

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

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July 31 - August 6, 2021 56th Year Volume 14 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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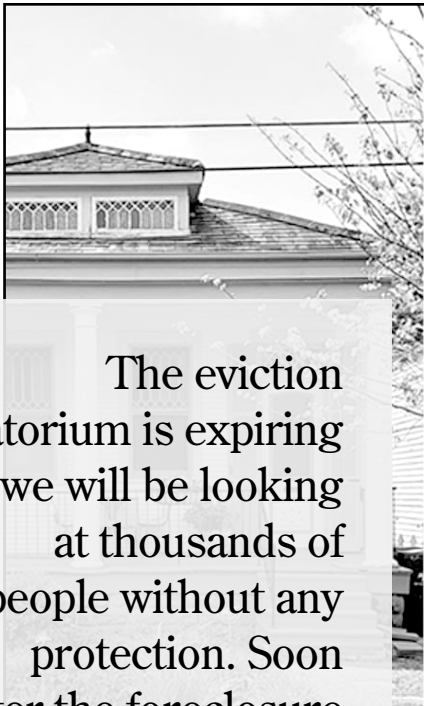
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Housing...

Building a Solid Foundation for a Better New Orleans



The eviction moratorium is expiring and we will be looking at thousands of people without any protection. Soon after the foreclosure moratorium for federally backed loans will end without any real change to our housing systems.



Andreanecia Morris, Executive Director of HousingNOLA, is a nationally recognized expert on housing. In her work, she continues to be an advocate in the fight against housing insecurity.

By Andreanecia Morris
Executive Director, HousingNOLA

Housing Insecurity Threatens the Future of New Orleans

New Orleans has faced various struggles over its 300-year history, and most revolve around its treatment of African Americans. Before Katrina, New Orleans had a problem with Affordable Housing, but, like most urban cities, it focused on other social issues such as crime, education, and healthcare, without recognizing that the lack of housing security is the root cause of most of those issues. Last year, as the COVID-19 Pandemic cast a spotlight on the need for Affordable Housing in New Orleans, we saw state

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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and city leaders wildly fail to keep their commitment to provide Affordable Housing. We are all told to “Shelter at Home” because that was our best option before the COVID-19 vaccines became available. Last year, HousingNOLA found that the “the system was broken before, and now it’s even worse because our leaders are failing us and spectacularly mismanaging the resources they have.” We hoped, in vain, that our warning would be heeded, and leaders would seize the chance to finally commit to ending housing insecurity as it would only serve to worsen the spread of COVID-19.

Renters

It is evident that housing affordability is increasingly out of reach for people, especially for those working minimum wage jobs. Based on the most recent reports, people need to make approximately \$20 per hour to rent, however the minimum wage in Louisiana is \$7.25. We know that housing stability has demonstrable economic impacts. Renters could be contributing even more if it were not for skyrocketing rents and stagnant wages. When the rent is too high, little is left over for basics like food, transportation, health care, and education.

For the past 15 months, rental assistance has been as much a health solution as a housing one. Keeping families in their homes and off the street or from doubling or tripling-up with relatives is a preventative health measure that will keep not just the renter’s family safe but also help minimize the spread of the virus—particularly for vulnerable populations that can’t get vaccinated (small children, immunocompromised individuals, etc.). COVID Relief Funding issued in 2020 to the State of Louisiana should have been used to stabilize renters and now, that there are millions of dollars in the hands of local and state officials,

