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The NEXUS Days

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October 16 - October 22, 2021 56th Year Volume 25 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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STEM NOLA’s Mission and Purpose Grows Over the Pandemic



Dr. Calvin Mackie, founder of STEM Global Action, started the organization in 2013 and now is incorporating Marvel characters into his growing STEM education content.

Leah Clark
Data News Weekly Contributor

The Pandemic may have disrupted how children learn, but it has not stopped Dr. Calvin Mackie, the founder of STEM NOLA, now STEM Global Action. For the last 18 months, and thou-

sands of views later, Mackie took his educational crusade virtual, to better help children embrace a love for science when many schools and after-school programs remained closed.

Most recently, he taught about the value of science through using the example of the Marvel Cinematic Universe’s Black Captain America, Sam Wilson, played

by New Orleans native and Actor Anthony Mackie, who just happens to be his brother. He shared that his brother’s well-loved character had great lessons to provide a foundation to help children of color develop an interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

“Different people respond to different things,”

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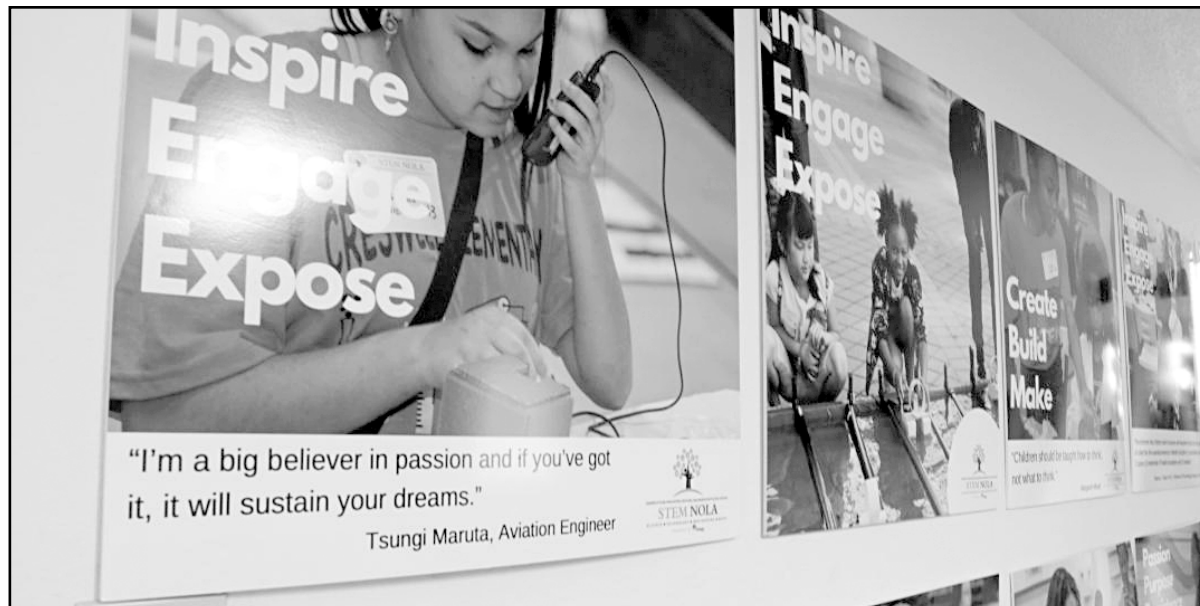
DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.



STEM Global Action works to give students in the New Orleans area and globally high-quality STEM education that will encourage them to enter STEM careers.

Calvin Mackie said. "When you look at the work we do, we put out a lot of content because we're trying to reach kids and their parents no matter where they should be," said Mackie on STEM Global Action incorporating Marvel characters into their content.

His brother's character gained global attention this summer after the Disney+ series *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* finally revealed that character Sam Wilson will officially be the face of the Captain America image within the MCU.

"That is part of the communication strategy. Can we draw an analogy between something that the kids like and what we're trying to get them to understand, [so] that we move them... towards something that can give themselves agency," Calvin Mackie said.

Mackie said he wanted children to spot connections between this fictional Marvel world and STEM, especially in the character Captain America. Sam Wilson, the newest Captain America, is an African American Veteran that, contrary to his predecessors, relies on STEM instead of superhero abilities. Using mechanical wings and drones, Wilson combines physics and technology to battle his enemies as well as critical thinking skills.

