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Helen Faison passes at 91

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

After a career as a teacher, principal, superintendent and university chair that lasted more than 60 years, and inspired countless African Americans and women, Helen Faison has taken her final sabbatical.

She died July 16, just three days after her 91st birthday. Hundreds filled Baptist Temple Church in Homewood for her funeral on July 20.

Though born in Homewood, Faison moved to Virginia in 1924 after her mother contracted tuberculosis. She returned eight years later, eventually enrolling at Westinghouse High School where she excelled, graduating in 1942.

Faison began her teaching career in 1950 at Fifth Avenue High School. She also



HELEN FAISON

SEE FAISON A5



CELEBRATING BLACK ACHIEVEMENT—As forward writer Candi Castleberry Singleton and introduction writer Chuck Sanders look on Who's Who Executive VP Ernie Sullivan and Min. Marita Dennise unveil the cover for the inaugural edition of Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh. (Photo by J.L. Martello)

Who's Who unveiling blows up Twitter

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

Combine colorful speakers, a hashtag and more than 300 of Pittsburgh's most skilled talented entrepreneurs, artists, medical, legal, academic and business professionals—all with cell phones—and what do you get?

You get the official Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh unveiling party, which not only rocked the Herberman Conference Center at sponsor UPMC's Hillman Cancer Pavilion, but also blew up on Twitter as honorees and guests celebrated the directory's recognition of African American excellence.

Following a sumptuously catered reception that featured music by the James

"Getting our story told has always been hard. We need some control over telling our story—that's why this book is so important."

LYNNE HAYES-FREELAND

Johnson Trio, the program began with emcee and KDKA-TV reporter Lynne Hayes-Freeland saying she was privileged to be there.

"I've never been in a room with this much talent. I salute you and my home-

town—give yourselves a round of applause," she said. "Getting our story told has always been hard. We need some control over telling our story—that's why this book is so important. It's a tool for honoring the community, for diversity, and it's part of your family legacy."

Before introducing UPMC Executive Vice President and CAO Gregory Peaslee, Hayes-Freeland pointed to the 'tweets' flitting across one of the large screens at the front of the room, and told people to join in with #whoswhopittsburgh.

Peaslee then welcomed everyone, and thanked Who's Who for doing something no one else had.

"Look at your program, at the spon-

SEE WHO'S A4

Residents meet about Penn Plaza eviction notice

Landlord agrees to delay

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

Even as residents railed against the owner of the Penn Plaza Apartments issuing a 90-day eviction notice, Urban Redevelopment Authority Chair Kevin Acklin was already negotiating a stay that would allow the residents to remain longer.

"The owners don't care," said one resident who asked to remain anonymous because

SEE PLAZA A5

Rash of weekend shootings leaves 4 injured, 2 dead

by Ashley Johnson
Courier Staff Writer

A number of shootings took place this past weekend that left four injured and two dead. From Larimer to the Marshall-Shadeland communities of Pittsburgh, neighbors heard gunshots.

The violent weekend began on July 17 with the late night shooting of two Black males in the 900 block of Smithton Street in Marshall-Shadeland. According to a release from the Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety, a 21-year-old Perry North male was shot in the head and a 26-year-old Bon Air male was shot in the back, both were taken to Allegheny General Hospital.

Reportedly, an argument that had begun inside a Smithton Street residence had spilled onto the street.

SEE SHOOTINGS A4

Pittsburgh Promise changes scholarship amount

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

In what supporters said was an effort to extend the life of the scholarship program, The Pittsburgh Promise has lowered the top amount it will award for college scholarships and will no longer pay for books, or room and board.

Joined at a July 14 press conference by

Pittsburgh Foundation President and CEO Maxwell King, Promise Executive Director Saleem Ghubril said the changes are not the first, and are intended to reach the maximum number of students for the longest time.

"We want to ensure students who are in kindergarten today will have a scholarship when they graduate high school," he said.

Beginning in 2017, the maximum annual

scholarship award—for students attending Pittsburgh Public Schools from kindergarten on—will drop from \$10,000 to \$7,500, for a total of \$30,000 over four years. When first announced in 2008, the top annual award was \$5,000.

The other major changes include:

- Eliminating the \$1,000 annual award to

SEE PROMISE A4

Target sues hero in 2013 store stabbing

by Ashley Johnson
Courier Staff Writer

A man who has been hailed a hero for assisting in the apprehension of a homeless man who stabbed a teen girl twice while in the East Liberty Target in March 2013, is now being sued by the corporation, alleging that his actions, along with others, brought a risk of harm into their establishment.

