

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

# Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"



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**Nekitha Johnson**

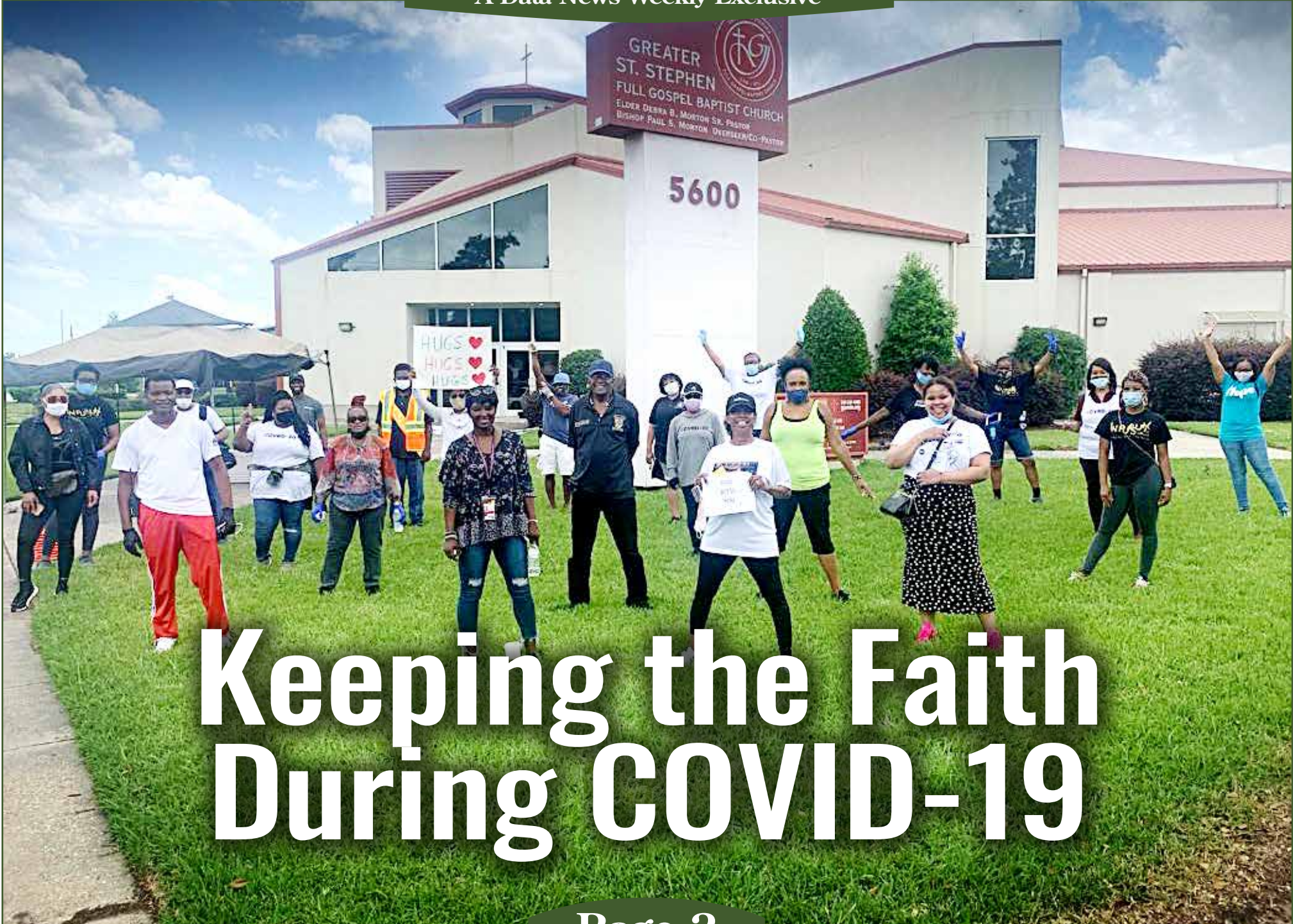
**Social Distance Birthday Celebration**

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May 16 - May 22, 2020 55th Year Volume 3 [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com)

A Data News Weekly Exclusive



GREATER ST. STEPHEN FULL GOSPEL BAPTIST CHURCH  
ELDER DEBRA B. MORTON SR. PASTOR  
BISHOP PAUL S. MORTON OVERSEER/CO-PASTOR

5600

# Keeping the Faith During COVID-19

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**We Don't Pause, We PIVOT!**

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**13-Year-Old Recalls Coronavirus Awakening**



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# Keeping the Faith During COVID-19



Bishop Darryl Brister stands at the alter after preaching to an empty sanctuary on Sunday, May 3rd. The sermon was broadcasted live on numerous social media platforms which allowed congregants to hear the message from home.

