



A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS, ALUMNI, AND FRIENDS OF TAKOMA ACADEMY.

Gratitude toward your support for our mission



Dear Parents, Alumni & Friends,

It is with great excitement and enthusiasm that I begin my second year as Principal of Takoma Academy. This past year was an incredible journey of acclimation and learning about the unique mission of TA. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all our stakeholders for the unwavering support and dedication demonstrated throughout this transformative year. Today, I proudly stand before you with a profound appreciation for the remarkable strengths that define our school.

Our community's commitment has been nothing short of inspiring. From generous monetary donations to selfless volunteering, from coaching our athletic teams to active participation on the Accreditation team, and from spreading the word about our STEM Lab project to all other forms of support, your collective efforts have

From the Principal's Desk

been the cornerstone of our progress. Every gesture, no matter how small, has contributed significantly to our mission and vision, and for that, I am truly grateful.

This academic year, we are fully prepared to translate our goals into action, guided by our theme for the year: "L.I.F.E." - Love, Integrity, Faith, and Excellence. This theme encapsulates the values we hold dear at Takoma Academy and serves as a guiding light for our students and our community.

In our pursuit of excellence, I am thrilled to share that our STEM Lab project is now 95% complete, and we eagerly anticipate the opportunities it will bring to our students. The labs will expose our young minds to cutting-edge programming and resources, further nurturing their skills and talents. It is through this innovative environment that we will prepare our students for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Your generous donations have been instrumental in making this vision a reality, and we are deeply grateful for your support.

To conclude the previous academic year, the student body was fortunate to witness four of our scholars dedicating their hearts to the Lord through baptism.



Mr. Robert Machado, Bible teacher, assists Mrs. Leah Burgess, chaplain, during the baptisms.

As we continue to broaden our programming, we extend an invitation for your prayers to support our exploration of the exciting possibilities that await our students.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey towards excellence at TA. I look forward to a year filled with growth and achievement as we all stand committed to pursuing excellence in fulfillment of our mission.

Mrs. Yasmine Julien

Mission Statement

Takoma Academy is a Seventh-day Adventist high school welcoming all races, cultures, and religions; leading young people to Jesus Christ, providing excellence in academics and a commitment to service.

Alumna makes her mark as public health leader

In early 2016, when Zika virus infections in Brazil were resulting in a surge of babies being born with microcephaly – abnormally small heads and brains - Celeste Philip, MD, MPH '93 knew that she and her team at the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) had to be prepared for Zika in their state.

Following seven years of working at the county and state level in Florida, she had just become State Surgeon General, the state's health officer, part of a career in medicine and public health she had launched at Loma Linda University Schools of Medicine and Public Health. Given Miami's tropical climate and role as a gateway to Latin America, a spread of the disease to Florida was likely.

"It was very scary for people thinking of having children," she noted.

Zika virus was first identified in 1957 and found to be transmitted by *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos known to be present in Florida. Several travel-associated cases of Zika were diagnosed in Florida during the early summer of 2016 in people who had been in other countries. With time, Philip and her team learned that some Floridians had contracted the Zika virus without travelling outside of the continental U.S.

Philip and her team in Tallahassee and Miami-Dade County, worked with dozens of partner organizations to successfully control and eliminate Zika transmission in that South Florida municipality. They recognized that in the continental United States, certain community infrastructure factors helped to decrease the likelihood of humans being bitten by mosquitos indoors such as broad use of screens behind residential windows, that aren't as prevalent in Latin America and other locations with a similar climate.



During an intense, six-month period, moreover, Philip and her team coordinated with Florida officials to analyze where small amounts of water gather throughout the state, since those are areas where mosquitos were most likely to lay eggs successfully. They collaborated with organizations and community members to drain standing water, while applying pesticides aerially to kill mosquitos in locations with known Zika transmissions.

During her three years as surgeon general (2016-2019) in Florida, Philip helped reallocate public health funding to provide pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in all 67 Florida counties, which assists individuals who don't have HIV but are at risk of getting HIV to stay HIV-negative. During her previous stint as deputy state health officer, she helped broker an agreement to settle a decade-long lawsuit, when the state was sued over its limited Medicaid provider service network for children with special healthcare needs.

