

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the United States is observed on the third Monday of January each year, close to Dr. King's birthday on January 15. The holiday serves as a time of remembrance and reflection. The following is extracted from President Biden's reflection.

We honor the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by continuing his unfinished work to redeem the soul of America.

Dr. King came of age in the South during a time when racial discrimination was the law of the land. Black Americans risked jail time for accessing public accommodations like drinking fountains, parks, restrooms, restaurants, and hotels. Their voting rights were denied by complicated, onerous, and discriminatory rules. Even if they attempted to register to vote, they could be fired from their jobs, be run off of their farms, or face vigilante violence.

Dr. King imagined a different future for America—an America he called the “Beloved Community.” Building the Beloved Community required a key shift in human understanding. It meant looking beyond external

differences to see the union of all humankind. It also meant finding a way to deal with our grievances without animosity, in a way that recognized the interconnectedness of all humanity and allowed us to move forward together.

From the pulpit to the podium to the streets, Dr. King devoted his life to the quest for this Beloved Community in our Nation. His activism and moral authority helped usher in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He gave a voice to the restless spirit of millions yearning for change. He gave us a roadmap to unify, to heal, and to sustain the blessings of the Nation to all of its people.

But the work continues because it remains unfinished. That is why my Administration has called on the Congress to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act to ensure that every citizen has a voice in deciding our future.

In keeping with Dr. King's campaign for economic justice and the rights of workers, my Administration is striving to make the American Dream a reality

for every family. By creating good-paying jobs, investing in the middle class, improving access to affordable housing and quality education, and closing the racial and gender wealth gaps, we can give hardworking families the dignity Dr. King would say they deserve.

Dr. King called for greater fairness in our health care system, and my Administration is pushing to put quality, affordable health care within reach of all people — especially the most vulnerable and marginalized Americans. By lowering costs and improving access, we can make health care a right and not just a privilege.

Dr. King preached that “darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.” In his memory, we strive to challenge violence and bigotry with grace and goodness. We work to embed equity and opportunity into all of the Federal Government's policies and programs. And we serve to bring together a Nation in our dedication to these ideals.

I will pay my respects and express my gratitude for his life and legacy by speaking at services at his cherished Ebenezer Baptist

Church.

On this day of commemoration, service, and action, let us hold up a mirror to America and ask ourselves: What kind of country do we want to be? Will we honor Dr. King's legacy by rising together — buttressed by each other's successes, enriched by each other's differences, and made whole by each other's compassion? I believe we can.

It will require constant care for our democracy, stubborn faith in this great experiment, and a commitment to stamping out discrimination in all forms. It will demand honest reflection about how far we have come and how far we have yet to go to be the best version of ourselves. But like Dr. King, I know that there is nothing beyond this Nation's capacity and that we will fulfill the promise of America for all Americans — perfecting the Union

we love and must protect.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Monday, January 16, 2023, as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday. I encourage all Americans to observe this day with appropriate civic, community, and service projects in honor of Dr. King and to visit MLKDay.gov to find Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service projects across our country.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-seventh.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

Consumer Alert: Before You Commit To Get Fit, Know Your Rights When Signing Contracts At Health Clubs

HARTFORD - The Department of Consumer Protection is reminding consumers to do their research and know their rights before signing a new contract with a gym or health club this New Year. “This is the time of year when health club memberships spike as people set New Year's Resolutions following the season of holiday indulgence,” said **DCP Commissioner Bryan T. Cafferelli**. “We'd never discourage someone from making a healthy change in their life, but we do urge consumers to do their research, understand their rights and what should be included in a health club contract, and consider what is realistic for their budget and their schedule prior to making an expensive commitment.”

The Department of Consumer Protection received 41 complaints about health clubs in 2023, mostly related to billing issues. Examples of complaints the department received include: consumers seeking a refund after they cancelled their membership and continued to be charged, consumers who disagreed with the amount they were billed, and consumers who had difficulty cancelling their membership.