**Lauren Jones**  
Data News Weekly Contributor

Could watching your faith leader over a livestream, while sitting at your desk or couch, really create the same feeling as praying together with your friends and family in your church’s sanctuary? In the world’s

current pandemic, churches are also learning to adjust their operations to satisfy new social distancing requirements. While many organizations adjust to staying connected, New Orleans-based churchgoers and leaders said they are keeping open-minded about having church in a digital age.

“Positivity is key,” said Bishop Darryl S. Brister, the Senior Pastor of the Beacon Light International Baptist Cathedral in Gentilly. “We’re not able to embrace people the way we used to, but we can engage [congregants] by meeting them right where they are,” Brister said. “We’re adjusting to our new normal by following the trends of the world,” Brister added.

**On the Cover:** Pastor Debra Morton (center) with members of Greater St. Stephen Congregation featured in socially distanced group photo.

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### DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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The Beacon Light International Baptist Cathedral parking lot, located on the corner of St. Anthony Street and Mirabeau Avenue, is packed with cars on any given Sunday. But on Sunday, May 3rd, it was completely unoccupied due to social distancing efforts and the closure of the cathedral to the public.



Connie Holmes is a 20-year member of Beacon Light and like most churchgoers is adapting to online services.



Larry Jones is the Membership Pastor at Beacon Light and is working to keep members connected over social media platforms.

To comply with social distancing measures encouraged by Mayor LaToya Cantrell, Brister said that Beacon Light's staff are producing performances and sermons to be broadcast on platforms like Facebook and YouTube.

Physical closeness, once a source of spiritual solidarity, now comes with a high risk of spreading infection. And older congregants, the heartbeat of the American church, are more at risk for serious complications and death from COVID-19, Brister noted. For this reason, Beacon Light on Mirabeau Avenue, like many other churches in the city, have temporarily shut their doors to the public since March 2020.

"It is an act of faith to adhere to social distancing and public health guidance," Brister said of the importance of churches to preserve the lives of their community members, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

The challenges residents are facing because of the coronavirus means more people than ever are turning towards their faith. Lo-

cal ministers said that they have had strong attendance for their streamed sermons, prayers, and worship services with consistency that shows their members they are not alone during these uncertain times.

"Our social platforms have given us the ability to touch the whole world," said Larry Jones, the Membership Pastor at Beacon Light, on the success of online streaming for churches. "We're able to see almost 10 times the amount [of congregants] we were seeing in our church services...we're now serving over 10,000 people on any given Sunday," Jones said.

Churchgoers said the pandemic has taught them how to practice their faith remotely.

"God is everywhere," said Connie Holmes, a 20-year attendee of Beacon Light. "When we're all in one room, it's easier to feel like we're with [God]. But I think we must erase the idea that we all have to physically be in one place to experience His presence," Holmes said.



Greater St. Stephen Pastor Debra Morton and New Orleans City Council District E Member Cyndi Nguyen.

## Greater St. Stephen Partners with Councilwoman Cyndi Nguyen, Revolution Foods and World Central Kitchen for Meal Distribution for New Orleans Communities

### Data News Weekly Edited Report

In the spirit of serving others during the COVID-19 Pastor Debra B. Morton and Greater St. Stephen Ministries recently partnered with Councilwoman Cyndi Nguyen, Revolution Foods, and World Central Kitchen have been hosting a FREE Meal Giveaway at Greater St. Stephen Full Gospel Baptist Church.

This event was created to posi-

tively impact families in the east and surrounding New Orleans communities during a time of uncertainty and financial strain. Pastor Debra B. Morton said, "We are extremely thankful for Councilwoman Cyndi Nguyen and the heart she has for the community. Greater St. Stephen Ministries and I are ecstatic to partner with Councilwoman Nguyen, Revolution Foods and World Central Kitchen to supply food for

1000+ people! Together, we will make it through this!" For more than 70 years, Greater St. Stephen has been a catalyst for change and spiritual advancement not only in New Orleans, LA but also in the world. Over the decades, Greater St. Stephen under its visionaries, Bishop Paul S. Morton, Sr. and Dr. Debra B. Morton, has been known as one of the largest Pentecostal Congregation in Louisiana.

