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Annual Sneaker Ball Celebrates Fathers, Children, and Community at Stella Walsh Recreation Center

Organized as a tribute to the neighborhood's fathers and their vital role in the community.

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Juneteenth Celebrated at Cleveland's African American Cultural Garden



SCAN TO LISTEN

By Obie Shelton

The heat was on, but the rain held off as more than 200 people visited the African American Cultural Garden to celebrate the Juneteenth holiday.

"This is what it's all about—community," said organizer Beverly Lloyd.

Martin Luther King Boulevard was closed off between Superior and St. Clair from noon until 4 p.m. to give full access to the celebration as the temperature soared to 90 degrees.

Live music was provided by the band Loladé. The band features David Clark, Jerrell White, Sha'Nyla Curry, and Lolade' Mccants.

The Cleveland Cavaliers sponsored a talent show competition of young people performing songs, dance, and spoken word. Cash prizes were given to winners. A dramatic presentation reenacted the day enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, were informed by a Union soldier that slavery had ended in the U.S.

Free food was served in the tradition of Juneteenth. Barbecued chicken, Jollof rice along with red beans and rice were served with watermelon and hibiscus red tea. The red-colored food is recognized as symbolizing the bloody struggle, sacrifice, and resilience of enslaved



Africans in America. Vendors sold African-themed clothing and artifacts while books were given away to children who listened to storytellers.

The Cultural Garden's executive director Obie Shelton urged those in attendance to spread the word about the importance of raising the rest of the money to complete the garden.

"We can each contribute," he said. "It's not about waiting for someone else to do it for us."

The garden's fundraising campaign has secured almost half of the \$4 million needed to complete the dramatic granite and sandstone design that will stretch down the hill from Wheelock Avenue to Martin Luther King Boulevard. "Let's finish it," Shelton

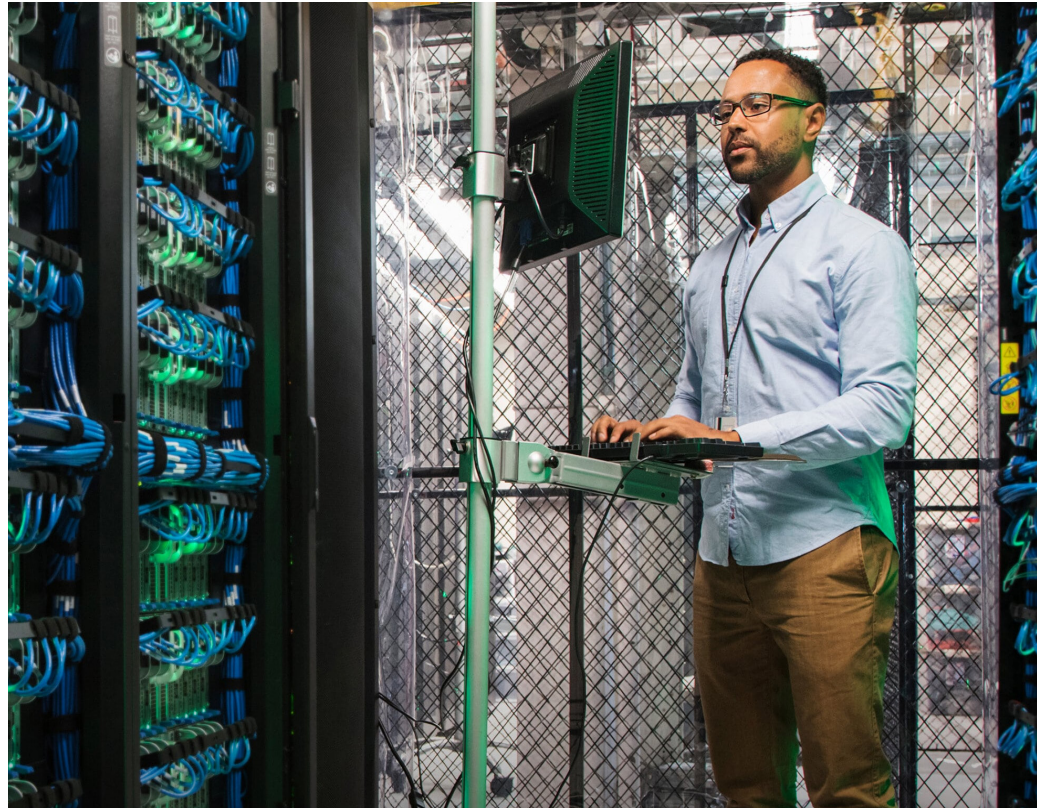
said. The African American Garden site was dedicated in 1977. The completed African American Cultural garden will convey the journey of the African American community from the past through the present and into the future.



