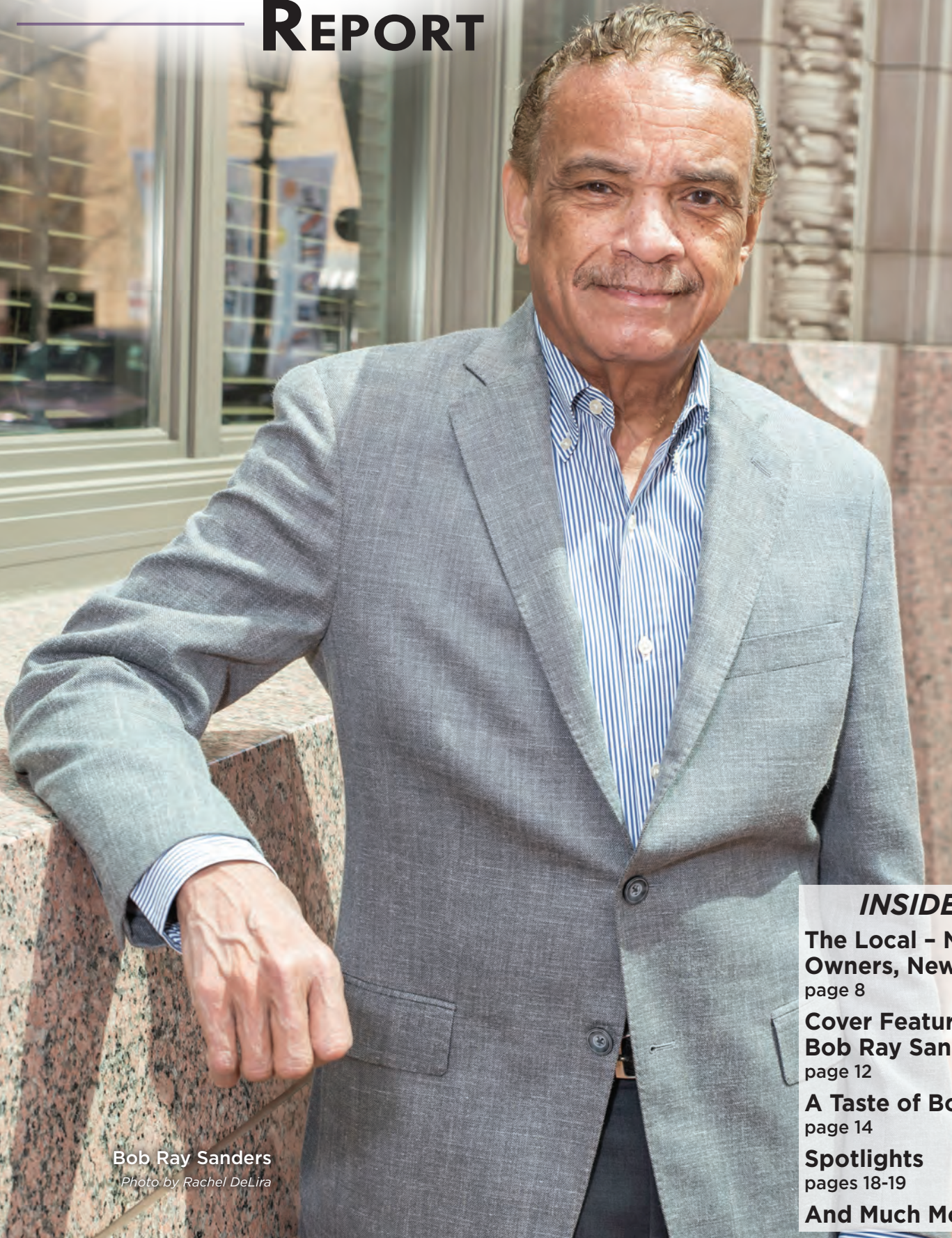


THE METRO REPORT

APRIL 2022



Bob Ray Sanders

Photo by Rachel DeLira

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From the Publishers

Greetings readers,

We are excited to introduce some wonderful people and businesses in the service industry in this issue of *The Metro Report*. Some of these businesses were birthed during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their owners share with us their passion and motivation as entrepreneurs. Our nonprofit feature this month is Christ's Haven for Children, an organization that works on behalf of the helpless victims of child abuse.

As for our feature story, let us introduce to some and re-introduce to many more of you, Bob Ray Sanders. Bob Ray has been a pioneer and advocate for equality in the black and brown community for many years. His contribution to the media in the Fort Worth/Dallas community has been priceless. We encourage you to take a few minutes and get to know him, as well as our other featured businesses and our spotlight features this month.

We encourage you to not just read the stories every month but help the economy by patronizing these businesses and volunteering or donating to our local nonprofits.

We hope that you enjoy *The Metro Report*.