## Mayor LaToya Cantrell on the Fight Against COVID-19

### An Exclusive Message to the Readers of Data News Weekly

Forward together is how we started! And these are truly important and pivotal times for our city, state, nation and world in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is something that's changing all of our lives, where there is a new normal impacting us all. For us to win the fight against this invisible enemy that is claiming the lives of so many of our people, we the citizens of New Orleans must step up to the challenge. We must do our due diligence in protecting our most vulnerable and in assisting our medical community so that they can remain as vital and as viable as possible.

During this crisis, New Orleans has been hit extremely hard, but we are a resilient people who for over 300 years have overcome unfathomable obstacles and we have always done this by working together. This time is no different, because all of our lives depend on it.

In the fight against COVID-19, we have made great strides and we are pleased to report that we can see a flattening of the curve because so many of our citizens are doing their part abiding by our stay-at-home order, staying informed and taking the precautions necessary to remain safe. For that, I would like to thank all of you, but this is not the time to think we are out in the clear.

We have to remain vigilant in this fight against COVID-19 if we are to survive this pandemic. No matter your race, income, zip code or which ward you are from, we all have skin in the game and must do our part. New Orleans is an amazing city whose welcoming spirit is full of vibrancy, charm and unmistakable uniqueness. We look forward to sharing the warmth of our summers, the taste of our cuisine, the sights of our art and the excitement of our music with the world once again. We look forward to brighter days and as we forge ahead, with all of your help, we will get there soon!



**New Orleans Re-Opening Phase 1 begins on May 16, 2020 but the fight against COVID-19 is far from over. We at Data News Weekly encourage all to continue to stay safe.**



Stay-At- Home NOLA

# Nekitha Johnson

## *Social Distance Birthday Celebration*

**Fleur De Lis**  
Data News Weekly Columnist

In a world where COVID-19 is creating a new normal affecting the lives of us all, but in the City of New Orleans people are finding ways to continue celebrating special times together while staying apart. Recently, Nekitha Johnson, owner of Crystal Magnolia Country Club who normally celebrates her birthday throughout the entire month of May. But in 2020, her celebration was a much quieter affair where she held a Luau themed party. Family and friends came to show love by honking their horns and received leis curbside. Immediate family and quarantined friends stayed for a private patio "Luau Themed" Celebration while social distancing.



Nekitha Johnson (L) owner of Crystal Magnolia Country Club recently celebrated her 54th birthday with a Luau themed event while practicing "Safety and Social Distancing".

Data Zone,  
Continued on page 5.



## AUDUBON NATURE INSTITUTE EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

### DEANA APPLEBERRY EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT AND FIRST RESPONDER SUPERVISOR

As executive assistant and first responder supervisor, Deana Appleberry has been keeping Audubon running smoothly for nearly 30 years. Deana's love for people and animals attracted her to the organization, and her favorite thing about being part of the Audubon family is spreading joy in our community by volunteering for our many diverse events. In her time outside Audubon, Deana is an ordained minister and has even officiated the weddings of other Audubon staff members!

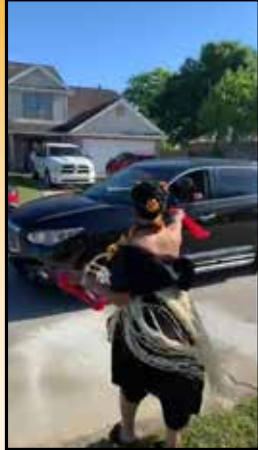
*Celebrating the Wonders of Nature*

Be a part of the Audubon Team: [AudubonNatureInstitute.org/Careers](https://AudubonNatureInstitute.org/Careers)





Data Zone, Continued from page 4.



## If I could do one thing, I'd have a daycare closer to work.

If you could do one thing for your community, what would it be? More daycare centers? More funding for Head Start? Completing the 2020 Census is a safe and easy way to inform how billions of dollars in funding flow into your community for hundreds of services. **Respond online, by phone, or by mail.**

Complete the census at:  
**2020CENSUS.GOV**

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**2020**



# Urban League of Louisiana During COVID-19 We Don't Pause, We PIVOT!

## Urban League of Louisiana

The Urban League of Louisiana has diligently and continuously asked the question "What's the MOST we can do?" as the pandemic continues to sweep through every aspect of our lives. As we have worked to quickly pivot and meet people where they are in the midst of these unprecedented events, we wanted to share with you how the Urban League of Louisiana has taken action since the shutdown of the state.

