

Mayor's Keynote Address Gives Thanks to Elders

Mayor Alvin Brown was featured as the keynote speaker at "A Night with the Stars" benefiting ElderSource.

The mayor thanked all of the donors and service providers for their work benefiting Jacksonville's seniors. There are nearly 425,000 people over age 60 in the metropolitan area.

"The world we live in today was shaped by the endeavors and triumphs of our senior population," said the mayor. "We owe our deepest gratitude and respect to those who have led us into the present day so that now we can build a better future."

Mayor Brown also entertained the audience of more than 200 people at the Marriot Southpoint with stories about his grandmother helping to raise him.

"My grandmother had a profound impact on me," said Mayor Brown. "She taught me a deeper sense of respect for myself and others."



Clara White Mission "Feed the City" with Over 150 Volunteers Serving to Give Back!



Judge Pauline Drayton-Drake with husband Phillip serving meals.



President & CEO JuCoby Pittman-Peele of Clara White Mission with a client.



Volunteers serving.



Clients of Clara White Mission enjoying the meal.

Artis Gilmore Tribute Brings Out Big Names, Helps to Raise Scholarship Money

He's been called "The A-Train" and "The Gentle Giant," a man whose skills on the hardwood have helped put Jacksonville on the map.

Artis Gilmore, the Jacksonville University standout who was recently inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, was the guest of honor as Mayor Alvin Brown and a host of dignitaries praised him for contributions on and off the court.

"He is a true blessing for this community," said Mayor Brown. "We salute him for everything he's done to put our city and Jacksonville University on the map. Forget about money and fame. In 1970, we were talking about raw talent."

We were talking about a young man who drew the nation's attention right here."

Gilmore's tribute was held at the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena on Friday, Dec. 2.

Jacksonville University graduate Diana Donovan gave a touching account of how scholarships helped her break free from a tough upbringing to change her life. The event helped to raise money for the "53 Campaign," a Jacksonville University scholarship fund that takes its name from Gilmore's jersey number.

Former pro basketball stars Rick Barry and Julius "Dr. J" Erving were on hand, as well, to honor Gilmore.

The Jacksonville Chapter of Continental Societies, Inc. Induct New Members

On Saturday, December 17, 2011 six new members were inducted into the Continental Society, Inc. at a private ceremony and luncheon held at Seasons 52 Restaurant.



(L/R seated) New Continentals: Alexia Robinson, Cynthia Brantley, Frankie Stepherson, Carla Thompson (chapter president), Frances Sneed, Cynthia Whitaker and Marquita Guillory. (L/R standing) Continental members: Denise Coleman, Tonette Phelps, Gina Feacher, Gayle Hardy, Jean Baker, Susan Jones, Pat Warren, Vera White, Lois Lindsey and Hazel Yates-Campbell.

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This past November marked the Clara White Mission's 107th year of service to the community. To celebrate this community milestone, the Clara White Mission, Radio Stations 93.3/V101.5, Junior League, Dignity-U- Wear, Delta Sigma Theta, United Way, UNF PR Students, Family Staffing, D. W. Perkins Bar Association and Sam's Club will sponsor the 17th Annual "Feed The City" Pre-Thanksgiving Luncheon and Food Drive Kick-off for the homeless and low-income families.

This event was held on Saturday, November 19th at Clara White Mission from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at 613 West Ashley Street. Over 150 community volunteers, served lunch to over 850 homeless and low-income families in recognition of this auspicious occasion.

To ensure families are served this Christmas, Clara White Mission is soliciting the HELP of businesses, civic organizations, schools and faith-based organizations to participate by sponsoring a food drive or pledging a contribution for Thanksgiving and or Christmas. Drop-off for food donations/contributions will be accepted from Tuesday, November 15th until Tuesday, December 22nd at the Clara White Mission, located in historic LaVilla on the corner of Broad & Ashley Street.

The Mission is a one-stop community development center that restores lives through job training, job placement, housing initiatives, literacy programs, daily meals and cultural awareness. Last year, the Mission served over 185,000 meals to the homeless and at-risk individuals.

For more information, please call the Clara White Mission at 354-4162 or visit our web site at www.clarawhitemission.org.

Reg Lawrence: A Life of Quiet Advocacy

By Steve DiMattia

Chances are that if you know Reginald "Reg" Lawrence through his work he has saved your life. Or maybe he just provided a safe place for you to iron out some demons. If nothing else, he has offered a shoulder to lean on or sent you in the right direction.

The thing is that if you are one of those countless people who have come to his workplace in the last 30 years, you probably had something to do with saving his life a little bit, too.

