



FEBRUARY 2021 | ISSUE 4

# BHCA ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY MONTHLY EVENT

## A Newsletter Honoring our Neighborhood Heroes

*BHCA dba*

**"BUILDING HARTFORD THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION!"**

**BHCA@BLUEHILLSCIVIC.ORG (EMAIL)**

**BLUEHILLSCIVIC.ORG (WEBSITE)**

### ED's Corner

By Vicki Gallon-Clark



On February 4th we launched Black History month, reflecting on 2020 as having "braved the belly of the beast," as Amanda Gorman, first national youth Poet Laureate so eloquently stated during the poem she delivered at the recent presidential inauguration. During this annual event, we honored five of our neighborhood heroes: Denise Best, Lew Brown, William Costen, Doug McCrory, and Pat Williams (posthumously). We have featured them in this newsletter edition and hope you enjoy reading about their contributions. Additionally, if you missed the airing of our *Looking Back to Move Forward* event, you may click on the attached document and view it.



The BHCA is proud to announce the recent partnership and alliance with the Nelle Mae Education Foundation to address root causes of social injustice and systemic barriers in education. I am especially excited to work with the entire team because they really "get it." They understand that "Anti-Blackness" exists and that there is a specific kind of racial prejudice directed toward Black people specifically as it relates to racism. This anti-Blackness affects Black people in different ways, and in some cases more significant than other groups. Furthermore, the NMEF team sends a powerful message that not only is it ok to talk about anti-Blackness. We must openly talk about it if we are to work together to combat this type of white supremacy.

We believe that Black History is 365 days a year experience; therefore, you will see information and facts pertaining to African Americans in each of our newsletters. We invite you to take this educational and life-changing journey with us!

**CLICK HERE TO WATCH  
BHCA'S BLACK HISTORY  
CELEBRATION**





# OUR NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES

## Denise Best

After retiring from Trinity in 2010, she worked for the Christian Activities Council, where she began her retirement career as a community organizer. She worked with each mayor on numerous projects and initiatives including the RTE 44 Safety and Streetscape Project, and The Town Center Project (Albany and Woodland Place). She organized five neighborhoods to get the Blue Hills Post Office removed from the federal closure list. She believes her greatest accomplishment as Chair of the Upper Albany NRZ is the assembling of amazing residents and other neighborhood stakeholders into a cohesive, dedicated cohort of leaders. After serving nearly ten years as the Chair of the Upper Albany Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, (UANRZ), she stepped down in September 2020.



## Senator McCrory

Senator McCrory is the Deputy President Pro Tempore, Chair: Education; Internship, Vice Chair: Banking, Member: Appropriations; Commerce; Energy & Technology; Government Administration & Elections. As Co-Chair of the Education Committee, Senator McCrory is very proud of the work he and his colleagues have done to get the African American and Latino Curriculum Bill passed into law in June 2019. Even before his service as a legislator, Doug has been committed to strengthening neighborhoods through education, economic development and civic engagement. A Blue Hills resident and Hartford native, Doug is dedicated to giving back to his community, closing the achievement and wealth gaps and working to ensure equal opportunities are afforded to all people regardless of class, race or gender.



## Patricia Mae Willimas

Pat Williams passed away on January 13, 2021. She began her career in 1973 as an Urban Planner for the Capitol Region Council of Governments, writing zoning and land use regulations for cities and towns in the area. Following a three-year period as the Town Planner in the Town of Glastonbury, in 1978 she becomes the Director of City Planning for the City of Hartford; the first woman and first minority in both positions. Her over twenty (20) years as Director of City Planning and subsequently as Deputy City Manager introduced her to many organizations across the city for which she would volunteer from that point. Up until her passing, she participated on many levels for a multitude of organizations however focused her energies primarily in the Upper Albany neighborhood. She was very active with the Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative serving on the board from its inception and headed innumerable programs, participating in many social activism causes.



