

collaboration between the school district, local industries, governing agencies and workforce leaders. This partnership ensures there is alignment between the needs of employers and industry leaders to the school districts CTE program, strengthening the talent pipeline and highlighting employment opportunities within the community. As an example, Hernando Schools was an early adopter of the Space Academy initiative led by Space Florida. As an advocate for this exciting and novel initiative, in 2024, HCSD was one of 22 school districts named a Space Academy District to grow Space Industry momentum in Hernando County.

A significant milestone for the expansion of Career and Technical Education was the opening of the Wilton Simpson Technical College, the first postsecondary site in the county. Wilton Simpson Technical College or "STC" will provide the community with access to advanced technical training and certification programs, expanding postsecondary educational opportunities in needed workforce industries. Through the use of voter approved millage funds, Hernando Schools demonstrates a commitment to ensuring this new facility is outfitted with cutting-edge resources to enhance a variety of programs.

The vision of the Hernando School District is to "grow our own" by providing educational pathways that lead to stable, rewarding, and local careers. We embrace our role and are honored to serve as a driving force for creating a healthy community through quality workforce education, strong partnerships with local leaders and as a proponent of forward-thinking industry initiatives that will position Hernando County as a lifelong home for residents. Hernando County is well positioned to be a place where education, industry, and community work hand-in-hand to create lasting success.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO DR. RAMESH SHARMA

HON. BETH VAN DUYN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Dr. Ramesh Sharma of Fort Worth. At 85 years old, Dr. Sharma is a shining example that age is merely a number. Raised in India, he earned his degree in mechanical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology before joining the civilian Indian naval forces. He completed several years of service before immigrating to the U.S. and settling in Fort Worth in 1986. Working as a stress engineer at various nuclear power plants, Dr. Sharma was driven by a desire to provide his children with the best educational opportunities.

Upon retirement, he set his sights on his next goal: continuing his education. In 2014, he completed his master's degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Texas at Arlington. Taking classes one by one over the next decade, he earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics, an incredible feat he attributes to the unwavering support of his family and professors. At his graduation, a touching moment unfolded as his son, who also earned his doctorate, assisted him in donning his graduation

robes. Dr. Sharma aims to mentor students and give back to our community.

Dr. Sharma's determination in the pursuit of knowledge is an inspiration to North Texans and I congratulate him on his incredible achievement.

TRIBUTE TO A BALTIMORE TV
ICON: THE LATE REVEREND DR.
TIMOTHY LAMAR TOOTEN, SR.

HON. KWEISI MFUME

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a dear friend, a loving family man, an inspiring educator, a devout pastor, an accomplished writer, an award-winning journalist, and a person of the highest caliber—the late Reverend Dr. Timothy Lamar Tooten, Sr.

Dr. Tim Tooten was not a native son of Baltimore, but we embraced him as one of our own. He gravitated towards journalism as a child, interviewing his middle school classmates using a pencil as a microphone. Tim's course in life was set in high school, when a teacher asked him to record a Public Service Announcement for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), urging voter registration—and he fell in love with the sound of his voice on the air.

He continued broadcasting as a student at Florida State University. His career began in earnest when he was chosen for a competitive internship with the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, spending a year in Washington, D.C. learning his trade.

His next stop was Huntington, West Virginia, where he spent five years working for WSAZ-TV. In Huntington, he met the love of his life, Charleen Dawson Tooten, and they would spend the next 40 years together in blissful matrimony.

After his time in Huntington was done, Tim moved his family to Baltimore, working as a reporter at WMAR-2 for just over a year. Following this chapter at WMAR-2, he began selling insurance to support his family while continuing to do freelance journalism. This freelance work led to his hiring at WBAL-TV, the station that he called home for 35 years.

At WBAL-TV, Dr. Tooten was the station's only education reporter, and he gradually became one of Baltimore's most recognized faces and most trusted voices. He was especially beloved by the children of the Baltimore area, who knew that the snow day wasn't official until they heard it from Tim.

Dr. Tooten's voice was respected not only by the people of Baltimore, but also by his journalistic colleagues. He was immensely proud of his work on the documentary Africa's Maryland, wherein he traveled to Liberia to explore that country's historical connections to our state. This documentary was lauded by the press, earning a regional Emmy as well as the National Headliner Award Best of Show and the National Edward R. Murrow Award. His documentary East is East, chronicling life growing up as a Black man on Maryland's Eastern Shore, earned him another National Headliner Award, and in 2024, Dr. Tooten was inducted into the Emmy Silver Circle Hall of Fame, recognizing his 25 years of significant contributions to the broadcasting industry.

Dr. Tim Tooten was a man who wore many hats. He was passionate about education, providing mentorship to young Black men at Perry Hall High School and dispensing wisdom in his broadcasting classes at Loyola University Maryland. He furthered his own education, earning degrees in theology and ministry while working full time and raising a family.

Rev. Dr. Tooten organized his own church, Harvest Christian Ministries, and devoted himself to spreading the good word in his retirement. He served on the board of the Maryland Bible Society, and in 2017, he penned a book, *Leading by Example: A Parental Guide to Teaching and Modeling Christian Faith at Home*, which married his twin joys of teaching and preaching.

Though Tim was taken from us far too soon, I find comfort in knowing that the Lord has called him home for a purpose greater than we can understand. I take heart in the knowledge that he awaits his loved ones in the Kingdom of Heaven, basking in the glory of the Almighty.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO ST. ANN MAGI MINISTRY

HON. BETH VAN DUYN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, St. Ann Magi Ministry in Coppell. More than 30 years ago, St. Ann Catholic Parish began its Magi Ministry, giving 100 gifts to those who would have otherwise gone without. Over the years, the ministry has grown to be one of the most important parts of the parish's Christmas season. More than 3,400 children, seniors, seminarians, and families received Christmas gifts this year thanks to the generosity of parishioners.

Beginning the weekend before Thanksgiving, parish members can choose an ornament from a tree around the church. Each ornament contains a gift request from a child in the St. Ann community, residents of Hillcrest and Ewing Houses, as well as children from Blessed Sacrament. The volunteers at Magi Ministry collect, sort, and wrap the gifts before individually delivering them to their recipients.

My heartfelt thanks go out to St. Ann volunteers for spreading Christmas love and cheer throughout our community. They are a shining example of what makes North Texas great.

HONORING AFRICAN AMERICANS
IN LABOR DURING BLACK HIS-
TORY MONTH

HON. FRANK J. MRVAN

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Mr. MRVAN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect and sincere admiration that I rise to celebrate Black History Month and its 2025 theme—African Americans and Labor. This year's theme reflects on the struggles and triumphs of the African American community in the workforce who have fought and continue