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Zulu Mr. Big Stuff Windell Bean Hosts Saints Watch Party and Toy Giveaway

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IRMA!

My Life In Music



New Orleans Soul Queen Irma Thomas, has had an incredible career spanning several decades. Throughout the month of October, WYES is broadcasting a 90 minute documentary entitle IRMA: MY LIFE IN MUSIC. It is a must see as it tell the amazing story of this iconic and legendary talent that's influenced generations of musicians.

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

A Soulful Journey

The name Irma Thomas is synonymous with timeless music. Over the numerous decades of her storied career, she's a template of timeless excellence.

Throughout the month of October WYES will be airing an amazing documentary about the life of this great iconic singer.

IRMA: MY LIFE IN MUSIC premiered on Monday, October 4, 2021, at 8:00 p.m. And will have repeat airings on Saturday, October 9, at 8:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

and on Sunday, October 17, at 5:30 p.m. The 90-minute program is produced by Michael Murphy Productions with the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation. IRMA: MY LIFE IN MUSIC is written and directed by Cilita Eberle and Michael Murphy.

On this day, Irma Thomas is lighthearted and welcoming as she speaks about the new film and her life.

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"WYES came to me and said they wanted to make a documentary about my life. In producing it we did a lengthy interview, and it covered the music and non-musical parts of my life." Laughing she says, "I don't think I was that interesting."

"My family is from New Orleans, and we have always been a part of the arts, and I filmed my first Jazz Fest in 1989 and did this for twenty-five years and after that we started making films. We've made several films with a focus on New Orleans. WYES called us and asked if we were interested in making a film about Irma Thomas. I then called her, and she said yes. We feel this is an incredible film that people will enjoy great music and learn more about Irma Thomas," says Michael the film's Director and Writer Michael Murphy.



Photo Credit: Owen Murphy Jr.



After many years of performing, Irma Thomas, received a Grammy Award in 2007 for Best Contemporary Blues Album.

On the Beginnings of Greatness

Thomas is part of a generation, where New Orleans and its music influenced many all over the world. In her journey that's taken her to faraway places sharing her gift of song; in what's been a long and storied career, Thomas reflects saying, "They are so many who have been around, and we do, and we do it because we love it. I would have never imagined that one day I would be the subject of a documentary."

It is a long way from Ponchartroula, Louisiana where Irma Lee Thomas first sang with a Baptist Church choir as a teenager. Her soulful gospel approach is heavily influenced by the sounds she heard growing up.

Reminiscing of this time in her life she says, "I loved Mahalia Jackson, my parents were old school, you went to Sunday school. I was introduced to gospel music early in my life. My mom played gospel around the house and my dad played what I like to call gut bucket blues. And back then all the Black radio stations had a gospel program, music was so much a part of my everyday life and I fell in love with singing."

In a career spanning several decades beginning in 1959, her first single, "Don't Mess With My Man," ranked number 22 on the U. S. Billboard R&B Record Chart. In numerous interviews, New Orleans music legend Allen Toussaint frequently noted that he often wrote songs with Irma Thomas' voice "in his head." As the producer, composer and pianist of many Minit Label recordings, Toussaint hired Thomas; and out of this collaboration came such beloved recordings as "It's Raining," "Ruler Of My Heart" and "Old Records."

Her impact is one that's earned her the title of "Soul Queen of



Photo Credit: Getty Images



Irma Thomas is part of a great generation, when New Orleans music influenced many all over the world. Today, she continues to perform, and has a new album entitled, "Love is the Foundation"

New Orleans". The documentary features new interviews from many of her colleagues including Record Producer Scott Billington; Producer and Director of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival Quint Davis; former GRAMMY Awards Telecast Producer Ken Ehrlich; Recording Artist Erica Falls; Recording Artist and Actress Ledisi; Singer and Songwriter Bonnie Raitt; Creative Director of Preservation Hall Ben Jaffe; Pastor of the Nazareth Baptist Church Reverend Marc A. Napoleon; Musician, Songwriter and Record Producer, the late Allen Toussaint, and his children Alison Toussaint-LeBeaux and Reginald Toussaint; and Recording Academy Membership & Industry Relations Representative Reid Wick, who speak reverently of her talent as a singer and her impact on their lives.

"I feel blessed that these people have so many great things to say and that I have made an impact with my music."