Anjie and Shevoyd Hamilton



Publishers Anjie and Shevoyd Hamilton

A closed door led to cakes - LaCherie Treats

by Allen White

Famous inventor, Alexander Graham Bell is credited with the quote, "When one door closes, another opens." While often used to encourage others after a failure, the saying is also applicable to those who are put in position whereupon they are forced to make major changes in their lives. Such is the case for Cherice Echols, owner of LaCherie Treats.

After working in the medical field for more than 30 years, Echols was suddenly laid off because of Covid-19. "I never dreamed of owning my own business", said Echols. While many suffered because of the pandemic, others have done as she has and started their own businesses. "If not for the pandemic, I would probably still be in the 9-to-5 medical field", she said. Echols was put into a position she would most likely not have pursued but has found she has the skills and has developed the business acumen to be a successful entrepreneur.

As is the case with other new entrepreneurs, her business sprouted from something she was already doing...baking. Family and friends were in the habit of having her prepare cakes and other baked goods for various holidays and special occasions which made the transition almost a no-brainer. It has grown from a few cakes here and there to consistently large orders for parties and offices.

“

I never dreamed of owning my own business. If not for the pandemic, I would probably still be in the 9-to-5 medical field.

- Cherice Echols

”

Years before she thought about the business, a close friend purchased her first piece of equipment and later helped finance the business as she was getting started. She bakes in ghost kitchens currently and can fulfill orders easily. She now has some name recognition and customer retention and has plans to grow the business further by opening a store front in Arlington or Grand Prairie.

Customers of LaCherie Treats are often referred through family, friends and prior customers and through social media posts as well as her website. She



Carrot Cake from LaCherie Treats

Photo courtesy of Cherice Echols

also gained customers through her appearance on a local morning television show. Echols is also putting together a strong marketing plan that will include video and be posted on social media platforms.

Echols has many of the usual flavors available, but the most popular item on her menu is Granny's Famous Lemon Cake which uses a recipe handed down to her from her grandmother. In addition to various cake flavors, LaCherie Treats also offers cookies, peach cobbler and the infamous Texas sheet cake. The menu is being expanded to include various bundt cakes as well. Her flavor offerings were determined by her initial customers — family and friends, as she studied their reactions to various cakes. "I found that people are really opinionated about food and will express their likes and dislikes. I just listened and paid close attention to what people said," said Echols.

In addition to local distribution, Echols also ships her products across the country. She is not shy about future plans for her business. She would like to take some of the market share of a known national bundt cake bakery. Her plan is for LaCherie Treats to be a household brand in the next five years and she is working on marketing materials and plans to do just that.

The pandemic closed a door for Echols, but it opened up a new opportunity for this entrepreneur. Proud of what she has accomplished thus far, Echols wants people to know all her baked goods are made from scratch with love and passion for every treat created.

LaCherie Treats

Website: lacherietreats.com

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Photos courtesy of Cherice Echols



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Hair Salon & Plant Shop by Erin Ratigan

On the north side of Oak Cliff's Bishop Arts District lies a hair salon filled with personality — and plants.

Crecer Hair Salon and Plant Shop feels almost like a little jungle, with vines hanging from the ceiling in terra cotta pots and large-leafed philodendrons branching out between the mirrored styling stations. Terrariums are all over the room and even the products on their shelves are plant-based.

Salon owner Nataly Medina opened the shop last November. She has cut hair for 10 years, and when the pandemic forced many salons to close, Medina said she started thinking about taking her career in a different direction and starting her own business.

"During the pandemic, I was making plant-based [body care] products to make money...I'm really big on that for ethical reasons," she said.

Meanwhile, her step-sister Cynthia Jasso had her own business making and selling terrariums. After Jasso suggested to Medina that she open her own salon and fill it with plants, Medina said the idea stuck.

"There's nothing really like it in the area and we just went for it," she said.

Among her favorite plants in the shop are the begonias, which she said are striking and bring life into the room. Their plant selection changes regularly and is sourced from local plant nurseries.

While Jasso handles the plants side of the business, Medina said her interest in offering plant-based solutions for clients was more about ethics than aesthetics. In fact, having a plant-based approach was one of her primary objectives starting out.

“I feel a sense of responsibility to make sure I'm using ethical products on clients because we use these things daily.”
 — Nataly Medina

"I feel a sense of responsibility to make sure I'm using ethical products on clients because we use these things daily," she said.

Medina has psoriasis and has always made her own skin care products to manage her condition. She said this made organic products an important component to how she wanted to serve clients.

"The power of plants is a real thing...there's a sense of peace for me in knowing that I'm using ethical products on my clients," she said.