Cleveland's IT Infrastructure, Backup and Recovery Strategies Falls Short



By Ron Calhoun



The City of Cleveland's efforts to establish a resilient information technology (IT) infrastructure, as promised by Mayor Justin Bibb during his campaign bid, have faced scrutiny. Shortcomings in utilizing American Rescue Plan Act - or ARPA - infrastructure funds and addressing an outdated system have come to the surface. The recent spotlight on the City's technological infrastructure has sparked discussions about essential practices for ensuring data protection and business continuity.

One crucial aspect highlighted by experts is the need for comprehensive planning and design. A team of professionals with a deep understanding of business requirements is essential to creating a scalable infrastructure that can adapt to the City's evolving needs. This

includes considerations of network topology, hardware requirements, and data storage to build a solid foundation for future growth.

Security remains paramount in any IT infrastructure strategy. Prioritizing cybersecurity measures, including encryption, access controls, and intrusion detection systems are crucial for safeguarding sensitive data and infrastructure against cyber

threats.

Additionally, collaboration and partnerships with public and private sector organizations play a vital role in leveraging resources and expertise for IT infrastructure projects. By engaging in knowledge-sharing and best practices exchange, Cleveland can drive innovation and continuous improvement in its technological initiatives.

However, recent events have exposed vulnerabilities in Cleveland's backup and recovery strategy, raising questions about its effectiveness. Infrastructure experts stress the importance of a comprehensive backup and recovery approach, including thorough assessments of data assets, redundancy measures, and regular testing of recovery procedures.

A resilient backup and recovery strategy should prioritize redundancy and geographic diversity to mitigate the risk of data loss and downtime during disasters or emergencies. Encryption of backup data and regular testing of recovery procedures are essential for ensuring the reliability and effectiveness of the strategy.

Incorporating disaster recovery plans and ensuring compliance with industry regulations are also crucial aspects of a robust IT infrastructure strategy. By adhering to these guidelines and continuously improving their approach, Cleveland could have built a resilient IT infrastructure that supports economic growth and enhances the quality of life for its residents by now.

The Cleveland Clinic could have been a valuable resource in accomplishing a vigorous IT infrastructure strategy. The two-year, \$170 million Cleveland Clinic Data Center project was completed

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in 2014. This confirms that a brand new system for the City of Cleveland was and is not unreachable for the Bibb administration.

Ron Calhoun is the publisher for The Cleveland Observer. He is also a retired IT professional with 15 years of experience. He emphasizes the importance of effective backup and recovery strategies in minimizing data loss and operational disruptions.

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University Settlement Sneaker Ball Celebrates Fathers and Children, at Stella Walsh Rec. Center



Story & photos by Mark Silverberg

CLEVELAND, April 19, 2024 — The Inaugural Sneaker Ball, held at Stella Walsh from 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., offered a unique evening dedicated to fathers, children, community, and culture. The event provided an opportunity for fathers and their children to strengthen their bond while enjoying a memorable evening.

Participants, including fathers and their children, dressed formally while showcasing their hottest sneakers. The Sneaker Ball also served as a networking platform, allowing fathers to engage with one another. The event featured participation from Warners Girls' Leadership Academy, Mound STEM, AB Hart, and the University Settlement Youth Program.

Attendees enjoyed a variety of activities and amenities, including food, a cotton candy machine, a photographer, resource vendors, a DJ, a sneaker table activity for the children, sock giveaways, and a candy table.



More than 180 people attended the Sneaker Ball. The event recognized several individuals for their hard work, dedication, and growth as fathers: Hudson Lee, Raheem Stover, Charles Mosby, and Shannon Ward were all

awarded for their contributions. The Sneaker Ball continues to be a celebrated event, fostering community spirit and providing a platform for fathers and their children to create lasting memories.



Jamal Bowman Jr. is Empowered by His Dedication While Chasing His Dreams



By Michael Patterson



Cleveland amateur boxer Jamal Bowman Jr. has taken pride in his dedication since he was eight. In doing so, he's gotten one step closer to achieving his long-term boxing goals.

