

# PRIME MERIDIAN PRIME MERIDIAN

Volume 2, Issue 1: Summer/Fall 2016

## “Creating Our 50 Year Legacy, As We Strive For A Greater Future”



The National Council of Meridianites, Inc.® returned to the Motor City for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention and Picnic. The Midwest Region Meridianites truly made the 50<sup>th</sup> a stellar affair. The event was held in the Detroit Marriott that oars 70 floors above the Detroit River at the Renaissance Center on the International Riverfront, next door to Hart Plaza. The Renaissance Center is General Motors’ world

headquarters. It has a gorgeous riverfront walkway were you can enjoy traffic on the Detroit River and see all the way to Windsor, Canada. Have 1, 363 reviews from the Trip Advisor - 320-Excellent; 488-Very Good; and 277-Average.

People could dine Chevrolet or Cadillac style -- at the Food Court on fast food or dine at Joe Muer, Detroit’s premier seafood restaurant. The casino crowd could walk to Greektown or take a taxi and pay \$10 for four to travel to the MGM Grand. Detroit as they say: “Where we do the things we do” was superb.

## From: President Valeria Burwell Address

*Today, five decades later we have literally come full circle. We have grown into an organization that is 5 regions strong, currently has 10 chapters but we started with 18 and we are still holding on to 100s of members. From the very beginning we had a strong desire to connect. Back then relationships and concern for one another was the motivating force of our organization. Fifty years later, is that still true today? Has our desire for community remained our motivation? Do we still have the same love and concern for one another? Fifty years ago we were planning events left and right. They were large and frequent. Frankly, we couldn’t get enough of each other. Do we still feel that way today? Fifty years later, is that still true today? Has our desire for community remained our motivation? Do we still have the same love and concern for one another? Fifty years ago we were planning events left and right. They were large and frequent. Frankly, we couldn’t get enough of each other. Do we still feel that way today?*

*Each of us must step up and ensure our organization continues to expand, to live and to thrive. We can only do that by reclaiming our focus and getting back to why we were birthed. Why this organization was birthed and why we started in the first place. Community, connection and unity because only through the spirit of cooperation can we accomplish bigger and better things. Meridianites, we have 50 more years ahead of us. Let’s stay focused and get to work! Thank you so very much. Through God all things are possible.*

*Valeria Burwell*

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### Special points of interest:

- **Shaymora Nicole Blanks, former JSC** delivers dynamic speech for luncheon.
- **Rev. Jonathan Wilson** brings word of comforts at Roll Call
- NCM **51st** heads back to **Chicago**

**Note: NCM now a 501 (c) (3); donations now tax deductible**

## Jones Welcomes Meridianites



**Brenda Jones**, president of the Detroit City Council welcomed Meridianites. She presented the Midwest Region and the National Council of Meridianites The Sprit of Detroit Award.

The award is presented to an individuals and/or

a group “ as an expression of gratitude ... in recognition of exceptional achievement, outstanding leadership and dedication to improving the quality of life” in Detroit.

Councilwoman Jones was elected November 2005 and was reelected January 2010. She was elected President of the Council on January 6, 2014.

Councilwoman Jones brought a warm welcome and urged Meridianites to take advantages of the many Detroit attractions.

## Memorial Service: Meridianites Beyond the Wall



**National Memorial Service Chairperson Juanita Simon** and her committee inspired all with and uplifting, spirit-filled Memorial Service. Nine candles were lighted in memory of Meridianites beyond the wall since our last picnic. Soulful music, a special inspirational

tribute in memory of past president Irene Wade, and Words of Comfort from Rev. Jonathan Wilson of CA lifted us up. He used John 15:7 and the topic "Out of the Past and Into the Future" and urged Meridianites to soldier on: Yesterday is history; tomorrow a mystery; today is a gift. The best comes in threes: friends, dreams, and memories. He urged us to take comfort in the word such as John 14:27: "My peace I give to you ... Let not your heart be troubled do not be afraid."

**Roll call included:**

- **MH Keyes**, Council of Organizations 6/20/15
- **Irene Wade**, (Former National Pres.'09-'13 Council of Organizations 9/13/15)
- **Laura Hunter**, Cincinnati Meridianites 8/15
- **Robert Dubose**, Sitting Cincinnati Meridianites 1p/15
- **Melvin Bell**, Chicago Social Pals 11/13/15
- **UnRenee Butler Pierce**, NCM Founder Detroit Meridianites, 3/9/16
- **Rhonda Denise Easton**, Los Angeles Area Meridianites 5/7/16
- **Clara A. Holmes**, Chicago Social Pals 2/21/16
- **Hazel L. Robinson-Fitts**, St. Louis Area 4/17/16

## Membership Drive

Recommendations to increase membership:

**FACEBOOK:** Each chapter - set up a Facebook page

**NATIONAL WEBSITE:** NCM - funds to update the website: post past and present picnic pictures, chapter info, etc.

**BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER:** publish summer/fall of 2016 and winter/spring 2017: events from the convention,

updated chapter activities, upcoming picnic information.



