

DECEMBER, 2024

WASHINGTON PARK ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.

NEWS BULLETIN



President's Message

Christmas Greetings,

Hello December! This is the month that wraps up the year with cozy vibes and chilly days. It's a time to slow down, reflect, and enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Life's blessings are everywhere. Look around your surroundings, and you'll surely see them. Of course, to acquire these blessings, we can't just sit still and wait for them. We have to grab them with our own hands. Let us start by being thankful for what we already have and by sharing our blessings with others. Sometimes we focus so much on what we don't have that we fail to see, appreciate, and use what we do have. Our association has given more than \$320,000 in scholarships and still giving. We have only had a few working hands, but we have had so many big hearts to make magical moments for so many young people. Thank you for sharing with us. We are asking everyone, especially those who attended Rochelle, to take this journey with us by becoming a member. No matter how close or how far away you are, you will make an impact on our efforts.

Have a blessed Christmas and may your New Year be a prosperous one!

Respectfully,

Beverly Boatwright, President

WP ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INC
P O BOX 90452 * LAKELAND, FL 33804

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Dec. 30
6 PM - 8 PM

ATTIRE
HOLIDAY CASUAL



55 NEW AND RENEWED YEARLY MEMBERS \$50
10 LIFE MEMBERS \$500

ALL MEMBERS

INVITED TO ATTEND

YEARLY MEMBERS

- Annette Dunn
- Annie Campbell
- Barbara Harrison
- Carmen Allen
- Cynthia Simmons
- Dr. Deirdre D. Joe
- Emma Brooks
- Errol Brooks
- Gentle Barnett
- Gloria Coleman
- Helen Bennett
- Helen Figgs
- Jessie Gregory
- Judy Fields
- LaFrancine Burton
- Lawrence Sanders
- Leon McDougal
- Louis Harrison
- Marsha Hassell
- Marva Love Patterson
- Mary E. Ashford
- Mary Barnett
- Mary McElrath
- Patricia Anne Jones
- Pauline Bennett Lyons
- Phillip Walker
- Ronald Coleman
- Ruth Niblack
- Timothy Coon, Judge
- Valda Hawkins Browning
- Wanda Hayes Gibson
- Yvonne Wilson

**\$25 Gift
Card Raffle
every 30
minutes**



**Win the
GRAND
PRIZE
\$300 Value**

Raffle Participants: *Must be present to win*

How to earn raffle ticket for grand prize:
Life members get a raffle ticket
Bring a person who joins
Join at the event and get a raffle ticket

CRAB DADDY'S RESTAURANT

1046 MLK JR. AVENUE-LAKELAND, FL



SUPPORT MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT SCHOLARSHIPS

MORE THAN \$300,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS TO DATE!

COME OUT & SHARE WITH US & ENJOY COMPLIMENTARY HORDERVES

MENU: FISH NUGGETS OVER SEAFOOD RICE, ITALIAN PASTA SALAD, DEVEILED EGGS
TOPPED WITH GARLIC SHRIMP, SOUTHERN FRIED CABBAGE WITH GARLIC SHRIMP &
SMOKED SAUSAGE, CAJUN BREOILED PEANUTS, SHRIMP & GRITS, SEAFOOD DRESSING
TOPS/CREOLE SAUCE, WINGS BATTERED AND FRIED TOPPED WITH CRAB DADDY'S

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Naomi Williams, Chairperson

Clarence Childs James Griffin

Robert Zackery Eugene Williams

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Tuesday, January 14

Coleman Bush Bldg 6 PM

ALUMNI OFFICERS

President – Beverly Boatwright, Rochelle High School

Vice President – Valarie Niblack, Rochelle/Lakeland High School

Secretary – Rosa Hughes, Rochelle High School

Recording/Corresponding Secretary – Gwendolyn Sanders, RHS

Financial Secretary – Angela Terrell Walker, Rochelle High School

Treasurer – Ronald Coleman, Rochelle High School

Historian/Chaplain – Willie Jay Williams – Rochelle High School



SOUL FOOD SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 16, 2025

COLEMAN BUSH
BUILDING



PROFESSOR WILLIAM A. ROCHELLE



•William Rochelle was born on a boat that was traveling on the St. John's River while his family was on the way to Lakeland, Florida. He earned credits from what is now Florida A & M University in Tallahassee and also completed advanced coursework at Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia.

Mr. Rochelle was a member of the St. James Lodge of Masons, Independent Pallbearers, the Teachers' Association, and the Negro Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Rochelle founded the Negro Boy Scouts in Lakeland and was active in the Red Cross, Community Chest, and other community causes. He was a founding member of the Foster Memorial Methodist Church and was one the church's trustees.

•He was active in racial and inter-racial movements in Lakeland and he was awarded a citation for his work in educational community activities by the Negro Chamber of Commerce.

•Mr. Rochelle was 89 when he died at Morrell Memorial Hospital (later Lakeland Memorial Hospital and now Lakeland Regional Medical Center). He was laid to rest at the Tiger Flowers Cemetery in Lakeland next to his wife, Lucy Rochelle (April 1, 1868-August 6, 1955). He also had a brother, Elder Stamper and a sister, and a sister, Dr. Emma Wheeler.