From Florida, she became public health officer for Sonoma County, Calif., where she served for one year. From the land of hurricanes, she went to a place where she had to deal with electricity shutoffs from one to four days, to ensure that people who need ventilators and other aids

had sufficient batteries and power generation to live. In addition, she provided ongoing support for a syphilis outbreak in an unhoused community, as well as a major wildfire and the first diagnoses of COVID-19.

Recalling the journey that began at the age of 16, when Philip began working part-time at the Howard University Hospital Department of Surgery, she thought that medicine lay in her future. Her parents, both registered nurses, had emigrated from India to the U.S. in 1969, and influenced her interest in health. A Howard guidance counselor had asked her what brings her joy and what she felt she was good at, and during this period she was also introduced to public health which focuses on prevention and a community's collective health and well-being. After graduating from TA, she chose a less traveled path to receiving her medical degree, having received a bachelor's degree from Howard University in the dual majors of English and Spanish. She is grateful for being challenged by her TA teachers, including Ms. Myrna Candelaria (English) and Señor Orlando Mastrapa (Spanish).

Her medical school graduation led to residencies and fellowships and at Advent Health in Orlando (formerly Florida Hospital) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where she further explored her interest in public health. After her graduation from Loma Linda, she provided primary care to patients in clinical healthcare settings for 10 years in health departments or free clinics.

Interacting with patients one-on-one helped Philip to realize how difficult it can be for individuals to improve their health and stay active. In some communities, for example, affordable,

fresh fruits and vegetables are more accessible, while in some areas, not only are such healthy eating options not available, but there is a lack of green space and sidewalks that her patients could use to exercise safely. Moreover, many held more than one job and had difficulty finding sufficient time and resources to prioritize their health.

"It was very eye-opening," she said of clinical experience in low-resource settings. Nonetheless, she always tried to find practical solutions. "We brainstormed together to find feasible and achievable strategies," regardless of a patient's circumstances, she added.

She returned to CDC in March 2020, where she served for three years

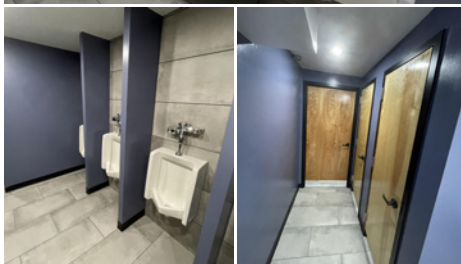
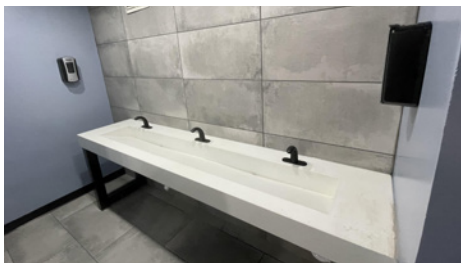
as deputy director for non-infectious diseases in Atlanta, providing leadership and guidance for four non-infectious disease centers with a combined annual budget of \$2.5 billion. Her time at CDC coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which she says exposed the drawbacks of the country's 20-year declining investments in its public health system and the need to increase trust and bi-directional communication with member of the public.

After completing her role at CDC in March 2023, Philip moved back to Maryland, where she incorporated a public health consultancy. She is working with the American Public Health Association and sees much opportunity to advise policy makers in

the nation's capital to help build health equity, which she defines as "the concept of everyone achieving optimal health."

She has appreciated the opportunity to be involved at TA through the Alumni Board with old friends such as Mrs. RaShawna Young '92 and Ron Braithwaite, M.D. '93, which put on a successful Alumni Weekend in April 2023, coinciding with her class's 30-year reunion. She is thoroughly enjoying being back home after 25 years and is grateful to be closer to her parents and many lifelong friends. She believes their close bonds are a tribute to the value of Christian education.

TA Bathroom Update



In May 2022, we began our effort to fundraise \$60,000 to renovate the boys and girls bathroom on the lower level of our building, near the gym. We reached our goal last spring. Thank you to all of our donors who supported this initiative, which we completed over the summer.