Getting Your Flowers While You're Here

Thomas' talent was always evident and in 2007 she won the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Blues Album, for "After the Rain." For a career spanning five decades, where she's recorded modest hits and performed, and saw some songs she recorded first become hits for other artist including the Rolling Stones (Time is on my side) and Otis Redding (Ruler of my heart) (Re-named Pain in my heart).

"I love what I do, when you enjoy, I have achieved a lot in my time as a singer. Making songs and performing on many stages large and small. The culmination of that is that I received a Grammy. Many have gone through their careers and never received one. It was a great honor, but if I wouldn't have, I would have never doubted my ability as an entertainer."

Pearls of Wisdom

In a life that like all of us have had its ups and downs, Irma Thomas is what you would call an eternal optimist, and is grounded in her faith.

Speaking on her philosophy of life she very plainly speaking says, "Do unto other and you have them unto you."

Continuing she says, "There is a difference between worrying as opposed to being concerned. I don't worry about things I can't do anything about. I have never been a pity party kind of person. I believe every experience is a learning experience and I see life as half-full. Every adventure is an adventure, and you choose to either learn or not learn the lesson."

"I am not a pew person, I have to be in the choir I pray about it, and I get answers."

What Does it Mean to be from New Orleans

Making a film or creating content centering on New Orleans is

something I may have attempted to do, but it is more than simply the spectacle, it is a deeper spirituality that connects to people on a human level is what the essence of New Orleans is about.

"I think my connection to the city makes my approach different and what becomes the final product different than some of the films made about New Orleans. Also, I am bringing consultants, who help me to create a product that is true to what I am trying to present. I think Irma's story is just that," says the film producer, and New Orleans native Michael Murphy.

This is the magic that shines through in Irma. It marries great storytelling and performances of one of the true treasures of New Orleans music, who has a new album, called "Love is the Foundation" aptly titled, for an incredible singer whose shined her light on the world.

Zulu Mr. Big Stuff Windell Bean Hosts Saints Watch Party and Toy Giveaway

Photos by Glenn Summers

Recently, Windell Bean, the present Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club Mr. Big Stuff, held a Saints watch party where they enjoyed the game and held a toy and bike giveaway. Zulu continues its commitment to serving the people of New Orleans.



Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club pride themselves in giving back to the community. In addition to providing the needs of people the Krewe members also understanding the importance of making kids happy. Meanwhile, Windell Bean Mr. Big Stuff 2022 and toy for tots collaborated in hosting the Annual Toys For Tots drive to fulfill their goal in meeting the needs of families in the community.

Data Zone,
Continued on page 5.

FDA Gives Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine Full Approval

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL | AUGUST 23, 2021

The Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer joins a list of approved vaccines Americans have been safely using - like measles and chicken pox - to eradicate disease over the past decades. Billions of doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been administered worldwide.

To find out where you can get your COVID-19 Vaccine, go to covidvaccine.la.gov or call the Vaccine Hotline at 1-855-453-0774.

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"This vaccine is now fully FDA approved because it has been tested and re-tested and found to be safe and effective."



Data Zone, Continued from page 4.



Windell Bean, Mr. Big Stuff (center), Randolph Davis King Zulu Elect (center right) and Zulu Krewe members.



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Garbage

The Whole Story

DNW Staff Writers

There has been a lot of coverage about New Orleans' garbage issue over the past few months. There have been detailed daily accounts of missed pick-ups, the health hazard that this situation – a massive residential garbage pile up - creates, the impact of Covid, the impact of Ida, and speculation about specific sanitation contractors' role in and responsibility for this crisis.

The City Council has convened multiple meetings to ensure that voters are aware that the Sanitation companies are on the hot seat during an election cycle. One company in particular has been the central focus of citizens' and politicians' ire.

What there hasn't been a lot of is serious analysis of how we got into this situation, nor soul searching to ensure that we never find ourselves here again.

New Orleans is a special city, as we all know. Our inability to provide citizens with something as simple as regular garbage pick-up is simply unacceptable.

Let's look at the facts.

There are 3 sanitation zones or areas in New Orleans. There are 3 sanitation contractors. The number of households per zone ranges from approximately 4,000 in the French Quarter to 72,017 in Area 2 (New Orleans East, Gentilly, the Lower 9th Ward, and Lakeview) and

approximately 74,574 households in

Area 1 (Uptown, Hollygrove,



Mid-City, and Algiers).