Bowman's First Steps Toward His Dream

Bowman started training in his father's apartment and had his first fight at 10. Later, he transitioned to Zelma George Park where he currently trains.

Bowman started out only training on Saturdays because of his dad's work schedule. Now he trains several days throughout the week for a couple of hours each session.

Constantly moving, while residing near Miles and Kinsman areas, during his childhood impacted Bowman's social life

while growing up. This created a challenge in building friendships.

"With school it could kind of mess with your friends a little bit... You make some friends, then kind of break up," Bowman said.

Bowman's Sacrifices Toward His Dream

Bowman's dedication to boxing still has an effect on his social life. He has lost numerous friends due to his boxing schedule. He is content with sacrificing aspects of his social life as long he achieves his goal of being a world champion boxer.

"Some of my friends from high school, ever since I graduated, we have broken off... I'm working and boxing so I don't really have time to do what they're doing... A lot of friendships got broken because I was telling them I'm in the gym, I don't have time for everything else," Bowman said.

Bowman's Early Sports Dreams

Bowman had different plans before completely setting his sights on boxing. When he was

younger he had dreams of being a football player. He strayed away from that dream after realizing his size. When asked about it he said "I was like 55 pounds all the way up until I was 12. I was small."

In high school he ran track and cross country to enhance his endurance for boxing. That prompted a hiatus from boxing which increased his desire to excel in boxing. When asked how the time off from boxing affected him, Bowman said, "It made me want to compete more.. I've been seeing other people win.. so now I wanted to come back and I wanted to compete."

Fighting Through Skeptical Thoughts

A few years after he stopped running cross country, doubts came into his mind about his boxing career. Bowman thought about walking away from the sport completely. These doubts, Bowman said, were because "I was just training and I wasn't fighting."

Encouragement from his father pushed Bowman to fight in a local tournament created that urge to fight again.

"I just fought in the tournament, had a good result. Now I was ready to keep on going," Bowman said.

Life Outside of Boxing

Although Bowman is heavily invested in his boxing career, he does have several different hobbies that help him stay at ease outside the ring, which include hanging out with his girlfriend and brother, and a newfound joy of playing instruments.

When asked about his hobbies Bowman said, "Recently I've been trying to get into learning how to play the guitar. I learned how to play the piano and stuff like that. Other than that I just play basketball with my brothers or my girl." He learned how to play the piano while living with a family member who had one. Staying there prompted his curiosity and pushed him to start playing.

He also is a foodie which is something he picks up from his girlfriend. When asked what is his favorite hobby to do with her, he said, "Eat..She put me on to all types of restaurants.. She's the one who put me onto the apps. I got apps for every restaurant I'm not gonna lie..."



Cleveland amateur boxer Jamal Bowman Jr. Photo credit: Jamal Bowman Sr.

Bowman's Influence on Those Around Him

Bowman plays a huge mentor role to younger boxers around him. He specifically spoke about his influence toward eight-year old boxer Paul Butler Jr.

When asked about his leadership toward Paul Butler Jr. he said, "Every time we're in the gym, he's around...when he sees me workout he doesn't see me cut any slack. I don't cheat on any workouts so he probably sees it too... When we're running I try to motivate him to run because he'll stop running. I put my hand on his back and I tell him to keep on running, it's only gonna pay off."

Butler Jr. already has several fights under his belt despite his young age. Who is Butler's favorite fighter?

"Jamal," Butler said emphatically.

Most Important Life Lesson from Boxing

Bowman's dedication is what drives his love for boxing. Boxing has taught Bowman much about himself.

"The same dedication that I put into boxing, I could put into anything..I can just put the same determination for boxing into anything else," he said.

Michael Patterson is a senior at John Carroll University studying digital media. He loves basketball, mixed martial arts and football and aspires to become a sports reporter or commentator.



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Legal Aid helps Northeast Ohioans get 'Economic Justice'



By Tonya Sams

Money issues can cause an enormous amount of stress and fear. Concerns about money can determine housing choices, whether or not basic needs are met, a person's quality of life, and more. Money stressors not only include the size of a paycheck or being in debt, but also employment and unemployment issues, foreclosures, estate planning, taxes, and bankruptcy. The Economic Justice group at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland helps clients navigate the waters of difficult legal financial woes.

