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New Orleans

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**Data Zone
Page 4**

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New Orleans Pelicans

The Best in the West

Page 2



Newsmaker
NOPD
Superintendent
Shaun Ferguson
Announces Retirement

Page 6

State & Local

Mental Health Toll
on HIV/AIDS Patients
Increased During
the Pandemic



Page 7

New Orleans Pelicans

The Best in the West



Zion Williamson is leading the Pelicans, who are leading the Western Conference. He is having an MVP season thus far.

Fleur De Lis
Data News Weekly Contributor

While the Saints have left the fans with not much to cheer about this season, the Pelicans are beginning the year atop the Western Conference. It is not that they are only beating subpar

teams but are winning against the NBA elite. Last week, they defeated the Phoenix Suns 128-117 to take control of the Western Conference in front of their home crowd. In their two consecutive games, it felt like a divisional playoff game with intensity coming from both teams. Last year, the Suns eliminated the

Pels in six games. In these two games, the Pels played like champions. Now that he is healthy, Zion Williamson is living up to expectations, where in the second game he seemed unstoppable, scoring 35 points, grabbing seven rebounds, and dishing out four assists. This year under second year coach Willie Green,

Cover Story, Continued on page 3.

INSIDE DATA	
Cover Story	2
Data Zone	4
Newsmaker	6
State & Local News . .	6
National News	7

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.



Pelicans stars Brandon Ingram and CJ McCollum are giving the team an added boost this season.



Team Owner Gayle Benson, and the management are investing in building a winning franchise.



things are coming together. They have a balanced team that is playing great on both sides of the court. Besides Zion Williamson, the Pels are getting top level play out of Brandon Ingram, CJ McCollum, and Jose Alvarado.

So far, they are 18-8, and looking like the real deal. Kevin, who is a diehard Saints fan says, "I am glad to see the Pelicans winning games, it is good for the city and for sports. It is giving us something to cheer about."

Some are saying it is too early in the season to think they have a chance at making it to the NBA Finals this year.

"I believe if they stay healthy and continue to play at this level,

they have a shot to go deep into the playoffs. But I am going wait to see how they look near the end of the season, that is the most important time for them to play well," says Kenneth, of New Orleans.

As you walk around the city, we see more people rocking Pelican's gear. It is a sign that support for them is growing, and that New Orleans can possibly become a city where basketball is popular among fans.

"I think it could be a great thing for the city that we have another professional sports team that we can support. It not only is good for the fans, but it has an economic impact as well," says Deidre, a New Orleans Businessowner.



Pelicans Coach, Willie Green is leading the team, and may be on his way to winning NBA Coach of the Year.



The one place where folks keep it real is in the barbershop, inside of Mr. Chill's First-Class Cuts on this day the topic of sports came up. It was mentioned winning is not necessarily about what happens on the field. But how these games bring people together and give everyone

a sense of a unified identity.

Undoubtedly, this is something that hits home for many in the shop, that's what is important in these times. What we do in the stands becoming one is what we must practice in our everyday lives. Doing the same things to improve neigh-

borhoods, schools, fighting crime and raising our young people to be respectable, responsible adults.

In this scenario, not only would the Pelicans or Saints win games and become champions but so would the citizens of the City of New Orleans.

Community Organizations Step Up to Ease the Holiday Crunch for Families

Endya Gillard
Data News Weekly Contributor
Photos courtesy Eric Gillard/
NOPD

The holidays are meant to be a cheerful time, but with inflation and concerns of a recession, consumers indicated they are struggling to purchase items this holiday season. The continued rise in costs of some daily household needs has caused a huge burden on families and has increased the pressure for families to afford toys and food during this year.

Roughly 50-percent of consumers indicated that "Santa will be less generous, and 40-percent of Americans are foregoing holiday gifts this year due to inflation," according to a recent survey conducted by WalletHub. The National Retail Association also noted that Black Friday crowds were smaller than expected in major cities, with retailers reporting that consumers were focusing on smart purchases, instead of splurges.

Local organizations are setting up toy drives and food drives to support families choosing between bringing holiday cheer and keeping food on the table. As part of that effort, the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) hosted its toy drive on Dec. 7th for local children in their community hoping to bring holiday cheer to families in need.

"It really feels good to get those kids something that they may not have received," said Second District New Orleans Police Department School Resource Officer, Tianna Conway. "Some come from abusive homes, or they are in very traumatic living conditions, so just being able to bless them makes me feel really good."

