

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Happy New Year! We hope this message finds you well and filled with the spirit of new beginnings. As we step into 2024, the Birmingham Chapter of The Links, Incorporated is thrilled to share our first newsletter submission of the year, highlighting the exciting initiatives and events that will shape our journey in the months to come.

**A Year of Community Engagement:** As advocates for positive change, we are committed to fostering meaningful connections within our community. This year, we have planned a series of events aimed at promoting education, health, and cultural enrichment. Stay tuned for updates on our educational workshops, health and wellness programs, and cultural events that will bring us together in celebration of friendship and service.

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## SERVICES TO YOUTH FACET PREPARES STUDENTS FOR STEM

Preparing students for prospective careers in STEM fields is the focus of an initiative hosted by the Services to Youth Facet (STY). The facet has partnered with the UAB School of Engineering to prepare local students to compete in a statewide robotics competition this year in Huntsville, Alabama. As part of the program, instructors and students of the UAB engineering program will deliver classroom instruction and mentoring. Participating schools include the Alabama School of Fine Arts, and Ramsey and Parker High Schools. Students successfully completing the STEM program will participate in a special graduation ceremony at Alabama Power Company in May 2024. Also, the STY facet will sponsor up to eight students to attend the National Society of Black Engineers Conference in Atlanta this spring.

Additionally, a hands-on art project at Oxmoor Valley Elementary School is teaching students about the versatility of STEM fields. The project, led by Links member Diann Jackson, is supported by STY committee members who are instructing approximately 70 students in the design and production of two quilts.

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**Services to Youth Facet Prepares Students for STEM (continued from page 1)**

The colorful quilts are themed “Greatness” in homage to the school’s motto “from good to great.” They each feature two hands clasped in prayer. The project is designed to inspire creativity and support the educational pursuits of students. Upon completion, one quilt will be exhibited at Oxmoor Valley and the other will be displayed at a partnering grade school in The Bahamas.

**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE (Continued from page 1)**

**Empowering Women and Youth:** Empowerment lies at the heart of our mission through service and this year, we are putting a spotlight on initiatives that uplift and support women and youth in Birmingham. From mentorship programs to workshops addressing important issues, we are dedicated to creating spaces where individuals can thrive and reach their fullest potential.

**Building Bridges:** The Links, Incorporated has a rich legacy of building bridges across communities. In 2024, we will continue to strengthen these connections by collaborating with local organizations, businesses, and individuals who share our vision for a better, more inclusive Birmingham. Together, we can achieve more.

**Save the Date – Annual Gala:** Mark your calendars on August 17, 2024, for our much-anticipated Annual Gala, where we will come together to celebrate our achievements, honor community leaders, and raise funds for our impactful programs. It promises to be an unforgettable evening of elegance, inspiration, and friendship.

We invite you to join us on this journey of service, empowerment, and community impact. Whether you are a long-time supporter or a new friend, there are numerous opportunities to become involved. Reach out to us through our website or social media channels to learn more about partnering with us.

Thank you for being a valued part of the Birmingham (AL) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. Together, let's make 2024 a year of positive change.

Wishing you a year filled with joy, success, and meaningful connections.