"That is STEM in action. What I'm trying to tell kids is that, just like Captain America, if you develop critical thinking skills and you develop skills in STEM, you can use those skills to create a better tomorrow for yourself and your community," Mackie said.

While Mackie uses his brother's work on-screen to inspire local students, he emphasizes the hard work his brother puts into getting to this level today. Together, Mackie believes that diligence and a strong education can launch children from the same humble beginnings of his brother to become successful



Dr. Calvin Mackie kicked off the return of in-person STEM NOLA Saturdays with Rocket Day over the summer.



Dr. Mackie works with high school students on coastal restoration.

STEM professionals.

"When I talk to kids about my brother, I talk more about the fact that he went to college. Our mother passed away when he was in the eighth grade, and he told me he wanted to be an actor. I told him [that] he was not going to stand on the corner and be discovered. 'If you're going to be an actor, you're going to be like everything else, you're going to be a professional. You're going to go to school, and you're going to develop your craft,'" he said.

Outside of the character Sam Wilson, Mackie has cited other similarities between the Marvel Cinematic Universe and STEM. He referenced 2018's *Black Panther* Film which depicts Black intellectuals in an environment that is heavily based on STEM. The fictional world of Wakanda demonstrated

the heights that societies could reach by utilizing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Comparisons to Marvel characters have resonated with students that participate in STEM Global Action's Programs. Karson Williams, a New Orleans 5th grader, is a regular participant after starting STEM Global Action three years ago. Williams shared that he has enjoyed the program as it has grown his interests in STEM, specifically math and engineering. Combined with his love of Marvel characters, such as his favorite Spiderman, Williams has been able to recognize STEM in real life.

"Most of [Marvel characters] do some form of engineering like Spiderman or Iron Man and Hulk, who is a scientist," Williams said. "So, it makes kids want to be like them and their



Beginning in his garage with two kids, Dr. Calvin Mackie has seen STEM Global Action grow to reach nearly 100,000 kids.



STEM Global Action teaches STEM knowledge through New Orleans native Anthony Mackie's character Captain America as an inspiration for all local children. (photo courtesy STEM Global Action)

professions and what they do."

While Mackie uses Marvel characters to get his foot in the door with students, he doesn't make using pop culture and entertainment references a regular occurrence. The STEM educator believes that more students should admire scholars and intellectuals and not just entertainment figures, only.

"I think we're doing ourselves a disservice when we just use entertainment to push education, so I use everything," Mackie said.

Recently, Mackie was able to secure major donation investments to construct a state-of-the-art education hub in New Orleans East, but

he first started his educational organization in his garage in 2013. After being disappointed in the quality of the STEM education his son was receiving, Mackie began holding sessions in his garage. The number of kids attending grew from two, his sons, to 20 to now 100,000. As STEM Global Action grows, Mackie continues to find more innovative ways to bring STEM to the community.

"STEM [Global Action] is about STEM for all, and I'm putting high-quality STEM in the community. If you want that high-quality STEM, you have to come to the community and get it," he said.

The NEXUS Days

The Golden Age of Black Nightlife in New Orleans

Noah & Karin Hopkins have Collaborated on a Book about NEXUS

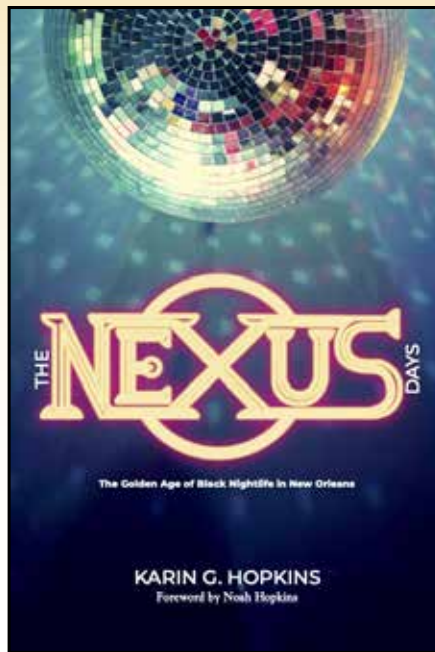
An Exclusive for The New Orleans Agenda

You'd be surprised at who Noah Hopkins is today. His neighbors own cows, horses, and pigs. Some of them plant corn, soybeans, and blueberries. Noah even pauses frequently to enjoy the birds that play in his backyard trees. And by the way, he has a pecan tree on his property that drops the biggest, sweetest pecans this side of Heaven. His surroundings have changed but his name still resonates in New Orleans, associated with The Exchequer,

Noah's Jazz Club and NEXUS.

