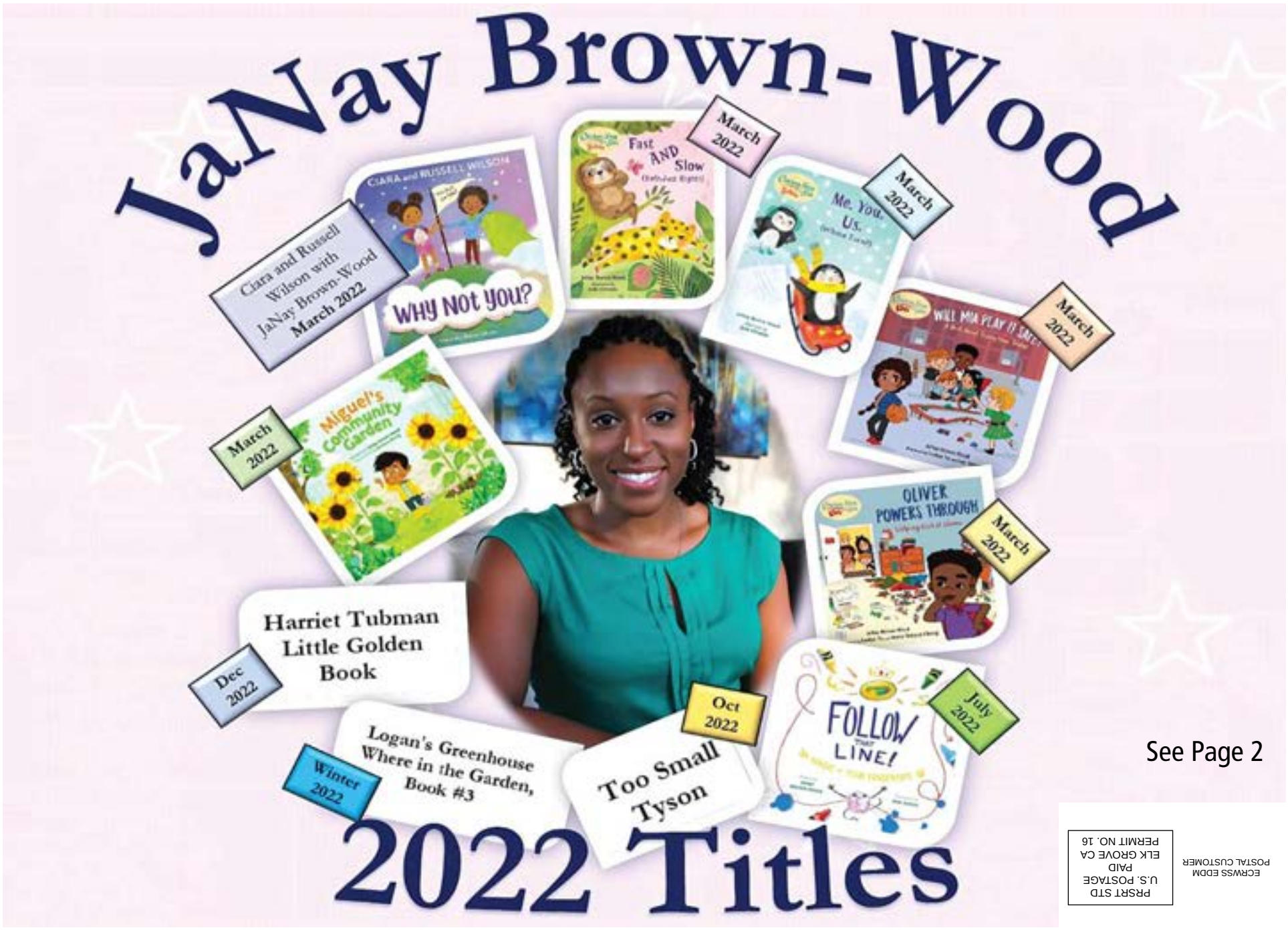
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See Page 2

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Local author JaNay Brown-Wood has 10 children's books coming out this year

By Monica Stark

When writing for children, local author JaNay Brown-Wood likes to include elements of diversity because she believes all children should be able to find those books in meaningful, non-stereotypical ways.