Last week, Michael Turner, of East Liberty, took his story to the streets when he stood in front of the store with a handwritten sign that read, "Target Sues Stabbing Victim Hero." He believes he is unjustly

being sued by Target Corporation when he selflessly risked his life to save 16-year-old Allison Meadows from being stabbed further by Leon Walls and sees it as a "slap in the face" for his courage and a way for Target to pawn off their responsibility in the matter.

Attorney Todd Hollis, who representing Turner at no cost, said the lawsuit is not just a "slap in the face" to Turner, but anybody who may try to help someone in need.

"If you or I were standing in front of that store and we were watching someone get assaulted, are we

SEE TARGET A5



SUED FOR HEROISM—Michael Turner, right, with his attorney Todd Hollis. (Photo by J.L. Martello)

Ulish Carter says
Blacks should be involved in all sports

Opinion A6



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Who's Who unveiling blows up Twitter

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sors—leave it to Who's Who. Who else could get Highmark and UPMC that close," he said. "But seriously, I want to thank them for this testament to the depth and breadth of Pittsburgh's Black community, and the 24 of our colleagues in its pages."

As she prepared to introduce the remaining speakers, Hayes-Freeland noted that none of her tweets had appeared on screen.

Rod Doss, associate publisher of Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh, thanked the Who's Who Publishing team for putting together the inaugural Pittsburgh edition.

"It's an honor to be associated with the people and the energy in this room," he said. "This is a grand opportunity to showcase the talent in Pittsburgh."

State Rep. Jake Wheatley, D-Hill District, then congratulated everyone and urged them to go beyond the event, to exchange cards, and do lunch, and follow up. Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald said Pittsburgh has a lot of good things happening now.

"And a lot of it is because of the people in this room," he said.

Hayes-Freeland said she still wasn't seeing her tweets.

"Oh wait," she said. "I'm doing it wrong—there's no apostrophe. Oh well, here's Valerie."

Valerie McDonald Roberts, the city's chief urban affairs officer extended thanks from Mayor Bill Peduto and a challenge: "Mentor these young people."

De Lena Scales and Ernie Sullivan, sales and marketing manager, and executive vice president respectively, then thanked the sponsors—UPMC, Highmark, PNC, Univer-

sity of Pittsburgh, Urban Lending Solutions and Huntington Bank, before playing a special video honoring Pittsburgh youth called "Leaders of the Future."

Highmark Executive Vice President for Community Affairs Evan Frazier then thanked Who's Who for honoring several Highmark employees.

Following him, outgoing UPMC Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Candi Castleberry Singleton, who also wrote the forward for Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh, thanked everyone—including Highmark.

"If I was feeling competitive, I'd say welcome to my house," she jokingly said. "But this isn't about any of that. This is about Pittsburgh and what we can do together. Today, Black Pittsburgh did something good."

Chuck Sanders, CEO of Urban Lending Solutions—the 14th largest Black-owned firm in the country—who also wrote the directory's introduction, encouraged the youth present to get their education, because even though he played professional football, the NFL stands for "Not For Long."

He then introduced the Living Legends that have their own section in the directory: Alma Speed Fox, Bev Smith, Katie Everett Johnson, Patricia Pratts Jennings, Doris Carson Williams and Esther Bush.

Hiram Jackson, CEO of Real Times Media, which owns Who's Who, said the company came to Detroit a few years back and put out a directory and he wasn't in it—so he bought the company. He thanked the sponsors, the advertisers and the people in the books pages.

"Sometimes people don't get recognized and it's our job to pull out those hidden

gems so you get to see them in these pages," he said. "We are not the people you see on the six o'clock news. We are much

more complex and more successful."

Then as cameras clicked and fingers texted, he unveiled the cover of Who's

Who in Black Pittsburgh. "We are not only in handcuffs, we are CEOs and presidents," he said. "Thank you Pittsburgh,

the next city's going to have a hard time stepping up."

(Send comments to cmorrow@newpittsburghcourier.com.)



THE LIVING LEGENDS—Rod Doss, associate publisher of Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh, left, and Ernie Sullivan, executive vice president of Who's Who Publishing, right, flank the Living Legends. From left: Doss, Doris Carson Williams, Bev Smith, Patricia Pratts Jennings, Katie Everette Johnson, Esther Bush and Sullivan. (Photos by J.L. Martello)



UPMC—Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh honorees from UPMC enjoyed the recognition.



HIGHMARK—Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh honorees from Highmark enjoyed the evening and the honor.

