Things,” shares Clover. “I’ve spent the last couple of years supporting an inspiring array of songwriters and performers that have taught me so much that I can’t help but feel confident about what’s in store on and off the stage. Standing in rooms with those who’ve carried my little songs into their own lives is something I don’t take lightly, and I’m genuinely honored to get to cultivate this experience together.”

Living comfortably in the space between folk, Americana and alternative, Clover affectionately refers to the genre she occupies as “bootgaze.” She began developing this sound as a student at University of Georgia where she cut her teeth playing house shows and college bars around Athens, GA. After the release of her debut single in 2023, she went out on the road with alt darlings

and country stars like Lord Huron, Medium Build, Waylon Wyatt and Morgan Wade. Then, last year she released her debut EP Porch Lights which included the nostalgic single “Ultraviolet,” which peaked at #22 on MediaBase Triple A charts and is still a mainstay on SiriusXM.

Finer Things (Deluxe) Tracklist

1. Anywhere
2. Sweeter
3. Yours Too
4. Midnight Crow
5. Virginia Slim
6. Blue Suede Eyes
7. Angels
8. Good Game
9. Whiskey Cherry
10. Cadillac
11. Paradise Rd
12. Stranger Danger
13. Airpark *
14. Suitcase *
15. Virginia Slim (From the Garage) *

* - New Track

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VP Records supports ‘Mission of Hope’ humanitarian flights to Jamaica following fury of Hurricane Melissa

From VP Records

VP Records proudly supported the Mission of Hope: Humanitarian Flights to Jamaica, an initiative led by Captain Barrington Irving through his nonprofit Experience Aviation, in collaboration with the Buju Banton Foundation, The Best of the Best Foundation, We the Best Foundation, and the Miami-Dade County Commissioner’s Office, among others.

The mission took place on November 10 and 11, with two flights departing Miami International Airport and arriving at Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston. More than 100,000 pounds of critical supplies were delivered aboard a Boeing 737-800 cargo jet and Captain Irving’s own aircraft to communities across Jamaica affected by Hurricane Melissa.

The project united partners from

“VP Records supported this mission through our long-standing relationship with Buju Banton. His partnership with Captain Barrington Irving and Experience Aviation offered a direct, well-organized way to transport critical supplies to Jamaica after the hurricane,” said Randy Chin, president of VP Records.

Jamaica’s corporate, cultural, and diaspora communities to deliver coordinated relief and demonstrate the impact of collective action.

“VP Records supported this mis-



Pictured L-R: Christopher Chin, CEO, VP Records; Angela Chung, VP of Distribution, VP Records; Buju Banton; Howie Chung, Head of Distribution, VP Records. (Photo credit: Kimberly Chung)

sion through our longstanding relationship with Buju Banton. His partnership with Captain Barrington Irving and Experience Aviation offered a direct, well-organized way to transport critical supplies to Jamaica after the hurricane,” said Randy Chin, pres-

ident of VP Records.

Buju Banton added, “We are incorporating and aligning ourselves as the foundations and working together to make a difference. Please remember my beautiful island of Jamaica and what we just went through. Re-

member Jamaica in your prayers, remember Jamaica in your giving, and to all Jamaicans remember who you are.”

Captain Irving, a Guinness World Record holder as the first Black man and, at the time, the youngest person to fly solo

around the world, has led multiple humanitarian missions through Experience Aviation, including efforts following Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas and Hurricane Helene in North Carolina.

Herb Alpert shares his reshaped rendition of the holiday classic, “My Favorite Things” from page 5

the release of Alpert’s milestone 50th studio album titled 50, which also commemorates 50 years of marriage to his wife, collaborator, and touring partner, Lani Hall. 50 debuted at #4 on the Billboard Contemporary Jazz Chart, #17 on the Billboard Jazz Chart, and #1 on the Current Contemporary Jazz Albums chart. It was met with critical acclaim from The New York Times, NPR, Billboard, Paste, and Stereogum who raved “The legendary trumpeter Herb Alpert has had one hell of a life in music... He’s still going now. Amazing.”

Alpert also sat down with CBS Mornings’ Anthony Mason to chat about the landmark moment, his remarkable career, and more after celebrating his 90th birthday with back-to-back sold-out performances at New York City’s Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Track Listing:

- 01) Feliz Navidad
- 02) Jingle Bells
- 03) My Favorite Things
- 04) Christmas Time Is Here
- 05) Santa Baby
- 06) White Christmas
- 07) Greensleeves
- 08) All I Want for Christmas Is You
- 09) Winter Wonderland
- 10) Sleigh Ride
- 11) The Christmas Song
- 12) What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve?

Have a Merry and Safe Christmas!

“Avatar: Fire and Ash” takes audiences back to Pandora on December 19

Miley Cyrus delivers new single “Dream as One”

With “Avatar: Fire and Ash,” James Cameron takes audiences back to Pandora in an immersive new adventure with Marine turned Na’vi leader Jake Sully (Sam Worthington), Na’vi warrior Neytiri (Zoe Saldana), and the Sully family. “Avatar: Fire and Ash,” which is directed by James Cameron and features a screenplay by James Cameron & Rick Jaffa & Amanda Silver, and a story by James Cameron & Rick Jaffa & Amanda Silver & Josh Friedman & Shane Salerno, is produced by James Cameron, p.g.a., and Jon Landau, p.g.a., with Richard Baneham, Rae Sanchini, and David Valdes serving as executive producers. The film also stars Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang, Oona Chaplin, Cliff Curtis, Joel David Moore, CCH Pounder, Edie Falco, David Thewlis, Jemaine Clement, Giovanni Ribisi, Britain Dalton, Jamie Flatters, Trinity Jo-Li Bliss, Jack Champion, Brendan Cowell, Bailey Bass, Filip Geljo, Duane Evans, Jr., and Kate Winslet.

Advance tickets Advance tickets

for “Avatar: Fire and Ash” are now available for purchase at Fandango or wherever tickets are sold (<http://www.fandango.com/avatarfireandash>). The third film in Oscar®-winning filmmaker James Cameron’s phenomenally successful “Avatar” franchise opens exclusively in theaters worldwide on December 19, in IMAX 3D, Dolby Cinema 3D, RealD 3D, Cinemark XD, 4DX, ScreenX, and premium screens everywhere.

And Miley Cyrus’s new single “Dream as One” is now available to download and purchase at (<https://mileycyrus.lnk.to/DreamAsOne>). The song, which is performed by Cyrus, with music and lyrics by Cyrus, Andrew Wyatt, Mark Ronson, and Simon Franglen, will appear in the end credits of “Avatar: Fire and Ash,” and be featured on the film’s original soundtrack. The original soundtrack for “Avatar: Fire and Ash” featuring a score composed by Simon Franglen is now available.



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Christmas scenes of happiness and ‘joy to the world!’

From this to this



Santa Escorts First Lady Melania Trump to Toys for Tots Christmas Event!



First Lady Melania and Santa wave at reindeer fans, friends, families, and kids waiting for event of the year, Toys for Tots, to start.



Christmas is a time of celebration and enjoying family time together from front page

knew myself.

That said, looking back on my life of Christmas gifts, I do not believe I could name my favorite. I’m not even sure what I got for Christmas last year.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I celebrate our 55th Christmas this year. She can sit around the Christmas tree and recall every gift we have ever received or given and to whom.

That makes Christmas a great challenge for me. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has no problem with Christmas gift shopping. I must confess that most of the time I let her do the shopping for me, I have to pay for it.

One of the greatest disappointments in Christmas gifts is that I don’t know who wants what.

Another problem I have with Christmas gifts is that I don’t know what I want. I can’t think of anything that I would want anybody in my family to buy me for Christmas. They always come around and bring me things that surprise me, and I appreciate it. But if I had to make a list of what I wanted for Christmas, that list would be blank even today.

My other big problem with Christmas gifts is for The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. I would never know what Christ-

I’m looking forward to a wonderful Christmas. It is amazing to me to see the gifts people give each other...Celebrating Christmas around the Christmas tree is a wonderful time to be with family. Thinking along this line, a scripture came to mind. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

mas gift she would like from me. What does she need for Christmas? After all, she has me, so what else does she need?

If I’m going to do Christmas right, I’ll need to ask The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage what I should get for each of the family members. When I asked her that question, she didn’t need to think about it and came up with a long list of what I could get for each of my family members.

Oh boy, if I didn’t have her, I wouldn’t be able to celebrate Christmas as I do today.

In her craft room, she has a special place, I don’t know where it is, where she stores all of her Christmas gifts for the coming year. She knows what she has and who it’s for. I sometimes wonder whether Santa Claus might be part of their family heritage.

I’m looking forward to a wonderful Christmas. It is amazing to me to see the gifts people give each other. I can only assume that they get that trait from The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

Celebrating Christmas around the Christmas tree is a wonderful time to be with family.

Thinking along this line, a scripture came to mind. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Christmas is a great time to gather and give God the glory for all He has done for us. A time to remember all God has done for us during the year and looking forward to the New Year.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, e-mail jamesnsnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamesnsnyderministries.com.

NFL celebrates 32 individuals driving positive change in their communities to make a difference throughout year

NEW YORK – Dec 11, 2025 – The NFL and its clubs announced the 2025 Inspire Change Changemakers, recognizing individuals who have distinguished themselves through their commitment to social justice in their communities. To see the full list of Changemakers, view the link here.