That is the way it is at the Jacksonville Veterans Center where Lawrence has worked since 1981 and from where he quietly retired in November at age 65.

"It's definitely gone both ways," Lawrence said. "Hearing other vets' stories and helping them work through whatever war trauma related issues they have has helped me with my own journey."

As team leader, Lawrence oversaw a staff of seven as they helped combat veterans reintegrate into society. He and his fellow counselors and therapists may serve 50 vets a day, upward of 5,000 a year from Florida and Georgia.

The center's focus is driven by the unique challenges facing today's veterans: An estimated 107,000 are homeless on any given night, over 14 percent are unemployed, at least 300,000 have reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, 18 commit suicide daily, many battle substance abuse, and an increase in women warriors has changed family structures.

"Our goal is to get them back on their feet and put them in a position to regain some of the self-esteem they may have had before going into the military," Lawrence said. "We want to relieve them of suspicion and distrust and help them make a successful readjustment back into their community. It's a responsibility we take seriously; it's an honor and privilege to work with those who have fought for our country."

Lawrence's commitment is rooted in his own experiences as a veteran.

Drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War in 1969 at age 22, he reached the rank of sergeant E-5 serving in both the infantry and medical corps. While he avoided physical injury, he did not walk away unscarred.

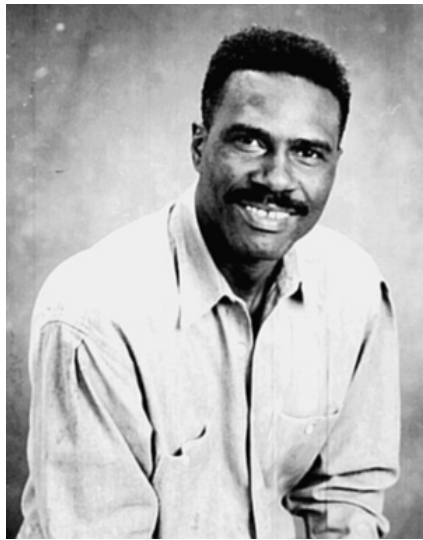
The war took his best friend, Milford Jones, who he had known since kindergarten. His own exposure to battle left him traumatized, but that went largely unspoken for many years, partly because soldiers rarely talked about those things and partly because of upbringing.

"In spite of adversity you still try to move forward to overcome whatever it might be. You don't allow obstacles to keep you from being a good person and doing good things. And you don't talk much about your problems. That's how my mother raised me."

But as part of a medical battalion, he did help fellow soldiers work through their issues. That was his genesis as a veterans advocate.

Before being drafted, Lawrence was a star running back in his hometown of St. Petersburg, Fla., earning a football scholarship to Allen University in Columbia, S.C. where he met and married his wife, Mazie. He studied sociology and psychology with an eye toward law school and played a little semi-pro football.

After Vietnam, his service culminated



Reg Lawrence

with a short stint at the Army's Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense in Maryland where he was joined by Mazie and their two children. He was honorably discharged in 1972 and the family returned home to St. Petersburg.

His first post-military job was as "sensitivity specialist" for the Pinellas County School Board. He helped ease tensions that arose from school integration between African American students and the angry parents of white students. He next became a state youth probation officer and then a surety agent. He also studied criminal justice at Nova University, stopping just one class shy of his master's degree due to an administrative mix up.

In 1980, an unintentional insult put Lawrence on the path that would define the next 30 years of his life. He was introduced to a Veterans Administration social worker who earnestly asked, "What can you tell me about Vietnam?" For Lawrence, this was like a shot in the heart. "I said, 'I can't tell you anything about it. I just don't talk about it.' I was angry by the question and didn't truly know why." He soon realized that the social worker was actually looking for Vietnam vets to be part of a new VA veterans center program. He joined Jacksonville's center as a counselor in 1981, becoming team leader in 1988.

Through the years Lawrence harbored the effects of PTSD: Feelings of isolation, disconnection and sensitivity to certain "triggers" that would ignite wartime flashbacks. Never to the point that he could not maintain his 43-year marriage or raise four children, but they were there. With the exception of Mazie, he rarely spoke about it. But every day at the vet center he listened to other vets tell their stories. He listened and he spoke words of encouragement, guidance and support, then followed through with action. He understood what they were going through. And the vets knew it.

"He is an unsung hero," said Bob Hunter, a Vietnam vet who first met Lawrence 30 years ago while seeking help with PTSD and who became a veterans advocate himself. "He's like a trainer on a football team: Nobody knows their name, but they're the ones keeping the players healthy. He saved me so that I can help guys who are not as fortunate as I was."

