



BLACK HISTORY MONTH



CITIZEN

WEEKEND

WEEKLY

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Flowers Communications Group Founder and CEO Michelle Flowers Welch (middle), Director of Marketing of Business Development Brinton Flowers (left) and Managing Director Jasmine Flowers Mazyck. PHOTO PROVIDED BY FLOWERS COMMUNICATIONS GROUP.

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briefly

ZAKAT FOUNDATION OF AMERICA SPEARHEADS SUMMIT FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY WITH EXPERTS FROM UNESCO AND THE GAMBIA ACADEMY

Gambia, a picturesque West African nation renowned for its coastline and peanut exports, is poised to become a trailblazer in alternative education. Recognizing the transformative power of learning, in 2022 Zakat Foundation of America partnered with The Gambia Academy and its founder, Dr. Sonja Jobarteh, a renowned singer, composer, educator, and activist, founder, in order to drive educational reform throughout Africa.

Mr. Halil Demir, Executive Director and Founder of the Zakat Foundation of America, traveled to Gambia for the February 2024 Summit for Peace and Prosperity in the Sahel and Across Africa. His aim was to strengthen the partnership with The Gambia Academy and emphasize the mission of educating Gambian children as future leaders. Representatives from UNESCO, including Dr. Lalla Aicha, Ben Barka, Dr. Ibrahim Abdul Hayou Cisse, Dr. Adama Ouane, Dr. Moulaye Kone, and Ann Therese Ndong Jatta, witnessed the educational success achieved at the Academy and commended Zakat Foundation of America for organizing the event.

Experts spent 3 days discussing the success of The Gambia Academy and gathering practical solutions for positive change. They toured The Gambia Academy, attended a reception at the US Embassy with the Ambassador Sharon L. Cromer, conducted planning sessions, and were briefed on the healthcare and education of the students. The data and solutions from this summit will be shared with the US Embassy and stakeholders in the hopes that the success of Gambia Academy will be emulated in other communities across Africa.

ZFA has pledged additional support and funding for the Academy's future, and all are enthusiastic about the next phase of curriculum development, creating an innovative African Heritage curriculum from scratch. By integrating Literacy and African Heritage coursework, the organization aims to empower the bright, young students of Gambia Academy.

A stellar example of the Academy's success is Michael, who before joining the school faced economic instability and bullying, resulting in impaired mental health and well-being. Upon joining the Academy, he received a bicycle for an easier school commute and was given a renewed sense of support and purpose. Michael appreciates the Academy's methods in which teachers patiently explain concepts, fostering deeper understanding and connection to lessons.

VISIT CHICAGO SOUTHLAND RELEASES ITS 2024 VISITORS GUIDE

Olympia Fields, Ill. – The 2024 Chicago Southland Visitors Guide has been released so it's time to dust off the calendars, gather your family/colleagues/friends and plan the perfect activity or getaway.

"Our marketing team and community partners have done another fantastic job in putting our Visitors Guide together," said Jim Garrett, President/CEO of Visit Chicago Southland. "Everything that visitors and residents alike are looking for can be found in this guide, including the finest attractions and restaurants in all of Illinois."

The 2024 Visitors Guide is the bureau's thirty-sixth edition and the most concentrated to date. The 82 colorful and glossy pages include sections of Things to See and Do, Arts & Culture, Accommodations, Dining, Shopping, Transportation and Golf in Chicago's 60 south and southwest suburbs. Special articles include Chicago Southland Bucket List, Foodie Tour, Four Seasons Four Agendas, and Exploring Black History.

To order a hard copy of the Visitors Guide, call Visit Chicago Southland at 888-895-8233.

Visit Chicago Southland is the official destination management and marketing organization for Chicago's 60 south and southwest suburbs. Visit Chicago Southland nationally markets and sells the Chicago Southland region as a destination for meetings and conventions, group tours, sports events and leisure travel. For more information, go to VisitChicagoSouthland.com.

Flowers Communications Group continues to disrupt the marketing and communications industry

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BY TIA CAROL JONES

Flowers Communications Group received 22 awards in 2023. The family-owned and operated integrated marketing communications agency believes the awards are the result of a commitment to multicultural storytelling.

Flowers Communications Group was founded by Michelle Flowers Welch in 1991 and the agency is entering its 33rd year. The awards the agency received in 2023 include being named PRNEWS Medium Sized Agency of the Year, 'Best Use of Social Media' for American Honda Battle of Bands, 'Community Relations' and 'Best Visual Storytelling Campaign' for FCG's work with the Black McDonald's Operators Association, as well as recognition from the Poetry Foundation, ComEd and the Illinois State Lottery.

Flowers Communications Group Managing Director Jasmine Flowers Mazyck believes the recognition the company has received says that it has remained true to its mission, which is to reach and respect diverse audiences. The company has a core set of values, called the Sacred Seven, as well as its brand promise, FLOW. The Sacred Seven includes promoting collaborative individualism, a dedication to outstanding client services and fostering an inclusive work environment.

"All of those (core set of values), together is foundationally how we run our agency and it keeps us rooted in everything we do. This really comes from who we hire, all the way to the work that we do," Flowers Mazyck said, adding that the people on the team is what makes the agency really special.

