

# SoulVision®

M A G A Z I N E

**CARIBU**

**Max Tuchman's  
Devotion to Literacy**

**March 2020**

EDITORS NOTE

# BK Fulton



Photo by Queon “Q” Martin

“Stories of achievement and overcoming obstacles in life have been rocket fuel for my soul.”

What would it be like to have 1,000 books in your pocket? As you know, the editors of SoulVision Magazine believe that readers become leaders. In this month’s issue, we feature an insightful interview with Max Tuchman, founding CEO of [Caribu.com](https://www.caribu.com). Caribu was named one of the “100 Best Inventions of 2019” by *TIME Magazine*. The app allows caring adults to read and draw with kids in real-time from anywhere in the world! They have over 1,000 titles for readers to choose from, including all 7 of the *Mr. Business* books. Max shares what it’s like to be a female innovator and leader who happens to be of Latinx and Jewish heritage. Max is so confident in Caribu that she gives away the monthly subscription service to active U.S. service men and women. She is putting 1,000 kids’ books in our pockets and connecting families around the globe. How’s that for being a “Boss?” This month we also highlight the great Willie Lanier in our living legends story. The Hall of Famer took some time with us because he is an avid reader. Willie notes that reading changed his life.

## *BK Fulton – March 2020 (continued)*

Our March issue shines a light on first-time feature-film director Brett Smith who is currently filming *Freedom's Path*. The film takes place in the Antebellum South at the dawn of the Civil War. *Freedom's Path* is a story of friendship and what it really takes to be courageous. March is National Reading Month. Tackle Reading, founded by Kathryn Stark, is our community feature this month. Tackle Reading partners with over 32 NFL teams, alumni chapters and NFL greats like Roger Staubach and Willie Lanier to read to kids for Tackle Reading Day on the 2nd day of March. *Mr. Business* will be a part of this year's program that will reach tens of thousands of kids from coast to coast.

I will have the pleasure of reading to nearly 700 kids in Virginia with Willie Lanier, considered one of the 100 best professionals to ever play in the NFL. The library is a special place to me. Reading changed my life too. Stories of achievement and overcoming obstacles in life have been rocket fuel for my soul. Reading about the accomplishments of others continues to serve as a blueprint for my journey and a beacon for what is possible. Thank you Ron Brown, Dick Parsons, Marianne Spraggins, and Vernon Jordan for showing me the way with your examples. One of the most important things our young people need today to achieve their best lives is having accessible, courageous and supportive mentors and role models. **Be one.** You get a new look when you have SoulVision!

“One of the most important things our young people need today to achieve their best lives is having accessible, courageous and supportive mentors and role models. **Be one.**”

CELEBRITY

# Max Tuchman's Devotion to Literacy



*Max Tuchman, CEO and co-founder of Caribu, an innovative video-calling app. Photo by Michelle Citrin.*

| “Early childhood literacy is integral to the well-being of us all.”

## Max Tuchman's Devotion to Literacy (continued)

Max Tuchman is the CEO and co-founder of Caribu, an innovative video-calling app that connects kids with their families to read and draw together over long-distances. A child of immigrants, Max was born in the beautiful city of Miami, FL and always knew the value of education and self-worth. When she looks back at her Miami upbringing, she appreciates the radical diversity she was a part of. "I was born and raised there," she says. "It is like New York City, where you grow up around a ton of diversity—socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and religious—and everything and everyone." She believes diversity is helpful to the city's evolving reinvention of itself. While growing up, she saw how people who migrated to Miami worked their way up to the top and into the C-suite. "Miami inspired me to be whoever I wanted to be because I saw it," she says. "I'm '305 ride or die' like Pitbull. I'm really proud to be from here."

Her family had to endure immense tragedy and wars to get to a place where they felt secure. Her paternal grandparents survived the Holocaust. Her maternal great-grandparents survived the Bolshevik Revolution. Both families ended up in Cuba. "When you grow up with that type of history where your grandparents, your great-grandparents, and parents were constantly having to flee, you grow up with a sense of education being the most important thing. It is the only thing you can take with you and nobody can take away," she continues, "You can sew your silverware and jewelry into your coat, but at a certain point what you have in your head is the greatest asset you can take with you to the next country because it gives you the opportunity to succeed there."

