

African American History Month Announcements

February, 2021

Charlotte County Schools

February 1, 2021

Good morning! We will celebrate African American History Month by sharing information about an African American inventor and those in science and medicine each school day. Throughout history, African Americans have played a major role in contributing to fields that have influenced our lives.

There is probably no snack more popular and widely loved than the potato chip. Thank Chef George Crum (1824-1914) for this tasty snack. Crum invented the chip while working as a chef in Saratoga, New York. When a diner complained about the fries being too thick, Crum made the potato slices so thin that they couldn't be picked up with a fork. Crum's invention became known as Crum's Saratoga Chips when locals began to ask for them. The rest is history. Think of George Crum when you enjoy your next bag of potato chips.

February 2, 2021

Did you use an alarm clock to wake up this morning? If so, thank Benjamin Banneker. Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806), a free, self-taught African American mathematician, astronomer, almanac author and farmer, who at age twenty-one, invented the first clock in America in the 1750's. Benjamin Banneker was fascinated with the stars in the sky and developed a strong passion for astronomy, and he went on to author a series of almanacs. Banneker is also responsible for surveying the territory for the construction of the nation's capital in Washington, D.C., in 1791. Many of the buildings and monuments he designed still exist today.

February 3, 2021

Next time you use any navigational device or software like Google Maps, thank Dr. Gladys West. Dr. Gladys West (1930-Present), started her career as a mathematician who developed a mathematical model for the shape of the earth, is inventor of GPS technology. Dr. West, a member of a farming family, grew up in a sharecropping community. She decided early on that education was the way to have a better future. Dr. West chose mathematics as a major, which at the time was only studied by men. Dr. West was inducted into the United States Air Force Hall of Fame in 2018. Dr. West has said that she had no idea that her work would affect so many as she was one of the "hidden figures" described in the book and movie *Hidden Figures* (2017).

February 4, 2021

Do you have a security system in your home? If so, thank Marie Van Brittan Brown (1922-1999). Marie Van Brittan Brown created the first home security system in 1969, which consisted of peepholes, monitors, a camera, a two-way microphone, and an alarm button. Due to her invention, the National Scientists Committee honored her with an award. *New Scientist* reported in 2016 that 100 million concealed closed-circuit cameras were in operation because of Marie's invention. Due to Marie Brown's invention, there are millions of homeowners who now entrust home security systems to protect their families in the event of a fire or medical emergency. Marie Brown also is credited with inventing the first ever Closed-Circuit Television.

February 5, 2021

When you drop a letter into a mail box thank Philip Downing (1871-1961) who invented the Street Letter Box, which is known today as the mailbox. Downing designed an apparatus that would allow people to securely place outgoing letters in a protected community postal box centrally located in the neighborhood. The box would serve as a convenient alternative to going to the post office. His invention, a steel frame with a hinging door, supported by four legs provided a safeguard for letters against snow, rain or dirt. Downing's invention forever changed the way mail was handled. It is estimated that millions of envelopes are processed and delivered through the U.S. Postal Service each year and the street letterbox handles a significant portion of that volume.

February 8, 2021

Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951) was an African American woman, whose cancer cell culture was used to create one of the most important cell lines in cancer research in 1951. During treatment for cancer, two samples of her cells were taken without her knowledge or permission and used to create the HeLa cell line. The cells were the first to be successfully cloned and have been used to develop a vaccine for polio, and to research cancer, AIDS, and other viruses. Lacks was given a posthumous honorary doctorate in public service in 2011 and inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame in 2014.

February 9, 2021

Ever wonder where the phrase "The Real McCoy" came from? Elijah McCoy (1844-1929) was the son of the enslaved parents from Kentucky, who escaped via the Underground Railroad to Canada. McCoy's parents sent him to Edinburgh, Scotland where he studied mechanical engineering. McCoy, a prolific inventor noted for 57 patents, changed the travel industry with his work on the steam engine, which involved the lubrication of steam engines. McCoy's inventions have enabled trains to run faster and more efficiently His oil-drip cup invention was so successful that people termed the phrase "The Real McCoy" which now refers to something authentic and of high quality.

February 10, 2021

How many products do you think could come from the peanut? Well, George Washington Carver (1861-1943), was one of the most prominent inventors and scientists of his time. Washington was a plant biologist, who made groundbreaking discoveries focusing on certain crops such as peanuts, sweet potatoes, pecans and soybeans. He discovered over 300 products from the peanut which included soap, axle grease, insecticides and glue to name a few. Carver also developed more than 100 uses of the soybean from plastics to adhesives. He taught automotive pioneer Henry Ford how to construct a new line of automobile parts using plastic that was produced from soybeans. In 1916, George Washington Carver was given a rare honor for any American by becoming a member of the British Royal Society of the Arts. Carver's laboratory was located at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

February 11, 2021

We have all ridden on elevators, but did you realize that when elevators were first invented in the mid-19th century, that riding an elevator was extremely dangerous? Alexander Miles (1838-1918) invented the method for opening and closing elevator doors automatically on each floor. Before his invention, if someone failed to close the door leading to the shaft when exiting, another passenger could possibly fall down the shaft while attempting to get into the elevator. The new automated process that Miles invented improved passenger safety and saved countless lives. The elevators we ride today still feature the same mechanism invented by Miles. Miles was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2007.