The contractors with the largest number of households are Richards Disposal (Area 1) and Metro Service Group (Area 2). They are paid lower rates than other contractors in surrounding parishes. In Metro's case, the per household rate (\$13.60 for twice per week waste collection and once per week recycling collection) is the lowest not only in the City, but in the region. Both companies are also Black owned. Metro and Richards have been a source of pride for the community as a whole, with excellent approval ratings prior to the pandemic, and a source of pride for the Black com-

munity, as there are too few prime Black owned City contractors, and ownership of both companies have been active in and generous to our community for decades.

Both Metro and Richards' contracts were inked under a prior administration, and the City – then and now - has taken a hard line on ambiguities that the 7 year contracts are riddled with. The most punitive of these ambiguities results in a total of 10,610 households that are serviced (4,874 by Richard's and 5,736 by Metro) but for which neither Metro nor Richard's receives any compensation from the City.

We as citizens pay \$24 per month

to have our garbage collected. Until recently, that has meant twice weekly garbage and once weekly recycling. Of this \$24, Metro gets \$13.60 and Richards gets \$13.75. Which means that the City keeps \$10.40 in Metro's area and \$10.25 in Richards' area. Using numbers relative to the Metro contract, they are not paid the \$78,009.60 per month, or \$936,115.20 per year for the locations that they are servicing but for which the City is not paying them. Add in the number for Richards (\$67,017.50 per month or \$804,210 per year), and the City is keeping over \$1.7 Million per year of the monies paid by citizens for trash

collection for over 10,000 homes. In fact, for those homes, the City keeps the entire \$24 per month, which would equal over \$2.8 Million since they don't pay any of the money to the contractors. Even with the payment of the disposal fees to the Landfill owner, the City is keeping a large portion of the sanitation fee and not paying any portion of it to the people actually doing the hard work of collecting garbage for over 10,000 homes.

This discrepancy – households serviced but not paid for – exists only for the Black owned contractors.

The nation is experiencing a severe, well documented worker shortage. New Orleans is not alone in this problem. Three of the four local sanitation contractors teamed up early in the pandemic to assist one another in staying on track. Metro, which has experienced the most issues, was well into the pandemic before they needed help and, by then, other companies were able to offer little in the way of extra trucks, drivers and hoppers.

Metro has consistently paid its workers at least the living wage - \$11.13 – per its City contract, despite the very low margins in their low bid contract. Today, hoppers are paid \$13/hour and can make overtime (\$19.50/hour) after 40 hours. Drivers make \$17 per hour to start and \$25.50 in overtime

Earlier this year, Metro was hob-

Newsmaker, Continued on page 7.

Queen on Thrones

Broken Girls Are Strong Women



Diva Dionne Character
Female Empowerment
Columnist

Sometimes, we put people on a pedestal so high that they could never live up to the things we think they can accomplish when they fall

and crack our souls. Perhaps that person should have been gently placed on the coffee table and not atop of the fridge because the responsibility you had for them was too grand for them to ever live up to and now, you feel broken because you didn't get all that you wanted from one human being.

In spite of it all, broken girls don't have to become broken women. It's time to let the broken-hearted inner child in you go because she is a grown woman who has proven to be the strongest person you'll ever know. Every broken girl may not



make it, but for those of us who do, we have to maintain our gratefulness for the mini blessings in becoming a brilliant being, someone who made it in the midst of it all. You are able and you are strong!

Girl, act like your ransom has been paid and you are free! Let the little girl in you live and forgive those who tried to hold her down and so far back you never thought you would've made it, but you did. For those who have been battered, shamed, and oppressed, let the little girl who has been disappointed and hurt go because she is going to

be okay. She made it another day!

It's a new season and with all the changes we've all gone through, women are survivors. There is so much joy in life when you live it for today and not yesterday, staying in the moment of things. Honey, you are a queen on your own throne. Take those memories of your childhood and use them as ammunition.

You are not broken. You are strong. You are a capable grown woman full of surprises.

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

City Works to Speed Up Post-Ida Recovery

Tyana Jackson
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Over a month after Hurricane Ida, one of the largest tropical cyclone storms to make landfall in Louisiana, residents are still struggling to return to normal. Several issues have frustrated post-storm recovery ranging from delayed trash disposal to lost wages, and damage to homes and businesses, due to the devastating effects of the storm across many parishes in Southeast Louisiana. New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell said recently that post-storm clean-up and recovery remains a primary focus for her office.

"To date 'Operation Mardi Gras' has picked up about 197 loads of trash in about 7 subzones in the City of New Orleans," Cantrell said at the press conference. "It is my team's top priority at the moment," the mayor said.