Max attributes her work ethic to her family's history of struggle and achievement in spite of the obstacles. "I'm an overachiever because I feel like I can never repay my family for their sacrifices. Nothing is enough. Getting into Harvard (She earned her M.P.P. from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and an M.B.A. from the Harvard Business School) and into the White House Fellows program was not enough," she says. She wants to do more. She gives back to her community and wants to continue to



Max Tuchman and kids having fun with the Caribu app.

Photo by Sonya Revell

extend a helping hand to anyone who needs it. "I know so many people who reached out a hand and gave my parents and grandparents a lot of resources and opportunities," she says. "It is my obligation to pay it forward."

Max lives by the golden rule of treating everyone the way you would like to be treated. In business, she says it is important to treat everyone like you're equal, no matter their position in the company. "I feel you should treat everyone well from the most senior people to the most junior people, including those who clean the offices and/or do security because everyone is a human being and has value," she says.

As a "minority" in a leadership position, Max believes unity between women and all so-called minorities is vital to success. According to Max, you should ask yourself two questions when walking into a room: *Whose voices are not being heard?* and *Who's not even in the room?* Beyond just race and gender lines, Max says we need to look at other types of diversity like people's abilities. As a businesswoman, she believes diversity can do more good than bad for business. "Believing and practicing diversity makes you a better leader," she says. "If you don't take diversity into account, you are not serving all people and it is important for you to make sure your product is actually solving people's pain points."

## Max Tuchman's Devotion to Literacy (continued)

When Max was beginning her career, she taught government and economics for Teach For America in a high school in Liberty City, FL. The majority of the school's population was black—African American, Haitian American, Jamaican American, and Nigerian American. Most of the school's population did not have the opportunity to go out of their neighborhoods and explore the Miami she knew and loved. Max had an assignment for them: research religious winter holidays that were not Christmas. They came back with Hanukkah and Diwali. The assignment eventually expanded to other holidays that did not fall on the traditional U.S. holiday season, like Ramadan. One of Max's students worked as a candy stripper at the local hospital. She wanted to make a sign that showed respect to all of the different holidays. But she wanted to make sure she had the correct spellings of each holiday, so she texted Max and asked, "Can you help me with spelling the holidays correctly?" "I was just so proud at that moment because she saw everybody," Max says. "All of a sudden, her world was expanded. She wanted to be kind and considerate to every patient and let everyone in the hospital know about all of the holidays that were being celebrated there."

**"Believing and practicing diversity makes you a better leader."**

While teaching government and economics at the high school, she received a grant to buy and teach the lessons in *Rich Dad, Poor Dad for Teens*. They also received a game called the CASHFLOW Board Game as part of the grant. "It was all about showing kids that you're going to live paycheck to paycheck unless you invest, buy assets and think about ways you can save your money," she explains. She remembers one of her students—Oluremi—saying to her, "You know Miss, the Miami Arena is up for sale and I think it's a good asset and I think I should buy it." Her work was figuratively done. "All you want as a teacher is to make some kind of impact—hopefully long-lasting—on a kid's life," she says.

"For me, I could see his prospects in the world being so different, because he knew the difference between an asset and a liability, and he was already thinking about investing in real estate."

In 2015, Max, and fifteen others were appointed by former President Obama, to serve as White House Fellows. This was during his last year in office and Max was given the opportunity to work for the US Department of the Treasury. In her teaching days, she worked with students on financial literacy, but it was not at this scale. "Here I was thinking about not only financial literacy but inclusion and ensuring every American had an opportunity to be banked and that students weren't being crushed by their student loan debt," she says.

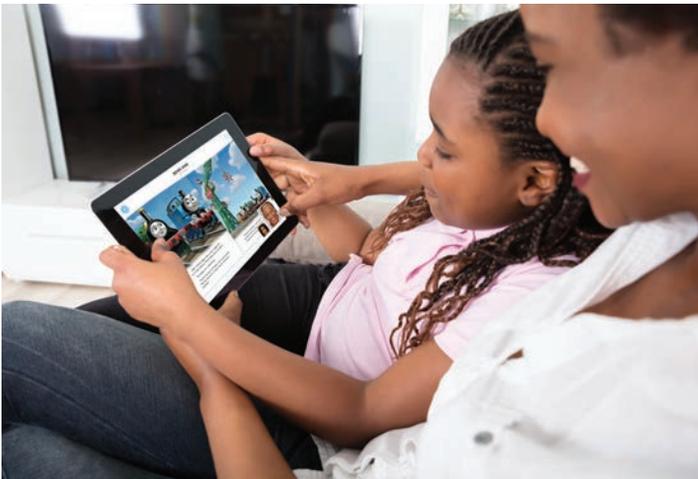
**"It is unfair to children if we allow them to graduate from school and they can't read a job application or even read for pleasure."**