Remember the potluck nights at The Exchequer? What about the live jazz performed at Noah's? Were you at NEXUS the nights Stevie Wonder performed there?

You can relive those experiences and many more in a new book written by Noah's wife, Karin, entitled, *The NEXUS Days: The Golden Age of Black Nightlife in New Orleans*. She traces Noah's life back to his childhood growing up in the Gert Town area. She shares the events that put him on a path towards success. And Karin writes about



Karin and Noah Hopkins.

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.

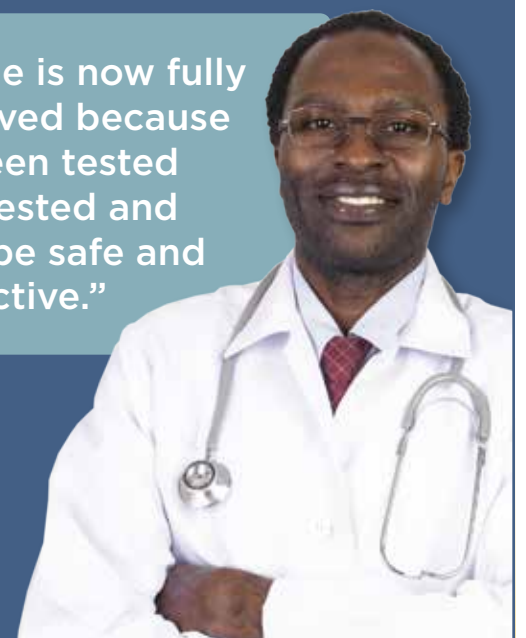
To find out where you can get your COVID-19 Vaccine, go to covidvaccine.la.gov or call the Vaccine Hotline at 1-855-453-0774.

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Noah Hopkins chats with Comedian Eddie Murphy during Eddie's visit at NEXUS. Murphy photo by Noah Lewis



On July 6, 1986, while in New Orleans for another engagement Stevie Wonder and Sister Sledge made a surprise visit to NEXUS. Willie T Turbinton (back row) looks on.



NEXUS House Band; David Torkanowsky, Chris Severin, and Julian Garcia. All photos provided courtesy of Karin & Noah Hopkins

the breakthrough moments that connected Noah to partners and investors; providing a financial backbone to his dreams. For the record, Noah partnered with Sidney Richmond to establish The Exchequer. He teamed with Richard Powell for NEXUS.

The book has many bonuses, including Noah's trade secrets about starting a nightclub, how to successfully operate this type of business and build a loyal customer base. These are lessons from a master. Did you know he took a dead night for all club owners and made it a boom night at NEXUS that attracted 1,600 customers every Monday?

All of this is inside the pages of The NEXUS Days. This book also reminds us that the NEXUS environment produced many love connections. On October 11, 1985, at a Friday night Happy Hour, a mutual friend introduced Noah to Karin, and they have been together since that moment. As they were building the Website for the book, they included a playlist featuring one hundred songs that fit their love story.

When they lived in New Orleans, they collaborated on a number of projects that made an impact on this city. Now living in Tuskegee, Alabama, they have embraced their country lifestyle while also retaining their cosmopolitan attributes. Noah is the leading tourism advocate in Tuskegee, and he uses the skills he cultivated in New Orleans to promote this historic town. He identifies tourism treasures and presents these assets to the world through a dedicated website and social media platforms. He also designs and publishes tourism magazines and other collateral materials.

You can take a man out of New Orleans, but you can never take New Orleans out of Noah. The book, which preserves a chapter of this city's history, also celebrates the spirit of New Orleans during The NEXUS Days.

To purchase your copy, click this link www.amazon.com

For more information email karin@thenexusdays.com

Photos courtesy of Noah and Karin Hopkins



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Henry Consulting Wins Six Flags Redevelopment Plan

Data News Weekly Staff
Edited Report

BAYOU PHOENIX – Expanded Development Project Plan

BAYOU PHOENIX TEAM
Henry Consulting is a New Orleans-based management consulting firm and one of the largest Black-owned companies in Louisiana. Founded in 2001, by New Orleans East native and resident, Troy Henry. With over 200 direct and indirect employees, the company generates an average of \$25 million dollars in annual revenue.