She also wanted her business to reflect their families'



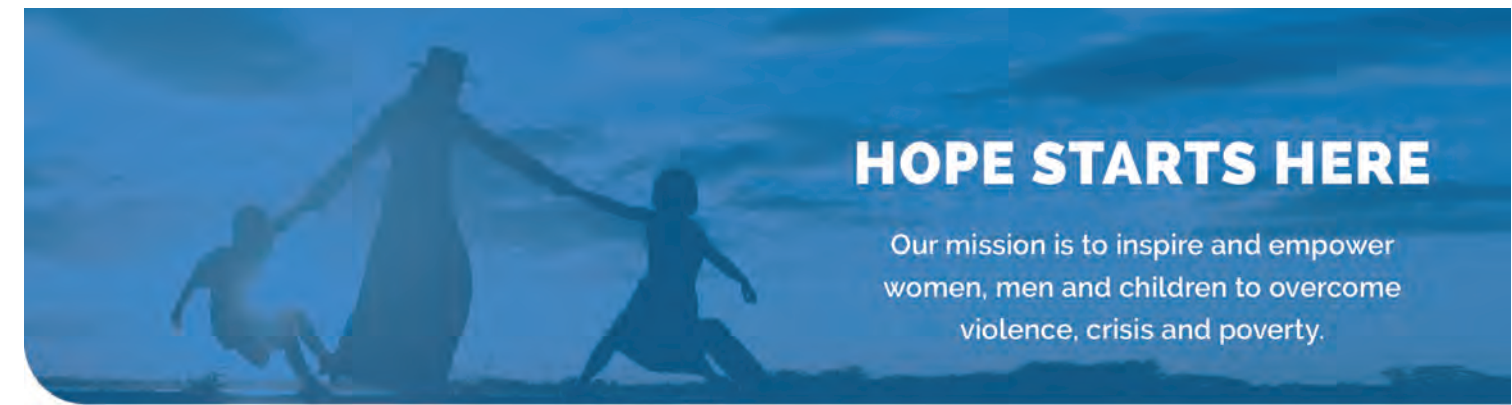
Latin culture while embracing the diversity of the Bishop Arts community. Medina's paternal family is from Mexico and Jasso's mother was from Cuba. In keeping with this spirit of cultural cohesion, Medina and Jasso made a point early on to visit the Latin-owned businesses in the area to make sure Crecer's offerings were curated. The salon's service list combines Spanish titles (and English translations) with references to the art of Frida Kahlo.

"We just try to make it known that the reason we're here is because of our ancestors ... because we feel we owe it to the people who paved the way for us to be here," she said.

She also wanted to support other women in the process, so almost all of the products they use are from women-owned brands.

Medina has high hopes for the salon's future. On top of adding to the small staff of stylists, she said she'd like to help local plant sellers by featuring some of their collections in the shop. She hopes to inspire others to support them as well.

Crecer Hair Salon
 428 W Davis Street, Suite 2, Dallas, TX 75208
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The Local – New owners, new vibe by Steve Rochun



Brian Torres and Chandon (CK) Sanders, co-owners, The Local

Photo credit: Steve Rochun

Brian Torres and Chandon (CK) Sanders, both Fort Worth natives, have been friends for years and have at times worked in similar fields. A few short months ago, an opportunity to do a joint business venture was presented. Through a chance discussion with the now former owner of a local bar, Torres made an informal offer to buy the bar and after receiving an acceptance, Torres and Sanders became bar owners a very short time later.

The two longtime friends are now co-owners of The Local, a bar located in Fort Worth's vibrant West 7th Street district. Seeing great opportunity, they have moved quickly to improve operations and service to the current clientele in the surrounding residential and entertainment district while also beginning the process to market to a more diverse audience. "Our goal is to create a fun, professional experience that will appeal to a diverse audience," said Torres.

“

Our goal is to be welcoming to the regulars...and add to it with the growing population that's going in the West 7th area.

– Brian Torres

”

The Local is not the first business venture for either man. Torres is owner/operator of Hooky Bar while Sanders owns and operates Tilt Work, SEO Runners and Carbon Marque, digital agencies for web development, digital marketing and advertising. He also invests in other businesses. "We believe that forging our experiences in the bar industry and marketing industry gives us an advantage towards having success," says Sanders. "We've known each other for a long time, and we respect what each other bring to the table," says Torres.

With their efforts and plans to attract a new audience, they definitely want to embrace the current patrons. "We obviously want to target the clientele that have called The Local their home, as well as all the service industry that come in nightly to support the bar and its bartenders. But we also know that on any given weekend or holiday, there are thousands of bar-goers walking around West 7th and they're looking for a bar to go into and enjoy their night out. We believe we've done an amazing job with the marketing and social media side that targets all groups," said Sanders.

The Local was one of the first neighborhood bars in the West 7th bar district. It grew because it has a great following from the regulars who visit the bar daily. According to Torres, "Our goal is to be welcoming to the regulars who helped build the bar's reputation and add to it with the growing population that's going in



the West 7th area. Though it is a great neighborhood bar, it has plenty of character to provide a great late-night experience as well."