Warm Regards,

Cheryl Anderson Kidd, J. D., M.B.A.  
President

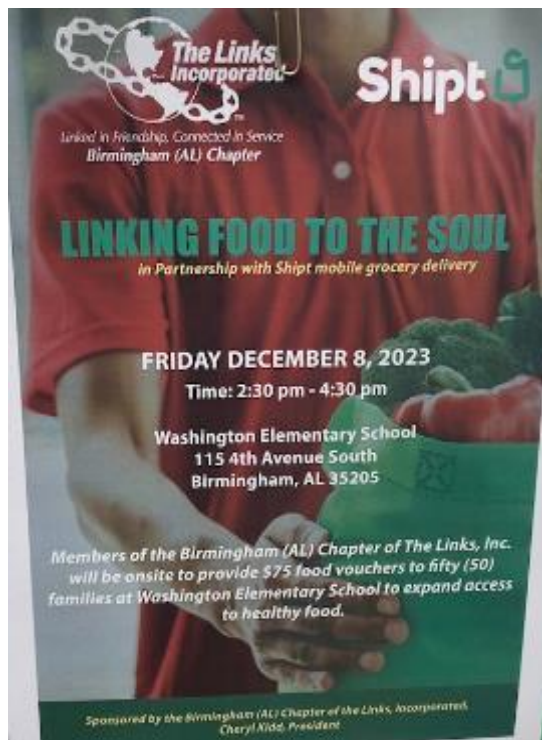


## NATIONAL TRENDS AND SERVICES HONORS VETERANS

On Veteran's Day 2023, The Birmingham (AL) Chapter honored veterans residing at Birmingham Towers in North Birmingham. During the program, Southern Area Director Vanessa Falls thanked the veterans and their widows for their service. Participants included U.S. service members representing the Navy, Army, and Marines who, collectively, have served over 40 years in the military. A reception followed at which guests were provided toiletry kits, branded coloring books, and autographed copies of *Reparations Now*, by Ashley M. Jones. The event was organized and hosted by the National Trends and Services (NTS) Facet.



## NATIONAL TRENDS AND SERVICES LINKING FOOD TO THE SOUL



In partnership with Shipt, the National Trends and Services (NTS) Facet is addressing hunger in the local community. Members collaborated with the same day delivery service company to prepare food boxes for 71 individuals. Also, as part of the Linking Food to the Soul program, food vouchers valued at \$75 each were distributed to 50 families residing near Washington Elementary School, an area that is considered a food desert.

Food deserts are regions where people have limited access to healthful and affordable food options due to income limitations or having to travel outside their immediate communities to find healthy food options. Without access to healthy foods, people living in food deserts may be at higher risk of diet-related conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

The Linking Food to the Soul initiative gave participating households access to balanced meal options that included fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat. The program was beneficial for the families as well NTS members who were able to immediately see the impact of their work reflected in the appreciation from the program beneficiaries.



## THE ARTS AND A GOSPEL CELEBRATION

The harmonious sounds of VOX Fortura, an international vocal performing group, enraptured an assembly of students at Bush Hill Elementary School. Hosted by the Arts Facet, the trio led a masterclass this winter featuring performances and discussion about careers in the music industry. VOX Fortura tenor Elias Hendricks, son of Birmingham (AL) Chapter member Gaynell Hendricks, and brother to members Daagye and Shia, was one of the performers. The objective of the program was to expose students to the variety of music in the arts.

Additionally, the Arts Facet participated in a collaborative program "A Gospel Symphony Celebration featuring Gospel Legend Donald Lawrence" at the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center. On behalf of the Birmingham (AL) Chapter, the facet hosted students from Miles College at the event. Along with Lawrence and accompanied by the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, award winning conductor Dr. Henry Panion III orchestrated the outstanding guest performances of VOX Fortura, and the Miles College and UAB Gospel Choirs. Both events were held in November 2023.



## BIRMINGHAM (AL) CHAPTER OBSERVES NATIONAL FRIENDSHIP MONTH

The Birmingham (AL) Chapter kicked off National Friendship Month with a Friendship Luncheon in November in the Gold Room at The Club. Members and several alumnae members enjoyed food, fellowship, music, and gift giving during this much anticipated event.

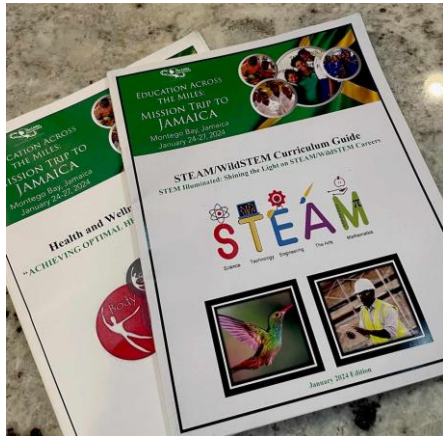




**NATIONAL FRIENDSHIP MONTH OBSERVATION**



## BIRMINGHAM (AL) CHAPTER MEMBERS IN JAMAICA



Three members of the Birmingham (AL) Chapter recently participated in a mission project in Jamaica where they joined more than 275 Links members from throughout the U.S. to offer invaluable instruction to students at four area grade schools on topics such as STEM, arts, and physical and dental health. The delegation included dentists who conducted dental screenings with all the students. The programs in Jamaica mirrored the volunteerism that the Links organization performs annually in communities throughout the U.S. The participating Birmingham members included Southern Area Director Vanessa Falls, Debra Nelson, and Diann Jackson. As the Southern Area Stem Chair, Jackson served on the National STEM committee responsible for creating the STEAM curriculum that was used at the schools. The mission program in Montego Bay, Jamaica has been a multi-year initiative of The Links, Incorporated. This year the mission trip occurred January 24-27, 2024.