"The Economic Justice Group provides direct representation for clients needing legal assistance related to money and advocates for systemic change that will result in greater economic stability for our client community," said Barbara Barreno-Paschall, senior attorney in the Economic Justice group. "The five legal areas that the Economic Justice group focuses on are employment, consumer, tax, bankruptcy, and estate planning."

When assisting with employment issues, economic justice attorneys help clients remove barriers to employment such as sealing criminal records

or applying for a Certification of Qualification for Employment or CQE (part of an Ohio law that helps people with criminal records obtain employment), sealing and expunging juvenile records, and employment discrimination.

Clients experiencing consumer legal issues are assisted with mortgage and property tax foreclosure, debt collection lawsuits, car repossessions, student loans, payday loans, auto title loans, and medical or nursing home collection.

Economic Justice attorneys also help clients settle disputes with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) about personal federal income taxes and file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy protection. They also help with estate planning,



including helping clients with wills and clearing tangled property titles.

There is one area of law where the Economic Justice group receives the most requests for assistance.

"Historically, we get a

huge number of requests for bankruptcy assistance. We saw a drop off during the pandemic when debt collection was paused, but our bankruptcy numbers have been increasing over the last year," Barreno-Paschall said. "Individuals who have low income often find themselves in financial situations in which they have accumulated debt that they are unable to pay off, no matter how much they would like to do so."

The state of the economy can have a huge impact on bankruptcy cases.

"As prices have risen due to changing economic conditions, it has become harder for our client community to keep up with increased living expenses.

This would include housing costs, transportation, and food, when their wages are not increasing at the same rate, or when they are on a fixed income such as Social Security," Barreno-Paschall said. "For many Americans, they are one car accident or health emergency away from not being able to pay their bills each month because they have not been able to save

due to increased costs and stagnant wages."

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland serves residents of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain counties. To get help with financial legal issues, call Legal Aid's Economic Justice infoline at 216-861-5899, or seek help online at www.lasclev.org.

Tonya Sams is a Development & Communications Manager at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

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July is Cord Blood Awareness Month: Why You Should Care



By Sharon Lewis



SCAN TO LISTEN

What is cord blood? It is the blood in the umbilical cord – the lifeline that connects a baby to its mother. While cord blood is considered medical waste, it contains red and white blood cells and is rich in stem cells.

Red blood cells (RBCs) transport oxygen from the lungs to the body and return carbon dioxide to the lungs. **White blood cells** (WBCs) are key to the immune system. They protect against infections by identifying and destroying pathogens. **Stem cells** can differentiate into various cell types and self-renew. Hematopoietic stem cells in bone marrow produce all blood cells, including RBCs, WBCs, and platelets. They are vital for growth, tissue repair, and treatments like bone marrow transplants for leukemia.

Stem cells can be used to treat approximately 80 different medical conditions. Stem cells have been used in transplant medicine and, more recently, in regenerative

medicine – the research and application of therapies that support the body’s ability to heal itself.

Cord blood can be stored or banked after delivery without discomfort or inconvenience to the mother or child. For a healthy person, making stem cells is not a problem. For those individuals,



stem cells from cord blood can be lifesaving, and banking cord blood can serve the entire community.

What Diseases and Medical Conditions can be Treated with Cord Blood?

Scientists have already determined that many cancers, including leukemia, Hodgkin’s disease, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, and some solid tumor cancers can be treated with stem cell therapies.

Also, many blood, genetic, metabolic, and immune system conditions can be treated with stem cells. Research is underway

to determine if they can be used to treat such conditions as stroke, diabetes, birth asphyxia (brain damage from low oxygen), cerebral palsy, autism, Parkinson’s disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), heart failure, osteoarthritis, and other conditions.

According to Advanced Nurse Practitioner Monique Jones MSN is a nurse practitioner in Southfield, MI., stem cells and other biologic agents are being utilized in wound healing, along with infection control and nutrition, to decrease the size of wounds quickly and exponentially.

Cord Blood Collection

The process of collecting cord blood begins after the baby is delivered. After the umbilical cord is cut, the cord and placenta are collected, and a needle is inserted into the cord to extract the blood which then goes into a sterile bag with a blood thinner so the blood does not clot. No blood is taken from the baby or mother. The collection can be done after a vaginal or cesarean section delivery.