Now entering its fourth year, the award honors community leaders nominated by clubs for driving meaningful impact across the four pillars of Inspire Change: education, economic advancement, police-community relations, and criminal justice reform. Each honoree will be recognized during the league's annual Inspire Change Weeks in Weeks 15 and 16 and will receive a \$10,000 donation from the NFL Foundation directed to a non-profit organization of their choosing.

"These 32 Changemakers represent the very best of what Inspire Change stands for – leaders who are transforming their communities through dedicated action," said Anna Isaacson, Senior Vice President of Social Responsibility. "They're proof that real transformation begins at the community level, led by people who show up, stay committed, and do the work. The NFL and our clubs are proud to honor these individuals who inspire us all by showing us what meaningful progress looks like."

Now through December 22, Inspire Change Weeks will showcase the NFL's ongoing commitment to breaking down barriers to opportunity, spotlighting impactful stories from individuals and organizations nationwide. Since 2017, the NFL family has contributed more than \$460 million to empower more than 700 local non-profits, 2,300 player and Legend matching grants, and more than 50 national grant partners in support of Inspire Change's mission of creating positive change. This year's Changemakers include:

- **Dawn Wallace** – nominated by the Arizona Cardinals for her work advancing civic engagement and youth leadership development with the Arizona Center for Civic Leadership at the Flinn Foundation. As Director, Wallace oversees programs that empower Arizonans to participate fully in civic life, from youth leadership initiatives to immersive fellowships for experienced community leaders. Her decades of public service include advising governors and managing statewide educational policy initiatives, with a core emphasis on equity, access, and education.
- **Chad Houser** – nominated by the Atlanta Falcons for his work creating pathways for economic advancement and criminal justice reform with Café Momentum. As Founder, Houser helps provide justice-involved youth, ages 15 – 19, with culinary industry skills and a strong support system through award-winning restaurants and training programs.
- **Joni Holifield** – nominated by the Baltimore Ravens for her work elevating youth potential through mentorship and economic empowerment with HeartSmiles. HeartSmiles provides youth in Baltimore with internships, career development, and leadership seminars, helping them build their network and find success within their local community. As Founder, Holifield prides herself on the 'earn-while-you-learn' model, which has provided youth participants with over \$1 million in wages since 2015.
- **Mark Laurie** – nominated by the Buffalo Bills for his work championing educational equity and student well-being with the Niagara Falls City School District. As Superintendent, Laurie spearheaded the expansion of Say Yes Buffalo to Niagara Falls, providing crucial tuition assistance and support services for students. He also established the Niagara Falls Stu-



dent Champion Team, which trains students on mental health and trauma first aid.

- **Michael DeVaul** – nominated by the Carolina Panthers for his efforts in promoting community building, diversity, and inclusion through the YMCA. Within his 40-year career, he has held several titles, including Executive Director of the University City YMCA in Charlotte, NC, and Senior Vice President of Organizational Advancement of YMCA of Greater Charlotte. As Chief Responsibility Officer of YMCA of Greater Charlotte, DeVaul established the YMCA's Young Men Thriving initiative, which has been adopted on a national scale in nearly 40 markets.
- **Matt DeMateo** – nominated by the Chicago Bears for his work driving community safety through restorative justice and violence prevention with New Life Centers and New Life Community Church. As Chief Executive Director and Pastor, DeMateo and his team address violence prevention and food security needs with programs like the Pan de Vida Food Pantry, while building long-term pathways for safety and opportunity.
- **Rickell Howard Smith** – nominated by the Cincinnati Bengals for her work advancing social justice and championing women's rights with the YWCA Greater Cincinnati. As President & CEO, Smith spearheaded the development of a new trauma-informed shelter for domestic violence survivors, expanding its capacity from 67 to over 100 individuals. Throughout her career as a civil rights attorney, she has fought against housing discrimination while serving on the boards of the Hamilton County Human Services Chamber, Planned Parenthood of Southwest Ohio, Lighthouse Community School, and the Women's Fund of Greater Cincinnati Foundation.
- **Henry Pettiegrew** – nominated by the Cleveland Browns for his work spearheading significant academic gains and championing initiatives that address systemic barriers to opportunity in East Cleveland City Schools. As CEO and Superintendent, Pettiegrew improved graduation rates, attendance rates, and proficiency scores, while implementing innovative instructional strategies that close achievement gaps. Under his leadership, the district surged 62 spots in Ohio's rankings in just one year and has now reached a 3-star rating on Ohio's State Report Card ranking, meeting state standards for the first time in district history.
- **Lisa Rose** – nominated by the Dallas Cowboys for her work empowering women and children to break cycles of abuse and poverty with The Gatehouse at Grapevine. Rose founded The Gatehouse, a 61-acre supportive living community providing long-term, comprehensive support including housing, child-care, counseling, and career development. The Gatehouse offers a dignified, long-term path to permanent self-sufficiency for women and children, empowering over 800 individuals in the last decade.
- **Dr. Malcinia "Nina" Toombs Conley** – nominated by the Denver Broncos for her work advancing educational equity and next-generation leadership serving Colorado's youth. Dr. Conley serves as an education specialist and advocate, mentoring hundreds of youth through education programs and college and career counseling at the Denver Broncos Boys & Girls Club. She led the RISE youth leadership program focused on racial equity and cultural competence and helped

pilot the Pathways2Teaching program in Montbello High School to boost the number of teachers of color.

- **Angela Reyes** – nominated by the Detroit Lions for her work driving community development with the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation (DHDC). As Founder, she has offered adult education classes, mental health resources, housing counseling, financial literacy courses, advocacy groups, entrepreneurship support, youth development programs, parenting resources, and community violence intervention programs. Reyes' philosophy treats youth not as 'at-risk' but as 'at-promise,' and many of DHDC's current staff are former program participants or individuals whose lives she directly influenced.
- **Tony Pichler** – nominated by the Green Bay Packers for his work providing essential services and support to those experiencing homelessness with Whatsoever You Do Inc. As co-founder, Pichler helps provide food and shelter to the homeless and offers transportation/bicycles to help individuals get to jobs. He also spearheaded the creation of The Giving Garden, which donates fresh vegetables to low and no-income neighbors in need, and is the Executive Director of Envision Greater Green Bay.
- **Jenifer Jarriel** – nominated by the Houston Texans for her work strengthening family well-being and reforming the child welfare system with DePelchin Children's Center. As President & CEO, Jarriel oversees prevention, foster care, adoption, and mental health support for some of Texas's most vulnerable populations. Under her leadership, the Center became the lead agency for Community-Based Care in Region 6, ensuring thousands of children and families receive high-quality, stable care.
- **Chanel Parker** – nominated by the Indianapolis Colts for her work improving the quality of life for at-risk detained youth with the Marion Superior Court Youth Services Center. As Quality of Life Coordinator, Parker cultivates a robust network of community volunteers, including educators, athletes, artists, clergy, and ex-offenders, to provide impactful programming for detained residents.
- **Ronnie King** – nominated by the Jacksonville Jaguars for his work transforming grassroots education through technology and innovation with the MyVillage Project. As Founder, Ronnie established the world's largest community knowledge repository, empowering students and nonprofit leaders by seamlessly integrating local insights with state-of-the-art technology. Through initiatives like "Coding in Color," King has successfully trained over 500 students for careers in AI, app development, and video game design, all while forging essential connections with grassroots nonprofit networks.
- **Jeff Shafer** – nominated by the Kansas City Chiefs for his work driving educational equity and community empowerment with City Year Kansas City. As Executive Director, Shafer leads a passionate team focused on equipping public school students with the academic and social-emotional support they need for success. Under his guidance, City Year KC played a vital role in helping Kansas City Public Schools regain accreditation in 2022.
- **Robert Strawder** – nominated by the Las Vegas Raiders for his work bridging divides through mentorship and police-community relations with the Donna Street Community Center Inc. and Hip-Hop Entrepreneurship Program Academy. Through the Donna Street Community Center, Strawder provides technology access and resources for low-income families. As Founder of Hip-Hop Entrepreneurship Program Academy, he blends music, business, and critical-

thinking skills to inspire students and foster mutual understanding with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

- **Steve Delgado and Shirley Torres** – nominated by the Los Angeles Chargers for their work advancing social justice and transformation with Homeboy Industries. As Co-Chief Executive Officers, Delgado and Torres provide hope, job training, and mental health support to formerly gang-involved or incarcerated individuals. Torres, with over 20 years at the organization, and Delgado, who joined in 2019, lead with a shared commitment to fostering kinship and human connection to support reentry.
- **Aurianna Tuttle** – nominated by the Los Angeles Rams for her work providing community resource stability for youth with ROC Era. As Founder and Executive Director, Tuttle creates safe spaces where young people, especially Black and brown youth, can discover their voices and recognize their value. She also provides crucial financial support, offering grants to families for healthcare and eviction prevention, and supporting hundreds of families impacted by the Altadena fires.
- **Dr. Germaine Smith-Baugh** – nominated by the Miami Dolphins for her work championing economic empowerment and dismantling systemic barriers with the Urban League of Broward County. As President and CEO, Dr. Smith-Baugh has launched impactful initiatives, including the Village at Oakland Park, which is poised to be the county's largest mixed-income affordable housing project. She also created a Community Development Financial Institution that funds underserved entrepreneurs, building on her nearly three decades of dedicated social justice work.
- **Ebbony and Raymond Jackson** – nominated by the Minnesota Vikings for their work offering educational scholarships and community outreach with The Khyree Jackson Foundation. The Jacksons established the foundation to honor their late son, former Vikings cornerback Khyree Jackson, who passed away tragically. The organization supports children and families in underserved communities through football camps, scholarships (including the Khyree Jackson Memorial Scholarship and Black Student Athlete Summit Scholarship), and community outreach like 'Khyree's Locker of Hope' for donated sports equipment.
- **Shaheer Mustafa** – nominated by the New England Patriots for his work transforming the child welfare system and promoting positive outcomes for families with HopeWell, Inc. As President and CEO, Mustafa oversees services that create positive, measurable outcomes for children and families, including comprehensive foster care and education support. He previously served as Director for the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, where he focused on improving permanency for children and reducing disproportionality in the foster care system.