## HOLIDAY SOCIAL EVENTS

**Links Jingle Mingle Near The Zoo**

The Social Committee hosted "Links Jingle Mingle at the Zoo." The event was a highlight of the holiday season. Members dined at Post Office Pies, enjoying fellowship and the company of Madeline Elise Yelling and Champ Bryce Slade, two of the members' children. Participants thanked member Daagye Hendricks for coordinating with the staff at the Birmingham Zoo and for gifting each member with a holiday ornament to commemorate the evening.

**A Sparkling Sisters Social 3X**

The Birmingham Chapter had 3 times the fun at 3 different venues and a celebratory connection on Zoom. Thanks to member hosts Debra Weston-Pickens, Shia Hendricks and Stephanie Rayborn, the Social Committee, and President Cheryl Kidd for planning a great event. Southern Area Director Vanessa Falls offered greetings and participated in the activities during the festive affair.





# APPLAUSE



## Birmingham (AL) Chapter Links and Connecting Links Lead UNCF Support Effort

**Carnetta and Norm Davis and Vanessa Falls and Walter Body** recently co-hosted UNCF Birmingham's 2023 A Mind Is Society Fundraiser during the holiday season. The Davises opened their home to allow some of Birmingham's service-minded leaders an opportunity to gather and celebrate UNCF's mission, institutions, and students.

"Vanessa and Carnetta, along with their husbands, are some of the most powerful voices for education in our community, and they consistently inspire me and countless others. Norm Davis and Walter Body are business leaders who consistently lead by example and always give of their time and resources. Our region has benefited greatly from their leadership," said **Casi Ferguson**, Area Development Director, UNCF.



## Birmingham Links Members Help Launch First Masterclass at UAB Office of Small Business Inclusion

Birmingham (AL) Chapter members recently participated in an inaugural program hosted by the UAB Office of Small Business Inclusion. Titled Masterclass: Building Generational Wealth, the program featured members **Debra Nelson**, president, Elevate Communications, and **Vanessa Falls**, executive vice president, Falls Facility Services, Inc. They joined fellow panelists **Michael Jones**, chairman and CEO Securities Capital Corporation and **Arlillian Kate Bushelon**, director, Bushelon Funeral Home, to discuss lessons learned and strategies to grow and sustain legacy businesses.

Nelson coordinated and facilitated the session while Falls shared experiences and insights, and regaled the audience with stories about working with her father who founded the 60-plus year-old company. Altogether, the panel represented more than 150 years of successful business operations in the state of Alabama.

During the meeting, alumna member **Carol Kirby** was acknowledged for leading Kirby Insurance Agency, Inc., a company established by her father in 1963.



## Q&amp;A WITH SHELIA CULPEPPER-MUHAMMED

The Birmingham Gazette periodically features profiles of members of the Birmingham (AL) Chapter. This month meet Sheila Culpepper-Muhammed, Vice President Membership, who draws inspiration from her family members. She says their example influences her passion for service.

**Tell us about your history in The Links, Incorporated.**

June 2024 marks my 21st year as a member of The Links Incorporated, having been invited to membership at age 29 by Mrs. Lucia Bacote James and inducted at age 30. I am a graduate of The Scott Hawkins Institute, Cohort 3. I have had the privilege to serve two consecutive teams as president of the Charleston-Institute Chapter in Charleston, West Virginia, and two terms as vice president of membership. During my tenure, I served as the co-chair of the Central Area Conference and Planning Committee. I joined the Birmingham (AL) Chapter five years ago.

**What motivated you to become a member?**

My mother-in-law Dorothy Bostic Williams motivated my decision to become a member of this esteemed organization. She was a charter member of the Tuscaloosa (AL) Chapter. While at Stillman College, I observed as she hosted her Links friends in her home or chatted on the phone with them about life events while organizing and planning events to serve her community. My family often moved for work, so it was not unusual for her to refer to her Links directory to connect with members in our new city. Without fail, the Link sisters would warmly embrace us. In those moments, I realized that those type of women would be the glue I needed throughout my life.

