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News Weekly

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NOLA Black Selfie Project

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Covenant House

Shining a Light of Hope on the Youth of New Orleans



Members of the Civic and Business community support the great work of Covenant House and what it does to help the Homeless Youth of New Orleans.



“Covenant House provides a window of hope in fighting youth homelessness, but more is needed if we are to eliminate the problem in New Orleans,” says Oliver Thomas, former City Councilmember and WBOK, who once worked at Covenant House as Director of Advocacy.



The Annual Sleep Out is a major fundraiser for Covenant House where Citizens from across the City sleep outside for the night to bring voice to the issue of youth homelessness in New Orleans.

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

Covenant House A Beacon of Light and A Place of Refuge for Homeless Youth of New Orleans

It is a place that is a beacon of light for many young people who feel they have nowhere to turn. Since 1987

Covenant House of New Orleans has helped transform and save the lives of countless numbers of young people by giving them the help, they need to live healthy productive lives.

The causes of Homelessness Among Youth in New Orleans

As is quite evident, when one looks under the overpasses of many parts of the City, New Orleans has a

problem with adult homelessness. But many do not know that there is a growing problem with homelessness among youth.

Many are disconnected from their families for a variety of reasons including, abusive homes, victims of human trafficking, some who have aged out of the foster care or other traumatic experiences.

Brian Gorman, who is the Director of Administration, speaking about Covenant House and its mis-

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sion says, "We serve youth ages 16 to 21. We provide them with the support they need that includes temporary shelter, counseling services and with our partners help them with a host of challenges they come to us with."

Continuing he says, "Our doors are open 24 hours for those who are in need, we get kids from all walks

our young women were recently released from jail or juvenile detention

33% of our young women are mothers

25% are victims of human trafficking and/or sexual labor

33% are LGBTQ

85% suffer from PTSD/poly-trauma – 35% receive medication

munication, structure and choice. We have found this approach works in helping the youth that come through Covenant House."

While Covenant House Provides a Valuable Service Solving the Problem of Youth Homelessness Will Require More Resources

Throughout the years many from the civic and business com-

munity have come out in support of Covenant House. One of them is former City Councilmember and WBOK Radio's Oliver Thomas. He once worked at Covenant House as the Director of Advocacy. "The mis-

sion is a great one and I am proud to say that for a time I worked with them in helping guide and give some of our homeless youth the tools to succeed in life."

Also speaking on the issue of



There are always volunteer opportunities and we have community partners who help us as well," says Brian Gorman, Director of Administration for Covenant House. "We realize that we cannot do this work alone of providing hope and opportunities for the people of New Orleans."



of life and backgrounds who seek us out."

80% have used drugs – 40% have a serious addiction

A Snapshot of the Youth Covenant House Serves

The statistics provided by Covenant House provides a snapshot of who are the clients they service each year.

80% are survivors of physical abuse and/or sexual abuse, assault, or rape

30% aged out of foster care

15% ran away from home

70% were thrown out of homes that no longer wanted them

52% are young men, 46% are young women, and 2% are transgender

40% of our young men and 20% of

Stories of Recovery and Hope

When we look at these startling numbers it pulls at the heart strings, but the young people who come are much more than statistics. They are resilient, brave and courageous. And with the help of Covenant House, they learn to cope with their difficulties and most of all with hope they often discover that there are brighter days ahead.

Gorman speaks of what their program entails, "We have an approach that is guided by five principles: immediacy, sanctuary, value com-



homeless youth in New Orleans, he says, "The problem is much larger than people think. Especially since Hurricane Katrina, as you know that we have an adult homeless problem. But there are so many youths out here who do not have homes or are in circumstances where they feel they have nowhere to turn. It is great that Covenant House is providing these services, but much more is needed if we are to eliminate the problem of youth homelessness."

Working Towards Solutions: Coming Together to Support Homeless Youth

Many people across the City come out to support Covenant House. One of their biggest fundraisers is their Annual Sleep Out. It is where citizens from across the City sleep outside for the night to bring voice to the issue of youth homelessness.

"This is a big event for us where people sleep outside in solidarity with our mission of helping the young people, we service here at Covenant House. It is incredible how many people come out to support the work we do, says Gorman."