Storing Cord Blood

Parents interested in banking their cord blood should

inform their healthcare provider who may be able to collect and send the cord blood to the cord blood bank. Unfortunately, not all hospitals do the collection. Once there, the blood is processed, typed, and screened for diseases or other disorders to ensure that it is safe to use. The blood is cryogenically frozen and then stored.

Reasons to Bank Umbilical Cord Blood

A common question for parents is “Can my child use their own cord blood?” The answer to that is no. However, siblings or other family members may be able to use the banked cord blood for a life-saving stem cell transplant. The storage process does not affect you or your child and it gets thrown away. There is no risk and no harm done by electing to store it.

By banking cord blood, the life of a loved one or of a perfect stranger may be saved. Either way, it could save a life.

Sharon Lewis graduated from John Carroll University with a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communications and holds a Master of Education from Cleveland State University.

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Community Development Corporation Leadership Program Seeks 2024 Applicants



By Sandra Kluk

If you are passionate, committed and dedicated to taking an active role in improving your community, you may be excited by, and ready for, one of two valuable leadership development programs. The Neighborhood Leadership Development Program (NLDP) and Community Development Corporation Leadership Program (CDCLP).

NLDP and CDCLP are programs of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation. Both programs are free to participants.

For 17 years, NLDP has offered community engagement leadership training for residents of Cleveland, and its inner ring suburbs, who are working on projects in the city of Cleveland and who are determined to make a positive impact on their communities.

CDCLP just graduated its third cohort. CDCLP is the Cleveland area's only leadership program specifically designed for Community Development Corporation Executive level leadership.

Both programs are currently seeking applicants for their 2024 cohorts.

NLDP and CDCLP are designed to help emerging neighborhood leaders reach their potential by expanding their knowledge base and personal development through education, coaching and ongoing interaction with their peers and other leaders. Participants, as well as, graduates of both programs have ongoing access to the services of a Program Coach who will give advice and support tailored to the needs of the participant.

The programs cover topics such as organizational and program planning, marketing and communications, program fundraising, board governance, conflict resolution and more. NLDP and CDCLP participants and graduates are a diverse group with many interests who are working on a wide variety of issues

that positively impact Cleveland's neighborhoods.

Both programs hold their in-person sessions at Trinity Commons at 2230 Euclid Avenue. NLDP sessions take place from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, CDCLP sessions take place from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursdays.

The application period is now open!

The deadline for NLDP applications is August 14th. For additional information on NLDP and to view the curriculum and

online application, visit www.nldpcleveland.com or call 216-776-6167.

The CDCLP deadline is August 2. For additional information on CDCLP and to view the curriculum and online application, visit www.cdclp.org or call 216-776-6172.

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Do Nothing! It's Good for You. Why Downtime is Vital



By Khemi Adé



Daydreaming is directly linked to having a healthier mind and even a healthier life. Time spent daydreaming and removing yourself from the outer world is important. In the long run, failure to allow the mind to rest can result in “accelerated aging and premature death”, according to Stephanie McCain, a Cleveland-area independent marriage and family therapist.

Similar to the body, the brain can experience chronic stress and immune dysfunction. The mind acts like a sponge and can only absorb so much information, according to mental health experts at Cleveland Clinic and the Village of Healing Center.

What is downtime?

Why is downtime vital for overall health and well-being? What exactly is downtime?

There are several meanings when defining downtime. Bianca Stallings, a psychiatric nurse practitioner at the Village of Healing Center, has a very simple and straightforward definition: downtime is decreased activity or inactivity.

“It means taking time for yourself that doesn’t involve work. It involves being intentional with your time so that you can truly relax and not worry about daily tasks or responsibilities,” Stallings said.

What happens when the brain doesn't rest?

The lack of prioritizing downtime in one’s day-to-day life can come with major, long-term health consequences.

“Increased stress can lead to depression, anxiety, decreased concentration, and problems with memory. Chronic stress, in particular, can weaken the immune system “which determines our ability to fight off infections,” Stallings said in a recent interview with The Cleveland Observer.

The body will inevitably respond to a lack of mental rest

“The body will demand downtime” since “there’s little to no space for exploration.” Furthermore, “if we don’t make time for ourselves, it can negatively impact our mental and physical health,” McCain said.

Lack of downtime can also negatively impact social health, worklife, and sleep hygiene.