For the Annual NOPD Toy Drive officers purchase toys to give back to less fortunate children and distribute at schools in the city as well. Before going to purchase the toys, the officers incorporate a wish list to get a good idea of what are the top toys for kids this year. Once all the gifts are purchased, they dress up as holiday characters and perform a show for the children.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the price of toys rose by 3.1-percent in October and food prices are up on average by 8-percent. This holiday season many people's shopping habits are affected by inflation and families are seeking other financing options to cover their holiday purchases this year, according to data by Oracle Retail.



An NOPD officer dressed up as Santa Claus talks with local children at the annual NOPD toy drive.

Despite, these tough times in the economy, many organizations are still wanting to help their community have a great holiday season. New Orleans Construction Company, Verius Property Group, hosted a food drive and collected over 4,000 non-perishable items to donate to a couple of food banks in Mar-rero, on the Westbank.

"It was super impactful for the community," said Jackson Wemmitt, an estimator at Verius. "I come from a community where this is a common need every single year, so I try to go out of my way to do it every year no matter which community I am in," Wemmitt said.

The City of New Orleans has held food drives alongside several other community organizations and will continue to do so leading up to Christmas Day.

"I am glad we can give back to the unfortunate children that we see daily that do not have toys, and the good part is when their face lights up when you give them the toys," said New Orleans Second District Police Officer, Heather Gore. "It makes me feel like I have accomplished something throughout the year," Gore said.



New Orleans Police Department officers dress up as Santa Claus while they hand out toys to children in the community.

Black Panther

Wakanda Forever Continues to Break Box Office Records

Glenda Bell
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Black Panther: Wakanda Forever just set a new Marvel Cinematic Universe Record by leading the domestic box office for the fifth weekend in a row.

The sequel to 2018's Black Panther continues in holding the top spot earning a respectable \$11.1 million dollars this weekend. This brings Black Panther: Wakanda Forever's domestic total up to \$409 million, making it one of only three movies in 2022 to gross over \$400 million.

Also, Wakanda Forever's five-week run atop the domestic box office charts crowns it the first MCU entry since the first Black Panther to achieve this feat.

It continues to do well entertaining audiences across the globe, with current international earnings of \$767.8 million. The first Black Panther earned a whopping \$1.3 billion. From these numbers, it is evident that this franchise continues to be a runaway success at the box office.



This is more than just another film, it is one that is showcasing Black Excellence at its finest, and everyone is coming out to see this amazing and inspirational movie. If you have not seen it, go out on your next date night, or as a family during this holiday season to check it out.

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NOPD Superintendent Shaun Ferguson Announces Retirement

Data News Staff Edited Report

Last week New Orleans Police Superintendent Shaun Ferguson announced he will retire from his position effective Dec. 22nd, according to city officials.

In a statement, Ferguson thanked Mayor LaToya Cantrell and the citizens of the City New Orleans.

"We need to support each other as we continue the work of making the city safe for its residents and visitors. After 24 years of ser-



vice in a profession that takes a lot out of the individuals who answer this call, it is time for me to take a step back and place more priority on my family and my own well-being. I will still be your neighbor, and I will always be a part of the city that I love so much."

Throughout his long career he's held several posts with NOPD that included:

Commander of the Educational and Training Division, which oversees the police academy. Commander of the Second District from 2016 to 2018, and NOPD's Fourth

District from 2014 to 2016.

Upon being informed of his retirement New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell issued a statement that in part read:

"The City of New Orleans will soon bid farewell to a great leader, a great partner and a great friend. After 24 years of dedicated public service to the City of New Orleans, Superintendent Shaun Ferguson will retire at the end of this year. He gave this city his very best – the safety and well-being of each and every resident and visitor was always his top priority."

Mental Health Toll on HIV/AIDS Patients Increased During the Pandemic

Corbin Johnson Data News Weekly Contributor Photo by Corbin Johnson

Eclipsed by other viruses and diseases, advocates hope to center HIV/AIDS victims who continue to be most vulnerable in a holiday season that has combined the trifecta spread of COVID-19, the flu, and upper respiratory infections like the Respiratory Syncytial Virus, better known as RSV. As more HIV/AIDS patients continue to isolate far longer than the average individual, health professionals say the Pandemic has taken an additional toll on the mental health of this particular group of vulnerable citizens.

"It's troubling times we live in, nowadays," said Judy Houston, a community analyst who works at AETNA Louisiana HealthCare Center, who held a Wellness Fair for World AIDS Day on Thursday, Dec. 1st. "HIV is a disease that can just come out of nowhere, and once you have it, your whole world comes down crashing," Houston said.