What she considers "casual diversity", or for instance "a young Black kid just being a Black kid in America." She argues the story doesn't have to be tied to the race of the kid. Like Miguel, a young, Hispanic boy with two dads; or, Amara, a young African American girl being raised by her grandparents, or Logan, a young white male in a wheelchair, elements of diversity are in many of Brown-Wood's children's books.

A selection of books from her 10 children's books coming out this year fit this objective.

Additionally, two of the 10 upcoming titles include board books with animal characters who demonstrate budding social emotional learning skills. Lastly, Brown-Wood is releasing her first nonfiction Little Golden Book, a biography of Harriet Tubman, which was a new challenge because she had never written children's nonfiction before.

A professor of Early Childhood Education at Folsom Lake Community College, Brown-Wood can't help but have child development in the back of her mind when she writes. "You know, if I'm writing a character, I'll ask myself, does this sound like a four-year-old? Is the word choice correct? Etcetera."

For the Tubman book that meant finding all the different sources and learning more about her, and then really deciding what are the nuggets, the pieces she wanted to include in this story that would be meaningful for readers, and young children.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Brown-Wood also worked on her first collaboration with celebrities Grammy-winning R&B singer Ciara and NFL Seattle Seahawks Quarterback Russell Wilson, called "Why Not You?"

The book encourages children to follow their dreams no matter how outlandish they may be and to really shoot for the stars. "It's all about youth empowerment and…it's just really cool to be a part of that collaboration," she said.

Under the cover, Brown-Wood dedicated her collaborative work on the book to her loved ones. She writes: "To my parents, Marci and Lee, who taught me to believe in myself. And to my husband, Catrayel, and my daughter, Vivian, who push me to be better every day. I am because of you."

Brown-Wood's first book Imani's Moon, about a young Maasai girl who strived to reach for the moon, despite being bullied by her peers over what they thought was an impossible feat, was published in 2014. The book was honored by the Brown Bookshelf for Black History Month in celebration of children's literature. Brown-Wood's book also won the 2013 Children's Book Contest sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and was featured on Stephen Colbert's The Late Show and Storytime with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2021. It also made it onto the infamous Central York School District of Pennsylvania's banned anti-racist book list, which has been overturned. When she heard about the list, Brown-Wood was curious as to the books on it and came to find, Imani's Moon was included. "I was listed under 'author of color'…so you're telling me the reason why I'm on this list is because I'm out there as a person of color."

The community pushed back; the school board rescinded the list, but as Brown-Wood stated: "That is not the case for a lot of these authors of color or diverse authors, whose books are being banned from schools across the country," she said.

In 2016, Brown-Wood met children's author Jacqueline Woodson, awardee of The Hans Christian Andersen Award, the highest international recognition given to an author of children's books. Brown-Wood asked her what advice she would give to budding writers, and she said: Be prolific. Fast forward to a recent meeting with a student, who asks Brown-Wood: How are you so prolific?

"I just made that, you know, connection. Like, yes, I guess I must be doing something right. The students are interested in it [writing for children] and they often want to know tips and things of how they can get published," she said.

Previously, Brown-Wood sold poetry to Highlights Kids and to High Five. Published by

Brown-Wood's books will be available online on Barnes and Noble, Amazon, the publisher's website, local bookstores and libraries. Brown-Wood recommends readers ask the libraries or local bookstores to order them if they don't have them in stock. "Those are things that are helpful for authors to get their books out there, and have people share their work with others."

About the first three books being released, followed by the titles of the later release dates

1) Why Not You: Ciara and Russell Wilson with JaNay Brown-Wood, March 2022

Published by Random House Books for Young Readers

From Grammy-winning pop star Ciara and Super Bowl champion quarterback Russell Wilson comes a picture book to inspire young readers to see the value in themselves, be brave, and go after their biggest dreams!

