

LOCAL

UTC student digitally digs into huge African American collection at Bessie Smith Cultural Center



KaZee CEO, Albert Woodard

By Shawn Ryan

Over the summer, Maxwell King was immersed in the history of Chattanooga.

It may seem odd that a sophomore majoring in computer science at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga would dive into the city's past, but King was using his tech skills.

As an intern in the city's Bessie Smith Cultural Center, which focuses on the history of blacks in Chattanooga, he helped digitize its massive collection of artifacts, photos and artwork, a task that hadn't been done until now.

Some of the history was totally new to King.

"I was learning to effectively research topics I know nothing about—traditional African art, African American music history, African American local history," he said. "The most surprising, memorable thing I cataloged was an original map of downtown Chattanooga from 1880."

King was the first student in the College of Engineering and Computer Science selected for the Small-Business Intern Initiative Fund, established with a \$25,000 donation from Atlanta-based KaZee, the largest minority-owned software development company in the country.

Albert Woodard, a 1974 graduate from UTC with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering, is founder and chief executive



UTC intern, Maxwell King, poses inside Bessie Smith Cultural Center. King has been busy using his tech skills helping digitize the center's collection of historical artifacts.

officer of Atlanta-based KaZee, which provides information technology products and services to the health-care industry.

"It is important to future generations that we record and display the contributions and history of Chattanooga's black community," Woodard said. "The Bessie Smith Cultural Center provides a balanced historical perspective as well as an educational venue for arts and the exchange of ideas."

The KaZee fund will financially support paid internships with preference given to small, minority-, women- and disabled-owned businesses with less than 25 employees and \$5 million in annual revenue.

Tyler Broome, digital media specialist at the Bessie Smith Cultural Center, said King was "a huge help to us with this project."

"Maxwell's drive, willingness to learn and genuine interest in history really shined through during his time here," Broome said. "He did research on almost every item he touched. He learned what the

artifact was, how it was used, and what significance it had for Chattanooga's African American History."

During his internship, King cataloged almost 1,000 pieces of history at the center, Broome said, "as well as assisted us with the finishing touches on our brand-new exhibit 'Chattanooga's Black Soundtrack,'" Broome said.

King said he archived photos of black Chattanooga musicians such as Usher, singer and composer Roland Hayes—namesake of the concert hall in the UTC Fine Arts Center—and Russell Goode, a music teacher at Howard High School.

Photos also documented local history such as the Martin Hotel, once the largest African American hotel in the South and located on what is now M.L. King Boulevard in front of the Bessie Smith Cultural Center.

Others were taken outside of Chattanooga.

"One photo I remember well is one of two Congolese fishermen from the 1930s," King said.



Manilla



Usher Artifacts

Along with photos, King also cataloged African instruments such as a masenqo, a single-stringed instrument with an animal-skin resonator and a harp with an animal-skin stand.

"The items I cataloged were all to remain in storage, with the idea being that, if they wanted to put something on exhibit, they would be easier to find."

The Bessie Smith Cultural Center was created 39 years ago, Broome noted, and only a fraction of the details and history of its large collection has been saved in digital form. Most of it is on paper and "mostly handwritten," he said.

"Archiving and digital preservation is a necessity. Over time, paper, wood and organic materials erode and disintegrate," Broome said. "By digitizing photos and documents and photographing artifacts, it allows us to ensure that there will always be a copy of that piece of history in our archive digitally."

Big Game Week



McClendon Curtis speaks with the media at the Chattanooga Mocs weekly press conference.

CHATTANOOGA---It's a big game week. Is it because it's a matchup of No. 8 vs. No. 11? Is it because the winner is in first place when the final horn sounds?

Both of those are solid points. But no, it's a big game because it's the next one on the schedule. Coach Rusty Wright, senior left tackle McClendon Curtis and slot safety Reuben Lowery III all shared that sentiment in some way during their individual sessions at the podium.

Mercer provides a big challenge on both sides of the ball. As mentioned yesterday, it's the highest rated meeting by the team ranking at the time in Finley Stadium since No. 6 Chattanooga hosted in No. 7 Jacksonville State in the 2015 season opener, a disappointing 23-20 loss.

So it's game week for the 8th-ranked Chattanooga Mocs and No. 11 Mercer Bears. Coach Wright opened the proceedings.

The contest is a "White Out" with all fans encouraged to don as much white clothing as possible.

It's also Academic Day with the athletics department celebrating it's continued success in the classroom honoring the lengthy list of 3.0 or better student-athletes. Add in Hall of Fame weekend with six new members honored at the game. Read more about the group here with five different sports represented: cross country/track & field, men's golf, softball, women's tennis and wrestling.

TICKETS

Home tickets can be purchased at the link above or by calling (423) 266-MOCS (6627). Single-game sales start at \$15.

3 NOTES TO KNOW

- Curtis and his o-line mates lead a rushing attack that averages 178.2 yards per game. The Mocs have run for

160+ in four of six games with a high of 299 against VMI.

- Lowery is fifth in the league in tackles for loss with 6.5. That's behind league leader Jay Person's 12.5 and DT Devonsha Maxwell's 7.0 in fourth.

- Ailym Ford's 105.1 rushing yards per game for his career ranks second among active FCS rushers to Jaleel McLaughlin of Youngstown State (145.8).

MEDIA

TV – ESPN+: Chris Goforth (PxP), Scott McMahan (Analysis) & Dave Keyton (Sideline);

Radio – Mocs Sports Network: 96.1 FM, 100.3 FM & 1070 AM – Jim Reynolds (PxP), Todd Agne (Analysis) & Will Poindexter (Sideline). Also available online at GoMocs.com.