Torres and Sanders have spent some time evaluating and assessing the bar and how they plan to improve it. Their biggest goal at the current moment is to update the bar. Many of the games and equipment are outdated, so they are working to bring new life to the bar with a huge interior facelift. They are also looking to the future and plan to eventually explore the possibilities of using the patio to grow and capture the attention of those walking by. Asked what made them purchase a bar together, Sanders explained "A bar has always been a place that friends can meet up to unwind, to celebrate or just get away and have some time for self-reflection." Torres continued, "We both believed that the two of us could come together and create that atmosphere that could bring people together and have a wonderful experience time and time again." Though some of the changes are small, some will entail more, but they plan to remain open while they work.

Torres and Sanders love the local vibe of Fort Worth and what the city has to offer. To keep with the vibe, they use local breweries and Texas products. Their loyalties run deep for their home city and state. In addition to running their various business enterprises, the two partners also believe in giving back to their communities. Torres recently became a director for Children's Charities of Fort Worth and Sanders is a board member of the new Juneteenth Museum to be located in Fort Worth.

The two entrepreneurs noted that their ambition doesn't stop with this latest purchase of The Local. They are already making plans to expand their business ventures in the near future.

Visit The Local: 2800 Bledsoe Street
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Still Waters Run Deep – Bob Ray Sanders

by Allen White

The saying “still waters run deep” refers to someone who appears to be quiet or placid, but that manner conceals a more passionate nature. The saying is apt for Bob Ray Sanders whose gentle demeanor disguises his passion for his community. His appearance anywhere is notable, and according to Shevoyd Hamilton, owner/publisher of The Metro Report and Vice President of Operations for the *Fort Worth Business Press*, “Bob Ray Sanders’ appearance establishes the atmosphere. When he’s in the room, you know something good or noteworthy is coming.”

Born during segregationist times, Fort Worth native Bob Ray Sanders was born in downtown Fort Worth at Ethel Ransom Memorial Hospital, the first 20-bed facility for African Americans in Texas and one of only three African American owned hospitals in the United States accredited by the American Medical Association. Dr. Riley Ransom, owner of the hospital, delivered Sanders and as Sanders likes to laughingly say, “he was the first person to spank my black behind.” Sentimentally, Sanders still visits Dr. Ransom’s gravesite when he visits those of his parents.



Bob Ray Sanders in downtown Fort Worth

Photo credit: Rachel DeLira

Sanders’ family would say he’s been in media since elementary school because he was the “nosiest” kid in the neighborhood who loved to report on the news — loved to tell the stories he had heard. On his 11th birthday, one of his older sisters gave him a Kodak camera (with flash) in a cardboard case that he still has to this day. His mother gave him a reel-to-reel tape recorder, which he put to immediate use by interviewing people in his neighborhood. His older brother, Delbert (a football star at Terrell at the time) gave him a shirt with newspaper comic strips printed on it. Looking back, he believes his family knew he’d be a journalist.

Sanders graduated from high school and left to continue his education at North Texas State University (now University of North Texas). In both high school and college, Sanders worked on the school newspaper. His father was not thrilled with his decision to major in journalism. Newspapers at that time had a reputation for not hiring blacks and only wrote about them if they had been accused of some crime. Even knowing this, Sanders graduated from college in 1969 and applied for a job with the *Star-Telegram* on the very same day, never believing he would be hired. By the time he arrived home later that day, his mother told him, “Somebody from the *Star-Telegram* called and they want to know if you can start on Friday.” Two weeks

later, his name and photo appeared on the front page of the newspaper. His father spent the remainder of that week explaining to neighbors and friends, “Yeah, that’s him on the front page of the paper, BUT he didn’t kill nobody. He WROTE the story.” What a memorable beginning to his professional career.

Sanders left the *Star-Telegram* three years later and joined the newsroom staff at KERA, Channel 13, as the Fort Worth reporter. He spent more than 20 years at KERA in various roles: reporter, anchor, producer, vice president and station manager of their newly formed radio station as well as the TV station. He helped create and became executive producer of the PBS program, “With Ossie and Ruby,” a weekly program featuring the great acting couple Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. Leaving KERA, Sanders spent three years as a host for the “conservative” talk show station KLIF, where he was the only liberal personality at the station.

When he left there, Sanders returned to where his career began, the *Star-Telegram*. “Here’s how the *Star-Telegram* hired Bob Ray back for his second stint at the paper,” recalls former president and publisher Richard L. Connor. “I met Bob Ray for lunch and as we walked from the *Star-Telegram*, every other person on the street stopped us to say hello to Bob Ray. I knew right then he was the person who could more closely connect us to the community — a part of the community which was underserved by us,” said Connor. “I wish I had saved the lunch money and hired him on the spot at the corner of Taylor and West 7th.” Sanders made his return as a columnist, writing three times a week. He joined the editorial board and later became vice president of the paper. “Bob Ray helped make the *Star-Telegram* more relevant and he gave voice to people who were underserved,” said Connor.