Reg Lawrence says he never consciously realized how much his helping others helped himself. "I haven't been smart enough to figure out how all that happens..." he said. "I do know there's no panacea out there, but I also know that PTSD is not a death sentence." And he has proven that every day for the past 30 years by the lives he has saved, including his own.

Jacksonville Veterans Center is located on the corner of East State and North Market streets: 300 East State Street, Suite J, Jacksonville, FL 32202, (904) 232-3621 Or (877) 927-8387, <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=379>

Author Brenda Jackson Donates a New Mascot to Raines High School

Jacksonville, FL - On Monday, November 7, 2011, Jacksonville native, novelist and screenwriter Brenda Jackson, presented her alma mater William M. Raines High School with a \$2,000 donation that will be used to purchase a new mascot for the school. Ms. Jackson also gave a special presentation to 11th and 12th graders.

She has authored 90-plus books that are made up of multicultural romance novels. Several of her books have made the USA Today's Best-Selling Books list.

Ms. Jackson recently turned one of her novels Truly Everlasting into a movie. It made its debut on the big screen November 5, 2011 at the Florida Theater in downtown Jacksonville, FL.

Join RSVP - Retired & Senior Volunteer Program of Duval County

Jacksonville, FL - Your skills and talents are vitally needed in many local non profit agencies and programs. People helping people, volunteers sharing the skills of a lifetime to support their community by helping other, this is RSVP. People 55 years of age or better here is your opportunity to make a difference.

Our mission is to provide personalized placement service, follow-up contact, and on-going support. RSVP staff has, or will find, the volunteer opportunity that matches you to a volunteer position that meets your need.

RSVP volunteers work at various agencies including museums, art/cultural programs, reading to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children at local elementary schools with the Tale Teller program, health-related agencies, United Way, the Sheriff's office, environmen-

tal agencies, retirement communities, making rainbow cards of caring for the military and nursing home residents and many more assignments that address local community needs.

Opportunities are also available for short-term and sporadic projects including staffing community events, environmental clean-up projects and participating in holiday and special events during the week and on weekends.

Volunteering has many benefits such as improved self-confidence and self-esteem which helps reduce blood pressure and improve immune function. Studies report that engaging in regular volunteering increases life expectancy because social interaction improves quality of life.

For more information, call RSVP at 630-0998 or email jduvall@coj.net.

RSVP is a Corporation for National and Community Service/Senior Corps program, sponsored locally by the City of Jacksonville, Recreation and Community Services Department, Adult Services Division.

Duval County Public Schools Celebrates Partnership with U.S. Navy

Jacksonville, FL - Duval County Public Schools celebrated its newest partnership with the U.S. Navy during a special ceremony at Nathan B. Forrest High School on Tuesday, November 29. The name of this unique, mentoring program is Project N.A.V.Y.

- Navy Appreciating and Valuing Youth. Its focus is volunteerism, and it will be piloted in four area schools:

- *Forrest High School
- *George Washington Carver Elementary School
- *Ribault Middle School
- *Stillwell Middle School

Servicemen and women will connect with students to provide positive role models, demonstrate commitment and service to others, build students' character and model discipline.

In addition, students will learn about life in the Navy, as well as career opportunities. In turn, students will demonstrate their appreciation by inviting Navy personnel to school events and modeling positive behaviors.

"There is no better time than now for our students to be exposed to such great mentors who represent the epitome of service above self, leadership and citizenship," said Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals. "This partnership creates a win for the schools, the students and the community as a whole."

Those attending the kickoff event included the schools' principals, students and support staff, as well as base commanding officers from Naval Station Mayport and Naval Air Station Jacksonville.

Duval County Public Schools operates 177 schools and serves approximately 125,000 students. The school district is committed to providing high quality educational opportunities that will inspire all students to acquire and use the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a global economy and culturally diverse world.

Duval County Public Schools Provides Winter Packets for Continued Learning over the Holiday Break

Jacksonville, FL - Duval County Public Schools is providing winter packets to students and parents to continue enriching the academic success of all students during the winter holiday.

All K-12 students, parents and community members are encouraged to log onto the district website and print out grade appropriate materials for students during the winter break. Math, reading and science worksheets are available, along with links to online assistance for all students.

To access the winter packets, visit www.duvalschools.org and click on the winter packets section in the banner.

In addition to the winter packets, Duval County Public Schools, the Florida Department of Education and the Jacksonville Public library are providing Recommended Reading lists as a guide for those wishing to give the gift of reading to students this holiday.