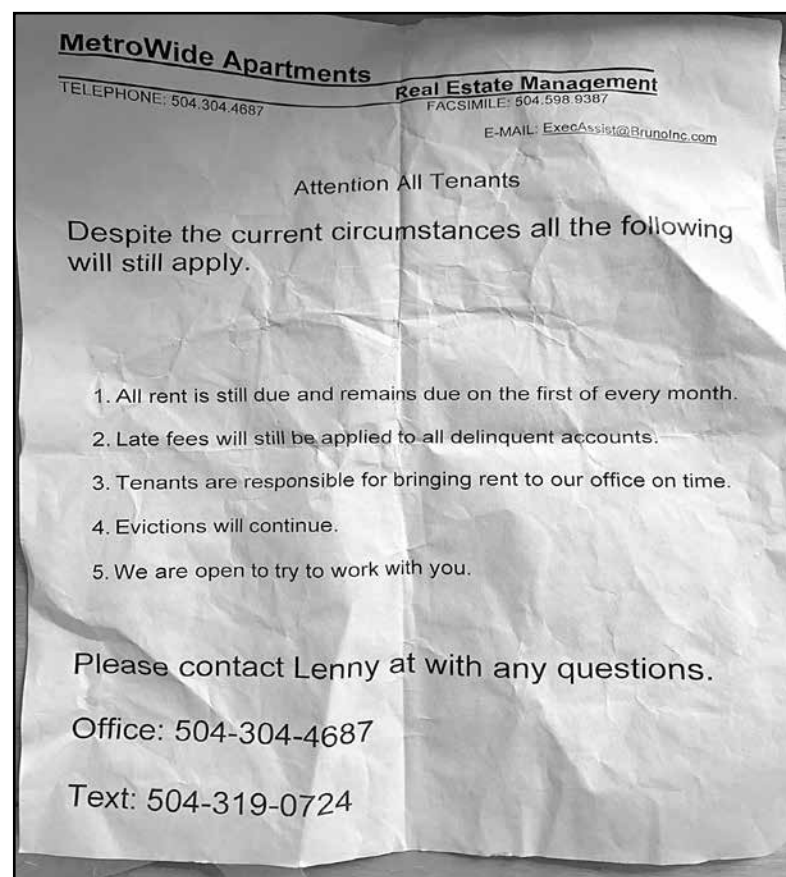


New Orleans, is a city that continues to have a problem with homelessness. Ending the moratorium on rent, may possibly make this problem much worse.

expressly for rental assistance, they struggle to get the funds into the hands of landlords to stave off the onslaught of evictions.

Homeownership

Those who own their homes are not exempt from the impacts of the city’s Affordable Housing Crisis. Homeowners have also been ignored by inadequate support from federal, state, and local COVID relief efforts. This is ironic as hundreds of homeowners, who rebuilt their houses after Katrina, are now being sued by the State of Louisiana for failing to run the gauntlet of the Road Home Program. Despite its successes, the Road Home exemplifies how well-intentioned policies can fail the most vulnerable by failing to account for systemic biases. Almost 16 years after Katrina’s floodwaters retreated, the failed program design and two separate contractors now imperils hundreds of homeowners. For this reason, the precious funds allocated in the American Rescue Plan Act must be managed better than other relief dollars and we need leaders to heed the recommendations from advocates and community members to ensure and effective an



The problem of housing insecurity is more than simply and affordability issue, but one that is a humanitarian crisis as well. In the sense, that many of the citizens of New Orleans, of no fault of their own may find themselves without one of the basics of life... shelter. And the question becomes for the city, how does it build a solid foundation for itself? Moreover, how does a post- COVID-19 recover look like. These are questions one must ask of those who have offered themselves up for elected office.

equitable program design and administration. We have seen some of the same issues and actors involved in the recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina and want to ensure the disaster profiteering does not usurp effective management and investment of the American Rescue Plan dollars in the communities that need the most help and support.

Homelessness

Without a guarantee to house all and the funds necessary to ensure that renters and homeowners can remain housed, we will be facing a dramatic increase in the number of homeless people. Indeed, many landlords have been able to circumvent the moratorium and evict tenants which has caused dramatic overcrowding and a visible increase in the homeless encampments across the city.

The City of New Orleans is a study of contradictions. It’s a party city but people are ready and willing to fight for and about how much to love it. Once, it was a central point of the transatlantic slave trade and now it’s a majority African American city with the distinction of being the “Soul of America.” Rising out of the swamps, New Orleans built levees so it could grow, and those same levees amplified Hurricane Katrina’s impact. The city’s problems were on display for the world to see, but the people didn’t yield, they fought their way back. That resilience inspired the world...but leaders used “the myth of New Orleans’s exceptionalism” to gloss over their own failures. The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina to neighborhoods in New Orleans is still seen today throughout the city by way of blighted and abandoned properties and the high levels of poverty – particularly in majority African American parts of the city. But the impact of Katrina also inspired resident leaders who rose up to advocate and fight for their rights to a dignified quality of life that includes safe, healthy, and Affordable Housing for all.