Max says every Tuesday and Thursday, Fellows had the opportunity to sit with the President, First Lady, and members of the Cabinet for lunch. "We would sit and talk and ask any questions we had," she says. "They gave us advice and let us know their mistakes as well as the lessons they learned that lead to the successes in their careers." She remembers talking to former Secretary of State Colin Powell. He let her know he was also a former White House Fellow and his experiences outside of being in government. "It was mind-blowing. You can't recreate that anywhere else," she says.

Max sees Caribu as a vehicle for advancing early childhood literacy. She refers back to her time as a 12th grade teacher. It was then that she realized how the education system failed her students who could not read at grade level. She had 180 days to get them to the point where they could be productive in the world. "It is unfair to children if we allow them to graduate from school

## Max Tuchman's Devotion to Literacy (continued)

and they can't read a job application or even read for pleasure," she says. "This is unacceptable." When she was a White House Fellow, she met former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. She asked him if he had unlimited funds what would he put a majority of his focus on. He said he would focus on early childhood education. She says he believed it could change the world.



*Mother and daughter reading on the Caribu app. Families can pick from thousands of children's book titles in-app.*

*Photo courtesy of Caribu.*

Through her research, Max understands quantity and quality are two factors that help in early childhood literacy. "There are two components to learning to read: there's quantity of reading and quality of time reading. We do both, but we really focus on quantity," Max explains. "From 0-3, kids should be reading a minimum of 20 minutes a day and should be hearing 30,000 unique words every day, and that is hard." What makes Caribu different from services like Skype and FaceTime, is the ability to play games, draw and most importantly, read from a library of over 1,000 books in-app with a caring adult who might be located anywhere in the world. It's very cool and easy to use.

The idea for Caribu came from a photograph of a soldier trying to read to his daughter through a webcam. The team at Caribu wanted to know how they could make this exchange more fun and engaging. It also inspired

the team to partner with *Blue Star Families*, a non-profit that helps those in the military, to donate Caribu to active-duty military families. With Caribu, consumers have access to over a thousand titles in eight languages. While Max understands not every family can afford \$6.99 a month, she believes the service is affordable for most and costs less than one hardcover book.

For Max, Caribu solves some of the problems she saw while she was the executive director of Teach For America Miami-Dade. They would have students, including football players (who the kids idolized) to spend time reading with the elementary school kids across the street. After the readings were over, the children could take the book home with them. She recalls one girl in second grade running up to her sister and screaming with excitement, "Look, I have a book. It's going to be the only book in our house! It's going in my room!" Max was shocked. "I couldn't believe it, but that is the reality," she says. "For me, it is about high-quality access and making sure that kids have access to a library of high-quality books."

**"If you are constantly trying to surprise and delight your customers, you will always win."**

For young entrepreneurs, Max advises them to chase the customer and not the investment dollars. "Fundraising is not why we build companies," she says. "We build companies because we found a problem customers have and we can solve it better than anyone else." When a young entrepreneur is focused on thinking about the customer, they will always be successful. "If you are constantly trying to surprise and delight your customers, you will always win," she says.

Max sees Caribu becoming a household name. She wants everyone to have the chance to experience Caribu. "I want every child to have a way better reading experience with their parents and grandparents no matter

## *Max Tuchman's Devotion to Literacy (continued)*

where they are. I also want kids to read a lot more," she says. "I want them to have a fun time with long-distance families. I want them to enjoy art, coloring, and reading stories of faraway lands with people who may look like them and some who don't look like them. When we have fully accomplished that for every child, it will bring me the greatest joy."