Listen Live – Radio broadcast is available for free online at GoMocs.com & on the Varsity Network App

Ramsey: from front

the Department of Community Development for the city of Chattanooga, agreed with Mrs. Ramsey.

"Through his outreach, through his entire life, his goal was to give back to his community," Sammons said. "This is only a symbol of what he represented. The lasting work that Chris gave us, is us returning and giving back to our community as well. So let's do him that honor."

Mayor Tim Kelly said the Brainerd center, a place that's become synonymous with community in the area, is being honored in a way reminiscent of how Chris Ramsey lived.

"I will forever be in his debt and grateful for everything he did during his lifetime to inspire all of us to make that vision a reality," Mayor Kelly said. "Chris lived by the phrase 'service is the price we pay for the space that we occupy.'"

Best known for his work promoting

the Hamilton County Minority Health Fair, Mr. Ramsey was a dedicated public servant and an outspoken advocate for health equity and education for underserved communities in Chattanooga. He was also a leading voice at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sadly, it was that very virus he was fighting so hard to keep others safe from that claimed his life.

"It was Chris who pointed out to me during my campaign that Chattanooga had one of the worst health disparities in the state of Tennessee," Mayor Kelly said. "It was he who inspired me to really create the Office of Community Health to continue to try to close those health disparities that have haunted our area for so long."

His widow noted that the Brainerd Community Center held a special significance to Mr. Ramsey, a 1984 graduate of Brainerd High School.

"It's such an honor to have the center named after him," she shared. "He always used to tell me that this center was where he used to go in the summertime, and he

was a member of the Boys Club. So, this is the ideal place to continue his legacy."

A plaque in Mr. Ramsey's honor was hung in the entryway of the center now bearing his name, a reminder of his dedication to service and community. Dr. Bernie Miller, pastor of the New Covenant Fellowship Church in Chattanooga, also unveiled a proclamation in Mr. Ramsey's honor that will hang in the center.

"Chris challenged us to find our passion and serve our community," Mrs. Ramsey said. "He felt that we didn't have to wait on the government, on people, to help us, that we can help ourselves. He didn't just sit back and let others do. He wanted to do and share his part."

Mr. Ramsey was a native of Chattanooga. He received his Bachelor of Business Administration from Austin Peay State University in 1988, and his Master of Business Administration from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 1990.

While attending Austin Peay, Mr. Ramsey became a member of Kappa Al-

pha Psi Fraternity, Inc. After college, he continued to serve as an active member of the organization and held several leadership roles.

He was a 2011 NAACP Ruby Hurley Humanitarian Honoree.

Additionally, Mr. Ramsey was an active member at New Covenant Fellowship Church, where he joined in 2004. He served as a deacon and in 2014 was ordained as an elder.

Lucrecia Ramsey said that although it's bittersweet her husband isn't here to see the renaming, she is proud of him and glad he was recognized.

"My heart is just overflowed with happiness," she said. "I know Chris is up in heaven, just smiling."

Mrs. Ramsey said she is thinking about bringing some of her husband's awards and other memorabilia to the center so those visiting can learn more about him. (Photo Gallery on pg 3)

Biden: from front

U.S. that year (the most recent for which data is available).

The second-largest category of drug arrests involved "other" drugs (29%), followed by heroin, cocaine, or their derivatives (25%), and synthetic or manufactured drugs (6%).

The District counts among the growing number of places where marijuana use is legal.

Biden's actions grant full, complete, and unconditional pardons to U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents who have committed or been convicted of simple possession violating the Controlled Substances Act.

The U.S. Justice Department praised Biden's announcement.

"The Justice Department will expeditiously administer the President's proclamation, which pardons individuals who engaged in simple possession of marijuana, restoring political, civil, and other rights to those convicted of that offense," department officials wrote in a statement.

"In the coming days, the Office of the Pardon Attorney will begin implementing a process to provide impacted individuals with certificates of pardon.

"Also, in accordance with the president's directive, Justice Department officials will work with our colleagues at the Department of Health and Human Services as they launch a scientific review of how marijuana is scheduled under federal law."

Grateful: from front

agenda—just an open invitation to the community to attend. What started as a one-time event to bring people together has become a quickly growing tradition that spans multiple cities in the southeast including Milan, Tennessee, Nashville, Tennessee, and Huntsville, Alabama.

Grateful is made possible by generous financial support from The Maclellan Foundation, First Horizon, Synovus Foundation, Elliott Davis, EPB, Benwood Foundation and Brewer Media Group. The event is hosted by River City Company, City of Chattanooga, United Way, Bessie Smith Cultural Center and Causeway.

Party Bites will provide the turkey and dressing while others like Neidlov's, Commu-

nity Pie, Main Street Meats, and Coca-cola are donating side dishes and drinks.

This year, instead of providing a side dish for the potluck, for those who would like to give back to the community, people are encouraged to bring supplies to benefit the Maclellan Shelter for Families. A collection bin will be available that day. Items of need include nonperishable food, coffee supplies, disposable plates & silverware, hygienic supplies including toothpaste and diapers, and laundry supplies.

Hundreds of volunteers are needed to make the event possible. For volunteer shifts, visit www.ihelpchattanooga.org.

If you're interested in being a sponsor, supporter, please email Dawn Hjelseth at dawn@rivercitycompany.com or call 423.265.3700.