Put Housing First

With the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, the Black Lives Matter Movement took center stage across the world. But despite the willingness to examine systemic racism in policing, we still ignore our most basic system: housing. We can no longer ignore the failures of our leaders. Guaranteeing housing for all as the Delta Variant surges is not an impossibility—it is a moral imperative and key to our recovery. Nothing else is acceptable. We can accomplish the seemingly impossible here and there is no excuse to not #PutHousingFirst.

NEA Names Donald Harrison, Jr. 2022 Jazz Masters along with Hart, Clarke, and Wilson

Nate Chinen
NPR (National Public Radio)

There's a moment on "Oceans of Time," from a 2016 album by The Cookers, when Alto Saxophonist Donald Harrison, Jr. takes a solo full of swerving self-assurance. Swinging mightily behind him is the composer of the tune, Master Drummer Billy Hart.

As of today, both Hart and Harrison can be identified not only as members of The Cookers but also by a prestigious title: They are both 2022 NEA Jazz Masters, along with the magnetic Singer-Songwriter Cassandra Wilson and Virtuoso Bassist Stanley Clarke.

According to an announcement this morning by the National Endowment for the Arts, these four new inductees will be celebrated with a concert and ceremony March 31, 2022, at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco. They will each also receive a \$25,000 award, along with what is considered the highest honor reserved for a living jazz artist in the U.S.

"The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of honoring exceptional individuals in jazz with the NEA Jazz Masters class of 2022," Ann Eilers, Acting Chairman for the National Endowment of the Arts, says in a statement. "Jazz continues to play a significant role in American Culture thanks to the dedication and artistry of individuals such as these and we look forward to working with SFJAZZ on a concert that will share their music and stories with a wide audience next spring."

Harrison, 61, is this year's recipient of the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy — an award that often goes

to a writer or producer rather than a musician. His qualifications are rooted in a lifelong commitment to his native New Orleans, where he established the Congo Square Nation Afro-New Orleans Cultural Group and serves as Artistic Director of Tipitina's Foundation Internship Program. Harrison is also an Alto Saxophonist and Bandleader of high distinction, and progenitor of a hybrid genre he calls "nouveau swing," which combines elements from across the African Diaspora. (Speaking with me in 2019, he explained how this idea applies to his instrumental cover of "Old Town Road," the Lil Nas X smash.)

Harrison is the son of the late New Orleans Folklorist Donald Harrison, Sr., who was known for his involvement in local Mardi Gras traditions. Like his father, Harrison devoted himself to the Crescent City's Multifaceted Cultural Heritage, founding the Congo Square Nation Afro-New Orleans Cultural Group to honor the place that Blacks, both free and enslaved, could sing and dance in public. "The incredible part to me is, even though the players today don't have a consciousness of that, some of those things are still at the root of what we call jazz music," Harrison noted in a 2021 Tennessean Story.

As a Saxophonist, Donald Harrison, Jr.—recipient of the 2022 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy—is known for his hard-swinging improvisational style and the creation of "Nouveau Swing," a blend of jazz with R&B, hip-hop, rock, and soul. And his dedication to preserving the music and culture of New Orleans has been crucial to assuring its important legacy survive.

Donald Harrison, Jr. is this year's recipient of the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy — an award that often goes to a writer or producer rather than a musician. He is the son of the late New Orleans Folklorist Donald Harrison, Sr., who was known for his involvement in local Mardi Gras traditions. Like his father, Harrison devoted himself to the Crescent City's Multifaceted Cultural Heritage, founding the Congo Square Nation Afro-New Orleans Cultural Group to honor the place that Blacks, both free and enslaved, could sing and dance in public. "The incredible part to me is, even though the players today don't have a consciousness of that, some of those things are still at the root of what we call jazz music."



Earth War

New Orleans Hip-Hop Artists in Los Angeles



Diva Dionne Character
Female Empowerment
Columnist

When Hip-Hop Rappers J. Character and 7th Ward Shorty decided to collaborate on the song Earth War, neither of them had an idea that a masterpiece created by the two would bring worlds together through music and culture, which is exactly what happened one week-end in Los Angeles, CA.