- tem.
- **Mary Ambrose** – nominated by the New Orleans Saints for her work driving equitable representation through community advocacy and strategic funding with United Way of Southeast Louisiana. As Chief Equity & Impact Officer, Ambrose drives change through engagement, research, funding, and advocacy across all Inspire Change pillars in the Greater New Orleans region. She led the Impact 59 Super Bowl grants initiative, meticulously championing nonprofits and ensuring equitable representation of all communities in a major project for the region and the NFL. Ambrose has served the United Way Southeast Louisiana for over 25 years.
- **Nadine Wright-Arhubakrr** – nominated by the New York Giants for her work building an inclusive future for families impacted by autism with Nassan's Place. As Founder, Wright-Arhubakrr provides affordable educational and recreational programs, support services, and free Individualized Education Plan support to families in underserved communities. Married to NFL Legend Hasson Arhubakrr, Wright-Arhubakrr founded Nassan's Place after their son was diagnosed with autism. She promotes economic advancement by offering financial literacy courses and hiring autism parents and adults with autism to work events, helping families find long-term stability.
- **Meghan Leonard** – nominated by the New York Jets for her work fostering inclusion and building a unified community through sports with Special Olympics New Jersey and Bloomfield High School. Leonard is the Coordinator and Head Coach of Unified Sports at Bloomfield High School and a member of the Essex County Special Olympic Committee. She has been instrumental in fundraising to expand Unified Sports, increasing its reach with more Bloomfield High School students.
- **Emmanuel Clark** – nominated by the Philadelphia Eagles for his work driving grassroots impact and youth development with the What I Wish I Knew Foundation. As Founder, Clark is a well-connected community organizer known for localized outreach, addressing community needs from backpack giveaways to in-school programs focused on conflict resolution.
- **Tim Smith** – nominated by the Pittsburgh Steelers for his work strengthening the community through academic programs and a holistic approach with Center of Life. As Founder and Pastor, Smith established Center of Life to holistically support the people of Hazelwood with rich academic out-of-school programs and experiences in music and arts.
- **Kristopher Scott** – nominated by the San Francisco 49ers for his work dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline for Bay Area youth with Fresh Lifelines for Youth. As Managing Director, Scott amplifies the voices of

young people, ensuring they are seen, heard, and valued. His work empowers both youth and probation officers, and actively collaborates with city and state officials to advocate for meaningful policy change in the criminal justice system.

- **Linda Thompson-Black** – nominated by the Seattle Seahawks for her work advancing educational equity and access to higher education with the United Negro College Fund Pacific Northwest Area. As Development Director, Thompson-Black leads initiatives that empower students to pursue higher education through scholarships, institutional support, and leadership development. She began her career in public service with the City of Seattle Parks Department, where, under Mayor Norm Rice, she helped lead the first-ever Seattle Education Summit. Previously, as Director of Field Operations of Communities In Schools, she expanded the organization's reach from 500,000 to over 2 million students nationwide.
- **Jamal Jefferson** – nominated by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for his work providing a safe, uplifting environment for the next generation of youth leaders with the Jackson Heights NFL YET Center. As Site Supervisor, she oversees all operations and orchestrates after-school and summer programming to offer a secure space for children and teens from East Tampa. He has been intentional about cultivating programming, such as music classes and a multimedia center, providing local youth with opportunities they might not otherwise have access to.
- **Melvin Cole** – nominated by the Tennessee Titans for his work providing second chances and purpose for at-risk young males with P.U.R.E. Academy. Cole launched P.U.R.E. (Progressing Under Restraints and Extremes) Academy, a school dedicated to helping at-risk young males find community, academic success, and a positive path forward. Motivated by his own experience with the criminal justice system, he partners with the state, city, and various leaders to shape the minds of young males and give back to his Memphis community.
- **Reverend Gary Hill** – nominated by the Washington Commanders for his work providing holistic community support and critical services to vulnerable youth with Exodus Treatment Center Inc. As Founder & Executive Director, Reverend Hill offers robust programming and support in Wards 7 and 8, ranging from teen anger management and youth substance abuse services to summer camps and mentoring. A 40-year native Washingtonian, he serves as a Commissioner for the Deputy Mayor of Education and as an advisor to the 7th District DC police station, building trust and knowledge of the core community issues.

For more information about Inspire Change, visit nfl.com/InspireChange.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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UofM’s Benjamin L. Hooks Institute announces “Medgar & Myrlie”as the Hooks National Book Award winner

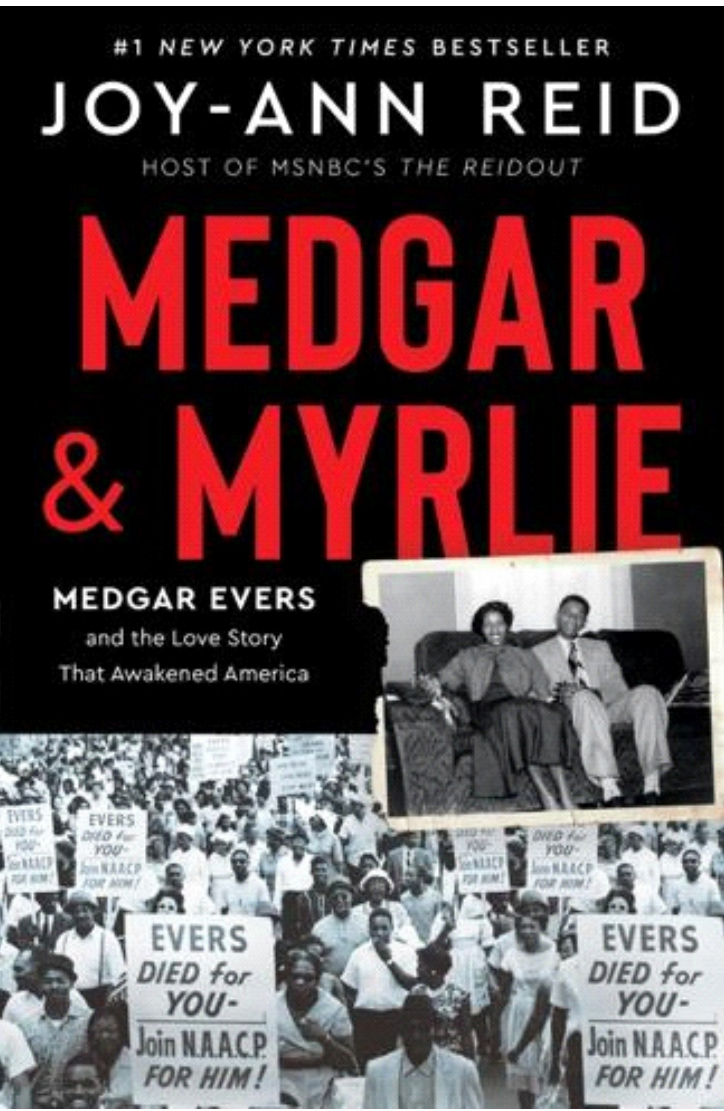
The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis has selected Medgar & Myrlie: Medgar Evers and the Love Story That Awakened America by Joy-Ann Reid (Mariner Books) as the 2024 Hooks National Book Award winner. The book award will be presented in February of 2026. The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change

“Joy-Ann Reid effectively explores Medgar and Myrlie Evers as partners in love and in civil rights activism. What makes this book so interesting is that it really explores the two of them together, the love story that they had and the impact of their love story in Medgar's work, but also the work that Myrlie takes up after Medgar is assassinated. We see them working as co-leads in civil rights and that’s not something we normally see, and that’s what makes this such a compelling book,” says Dr. Terrence Tucker, chair and professor in the University of Memphis Department of English and chair of the Hooks National Book Award committee.

“In the push for civil rights, we usually think about it in terms of anger or outrage, but Reid’s book brings love into the center of the civil rights movement...the love for people in addition to the love Medgar and Myrlie had for each other and their family. The power of their love led Medgar and Myrlie Evers to work, tirelessly to make our country better.”

Mariner Books, the publisher, described this groundbreaking book as follows:

[A] triumphant work of biograp



phy that repositions slain Civil Rights pioneer Medgar Evers at the heart of America's struggle for freedom and celebrates Myrlie Evers's extraordinary activism after her husband's assassination in the driveway of their Mississippi home.