### Advocacy and Social Justice

ULLA's 2020 Census Campaign strategy quickly adjusted canvassing and face-to-face events, pivoting to virtual efforts. Beginning with a Digital Census Day activation, ULLA worked with over 100 partners in New Orleans and Baton Rouge by providing a digital toolkit promoting awareness through social media, emails, newsletters, phone calls, and text messaging. In addition, ULLA reached over 25,000 families at each of the New Orleans Citywide Feeding Program locations on Census Day, provid-



Judy Reese Morse President and CEO Urban League of Louisiana

ing flyers about how and why to be counted. If you have not been counted yet, please visit [www.my-2020census.gov](http://www.my-2020census.gov).

In addition, the Urban League of Louisiana released Reform, Recover, Re-Open: Essential Strategies for an Equitable COVID-19 Response

in Louisiana to help guide efforts to increase the health and safety of the most vulnerable citizens and workers as leaders contemplate re-opening local economies. To read the complete plan, visit <https://urbanleaguela.org/2020/04/22/urban-league-releases-reform-recover-reopen/>

### COVID-19 Updates Website

On Thursday, March 12 we created our "one-stop resource site" that includes a wealth of information and resources for the people that we serve and the general public. You may access it via this link: [www.urbanleaguela.org/covid-19-updates](http://www.urbanleaguela.org/covid-19-updates)

### Workforce and Economic Development

ULLA's Office of Workforce Development is hosting Virtual Job Fairs to connect job seekers to current job openings in positions in essential industries including retail (pharmacies/grocers), food service (restaurants), transportation, healthcare, hospitality (food service) and construction. Visit [www.urbanleaguela.org/virtual-job/](http://www.urbanleaguela.org/virtual-job/) to

sign up for the next virtual job fair.

ULLA's Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation is providing its core services and scheduled trainings through online platforms. The CEI is hosting regular webinars directly related to the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses. These online sessions are accessible to the Center's existing clients and other small business owners across Louisiana. For more information, visit [www.urbanleaguela.org](http://www.urbanleaguela.org) and click on the Events tab at the top.

### Education & Youth Development

ULLA's Center for Education & Youth Development is providing a wealth of resources to parents and students via our website and through email and person-to-person telephone updates from the Parent Information Center. Visit [www.urbanleaguela.org/covid-19-updates/](http://www.urbanleaguela.org/covid-19-updates/) to view how our Parent Information Center has pivoted.

To those that have experienced this virus first-hand, know that our hearts and prayers are with you. Please visit our website and reach out to us if you are in need of our help.

## Commentary

# Eviction Moratoriums Will Keep Up the Pressure, but We Still Need Long-Term Rental Assistance



Andeanecia Morris  
Executive Director,  
HousingNOLA

In the new normal, the need for safe, decent affordable housing has never been clearer. Until a vaccine is developed for COVID-19, staying safer at home will be one of the best things we can do for the health of our families and our communities. But for far too many families, a safe and stable place to call home is out of reach. In the

face of the economic crisis, far too many families are in danger of losing the roof over their heads.

Housing insecurity was a problem before the novel coronavirus made its way to New Orleans. On March 1, 2020 estimates tell us that over 80,000 households were housing cost-burdened—paying more than they could afford in rent, mortgage and/or utilities. Now, the problem is compounding at an alarming rate as unemployment soars, and will continue to do so – especially here in New Orleans where the industries we rely on like hospitality and tourism are projected to take many, many months to bounce back. There are people who urgently need help and we are leaving them in the breach.

The first step in treating this crisis is similar to basic first aid for a serious injury or wound: apply pressure. Early on, eviction and foreclosure moratoriums were enacted to staunch the flow. Like the application of pressure, this is short-term measure that must be followed up with the interventions necessary to stabilize households across the city. Last week, the New Orleans City Council unanimously passed a resolution to urge the courts to halt evictions until August. Advocates also directly lobbied the courts to also refuse to hear evictions until August. If heeded by the courts, this would keep up the pressure, but that is not enough.