An advocate for the underdog, Sanders has become a voice in the black community. Though that wasn’t his goal, he realized as he wrote and reported on the criminal justice system and social/community issues that he needed to speak for people who felt they never had a voice. This included the African American, Hispanic and Native American communities. While at the newspaper and working for KERA-TV, he was the person called to explore issues in those communities — from the police shooting of 12-year-old Santos Rodriguez by a Dallas policeman in 1973 to a man falsely accused of murder to several death row inmates whose executions he was partially responsible for stopping.

Most good reporters have some interviews that they are proud of and Sanders has been privileged to interview some very influential people in the country — activist Angela Davis, Gov. George Wallace of



Ethel B Ransom Memorial Hospital – birthplace of Bob Ray Sanders

Photo credit: Dallas Public Library

Alabama, writer James Baldwin, boxer Muhammed Ali and musicians Gil Scott-Heron, Billy Preston, Tina Turner and Dionne Warwick. He also has had the opportunity to meet or be in the direct presence of every American president (except Donald Trump) since Lyndon B. Johnson, a worthy feat indeed. Though he recognizes the honor of having met and interviewed many famous people, his most prized interview was one conducted on death row in the execution chamber in Huntsville, Texas, with Henry Martinez Porter. Porter, who had been convicted of killing a police officer, had written to Sanders while being held in Tarrant County jail on a bench warrant and had read some of Sanders’ columns. They became friends. Porter asked for Sanders to be present at his execution, a request he could not deny. While other reporters wrote about Porter’s last requested meal, Sanders wrote about the speech that Porter made just before his execution. He got the call from the warden on Sunday morning for an execution that would take place on Tuesday and later that same Sunday, he got a call from Porter’s family asking that he be present at his rosary in San Antonio on the following Thursday. “Imagine being invited to witness a man’s death and invited to the funeral of someone who was not yet dead,” said Sanders. This event left a lasting impression on him.

Long an advocate for the underserved minority communities, Sanders believes that he has helped change some of the conditions in various communities in his hometown of Fort Worth. In his lifetime, he has seen much change for the black community. No longer are there ‘colored’ and ‘white’ signs over water fountains

“Bob Ray has long been a champion and cheerleader for Fort Worth and he doesn’t shy away from a challenge or an opportunity to make a positive impact.”
– Betsy Price

One of 10 children, Sanders attended schools in the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) and graduated from the historic I.M. Terrell High School which was the original black high school in the area. It served students from 17 other cities (as far away as Weatherford, Grapevine, Arlington, Roanoke, Grand Prairie and Mansfield). After the 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* to integrate public schools, FWISD added three black high schools: Dunbar (east side), Como (west side) and Kirkpatrick (north side), so by the time Sanders graduated, there were four black high schools. In the late 60s when FWISD finally started to integrate all schools, they closed three of the black high schools, leaving only Dunbar.

A Taste of Boudin by Steve Rochun



Gary Artis and Kenneka Scott, Owners, 5th Bayou Boudin and More



Photo credit: Steve Rochun

All food trucks are not created the same. In the growing business model food trucks, there are many great ones out there, but because of their specialty, 5th Bayou Boudin and More believes they stand alone. Nestled away in a parking lot in the 3200 block of Collinsworth Street off S. University in Fort Worth you will find this food truck prepared and ready to serve its customers the best Cajun food on wheels. Bold enough to take Louisiana cuisine down a different path, 5th Bayou wants to guide your taste buds down the bayou sides of South Louisiana right here in Fort Worth, TX.

“There are other Cajun food trucks, but what makes us stand out is that we are the only ones who craft and sell boudin.”
 — Gary Artis

Owners Gary Artis and Kenneka Scott launched the business in November 2020. After spending a few years working in different industries, the Franklin, Louisiana native, Artis decided it was time to step up his game and commit to his dream. He always had a passion for cooking and started by preparing barbecue and small dinners for friends and co-workers. A conversation with Scott led to a decision to try their hand at being entrepreneurs and investing in themselves and the food truck service industry. “We were a bit nervous at first, not knowing how things would turn out. This was our first rodeo as entrepreneurs,” says Artis. “I was more nervous than he was,” says Scott,

“but we had faith that God would honor the desires of our hearts.”

“There are other Cajun food trucks, but what makes us stand out is that we are the only ones who craft and sell boudin,” said Artis. Our most requested items are the Bayou Dog and the Bayou Balls made with boudin,” he said.

Although born and raised in Louisiana, it wasn’t until a few years ago that Artis began making boudin. “I wanted to bring something different to the industry, so I learned to make boudin. But, we didn’t start selling until Kenneka gave her approval as the taste tester,” said Artis.