DCP is also reminding new and existing health club and martial arts club members to look

for an AED, or automated external defibrillator, in their facility. State law requires all health clubs and martial arts clubs to have an AED on site in case of emergency. Consumers who are unable to locate an AED in their health club should notify the business and file a complaint with DCP by emailing dcp.complaints@ct.gov, or by visiting ct.gov/dcp/complaint. **Before committing to a health club:**

- **Do some research.** Look for reviews online and ask current customers about their experiences.
- **Schedule a visit.** Stop in at the health club you're considering so you can see what equipment and conditions they have. Many health clubs offer free tours, and even free or discounted day passes for prospective members. Consumers should avoid signing an online contract without seeing a location first.
- **Review the contract or agreement.** It's important to know how much you're paying, when your bill comes, and what the cancellation policy is. Connecticut law requires health clubs to have contracts in writing.
- Health club contracts can be offered for as long as two years, but not longer. Any club offering contracts longer than one year must also offer a one-year contract.
- Health club contracts cannot auto renew. The only exception is after a

one-month period. For example, if you sign up for a one-month trial period this month, your contract may auto renew for the rest of the year at the end of that period. If the monthly price changes after the first month, that change must be disclosed up front, in writing.

• You have a three-day right to cancel. If you sign up for a health club contract, you have the right to inform the health club in writing that you do not wish to continue your contract within the first three days of your agreement.

• State law also includes a right to cancel if you become injured or disabled, or if you move more than 25 miles from your health club. Consumers can [review the statute](#) for more information and the complete notice that should be included in their contract.

There is a Health Club Guaranty Fund. If you have paid for a contract, and your health club closes, you can file an application for the guaranty fund through DCP, and if it is approved, get reimbursed. More information and the application form for the health club guaranty fund can be found at ct.gov/DCP.

Consumers with questions or complaints may contact the Department of Consumer Protection's complaint center by emailing dcp.complaints@ct.gov, or by visiting ct.gov/dcp/complaint.

Black Entrepreneur Magazine To Bring Investment And Build Black Wealth Events To Hartford



Mark Milward

Black Entrepreneur Magazine has been a hub for black entrepreneurs, business owners, executives, professionals, and decision-makers since 2002. The magazine is now global and the number one magazine worldwide for black business development activity.

The magazine is also an affiliate of Direct Music TV America (DMTVA) and promotes concert shows and entertainment venues globally with popular DJs and major recording artists such as Beyonce, Janet Jackson, Anita Baker, Chris Brown, Maxi Priest, Beres Hammond, Keith Sweat and many others.

Most recently the magazine has been featuring local Hartford area black entrepreneurs and business people in advance of staging meet and mingle networking and investments events in the region. Some of those featured included business and civic lead-

ers Veronica-Airey Wilson, Dr. Gary Rhule, MD, former Connecticut State Treasurer, Shawn Wooden, Baratunde Ma'at aka Barton Campbell, cartoonist, filmmaker Joe Young, actor and Hollywood movie icon Tony Todd among others.

Viewership for the magazine is electronic with greater than 67,000 downloads per month in over 37 countries around the world with huge audiences in America, Canada, the Caribbean, UK, and Africa. An affiliate magazine under the BE MAG umbrella LifeStyles magazine is currently conducting a New Face Model search in Miami, Houston, New York, and Los Angeles.

Black Entrepreneur magazine will continue to feature Connecticut professionals and black entrepreneurs monthly in the coming month as the effort is the prelude towards connecting into the Hartford area before hosting investment and networking events.

The Women's Empowerment Meet and Mingle Networking Event has been a favorite in recent venues and attracts audiences eager to participate in event workshops and important business topic presentations. BE MAG is working closely with “The Jamaica Diaspora Show” which airs on Hartford Public Access Television (HPATV). Announcement dates for BE MAG networking and investment events is coming soon.

\$500k Grant Aims To Increase STEM Diversity And Retention

WILLIMANTIC, CT: Minority students applying to Eastern Connecticut State University in 2024 who plan to major in the sciences or mathematics will be recruited for a new STEM mentoring program funded by a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant.

The Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program at Eastern is designed to recruit and retain minority students in science, technology and mathematics. It will start this summer with 15 students selected from the incoming first-year class. They will receive stipends to spend two weeks in summer residence at Eastern, receiving individualized mathematics instruction and building a foundation for their fall entry as majors in biology, biochemistry, computer science, mathematics or environ-

mental earth science.

In their first year at Eastern they will be part of a learning community in STEM in which they will take at least two classes and a first-year seminar together. Building a STEM learning community will "help them stay in the profession and learn what it's about," said Kim Ward, professor of mathematics and coordinator of LSAMP at Eastern.