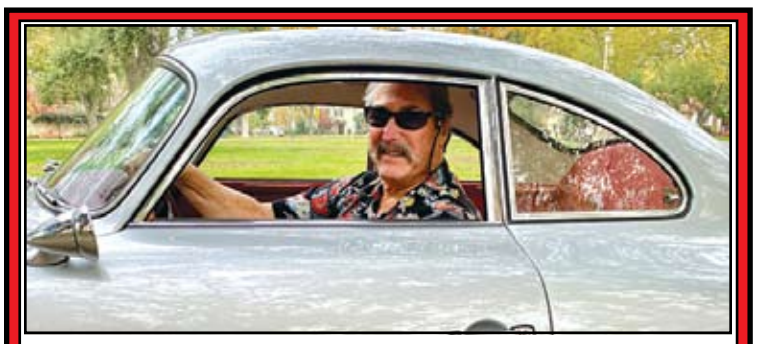
Source:www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/669041/why-not-you-by-ciara-and-russell-wilson-with-janay-brown-wood-illustrated-by-jessica-gibson/

2) Miguel's Community Garden, Where in the Garden Book 2: March 2022

Published by Peachtree Publishing Company Inc.

Miguel searches for sunflowers to take to his community garden party in this vibrant, diverse exploration of gardening and healthy eating. The second book from Janay Brown-Wood

See LOCAL AUTHOR on page 4



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Cover courtesy: Janay Brown-Wood

California health classes now require more expansive teaching on mental health amidst decline in high schoolers' well being

By GraceAnn Lesser
Rio Americano High School/
Sac School Beat

Senate Bill 224 went into effect in January, requiring all California middle and high school health classes to include mental health in the curriculum.

By January 2023, the Department of Education is required to incorporate the new topics into the state standards, and school districts will be teaching the new material by the following January.

According to Rio Americano Health teacher Vicky Warren, these standards are vital to ensure consistency between educators.

"The current curriculum is extremely outdated." says Warren." The district is currently piloting new Health textbooks, which is long overdue. Most health teachers have relied on supplemental materials for the last several years to compensate for the outdated text. The real issue is that there is a lack of consistency without a reliable, vetted curriculum. One teacher may choose to cover some aspects of mental health that they feel are important and another teacher may choose other topics. A consistent, board-adopted curriculum will ensure all students receive comprehensive mental health education."

However, some educators worry about the increasing volume of material that must be crammed into a single semester, and the demands this places on health teachers.

"We already have mandates for CPR instruction and comprehensive sexual health. We need to cover nutrition, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs as well," says Warren. "I worry that a mandated curriculum could be based on unrealistic time expectations. I don't think we're going to solve any student's mental health crisis through instruction in the health class, but hopefully it will help students be more aware of their own mental health and those around them and that they will be empowered with access to resources so they can advocate for themselves and others."

The new curriculum will not only require mental health education for classes that did not already include it, it will expand upon any existing mental health curriculums. New standards will teach students how to spot and intervene in a mental health crisis; the impact of race, ethnicity and culture on mental health; and the defining



characteristics of serious mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders and schizophrenia.

Students seem to think this would be beneficial.

"I think that more serious mental health conditions should be discussed in health class because a lot of them are super misunderstood," said Rio senior Zoe Buck, who took Health last semester.

Rio senior Hannah Lee, who took Health as a freshman, seems to be in agreement.

"I do think teaching more about the serious conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, OCD, eating disorders, PTSD, etc. would be so helpful and important for students to be educated on," she said.

Warren says these topics should be approached with caution.

"Covering conditions like eating disorders, depression, and suicide can be very tricky," she said. "These topics can be triggering and upsetting to some students who are already struggling. Leaving this out of instruction is not really an option though either. With regards to these, and other conditions like OCD, PTSD, schizophrenia I think the most helpful thing we can teach students is identifying signs and symptoms and accessing reliable resources for help."

The bill cites the effectiveness of mental health education in reducing stigma surrounding mental health issues, while encouraging awareness and seeking out help.

It also mentions the vast numbers of Californians, particularly adolescents, that struggle with mental health issues.

This struggle has been greatly exacerbated by the two-year period of isolation and uncertainty caused by COVID-19, evidenced by a national 24 percent increase in mental-health-related hospital visits for children ages 5-11, and a 31 percent increase for ages 12-17 between March and October 2020. Visits for suspected suicide attempts increased by 50 percent among teenage girls 12-17 early in 2021 compared to early 2019.