*All seven books of the Mr. Business: The Adventures of Little BK series are available on Caribu. **View Video [here](#).***

*To learn more about Max Tuchman and Caribu, you can visit [caribu.com](http://caribu.com) and follow them on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).*

MOVIES

## Director Brett Smith Advocates for Courage in Freedom's Path



From left: Actors RJ Cyler and Gerran Howell receiving coaching from Brett Smith on the set of *Freedom's Path*.

Photo by Diego Castello

| “Your audience must be fully immersed in the story you created.”

Brett Smith has an aptitude for grandiose narratives. The writer-director from Seattle, Washington wants audiences to be fully immersed in the experiences he creates. “My job is to trick the audience into believing that what they are seeing through the lens is reality, despite what may be going on just outside the frame of the camera,” he explains. “A filmmaker must create an environment where the audience is fully immersed in the story.” Brett recognizes the impact film can have when everyone involved works in synergy. If you can deal with unforeseen circumstances like setbacks and have the ability to work with those with strong personalities, he believes you can achieve so much in film. “It is the greatest feeling there is,” Brett says.

## Director Brett Smith Advocates for Courage in *Freedom's Path* (continued)



Brett Smith. Photo by Diego Castello.

The world will soon know Brett's name when he releases his full-length directorial debut *Freedom's Path*. Brett says the film is currently in post-production. The film has been nine years in the making and is based on a short he created of the same name. "It is a tribute to the millions of enslaved people who were buried silently in unmarked graves and whose stories have been lost to time," Brett says. "It's in honor of the countless heroes who persevered so that the next generation might one day taste liberty and freedom."

Public opinion on slave films has been mixed. Some believe there are too many slave films and they depict African Americans as victims. Others believe, when done correctly, these films can serve to teach the truth and triumphs that grow out of our nation's original sin. This is a fact Brett is certainly aware of. He believes his film's narrative is fresh and unique. *Freedom's Path* is the story of a group of freed and self-proclaimed free blacks, living in the south, helping enslaved fugitives travel north to freedom via a small portion of the Underground Railroad during the Civil War," he explains. This group of freedmen rescues and heals a white Union soldier. "They heal him physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, while teaching him what it means to be free and what it means to be a courageous human."



From left: Actors Afemo Omilami and Ewen Bremner with Brett Smith. Photo by Kassy Gross.

With films like *Harriet* bringing more visibility to the Underground Railroad, there is a room for a new generation to have the opportunity to extend the narrative of lesser-known heroes who were a part of this movement towards freedom. Brett will be spending the next six months prepping *Freedom's Path* for its autumn premiere. While he's preparing, he is busy working on a script for his next feature based on a short film he wrote and directed titled *Never Land*, a reimagining of Peter Pan, told from the perspective of a black boy in foster care. Brett Smith is fully aware of the immense power of film. He is creating stories where characters who are often sidelined, become the leaders in their own stories; stories that can inspire us all.

MOVIES

# Austin Zajur's Youthful Brilliance



Photos by the Riker Brothers.

| “Take the leap to follow your dreams.”

## *Austin Zajur's Youthful Brilliance (continued)*

Austin Zajur is a Richmond, Virginia native and began his acting career at the age of 11 on the set of the HBO miniseries *John Adams* (filmed in Richmond). As a child, he would spend his days traveling back and forth to New York from Richmond. At 20, he took a leap of faith and moved to New York to focus on his acting career. He had basically just moved to Manhattan when he got a call from his agent, saying he was going to Atlanta for a table read for the film *Fist Fight*. His self-taped audition was a success. After filming *Fist Fight* with Charlie Day, Ice Cube, and Tracy Morgan, he headed to Los Angeles to work on more projects. He was 22. Since moving to LA, Austin has worked with Jim Carrey on his show *Kidding*, appeared on TV shows *Speechless* and *Carrie Diaries*, lent his voice to Nickelodeon's *Wonder Pets*, and starred in hilarious commercials for Sprint, Walmart and State Farm. Recently, he appeared with Super Bowl LIV MVP Patrick Mahomes in a promo for EA Sport's *Madden NFL 20*. Austin has a few exciting projects in the pipeline. Austin will



Photo credit: David "Wavey" Anderson

appear in Lee Ann Kurr's directorial debut *Student Body* and Charlie Day's directorial debut *El Tonto*.