The NSF grant for LSAMP totals \$3.2 million to all four Connecticut state universities, with Southern Connecticut State University serving as the lead institution. Eastern's part of the grant is \$525,000 over five years. The program at Eastern was developed by Ward; Dean Emily Todd; Patricia Szczys, director of the Institute for Sustainability; and Jennifer Brown, former associate provost. Todd also serves on the governing board for

the grant.

Fifteen more students will be added to Eastern's program in 2025. When the 2025 cohort participates in its summer preparation, the 2024 group will attend a second summer residence, this one in research, choosing a faculty mentor and a research project. As LSAMP scholars, they will present their research, possibly yearly. Each year of the five-year grant, 15 additional students will be recruited to the program.

Besides academics, LSAMP will emphasize study skills and a community mindset, said Todd. A sense of belonging and self-identity in STEM will be reinforced by the program, said Ward. Self-identity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics has been identified as crucial to keeping people in the fields. As part of LSAMP, students will have peer mentors as well as research mentors.

The four CSCU campuses will share seminars and events for LSAMP scholars, Ward said. Faculty will also share best teaching practices. "The grant will develop further collaboration with faculty in the system," said Todd.

Talks by alumni who work in STEM industries and internships also will be part of the program. "All of the institutions are excited about strengthening our bonds with alumni," said Todd.

Minority applicants to the incoming class who choose one of the five designated majors will be considered for LSAMP. "We'll take economic status into consideration, but the grant is nonrestrictive," said Ward. The broader impact of the program is to "create, evaluate and sustain best practices and graduate a higher percentage of under-represented students in STEM, and to prepare for jobs in the state of Connecticut," she said.

For more information contact: Michael Rouleau, (860) 465-0172, rouleaum@easternct.edu; universityrelations@easternct.edu

Eastern Connecticut State University is the state of Connecticut's public liberal arts university, serving upwards of 4,000 students annually on its Willimantic campus. In addition to attracting students from 160 of Connecticut's 169 towns, Eastern also draws students from 30 states and eight countries. A residential campus offering 41 majors and 68 minors, Eastern offers students a strong liberal arts foundation grounded in a variety of applied learning opportunities. Ranked among the top 20 public institutions in the North by U.S. News & World Report in its 2022-23 Best Colleges ratings, Eastern has also been awarded 'Green Campus' status by the Princeton Review 13 years in a row. For more information, visit www.easternct.edu



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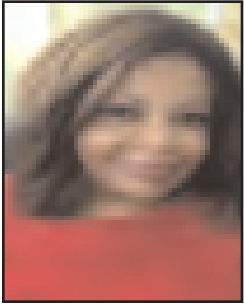
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Health & Wellness

New Year - New You



Dr. Laurice Howell a healthy plan in mind? When it comes to lifestyle habits, the American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity in a week, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.

You should also include strength-training exercises at least two times a week. Try using a weight or resistance level heavy enough to tire your muscles after about 12 to 15 repetitions.

Barbells and dumbbells are typical strength training tools. If you don't have weights at home, you can use soup cans, a water bottle, or kettlebells.

Diet is also important in preventing weight gain and keeping you healthy. An increase in the use of carbonated beverages, foods high

in sugar, such as baked products made from white flour, processed, and packed ready-to-eat foods, and fried foods, contribute to an unhealthy eating pattern. These foods can lead to obesity and other health issues.

Now that you know what healthy lifestyle habits are, here is how you can succeed in sustaining a lifestyle habit change.

According to *Psychology Today*, "Our habits are the building blocks of our day-to-day lives." James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits* (2018), suggests we can get results by making one tiny change at a time.

Here are suggestions from *Psychology Today* on how to succeed in making lifestyle changes (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/flourish-and-thrive/202002/6-powerful-ways-build-new-habits>):

- Start your habit change process by paying *attention* to what you are currently doing and then identify one thing that you want to change. Making a list of your daily routine can help.

- All changes begin with making choices. Decide which

habits are helpful and which ones you are willing to change.

- Attach your new habit to something you already do; for example, if you want to begin walking, plan to walk after or before a meal.

- Clarify what you want to do and how you will do it. Be specific and try not to change more than you can handle.

- Taking small steps can add up to big results, that is, if you decide to give up one can of soda a day you are giving up 1050 kcal for the week (a typical 12-ounce can of soda contains about 150 calories and 40 grams of sugar (or 10 teaspoons)

- Remember the "Why." Keep in mind why you are making this change and its importance to your health and well being.