J. Character who currently resides in Los Angeles, CA studied music at an early age, playing trumpet and upright bass, while attending elementary school. He is a child prodigy who grew up in a world of entertainment. A graduate of Norwich University Military Academy, he graduated Magna Cum Laude in International Studies/Chinese, lived abroad in Chengdu, Shanghai and Tianjin, which is where he decided to intertwine Chinese lyrics with English, setting himself apart from most rappers, bringing in the New Orleans flavor from his childhood, later deciding not to join the Army but pursue a career in music.

Rapper, 7th Ward Shorty, who recently received recognition from the Mayor of New Orleans in a press conference for his service and humanitarian efforts in the community is boldly making noise in the industry. He has collaborated with many artists like The Game, Big Freedia, Lil Jon and the East Side Boys, Gun Play and a host of other artists around the country. On the rise with his music career, 7th Ward Shorty has proven to be the "King of New Orleans" with his non-stop approach to music after serving time, proving you can't hold back the talent of a man destined to change the game when it comes to raw talent. With over 35k worldwide streams on all platforms, his new album, "Big Shorty," continues to prove that his ability as a stand-alone artist who can join forces with other artists has been recognized as a true talent.

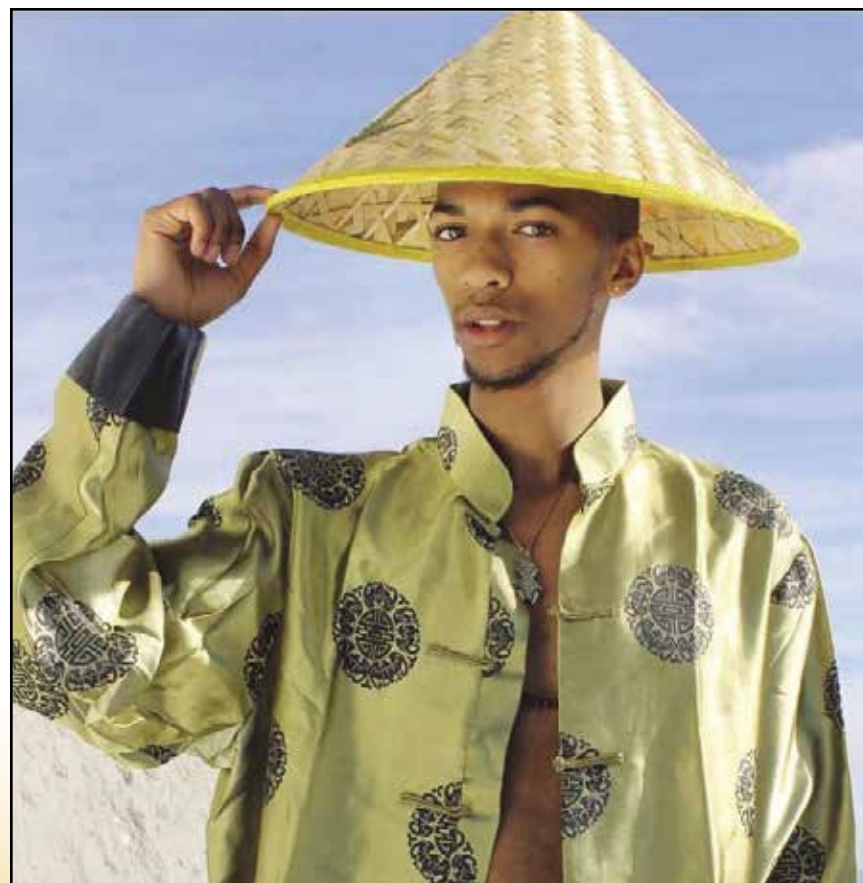


J. Character and 7th Ward Shorty in Hollywood, CA.

The birth of two musical talents from one city who created a powerful reenactment video of China and the U.S., at war to instead unite them through music and spark conversation has definitely put the two on another level as it obvious that New Orleans is not only the birthplace of Jazz, but a community of artists who can immerse themselves with no boundaries when it comes to true talent.

Checkout Earth War featuring 7th Ward Shorty by J. Character on YouTube.

Dionne Character can be reached at www.characterhollywood.com.



J. Character, Chinese / English Rapper.

New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell Announce Indoor Mask Advisory in Response to Rise in Delta Variant COVID-19 Cases

Eric Connerly
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Last week, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell announced an indoor mask advisory as cases of the Delta Variant of COVID-19 continue to rise.