Last year, he starred in Guillermo del Toro's *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. In the film, he plays Chuck Steinberg. Chuck, alongside a group of teens, must solve the mystery of unfortunate and horrific events in their small town. Chuck is mischievous but caring. Seeing Austin as Chuck showcases the young actor's naturalistic approach to acting. The characters all seem like real-life friends. Their chemistry is unmatched.

Like other members of his generation, Austin has an active YouTube page where he vlogs and does pranks and challenges with his friends. It serves as another way for Austin to connect with his fanbase. Austin says his life's



Photo credit: David "Wavey" Anderson

## *Austin Zajur's Youthful Brilliance (continued)*



*Photo credit: David "Wavey" Anderson*

goal is to inspire teens to follow their dreams and be successful. Before he moved to New York, Austin volunteered as a bilingual leadership coach to Latino middle school students through the Virginia Hispanic Foundation. The foundation "supports the aspirations of Hispanic students on their journey to be productive and successful leaders in the community through education and mentorship." On Austin's visits back home to Richmond and elsewhere, he continues to work with youth and inspire them to live their dreams. Austin had in his mind that he would become an actor and despite the numerous amounts of rejection he faced on his acting journey, he persisted and kept on believing in his dream. "I believe true failure is when you don't try," he says. "If you try and are not successful, you can learn from your mistakes and try again." What do you really have to lose?

*To learn more about Austin Zajur, you can follow him on [TikTok](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).*

BUSINESS

## Rebekah Pierce's Love for All Things Sweet



*Photos by Latika Lee*

| “Believe your gift will be a success.”

Rebekah Pierce is a playwright, author, teacher, entrepreneur, proud Air Force veteran, and baker. Her homemade sweets are baked with love. “My mother taught me how to make cookies and cakes from scratch when I was a little girl, and so I grew to love baking,” she says. It was around 2010 or 2011 when her talent for baking came in handy. One of her short plays was accepted into a festival in New York. But she needed to raise money for the actual production of the short play. She figured she could raise the money with a bake sale. She logged onto Facebook, created a page and launched a campaign selling pies, cookies, brownies, and cupcakes. It was a success. She had enough money to pay for cast and crew, transportation and accommodations. “It was then that I realized just how important this gift (baking) could be for me because it enabled me to work my other gifts of writing and producing,” she says.

## *Rebekah Pierce's Love for All Things Sweet (continued)*

Rebekah didn't turn her culinary gift into a full-time business immediately. She didn't think it was possible for her to start a baking business. It wasn't until a local barbershop owner persistently encouraged her to do so. "He had been asking me for several years to do it," she says. She turned her gift into a full-time business in 2019. She named her business "Maggie's Cupcake Café" in honor of her friend Maggie Maynard who died of cancer several years ago. "I hired a graphic designer to create the logo, and voila, I had a legit home-based baking business," she explains.

**"My mother taught me how to make cookies and cakes from scratch when I was a little girl, and so I grew to love baking."**

Her business carries on the tradition of food as storytelling in the African American community. She has launched her baking business as a part of the parent company, RLP Productions. "We specialize in homemade and semi-homemade cookies, pies, cakes, cupcakes, scones, muffins, and more," she says. Rebekah is working on alcohol-infused desserts called "divorce desserts." She created it to help pay for her divorce. "I'd like to think that I was 'thinking outside of the box,'" she says jokingly.

Rebekah hopes she can open a small family-style café in Richmond within the next year. All of her sweet treats will be there. "We'd love to open it in one of the historic neighborhoods like Church Hill, Jackson Ward, or Old Manchester/Blackwell," she says. She would also like to partner with local grocery stores and start a catering service. "We'd love to provide dessert services for local and regional events," she continues. "Particularly for veteran-focused events as I am a veteran and want to support my fellow brothers and sisters in arms."



*Photo credit: David "Wavey" Anderson*

Rebekah has recently launched a cooking show. "We have brought in a local chef to be the host chef and we will showcase easy to prep and cook meals featuring a dessert paired with a cocktail," she says. "The show is called *Beyond the Plate RVA*. It's a chance to really showcase not only what I do, but to help give a platform to other aspiring chefs and bakers in the RVA community." The show's tagline is "Savory Meals & Saucy Stories."