Flowers Communications Group Marketing and Sales Director Brinton Flowers said the agency is appreciative of every award it receives, and they were meaningful because it is a testament to its talent. One standout campaign the agency did this year was the Famous Amos Ingredients for Success. That campaign was recognized within the marketing and communications industry for five categories, which included Multicultural Campaigns, Multicultural Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Another standout campaign is the Democratic National

Convention video collaboration that garnered recognitions for 'General Government Relations' and 'Best Use of Broadcast/Film/Video.' In that campaign Flowers Communications Group worked in collaboration with top Illinois Democrats to create a video to tell the story of Chicago and show the world why Chicago is a Global city.

Flowers Communications Group's vision is to be the Nation's top multicultural integrated marketing and communications firm. The plan for 2024 is to keep its momentum to deliver on its brand promise, FLOW: Fresh ideas, Leadership, Optimal engagement and Winning outcomes.

"We're going to continue focusing and leveraging our brand promise, but also, tying that to our strategic goals that we have related to really ensuring that we have a strong infrastructure -- systems and processes in place that really support our growth and enable us to provide best in class client services," Flowers Mazyck said.

Flowers Communications Group has hired leaders and talented creatives that strengthen and expand its in-house capabilities and help continue to expand its national length. They also want to continue to disrupt the industry, with culturally competent communications, forward thinking strategies and new depths of creativity.

Brinton Flowers and Jasmine Flowers Mazyck's expertise complement each other. Flowers Mazyck's background is in management consulting bringing business strategies, operations and development expertise to the firm. Flowers' background is in media and radio, with marketing and on-air experience. He transitioned to PR, focused on media relations, working with publications. Now, he is building relationships with various industry leaders and managing the FCG brand.

Michelle Flowers is CEO and Chairman of Flowers Communications Group, and she tapped Flowers and Mazyck to continue the legacy of the firm and lead the business into the next generation.

For more information about Flowers Communications Group, visit explorefcg.com.

Auditorium Theatre announces return of ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

CHICAGO – World renowned ambassadors of Dance and Culture, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns to its Chicago home – the landmark Auditorium Theatre at 50 E. Ida B. Wells Drive – for its 55th engagement here, with six dynamic performances, April 17-21. Celebrating its 65th Anniversary season in 2023-24, the company will perform three distinct programs certain to appeal to both longtime Ailey fans and new audiences discovering this joyous company for the first time: AUDIENCE FAVORITES, ALL-NEW, and AILEY CLASSICS. Tickets, starting at \$40, are now on sale at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater | Auditorium Theatre.

In 1958, Alvin Ailey and a small group of young Black modern dancers took the stage in New York City and forever changed the perception of American dance and culture. One of the country's groundbreaking greats, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is recognized by US Congressional resolution as a vital American "Cultural Ambassador to the World", promoting the uniqueness of the African American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of American modern dance in a universal celebration of the human spirit.

Led by Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, the acclaimed Ailey dancers will showcase their passionate spirit and extraordinary technique in three specially themed programs. AUDIENCE FAVORITES features Kyle Abraham's critically applauded Are You In Your Feelings? and a new production of Ronald K. Brown's tribute to Judith Jamison's profound influence Dancing Spirit, along with the Company's traditional program closer, Alvin Ailey's beloved must-see masterpiece Revelations. ALL-NEW presents a pair of exciting new works commissioned especially for Ailey: Amy Hall Garner's rousing, high spirited tribute to her grandfather, CENTURY; and Elizabeth Roxas-Dobrich's dreamlike duet reminiscence of romance, Me, Myself and You; in addition to updated productions of the audacious Following the Subtle

Current Upstream by Alonzo King and the tour de force Solo by Hans van Manen. AILEY CLASSICS offers a newly curated two-act program sampling a variety of classic works by Alvin Ailey culminating with his signature Revelations.

"Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's annual engagement at the Auditorium Theatre is a recognized highlight of the Spring arts season, and we're pleased to be able to announce the exceptional program lineup so far in advance to help the Company's legion of Midwest fans plan their schedules," said Auditorium Theatre CEO Rich Regan. "We look forward to welcoming back the Company led by Matthew Rushing, with whom we've had the pleasure to work for much of his 30 years with Ailey, with a diverse program for Chicago audiences."

"We're excited to return to our Chicago home with Ailey's 65th Anniversary season featuring new works by exciting choreographic voices, along with a special program of classics by our legendary founder Alvin Ailey," said Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing. "I share the audience's excitement in watching the Company's extraordinary dancers, some of whom hail from the area, share their artistry on the Auditorium stage to carry on a cherished legacy of inspiration."

AUDIENCE FAVORITES will be performed Opening Night, Wednesday, April 17, at 7:30pm, and Saturday evening, April 20, at 7:30pm.

ALL-NEW will be performed Friday, April 19, at 7:30pm, and Saturday, April 20, at 1pm.

AILEY CLASSICS will be performed Thursday, April 18, at 7:30pm, and Sunday, April 21 at 3pm.

Performance Schedule and Tickets

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs at the Auditorium Theatre: Wednesday, April 17 at 7:30pm; Thursday and

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