Cantrell said her office opened up the Elysian Fields Transfer Station for residents to discard their own trash and debris along with their neighbors in an effort to create a short-term solution for trash disposal. Additionally, the city has entered into four new trash contracts to speed up debris collection.

To help residents in Orleans Parish who have received damages to their roofs the Army Corps of Engineers has begun to distribute blue tarps for homes. There are also several grocery distributions in part-



The City of New Orleans continues its recovery effort after Hurricane Ida.

nership with the Second Harvest Food Bank, Greater New Orleans Foundation, and Topbox to help families in need.

City officials have also been encouraging residents to apply for the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program along with the Transitional Assistance Program to help displaced residents find temporary housing.

Hurricane Ida also devastated Louisiana's power grid, knocking out electricity to over one million homes and causing some New Orleans residents to be without power for several weeks. Entergy, Louisiana's energy power company, has restored 932,000 customers and projected that those hard-hit areas like the lower Jefferson Parish area, should have power restored by Sept. 29, 2021.

Britney Burns, a New Orleans native, said that she fled her home as soon as she heard it was going to

be a Category 2 storm. "I go when they say it is a 2," Burns said. "A lot of people are traumatized from Hurricane Katrina so that's why."

Burns said that she had hoped for a quicker response for post-storm clean-up across the city.

"We have to deal with all this trash, branches, and trees along the streets," Burns said.

Her neighbor, Jasmine Jowels, a mother of two, also fled before things got bad. "I do not even know what's going on," Jowels added. "We had to throw out all our food and haven't received any assistance from the city yet."

The two reside in Gert Town and have been working to manage leaks from their roofs exacerbated by post-storm heavy rains. Burns' said her car also flooded.

"I would have wanted [the city] to prepare better, with other cities and neighboring states, to help with getting their trash compa-

nies to come and get this stuff up," Burns said.

While most residents are ready to get back to normal, some are very relieved that the effects of the storm were not as severe as Katrina. New Orleans native James Shade, an English Professor at Xavier University of Louisiana said he was grateful the city was finally able to provide relief for residents. He noted that even with all of the issues the city is facing, he is happy to see that officials are still working to fix the post-storm problems, with limited resources.

"I appreciate the fact that the mayor is dealing with the issues as best as she can because she was kind of blind-sided by it as well as the city government," Shade said.

Residents in Need of Post-Ida Recovery Assistance can Seek Help here:

FEMA Evacuation:
FEMA Evacuee Lodging Provider List (femaevachotels.com)

The Coalition to Back Black-Owned Businesses Grants:
Black-Owned Business Assistance | Coalition to Back Black Businesses (webbackblackbusinesses.com)

Blue Tarp Request:
Blue Roof Information (army.mil)

Crisis Clean-Up:
Call 844-965-1386

Newsmaker, Continued from page 6.

bled by a widely publicized strike by a handful of "hoppers" (workers who ride the back of the trucks and empty the carts) mobilized by a national group that effectively spread misinformation about Metro. While Metro provided ample PPE at the outset of the pandemic, this group convinced most local media outlets that PPE was not made available, and also that rates being paid to workers by Metro were far below the actual rates being paid. This issue culminated with a march on Metro owner Jimmie Woods' house in Gentilly by a predominantly white crowd brought in from around the country. There was no march on

St. Charles Avenue or the French Quarter, where the white sanitation contractors live. When Vice television reported on the march, Woods said it felt like a lynching.

While Richards has had some success with assistance from local competitors, it has been harder for Metro. The trucks and personnel that Metro has been able to get from other local companies have, in many cases, come at a cost higher than the per household rate that Metro gets paid by the City. Metro has come out of pocket in its efforts to catch up with the huge volumes of garbage, both following stay home orders for the global pandemic and thousands of tons of additional garbage after Hurricane Ida.

The much touted \$20 Million emergency garbage collection contracts that went into effect with Ceres Environmental, Witt O'Briens, Waste Management, and River Birch this week were not activated for weeks after the hurricane. Why did City Hall take so long to implement these contracts, leaving mountains of garbage on City streets? Did anyone actually expect the normal contractors to be able to pick up the thousands of tons of additional garbage without additional equipment or compensation?