"The most significant change I have noticed in students' mental health over the course of the pandemic has to do with a decline in social skill," Warren says. "Students seem more withdrawn and less interested in engaging with each other and their teachers. In general, the energy level feels low. This could be result of underlying mental health concerns of just a generalized fatigue from the constant changes, disappointments, and fear of the unknown. We're all tired."

GraceAnn Lesser is a student at Rio Americano High School and originally published this article on Sacramento School Beat.

On the web: sacschoolbeat.com/1092/news/california-health-classes-now-require-more-expansive-teaching-on-mental-health-amidst-decline-in-high-schoolers-mental-health/

Trivia test by F.A. Rodriguez

1. GEOGRAPHY: Where is the Adriatic Sea located?
2. MEASUREMENTS: How many centimeters are equivalent to 100 inches?
3. MOVIES: Who was the famous person portrayed in the movie "The Aviator"?
4. FOOD & DRINK: When did the first self-serve grocery store open?
5. FAMOUS QUOTES: Which 19th century author once wrote, "It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade"?

Answers

1. Between the Italian and Balkan peninsulas
2. 254 centimeters
3. Howard Hughes (by actor Leonardo DiCaprio)
4. 1916, Piggly Wiggly store in Memphis, Tennessee
5. Charles Dickens

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Local Author:

Continued from page 2

and Samara Hardy's Where in the Garden? series, "Miguel's Community Garden" stars an adorable young Latino exploring his garden while comparing, contrasting, and hunting for sunflowers among a multitude of warm-weather fruits and vegetables like apricots, artichokes, asparagus, mushrooms, spinach, and more. Back matter includes a delicious recipe. Also available from JaNay Brown-Wood and Samara Hardy: Amara's Farm.

Source: www.peachtreebooks.com/book/miguels-community-garden/

3) Chicken Soup for the Soul Babies: Fast and Slow (Both Just Right!): April 2022

Published by Penguin Random House

Chicken Soup for the Soul Babies combines sweet stories with humorous lessons to bring out little one's best behavior! Jaguar likes to go fast, but Sloth likes to go slow; Jaguar and Sloth both try out each other's speeds, and learn something new about themselves and one another. We accept one another's differences when we understand that we come from different walks of life, and some walks are just slower than others. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/678736/chicken-soup-for-the-soul-babies-fast-and-slow-both-just-right-by-janay-brown-wood-author-jade-orlando-illustrator/

