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# Chattanooga News Chronicle

A Progressive Voice in the African American Community

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Complimentary

## Mayor Selects the First Black Woman to Head the Chattanooga Police Dept.

By Camm Ashford

During an early morning press conference on Tuesday, Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly named Celeste Murphy, a 25-year law enforcement veteran, as the city's next police chief.

"I am thrilled to announce my appointment of Celeste Murphy to be Chattanooga's next chief of Police," Kelly said. "She has a demonstrated track record of keeping people safe and reducing crime, and she brings a lifelong commitment to civil rights and community policing."

Murphy is the first woman, and also the first Black woman, to head the department. She also made history in her previous role with the Atlanta Police Department, where she was the first female ever to command two different precincts at the rank of major and four different divisions at the rank of deputy chief.

"This is a dream come true," Murphy said of the historic nomination.

Murphy, whose appointment is subject to confirmation by Chattanooga City Council, helped drive and maintain a double-digit decrease in overall crime in her Atlanta precincts as deputy chief of the Field Operations Division and has also led department efforts to provide educational and life skills to the city's youth—including working with local nonprofits to provide alternative pathways to criminal justice involvement.

"As chief, I will bring every resource, every relationship and every ounce of experience to meet this challenge and keep our city and our neigh-

borhoods safe," Murphy said. "We are going to expose the humanity in each other by embracing what we have in common. We will work together instead of against each other through conversations and partnerships between the department and the community. And we will enhance both our focus on stopping crime as well as our work to address its root causes."

As chief, Murphy will focus on three key issues: violent crime reduction, community policing and youth engagement.

Over the last two decades, Murphy rose through the ranks at the Atlanta Police Department, serving as patrol officer, detective, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major and deputy chief. She has worked in or supervised every division of the department, including Special Operations, Special Projects, Field Operations, Strategy, and Community Services.

She has taken on multiple high-level assignments for the department, including overseeing policing at the Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport, as well as managing Violent Crime Interdiction.

During the period of unrest after the killing of George Floyd, she managed approximately 900 patrol officers and worked with the community to quickly restore the peace.

Murphy is a mother of four children, and holds degrees from Syracuse University and Saint Leo University.

She succeeds Eric Tucker, who served as interim chief following the



Celeste Murphy is the first woman, as well as the first Black woman, to head the Chattanooga Police Department.

retirement of David Roddy on July 30, 2021. If she's approved by the council,

Murphy's salary will be \$165,000 a year.

## Chattanooga State's Nesmith named DREAM Scholar

By Betty A. Proctor

Zennia Nesmith, on track to graduate from Chattanooga State Community College in spring 2022, has been named a 2022 DREAM Scholar by Achieving the Dream (ATD).

As one of eight students chosen for this honor nationwide, Nesmith will engage with community activists, education leaders, peers and DREAM Scholars alumni.

Nesmith's journey began at the tender age of seven when she became inspired by the compassion and humanity exhibited by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She loved finding solutions to problems and helping others, but did not have the support needed to achieve her academic goals.

During Nesmith's early adult life, her goal was to make a livable wage. Once she became a wife and mother, that changed to providing for her daughter and later when her daughter suffered a traumatic brain injury from a car accident, it became keeping her head above water.

"I worked a job to provide for her and made a decent living, but all the while, I knew I needed to go to college and get an education so I could help others heal from trauma," said Nesmith.

Although she did not complete high school, Nesmith completed her GED and enrolled at Chattanooga State more than two decades later.

Now fully understanding her life goals, she said, "My life has trained me to help women and children with trauma, and I am pursuing a degree in psychology to do exactly that."

Fully immersed in academia and college life, Nesmith shares her own inspirational story with

HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) adult education students twice a week.

"I wanted them to know that I sat in their seat trying to figure it out, too, and that it was OK," she said.

Later, when Nesmith began experiencing difficulty



Zennia Nesmith is one of eight students from around the country selected to be a DREAM Scholar. She is the first DREAM Scholar from Chattanooga State Community College.

retaining information in two of her classes, she was diagnosed with severe ADHD, and had to extend the same grace to herself that she advocated to others.

"These experiences related to my career goals of making available more resources in our communities

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## Tennessee Legislative Updates 2022



Tennessee's 2022 legislative session is well under way, and we're keeping a close eye on the proposed bills involving our state's election process.

What voting and election legislation have we seen so far? Here's a summary of the issues that we see trending:

Enhanced election audits: Currently, only the counties that use optical scan voting machines, i.e., those with paper ballots, are required to audit ballots following certain elections, but a couple of bills could change that.

HB2585/SB2675 would require randomly selected counties to conduct risk-limiting audits, a statistically based technique of randomly selecting ballots to audit, before the election results are certified. This type of audit is aligned with election security best practices, as they help to ensure that voting equipment and processes are working properly before

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## The State of Black Chattanooga: A Tale of Two Cities

By Camm Ashford

A scathing report released Wednesday afternoon by the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga during a news conference paints a bleak picture for Blacks living in Chattanooga and Hamilton County.

The "State of Black Chattanooga," the Urban League's inaugural report on the dismal condition of African Americans living in the area, points out "numerous large and se-

rious aspects of gaps in parity (equality) between Black and White populations in the city and region."

The report uncovers a "tale of two cities," said Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly.

"Today, we're facing two fundamentally different life experiences," Kelly said during the 1 p.m. news conference at the Kingdom Center, 730 E. Martin Luther King Blvd. "It's two Chattanooga's."

The Rev. Dr. Ernest Reid, Inaugural State of Black Chattanooga co-chair, compared the status of the city's Black residents in 2022 to the African Americans in



More than 100 people attended a news conference Wednesday on the "State of Black Chattanooga." Photos by Camm Ashford

1787 who were subjected to the "Three-fifths Compromise," which allowed a state

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Urban League of Greater Chattanooga President and CEO Candy Johnson discusses the "State of Black Chattanooga" with Mayor Tim Kelly.

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