She, along with other City and State officials are strongly recommending anyone, vaccinated or not, to wear a mask indoors.

In a press conference, where she made the announcement Cantrell said wearing a mask is the most "immediate and tangible" way to slow the spread.

Adding, "Don't let us go back," Cantrell remarked. "The city cannot afford for that to happen."

In a stunning shift, the number of average daily cases in New Orleans has jumped from 11 to 99 in a two-week period. A nine-fold increase,



New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell announced an indoor mask advisory as cases of the Delta Variant of COVID-19 continue to rise. She, along with other City and State officials are strongly recommending anyone, vaccinated or not, to wear a mask indoors.

according to the City's spokesperson Beau Tidwell.

Dr. Jennifer Avegno, who heads the New Orleans Health

Department says the increase of cases is occurring to unvaccinated people, the elderly and those with health risks.

Although a crisis, the City of New Orleans continues to lead the state in persons receiving the vaccination.

According to the latest data, 69% of adults in New Orleans have gotten the first dose of the vaccine. Tidwell says 63.7% are fully vaccinated. Almost 51% of the total population is fully vaccinated, he said.

The rise in cases across can equal dire consequences according to Dr. Joseph Cantor of the Louisiana Department of Health stated recently on CNN, that the state has lost six months of progress in two weeks in the fight against COVID-19.

With the rapid spread of the Delta Variant, it could possibly put fall events in jeopardy. Several festivals are scheduled this fall, including JazzFest, in addition to the beginning of football season and school re-openings.

The spread of the Delta Variant can possibly alter these plans. What steps the City will take to stop the rise in numbers remains to be seen.

Commentary

We are Rounding the Curve. What's Next?



Terrol Perkins
Data News Weekly Contributor

When I received my first vaccination shot in March of 2021, I was practically willing to do anything in order to resume my normal life pre-COVID. I, like most, vividly remember the lockdowns of the quarantine summer months of 2020. Being a part of the Jesuit High School Class of 2020, my graduation had to adhere to capacity restrictions, and my parents weren't allowed in the school's graduation hall. Instead, they, along with the other parents of my classmates, had to gather at the outside of the building and

watch the commencement ceremony virtually. Also, the number of enjoyable, extracurricular activities during my first semester of college at Xavier University of Louisiana were limited or virtual due to the Pandemic restrictions. Through it all, my experiences during the lockdowns taught me something that it takes some people an entire lifetime to understand: the only thing constant in life is change whether we like or accept the change or not.

Of course, though, nobody liked not being able to communicate with their friends without the need of a face mask, being prohibited from going to a football game in a crowded stadium or watching a newly released movie on the "big screen" for nearly a year. Many people lost hope of life ever returning to the way it was prior to the initiation of the lockdowns in March 2020. I, myself, remained doubtful, but, after I received both doses of the Moderna vaccine, my wavering optimism

was renewed with a huge yearning of desiring my old life back.

Now that the summer of 2021 is drawing to a close and I've had some time to reflect on the challenges of the past year, I am pleased with the tremendous progress that we as a society have made to "round the curve." When I return to Xavier University in the Fall of 2021 to begin my sophomore year of college, I am excited to have a much better experience with less restrictions than in my first year. My wish is for all of my Fall Semester college classes to be taught in an in-person setting with an online option being a possible alternative for some students who still feel uncomfortable mingling with large numbers of people.

This approach would take into consideration the wants and needs of every student. I also want the University to sponsor more in-per-

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State & Local News

Brothers Empowered to Teach Receives \$650,000 Grant from Kellogg Foundation

Award Makes Third Investment to Help Continue Strengthening Teacher Pipeline



Brothers Empowered to Teach recently received a \$650,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to continue its commitment to identify, train and nurture Black males for careers in Education. "We are very excited to know that the W.K. Kellogg Foundation continues to support Brothers Empowered to Teach and our vision," said CEO Larry Irvin, Jr. "

Data News Weekly Staff
Edited Report

As many young people, especially, young Black boys struggle in the classroom for a variety of reasons; one of which are the lack of male

teachers in the classroom. This would in some ways show young men, who sometimes do not have positive role models that they can be successful in life. While there

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Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos is Sending \$100 Million to Van Jones to Put to Work at Charities of His Choice

Isheka N. Harrison
Moguldom.com

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has entered a different orbit – both literally and with his philanthropy. After returning from his successful flight into space, Bezos announced he was awarding journalist Van Jones \$100 million to give to any charities of his choice. Bezos also awarded the same amount to Celebrity Chef José Andrés to do the same.