Speaking of other ways people can help he says, "There are always volunteer opportunities and we have community partners who help us as well. We realize that we cannot do this work alone of providing hope and opportunities for the homeless youth of New Orleans."

Louisiana East Bank All Stars Shuts out Curacao to win Little League World Series

E. Benjamin
Data News Staff Writer

It was a historic day as Louisiana claimed its first Little League World Series Title with standout performances by Marshall Louque as he hit a pair of doubles and drove in three runs, while pitcher Egan Prather threw a two-hit shutout Sunday to lead a team from River Ridge past Curacao 8-0.

The team Jefferson Parish fought its way back through the loser's bracket after dropping its first game to Hawaii. Louisiana showed resilience winning six games in eight days, becoming the first team to win the LLWS after losing its first game since the tournament expanded in 2001.



Egan put on a pitching clinic against the Curacao lineup, throwing 88 pitches over six innings. His performance in the championship caps off a solid tournament on the mound in which he picked up two victories and struck out 19 batters in 14 1/3 innings.

With Louisiana's Victory, it continues the dominance by U.S. Teams having won back-to-back Little League Crowns for the first time since 2009, when a team from Chula Vista, California, was on a winning streak taking five straight championships for the United States.

People from around the region are celebrating their winning effort. Data News Weekly also sends out a congratulation to these amazing young people.

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Xavier University of Louisiana Receives \$16.8 million Renewal NIH Award to Enhance Diversity in the Biomedical Workforce

Data News Weekly Staff Edited Report

NEW ORLEANS - Xavier University of Louisiana received a \$16.8 million Grant Renewal from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as part of the National Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD) Initiative. The second phase of the grant, Project Pathways II, will allow Xavier to focus on the most effective aspects of the already thriving Biomedical Program that this Historically Black University offers its students, work to institutionalize these initiatives, and disseminate these best practices across the country.

"We are proud that the NIH has named us, once again, as one of the institutions that it believes can uniquely contribute to increasing diversity in biomedical fields," said Dr. Reynold Verret, President of Xavier University. "Xavier is already a national leader in producing African American graduates who go on to earn terminal degrees, however, with this grant, we plan not only to increase the number of our graduates who enter and complete graduate studies in biomedical sciences but to also identify and map initiatives which can be disseminated to other institutions of higher education in order to increase the number of African American Biomedical Scientists nationally."

The Project Pathways II Award is one of only ten across the country forming the Diversity Program Consortium BUILD Initiative, an approximately \$200 million NIH investment that seeks to continue to develop new approaches to engage student researchers, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, and prepare them to



Recent Xavier University Graduates pursuing excellence showing where they've been accepted to pursue advanced studies. Xavier University continues to be a National Leader producing graduates in the high demand STEM Fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

thrive in the biomedical workforce. Xavier and fellow awardees will continue to train, mentor and encourage students from underrepresented groups to enter into and stay in biomedical research careers.

"The BUILD Funding from the NIH has provided us with a great opportunity. This grant has provided resources to implement initiatives, which are assisting us in doing what we do best, preparing Xavier students for successfully entering and completing graduate and professional programs," stated Dr. Maryam Foroozesh, Xavier's BUILD Program Lead Principal Investigator.

Xavier University: A Record of Excellence:

#1 in the nation in the number of African American graduates who go on to complete medical school

(AAMC data 2019).

Among the nation's top four colleges of pharmacy in graduating African Americans with Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm D) degrees. (2018)

#1 in the nation in awarding bachelor's degrees to African American students in the biological and biomedical sciences, the physical sciences, and physics. (2018)

#3 in the nation in the number of African American graduates who go on to earn a Ph.D. in science and engineering disciplines. (2018)

The Department of Physics is #1 in the nation for awarding African Americans Baccalaureate Degrees in physics and the physical sciences, according to the American Institute of Physics. (2018) Xavier is consistently ranked by the American Chemical Society as one of the top 25 universities in the nation.

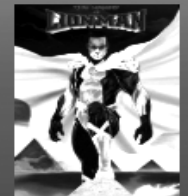
GrandMaster Eric O'Neal, Sr.

