

NAACP

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane." Martin Luther King jr.

Missouri Legislators Attempt to Lower Tax Rates on Wealthy

Senate Bill (SB) 46 and SB 50 aim to create a mechanism to collect tax on online purchases (already due to the state) and use the proceeds to lower tax rates on the wealthy instead of use for the state's unfunded programs like infrastructure. Call or write Senator Lincoln Hough (573)751-1311, lincoln.hough@senate.mo.gov

Junk Insurance Bills

SB 48 and House Bill (83) have been proposed which will expand the ability of insurance companies to sell insurance policies that exclude many pre-existing conditions. Maternity coverage, diabetes, HIV and others are excluded from coverage. These bills provide little coverage and are highly profitable for the insurance companies. Call your state representative and your state Senator to see where they stand.

Meet Mae Ella Mahaffey Graham , RN 1917-2012



Author's Note: *Although everyone featured in this publication to this point has been a practicing African American or Black Healthcare Professional, this extraordinary woman has a story that needs to be told. Gwendolyn Marshall, Masters of Science in education, related her mother's story on a cold and blustery night at Big Momma's Coffee Shop.*

My mom was born in 1917 near Georgetown, Mississippi (population 317 in 1920, population 286 2010). She was one of 14 children in the family. Her parents, Joseph and Bertha (Poppa and Big Momma) were farmers. Although Poppa only had a third grade education he insisted all of his children pursue higher education. His sons served honorably in the military. Poppa amassed a farm of 300 acres despite the local banker's and surrounding white farmers' schemes to take the land. He didn't like the idea of credit and would save his money until he could pay cash for whatever he wanted. Mom left the farm at age 14 to attend a Jackson high school about 50 miles away. She lived with a cousin, a beauty salon owner. Mom worked at the beauty salon to earn extra spending money. She graduated from Lanier High School in Jackson MS. She then worked at a healthcare facility that took care of people with Tuberculosis or polio. It was there she discovered her love for caregiving. She attended nursing

Willard High School Theatre Students Present “The Milly Project”

Last year the Springfield News Leader published an extraordinary story of an enslaved woman, Milly Sawyers, who sued for her freedom in a Greene



County Court in 1835. Milly WON her freedom suit and was awarded a hearing for a monetary judgment. Our founding fathers and a mob of white people later pulled Milly and another black woman “Easter” out of the home where they were staying and beat them in the street. The women then disappear from history until last year. A Greene County archivist found the yellowed and aged court records while a News Leader reporter covered the story about this courageous woman. Information about performances and tickets can be found at whstheatre.blogspot.com

school in Jackson where she was one of only four other black students to graduate as RNs. She loved nursing and was very compassionate and gracious. She was always immaculately dressed in her white uniform and scuff-less shoes. Her career spanned 40 years at the Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital in Jackson MS, the VA hospital in Memphis TN and the Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital also in Memphis. My mom was a founding member of the Black Nurses Club (later the Eliza Pillars Nursing Club) formed in 1945 in response to black nurse exclusion from the Mississippi Nursing Association. They worked towards equal treatment, pay and appropriate staffing levels. There were six founding members: Mrs. Mattie Rundles, Mrs. Mary Hankins Harris, Mrs. Johnnie Wilson, Mrs. Rosie Mitchell, Mrs. Mae Ella Mahaffey Graham (Mom) and Mrs. Jean Frazier. The motto of the club is, “An Organization Dedicated to Excellence in Healthcare.”

Did your mom talk about facing racism? Stories of racism in the segregated South were quite frequent. She related that when she would go into a patient room at the VA to give medications the men would say, “I need to see the nurse.” She would say, “I AM the nurse.” Sometimes they would refuse her care or medication so she would leave. Later they would ask her to return and say, “Nurse, may I have my medication?”

What else would you like to tell us about your mom? She was proud of her profession. She maintained her RN license until her late seventies. Even after she retired she was “on duty” caring for those injured in auto accidents, emergency deliveries of babies and even a soldier having a seizure on a bus. When she wasn’t assisting others she enjoyed working in her flower garden and maintaining the most beautiful lawn in the neighborhood. In retirement she enjoyed lunch with other, mostly white, retired VA nurses along with three other black nurses from her unit.

What advice would your mom have for young people? Today she might say, “Dream big and follow your dreams, don’t let anything hold you back.” Do not give up when called the “n” word. She noted that people are people, look beyond the prejudice and racism. When people are sick, you see them as your patient, a person that needs help.