The “surprise” philanthropic initiative is called the Courage and Civility Award, which Bezos said he founded to honor courageous individuals who are working to change the world with passion and civility.

“We need unifiers and not vilifiers,” Bezos said at a press conference announcing the award. “We need people who argue hard and act hard for what they believe. But they do that always with civility and never ad hominem attacks. Unfortunately, we live in a world where this is too often not the case. But we do have role models.”

Visibly overcome with excitement, Jones told CNN he “literally lost the ability to speak” when he found out he was one of the inau-



Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos(c) announced he was awarding Journalist Van Jones (r) \$100 million to give to any charities of his choice. Bezos also awarded the same amount to Celebrity Chef José Andrés (l) to do the same.

gural recipients of the award. He also thanked Bezos and his girlfriend, Lauren Sanchez, for taking a chance to “bet” on him.

Jones has a non-profit called Dream Corps, which focuses on finding bipartisan solutions to reform the criminal justice system. However, he seemed ready to share the love and money with other changemakers.

“The only thing I worry about

when you say courage, I haven’t always been courageous. But I know the people who are, and they get up every day on the front lines of grassroots communities, they don’t have much but they’re good people, they fight hard and they don’t have enough support,” Jones said, according to The Hill.

Andrés, who is also known for his philanthropic efforts to fight hunger across the globe through

his non-profit World Central Kitchen, said the money was the “start of a new chapter for us.”

Bezos said Jones and Andrés were free to do “what they want” with the funding. “They can give it all to their own charity or they can share the wealth. It is up to them,” Bezos said.

Jones gave examples of how the money could be used for good. “Can you imagine grassroots folks from Appalachia, from the hood, Native American reservations, having enough money to be able to connect with the geniuses that disrupted the space industry, disrupted taxis and hotels and bookstores, to start disrupting poverty. To start disrupting pollution. To start disrupting the \$90 billion prison industry together,” Jones said.

He added Jeff Bezos’ gift “lifted the ceilings off of the dreams of humanity,” making it easier for people to make the world a better place. “If you take people on front lines and their wisdom and their genius and their creativity and you give them a shot, they’re not just gonna turn around neighbors, they’re gonna turn around this nation,” Jones said.

Commentary, Continued from page 6.

son activities and events so more students can socialize and enjoy campus life. In my opinion, allowing for more social gatherings while still adhering to capacity restrictions would dramatically increase school spirit. Furthermore, I also support the idea of private institutions mandating that all faculty and staff members as well as students receive the COVID-19 Vaccine prior to returning to campus. This measure will allow for more social engagements around schools also making sure that everyone is less likely to contract the virus and infect others.

I would opine, that the vaccine is the only way to return to semi-normalcy and keep the highly contagious Delta Variant from spreading dramatically. Universities deciding to implement these recommendations will help more schools gradually move on from the Pandemic while also keeping everyone safe and comfortable. If we truly seek to “round the curve” then we can’t be resistant to take the necessary steps to achieve this goal. To seek the change we want, we first have to put in the work.

State & Local, Continued from page 6.

are many stories of those who fall through the cracks; there is a group whose mission is to change this narrative.

Brothers Empowered to Teach recently received a \$650,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to continue its commitment to identify, train and nurture Black males for careers in Education. The award marks the third investment Kellogg has made in BE2T to continue strengthening the teacher pipeline in Louisiana.

“We are very excited to know that the W.K. Kellogg Foundation continues to support Brothers Empowered to Teach and our vision,” said CEO Larry Irvin, Jr. “As illustrated during the unprecedented COVID era, the pedagogy of how classes are delivered, the content and creativity will never be the same. We must continue to identify talent and train the best of the best to ensure consistency and success in learning spaces for all children.”

Irvin, a 2021 TED Fellow, founded BE2T in 2014 with educator partner Kristyna Jones. Through innovative programming, mentorship, and paid fellowships, BE2T has established itself as a leading organization for training men of color to become teachers and increasing the number of Black male teachers in US public schools.