He spent 55 years in the field of education and 22 of those were as principal of Washington Park High School. The school's name was changed in 1949 to Rochelle High School in honor of Mr. Rochelle and his contributions to education

**Excerpts from dissertation paper by Tosh Sargeant
Where We Live and Learn to Know**

This young man, Tosh, attended Rochelle School of the Arts long after Rochelle High School closed. The school was unlike any other elementary school. There was something in these buildings before our time. What could it have been? He researched the history of Rochelle and wrote this dissertation paper.

MUSIC EDUCATION IN POLK COUNTY'S BLACK HIGH SCHOOLS The minimal records and first-hand accounts that are available indicate that most of Polk County's segregated Black high schools had extracurricular chorus clubs or glee clubs until the late 1940s¹²⁴ and did not offer music classes during the school day until instrumental music programs were established in each high school.¹²⁵ The years that instrumental programs were founded in Polk County's segregated Black high schools are as follow: Table 1. Founding Year for Instrumental Music Programs at Segregated Black High Schools in Polk County¹²⁶

High School	Year Instrumental Music Program Founded
Jewett High School	1951
Oakland High School	1954
Rochelle High School	1949
Roosevelt High School	1948
Union Academy	1953

Polk County's segregated Black high schools began to offer both vocal and instrumental music courses as instrumental music programs were added.¹²⁷ However, in 1951 Union Academy in Bartow, Florida had a large choir that was separate from the extracurricular glee club indicating that chorus classes may have begun at Union Academy before the instrumental music program were founded in 1953.¹²⁸ By the mid-1950s every segregated Black high school in Polk County had a band¹²⁹ and a chorus. A more detailed account of music education in Lakeland's Black schools is provided in Chapter four. DESEGREGATION IN LAKELAND, FLORIDA SCHOOLS The Brown v Board of Education 1954 Supreme Court ruling determining that Jim Crow era laws of "separate but equal" were illegal and discriminatory did nothing to change the segregated education systems already established in Polk County, Florida. Instead of embracing the ruling of the landmark desegregation case, Polk County, and many other counties in Florida, used Florida's 1956 Pupil Assignment Law to restrict student transfer between schools. The state law allowed school districts to automatically assign students to the school they attended during the 1955-56 school year. Coincidentally, the final year that Polk County had legally segregated schools¹³⁰. It was an effective attempt by the Polk County School Board to prevent Black students from attending historically all-White schools. For another ten years the law successfully reinforced the segregated school system in Polk County

For students at Rochelle this meant that very little changed. The school remained a segregated all-Black high school. Even though technically segregation was illegal, Rochelle students were not allowed to attend any all-White high schools even if the all-White high school was closer to their home¹³¹. Also, no White students were allowed to attend Rochelle even if Rochelle was closer to their home. It should be noted that there's no evidence that any White students petitioned to attend Rochelle¹³². Locally, the wheels of change did not begin to roll until 1963 when fourteen-year-old Herman Mills and his mother Althea filed a lawsuit that challenged Polk County's racially segregated school system. Mills v. Polk County sought to end discriminatory education practices and ensure equal treatment for all students, staff, and faculty of Polk County schools¹³³. The Polk County School District defiantly fought to keep the district segregated, but national efforts to desegregate American society were quickly gaining ground. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 signaled the beginning of the end of dual education systems divided by race nationally and in 1965 the Middle District of Florida ruled in favor of Herman and Althea Mills. The Polk County School District reluctantly desegregated their school system for the 1965-66 school year. However, initial efforts initiated by the Polk County School Board to desegregate its schools were lackluster and ineffective. The all-White school board placed almost all efforts to desegregate schools on the shoulders of racial minority families and required Whites to make few if any accommodations to assist in desegregating schools. During the 1965-66 school year 170 Black high school students in Polk County transferred to all-White high schools.

Only 8 students from Rochelle choose to transfer to an all-White school; seven students transferred to Lakeland High School and one student transferred to Kathleen High School. One student who transferred to Lakeland High School and the lone student who transferred to Kathleen High School later returned to Rochelle to finish their high school education¹³⁴. In a repeat of desegregation efforts from ten years prior, no White students were asked or petitioned to desegregate Rochelle. While there was limited, but highly restricted effort, to desegregate the student population in Polk County, there was virtually no effort to desegregate the teacher, staff, or administrative positions. The federal courts stepped in again in 1968 and ordered the Polk County School Board to implement and monitor a more robust desegregation plan for the district. Hoping to appease what they saw as stringent federal desegregation guidelines, Polk County turned to a strict geographic zoning method to determine public school attendance. The method seemed to please the federal courts. An odd stipulation within the federally supported plans to desegregate Polk County schools was the support for the closure of the four remaining all-Black high schools. The federal government and Polk County School Board claimed that the closures were necessary because the campuses of the four remaining all-Black high schools were considered too small to be used as desegregated high schools and that the current teachers were not experienced in teaching the extended curriculum often found at the all-White high schools. These were only a few of the reasons the all-Black high schools were closed. In actuality, the Polk County School Board believed closing the remaining all-Black high schools was the quickest way to separate the 134 James Holton, "The best education provided": A social history of school integration in Polk County, Florida, 1963-1994. 45 district from segregation. They also recognized that desegregating formerly all-Black high schools would be vehemently resisted by most White Polk County families. (To be continued. 45)