Separately, we have raised more than \$210,000 toward our \$250,000 goal for our STEM lab project. In the next issue of the newsletter, we will update you on this initiative.

Takoma Academy Alumni Weekend

April 18-April 21st, 2024

Takoma Academy

8120 Carroll Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912

Honor classes: 1944/1949/1954/1959/1964/1969/1974/1979/1984/1989/1994/1999/2004/2009/2014/2019

Thursday April 18th -Welcome social /Volleyball/ Basketball Game -TA gymnasium

Friday April 19th Golf Tournament (location TBA) / New Science Lab Alumni reception/ Alumni Vesper Service -TA Chapel

Sabbath April 20th Alumni Worship Service/Honor class events -TA Chapel/gymnasium

Sunday April 21st Bike Ride and Walk a thon -TA Athletic Field

Mental Health at TA

This school year, Takoma Academy has hired Mr. Kelvin Mitchell, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, to provide therapeutic services to students and staff twice a week on campus. Mr. Mitchell, who started working at TA in September, is working with students and staff on an individual basis, as well as for group counseling. For students interested in receiving therapeutic services, parents must sign consent forms before the first session.

Jaysson T. Brooks, M.D. '03

For Jaysson T. Brooks, M.D. '03, one door closed, and another, even better one opened.

Following his junior year at Takoma Academy, Brooks received notification that he had been rejected for a summer internship at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt. He had envisioned himself as a space engineer, so it was a dream internship.

Devastated, he visited with the TA guidance counselor, who encouraged him to apply to Loma Linda University's Minority Introduction to the Health Sciences (MITHS), a three-week program at the California university's medical school designed to introduce Black Seventh Day Adventist high school students to health sciences careers.

"I'm not interested in medicine," was Brooks' response.

She persuaded him to apply, which led to three weeks of dissecting cadavers, attending Neuroscience and Anatomy lectures and speed-reading classes. He learned how to mold a tooth for dentistry and shave down a tooth for a crown.

By the third week, Brooks had called his mother with a simple verdict: "This is it, mom. I love it."

"I enjoyed being with very smart kids from around the country," he recalled.

He came back for his senior year at Takoma Academy, played for the third season on the varsity basketball team and began to date his classmate, *Brittany Law Brooks, M.D. '03*. The couple married after graduating from Oakwood University in Huntsville, Ala., where Jaysson Brooks graduated *summa cum laude*, majoring in biology. Brooks found college English classes to be relatively easy due to



the rigors of Ms. Myrna Candelaria's classes at TA, and he thanked her for preparing him well, now noting that strong writing skills are an important strength he uses every day.

Jaysson and Brittany Brooks followed Oakwood by attending Loma Linda University School of Medicine, where they graduated in 2011. The couple now have three children, including a newborn born in 2023.

Being a married couple was helpful in attending medical school together in the sense that they understood each other's inside jokes about studying medicine, according to Brooks. The drawbacks were that their fellow medical school classmates with a spouse not attending could lean on that partner to cook and take care of domestic duties during finals periods, but in attending medical school together with both partners studying, such an arrangement is not possible. In addition, the Brooks studied and synthesized information quite differently – she likes to talk about ideas, while he prefers to read on his own - so studying together was not always feasible.

Good with his hands in part from working with his father on projects around the house when he was growing up, Brooks ultimately chose to become a pediatric spine deformity surgeon, and his specialty is operating

on children with stress fractures, and ailments such as sclerosis, diagnosing, treating, and rehabilitating his young patients. He completed his residency at Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore and took his first surgery job in San Diego.

He likes being a surgeon in part because he likes quick results. He clearly enjoys the balance between the practical aspects of operating on patients and working

with families and teaching medical students and writing and publishing peer-reviewed research papers, which he has done more than a dozen times. The length of his days can vary considerably from six hours to 18 hours.

Since 2021, he has served as a pediatric orthopedic surgeon at Scottish Rite for Children in Dallas and an assistant professor at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Before that, he worked at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Miss., from 2017 to 2021.

Fellow TA alumnus *Naeem A. Newmann, M.D. '93* was a mentor for Brooks, and the latter has served as a mentor for a couple of TA students who have connected with him through the Internet.