## Lew Brown

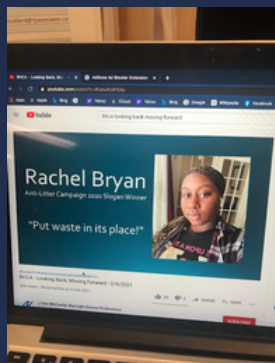
William M. Brown, known as Lew Brown, is a retired broadcast journalist in both radio and television. A current resident and native of Hartford, he was raised in Bellevue Square, the fourth oldest of twelve children. Lew often remarks that he was a "third world correspondent on the home front", covering issues that plagued the community, including crime, gangs, drugs, and housing issues. He was respected for truth and integrity in reporting and treated the everyday "little nobodies" as equal to the powerful leaders at City and State levels. Lew was one of the founders of the former Russworm Wells Society, an organization developed to provide support for African American journalists which evolved to become the CT Association of Black Communicators. Lew received numerous awards and citations over his professional career. Since retiring, Lew has remained active in issues he cares about. Lew challenges others to become involved because, after all, "The revolution will not be televised. It is a revolution of the mind, and that, in fact, is life."



## William H. "Bill" Costen

Bill Costen, born William Hollis Costen is an African-American hot air balloon pilot, business owner, photo documentarian, professional photographer, black memorabilia collector, curator, archivist and exhibitor. Being an avid archivist and collector, he created "The Costen Cultural Exhibition," a unique collection of rare photographs, ephemera, memorabilia, fine art and collectibles. The collection has been custom designed to travel to any location and show the contributions and accomplishments of Americans with an emphasis on African Americans throughout history. Topics address the interests of all age groups and include: Africa, slavery, civil rights, politics, government, invention, science, athletics, sports, aviation, military, music, dance, theater, literary arts, religion, radio, film, television and other forms of popular entertainment. It includes exhibitions on the history of "African American Golf," "The Tuskegee Airmen," "The Pullman Porters" and a photographic history of "The Freedom Schooner Amistad." The exhibit has been displayed at fundraising events, schools, colleges, universities, museums, historical societies, churches, community organizations and corporations.





BHCA is proud of our youth who participate in our many campaigns and programs.

Picture shows Rachel as the 1st place winner of BHCA's Anti-Litter Campaign Slogan receiver. Rachel won \$150.00 for her input in cleaning up our community.

### Interesting Black History Facts

1. February was chosen as the month to observe Black history because it is the birth month of abolitionist and writer Frederick Douglass (Feb. 14) and President Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12).
2. In the United States and Canada, Black history is celebrated in February. However, in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the Netherlands, they honor it during the month of October. In 2014, Ireland became only the fourth country in the world to celebrate Black History Month.
3. In 1739, the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina became the largest slave revolt in colonial America — some of the men who participated had been soldiers in Africa before being sold into slavery.
4. Phillis Wheatley became the first published African-American poet in 1774 with her collection Poems on Various Subjects, a work of distinction that looked to many literary classical traditions.
5. Journalist, Ida Wells-Barnett refused to give up her railcar seat for a white man in 1884, and bit a conductor on the hand when he tried to force her. She was dragged off the train. She sued the railroad and initially won, but the decision was overturned.

Adjovi Simpini & Andriana Milner  
Youth Development Specialist (YDS)

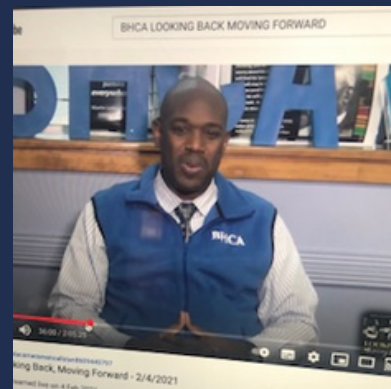


### **Nyanza Griffiths**

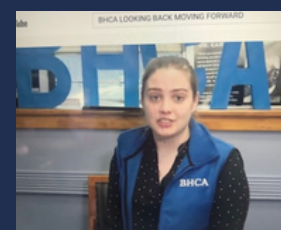
Ms. Griffiths is shown with a big beautiful smile because she won \$250 for being the winner of BHCA's Black History Event Kahoot game. Our youth are amazing!



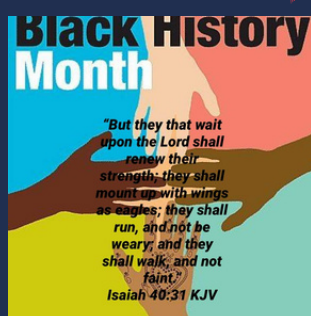
Jodian Daley; IT & YDS



**Kelvin Lovejoy**  
Lead Community Organizer



**Michelle Debarba**  
Community Organizer



*Stay Fearless*



**Reneesha Baugh**  
Community Organizer