Prior to purchasing the food truck they would set up a tent in the parking lot across from the Ace Hardware store in the southwest part of town and sell boudin. “We would set up on the weekends and make just enough boudin to sell out each day,” said Artis. It was during this time they realized two things. The first was that they could provide food at a higher level, and the second was that they couldn’t do it without the other.

Their business, like many others, was birthed by the pandemic. Gary lost his job working in the logistics industry that services the oil industry. After he was laid off they both decided they should fully invest in the food truck. “We were fully aware of how the pandemic had affected the food service industry, but we believed in what we were doing,” says Scott. So, in November 2020, 5th Bayou Boudin and More officially opened for business. The name was taken from the street where Artis lived in Louisiana and where he learned to cook.

The food truck is only open a few evenings during the week and on weekends. While Scott, a Fort Worth

SEE BOUDIN ON PAGE 16

Christ’s Haven For Children by Christ’s Haven Staff

Every month in Tarrant County, there are 543 confirmed victims of child abuse. 6,511 confirmed victims in all of 2021. That number is the highest it’s been in more than a decade.

Cassie McQuitty, CEO of Christ’s Haven For Children, a non-profit organization in north Fort Worth, says there is a sense of urgency to not only care for victims of child abuse but to also put community programs in place to help prevent child abuse from happening.

“Our trauma-informed, family model of care for youth who have experienced abuse or neglect is core to what we do at Christ’s Haven,” McQuitty said. “At the same time, when we see data showing the number of confirmed cases increasing, as an organization we have a responsibility to help prevent that abuse as well.”

Preventing a wide-scale and difficult issue like child abuse is no easy task. McQuitty said it’s imperative that organizations like Christ’s Haven take a collaborative and community approach.

In the organization’s 68-year history, the majority of the work has been residential care for youth who experienced abuse or neglect. The catalyst for helping Christ’s Haven add a preventive component to its programming was when they were selected in 2021 as a recipient of Fort Worth’s Crime Control and Prevention District (CCPD) grant funding.

The mission of Fort Worth’s CCPD is to collaborate with local nonprofit organizations to implement training and intervention programs that will increase safety and decrease crime.

“The CCPD grant was instrumental in helping us launch our Family Resource Center (FRC) where we can stand in the gap to support families before abuse happens and before they have to place their children outside of their homes,” McQuitty said.

The grant funding has given Christ’s Haven the ability to provide free resources to families who are experiencing stress or difficulties. In the program’s initial roll out, they have been available to provide free counseling, weekly food boxes, parent education training, foster placement care packages, and case management to 2,026 individuals.

“As we began implementing our FRC resources, we saw an immediate need and demand. We’ve seen that same trend continue into 2022 and are already trying to find ways to expand the resources we can provide.” McQuitty said.



Cassie McQuitty, CEO, Christ’s Haven For Children

Christ’s Haven’s FRC is not a new idea as several organizations across the country have implemented similar concepts. Data coming from these other areas shows that the strategy is effective. Casey Family Programs research has shown a similar program in Florida to have helped with a 45% reduction in cases of child abuse and neglect.

Other programs have also shown significant returns on investment in communities with thriving community programs like the FRC. In Alabama, an analysis of short- and long-term impacts shows that for every \$1 invested in their state’s Family Resource Center, \$4.70 was received in immediate and

long-term benefits.

“At Christ’s Haven our core values of normalcy, dignity, and hope drive everything that we do,” McQuitty said. “Preventing child abuse is one of the many ways we can provide hope for families and also for the community as a whole.”

McQuitty has been with the organization as CEO since 2018 but served as a volunteer for several years prior. Her tenure as CEO began a new era for Christ’s Haven as she is the first female leader of the organization.

Before coming to Christ’s Haven, McQuitty worked in Strategic Development for nonprofits at M. Gale & Associates and also spent eight years in senior leadership at the United Way of Tarrant County.

Christ’s Haven For Children provides a trauma-informed, family model of care for displaced children, teens, and young adults. We are a voluntary placement organization as an option outside of traditional foster care. Whether a child lives at Christ’s Haven for six months or sixteen years, we utilize that time loving them as our own and instilling normalcy, dignity, and hope into their lives.

If you would like more information on the free resources provided by Christ’s Haven For Children’s Family Resource Center, you can contact rhonda@christshaven.org.



Sanders FROM PAGE 13

and restroom doors. Technically, we've integrated society with blacks and whites going to the same schools, public accommodations have been desegregated and minorities are being given more access to employment opportunities in both the private and public sectors. But, Sanders noted, "Many of the things we were fighting 40 and 50 years ago are still major issues in our city. As co-chair of the Task Force on Race and Culture for Fort Worth, Sanders was part of the committee that emphasized issues that needed attention. Those issues include criminal justice, housing, health care, education, economic development and governance." As co-chair of Fort Worth's Race and Culture Task Force, Bob Ray helped carve out real solutions to help Fort Worth move forward in a meaningful way," said former Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price. There are still many disparities between the white and minority communities in all these areas that need to be worked on. "While we know he's great with words, Bob Ray is not about talk — he's about action," Price said. Sanders' plan of action to move the needle forward include but are not limited to: the need for more economic development in the southeast sector of Fort Worth, improved infrastructure in all minority neighborhoods, a decrease in the disparity between whites and blacks in health care and a decrease in the education gap between students of different races.