Living in places with a smaller Adventist presence, he appreciates how Maryland and its Adventist schools give the church a good opportunity to educate young people.

"My goal is to take the best care of my patients," Brooks said. "I'm only here today thanks to the amazing mentors I had. I would like to mentor as many students as I can who are interested in orthopedic surgery."

New Math Teacher, Mike Harvey

Takoma Academy's new Math teacher, Mr. Mike Harvey, brings more than 20 years of experience teaching to the classroom.

A native of Jamaica, he teaches Pre-Calculus, Algebra II, and Geometry. He just completed a six-year stint teaching middle school Math at a Prince Georges County public school, which followed four years of teaching Math at a Christian school in Upper Marlboro.

He appreciates TA's "no cell phone" policy, as opposed to the "constant battle" in the public school system of getting young people to stay off their phones during class.

During this school year, Harvey is trying to "absorb the way of the school," and better understand its culture. "My mission this year is to



understand and not to be understood," he said.

"It's always been my desire to teach at our schools," he said of Seventh-day Adventist education. He noted that in the Book of Education, "the

work of education and redemption are one and the same." Earlier in his life, he was discerning the calling to be a pastor, but over time, he has seen that "teaching is in line with my gifts."

"I really have a desire to have our kids be immersed in the faith," he added. Seventh-day Adventists schools are "designed to protect our children from the widespread corruption in society." He strongly encourages Adventist parents to send their children to SDA schools.

He noted that parents also tend to be more engaged in private schools such as TA, as opposed to public schools. "It makes a big difference."

"I'm impressed with the spirituality of some of the students," he said during the first week of class. "They have an earnest desire to know the Lord."

New Spanish teacher builds new family legacy

If you enter Mr. Orion Hunter's classroom, even if interviewing him for a newsletter article, be prepared to converse in Spanish.

After two years teaching Spanish in a Prince Georges County public middle school, he joined Takoma Academy's staff in August. In 2020, Mr. Hunter earned a bachelor's degree in Communications and Public Relations from Washington Adventist University, where he minored in Spanish.

He became fluent in Spanish through studying for an academic year at Universidad del Plata, the Adventist university in Argentina, from 2017-2018. Taking classes in Spanish and conversing in the language day in and day out helped increase his proficiency to the point that he eventually felt comfortable becoming a Spanish teacher.



His parents are Jamaican and they settled in Maryland around 30 years ago, and even though his paternal grandfather was Nicaraguan, he never had the chance to teach it to his sons, and Mr. Hunter and his brother T.J. decided they wanted to reclaim their

family's Spanish-speaking heritage after finding a Bible in Spanish that owned in the house. T.J. also studied for an academic year at Universidad del Plata.

Speaking in Spanish, with the flags of 20 Latin American countries affixed to the wall and the 12 months written in Spanish on the whiteboard, Mr. Hunter said many TA students are "well mannered" and "motivated." He feels that most students have the discipline to learn Spanish and also meet the high expectations they parents have set for them.

"The norm here is excellence," he added. He wants his students to take pride in their Spanish skills and to feel comfortable conversing with others using both formal and informal Spanish.

Continuing what he received at TA

When he thinks of his four years at Takoma Academy Christopher Banks '99 remembers the extra actions that his teachers and staff took on his behalf within a community of faith.

He remembers Ms. Myrna Candelaria, English teacher, reading the play that Banks wrote when he was 16 years old, *The Askia*.

"She didn't get paid overtime to do that," he recalled. "I was deeply appreciative of that."

He remembers Mr. Larry Kromann, principal, completing a required school recommendation for him in a moment's notice, so that Banks could meet his looming admissions application deadline during senior year for Brown University, the Ivy League university where he studied International Relations, earning his bachelor's degree.

He remembers Dr. Joe Menendez, vice principal for student affairs, picking up the school main office phone one day when staff were on their lunch break and speaking, impromptu, to a Brown University admissions officer to answer questions the official had about Takoma Academy and Banks' work there.

"We know Chris here. We're very proud of him and hope you admit him," Menendez said to the Brown admissions officer, the latter later told Banks after he had arrived at the Rhode Island university. The admissions officer told Banks that his writing *The Askia* and Menendez' recommendation helped Banks earn an admissions offer.