About Brothers Empowered to Teach

The mission of Brothers Empowered to Teach is to provide opportunities and examples for underserved, marginalized student populations through the inspiration and incentivization of men of color who choose careers within Education. It does this by identifying, nurturing, and training, via innovative methodologies, in order to improve the representation and perception of Black male role models in Education.

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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 and datanewseditor@bellsouth.net.

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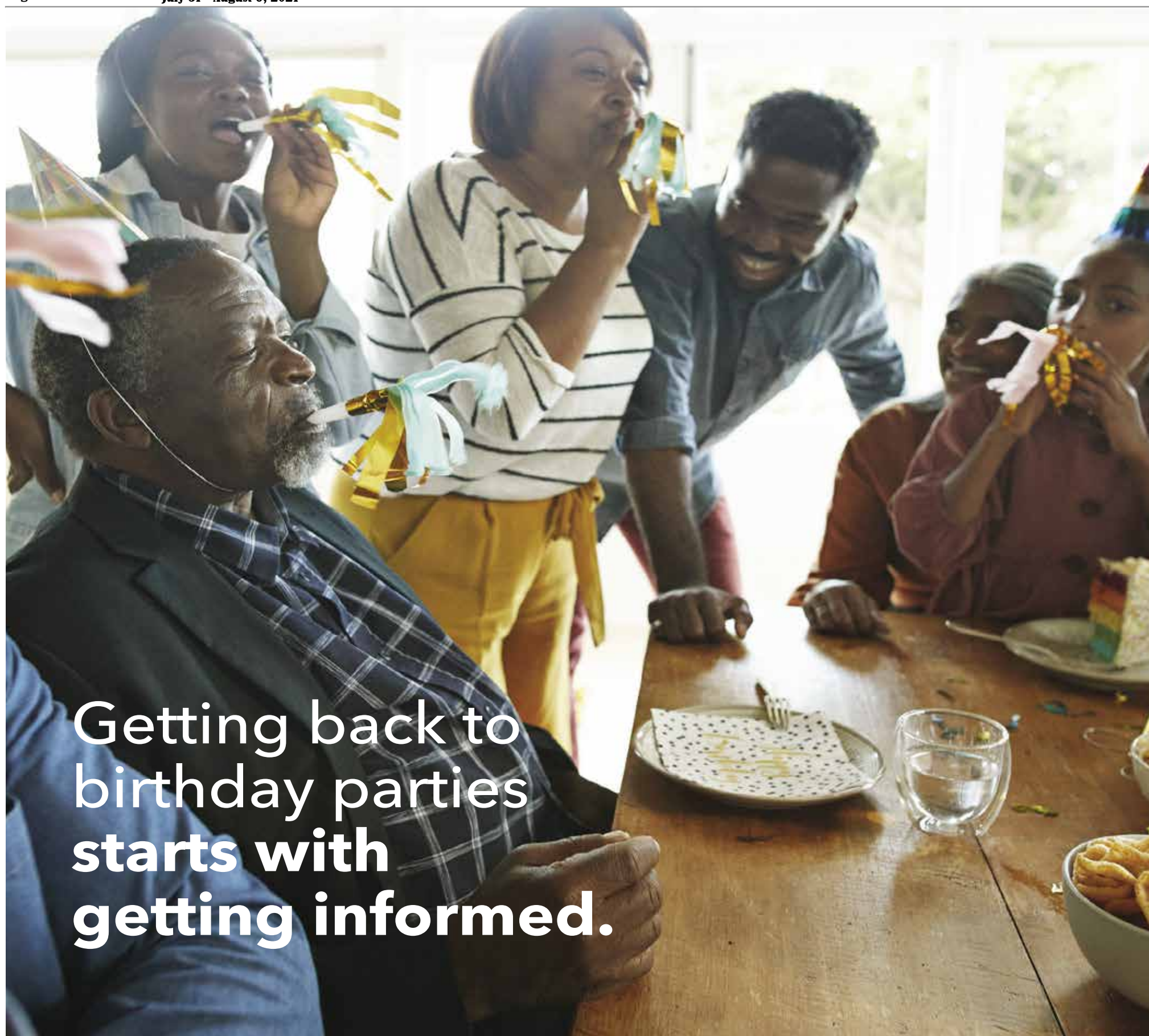
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