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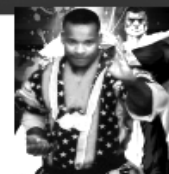
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NOLA Black Selfie Project

The Exhibit

Photos by Jafar Pierre

On August 24, 2019 the Ashe' Cultural Arts Center hosted an amazing event called "NOLA Black Selfie Project - The Exhibit". Hosted by Hollywood and featuring Sunni Patterson, Troy Sawyer, Jawara Simon and Jafar Pierre, with music by Chris Stylez. Many came out to support this historical and groundbreaking event telling the story of the people of New Orleans through photos.



Kathy and Keith's Birthday Celebration

Glenn Summers
Data News
Photographer

It was a great night as Kathy and Keith celebrated their Birthday's at Seal's Class Act Bar. Of course Data News Weekly was there for the festivities!!!




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Mental Health Awareness Matters



Cierra Mayes
Texas Metro News Writer

With so much going on in the world today, there are many real-world issues that are in need of our focus. One of these issues happens in our everyday lives: mental health. There is so much awareness that needs to be brought to mental health that goes unnoticed. Many of these issues began from trauma caused in one's life.

If we took the time to address these problems, we would be able to avoid many wrong doings of oth-

ers in our community and around the world. Everyone has that one friend they don't see eye to eye with sometime. For many people, I know that friend can be anxiety. Anxiety happens to everyone whether you realize it or not.

It can become a bigger issue when it's affecting your everyday life and you believe what you're feeling is true. Anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, eating disorders, PTSD, and more, are all things that can be controlled. Depression is another issue that is triggered from one's trauma. It is important that if you face one of the many issues, you seek help.

There are many who are willing to help those that are affected. Raven Fairley, a graduate student from the University of Missouri, with a focus in sports management, has created a platform that focuses on

the mental health issues of professional athletes. Even though she focuses on professional athletes, she is willing to help anyone in need.

"The Silent Injury" is an organization Ms. Fairley created to share with others the importance of mental health. Growing up in a sport household where her grandfather, father, and uncle had always been involved in sports, sports was something that she knew about and kept her focus towards. She says the reason she wants to focus on professional athletes is because they are the ones that have issues that go unnoticed. "Injury depression is real. I've experienced up close with a lot of my guy friends in football and basketball.

"When they get injured, they wonder if they're going to be back on the field, or while they're out, who's going to take their spot, and

'when I get healed, am I going to have my spot back?' For them, they're not only in physical pain, but mental pain as well," she said. Mental health awareness in athletes is definitely an issue that should be addressed.

High profile cases such as the O.J. Simpson trial and Aaron Hernandez case are prime examples. Many players have their mind focused on playing sports professionally, and if it doesn't happen some began to think negative thoughts about what they are doing and other options for their future. The environment you are raised in plays a big role in anyone's mental health.

For athletes, if you have your family depending on you to make it, it can hurt that player mentally if a pro career doesn't materialize, Ms. Fairley said. "Just seeing in the Black community that we don't

necessarily acknowledge mental health issues, we just kind of push them off to the side, really caught my interest.

We always hear "just pray about it" and just kind of brush it under the rug. Even though mental health issues are becoming a problem in the media, it has always been an issue." Besides athletes, our favorite celebrities, and those we aspire to be [like], go through rough times also.

More people are open to talk about their mental health now more than ever because many have created that space for one to talk about their problems. Raven Fairley's organization is set to launch at the end of 2019.

Cierra Mayes is an intern at I Messenger Media LLC. She is a graduate of North Texas University.

Commentary

The True Meaning of Black and Gold

A Game Plan for a Better New Orleans



Charles Dickerson
Data News Weekly Columnist

It is that time again, where people from around our great City will put on the black and gold, rooting for the Saints and representing for the City of New Orleans. While we have many things to be proud of, at the same time, we must ask ourselves what it takes for us to be a greater

City. Moreover, we must ask how we can reach this desirable goal for our City.

The quest for answers means we must ask the right questions. First, how do we become a winning team? Secondly, how do we reduce crime and violence in our city? Thirdly, how do we have a Public-School System where all our kids are getting a quality education? But most importantly, how do we create an economy where all who have the desire to work can make wages that are livable and that can elevate them into a middle-class standard of living?

As someone who has both played sports and been a coach, when thinking of this from a sports perspective, what we need is a game

plan. Obviously, this is something that many have thought of before and may have had good intentions, but the sad reality is the results have netted a City of a few haves and too many have-nots. This season it is important to change this by having a game plan that includes helping those who are the most in need by creating bridges to opportunities.