Pgh Promise changes scholarship amount

CONTINUED FROM A1

students who already have full funding;

- Only paying for tuition and fees, not for room and board or books; and

- Awarding funds for four years only beginning immediately after graduation, students deferring a year lose a year of funding.

Additionally, the residency/attendance eligibility scale will be adjusted, with students enrolling in grades 1-5 earning 90 percent, in grades 6-8 earning 70 percent, and in 9th grade earning 50 percent.

The changes are needed because The Promise has not reached its \$250 million funding goal. UPMC's donated \$100 million over 10 years, but The Promise and its supporters have raised only \$74 million of the remainder in corporate, foundation and individual donations.

With the Pittsburgh Foundation acting as The Promise's fiduciary agent, King said it is important for the city's corporate community to step up its contributions. If the goal is reached, the changes announced will allow The Promise to distribute scholarships through 2028. But King was optimistic that it would continue beyond that.

"I think there's hope that we can have a continuous fundraising capability in this community to keep the Promise going forever," he said.

Though Ghubril said it cannot claim complete credit, The Promise's latest annual report noted that through 2014, the school district's graduation rate has risen from 65 percent to 71 percent since 2009, for Black students the rate has increased from 57 percent to 65 percent.

However, The Promise has been criticized for not reaching enough of the district's most at-risk demographic—Black males.

Overall, African American students have received just 38 percent of the scholarships. And even though Black students make up 68 percent of an extension program created to get borderline students above the 2.0 GPA eligibility mark, Black males account for only 9 percent of Promise graduates.

This has led to calls for even more changes, including making the promise available to students with any passing grade. Ghubril said that would not happen.

"Scholarships by themselves, regardless of amount, will not make students ready for post-secondary success. Only academic readiness will," he said.

"The factors that seem to hinder some Black males from meeting our minimum eligibility criteria are many, they are complex, and they are a national struggle. Some factors are school-based, while others are social, emotional, familial, economic, or health-related. The solution requires our entire community locking its elbows around our children and working tirelessly on rebuilding the foundational assets that all children must have in order to succeed."

In addition to the extension program—which will continue to pay for a year at Community College of Allegheny County, and for three more years at any in-state college, university, or trade school for those who succeed—Ghubril said regional leaders are working with him on a "more collaborative support system for our most vulnerable students."

"We want to see more of them become Promise-eligible," he said. "We will be able to share more details later in the year."

(Send comments to cmorrow@newpittsburghcourier.com.)

Rash of weekend shootings leaves 4 injured, 2 dead

CONTINUED FROM A1

Hours later, ShotSpotter captured several shots fired at the Sunoco gas station, located at 6481 Frankstown Ave., in Larimer. Upon arrival, authorities found 31-year-old Paul Jones Jr. lying on the ground. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

In the early morning of July 19, 25-year-old Maria Bruno was found fatally shot in the backyard of a home in the 900 block of Fordham Ave., in Brookline. She too was pronounced dead at the scene. While there were others in the home at the time, it is still unclear what happened. No one has been charged.

Then later that evening, police spotted a 17-year-old

Black male laying in the street near the intersection of Minott and Sorrento Streets in Marshall-Shadeland. According to a release, the male was shot in the head and taken to Allegheny General Hospital where he was last classified as being in critical condition.

Hours later, just after midnight on July 20, a 47-year-old female from Carrick, according to a Public Safety release, was shot multiple times in the chest in the 900 block of Brownsville Road in Knoxville. Two Black males were seen running away from the scene.

No one has been arrested in either of these incidents. A number of shooting inci-

dents also took place the prior weekend, July 10-12. Over those three-days, six shootings occurred; five in Pittsburgh, one outside of the city, in Allegheny County. Of the six, one was fatal. On July 10, Derek McCellan, 44, was found dead in a vehicle on Chambers Street in Clairton. He had multiple gunshot wounds to the head.

When asked if there was a trend behind the number of shootings in the city, Sonya Toler, public information officer for the Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety, told the New Pittsburgh Courier, that while no one can truly explain why individuals resort to gun violence and no one particular

reason can be pinpointed, authorities are seeing a pattern of retaliatory shootings in regards to various matters, such as drugs, gangs, domestic incidents, etc.

While shooting incidents seem to be all too frequent, Toler pointed out that the number of homicides that have taken place in the city thus far, which is 26, is down from last year at this time, which she said were 41.

Although homicides are recorded, there is currently no data that captures the number of shootings when no fatalities occur.

As of July 20 there have been 51 homicides that have taken place within Allegheny County.