**LENDING A HELPING:** Make contacts with other Meridianites

**SURVEY:** Regions, Chapters, Individuals, etc. report membership efforts to 2<sup>nd</sup> VP in Jan.; these will post on web and newsletter. (Try to recruit from different age groups.)

**Scholarship Applications:** Invite recipients to become members

**Youth Activities:** Include in picnic weekend—maybe Thursday; Dress for Success; Winning Essay, etc.

**Contact:** **Mable Oatis**, 2nd VP and Membership Chair (601) 485-8834/ mhoatis@hotmail.com

**Mattie Butler**, Western Region  
**Annie Grant**, Eastern Region  
**Shirley Brooks**, Midwest Region

*Every service organization I know is struggling with declining membership, and revenue."*  
 -Jini Reynolds -

## Nineteenth Annual NCM/JSC Luncheon & 2016 Scholarships



Shaymora Nicole Blanks, Spelman College '04, and former NCM/JSC

Scholarship, recipient, was the 2016 luncheon speaker. She was a member of the first graduating class of Relay Graduate School of Education with a Master of Education in Childhood Education in 2010. She was promoted to Special Education Department Chair that same year. In 2014 she relocated to Chicago and is currently Principal of CICS Washington Park Middle School.

All were inspired by her address. This year's recipient of the **\$4000 NCM/JSC Scholarship** is **Justin Dean** of Stone Mt. GA (Eastern Region)

The **Roots Scholarship \$1500** per student, per region were awarded to:

- Eastern Region: **Caitlyn Simone Grant**, Conyers, GA
- Midwest Region: **Alexandra Nicole Poole**, L. Village
- Northern Region: **Akea Tena Davis**, Chicago, IL
- Southern Region: **Amber Christian Gordon**, Meridian, MS
- Western Region: **Laura A. McWilson**, Olympia, WA

## About Our Organization...

**NATIONAL  
COUNCIL OF  
MERIDIANITES,  
INC.**

**VALERIA BURWELL,  
PRES.**

4563 Tye Circle  
LaVerne, CA 91750

Phone:

909-593-6706

E-mail  
[formerlt@verizon.net](mailto:formerlt@verizon.net)

We're on the Web!

*See us at:  
nationalcouncilof  
meridianites.org*

The **National Council of Meridianites, Inc.** (NCM), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, had its beginning in the mid-1960s after several Meridianites (**Steve Jackson, Lessie Hill Cole, Lucile Kennedy Jackson, Curtis Cole, Clarice May Thomas, Annie B. Kennedy Horton**) reunited at the funeral of a friend (**Amos** ) in Detroit. Because the friends had not seen each other in over ten years, they decided to plan more fellowship gatherings. This evolved into the **first picnic of the Meridianites held in 1967 in Detroit, MI.**

At first, the event's location alternated between Detroit, MI and Cleveland, OH. However, as Meridianites residing in

other cities began attending the picnic, they started forming chapters in their own cities. Meridianite chapters are now located throughout the nation which is divided into five regions (**Western, Eastern, Northern, Midwest and Southern.**)

The Convention and Picnic rotates among the regions and returns every five years to the Southern Region with the **Council of Organizations, home chapter** as host.

**Roots Scholarships** (one for each region) and the **NCM/JSC Foundation Scholarships** are awarded each year. To date NCM/JSC has awarded \$50,000+.

## Chronology

- 1967:** FIRST PICNIC OF THE MERIDIANITES WAS HELD IN DETROIT.
- 1974:** PICNIC RETURNED HOME TO MERIDIAN, MS; 6,000+ ATTEND; ... FEATURED IN THE 1974 OCT *EBONY* MAGAZINE.
- 1976:** RATIFIED CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS;
- 1980:** ESTABLISHED ROOTS SCHOLARSHIP
- 1990:** NCM INCORPORATED; US TRADEMARK ACQUIRED
- 1996:** ESTABLISHED NCM/JSC. JACQUELYN SWEETNER CAFFEY SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION
- 2005:** KATRINA RELIEF TO MERIDIAN, MS
- 2015:** NCM -- 501 (C) (3)

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
MERIDIANITES, INC.  
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**Valeria Burwell**, President  
**Louise Gaddy**, 1<sup>st</sup> VP  
**Mable Hoskins Oatis**, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP  
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**Leroy Caffey**, Sgt.-at-Arms and  
Liaison to the President  
**Alinda Rush Brown**, Chaplain  
**Irene Wade** (d), Immediate  
Past President



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
MERIDIANITES, INC.  
C/O VALERIA BURWELL, PRESIDENT  
4563 Tye Circle  
La Verne, CA 91750

RECIPIENT NAME  
STREET ADDRESS  
ADDRESS 2  
CITY, ST ZIP CODE