For example, the mindset that mediocrity is acceptable must be eliminated. The leadership as well as the citizens must develop a winning attitude as it relates to all things New Orleans. With this in mind, we must become a team with everybody working for the betterment of all our citizens.

This means, support that in-

cludes mentoring and outreach programs. Also, a commitment from civic and business leaders to provide resources and making the investments necessary to rebuilding our communities. Furthermore, we can no longer think of certain areas of town as not mattering or that some of our citizens do not deserve the best that this City has to offer in terms of opportunities.

For this to occur, the same thing that happens during football season must happen year-round; all people forget about the things that divide us and root for the Black and Gold. This is the spirit we must carry as the agenda of our City and its citizens.

In the past some have tried to throw the long "Hail Mary" passes

trying to get us into the end zone; but what it will take to be successful is balanced offensive plays calling with a mix of short passes and running plays, driving down the field to put points on the board. Conversely, this also means that we must have a good defense that can help rid our City of the vices that keep us from being our best.

Finally, for us to win, this will take all of us being on the field, playing our position, doing our part and making the right calls. If we do this, we can reach our goals as a City. And as we cheer on our Saints to victory, we as citizens can also win off the field by making New Orleans a better place for all to live if we stick to our game plan and realize we are all on the same team.



Covenant House: A Story of Success

Jakiya's Journey to Greatness

Sophie Trust

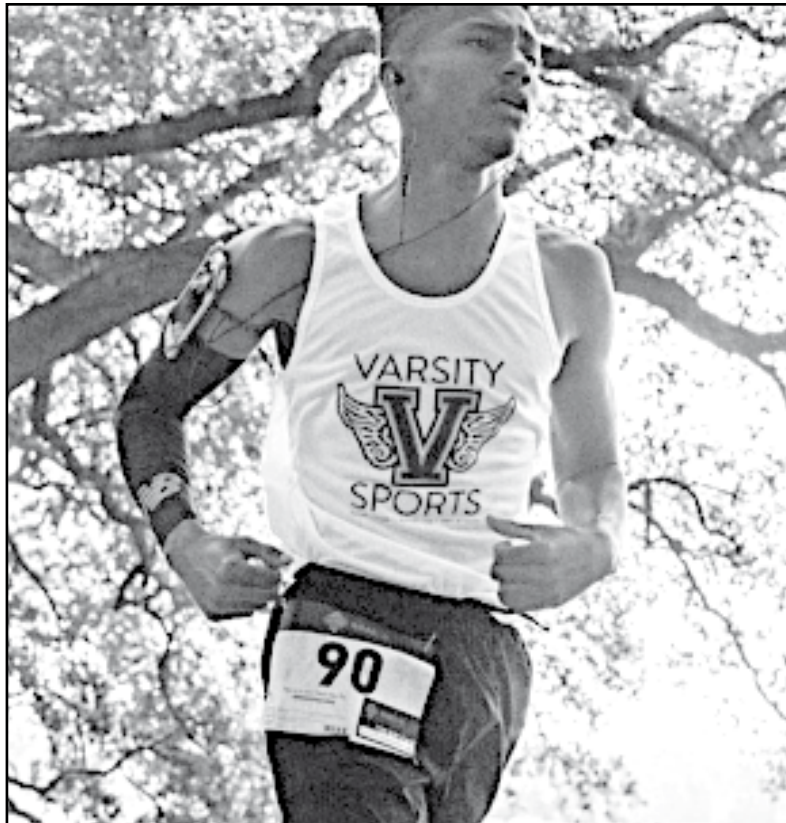
On Saturday, June 1, 2019, the Inaugural Arts & Hearts 5K was held in beautiful Audubon Park, presented by Varsity Sports. All proceeds were dedicated to Covenant House to provide unconditional love and holistic care to our community's most vulnerable youth. As part of our wellness program, volunteer coaches came to Covenant House twice weekly over the month leading up to the race, helping train dozens of our young residents. Participating youth were treated with athletic gear, generously provided by Varsity Sports and over twenty individual sponsors.