On June 12, 1963, Medgar Evers . . . [was] gunned down in the couple's driveway in Jackson [Mississippi]. In the wake of his tragic death, Myrlie carried on their civil rights legacy; writing a

book about Medgar’s fight, trying to win a congressional seat, and becoming a leader of the NAACP in her own right. . . . Joy-Ann Reid uses Medgar and Myrlie’s relationship as a lens through which to explore the on-the-ground work that went into winning basic rights for Black Americans, and the repercussions that still resonate today.

About Joy-Ann Reid
Joy-Ann Reid is a journalist, au-

thor, documentary film producer and social and political commentator. She is the former host of The Reid Report, AM Joy, and “The ReidOut” on MSNBC (a two-time NAACP Award-winning and Emmy nominated nightly news analysis program). Her latest project: The Joy Reid Show, airs on Youtube and on all audio podcast platforms.

Reid has written four books, two of which were New York Times best sellers: Medgar and Myrlie; the Love Story That Awakened America, which made the Times best-seller list and won the 2025 NAACP Image Award in the biography category; and The Man Who Sold America, which was also made the Times best-seller list. Additionally, Reid authored, *Fracture: Barack Obama*, The Clintons and the Racial Divide, and the foreword to Kamala Harris: Selections from the Official White House Photography.

A 1991 Harvard graduate with a documentary film concentration, Reid has worked in talk radio for Radio One; was the managing editor of TheGrio.com; was a political operative for America Coming Together in 2004; and worked for the 2008 Barack Obama presidential campaign.

Reid is a proud honorary member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She and her husband Jason co-own the production company, Image Lab Media Group, which produces The Joy Reid Show and an upcoming documentary on Medgar Evers. They have four adult children.

About the Hooks National Book Award
Please see page 12

Season tickets now on sale for 2026 Memphis Baseball season for fans

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – University of Memphis Baseball season tickets are now on sale, the University announced.

Season-ticket pages are \$99 plus fees and include a reserved seat in the grandstand at FedExPark Avron Fogelman Field for all 31 home games in 2025.

Kids ages 17 and under will receive free admission all season. Please note that free youth tickets are only in the general admission area and not in the grandstand.

Memphis enters its third season with head coach Matt Riser at the helm, with a roster split between

Kids ages 17 and under will receive free admission all season. Please note that free youth tickets are only in the general admission area and not in the grandstand.

18 returners and 20 newcomers. The Tigers return multiple key pieces, including Seth Garner, Shane Cox and 2025 MLB Draft selection, James Smith IV.

The Tigers’ season begins with weekend series against Toledo (Feb. 13-15), with the Rockets coming off a Mid-American Conference championship game appearance before facing off against a regional foe and reigning Ohio Valley Conference tournament champions, Little Rock, on Feb. 17.

The ensuing weekend sees the reintroduction of the Grind City Classic, which was first played in 2025. From Feb. 20-22, Memphis has two matchups against Ohio State and one against Louisiana Tech.

The following weekend has the Tigers matched up against another conference tournament championship participant in Jacksonville State (Feb. 27-March 1), with the Gamecocks reaching the final of the Conference USA tournament.

The Tigers continue with a third weekend series against a team that reached its conference tournament final in Eastern Illinois (March 13-15), with the Panthers falling to Little Rock in the Ohio Valley Conference championship game.

Prior to its first home conference series, Memphis will face perennial SEC power Ole Miss on March 24, before welcoming Wi-



chita State (March 27-29) for the Tigers’ first home series of the American Conference slate.

Memphis returns home in the month of April to host a conference series against Florida Atlantic (April 10-12).

After a seven-game roadstand, the Tigers host back-to-back weekends against East Carolina (Mar 1-3) and UTSA (May 8-10) in key conference series with both the Pirates and Roadrunners qualifying for an NCAA Regional in 2025, including UTSA reaching the Los Angeles Super Regional.

Other matchups include mid-week contests against Lipscomb (March 10), Arkansas-Pine Bluff (March 11), Arkansas State (March 31) and Central Arkansas (May 5).

Tickets can be purchased by visiting www.gotigersgo.com and the full home schedule for the 2026 season is listed below.

2026 Memphis Baseball Home Schedule	
Feb. 13-15	– vs. Toledo
Feb. 17	– vs. Little Rock
Feb. 20-22	– Grind City Classic vs. Ohio State and Louisiana Tech
Feb. 27-March 1	– vs. Jacksonville State
March 10	– vs. Lipscomb
March 11	– vs. Arkansas-Pine Bluff
March 13-15	vs. Eastern Illinois
March 24	– vs. Ole Miss
March 27-29	– vs. Wichita State*
March 31	– vs. Arkansas State
April 10-12	– vs. Florida Atlantic*
April 14	– vs. Mississippi Valley State
May 1-3	vs. East Carolina*
May 5	– vs. Central Arkansas
May 8-10	vs. UTSA*

* – Denotes American Conference Series

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

Profile: University of Memphis names Charles Huff as new Head Football Coach to forge ahead in new season

MEMPHIS, Tenn., December 8, 2025 – Charles Huff has been named the 26th head coach in Memphis football history, Senior Vice President and Director of Athletics Dr. Ed Scott announced Monday, Dec. 8. Huff, a well-known figure in both collegiate and professional football, spent the 2019-20 season as College Football Hall of Fame coach Nick Saban’s associate head coach and worked with future NFL superstars Najee Harris and Saquon Barkley.

Huff brings over 20 years of coaching experience with stops at Marshall (2021-24), Alabama (2019-20), Mississippi State (2018), Penn State (2014-17), Western Michigan (2013), the Buffalo Bills (2012), Vanderbilt (2011), Hampton (2010), Maryland (2009) and Tennessee State (2006-08).

“We are extremely excited to welcome Charles Huff as the next head football coach at the University of Memphis,” Scott said. “Early in our search process, Coach Huff quickly rose to the top of our list as a dynamic leader with a proven track record

“Early in our search process, Coach Huff quickly rose to the top of our list as a dynamic leader with a proven track record of building strong, competitive programs. He brings a championship mindset, tremendous drive, and more than 20 years of experience working alongside some of the top coaches in college football. We are eager to get him to Memphis and begin this next chapter for our football program...”

of building strong, competitive programs. He brings a championship mindset, tremendous drive, and more than 20 years of experience working alongside some of the top coaches in college football. We are eager to get him to Memphis and begin this next chapter for our football program. “We are also excited to welcome his wife, Jessica, and their three sons, B.J., Beau and Blaze to

Memphis.”

Huff comes to Memphis after serving as the head coach at Southern Mississippi where he turned the Golden Eagles from a 1-11 team in 2024 to a bowl eligible 7-5 team in just one season. It was the program's best regular-season record since 2019 and his six-win turnaround with the Golden Eagles was one of the biggest improvements in the FBS this season.

"I am excited to welcome Charles Huff to the University of Memphis as our next head football coach," Dr. Bill Hardgrave, University of Memphis President said. "As a proven winner who knows how to build a championship team, Charles brings a strong blend of on-field success, recruiting excellence and player development."

Changing the narrative of Southern Miss football, Huff guided the Golden Eagles to a complete revamp; after the team ranked near the bottom in nearly every statistical category in 2024, Huff’s team flipped the script and became one of the most danger-

ous teams to play in FBS.

The team’s 21 interceptions ranked first in the country while the 26 total turnovers created put Southern Miss top four in all of Division I. Boasting a 1.00 turnover margin, the Golden Eagles held opponents to under 28 points per game, a more than 10-point difference from the year prior.

"Coach Huff brings energy, discipline and a vision that aligns perfectly with who we are and where we want to go as a University," Cato Johnson, Board of Trustees Chairman said. "He is a tremendous competitor who knows what it takes to win at the highest levels of college football. We look forward to supporting him as the next leader of Tiger Football."

Offensively, the Golden Eagles were slinging the ball around the field with a 65.3% completion percentage - up 88 spots in the rankings from the 2024 season - while having the number one passing offense in the Sun Belt

Please see page 12

Gold Strike Casino Resort welcomes the legendary classic rock band Jefferson Starship on May 1, 2026

TUNICA, Miss. -Dec. 10, 2025) — Gold Strike Casino Resort, the Mid-South’s premier casino resort destination, will present arena rock legends Jefferson Starship at 8 p.m. Friday, May 1, 2026, at Gold Strike Theatre inside the casino.

Celebrating five decades as one of rock’s most enduring and influential bands, Jefferson Starship has earned an impressive catalog of accolades over its storied career, including three platinum albums, eight gold records and a long list of Top 40 Billboard singles.

Founded in the 1970s by the legendary Paul Kantner, Jefferson Starship was created to include former members of Jefferson Airplane. Kantner envisioned the band as a collective of creative explorers contributing to a series of epic concept albums and rock classics. As the band marks its 50th anniversary, it continues to honor Kantner’s legacy following his passing in 2016.

Today’s lineup, which began taking shape in 2012, has carried that spirit forward, evolving into a powerhouse touring band that continues to thrill audiences worldwide. Current members, who proudly refer to themselves as both a “family” and a “gang,” include original member David

Freiberg; drummer Donny Baldwin, who joined the band in 1982; keyboardist Chris Smith, who signed on in 1998; and guitarist Jude Gold, who joined in 2012. Vocals are led by singer and guitarist Cathy Richardson, who came aboard in 2008 after Kantner saw her dynamic performance of Janis Joplin’s vocals alongside Big Brother and the Holding Company.