Bayou Phoenix LLC is the development group that won the city's approval to redevelop the abandoned Six Flags site in

New Orleans East.

The company beat out a rival group backed by Drew Brees.

The site is 227 acres near the intersection of Interstate 10 and Interstate 510. It's owned by the nonprofit corporation Industrial Development Board, which was created by the New Orleans City Council in 1972.

Six Flags has been closed since Hurricane Katrina swamped the area 16 years ago. However, it is a popular location for film crews and urban explorers.

Here's what we know about Bayou Phoenix.

Bayou Phoenix is a partnership with:

- Troy Henry, founder of Henry Consulting
- Thomas Tubre and Michael



Troy Henry founder of Henry Consulting a New Orleans-based management consulting firm and one of the largest Black-owned companies in Louisiana.

Tubre, construction contractor TKTMJ Inc.

- Dallas-based Hillwood Development Co. LLC.

What are the plans for the old Six Flags site?

Bayou Phoenix is planning to build a 1 million-square-foot warehouse and logistics hub on the site of the former amusement park, coupled with a "family education" facility that will be operated by local nonprofit STEM NOLA.

In later phases of the project, the group said it plans to add an indoor water park, a 200-room hotel, an e-sports arena, and an athletic complex.

What's the timeline for the project?

Bayou Phoenix estimates that the first phase of its project, consisting of the warehouse and STEM center, will cost about \$100 million and take two years to complete.

While the group offered assur-

ances that it could privately finance the first phase, it didn't detail who might serve as its primary tenants.

A member of the city's selection committee, Courtney Stuckwisch-Long, noted that Bayou Phoenix's most recent proposal did not include any benchmarks within the two-year Phase 1 construction timeframe, nor any details underlying its hard cost estimate.

Mayor LaToya Cantrell said additional details about Bayou Phoenix's plans for the Six Flags site would be available once a cooperative endeavor agreement between the group and the city is finalized. Negotiations are expected to be completed and a deal signed within three months.

Staff writer Jessica Williams contributed to this story, The Advocate, bing.com/news

State & Local News

Experts Call for a More Equitable Tourism Sector

Tyana Jackson
Data News Weekly
Contributor

As New Orleans prepares to slowly restart its festivals and Mardi Gras yet again, cultural experts say they hope the Pandemic has shown how the city's important tourism sector often neglects the African American artists and workers who keep the industry afloat.

The economics of tourism in New Orleans have deep roots that can be traced back to American slavery and its exploitation of African Americans, said Dr. Lynnell Thomas, who is a Professor of American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

"Local, national, and public officials and media collaborate in the tourist promotion of debauchery and degradation as the most predominant and enduring features of Black people in New Orleans during that time," said Thomas, who is a New Orleans native, and has studied the post-Katrina New Orleans diaspora.

Thomas spoke at the "Legacies of American Slavery" lecture hosted by Dillard University's Ray



New Orleans native Dr. Lynnell Thomas is a Professor of American Studies and researches post-Katrina New Orleans and the effects of tourism on African Americans in the city.

Charles Program in African American Material Culture on Sept. 29th, where she focused on tourism's connection to race and historical memory.

"Tourism is often not connected to other forms of legacies of slavery," said Zella Palmer, the Director and Chair of the Ray Charles Program. "Cultural creativity is defined as a cultural expression in all its forms as a way to



Zella Palmer, the Director of the Ray Charles Program in African American material culture called for the community to better understand how tourism can often exploit Black culture.

understand and cope with American slavery and its aftermath," said Palmer, who explained that African Americans created forms of resistance to slavery through culture that are now part of the tourism experience of the city.

That legacy of tourism in New Orleans, Thomas explained, can be found through tourism merchandise, monuments, and today in the gentrification of Black



Asali Ecclesiastes is the Executive Director of Ashé Cultural Arts Center, and hopes that the economics of tourism can be more equitable to artists and culture bearers.

neighborhoods.

"An example is when vendors in New Orleans would sell Gambina "servant" dolls in a way to glamorize slavery as a community festival," Thomas said.