This special event would not have been possible if not for Event Chairs Susan Opelka & Julie Slick, as well as the generous support of local artists, businesses, and donors. Post-race food and concessions were donated by Louisiana Pizza Kitchen and Luzianne Iced Tea. Grace Pilates & Yoga offered post-race stretching and meditation. More support came from Louisiana Running & Walking Company, Higher Power, and Chuck George with New Orleans Running & Walking Systems. Handmade pottery medals and prizes were crafted and donated by local artisans.

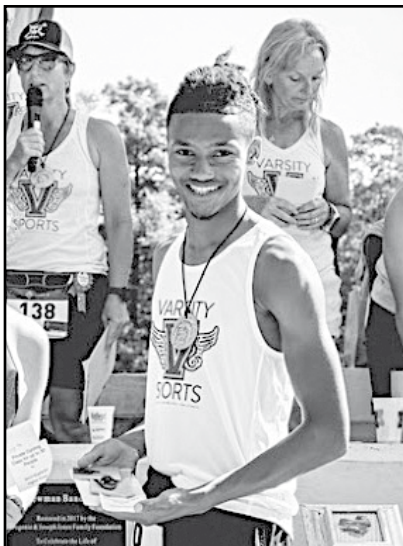
One of our young people, nineteen-year-old Jakiya, took home the second-place medal, running the 5K in nineteen minutes and five seconds! A graduate of West Jefferson High School, Jakiya was a star on the track team and won several awards in long-distance running. Even so, he was stunned by his second-place finish in the race. "I couldn't believe it," he said. "I felt great about myself."

After his mother passed away in 2015, Jakiya says he really took his running to the next level. "It made me feel motivated, kept me focused. Whenever I run, I feel free. I feel like I'm speaking out, expressing myself," he said.

Jakiya is going places, in more ways than just crossing a finish line. With the help of Covenant House Staff, he created a recruitment file with his running stats and applied to several colleges. He recently received a four-year track scholarship from Waldorf University in Forest City, Iowa. Although Jakiya doesn't know a soul in Iowa, the coach and track team at Waldorf have reached out to him by phone and email, and



Jakiya Racing to Excellence



Jakiya attributes his success to his grandparents and the strong, loving community he found at Covenant House. "I love my grandparents and still talk to them, but they just couldn't take care of me after my Mom died. Covenant House is the best place for me to be right now, but I couldn't do it without them," he said.

he can't wait to begin his new adventure in August.

Jakiya attributes his success to his grandparents and the strong, loving community he found at Covenant House. "I love my grandparents and still talk to them, but they just couldn't take care of me after my Mom died. Covenant House is the best place for me to be right now, but I couldn't do it without them," he said.



Jakiya Muller with Event Chairs Susan Opelka and Julie Slick

this next chapter of his life in Iowa, and we know that if our community continues to come together and support our kids with events like the Arts & Hearts 5K, we will be able to offer a brighter future for all of our young people.

Jakiya story appears on www.covenanthousenola.org/arts-and-hearts-jakiya/

You can visit their website at www.covenanthousenola.org to learn more about the work they do and how you can get involved.



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Welcome Back

Every Child...Every School...Every Day



Dr. Henderson Lewis, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

The arrival of students to campuses across our community of schools this month marks the end of summer break and the exciting start of the 2019-2020 Academic Year. I hope that this is a great year for all schools in NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS) and that we all make the most of new opportunities to better serve our students and families.

I would like to share a few highlights from the summer that we have accomplished in collaboration with our schools and partners to prepare for this school year:

- In August, NOLA-PS held a dynamic two-day Summer Training Collaborative at Ben-



jamin Franklin High School to encourage dialogue about the unique challenges public school students face, as well as how schools can best offer the necessary support to students for long-term success. The training brought together more than 400 counselors, school leaders, social workers, special education staff

and other educators with the goal of improving student support.

- This school year, NOLA-PS and Children's Hospital are partnering with over ten schools to launch a School-Based Telehealth Program that brings skilled pediatricians to students through video conferencing equipment. Students with mild

or common concerns can have a clinic visit without being picked up from school (think, Facetime for doctor's visits). For our families, this is a convenient solution that improves student attendance and reduces the barriers in accessing healthcare.