Together, the band has performed in all 50 U.S. states, visited five continents and brought its music to countless countries, continuing Kantner’s trademark spirit of curiosity, exploration and musical adventure.

Tickets start at \$39.50 and go on sale Dec. 12. To learn more or purchase tickets, visit GoldStrike.com. Tickets may also be purchased by calling 888-747-7711. Gold Strike Casino Resort is located on the Mississippi River, approximately 30 minutes from downtown Memphis. With more than 1,100 luxury guest rooms, a theater, high-limit gaming, award-winning dining and a sportsbook, it is the Mid-South’s source of energy and excitement.

To learn more, visit GoldStrike.com. Cherokee Nation Entertainment is the gaming and hospitality company of the Cherokee Nation.



The Christmas Season is all about the tummy, too!

Cracker Barrel spreads holiday cheer with free toys for kids & festive offers for families

Enjoy a side of joy and a free toy – up to \$5 in value – with every kid's meal for dine-in now through December 24

LEBANON, Tenn., Dec. 10, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- This holiday season, Cracker Barrel Old Country Store is inviting families, travelers and holiday guests to celebrate the most magical time of the year with special offerings that bring comfort and joy to every visit. From a free toy* from the Old Country Store with every kid's meal and hearty weekday value deals to Holiday Heat & Serve meals that make hosting celebrations at home easy and delicious, Cracker Barrel is serving up tradition and a little holiday magic at every turn. "The holidays are a time to slow down, come together, and savor the simple moments that make this season special," said Sarah Moore, Chief Marketing Officer for Cracker Barrel. "Whether guests are gathering around our tables or theirs, Cracker Barrel is here to bring comfort, tradition, and a little extra magic to every holiday celebration."

A Little Something from the Old Country Store
Now through December 24, every delicious, homestyle dine-in kid's meal comes with a free toy (valued at \$5 or less) from Cracker Barrel's Old Country Store. Families can choose from a wide selection of travel games, trading cards and more – perfect for keeping little ones entertained during holiday travels. "Santa has his sleigh, and



Cracker Barrel has the Old Country Store," Moore said. "With so much on families' plates at this time of year, we wanted to offer a small moment of joy that makes the season feel easier and full of cheer."

Find something while browsing the Old Country Store that costs more than \$5? No problem. Enjoy a \$5 discount and simply pay the difference.

Hearty Weekday Value for Busy Holiday Schedules with Meals for Two

Cracker Barrel is helping guests enjoy homestyle comfort during the busy holiday season with its Meals for Two offer. Available all-day Monday through Friday, this special provides exceptional value and includes a choice of a shareable starter or dessert and two full-sized entrées starting at \$19.99**. Guests can also add a cup of soup and a house salad for just \$5*** per person. Simple to Prepare, Easy to Enjoy Holiday Heat & Serve Meals Fully prepared and ready in three hours or less, Cracker Barrel's Holiday Heat & Serve meals are designed to take the stress out of hosting while giving back precious time to enjoy the moments that matter most. Perfect for family gatherings, office celebrations and last-minute hosting,

Cracker Barrel's lineup of at-home meal solutions include:

- **Holiday Ham Heat & Serve Feast** – A full, ready-to-heat meal featuring a whole sugar-cured ham, cornbread dressing, gravy, cranberry relish, mac & cheese, mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls, apple streusel pie, and a pecan pie. Serves 8 - 10 people.

- **Holiday Ham Heat & Serve Family Dinner** – A ready-to-heat meal serving 4-6 people featuring sugar-cured ham with mac & cheese, green beans, rolls, dressing, gravy, and cranberry relish.

- **Prime Rib Heat & Serve Family Dinner** – A premium option featuring a slow-roasted prime rib with au jus, served with creamy horseradish sauce and classic sides. Serves 4 - 6 people.

- **Holiday Pies** – A selection of seasonal favorites available in Apple Streusel, Pecan, Chocolate Pecan, and Cinnamon Roll.

"At Cracker Barrel, the holiday table has always been where tradition and connection come to life," Moore continued. "We know the season is joyful yet hectic so we're making it easier than ever to gather with those who matter most. Because when people share food, they share something bigger: time together."

Holiday Heat & Serve pre-order is available now on Cracker Barrel's website for pickup between December 21 - 28 at one of Cracker Barrel's nearly 660 stores nationwide.

To stay connected with Cracker Barrel Old Country Store throughout December and beyond, follow along on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

*One free kid's toy item (up to \$5), exclusive of taxes, with in store purchase of one Kid's Meal made 12/10/25 to 12/24/25, excl. online and to go purchases. For a kid's toy item with retail price of \$5+, a \$5 discount will be applied pro rata across all items on check. Not valid on previous purchases or in combination with other offers or discounts. Subject to availability. Limits and restrictions apply. Void where prohibited by law.

**Meals for Two offer valid thru 2/5/26, exclusive of taxes. Dine in only. Not available for take-aways, carryout, to-go, delivery and online purchases. Subject to availability. May not redeem pegs toward the purchase and not valid with any other discounts or promotions. Offer subject to modification/withdrawal without notice

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc. - rooted in a rich legacy of warmth, generosity, and tradition - is on a mission to bring the goodness of country hospitality to life. Cracker Barrel opened its first store opened in Lebanon, Tenn. in 1969.

For more information, visit CrackerBarrel.com.

Briza Restaurant’s savory theme ‘Land – Sushi – Sea’ sets holiday fine dining



Maggie Murphey-Hernandez, Chief Operating Officer & Moises Hernandez, General Manager & Executive Chef

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Briza Restaurant is now open and marked the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Sunday, November 9. Located on the first floor of Crosstown Concourse, Briza welcomes guests daily for lunch and dinner. More information is available at BrizaRestaurants.com, and reservations may be made online via Resy.com.

Briza leaders include Maggie Murphy-Hernandez and Moises Hernandez, along with principal partners Betsy and Darrell Horn. The concept, built around the theme Land – Sushi – Sea, offers globally inspired dishes that bring together seafood, sushi, and wood-fired entrées in a modern, comfortable setting.

This opening represents months of dedication from our entire team," said Moisés Hernandez, General Manager and Executive Chef. "We're proud to finally open our doors, welcome guests, and be part of the Crosstown community."

Lunch and Dinner Service Now Open Seven Days a Week
Briza is open daily for lunch and dinner, offering distinct menus that balance coastal and land-based favorites.

Lunch offerings include lighter selections and sandwiches such as the Ahi Tuna Burger with seared #1 tuna, pickled red onion, and sriracha aioli on a house-made bun; the Pescado Sandwich, featuring crispy grouper with creamy kale-ja-

“This opening represents months of dedication from our entire team,” said Moisés Hernandez, General Manager and Executive Chef. “We’re proud to finally open our doors, welcome guests, and be part of the Crosstown community.”

lapeño slaw and pickles; and the Pollo a la Brasa, a Peruvian-style roasted chicken topped with aji verde and served with creamy street corn. Guests can also choose from sushi options such as the La Nela Roll with salmon, mango, dragon fruit, and jalapeño, or the Shrimp Primavera Roll, wrapped in rice paper with seasonal vegetables and peanut sauce

Some Items on the Dinner Menu

The dinner menu expands on those offerings with entrées like Shrimp a la Diabla, jumbo shrimp simmered in chile de árbol sauce with arroz verde; Redfish Florentine, served over spinach, asparagus, and tomato in parmesan cream sauce; Double-Cut Chuleta, a wood-fired pork chop with mango salsa; and wood-grilled steaks including the Rosemary Ribeye, New York Strip, and Prime Filet. A selection of sushi rolls, shared plates, and composed salads rounds out the evening menu.

Here are some specialties for your holiday palate.



Tuna Tartare



New York Strip Steak



Island Eel Roll



Pacifico Roll

Photos by Jay Adkins

“Locally Owned, Nationally Loved” theme takes McDonald’s into Trump’s Golden Age



President Trump is shown here doing moves with his internationally famous “Trump Dance” at the recent McDonald’s Impact Summit 2025 where he was the main speaker. (Photo/Courtesy: The White House)

BMX athlete and former McDonald’s crew member Nigel Sylvester unveils new merch collaboration with McDonald’s Employee of the Month campaign to encourage old-fashioned work & ingenuity

CHICAGO, IL /PRNewswire/ - For many of the 1 in 8 Americans who have worked under the Golden Arches, wearing a McDonald's uniform is the first step toward turning ambition into achievement. Professional BMX athlete, philanthropist and creative director Nigel Sylvester knows this ride well – because he's lived this journey firsthand. Before becoming a global cultural icon, Nigel was mastering customer service at the front counter and team-work in the kitchen, learning life-long skills that became his "secret sauce" for success. On Dec. 5, Nigel is bringing those lessons full circle with the

launch of Employee of the Month, a limited-edition merch collaboration inspired by his journey from a McDonald's Crew member to world-class athlete and creative powerhouse. "Employee of the Month" often means clocking in, checking boxes, and doing what is expected. Nigel Sylvester is reimagining the term – turning it into a symbol for the dreamers, creatives, and hustlers who defy the odds and carve their own lanes to success. His upcoming collaboration with McDonald's delivers pieces that fuse classic streetwear style with the brand's iconic heritage for fans who turn the everyday grind into greatness.