HIV/AIDS has been a deadly force since the 1980s. Its impact on the LGBTQ+ community had left the public in fear. While vaccines were developed, some worked,



Judy Houston and Janya Layne provide HIV resources at the AETNA Healthcare Station for the Mental Health Resource Fair at Xavier University.

and some did not. HIV is typically contracted through sexual contact if the male partner is not wearing a condom during intercourse. They can also contract it if the other partner did not get tested before intercourse. HIV can also get transmitted through needles and other syringes, and once a person contracts it they have the disease for life.

It takes a toll on a person which causes them to have many mental

health issues and chronic depression, experts said. There is no cure for the disease, and it's not the same as AIDS. It's a common misconception, but HIV is the virus that leads to AIDS, and when the white blood cell count drops, then someone will eventually get it. You can get treatment early to prevent from getting AIDS, but HIV will always remain in a person's body.

According to UNAIDS Studies across 38 countries, 15-percent of

adults and 25-percent of adolescents living with HIV have reported depression or feeling overwhelmed.

"HIV affects young people the most because they're the ones who are sexually active at most times, and they have it worse," Houston said.

Identifying mental health issues in people living with HIV is critical because it goes either untreated or undiagnosed. People never want to reveal their psychological state to

healthcare workers because they are afraid of being discriminated.

"I've dealt with many people who were afraid to take HIV tests," said Janya Layne, a marketing analyst and healthcare worker at AETNA. "Our company offers free testing on STI and HIV testing, and since the Pandemic we've had many people who were nervous to take tests because they thought we would judge them," she said.

Patients are twice as likely to have depression compared to those without HIV. Diagnoses also increase risks of anxiety and cognitive disorders.

"HIV is something you never joke around with," said Dr. Warren H. Johnson, a Podiatrist who specializes in foot and ankle care. "It's sad to see people living with mental health issues and HIV because it's always left untreated," he said.

"They can develop chronic stress which can reduce the ability to fight the HIV and other diseases that come with it," Johnson said.

HIV can also cause inflammation to the body according to the MHA, Mental Health America. A person's brain will become inflamed as a result of the body's attempt to fight

Commentary, Continued on page 7.

White Teacher Fired After Telling Students His Race Was 'Superior'

Defender News Service

A teacher in the Pflugerville Independent School District which is located in Austin, Texas, is no longer employed by the district after a video surfaced of him saying he believes White people are "the superior" race.

In the video, the unidentified White middle school teacher was captured saying, "Deep down in my heart, I'm ethnocentric, which means I think my race is the superior one."

It's unclear what led to the controversial conversation inside a classroom at Bohls Middle School.

Rapper Southside's son is in that class, and they put the video on social media, which quickly went viral. The video shows the students' quick reaction to the statement, which prompted one student to ask,



The unidentified White middle school teacher was captured saying, "Deep down in my heart, I'm ethnocentric, which means I think my race is the superior one."

"So White is better than all?"

The teacher then asks the students to let him finish speaking

before adding, "I think everybody thinks they're just not honest about it."

Several students then appear to confront the teacher about his bold claim, asking him if he just openly admitted to being racist.

"I think everybody is a racist at that level," the teacher responded.

When asked a second time if he just said he is racist, the teacher said, "I did. I did. If I'm going to be honest with you."

In a statement released on November 14, Pflugerville ISD Superintendent Dr. Douglas Killian said that the teacher "is no longer employed" by the district and that the district "is actively looking for a replacement."

Dr. Killian acknowledged that the incident "has prompted local and national media attention" and issued an apology to "any parents whose students have been included in the video without their knowledge."

Commentary, Continued from page 6.

the virus. This irritation will damage the brain, and its blood vessels resulting in a brain damage that you will have to deal with for a long time. Having this type of brain damage is a very big risk factor for developing a mental health issue.

The immune system will become next to be infected, and people will have an increased risk of developing other viruses such as pneumonia and tuberculosis, which also affects the brain and nervous system. These problems can then lead to a change in behavior and how people function.

"It sends you into a zone of comfortability and sends you into an emotional turmoil," said Shayne Valentine, a junior pharmacy major at Xavier University. "Being in the medicine field and seeing what HIV has done to people is really scary," Valentine said. "The way it affects people's mental states and

how often it gets ignored and really it breaks my heart," he said. "Especially [for] gay people who often get it and the way they get ignored by health care workers is disgusting and something needs to change," he added.

Treatments and therapies have come out for HIV now such as Antiretroviral Therapy, which is a combination of medicines which will improve people's health and protect infected people who want to have sexual intercourse. This therapy helps to restore a sense of control over their health and can improve their sense of self and hope for their future, health professionals said.

"Finding activities that relieve your stress, such as exercise or other hobbies always helps," Johnson said. "People need to remember that there are support systems that will help them and will always be there to attend to their needs," he said.

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Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

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