According to former Mayor Price, "Bob Ray has long been a champion and cheerleader for Fort Worth and he doesn't shy away from a challenge or an opportunity to make a positive impact." A servant at heart, Sanders has served on numerous nonprofit boards, commissions and committees in DFW and in the state of Texas. Some of his appointments include the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, Fort Worth Opera, AIDS Outreach Center, Goodwill Industries, Child Study Center, Community Hospice of Texas, Sojourner Truth Players, The Black Academy of Arts and Letters and Jubilee Players. Currently, he serves on the boards of Community Healthcare of Texas (formerly Community Hospice of Texas) and Documentary Arts (archivists for the largest collection of black photographers' words in Texas).

Sanders has been married for 38 years and has one son. In what little spare time he has, he enjoys music of all kinds (recorded and live), dancing with his wife, reading good books and visiting museums and serene area parks. Asked if his son had any interest in following in his media footsteps, Sanders responded, "My

only child originally majored in broadcast journalism at my alma mater (a big surprise to me), but quickly changed his major to business." His son, Chandon, is an entrepreneur who owns several businesses and recently purchased The Local, a bar in the 7th Street district. He has no grandchildren yet, but was recently reminded by one of his older nieces that he has more than 300 nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews, great-great nieces and nephews and he believes great-great-great nieces and nephews. His oldest nephew, Andrew, is nine days older than he is and they went through school with most classmates and teachers believing they were twin brothers. To this day, most still call them brothers and in many ways they are.

Some people want to be remembered for the big things they did, the amount of money they made or their generous donations. Sanders wants to be remembered for being a person who cared about his community and its people and did everything within his power to make it better for both. Former Mayor Price agrees, "He (Sanders) was a big reason why we made the progress we did. While Bob Ray and I may not always agree on every issue, I'm honored to call him a friend and we are blessed to have him here in Fort Worth."

Boudin FROM PAGE 14

native, still works a full-time job during the week, she says their commitment to the success of the new business venture is unwavering. "No days off," she says. We are inspired every day when we see and think about how people continue to enjoy what we prepare and serve." Artis and Scott use the following to describe their food: It's unique, it's Cajun, it's simple, it's delicious, it's satisfying.

As with many food truck owners, they plan to eventually have a brick and mortar building for their business and they plan to get there one customer at a time.

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SPOTLIGHT ON:

Darlisa Diltz

Name, title, company: Darlisa Diltz, Managing Director/Owner of North Texas Entrepreneur Education and Training Center/The Center NTX

City of residence: Fort Worth

City of birth: St. Louis

Spouse: Orlando Gooden

Children: Orlanda S. Gooden and Orlando Gooden II

Company description: The North Texas Entrepreneur Education and Training Center is a starting point for Entrepreneur lifestyle seekers to come, learn, and be exposed to the realities of business ownership, without making a lofty investment into something that will develop into nothing. We are a Business Resource Center with a focus on Entrepreneur education and ecosystem building. Through our pipeline of partners, stakeholders, and staff, we provide a safety net for beginner Entrepreneurs to grow and fail shamelessly in an environment of inclusion, innovation and focused Entrepreneurial training. The Center NTX is an inclusive flexible work and meeting space facility that offers a coffee shop feel with business center amenities. We offer COVID-safe community engagement to those looking to engage in Northeast Tarrant County. We have flexible memberships to fit most needs.

Years with company: NTEETC-3.5, The Center NTX- 5 Months

Personal business strategy: To be inclusive and collaborative across all spectrums. I strive to provide a platform where individuals from any walk of life can have access to the knowledge and resources needed to be successful in their Entrepreneurial endeavor.

Challenges your company (or industry) will face the next 12 months: With the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, this continues to add barriers to not only the company, but to the economy as a whole. One aspect that can be both a challenge and a triumph is the increase in Entrepreneurship across the board. The challenge in this is that many people are gravitating to entrepreneurship, but not really developing a solid business structure. Our model is teaching entrepreneurship from a practical standpoint, so many of the “fast money” approaches do not fit.

Business advice to share: Develop a plan. No you do not have to have a formal business plan in order to start a business, however, without a plan there is not a focus. Taking the time in the beginning to establish a road map is essential for establishing a solid business foundation.



Photo credit: Steve Rochun

Worst business decision: Trying to bring everyone along on the journey with me. When I first started, I wanted to bring EVERYONE with me. I set out to help promote and push everyone else's business not realizing that mine was suffering.