If we are to focus on solutions, it should start with paying the contractors a fair portion of the \$24 monthly sanitation fee for all of the homes that they service. Keeping the transfer station open perma-

nently would also help to ensure that the process is more efficient. Having contracts lined up for additional trucks and labor to pick up garbage after a hurricane is essential. Blaming the local, black owned contractors for not doing the impossible is not an acceptable response to a pandemic or a major hurricane.

Something to contemplate: what would have happened had the existing local, minority owned contractors been offered the opportunity to make half of what was ultimately contracted to these four companies to pick up post storm residential waste, with the same time to prepare and procure additional equipment and staff?

It's not just the garbage that stinks. Let's start soul searching.

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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.

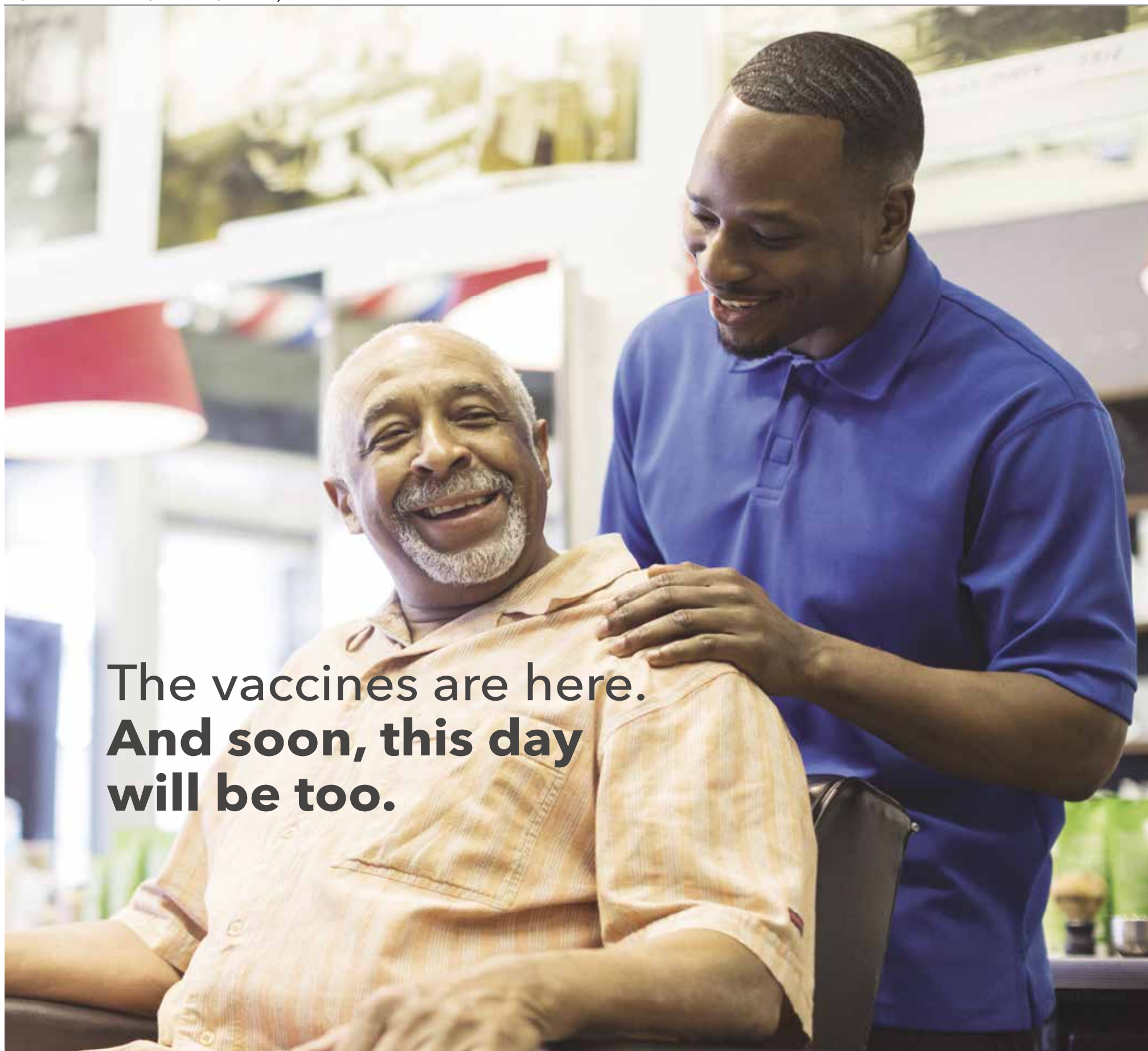
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