



This Week in African American History

PAGE 2



Big 9 Roots Festival Postponed

PAGE 3



Hate Crimes Rise to Highest Level in 12 Years

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Complimentary

Hamilton County Launches Text-Message Outreach to Positive COVID-19 Cases

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department launched a text-message COVID-19 case investigation system on Wednesday, September 8, 2021, in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Health. Hamilton County residents who test positive for COVID-19 through a reportable testing mechanism (PCR or antigen) may receive a text-message from the Hamilton County Health Department asking them to complete their case investigation online. This system replaces the traditional phone interview.

A text-message based system will accelerate the case investigation process and help provide critical isolation and mitigation resources in an expedited manner.

The survey will also uncover who may have been exposed, so that contact tracers can follow up with those individuals to advise them of the exposure, what symptoms they need to watch for, when to get tested, and how to avoid infecting others.

“If you receive a text, we urge you to respond and complete your case investigation information,” says Hamilton County Health Department administrator Becky Barnes. “Please do your part to contain the spread of COVID-19 and help our community.”

Questions about this new process may be directed to the Health Department’s COVID-19 hotline at 423-209-8383.

Vaccination Saves Lives

The Health Department reports rapidly increasing COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in Hamilton County. It’s not too late to get vaccinated. Visit vaccine.hamiltontn.gov to see the Health Department’s most up-to-date COVID-19 vaccine calendar. Free transportation is available to the Tennessee Riverpark site Monday-Friday. Call 423-209-8383 in advance to schedule a ride.

COVID-19 Testing

Free COVID-19 testing is available in Hamilton County. Visit testing.hamiltontn.gov to stay up-to-date on the Health Department’s test kit distribution program and testing opportunities with our community partners. Questions? Call the COVID-19 hotline at 423-209-8383.

Spanish Facebook Page

This press release is available in Spanish on the Health Department’s Spanish Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SaludHamiltonTN>

DeAngelo Jelks elected Hamilton County Democratic Party vice chair

By Camm Ashford

During its Biennial Reorganization Convention Aug. 28, Hamilton County Democratic Party (HCDP) members elected DeAngelo Jelks as their new vice chairman.

Ooltewah resident Jelks is also running against Republican businessman Greg Vital of Georgetown in the Sept. 14 Tennessee House District 29 special election.

The legislative seat was previously held by the late Rep. Mike Carter, an Ooltewah Republican who died May 15 of pancreatic cancer.

The 75 Democrats who gathered using the Zoom platform for their convention also re-elected Rodney Strong as chair, Therese Tuley as secretary and Alix Thornhill as treasurer.

All elected will serve for the next two years.

Initially, the HCDP Reorganization Convention was scheduled for April. However, in response to the deadly coronavirus pandemic,



DeAngelo Jelks, who is running in the Sept. 14 Tennessee House District 29 special election, won his first political office when Hamilton County Democratic Party members elected him as their new vice chairman.

the Tennessee Democratic Party delayed county conventions until August.

HCDP Chair Rodney String said the alarming rise of local covid cases and hospitalizations made it necessary for the party to hold its biennial meeting virtually.

“It took some work, but our team did a great job of creating

a safe online experience that was engaging and interactive,” he explained. “We were able to hold our elections and caucuses to do everything that we need to accomplish.”

Jelks is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and reached the rank of captain in the U.S. Army Reserve. For his service as a convoy security platoon leader, he was awarded the Bronze Star, which is one of the highest honors one can receive for outstanding service.

A longtime resident of Hamilton County, Jelks is the founder of Chattanooga Dads, a family-focused community development organization. He is also a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., the American Legion and the Military Officers Association of America.

In addition to the countywide officers, Democrats also elected representatives for each of the nine County Commission districts in Hamilton County.

UTC’s Akeyla Madison is improving counseling services for historically marginalized students

By Camm Ashford

As conversations about racial injustice in American institutions continue, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is pursuing new ways to improve counseling services for students of color on campus.

When Keilan Rickard joined the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga as director of the Counseling Center in 2020, he recognized the need to connect with an underrepresented demographic on campus.

“One of our goals for the Counseling Center has been to increase the number of outreach presentations to marginalized communities,” Rickard noted.

That goal became a reality this summer when Akeyla Madison became the UTC Counseling Center’s first diversity initiatives and outreach coordinator and counselor.

As part of her role, Madison said she will collaborate with departments across campus to improve services for underserved and historically marginalized students.

“I feel like a trailblazer in this position,” Madison said. “I’m creating it from the bottom and building it up. My goal is to let the minority community know that they have resources and individuals that are there for them and want to help in any way that’s possible--whether that has to do with their rights, their sexuality, their disability.”



Akeyla Madison is the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Counseling Center’s first diversity initiatives and outreach coordinator and counselor.

A native of Johnson City, Tenn., Madison is a two-time UTC alumna--with a bachelor’s degree in psychology (2018) and a master’s degree in clinical mental health and school counseling (2021).

Her time on campus has included being part of the Governor’s School program and serving as the University’s Tennessee Licensed Professional Counselors Association student representative during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Madison’s recently completed master’s program included a one-year internship in the Counseling Center under Rickard’s watch.

“One of Akeyla’s skills is being an excellent relationship builder with clients,” Rickard said. “She brings energy, commitment to our students and the

continued on page 7

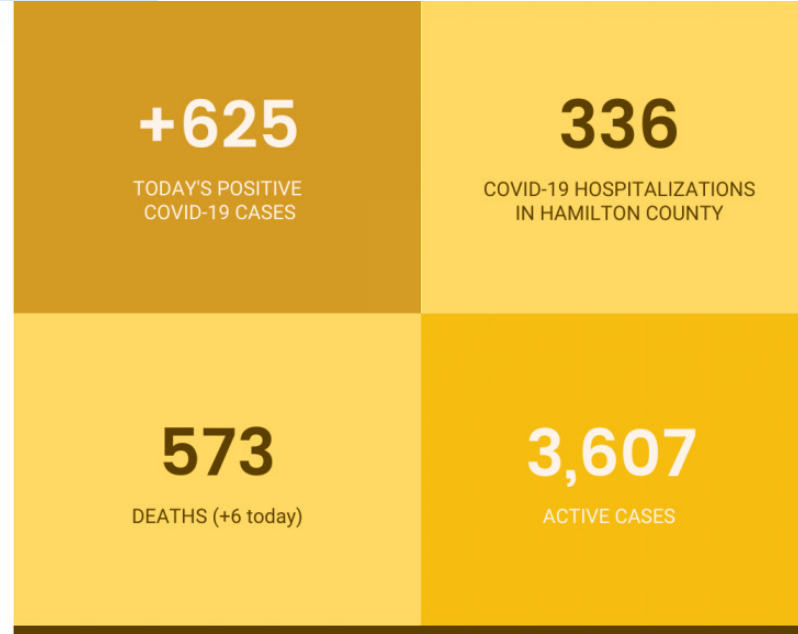
INDEX

- National2
- In The News.....3
- Local.....5
- Churches.....6&7
- Health.....8
- Business.9

Hamilton County Health Department

COVID-19 CURRENT DATA REPORT

September 8, 2021



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