Despite the moratoriums, landlords have been evicting tenants for non-payment of rent. For those

renters, whose landlords are abiding by the moratoriums, they are facing an impossible situation. If they were cost-burdened before the Stay at Home orders and have experienced any loss of income, how can they hope to cover, two or seven months of rent when the moratorium is eventually lifted. That is why we need the city and state leaders to allocate funds from all available sources, including the CARES Act Supplemental Community Development Block Grants and Emergency Services Grants, for immediate rental assistance so landlords can continue to provide housing for renters.

We are all putting our trust in city and state leaders. The choices they make now to help us weather the outbreak of the coronavirus

can also set a better course for the future of our communities. Now is the time for us to unite across our differences and make policy choices that help every-day people in pursuit of a safe and thriving New Orleans, Louisiana.

Unfortunately, just like testing and PPE, leadership is a vital resource we need to get through this crisis – and just like those other resources, leadership has been way too slow to show up. There are resources available (millions in restricted and/or unobligated funding, vacant homes, and untapped resources like vouchers) that need to be mobilized right now. Now is the time to deploy the resources we have on hand to meet the very real, very urgent needs of families.

# 13-Year-Old Paris Brown Recalls Her Coronavirus Awakening

**Paris Brown**  
Special to the NNPA  
Newswire

My name is Paris Brown. My parents are NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent, Stacy Brown, and the awesome Shenay Brown.

I am 13-years old and am privileged to be a member of the National Junior Honor Society. But more importantly, I am privileged to have such a beautiful family.

My oldest sister, Rikki, lives in Las Vegas with her husband Marc, and my niece, Nina. I have a brother, Jordan, who lives in Maryland, and my two sisters who live at home with me, Talia and Olivia.

The glue that holds everything together is my parents.

But the coronavirus nearly ruptured us in a way that would have been indescribably devastating.

Four months ago, I barely knew what the coronavirus was, and I had no clue it would change everything so drastically.

At the end of December and the beginning of January, all I heard about the virus was memes and people joking around about washing your hands. I didn't realize just how serious it was.

And even when more and more reports of deaths from the virus came piling up, I still didn't take it seriously enough. Then one day, mom said she wasn't feeling good, and that was the start of it all.

In my head, I thought that's just



13-year old Paris Brown (at left, pictured with her mother, Shenay) is the daughter of NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent, Stacy and Shenay Brown. She's also a member of the National Junior Honor Society.

mom being mom. She sometimes doesn't feel well.

Then when dad got sick, mom stayed in her room, and dad stayed in the basement. I, of course, thought this was unnecessary.

But then they had to rush mom to the hospital because she couldn't breathe.

Then a switch flipped in my head: "This is real, and I need to be taking it seriously."

At first, I didn't know what to do, so I tried to stay away, but that just

made me feel guilty.

So, I did the best I could to help them get better. I was okay and getting used to our "system," but I knew deep down, I was terrified.

I didn't have time to be scared because I had a ton of schoolwork to do (and I still do now), and I had to help take care of them.

You never realize how hard it is to live without the people you love until they're gone. So, when people ask me if I'm bored, I tell them I'm not. All of the school-

work and cleaning and cooking have kept me distracted in a good way, so I don't freak out and get overwhelmed.

This was definitely an experience I'll never forget because I haven't been able to hug my parents or speak more than a couple of words to them face-to-face.

But it's almost over — they get to come out of quarantine next week. And hopefully, with all of me and my sisters' excitement, they'll feel better than ever.

## DATA CLASSIFIED

Call 504-821-7421 to  
place your classified ad.

### Job Opportunity

### Freelance Writers Wanted

Data News Weekly, "The People's Paper," is looking for freelance writers to join our team print and digital team. We want to hear from you if you are a working journalist, or an aspiring journalist who has 2 years or more of newspaper or PR writing experience. We need writers who can cover New Orleans news stories, ranging from local high school sports, community events, City Hall and entertainment. Experience in print is necessary, experience in digital and social media are encouraged.

Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

If you are interested, please email your resume and 3 writing samples to: [terrybjones@bellsouth.net](mailto:terrybjones@bellsouth.net) and [datanewseditor@bellsouth.net](mailto:datanewseditor@bellsouth.net).

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# His first football season, Isaiah told us, ‘Wear a jersey with my name on it. I want everyone to know you’re here for me.’

Darnell and Denna, adopted 16-year-old Isaiah



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