These dolls, found in the French Quarter before Katrina, are sold to tourists as a merchandized form of antebellum New Orleans, but few tourists stop to think of the souvenir's

connections to slavery, Thomas explained.

The real impact of tourism is the post-Katrina desire to live among Black spaces, which are considered the true immersion into New Orleans Black culture. This has resulted in the ongoing gentrification of Black neighborhoods since Hurricane Katrina, particularly in Tremé.

"There are international models for sustainable tourism and cultural equity policies that we should be examining and testing here," said Asali Ecclesiastes, the Executive Director of Ashé Cultural Arts Center, about how New Orleans should begin to think of tourism in ways that do not further oppress Black communities.

Ecclesiastes called for a new form of tourism in New Orleans that would better the lives and livelihood of its residents and not just exploit them for cultural extraction and push native New Orleanians out of their communities.

"The ecological impact of tourism is a real issue, and it really just overlaps with histories of inequality," said Phil Katz, who attended the lecture.

Study Shows How Medical Community Neglected African Americans with COVID-19

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

It's well-documented that the COVID-19 Pandemic has wreaked havoc in communities everywhere, but African Americans mainly have borne the brunt of the disease's impact.

Now, a new study published by the University of Michigan delves further into yet another systemic problem.

Findings from the study show that Black patients experienced the lowest physician follow-up post-discharge and the most protracted delays (35.5 days) in returning to work.

More than half of hospital readmissions within the 60 days following discharge were among Non-White patients (55%), and the majority of post-discharge deaths were among White patients (21.5%).

"The COVID-19 Pandemic has disproportionately affected Black and Latinx communities in the United States compared with White communities in both morbidity and mortality," the study authors wrote.

The report noted that hospitalization rates for Black and Latinx patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 are approximately three times higher than those of similar White patients.

"It is therefore unsurprising that



of the 216,635 COVID-19-related deaths in the United States to date for which we have race and ethnicity data available, 29.3% have been Black (34,374) or Latinx (29,063), which correlate with US population norms," the authors continued.

White persons in the United States account for approximately 76% of the population and 61.1% of deaths (132,315).

Notably, Black and Latinx adults have an increased prevalence of comorbid conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease, associated with an increased risk of severe illness due to COVID-19.

Further, significant numbers of Black and Latinx adults have occupations considered essential, requiring close contact with others, thereby hindering the ability to effectively socially distance, self-isolate, or work from home, the study revealed.

"Health disparities, or preventable differences in health outcomes, are known to be driven by a variety of economic, environmental, and social factors, including institutional or structural racism and bias in health treatment," the authors conceded.

For example, researchers cited a recent study that evaluated pa-

tients with COVID-19 among five US emergency departments. That study found that Black patients accounted for the majority (56.7%) of readmissions within 72 hours, whereas White patients only accounted for 16.7%.

The study investigated variation in 60-day post-discharge clinical, financial, and mental health outcomes of diverse patients with COVID-19.

"I think people only think of COVID in terms of death, you know, or having like a mild cold," Dr. Sheria G. Robinson-Lane, a gerontologist and the study's lead researcher, wrote.

"They don't think about all of those spaces in between where people are having these effects post-COVID."

Robinson-Lane said one of the most surprising findings was the lack of follow-ups with physicians, noting that hospitals need to improve discharge plans to serve patients better. The physician shortage and stigma to going into the doctor's office when infected with COVID might contribute to the lack of follow-ups, Robinson-Lane said.

"So, we need to do a much better job about coordinating care, to find out what it is that people need," she said. "Because we're seeing a significant number of people also that are dying within those 60 days after hospitalization."

Newsmaker

Council President Moreno Meets with Vice President Harris to Request Assistance with Storm Costs and Hardening Power Grid

City of New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS - Last week, Council President Helena Moreno met with Vice President Kamala Harris to discuss ways the Biden Administration can help New Orleans and Louisiana shoulder power restoration costs and build a more resilient power grid for the future.

The vice president has been a longtime leader on climate action and has fought for strong investments in climate resiliency dating back to her days as California Attorney General and Senator.

"Vice President Harris is committed to helping the nation build stronger and more resilient infrastructure, and I know



Vice President Kamala Harris and Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Helena Moreno.

she will continue to be a strong partner for and supporter of New Orleans," said Council President Moreno. "We discussed a variety

of needs for our city and state, including power restoration costs from Ida and long-term investments in grid hardening to protect us into the future. We'll continue to work together to rebuild our city and state better than they were before."