**What is one thing you enjoy as a member?**

I enjoy serving my local community and seeing the impact it has on underserved populations.

**What is your professional position and what do you like most about it?**

I am a firm administrator at Birmingham Law Group where, among my responsibilities, I formulate annual budgets, prepare, and interpret management reports, expend budgets for administrative staff and operations, supervise accounting functions, and oversee administrative and personnel matters.

**Are you involved in any other service/volunteer organizations besides The Links, Incorporated?**

I am a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated® and an affiliate member of The National Smart Set. I am a former member Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, and the JLC in Charleston, West Virginia.

**How do you balance your work life and volunteerism?**

This question fills my heart with laughter. When my son was younger, he asked if the Links paid me. At that moment, I was reminded of an article that said, "We should all evaluate our lives first, with a birds eye view, then take stock of the things that make us happy and the ones that leave us feeling most fulfilled." With that in mind, I try to pause and prioritize my family, my work life and volunteerism, with that bird's eye view.

**Do you have a hobby or pastime and if yes, how does it benefit you?**

I love fashion, all types of fashion, fashion with friends, fashion with my family, or even home décor. This passion for fashion allows me to be creative within patterns, relationships, and everyday situations, which benefits my peace of mind.

**What is your favorite quote and why?**

One of my favorite quotes is by Winston Churchill who stated, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." This quote reminds me that my true mission on this earth is not to accumulate wealth or material things. My true contribution is reflected in how I give of myself to my community and others.

**What is one thing that inspires or motivates you?**

The successes of my tribe inspire me. When someone reaches success in their endeavors, I am motivated because I understand that what they have accomplished is within the reach of anyone who puts forth the effort to achieve their goals.

**What is an interesting or profound event that shapes you as a person?**

My move to Peoria, Illinois with a 13-month-old baby, new husband, and without a local family support system had a profound impact. This single event made me a resilient chameleon, forcing me to engage with people from diverse backgrounds and create new connections that led to lasting and meaningful relationships. I fondly called it my "I don't meet a stranger season."

**Who is your hero/heroine?**

My heroine is my mother, Mrs. Annie Culpepper, a retired Jefferson County Special Education teacher. She believed that every child was capable of learning and should have the opportunity to gain experience, especially those labeled with disciplinary issues. She was a trailblazer in preparing labeled students for the special education curriculum and gaining access to the regular classroom curriculum.

**What else could give readers a better understanding of who you are as a member/person?**

My son, Salih Muhammad, is a graduate of Morehouse College where he was a chemistry/math major.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



**PowHER Virtual Red Dress Event**

Providing Opportunities for Women's Health & Economic Resilience

Donna Lowery, Moderator  
Melissa Burroughs, MD, Cardiologist  
Kelisha Hawes, Heart Health Survivor  
Margaret Jefferson, Founder of Dress For Success, Charleston County  
Pamela Daniel, DDS, Heart Health Survivor

**Friday, February 2, 2024 at 8PM EST**

Join us for a virtual HeartLinks event & Dressing HER from the Inside Out Programming  
Health & Human Services | National Trends & Services  
Kick off webinar | Heart healthy program | Clothing drive



**Black Family Wellness Expo**

**NATIONAL IMPACT DAY OF SERVICE** **MARCH 16, 2024**



**LINKS DAY AT THE Capitol**

**Raising Our Collective Engagement**  
Advocacy ~ Education ~ Training

**LOUISIANA & SOUTH CAROLINA**  
TO BE DETERMINED

*Save the Date*

**GEORGIA**  
February 4-5, 2024

**FLORIDA**  
February 19-20, 2024

**ALABAMA**  
February 20, 2024

**MISSISSIPPI**  
March 6, 2024

**NORTH CAROLINA**  
April 24, 2024



**44<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

*Save the Date*

**JUNE 19-23, 2024**  
**DALLAS/FT. WORTH AREA, TX**

## We need your content!

Information to be considered for inclusion in our Chapter's newsletter include your facet activities and photos, upcoming events, and awards and recognitions of members. Please send items to Carnetta Davis at [cdavis9616@gmail.com](mailto:cdavis9616@gmail.com)

## BHAM LINKS GAZETTE

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