*To check out Maggie's Cupcake Café treats, follow them on Facebook @maggiescupcakecafe. To learn more about Rebekah and RLP Productions, visit their website [rlpproductions.com](http://rlpproductions.com).*

ART

## Stella Singleton-Jones Finds Comfort in Sculpting



*Stella Singleton-Jones chiseling away. Photos by Francine/SMC in Focus*

| “Our struggles can be turned into something beautiful.”

Stella Singleton-Jones always had the gift of creating meaning through art. Her stone sculptures have been exhibited at the Oscars, Emmys, MTV, and ESPY Awards pre-shows. “The inspiration for my sculptures comes from the strength shown by passionate individuals and God’s earthly creation,” she explains. For Stella, her art became her therapy in the midst of tragedy. Now the world gets to see her beautiful stone sculptures and be inspired by her story.

## *Stella Singleton-Jones Finds Comfort in Sculpting (continued)*

It was while Stella was a student at Santa Monica College (SMC), that she discovered her niche for creating stone sculptures. But her dreams had to be put on hold. In the late '80s, her brother, Derek Singleton, developed and died from meningococcal spinal meningitis. The death of her biggest supporter affected her deeply. Stella could not bring herself to continue with sculpting, so she dropped out of college and began working as a word processor.

On January 16, 1996, Stella was diagnosed with spinal meningitis, the same disease her brother suffered from. The disease was a consequence of their genetic makeup. She found herself in the hospital in disarray and surrounded by medical staff in white coats. But there was a cure for her: consistent doses of vitamin C, along with months and now years of physical therapy. Meningitis affected Stella's day to day life. She wanted to give up. Her doctor at the time, Dr. Gorniswky, recommended

she get back out there and return to school. She hadn't been to school or sculpted in twenty or so years. As she returned to sculpting, she began to regain confidence in her talent. She reflected on her fight with meningitis and channeled that energy into the creation of her now-icon



*Clockwise from top left: Solitude, Jupiter (Smile), Unity, and Them Bones. Photos courtesy of Stella Singleton-Jones.*

In 2009, as former President Obama began his historic first term, Stella was inspired. She created a sculpture called "Unity" and wanted to share it with the world. She googled the White House's address and shipped it off. She wrote to Obama, "May this 'Unity' sculpture serve as a constant reminder that change is possible when we the people unite as one."

**"My stone sculptures represent strength, harmony, calmness, and peacefulness—the elements that enhance the beauty in life."**



*Clockwise from top left: Solitude, Jupiter (Smile), Unity, and Them Bones. Photos courtesy of Stella Singleton-Jones.*

## *Stella Singleton-Jones Finds Comfort in Sculpting (continued)*

The former White House curator, William G. Allman, called her to say they had accepted her gift. She received a phone call from President Obama but missed his call. Fortunately for Stella, he ended up leaving her a message. Unity was displayed in the Oval Office for two years before it was moved to the White House archives in 2011.

As Stella continues on her journey, she hopes to inspire others to follow their dreams. “My stone sculptures represent strength, harmony, calmness, and peacefulness—the elements that enhance the beauty in life,” she says. “I hope they serve as inspiration to others to never give up on one’s dream.” The lesson here: Our struggles can be turned into something beautiful.

*To see more of Stella’s work, you can follow her on [Facebook](#).*

CHEF'S CORNER

# Chef Rebekah Pierce



Rebekah Pierce on set of *Beyond the Plate RVA* with PR expert Latika Lee. Photo by Denise Bell.

“There’s gourmet decadence in each morsel of this dark chocolate chip cupcake.”

## Dark Chocolate Chip Cupcakes with Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting

**Course:** Dinner

**Cuisine:** American

**Prep Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Cook Time:** 22-24 minutes

**Total Time:** 40-45 minutes (does not include cooling time and frosting the cupcakes)

**Serving Size:** 15-18 cupcakes (1.5 dozen)

## Ingredients

### Dark Chocolate Chip Cupcakes

- 1 cup flour
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¾ cup milk (2% or Lactaid 2%)
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 cup sugar
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract (preferably Watkins brand)
- 1 tbsp. Hershey’s Chocolate Syrup

### Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting

- 8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
- 6 tbsp. salted butter, room temperature
- 4 cups confectioners’ (powdered) sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract (preferably Watkins brand)
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