Council President Moreno traveled to Washington D.C. this week with Councilmember Joe Giarusso and also met with members of Louisiana's Congressional Delegation on behalf of New Orleansians facing climate and economic risks now and into the future. Hurricane Ida restoration costs now total more than \$4 billion across Louisiana and almost \$150 million in New Orleans alone.

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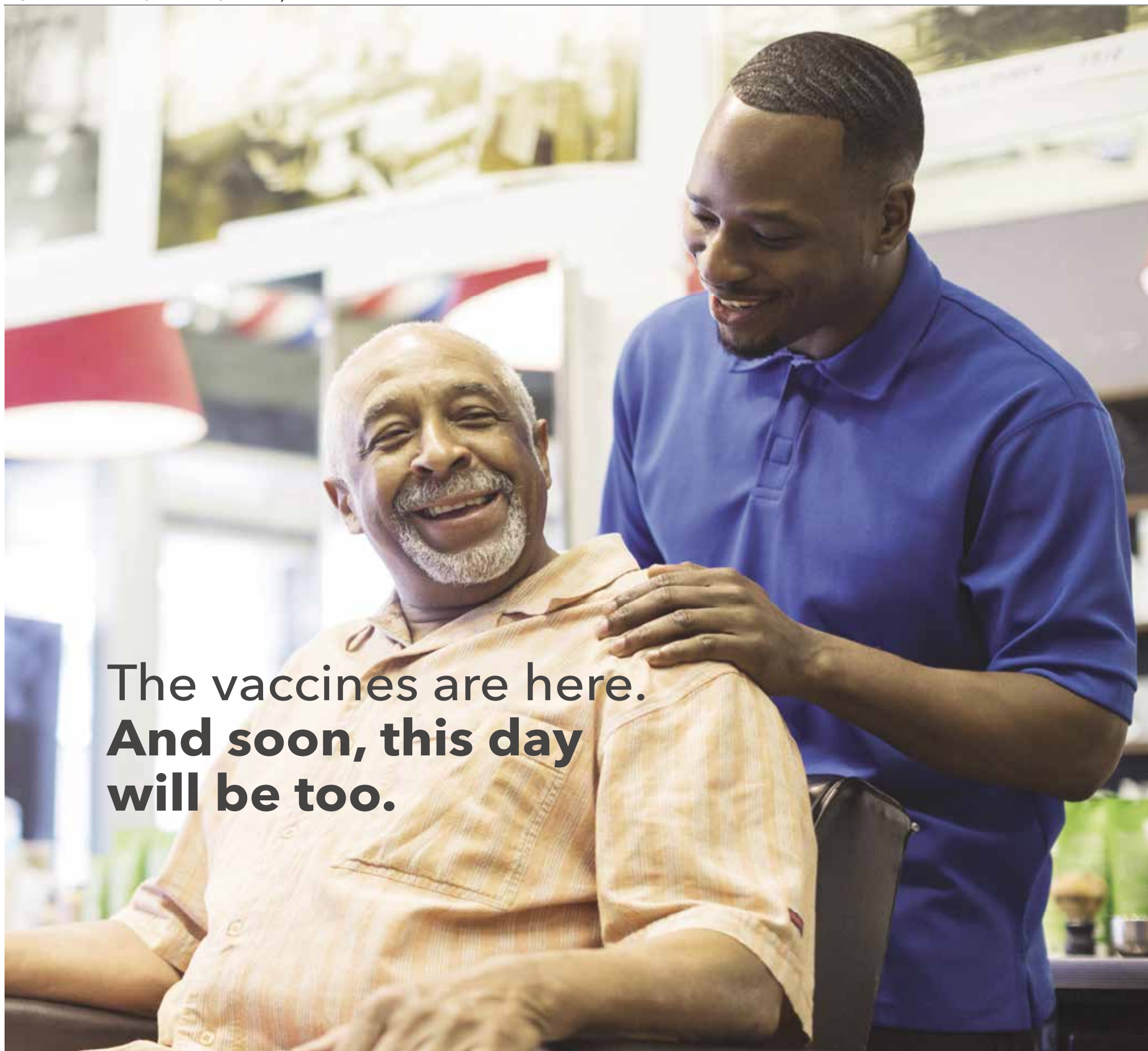
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