"Before I was a professional BMX athlete, I was one of the 1 in 8 Americans who worked at a McDonald's restaurant – something I'm proud of to this day. That experience taught me responsibility, attention to detail, and the power of community – lessons I carried straight into my BMX career," said Nigel Sylvester. "This collection is my tribute to those early days, the grind, dedication, and audacity it takes to will your dreams to reality."

Fans can ride along this holiday season by:

- Getting a first look at the Employee of the Month collection on everythingongo.com
- Shopping the drop start-

ing Dec. 5 at everythingongo.com

- Learning more about 1 in 8 at mcdonalds1in8.com

About McDonald's

McDonald's USA, LLC, serves a variety of menu options made with quality ingredients to millions of customers every day. Ninety-five percent of McDonald's approximately 13,500 U.S. restaurants are owned and operated by independent business owners.

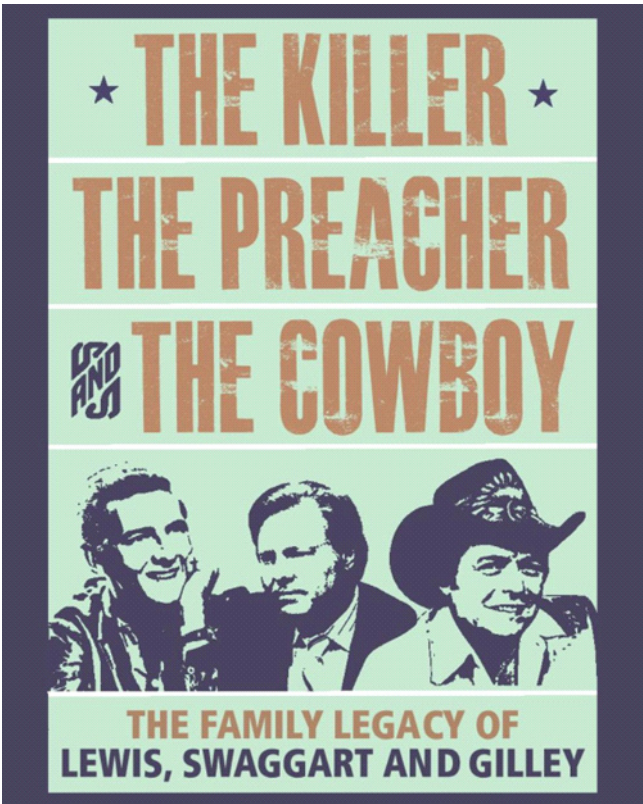
For more information, visit www.mcdonalds.com, and follow us on social: X, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook.

GRAMMY Museum Mississippi to debut new exhibit exploring the remarkable legacies of Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggart and Mickey Gilley in January 2026; Visit Cleveland, Mississippi

The Killer, The Preacher and The Cowboy To Open January 22

CLEVELAND, Miss. -Dec. 11, 2025 – GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi is thrilled to announce the upcoming opening of a groundbreaking new exhibit this winter spotlighting three entertainment icons (who also happened to be cousins) from Ferriday, Louisiana and Natchez, Mississippi: Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggart and Mickey Gilley. Titled *The Killer, The Preacher and the Cowboy: The Legacies of Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggart and Mickey Gilley*, the exhibit will officially open to the public on Thursday, Jan. 22. The exhibit is sponsored by Sun Records and Visit Mississippi and is co-curated by **Deana McCloud, Zach Farnum, and Jack McWilliams.**

Born within a year of each other, the three cousins used their natural musical talents and charisma to find their own paths to success, inspiring millions in the process and leaving indelible marks on American music, culture and society: •“The Killer” - GRAMMY® winner Jerry Lee Lewis redefined rock and roll with his electrifying piano style, fiery performances and fearless per-



sonality. His genre-crossing style of playing as if he was possessed by the music inside him and his natural showmanship attracted a broad scope of fans and inspired a host of artists who have attempted to follow in his footsteps.

•“The Preacher” - One of the most influential televangelists of the 20th century, GRAMMY nominee Jimmy Swaggart built a global broadcasting ministry,

reaching hundreds of millions with his message, and shifting the perspective of modern religion and its ability to reach new believers.

•“The Cowboy” - Mickey Gilley, was a GRAMMY-winning, chart-topping, country singer and entrepreneur, whose name became synonymous with honky-tonk hits and Gilley’s, the Texas hotspot that helped spark the urban cowboy craze. During his

impressive career, he was one of a small list of artists to win the ACM Triple Crown Award, solidifying his place in music history. “Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggart and Mickey Gilley each carved out their own distinct place in American culture, whether through music, entertainment or ministry,” said Emily Havens, Executive Director of GRAMMY Museum Mississippi. “GRAMMY Museum Mississippi is proud to bring to light the stories of these three remarkable cousins from Ferriday and Natchez. Though all three of these legends have since passed on, they continue to have a lasting impact on generations of fans and followers.”

The exhibit will officially open to the public on Thursday, Jan. 22. The museum will be announcing details soon about a special public program to celebrate the launch. Additional events will take place throughout the year to deepen the story and showcase the lasting influence of these three cousins.

Sponsors of the exhibit include **Visit Mississippi** and **Sun Records** with additional support to be announced soon.

About Jerry Lee Lewis

Jerry Lee Lewis was born on September 29, 1935, in Ferriday,

Louisiana. With his innovative and flamboyant piano playing style, Lewis emerged as one of rock’s early showmen in the 1950s. He signed with Sun Records in 1956 and quickly became a star, releasing his first single — a cover of Ray Price’s “Crazy Arms” — that same year. The following year, Lewis’ “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” became a hit on the pop, country and R&B charts. By this time, Lewis had also developed some of his famous stage antics, such as playing standing up and even lighting the occasional piano on fire. He had such energy and enthusiasm in his performances that he earned the nickname “The Killer” for the way he knocked out his audiences. Lewis was on a roll with his next single, “Great Balls of Fire,” which was another big hit in December 1957. The following March, Lewis struck again with “Breathless,” which made the Top 10 on the pop charts. He was among the first artists inducted into the inaugural Rock and Roll Hall of Fame class in 1986. Lewis earned three career GRAMMY nominations, winning Best Spoken Word Or Non-Musical Recording for Interviews From The Class Of ’55 Recording Sessions at the 29th Annual GRAMMY Awards® in 1987. In 2005, the Recording Academy honored him with a

Lifetime Achievement Award. Jerry Lee Lewis died on Oct. 28, 2022, at age 87.

About Jimmy Swaggart

The Reverend Jimmy Swaggart, born in 1935 in Ferriday, Louisiana, preached the gospel of Jesus Christ on television longer than any other American evangelist. Launching his full-time ministry in 1955, Swaggart combined his passionate preaching with a deep musical gift, becoming one of gospel music’s best-selling artists with more than 17 million recordings sold and multiple Dove Award nominations and a GRAMMY nomination. His ministry grew from local revivals to a global platform through radio, television, and eventually the SonLife Broadcasting Network, which today reaches audiences around the world. Beyond his media presence, Swaggart’s crusades, publications, and Bible distribution programs have influenced millions, cementing his legacy as one of the most recognized religious figures of the 20th century. Jimmy Swaggart died on July 1, 2025 at age 90.

About Mickey Gilley

Mickey Gilley was born in Natchez, Mississippi, and raised in Ferriday, Louisiana alongside his cousins Jerry Lee Lewis and Jimmy Swaggart. Inspired by the rhythm and blues he heard growing up, Gilley began recording in the late 1950s. Between 1968 and 1989, Gilley charted 46 singles on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart, including 34 that reached the Top 10 and 17 that went to No. 1. During the same period, he placed 27 albums on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart, with 10 landing in the Top 10. Two of those albums — Room Full of Roses (1974) and City Lights (1975) — hit No. 1. In 1971, he co-founded the world-famous Gilley’s nightclub in Pasadena, Texas, which became the largest honky-tonk in the world and a launchpad for the urban cowboy craze following the 1979 Esquire article and 1980 film starring John Travolta and Debra Winger. The Urban Cowboy soundtrack, featuring Gilley’s platinum version of “Stand By Me,” cemented his place as a household name. Over his career, Gilley earned a GRAMMY Award, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and performed for several U.S. presidents. Later, he built his own theater in Branson, Missouri, where he continued to entertain fans for decades despite setbacks, including a serious injury in 2009. Beloved by country fans worldwide, Mickey Gilley remained a resilient performer and cultural icon until his passing in 2022 at age 86.

About GRAMMY Museum Mississippi

Developed by the Cleveland Music Foundation—a nonprofit organization founded in 2011—the 28,000-square-foot GRAMMY Museum Mississippi is housed near the campus of Delta State University, home of the Delta Music Institute’s Entertainment Industry Studies program, which features the most unique audio recording facilities in the South. Affiliated with the GRAMMY Museum Foundation™, GRAMMY Museum Mississippi is dedicated to exploring the past, present, and future of music, and the cultural context from which it emerges, while casting a focused spotlight on the deep musical roots of Mississippi. The Museum features a dynamic combination of public events, educational programming, engaging multimedia presentations, and interactive permanent and traveling exhibits, including a Mississippi-centric area that introduces visitors to the impact of Mississippi’s songwriters, producers, and musicians. For more information, visit grammymuseumms.org. For more information, visit grammy-museumms.org.