February 12, 2021

Have a grandparent who has a pacemaker? Otis Boykin (1920-1982), went to work creating his own inventions after having to leave college due to the lack of funds. In 1959, he received a patent for his precision resistor, which would be used in radios and televisions. Boykin's most noteworthy invention was the control unit for the pacemaker, the device that doctors implant in the human body to help the heart beat normally. The pacemaker uses electrical impulses that would stimulate the heart to help create a steady heartbeat. The pacemaker is responsible for saving hundreds of thousands of lives each year. Otis Boykin who has 26 patents to his name was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2014.

February 15, 2021

Ever thought about how shoes were first made? Thank Jan Ernst Matzeliger (1852-1889) who received a patent for his shoe making invention in 1883. When Matzeliger noticed all the problems shoes had, he invented the "lasting machine" which would stitch the sole of the shoe and make the shoe making process much faster. The "lasting machine" could make around 700 pairs of shoes in day, which was about 10 times the amount a person could do. Because of his invention, the shoemaking industry was revolutionized and shoes made

affordable for the average person. On September 15, 1991, the United States Postal Service honored Matzelter on the Black Heritage U.S.A. Postage Stamp. He was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2006.

February 16, 2021

One of the most prolific inventors was Garrett Morgan (1877-1963). Morgan learned how the sewing machine worked and went on to invent and patent a new and improved sewing machine. One of Morgan's most notable inventions was the three-way traffic signal, which included a warning light, which he was inspired to do after he witnessed a serious car accident at a busy intersection. In 1914, Morgan invented the breathing mask, which made breathing better in a smoky environment. The gas mask invented by Morgan has saved countless lives from smoke and fumes including firefighters, miners and soldiers.

February 17, 2021

Ever heard of a hide-away bed? Well, such a thing exists thanks to Sarah E. Goode (1865-1905), the first African American woman to receive a United States patent and trademark. Sarah received a patent for her cabinet folding bed in 1885; today the bed is known as a hide-away bed. The bed was created so that it could fit in small spaces and when it was not being used as a bed, it could easily be used as a desk. Sarah who owned a furniture store with her husband created the bed in order to better serve her customers, many of whom lived in small apartments and did not have room for a bed and other furniture.

February 18, 2021

Ever think about how food is shipped from one place to another without spoiling? Frederick McKinley Jones (1893-1961) invented refrigerator trucks. Jones invented an apparatus that would allow large trucks to transport perishable items without their spoiling. In 1939, Jones invented a Portable Air-Cooling Unit, a device that allowed trucks to be refrigerated. His invention revolutionized the shipping and grocery businesses. Grocery chains were able to import and export perishable products instead of regular canned goods. As a result, the frozen food industry was born and consumers able to enjoy fresh foods from around the country. Jones who has over 60 patents to his name was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2007.

February 19, 2021

What African American was involved in creating the telephone and light bulb? Lewis Latimer (1848-1928) was an engineer and an inventor. While working at a patent law office, Latimer taught himself mechanical drawing. Lewis helped draft the telephone patent for Alexander Graham Bell. Latimer worked with Thomas Edison on the development of incandescent lighting. He made improvements to Edison's lightbulb by creating and patenting a filament which produced a longer lasting light bulb, allowing lighting to become more efficient and

affordable. Latimer helped install the first electric plants in New York City, Philadelphia and Montreal.

February 22, 2021

If you see the Blood Bank buses, thank Dr. Charles Drew (1904-1950) for this life-saving invention. Dr. Charles Drew discovered methods for the processing and storing of blood plasma. During World War II, Dr. Drew managed two different blood banks, however, he became frustrated with the military after they wanted white and black blood segregated. He then became chief surgeon at the Freeman's Hospital in Washington, D.C. How do you think Dr. Drew may have felt when he experienced the separation of black and white blood after making such a life-saving discovery for all people?

February 23, 2021

Ever used calling waiting or caller I.D.? If so, thank Dr. Shirley A. Jackson, (1946-Present), physicist and inventor. Dr. Jackson holds a Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T). During her career, Dr. Jackson has become a leading developer for many inventions, such as caller I.D., call waiting, fiber-optic cables, the portable fax machine, and the touch one telephone. Dr. Jackson was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1998.

February 24, 2021

How do trains communicate with each other? Granville T. Woods (1856-1910) an electrical engineer and inventor was known as one of the greatest inventors of all time. Throughout his life, Woods created over 50 patents with over a dozen focusing on bettering the railroad system. In 1887, Woods created a device which would allow the communication between train depots and trains called the Synchronous Multiplex Railway Telegraph. This device allowed dispatchers and engineers to communicate with train conductors via telegraph wires, helping them to avoid collisions. Woods made railways much safer and revolutionized the railroad industry. Woods was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2006.

February 25, 2021

While enslaved, Benjamin Bradley (1830-1897), a 16-year-old boy worked at a printing office and at the U.S. Naval Academy to help set up experiments for the teachers. He was able to keep \$5.00 of the salary paid to him each month, while the rest went to the plantation owner. Bradley began to experiment with scrap metal and built steam engines which could run a small boat. He continued to build his steam engines and in 1856, created the first United States steam engine big enough to power a war ship. With the money he earned for his steam engines, Benjamin Bradley was able to purchase his own freedom.

February 26, 2021

When you log on to your personal computer, thank Dr. Mark Dean. Dr. Dean (1957-) was one of the original inventors of the IBM personal computer, as well as, the color PC monitor. In 1995, Dr. Dean was the first African American to become an IBM Fellow, which is the highest level of technical excellence at the company. Dr. Dean who holds three of IBM's original nine Personal Computer patents, and he was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1997. Dr. Dean's inventions have changed the world and allowed billions of people to use personal computers in their homes, offices, and schools each day worldwide.