

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF 'THE WENDY WILLIAMS SHOW'



RODNEY AND ERIKA MCLEOD WANT TO MOLD THE FUTURE



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Constitution High School senior Tatiana Williams-Taylor plans to attend Duke University on a full scholarship.

— PHOTO BY ABDUL SULAYMAN/TRIBUNE CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER

Simply the best: Meet four Philly School District graduates from Class of 2022

Chanel Hill

TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

The Class of 2022 excelled in the classroom, served their community, won awards and made memories that will last a lifetime.

After years of hard work, late nights and a lot of determination in the face of a global pandemic, these four seniors have shown exceptional leadership, courage, dedication and endurance during their time in the School District of Philadelphia.

These graduates come from all walks of life — different high schools, programs and extracurriculars — but together they're poised to become the next generation of leaders who will make a difference in their communities.

Tatiana Williams-Taylor

Tatiana Williams-Taylor is passionate about giving back to the community and assisting others. She is the president of the National Honor Soci-

ety at Constitution High School and has been a part of New Options More Opportunities, a youth development nonprofit, for the last several years.

She was involved in various projects and programs concerning the study of the brain and nervous system at Ivy League colleges like Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania during her high school years.

Williams-Taylor is one of 150 students nationwide to be awarded the \$20,000 National Coca-Cola Scholarship and the only student in the School District of Philadelphia to receive the award in a decade.

"It's truly an honor to be named a Coca-Cola scholar," Williams-Taylor said. "It's a very competitive scholarship where only 150 students are selected nationwide out of over 65,000 applicants. I'm looking forward to connecting with their alumni in the future."

She plans to attend Duke University on a full scholarship and study neuroscience.

Souleymane Diarra

A student-athlete, Souleymane Diarra has maintained above a 3.5 GPA while being a part of his school's wrestling program at Overbrook High School.

"I never wrestled before until I got to high school," Diarra said. "One of the coaches at my school told me about the sport on my first day of school when I was a freshman. I went to try-outs and I've been wrestling ever since."

This year, Diarra won the gold medal in the 172-pound weight class at the District XII Wrestling Tournament, leading to his competition in the PIAA Regional Wrestling Championships.

He was also selected by Public League coaches for the Most Outstanding Wrestler honor and the Larry Imgrund Award — an honor bestowed on one wrestler who exemplifies dedication and leadership.

After graduating from Overbrook, Diarra has plans to attend college and continue wrestling.

SENIORS » 4A

Philly officials want you to reimagine the Benjamin Franklin parkway

Maria Pulcinella

WHYY

Philadelphia is embarking on a new phase of its long-term plan to redesign the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

The goal is to transform the area from Logan Circle to the Philadelphia Museum of Art into a more welcoming space for pedestrians and cyclists.

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation on Tuesday announced the Reimagine the Benjamin Franklin Parkway planning effort, a collaboration between Parks & Rec, the Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, & Sustainability, and international design firm Design Workshop.

Philly officials say they want to work with the community to create a "world-class public realm plan" for permanent changes that will improve the iconic parkway in terms of appeal, functionality, and traffic safety. The city characterized the changes it seeks as "people-centric."

Officials outlined a four-phase plan in which the city will collect public feedback, both in person and digitally, that will eventually inform preferred plans for the parkway. To kick off Phase 1, the city wants to hear from residents about their vision for the parkway's future.

Matt Radar, president of the Parkway Council, said in a statement that the project represents the next stage in a "decade-long journey to right the balance between 'park' and 'parkway.'"



Looking east toward City Hall from Eakins Oval. — WHYY PHOTO/EMMA LEE

The parkway has evolved since its inception in the 1870s. Inspired by the Champs-Élysées in Paris, it aimed to improve connections between Center City and a growing Fairmount Park.

In a 2013 study by the University of Pennsylvania's PennPraxis, researchers noted the parkway became "less an elegant pleasure drive to the park and more an automotive conduit to the city."

The 1960s redesign of Eakins Oval as a traffic circle, the authors wrote, "tipped the balance in favor of the car over the pedestrian experience."

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell, in announcing the initiative, said the city wants to hear from both residents and visitors as it makes the parkway a greener space that is more accessible and inclusive.

Those interested in getting involved can take the city's first parkway survey, which will be open through Aug. 15 and is available in 10 languages.

On Saturday, June 18, the public is invited to participate in an interactive design and planning event at The Oval XP, a pop-up festival situated at

PARKWAY » 4A

Decision on gas tax holiday may come this week

Aamer Madhani
Josh Boak

President Joe Biden said Monday that he's considering a federal holiday on the gasoline tax, possibly saving U.S. consumers as much as 18.4 cents a gallon.

"Yes, I'm considering it," Biden told reporters after taking a walk along the beach near his vacation home in Delaware. "I hope to have a decision based on the data — I'm looking for by the end of the week."

The administration is increasingly looking for ways to spare the public from higher prices at the pump, which began to climb last year and surged after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. Gas prices nationwide are averaging just under \$5 a gallon, according to AAA.

Biden said members of his team were to meet this week with CEOs of the major oil companies to discuss rising oil prices. Biden lashed out at oil companies, saying they are making excessive profits when people are feeling the crunch of skyrocketing costs at the pump and inflation. But Biden said he would not be meeting the oil executives himself.

"I want an explanation for why they aren't refining more oil," Biden said.

The Biden administration has already released oil from the U.S. strategic reserve and increased ethanol blending for the summer, in addition to sending a letter last week to oil refiners urging them to increase their refining capacity. Yet those efforts have yet to reduce price pressures meaningfully, such that the administration is now considering a gas tax holiday. Taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel help to pay for highways.

The Penn Wharton Budget Model released estimates Wednesday showing that consumers saved at the pump because of gas tax holidays in Connecticut, Georgia and Maryland. The majority of the savings went to consumers, instead of service stations and others in the energy sector.

In an interview Sunday on ABC's "This Week," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen expressed an openness to a federal gas tax holiday to give motorists some relief.

TAX » 5A



Cameron Larke, 11, is a participant in the Positive Choices program, which aims to teach kids conflict resolution and life skills, such as stock trading, and introduce them to careers like auto mechanics and video production.

— KIMBERLY PAYNTER/WHYY

Violence prevention groups struggle as city grants delayed

Philly poised to give more money, but earlier grantees still haven't been paid

Sammy Caiola

WHYY

Geanna Williams-Davis beams at the entrance of a basement room in the Shepard Recreation in West Philly, greeting a line of still-waking adolescents They take plates of baked goods, fruit and cereal before sitting down at an arrangement of folding tables that will serve as their classroom for the day.

The first Saturday in June marked the start of the summer session for Positive Choices, Williams-Davis's program designed to teach children emotional management and life skills that

could prevent them from getting involved in gun violence. Week one was a multimedia production workshop.

"Our kids, all they see is murder, drugs, violence," she said. "We're trying to show them something else."

Positive Choices is one of 41 nonprofit-led efforts selected in September 2021 to receive support from the City of Philadelphia's Targeted Community Investment Grant (TCIG) program, then in its fourth round. The city will soon announce the fifth round of the program, which will set aside more money for a new cohort of recipients.

PREVENTION » 4A