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Thanksgiving Back

Thanksgiving is a holiday that you usually celebrate with family and friends. However, that is not always possible for a number of reasons. It is especially true if you're a student and have to make the decision to go home either Thanksgiving or Christmas holiday, students will traditionally select Christmas because they have more days off from school.

There are however generous people in our community who sympathized with these students' plight and decided to do something about it. Roslyn (Auntie Roz) Burrough is one of those individuals. On Saturday, November 27, 2011, Burrough opened her home and her heart to those students. Burrough invited the students from Edward Waters College (EWC) who did not go home for the holiday to her house for a holiday meal.



Roslyn Burrough with Bernard Cromity who cooked the meat for the occasion.

Fifty-five EWC students took Burrough up on her invitation. It was a great meal consisting of smoked ribs and chicken, potatoe salad, cole slaw, rice with vegetables, string beans, baked beans, rolls and a variety of homemade cakes. Burrough contributed the success of the luncheon to her inner circle of friend who brought their special dishes to the luncheon. In addition to cooking, many of the friends served the students.

Burrough is an international performer who lives in Jacksonville, Florida and New York City.



Students enjoying the meal in Burrough's backyard. Photos by Cashmyr

YouthBuild and DAWN Programs Host Winter Graduation

Jacksonville, FL - The City of Jacksonville's YouthBuild and Developing Adults with Necessary Skills (DAWN) programs hosted a ceremony to celebrate the graduation of eight young women and ten young men who have completed State Department of Education requirements to earn their high school diploma. These students, while serving jail sentences, received concentrated GED instruction coupled with transitional counseling and vocational training. In addition, eight YouthBuild participants have earned National Center for Construction Education and Research construction certificates.

Thanks to their commitment to this

program, these young men and women will transition back into the community better prepared to assume the responsibilities of positive and productive citizenship. This accomplishment fits in well within the YouthBuild and DAWN programs' ultimate goals of education and reducing recidivism by arming adults with necessary skills and teaching them a trade to build a future and obtain gainful employment.

During the ceremony, the graduates will hear from previous program participants. The students will be encouraged to defy the stereotypes and odds placed on them for having been incarcerated and to live and think differently in order to reach their goals. To learn more about the YouthBuild and DAWN programs, visit www.coj.net and search keywords YouthBuild or DAWN, or call (904) 630-CITY.

MWKF Youth Invited to "Pass, Punt & Play" Event for Deserving Youth!



MWKF students at EverBank Field.

Jacksonville, FL – The DuBow Family Foundation and the Jacksonville Jaguars defensive line hosted its annual "Pass, Punt and Play" event on Tuesday, December 6th. 25 youth from MWKF (along with 25 from the Bridge of Northeast Florida) were invited to a behind-the-scenes tour of EverBank Field, followed by a pizza party and ultimately a 'shopping spree' at Target. Each student got the opportunity to shop for family members alongside Jaguars players and volunteers.

"Our students had a blast experiencing all of the activities that were planned for them throughout the evening. Getting a chance to tour the locker and equipment rooms, having a pizza party and meeting some of the coaches and staff was all very exciting for everyone. We're very thankful to have been a part of this event," says

MWKF Community Relations Manager, Ashley Strickland.

About MWKF - MaliVai Washington Kids Foundation is a local, non-profit youth development organization which operates the TnT (Tennis-n-Tutoring) afterschool program. The TnT program serves over 160 underserved youth in the community and provides free homework assistance, tennis lessons and life skills classes to youth in grades Kindergarten-High School Monday- Friday.

The mission of the MaliVai Washington Kids Foundation is to develop champions in classrooms, on tennis courts and throughout communities.

For more information about this event, please contact Ashley Strickland at (904) 359-KIDS (5437) or Ashley@malwashington.com



D'Anthony Smith (#95) with students from MWKF.



Nate Collins (#98) with students from MWKF.

Duval County Public Schools Secondary Turnaround Cluster Chief Assumes Principal Duties at Raines

Jacksonville – Superintendent Pratt-Dannals recently announced that Tony Bellamy, secondary turnaround cluster chief will assume the responsibilities of Principal at Raines High School through the remainder of the 2011/2012 school year.

"Mr. Bellamy has the leadership skills necessary to continue the path of success at Raines High School," said Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals. "His familiarity with the students, community, teachers and staff is an asset to Raines during this time of transition."

Tony Bellamy has been working for Duval County Public Schools since 1997 and has been an educator for more than 23 years. Mr. Bellamy will continue his work as the Turnaround Cluster Chief, maintaining oversight of two secondary turnaround schools.

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