

Calvert Library Prince Frederick celebrates inspiring African American men

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Prince Frederick, MD - The Calvert Library Prince Frederick is celebrating inspiring African American men of Calvert County.

"Calvert Library will have a reception celebrating the release of a new book 'Inspiring African American Men of Calvert County' Wednesday, Dec. 19 at 6:30 p.m. at the Calvert Library Prince Frederick," said Robyn Truslow, Public Relations coordinator for Calvert Library.

The goal of publishing a book about inspiring African Americans in Calvert County is to give solid reference to local history as well as be a resource and inspiration to youth. "Friends of Calvert Library sponsored the first printing of the book," Truslow said. "(The Friends of the Library) are also hosting the reception."

"We are so excited about this project and proud to be supporting it. The Friends are strong believers in making a difference in one's community," Friends of the Library President Martha Grahame said. "Many African American men have contributed to the building and improvement of our county, its people and the world beyond. We are pleased to celebrate them with this book!"

Truslow said there are 39 men featured in the book. Local youth will introduce each of them—after reading the book—and give a presentation on what they learned about each of the men. She said many of the men are people who continue to live in the area and inspire today. "(However,) there are people like Charles Ball and William Sampson Brooks, for example, from the late 1800s," she said. "There are so many more inspiring men who did not make it in the book so we left extra pages in the back in hopes that people will write in the man who inspires them."

She said this is not the first time the library and friends came together to make a collection like this. The library compiled Inspiring African American Women of Calvert County in 2017. "This book is essential. We do not have anything that records black history, and that is what I am trying to do now," said Michael Kent, who is featured in the book for his work in uncovering, preserving and sharing black history working with the Calvert County Schools, Calvert Library, Historical Society, NAACP, and the Maryland Commission for African American History and Culture.

"The first black high school was finished in 1939," Kent said. He went on to expand on the relevance of Albert I. Cassell to the history of Calvert County. He said Cassell had plans for a "black version of Atlantic City" named Calvert Town. He said white legislators blocked Cassell's federal funds to build Calvert Town in fear white citizens would be forced out by the black population of citizens that would inevitably grow once Cassell started pulling in black skilled labor from surrounding areas, Washington, DC, and Baltimore. Kent said at that time, African-Americans were the majority in Calvert County.

"I've been going to the high schools giving history presentations, and the kids are very perceptive," he said. "They are surprised by so many things here in Calvert County that affected things nationally." He said although schools are working to improve the education of African American history, there are still few classes with fewer qualified African American studies-specific educators. He explained the classes do not have textbooks and this book will be a great addition to those courses.

"Darlene Harrod spent hours putting together biographies of Inspiring African American women," Truslow said. "When we asked her to re-create the same for African American men of Calvert County, she was happy to do it."

Harrod appreciated the praise for her hard work but also wanted to praise the help she received from Shirley Knight. "I was happy to be asked and I was happy to have help from Shirley Knight," Harrod said. "(Knight) provided invaluable assistance with the editing work and offered outstanding input for the project."

"Calvert Library is very grateful for Ms. Harrod's dedication to helping Calvert County's African American community tell its story and celebrate its successes," said Carrie Willson-Plymire, Calvert Library Prince Frederick Executive Director.

Truslow said each man featured in the book will receive a copy courtesy of the Friends of the Library. She said copies will be available for sale at the event for \$5. They are also available on Amazon and will be available for digital check out from the library.

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