- In September, we are encouraging our community of

schools to celebrate being back in the classroom by inviting our students, teachers, and families to our Second Annual Back-to-School Fest at the Audubon Zoo on Saturday, September 14th from 11 am - 4 pm. The Zoo is providing free admission to the first 10,000 students and families who show up. I encourage everyone who is a part of our NOLA-PS Community to come out and celebrate our diverse system of schools while showing off your unique school pride.

As the 2019-2020 Academic Year begins, we at NOLA-PS are also working with our school leaders to learn from our successes and identify new and better ways to support our students' success. And I hope our students reach new heights and remain focused on achieving extraordinary things in the classroom and across our city. As the late Nobel-Prize Winning Author Toni Morrison once wrote: "You can do some rather extraordinary things if that's what you really believe."

Flavor of New Orleans

Pamela Pierre Brown; Owner of Gourmet Sacred Soul Kitchen Therapy & Catering

*Holistic Nutrition Health Advocate/Personal Chef/
Operations Manager of River House Experience*

Data News Staff Edited Report

Pamela Pierre Brown, a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, is a Certified Holistic Health Advocate accredited through the State of New York and Institute of Integrative Nutrition. She is also owner of Gourmet Sacred Soul Kitchen Therapy & Catering dedicated to educating and guiding clients to make behavioral changes resulting in improved nutrition, dietary habits, physical ability and overall greater health and wellness. Pamela's focus is on holistic lifestyle adjustments and nutrition. Her passion for knowledge and adventure has led her to unimaginable global experiences



Pamela Pierre Brown, Owner of Gourmet Sacred Soul Kitchen Therapy and Catering



where she explores a myriad of cultures seeking herbs, spices, and recipes and an understanding of their health benefits. After 10 years of witnessing the healing power of food, Gourmet Sacred Soul Kitchen Therapy creates healthy New Orleans cuisine that honors its rich heritage and traditions.



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NAACP Observes 400th Anniversary of Slave Trade in Journey from Jamestown to Jamestown



A cleansing Ceremony at Buckroe Beach in Hampton, Va., on Aug. 24th during a Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the First Enslaved Africans arriving in Virginia. (Evelyn Hockstein/For The Washington Post)

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire
Correspondent

On Sunday, August 18th, the NAACP began a journey to honor African ancestors.

Members of the storied civil rights organization and numerous guests boarded a bus from Washington, D.C.

Their initial destination was Jamestown, Virginia's Colonial National Park, where they held a prayer vigil and candle lighting ceremony to mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans.

The two-week-long observance included a Monday, August 19, visit to the National Museum of African American History and Culture which was followed by a trip to Ghana, West Africa, and onto Jamestown – thus the organization's theme: "Jamestown to Jamestown."

"This is to honor the memory of all those stolen from Africa over 400 years ago," NAACP President Derrick Johnson said.

"We honor the strength and resilience of our ancestors," Karen Boykin-Towns, vice chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors, wrote on Twitter.

"We must use the experience to guide our journey forward. Let's become renewed in our fight for a democracy that is equal and just," Boykin-Towns said.

During the trip, the NAACP will take part in an ancestral healing ceremony at an ocean, and members will attend a business and development summit.

They will also participate in an

African Ancestry reveal at the Door of No Return.

Members will get to experience the Assin Manso Last Bath Slave River, where enslaved Africans had their last bath before being shipped to the western world never to return.

Highlights of the journey include a welcome by local chiefs, politicians, community leaders and the traditional council of Jamestown, Accra.

Members will also receive a tour of the Cape Coast Castle slave dungeons, and the West African Heritage Museum in Ghana.

They will also visit the W.E.B. DuBois Center and other vital museums and monuments in the West African nation.

Members are also invited to visit Kumasi, the home of the great

Ashanti Kingdom. Participants will be able to attend the Akwasidae Festival at Manhiya Palace, the seat of the Asantehene – King of the Ashanti people.

Akwasidae is a festival held every 42 days to honor personal and community ancestors.

NNPA officials called this an opportunity to experience traditional Ghanaian culture in all its splendor, color, grace, strength, and vibrancy.

"Jamestown to Jamestown represents one of the most powerful moments in the history of the Black Experience," Johnson said.

"We are now able to actualize the healing and collective unity, so many generations have worked to achieve in ways which bring power to our communities in America, Africa and throughout our Diaspora," he said.

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