NEW NEIGHBORHOOD SEAFOOD RESTAURANT HAS PANTHER TIES

Husband and wife team Daryl & Bridget King recently opened Crab Daddy's Surf & Turf, located at 1046 Martin Luther King Jr Ave (once known as the historic Brother's BBQ). This is the son and daughter-in-law of WPRHS Alumni Life Member, Laurastine King.

Lakeland is growing and so is the culinary scene so when the two decided what would be their next "best thing" to grow their thriving and successful Food truck operation a brick and mortar was a no brainer. After an extensive search the two happen upon a staple in the community and after doing their due diligence, partnering with some key figures in the community and prayer they decided to take the plunge. They officially began their soft opening in September with the Grand Opening scheduled for January 18th 2025 the same day as the Martin Luther King Jr parade. We will have specials on Crabs, fish, Shrimp and even BBQ.

The two put their heads together and focused on creating a menu that was more robust than the Food Truck yet a perfect fit for the demographic. Whether you're from the area or a visitor we wanted to create a menu with tantalizing mix of long-standing staples yet innovative to capture the newcomers to our culinary landscape. In short, a touch of the old with the new, we even have Soul Food Sunday's. That's right folks they are serving Ox Tails, Smothered Pork Chops, Turkey Wing and even BBQ on Sundays. Crab Daddy's is striving for that total Seafood vibe curated for everyone to enjoy with a soulful experience.

They shared that most of their dishes are made from scratch so some may take a little longer to prepare because they don't pre-bread or pre-cook most dishes because it takes away from the natural flavors a compromise quality. "We cook your Crabs, fry your fish, sauteed or grill your shrimp when you order it so please know that process takes time but we have the logistics down so the wait times aren't too bad", they advised.

Our goal is to provide the most courteous and timely service, along with the most cost effective and quality menu possible. This is always a work in progress as food costs are soaring but with effective due diligence, we are finding ways to keep costs down.

Crab Daddy's has been on the food scene for a while. They cut their teeth years ago (2013) by bringing Crab Daddy's from concept to creation in Atlanta Georgia. The two decided to relocate back to Florida in 2019 when Daryl's Dad and Rochelle graduate, Russell King experienced some health issues. Daryl said "there wasn't any questions, once my dad got sick it was my job to come back and take care of him. He would have done the same thing for me". Daryl shared with us that both of his parents, aunts and uncles were all graduates of Rochelle. Daryl further shared that many, many, many years ago even he attended Rochelle but it wasn't a high school at that time. Daryl is no stranger to Lakeland as he was born and raised here, graduated from Kathleen Senior high where he earned honors in Football such as All state, All County and co-player of the year in 1984. He returned to Lakeland after leading his college Football team (Troy University) to two national championships. Following in the footsteps of his Grandfather, (who was Lakeland's first black police officer) he joined Lakeland Police Department in 1989 prior to relocating to Atlanta in 1994.

I'm looking forward to partnering with some of the Rochelle Alumni and using our facility to do some chat and chews, mixers or even wind down Wednesday to give Alumni a place to meet and reminisce.

If you are looking for some great food, great service and a nice vibe, give Crab Daddy's Surf & Turf a try..... Ask about those Cajun Shrimp & Grits with the Grilled Grouper..... WOW!



The Washington Park/Rochelle High School Alumni Association, Inc. is deeply thankful to Philanthropist Joseph Garvin and his family for their generous donation to our organization. Your contributions will significantly aid in the smooth operation of our organization as we inspire young people in the Lakeland community with
“Education for a Better Tomorrow”.

Beverly Boatwright, President

LETTER BELOW FROM MR. GARVIN AND FAMILY

Greetings,

We were inspired by the Holy Spirit, to bless your family with this gift and expressing our thanks to God our Father and provider. We are hoping that tax free gift will inspire and encourage you in your financial endeavors. In honor of my deceased wife Margaret Speed Garvin, who passed on February 27,2017 and myself Joseph Garvin.

We were blessed with four daughters: Vivian, Beryl & Bridget(twins) and Debbie.

During our sixty three years of marriage we were inspired and encouraged by our love for Christ and this scripture: Luke 6:38 “Give, and and it shall be given unto you: good measure, presses down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again”.

Margaret and I always gave thanks to God our Father for the things He has done for us through our parents, family, neighbors, church, Pastors, Deacons, Ministers, Elders and all others who helped to mold, develop and establish our lives. As we seek to find ways to help others in the presence of God's people we hope and pray our words of encouragement and monetary gifts will serve a genuine purpose in your life as we attempt to share God,s purpose in our lives. For we know, He is alive in our hearts.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Joseph Garvin & Family

Joseph Garvin



December 12, 2024