Your greatest achievement: I have been blessed to accomplish so many things...to pin it to one thing is a challenge. If I had to make a choice, I would say, taking the leap of faith and walking away from the toxic corporate life of a healthcare employee.

First job: Taco Bell

Dream job: Actress

Hobbies: Church, my children's sports activities, learning new things

Role models: Lisa Nichols, Tyler Perry, My daughter

How I know I'm successful: The funny thing is...I don't. LOL I still feel like there is so much more to be done, so I don't know that I have reached success just yet. If I had to make a choice now, I would say...because in those times where I want to give up, someone always shows up to remind me of why I got started in the 1st place. This then gives me the momentum to keep going. This in my mind means that I must be doing something right.

Favorite book(s): The Startup Community Way: Evolving an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Relational Intelligence and The Memo

Favorite movie(s): Norbit, All of the Friday's and Most of Adam Sandler's movies

Favorite restaurant: Olive Garden

People I'd most want to share a meal with: My immediate family and many of my Entrepreneur ecosystem buddies

Pet peeve: When people lie about dumb things

Colleges attended: Fontbonne and Lindenwood University

Favorite place to get away: Anywhere with warm weather and a beach

I collect: Costume jewelry and shoes

Motto or theme song: "It is what it is"

The talent you'd most like to have: Doing flips

SPOTLIGHT ON:

Lenetra King

Name, title, company: Lenetra King, FACHE, Founder @ Watch Me EXCEL™

City of residence: Fort Worth

City of birth: Birmingham, AL

Spouse: Roger

Children: RJ

Company description: Watch Me EXCEL™ is a leadership development firm that partners organizations to help them expand the capability and capacity of its leaders. We especially support companies who have a renewed commitment to deeply engage, develop and empower Black and Brown leaders with opportunities to advance. We provide Executive Coaching, Onboarding and Integration, and other professional development tools including leadership programming for Women and Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC). Our goal is to drive impact for public and private sector organizations around the practice of leadership.

Years with company: Launched company in 2020, full time since 2021

Personal business strategy: I am a huge proponent of exceptional customer journeys, and strive to give a high end level of service and connection that creates long term engagement with my brand. Each experience is more than a transaction, and I build on that.

Challenges your company (or industry) will face the next 12 months: As a woman owned and minority business enterprise, having access to capital to scale my business is most top of mind for sure. In terms of industry, my company is very niche in its offerings as a boutique leadership and professional services firm. Thus, ensuring that we continue to build capability around delivering solutions for leaders to refine their skills to drive culture, outcomes and bottom line performance for their companies is important.

Business advice to share: Three things. 1) Build genuine connections and relationships with people, because relationships are what makes the world go 'round. 2) Treat everyone with dignity and respect, regardless of what they can do for you. 3) You are your brand and do the work on the front end to be clear on what you do, who you serve and what differentiates you from other similar businesses.

Your greatest achievement: Breaking generational cycles, and being a first generation college and masters graduate.

First job: I worked at Hallmark Cards in one of the local malls while I was in college, and it is where I learned to make a mean gift bag!

Dream job: Running my own business and building a legacy brand

Hobbies: My son is pretty active, and being involved with him and his activities are very important to me. When I get a little time of my own, traveling and watching SEC and professional football are some of my fav activities.

Role models: My grandmother. Although she is deceased, there is not a day that goes by that I don't think about how she selflessly sacrificed, and instilled so many life lessons in me, including a very foundational love for Christ, focus on family and giving spirit to the community and causes she believed in.

How I know I'm successful: Every day I wake up and think about how I am making an impact, and when I have helped enough people and made a big enough impact, then I will know that I am successful.

Favorite book(s): Chase the Lion, Becoming, How Women Rise, Wooden on Leadership

Favorite movie(s): Coming to America, Black Panther, and my son has to watch Encanto at least once a week so that is now a favorite.

Favorite restaurant: I absolutely love seafood, so any place where I can get really good seafood dishes are my favorite places.

People I'd most want to share a meal with: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, The Obamas, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Muhammad Ali

Pet peeve: When people don't follow through on their commitments!

Colleges attended: Florida A&M University, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Rockhurst University

Favorite place to get away: Locally, it is Possum Kingdom Lake. Outside of Texas, I love going to New Orleans but have to do double duty exercise upon my return because we eat so much there!

I collect: Memorabilia from HBCUs from around the country. I am storing these items up to pass along to my son one day.

Motto or theme song: This Girl Is On Fire by Alicia Keys. Not only does she have an amazing voice, but this song just speaks to me and where I am at this point in so many areas of my life. Although not a theme song, two of my favorite albums are Mariah Carey Christmas and Michael Jackson's Thriller!

The talent you'd most like to have: Photography with a nice camera and not just taking photos on my iPhone. I snap a few photos here and there, and would love to get better at this hobby.



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