After an incredibly successful year of touring Randy Travis & Co. extends his ‘More Life Tour’ into 2026

NASHVILLE, Tenn.- December 9, 2025 – Country music icon Randy Travis is keeping the excitement alive as he extends his “More Life Tour” into spring 2026. Following a hugely successful 2025, fans will have even more opportunities to experience this unforgettable celebration of Travis’ legendary career, featuring his original touring band and special guest vocalist James Dupré. Tickets will go on sale Friday, December 12 at 10 a.m. local time to each venue. For tickets go to randytravis.com.

In 2025, the tour played over 50 shows to more than 60,000 fans, selling out venues across the country. Cities even added second shows due to overwhelming demand, highlighting Travis’ enduring influence and the emotional impact of the tour.

Although Travis does not perform vocally due to the effects of the stroke he survived in 2013, he does appear on stage with his wife, Mary, engaging with fans, interacting with the band, and celebrating the music throughout the show. Dupré and the band perform all of his iconic No. 1 hits, including “On the Other Hand,” “Forever and Ever, Amen,” and “Three Wooden Crosses.”

“The ‘More Life Tour’ celebrates something so much more than a musical moment in time—it’s a gift to me to spend time with my fans, and my band, as James Dupré perfectly presents the songs that best define my career. We look forward to seeing you all somewhere along the way,” said Randy Travis.

“I’m thrilled and honored to hit the road again with my hero and friend, Randy Travis. I’m looking forward to meeting and singing along with all the Randy Travis fans in 2026,” said James Dupré.

“More Life Tour” 2026 Dates:
March 12 – Muskegon, Mich. – Frauenthal Center
March 13 – Lafayette, Ind. – Long Center for the Performing Arts
March 14 – Marietta, Ohio – The Tower Event Center
March 19 – Poplar Bluff, Mo. – Rodgers Theatre
March 20 – Tuscaloosa, Ala. – Bama Theatre
March 21 – Prestonsburg, Ky. – Mountain Arts Center
March 26 – Monroe, La. – Jack



Howard Theatre
March 27 – Baton Rouge, La. – River Center Theatre
March 28 – Texarkana, Texas – Perot Theatre
April 10 – Louisville, Ky. – The Brown Theatre
April 11 – Anderson, Ind. – Paramount Theatre
April 12 – St. Louis, Mo. – Tou-hill PAC
April 17 – Mobile, Ala. – Saenger Theatre Mobile
April 18 – Lake Charles, La. – Rosa Hart Theatre
April 19 – Georgetown, Texas - Two Step Inn
April 20 – Midland, Texas – Wagner Noel Performing Arts Center
April 22 – Phoenix, Ariz. – Orpheum Theatre
April 23 – Escondido, Calif. – Center for the Arts Escondido
April 24 – Beverly Hill, Calif. – Saban Theatre
May 22 – Fayetteville, Ga. – Tril-ith Live
May 23 – Spartanburg, S.C. – Memorial Auditorium
About Randy Travis

With lifetime sales exceeding 25

million, Randy Travis is one of the most successful multi-genre artists of all time and a 2016 inductee into the Country Music Hall of Fame. He has been a member of the Grand Ole Opry since 1986. His accolades include seven Grammy Awards, 11 Academy of Country Music Awards, 10 American Music Awards, two People’s Choice Awards, seven Music City News Awards, eight Dove Awards from the Gospel Music Association and five Country Music Association Awards. Three of his performances earned CMA Song of the Year honors: “On the Other Hand” (1986), “Forever and Ever, Amen” (1987), and “Three Wooden Crosses” (2002). To date, he has 23 No. 1 singles, 31 Top 10 hits, and more than 40 appearances in feature films and television shows. His discography includes four Gold albums, four Platinum albums, one Double Platinum album, one Triple Platinum album, and one Quintuple Platinum album. In 1992, Travis was recognized by the USO for his support and dedica-

tion to US Troops, including five USO tours, and was named the recipient of the Bob Hope Entertainment Award. In 2004, Travis was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and is celebrated on Nashville’s Music City Walk of Fame. Since his near-fatal stroke in 2013, Travis, with the support of his wife Mary and rigorous physical therapy, has made significant strides in his recovery, including improvements in speaking, walking and singing. In 2019, he released his critically acclaimed memoir *Forever and Ever, Amen*, co-authored with Ken Abraham. In 2021, CMT named Travis the CMT Artist of a Lifetime. In 2022, he released his award-winning documentary *More Life* garnering six Telly Awards. In May 2024, With the assistance of AI, Travis and Warner Music Nashville released “Where That Came From,” marking his first new recording in over a decade, showcasing his signature vocals. The single debuted at No. 45 on Billboard’s Country Airplay chart, receiving an enthusiastic

reception from both fans and country radio. For more information, visit RandyTravis.com.

About James Dupré

James Dupré was born and raised in Bayou Chicot, Louisiana. He was named one of Rolling Stone Magazine’s “Country Artists You Need to Know” and has spent years sharing his smooth baritone voice with his fans across social media and at venues and festivals across the United States, Canada, and Europe. The one-time aspiring meteorologist turned paramedic became a YouTube sensation in 2007 which ultimately led to an invitation to perform on The Ellen Degeneres Show. Shortly after, he released his debut album *It’s All Happening* in 2010, which charted on Billboard. After signing a record deal with Warner Music Nashville in 2011, Dupré began performing and touring full-time. In 2015, Dupré appeared on NBC’s *The Voice* (Season 9) with a four chair turn, landing him a spot on Adam Levine’s team. Following his departure from *The Voice*, James released his sophomore album *Stoned to Death*, yielding two singles charting on the Billboard Indicator chart: “Hurt Good” and the title track. The father of five made his acting debut in the film “The Price” playing the son of a country singer portrayed by Randy Travis. In 2019, James was hand-picked by Randy and his wife, Mary, as the special guest vocalist for the “More Life Tour.” Along with Randy’s original band, James performs all of the Country Music Hall of Famer’s biggest hits. James released his third studio album, *Home and Away*, in 2020 with three singles: the title track, “Another Love Song,” and “Painfully Pretty.” In September 2023, he made his Grand Ole Opry debut in Nashville, Tenn.. In May 2024, James was featured on CBS Sunday Morning as being the first ever “vocal bed” on a commercially released song.

The single, “Where That Came From,” was the first new music released by Randy Travis in over a decade, and was produced with the help of Artificial Intelligence to reimagine Randy’s legendary vocals on new music. For more information, visit JamesDupre.com.

Profile: University of Memphis names Charles Huff as new Head Football Coach to forge ahead in new season ... from page 9

with nearly 267 yards per game. Nine Golden Eagles earned All-Sun Belt Conference honors with J'Mond Tapp (defensive lineman), Chris Jones (linebacker) and Josh Moten (defensive back) all earning First Team nods. Tapp led the Southern Miss defensive line with 67 tackles (18 solo) with team bests of 11.5 tackles for loss and 7.5 sacks. His sack total ranked second in the Sun Belt and No. 28 nationally, while his tackles per game total ranked No.1 among defensive linemen in the league. The Sun Belt's leading tackler, Jones ranked seventh nationally in total tackles, averaging 10.7 per contest (128 total). Jones was the first Golden Eagle to record 100-plus tackles in a season since D'Nerius Antoine in 2015 and produced the most since Gerald McRath registered 137 in 2008. Moten proved to be one of the most dangerous cornerbacks in the league, ranking fourth nationally with five interceptions while sitting in the top eight in the country in passes defenses. Huff made his way to Southern Miss after serving as head coach at Marshall University from 2021-24, posting a 32-20 record that culminated with a 31-3 victory over Louisiana in the 2024

Sun Belt Conference championship game. Huff holds the distinction of being the only Marshall coach in the FBS era to lead the Herd to a bowl game in each of their first four seasons at the helm. During his tenure, Huff led Marshall to victories over No. 8 Notre Dame (2022) and Virginia Tech (2023). The 26-21 win over Notre Dame was part of a 9-4 season and was the Herd's first win over a Top 10 team since 2003. In Huff's inaugural season in Huntington, Marshall finished 7-6 appearing in its 17th bowl game since moving to FBS in 1997. Huff also navigated the Herd to a five-game winning streak at the end of 2022, which was one of the nation's longest heading into the 2023 season. The 2022 campaign culminated with a 28-14 win over UConn in the Myrtle Beach Bowl. The Herd finished 6-6 during the regular season in 2023 before dropping a 35-17 decision to UTSA in the Frisco Bowl. In 2024, Marshall registered its first league championship since capturing the 2014 Conference USA crown, while also recording the school's first 10-win season since 2015. Described as an elite recruiter

and developer of talent, Huff's proven history bolstered head coach Nick Saban's staff for the 2019 and 2020 seasons. In his inaugural season in Tuscaloosa, Huff helped Najee Harris rush for a career-best 1,224 yards on 209 carries with 13 rushing touchdowns while catching 27 passes for 304 yards and seven more scores. In 2020, Harris was a consensus All-American who led the nation in total touchdowns (30), rushing touchdowns (26) and points (180). He also ranked third nationally in rushing yards (1,466) and holds the school record for total touchdowns (57), rushing touchdowns (46) and rushing yards (3,843). Huff arrived in Tuscaloosa after one season (2018) as the assistant head coach, run-game coordinator and running backs coach at Mississippi State. His one season in Starkville produced an effective rushing attack that averaged 223.6 yards per game to rank second in the SEC and 20th nationally. Huff spent four seasons (2014-17) as Penn State's running backs coach and special teams coordinator. He recruited and developed one of the game's most

electrifying players in Barkley who was drafted by the New York Giants as the No. 2 overall pick in the 2018 draft. Numerous records fell at the running back position and on special teams under Huff's tutelage at Penn State. In 2017, Barkley was a consensus All-American, becoming the first Big Ten running back in history to win Offensive Player of the Year honors twice. A Walter Camp National Player of the Year finalist, Barkley ranked second nationally in all-purpose yards in 2017 (2,329). He broke four school career records, including rushing touchdowns (43), total touchdowns (53), all-purpose yards (5,538) and consecutive games with a touchdown (15) in just three seasons. Huff spent the 2013 season at Western Michigan as the running backs coach and helped the unit nearly double its rushing yards from 2012. The Broncos ran for 1,394 yards in 2013 after running for just 735 yards the year before. During the 2012 season, Huff worked in the NFL as the assistant running backs coach for the Buffalo Bills. He helped guide C.J. Spiller to his first career