## Preparation

### Dark Chocolate Chip Cupcakes

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners.
3. Spray the liners with cooking spray to prevent the cupcakes from sticking to the liners.
4. Whisk 1 cup of flour and ½ tsp. each of salt and baking soda in a medium bowl.
5. Heat ¾ cup of milk until hot but not boiling and pour over ½ cup of unsweetened cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly.
6. Whisk 1 cup of sugar, ¾ cup vegetable oil, 1 egg, and 1 tsp. vanilla extract until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

## *Chef Rebekah Pierce (continued)*

7. Add the tbsp of Hershey's Chocolate Syrup and mix well. The batter will be thin.
8. Bake until the tops spring back, or 22-24 minutes.
9. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes.
10. Remove the cupcakes from the muffin pan and let cool completely on the wire rack.

**NOTE:** This recipe makes about 15-18 cupcakes (1.5 dozen).

### **Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting**

1. Combine the cream cheese and butter with a mixer until smooth.
2. Add about half of the powdered sugar, cocoa powder, vanilla extra and mix until smooth and well-combined.
3. Add the remaining powdered sugar and mix until smooth.
4. Add frosting to the cupcakes with a piping bag with a thick tip or a simple spatula.
5. Decorate according to your tastes.

**NOTE:** This will be messy as cocoa powder and powdered sugar dust tends to get everywhere, so try to mix on slow to medium for the first few seconds until the dust settles and then continue mixing on medium to high until the frosting is smooth.

This recipe makes enough frosting for about 2 dozen cupcakes, so feel free to halve the ingredients if necessary.



*Photo by Rebekah Pierce*

COMMUNITY

# Tackle Reading's Game Plan for Children's Literacy



*Kathryn Starke, creator of Tackle Reading. Photos courtesy of the Tackle Reading team.*

| “Let every child find joy in reading.”

Each month we highlight a community program that aligns with the values of SoulVision Magazine. We believe engaging with one's community is critical to fostering positive change in the world.

Tackle Reading is not just a book, but a movement. It is the brainchild of urban literacy consultant Kathryn Starke. She's a former elementary school teacher and founder of Creative Minds Publications, an educational publishing company in Richmond, Virginia. While teaching in underserved communities, Kathryn quickly understood the need for

## Tackle Reading's Game Plan for Children's Literacy (continued)

a program that went beyond the regular curriculum. In 2013, she worked with the Washington Redskins Charitable Foundation to create a summer reading program in the Richmond and Chesterfield County school systems. This work gave her an idea. In 2016, she published *Tackle Reading*. The book featured motivational stories from NFL athletes, celebrities, teachers and authors. The book also serves as a guide/lesson plan for educators to improve literacy instruction for every child.

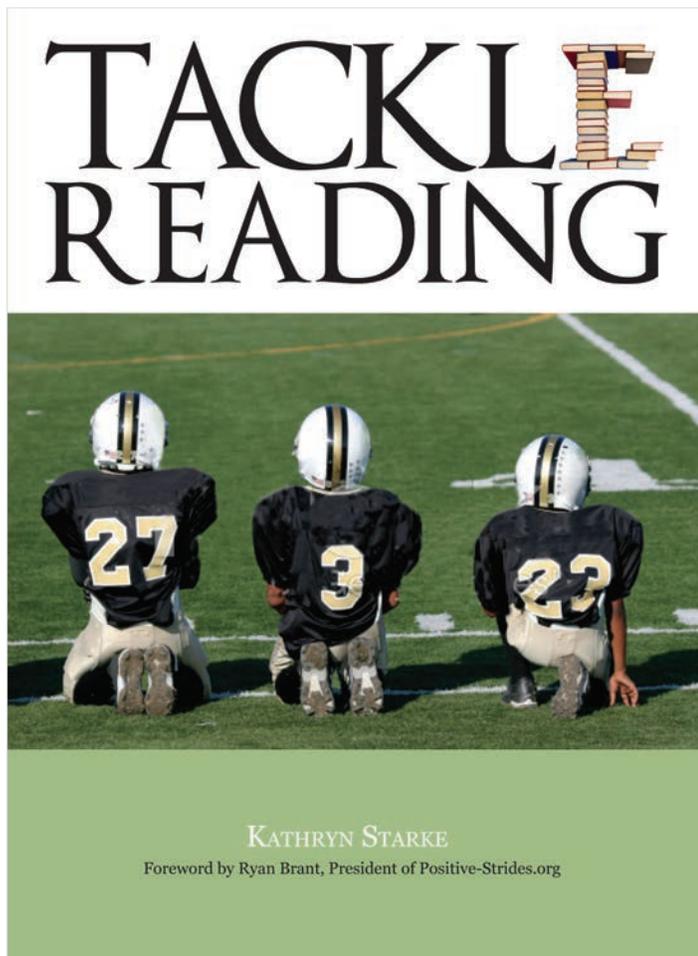
Kathryn Starke wanted to do even more, so she reached out to some of the participants in the *Tackle Reading* book. Michelle Staubach Grimes, daughter of Hall of Fame Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach, saw the book on social media and contacted her directly. They partnered to create Tackle Reading Day. This month marks the 4th annual Tackle Reading Day. The program