"It says a lot about the culture of the school," he said about how staff members and teachers seemed to go out of their way to help students. "We were encouraged to be ambitious and creative."

He also credited Dr. Selma Chajj, the guidance counselor at TA



when he was a student, with her encouragement, after he told her he planned to apply to several Ivy League schools. "She didn't shoot down dreams," he said.

In addition to being educated in a safe environment with 450 other students and a committed staff at TA, Banks also marvels at how the relatively small group of non-Adventist students grew to love the school. The father of his classmate *Mark Larson '99*, for example, came to love the school so much that he coached the boys soccer team as a volunteer. *Pete Garza '99* was eventually baptized at TA and later became an Adventist pastor.

Banks and his wife of seven years, Amarachi, have lived in Portland, Ore., since May 2023, and he is the director of education workforce at The Urban League, the national African-American civil rights organization. For seven years (2015-2022), he worked at Union College in Nebraska, helping to establish the first Political Science program at a Seventh-day Adventist university.

He also holds a Master's degree in International Relations from Columbia University in New York, as well as a Ph.D. in Politics from Oxford University, where he met Amarachi.

"God has been teaching me lessons all the time," Banks said.

During his time at Union, Banks was instrumental in helping several

students land impressive graduate school placements, including a Music major whom he helped gain admissions into the doctoral program for Political Science at Rice University in Houston, being one of a dozen student who succeeded out of 400 applicants. He takes pride in the accomplishment of one of his former students at Union, who earned a full scholarship to attend Stanford Law School. Banks was giving what he had received at TA as a teenager.

Earlier this year, Banks incorporated his college prep counseling service, Cardinal Ivy Prep, and he intends to work more with high school and college students to help them achieve their dreams, just as TA helped him.

"I continued what I received at TA," he said. "I believe in mentorship," he added. "I don't stifle ambition."

Sharon Brophy Russell, former TA teacher

Former faculty member (1971-77) Sharon Brophy Russell of Lincoln, Nebraska, passed away on December 16, 2022, at the age of 74 after a courageous fight against lung cancer. She is survived by her husband, Malcolm Russell, her sons Michael Ian of Washington D.C., and Eric of Grand Rapids, MI.

Rest in Peace

Derek Vernon Hampton '80
Franklin A. Hume (Alumni Parent)
Eddie Wimbish '74
Jonathan Armstead '78
Chris Butler '78
LaVerne Edwards-Smith '78
Derek Vernon Hampton '80
Franklin A. Hume (Alumni Parent)

Thank you to our TA donors

Thank you to all who gave to our Agape Fund during the 2022-2023 school year and to support our other initiatives, such as Worthy Student Fund, STEM Labs, and Bathroom Renovations (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023)

Founder's Club

- Adventist Healthcare
- Anonymous
- Herbert N. Gundersheimer Foundation, H. Dean Boland, Esq.
- Bainum Family Foundation, Barbara Bainum '62
- Andrew Gottlieb '89
- Patricia Kingston
- Dwayne Leslie, Esq. '84
- Medical Group Foundation, Inc.
- Nu Pathway Healthcare
- David M. Reile, Ph.D.
- Barbara H. Suddarth, Ph.D. '81
- Carla Taylor

Washington Training Institute Club

- Adenike Adepoju Noakes '00
- Benevity
- Phillip McIver, D.D.S '95
- Jon McIver, M.D. '91 & Joy McIver, M.D. '92
- Gloria & Alvin Singleton

Tiger Club

- Melissa Andrews
- Roberta Bainum '67
- Glenward Bryant
- Luther Jonathan Bryant '90
- Harold Chandler '87
- Celeste Chisholm '77
- Kimberly DeGross
- Dale Dowdie '84
- Lydia Gilbert-McClain, M.D.
- Steve Hutcheson
- Erica C. Isles
- Naeem Akil Newman, M.D. '91
- Alicia Robertson, D.D.S.
- Kristin Buybalid Little '89
- Teri Taylor