“My family and I are so fired up about this opportunity,” Huff said. “The city of Memphis, the leadership at the University and the level of consistency the football program has had over the recent years is incredible. I would like to thank University President Dr. Bill Hardgrave, Athletics Director Dr. Ed Scott, and their entire team who has instilled their faith in me to lead this outstanding program. To the city of Memphis and Tiger Nation, it’s time to STAND UP! To the players and administration, it’s go time!”

Huff graduated in 2005 from Hampton University where he served as a team captain, starting 12 games at center as a senior in 2005. He also played guard, fullback and tight end in his career. “My family and I are so fired up about this opportunity,” Huff said. “The city of Memphis, the leadership at the University and the level of consistency the football program has had over the recent years is incredible. I would like to thank University President Dr. Bill Hardgrave, Athletics Director Dr. Ed Scott, and their entire team who has instilled their faith in me to lead this outstanding program. To the city of Memphis and Tiger Nation, it’s time to STAND UP! To the players and administration, it’s go time!”

A native of Denton, Maryland, Huff and his wife, Jessica, have three boys: B.J., Beau and Blaze. Season ticket deposits for the 2026 season can be made by visiting www.gotigersgo.com/ For complete information on Memphis Tigers Football, visit www.GoTigersGo.com and follow the team's social media channels on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

The Harlem Globetrotters and Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announce promotional partnership to coincide with Globetrotters 2026 Centennial Season for historic celebration and excitement

Cooperative Work Will Include Clinics, Educational Programs, Marketing Co-Promotions and Special Events Coinciding with the Globetrotters 2026 Centennial Season

SPRINGFIELD, MA and NEW YORK, NY [December 16, 2025] — The world-famous, Harlem Globetrotters™ and The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame today announced a new partnership conjoining the history and majesty of the Hall of Fame with the Globetrotters legacy of excellence, community impact, and cultural influence. The partnership strengthens the ties between the Harlem Globetrotters, the first-ever team inducted into the Naismith Hall of Fame, and the global basketball community through joint promotions, special events, clinics, and other projects where the two organizations can collaborate to drive awareness, engagement

and further expand the impact of key initiatives. The full “100 Year Tour” will fully tip off with Boston and Pittsburgh on Friday, December 26th and roll out across 200+ domestic markets and over 125+ markets internationally. Tickets for “100 Year Tour” can be purchased www.harlemglobetrotters.com “The history of the Naismith Hall of Fame and the Harlem Globetrotters are intertwined, and there is no better way to share our stories and broaden our collective impact than working together on all levels, from clinics

to special events, not just during our Centennial season but well into the future,” said Keith Dawkins, President, Harlem Globetrotters & Herschend Entertainment Studios. “This partnership will connect with people around the world, who enjoy the game of basketball, and will grow that love even more through our goodwill, our athletes, our shared history, and our cross promotional efforts.” “The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame exists to celebrate the unifying power and global impact of our game,” said John Doleva,

President and CEO of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. “Partnering with the Harlem Globetrotters - an organization that has championed basketball's core values for generations - allows us to inspire new fans, elevate the sport's future, and expand our shared mission. We look forward to all we can accomplish together.” Fans can expect all-new surprises like the Golden Basketball by Spalding®, epic pre-game Magic Pass experiences, 100 Year limited edition merchandise and many other new innovations for the “Ambassadors of Basketball.” International markets such as France, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Mexico, and across Asia are just a few of the many locations the Harlem Globetrotters will be touring in winter of 2026 and running through the remainder of the year. ABOUT THE WORLD-FAMOUS HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS™ / HERSCHEID ENTERTAINMENT STUDIOS Now entering their Centennial season, The Harlem Globetrotters™ are THE originators of applying sport to deliver goodwill, excitement, showmanship, and athleticism to a global audience every year. Since 1926, with a legacy of elite talent that

has included many of the greatest stars of men's and women's basketball from HBCU's to Division I, II, III, NAIA, The NBA, and the WNBA, the Globetrotters are the first team ever inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. They have utilized their talents to showcase their iconic brand of basketball to tens of millions in over 124 countries and territories across six continents. Never ones to stop innovating, the award-winning organization, which currently holds an unprecedented 80+ Guinness World Records, the most of any professional sports team, has expanded its media footprint to make their content available to fans new and old on whatever platform they choose, from EMMY nominated broadcast shows, specials, and feature films, to their own FAST channel, as well as reimagining the memorabilia and collectible space through a new partnership with clct, with uniforms and other special apparel created by legendary designer, Jeff Hamilton. Content partners include; Hidden Pictures, Vantage Pictures, Aspire TV, and Hearst Media Production Group; commercial partnerships and consumer products include Zara, EQL, IMG, Jerry Leigh, OVO, Shoe Palace, Philco, and Excel Sports as well as the official ball partner, Spalding and Exxact Sports. Coined by the U.S. State Department in 1951 as Ambassadors of Goodwill, and now serving The Official Ambassadors of Goodwill for the United Nations as well, the team leverages their moniker to drive its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts globally around their strategic pillars of Health & Wellness,

Education, and Community Empowerment. These efforts have yielded partnerships with the likes of the NBA Retired Players Association, Microsoft, U.S. State Department Sports Diplomacy, United Agricultural Organization, and Operation Homefront. For more information about the Harlem Globetrotters™ and the Tour, visit their official website: www.harlemglobetrotters.com. ABOUT THE NAISMITH BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME Located in Springfield, Massachusetts, the city where basketball was born, the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting, preserving, and celebrating the game of basketball at every level—men and women, amateur and professional players, coaches, and contributors—both domestically and internationally. The Hall of Fame museum is home to more than 475 inductees and over 40,000 square feet of basketball history. Nearly 200,000 people visit the Hall of Fame museum each year to learn about the game, experience the interactive exhibits, and test their skills on the Jerry Colangelo "Court of Dreams." Best known for its annual marquee Enshrinement Ceremony honoring the game's elite, the Hall of Fame also operates over 70 high school and collegiate competitions annually throughout the country and abroad. For more information on the Basketball Hall of Fame organization, its museum, and events, visit hoophall.com and follow @hoophall.

UofM’s Benjamin L. Hooks Institute announces “Medgar & Myrlie” as Hooks National Book Award winner ... from page 9

The Hooks Institute's National Book Award is presented to a non-fiction book published in the calendar year that, through scholarly research, best furthers understanding of the American civil rights movement and its legacy. Finalists for the national book award were chosen from 47 books that were nominated for the 2024 award. In addition to “Medgar & Myrlie” the award finalists were:

- **Black Utopians: Searching for Paradise and the Promised Land in America** by Aaron Robertson (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- **From Rights to Lives: The Evolution of the Black Freedom Struggle** by Françoise Hamlin and Charles McKinney, Jr. (Vanderbilt University Press)
- **Survival is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde** by Alexis Pauline Gumbs (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

• **John Lewis: A Life by David Greenberg (Simon & Schuster)**

About the Hooks National Book Award Committee

The Hooks Institute extends its gratitude to the 2024 Hooks National Book Award committee. In addition to Tucker, chair of the English Department at the University of Memphis, the committee includes Dr. Daryl Anderson, Jr., Assistant Professor of English at LeMoyn-Owen College; Dr. Brian Kwoba, Associate Professor of History at the University of Memphis; Dr. Ladrice Menson-Furr, assistant dean of the UofM College of Arts and Sciences and associate professor of English and Dr. Shatavia Wynn, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Africana Studies at Rhodes College.

For more information, visit memphis.edu/benhooks/programs/book-award.php.

About the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change

The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute implements its mission of advancing social change and strengthening democracy through research, service, and historical preservation. Institute programs include community outreach; funding faculty research initiatives on community issues; implementing community service projects; hosting conferences, symposiums and lectures; and promoting local and national scholarship on civil and human rights. The Hooks Institute is an interdisciplinary center at the University of Memphis. Contributory support for the Hooks Institute, including funding from individuals, corporations and foundations, is administered through the University of Memphis Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, visit memphis.edu/benhooks



UP NEXT


SUNDAY, DEC. 28

2:00 PM CT

ELMA ROANE FIELDHOUSE

MEMPHIS WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Email photos and news to MSTnews@prodigy.net, MSTsports@prodigy.net, MSTentertainment@prodigy.net, MSTbusiness@prodigy.net, and BlackInfoHwy@prodigy.net

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!