Me, You, Us: April 2022

Will Mia Play It Safe: June 2022

Oliver Powers Through: June 2022

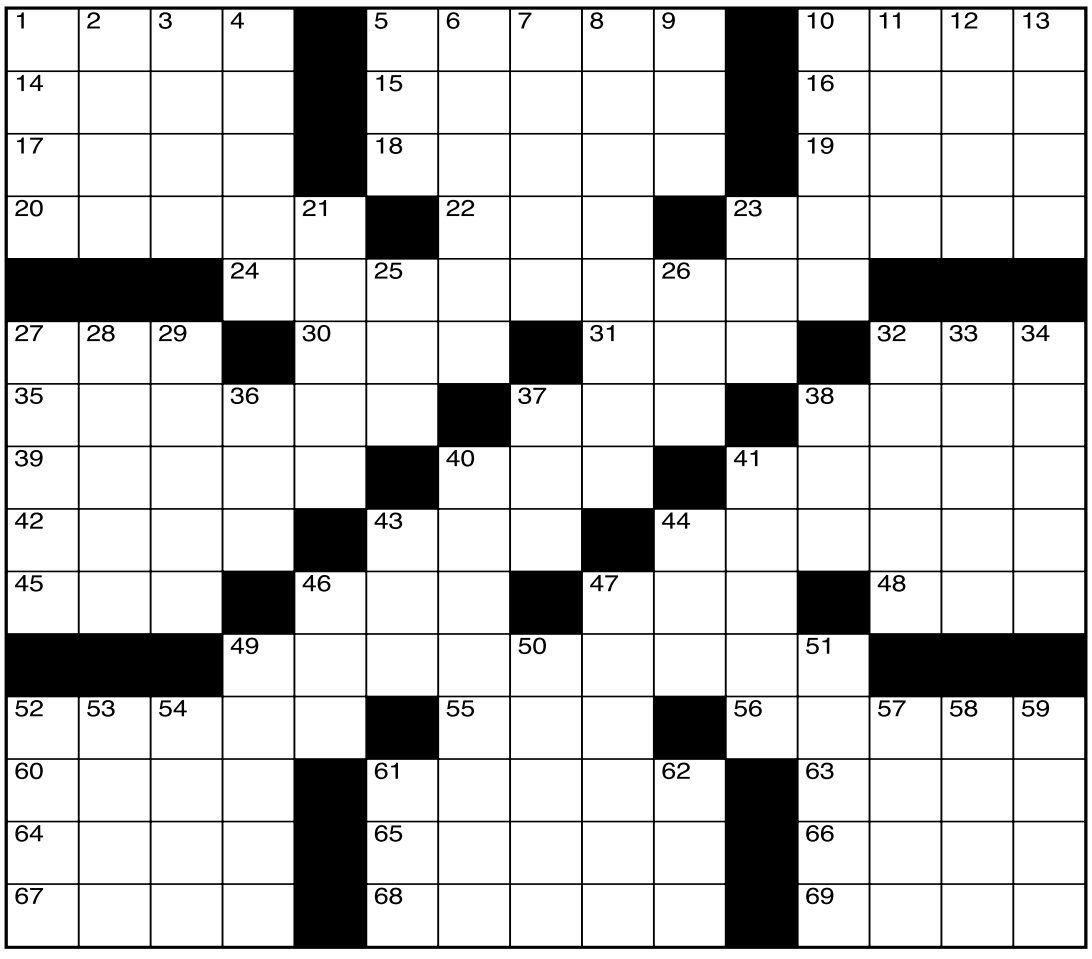
Follow that Line!: July 2022

Too Small Tyson: Oct. 2022

Harriet Tubman Little Golden Book: Dec. 2022

Logan's Greenhouse Where in the Garden Book No. 3, Winter 2022

CROSSWORD



CLUES ACROSS

1. Type of footwear
5. Studies a lot all at once
10. Adventure story
14. Hundred thousand
15. Former U.S. Vice President
16. Ruler
17. Indian city
18. Similar
19. Ship as cargo
20. Volcanic craters
22. Boxing's "GOAT"
23. Bullfighting maneuvers
24. London soccer team
27. Score perfectly
30. No (Scottish)
31. SoCal hoops team (abbr.)
32. Woman (French)
35. Unwanted attic "decor"
37. Peter Griffin's daughter
38. Broad, shallow crater
39. Large instruments
40. Low bank or reef
41. __ and Venzetti
42. Oil group
43. Father
44. Aggressive men
45. Pairs well with green
46. Travelers need it
47. Digital audiotape
48. Midway between northeast and east
49. Chemistry descriptor
52. S. China seaport
55. Sound unit
56. Heavy cavalry sword
60. Thick piece of something
61. Spa town in Austria
63. Boyfriend
64. Norse personification of old age
65. Type of box
66. Tie together
67. Fiber from the coconut
68. Chicago mayor
69. Old English letters

CLUES DOWN

1. Type of sauce
2. Pattern of notes
3. Plant with long seedpods
4. Map out
5. Numbers cruncher
6. Make a mental connection
7. Italian tenor
8. N. America's highest mountain peak
9. Witness
10. Arabic given name
11. Music awards
12. " The Immoralist" author
13. Area units
21. Units of loudness
23. Political action committee
25. Bar bill
26. Witch
27. A theatrical performer
28. 2-door car
29. __ and flowed
32. Papier-__, art medium
33. City in Georgia
34. Irregular
36. College sports conference
37. Angry
38. Partner to cheese
40. S. American mammal
41. Self-immolation by fire rituals
43. Split pulses
44. Disfigure
46. Cow noise
47. Erase
49. Chadic language
50. Reward for doing well
51. Paid TV
52. Millisecond
53. Other
54. Colombian city
57. Necklace part
58. Every one of two or more people
59. Regrets
61. They come after "A"
62. Horse noise



1. Name the singer who wrote and released "Give Me One Reason."
2. What was the full title of the James Brown song "Hot Pants"?
3. What was John Denver's first No. 1 hit?
4. Who released "Instant Karma! (We All Shine On)" and when?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I still see her standing by the water, Standing there lookin' out to sea, And is she waiting there for me?"