(Dr. Laurice Howell, MPH, MS, RDN, CBC. In private practice at Planned Lifestyle and Nutrition, LLC).

Jamaicans Reminded To Take Precautions Against Influenza



Dr. Sharon Lewis

By Garfield L. Angus

With Jamaica in the peak period for influenza, persons are being encouraged to take extra precautions and adhere to established health protocols to prevent infection.

Influenza, commonly

referred to as the 'flu,' is an acute viral infection that spreads easily from one individual to another through coughing, sneezing or close contact.

Flu activity in Jamaica often begins to increase from October to November, followed by a peak between December and March, and can last as late as May.

Addressing the recent monthly meeting of the Portland Municipal Corporation, Medical Officer of Health for the parish, Dr. Sharon Lewis, noted that "this is the time when we see a seasonal increase in the number of cases."

"So, everyone is encouraged to observe proper hand hygiene, proper coughing etiquette, and if you are ill, avoid public spaces in order to reduce spread of the virus," she said. (Source: Jamaica Information Service)

RSCO School Choice On-Time Application Now Open Through March 15, 2024

New Parent Resource Center Offers Comprehensive Support for Connecticut Families

(Hartford, CT) - The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) announced today that the application period for Greater Hartford Region magnet schools, Open Choice public schools, and Hartford Region technical high schools for the 2024-25 school year, is now open. Interested Connecticut families can submit their applications through ChooseYourSchool.org.

The early application period for the Hartford Region technical high schools (CTECS) extends through February 1, 2024, with placement notifications beginning in mid-February. The on-time application period for magnet schools, Open Choice, and CTECS runs through March 15, 2024, with placement notifications beginning in early April 2024.

"School choice empowers families to pursue educational opportunities that align with their child's unique needs, interests, and passions," **Robin Cecere, director of the CSDE Regional School Choice Office, said.** "This application season, we are offering families more support than ever before.

Our new Parent Resource Center, in conjunction with our improved website and application process, ensures that families interested in school choice have the information and assistance they need to make informed decisions about their children's educational futures."

The newly established Parent Resource Center (PRC) at RSCO is designed to provide specialized expertise and comprehensive support for families during the school discovery, application, and placement process. Operating on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.,

with extended hours during the on-time application period, PRC staff is available for assistance through phone, email, in-app messaging, and in-person appointments. Extensive language interpretation and translation services are also offered. PRC staff actively participates in community and school events across the Greater Hartford Region, expanding access to high-quality application support.

"In the Greater Hartford Region, families now have an unprecedented array of options to fit their students' educational interests, whether it is through enrollment in a specialized magnet school, Open Choice district, or one of the technical and career programs available in Greater Hartford," **Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker said.** "Connecticut is privileged to offer families an extensive system of school choice options and we continue to engage extensive planning, marketing, and outreach spanning several months, to maximize seat utilization.

This diligent outreach reinforces our commitment to ensuring that every family within the Greater Hartford Region is well informed about the available educational choices, enabling them to make the most suitable decisions for their children."

RSCO's upgraded website and online application platform facilitate the exploration of school choice options by grade level, location, academic themes, sports, extracurricular activities, transportation options, and the tracking of application and placement status. Families can access crucial resources, including the updated RSCO School Choice Family Reference Guide, featuring practical

information, tips, strategies, and FAQs about the application process, placement rules, priority protocols, waitlist procedures, and more.

The RSCO school choice program allows families with students entering Pre-K3 through Grade 12 to apply to three distinct types of free, public schools in the Greater Hartford Region, including:

- 43 magnet schools with specialized themes, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); visual and performing arts; dual-language; and Montessori.

- Open Choice public schools in high-performing districts outside their residence.

- Three regional technical high schools specializing in career and technical education.

The RSCO school choice program unites families from over 80 towns in diverse learning environments known to enhance creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking among students.

"More than 20,000 students from across the Greater Hartford Region are currently enrolled in RSCO schools, thriving in their chosen environments," **Cecere added.** "School choice is available to every family in the region."

For further information on school choice, upcoming events, and the application process, please visit ChooseYourSchool.org and follow RSCO on Facebook.

The first RSCO School Choice Fair of the season is scheduled for Dec. 9, 2023, at the Academy of Aerospace and Engineering, located at 1101 Kennedy Road, Windsor, Conn

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