As it pertains to social health, “relationships are challenged” due to such personal stress. As a result, quality time spent with others – including loved ones – also “diminishes” because “we’re not pleasant people” to be around.

When it comes to work-life balance, “you lose command of your time.” Therefore when overloaded with tasks and activities, one’s time management is jeopardized.

“Sleep hygiene is defined as healthy patterns, practices, and habits that support sleeping well. The “inability to rest” due to racing thoughts compromises the quality of sleep. This could be concerning because sleep plays a huge role in downtime,” stated McCain.

As the mind is said to be like a sponge, the mind is also “kind of like a battery – you can only use it for so long before you need to either replace it or recharge it,” Stallings said. This is what happens when your mind rests.

A Rested Body Blooms with Benefits

“When we have consistent downtime for ourselves, it improves overall mental and physical health. It leads to improved concentration, productivity, and satisfaction with life,” Stallings explained.

There are additional long-term advantages to prioritizing mental rest.

Consistent downtime could result in “better decision making, better problem solving, increased ability for learning, sparked creativity, and heightened imagination,” McCain also added.

Almost Doesn't Count: Downtime Doppelgängers

According to both McCain and Stallings, there are certain situations and circumstances that don’t count as downtime.

“Downtime doesn’t involve providing a service for someone else even if it may bring you joy. Although caring and helping others may bring us happiness, intentional time for ourselves is important. Relaxation is paramount because it helps refuel our bodies and mind. Sometimes doing absolutely nothing is important too,” according to Stallings.

Activities like “video games, games on your phone, scrolling on social media, watching TV, or any goal-oriented activity” do

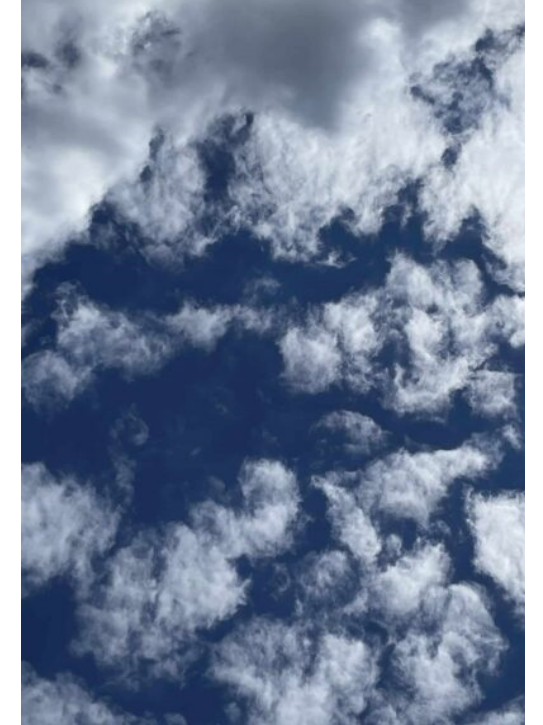


Photo of cloudy sky. Photo credit: Khemi Adé.

not qualify as proper downtime, McCain said. Simply put, “these activities do not allow our minds to wander” and they “keep you focused on an outside stimulus.”

What is true downtime?

Stallings’ answer is, “First and foremost, being intentional with your time. It’s easy to let our schedules fill up, and then we don’t have time for ourselves. One way we can avoid this happening is to pencil in our downtime so it’s a part of our routine.” Leaning in, and asking for help, and being kind to oneself are acts of necessary self-preservation.

Doing nothing is good!

Mental rest can look like an array of things but ultimately it’s doing nothing, sleeping, relaxing, daydreaming, and having uninterrupted time with self. Such deliberate choices improve physical, social, and overall mental health.

Downtime can also be viewed as subjective. It’s “different for everyone” because “it depends on how engaged your mind is,” McCain said. Overall, accounting for that level of rest results in being “happier people because we took care of ourselves.”

Cleveland was ranked as the most stressed city amongst the large U.S. cities in 2023, according to a study by personal finance company WalletHub.

Clevelanders could be in need of some mental rest even in the smallest of ways. Every little bit invested into downtime will be of benefit down the line.

Learn more about how to “downtime”: Why Downtime Is Essential for Brain Health (clevelandclinic.org)

Khemi Adé is a vibrant artist, writer, journalist, and the author of the Kindle eBook, “My Life is a Faerytale - A Journal Guide for the Magical Gorlies.”



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Adrian

CRUTCHFIELD

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