Answers

1. Tracy Chapman. She performed the song during a 1988 tour but didn't release it until 1995. The song netted her the Grammy for Best Rock Song in 1997 and is still her biggest U.S. hit.
2. "Hot Pants (She Got to Use What She Got to Get What She Wants)," released in 1971. Side A contained "Hot Pants" part 1, with parts 2 and 3 on side B.
3. "Sunshine on My Shoulders," originally on the "Poems, Prayers & Promises" album in 1971. As a single, it slowly climbed to the top of the charts in 1974.
4. John Lennon, in 1970.
5. "Galveston," by Glen Campbell in 1969. Writer Jimmy Webb's original version was an anti-war song, while Campbell's revised chart-topping version was more upbeat and patriotic. Campbell wore a military outfit in the video.

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Introducing local pot pie chef: Samela Rucker

By Monica Stark

Known by the business name FabDiva101 on Instagram, a local home chef has garnered the reputation of always offering something different to even the most basic meal.

Samela Rucker likes blending flavors, enhancing tastes or putting together foods and flavors you wouldn't usually imagine coming together. If she dines out, she tries to recreate the meals at home to put her own spin on the meal or bring out a bigger flavor. Her ethnic background is African American and Japanese, and her siblings are African American, Filipino and German so she grew up eating many different types of dishes.

Seafood, chicken and tri tip pot pies made with all fresh vegetables, fresh herbs and spices, Samela makes them and sells them frozen so that people can store and bake them when they are in the mood. The pot pies are $8 each ($9 for the seafood).

Besides pot pies, which are usually sold in two days because she starts getting calls for them a month ahead, the most often requested cakes would be rum cake or Kahlúa chocolate cake.

Instagram has been a communication tool for not only advertising but has facilitated discussions regarding orders, payment and delivery or pick up instructions. She shows her dishes depicted through pictures and videos. "I like to show my ingredients and the process of me making most dishes," she says.

She's been cooking since age 12 and recalls the evening that started her on this path. "I am the oldest of seven girls and discovered





cooking one evening when my mom was out late working and my younger siblings needed to eat dinner. It was the first time I cooked a whole chicken and fried it. I'm certain I cut the chicken in more pieces than defined but I just did what I remembered watching my mother do. From then on the kitchen has been my playground for both cooking and baking. I became known for the kitchen being my Happy Place." Samela has had various catering and event planning businesses. Currently she cooks for fun and by appointment when time allows.

Her reasons are succinct. "I love cooking. I love dining out. I love experimenting and creating in the kitchen. It makes me happy and I enjoy the happiness of others enjoying my creations. Cooking is very soothing for me."

Originally from Oakland, and the mother of two adult sons and one teen daughter, Samela will have more time to herself soon as her daughter will be graduating in June 2022. "Having raised all three of my children and getting them all through highschool my life will need to be filled with something enjoyable for myself. I would love to create a business of my own doing things that I love like cooking more and traveling. I have a vision of putting together group travel packages centered around unique food tours. The pandemic has caused me to have to rethink some ideas but I'm very creative so stay tuned via my Instagram," she said.

Puzzle Solutions

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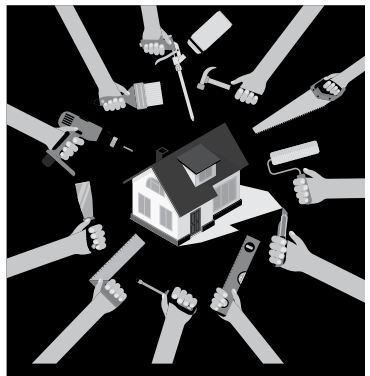
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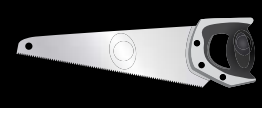
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