Carroll Avenue Club

- Annie E. Casey Family Foundation
- Kemba Esmond
- Marc & Pamela (Anderberg) Guest (Guest Family Fund)
- Trenise E. Wear Gulley '84
- Iyanrick "Ian" John, M.D. '93
- James Martin '89
- Rowena Mulzac
- David Murdoch
- Parchment Family Fund
- Jerome "Jerry" Rhodes, D.D.S. '75
- Karen M. Sewell
- Brian Sirls
- Carla Thrower
- James Vines
- Bethany Willis '03
- Gregory Woods

Principal's Club

- Kenneth R. Dobbel, in memory of Michael Dobbel '87
- Ronnita Green '90
- Sandra Hinds
- Trevan Osborn '99
- Judith Profeta, in memory of Michael Dobbel '87
- Kimberly Terry '91

Takoma Park Club

- Jason Banks '88
- Jaquetta Bates
- Noel Brathwaite
- Romir Campbell
- Denise Crarey
- Patrick Crarey
- Robert Deery, M.D.
- Shelly Eldridge '78
- Michelle DeOrnellas
- Jonathan Gantt
- RaShawna Green Young '92
- Ronald Green
- Rachel Hansdak '08
- Jeffrey Henry '89

- Christine Hill
 - Wendell Hill '71
 - Dr. Malini Meesarapu Joel, M.D. '93
 - Alisa Jones
 - Michael Johnson
 - Kaiser Permanente Cybergrants
 - Betty Kannenberg
 - Caleb J. King
 - Scott Lawrence
 - Shelley Lowry Pollock '69
 - Eric Lester '92
 - Linda Lundberg '66
 - Victor Marcelle
 - Deepak Marwah
 - Lester Mohr
 - Kathryn Niles Jolly
 - Melody Nangle
 - Timothy Neufeld '62
 - Penny Perry
 - Tiara Michelle Price
 - Martha Remington-Johnson, in memory of Barbara Remington-Quinnan
 - Clyde Roggenkamp, D.D.S. '59
 - Jere Sandefur, M.D. '71
 - Karel Schweitzer, in memory of Kenneth Dobbel '87
 - Mary Scott
 - Karen Senecal
 - Weymouth Spence, Ed.D.
 - Francis Steadman
 - Rhonda Visser
 - Dana Lauren West '78
 - Bonnie Wilbur
 - Lou Anne Wood
 - Darlene Zaft
- ## Chaplain's Club
- Willis Adams
 - Brian Clark
 - Michelle Crarey
 - Elizabeth Gerety
 - Bette Longfeil
 - Cynthia Martin
 - J. Lamont Murdoch, M.D. '55

- Lawrence Ropka
- Miriam Diaz Sackville
- Todd Sterling '95
- John Thomas Thiel, M.D. '63
- Pamela Jean Van Noty
- Sally Jo Eastman Walther

TA Supporter

- Imogene Allen Akers '45
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- Kari & Russ Banks
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- Michael & Lauralee Brown
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- David Case
- Kenneth Comeau
- Marthanne Glenn
- Paul A. Glenn
- Mel Hendrickson
- Braeanna Hillman
- Pamela Janniere
- Robert Kennedy III
- Mabel Mabena
- Beryl McWilliams '72
- Ronnie Mills
- Fay Moore
- William Murray
- Florice Ritter
- Shaila Settles Lewis
- Mary Snyder White '62
- Irving Westney, M.D. '81
- Helen John Wilson

Key:

- Founder's Club: \$5,000+
- Washington Training Institute Club: \$2,500-\$4,999
- Tigers Club: \$1,000 - \$2,499
- Carroll Avenue Club: \$500 - \$999
- Principal's Club: \$250-\$499
- Takoma Park Club: \$100 - \$249
- Chaplain's Club: \$50-\$99
- TA Supporter: \$25-\$49

Takoma Academy
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Takoma Park, MD 20912



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TAKOMA ACADEMY NEWS | VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2 | FALL 2023



The Takoma Academy community is excited to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Throughout this special month, our Latino students have taken the initiative to run the chapel experience and share their rich and diverse cultural heritage with the entire student body.

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Mrs. RaShawna Young '92
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Mr. Bill Murray
Fundraising Consultant
bmurray@ta.edu

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