is open to any school that would like to participate. Tackle Reading Day falls on March 2 to celebrate Read Across America Day. "We have representation from all 32 teams including current players, former players, and Hall of Fame members," Kathryn says. "I created this event to promote a love of literacy with a passion for football."

The promotion of literacy is important to the NFL athletes who participate. Many grew up in areas where libraries and the celebration of reading were non-existent. Tackle Reading allowed them to use their voices to motivate kids to be excited about learning and reading. The program teaches that those who continue to learn and read become the most successful adults.



*Brandon Carr of the Baltimore Ravens, one of the participants of Tackle Reading.*



*Tackle Reading* book cover.

Kathryn Starke's work goes beyond Tackle Reading. She says she's working on publishing another educational resource and two fiction manuscripts "I've created the first literacy application that simulates the one-on-one reading instruction between teachers and students," she says. "I'm currently looking for the best educational partner who wants to make an impact on literacy education." Kathryn will continue her fight to increase the literacy rate and make sure all children have the opportunity to become avid readers and learners. In order to be great leaders, they must be great readers.

To learn more about Tackle Reading, visit [creativemind-publications.com](http://creativemind-publications.com) and follow them on [Facebook](#). You can also follow Kathryn Starke on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

LIVING LEGENDS

# Willie Lanier



*NFL Hall of Famer Willie Lanier on the Red Carpet at the 2017 NFL Honors on February 04, 2017, at the Wortham Theater Center in Houston, Texas. (Photo by Rich Graessle/Icon Sportswire via [Getty Images](#))*

Legendary middle linebacker and Kansas City Hall of Famer Willie Lanier was drafted to the NFL at a time when African American players were not given an opportunity to play the “thinking” positions on the field. These positions—middle linebacker, offensive guard, quarterback, and free safety—were only given to white players. Willie broke this glass ceiling. He was the first African American to play the position. He proved athletes were much more than their strength. On and off the field, Willie was intelligent, creative, disciplined, and a man of integrity.

Lanier is a Virginia native and graduated from Maggie Walker High School in 1963. He went on to attend and play football at Morgan State University, an HBCU. Black players were not recruited by predominantly white colleges due to prejudice and segregation. It was when Lanier was a senior at Morgan State, that he was drafted in the second round by the Kansas City Chiefs (of the AFL). He was the 50th pick. During this time period, it was not a rarity for a player to be recruited from an HBCU. Jim Lynch, who was the middle linebacker for Notre Dame (No. 48) was said to be the best man for the middle linebacker position, but Lanier quickly proved himself to be the better candidate.

## *Willie Lanier (continued)*

Lanier played 11 NFL seasons and helped Kansas City become the champion of Super Bowl IV in 1970. This was the team's only Super Bowl win until this year's Super Bowl LIV, 50 years later. On the field, he was called "Contact" because of his aggressive and spectacular hits. After his football career, Lanier became a savvy businessman. He is CEO and president of the Lanier Group LLC, an investment firm.

Without reading and a respect for education, Willie Lanier would have not been the tactful and sharp middle linebacker we celebrate today. He also wouldn't have been able to move beyond football. Lanier looks back on his Morgan State and HBCU education and is thankful for those in the institution who took priority in shaping him into a well-rounded person.

**"I started delivering papers at 12 years old. Those papers peaked my curiosity about reading and today I read 5-7 newspapers each day. Reading is the essence of my being able to be an advocate for myself and others."**

**— Willie Lanier**