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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Juan Cherry is Speaker for Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Observance at Gardner-Webb, Rescheduled for Feb. 10" (2022). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2340. <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive/2340>

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CAMPUS NEWS

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BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON JANUARY 21, 2022



Alumnus Will Honor King's Legacy and Introduce University's New Mentoring Program for Minority Males

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance has been rescheduled for a Dimensions program on Feb. 10 at 9:25 a.m. in Stewart Hall of Tucker Student Center. For over two decades, the University has designated the Tuesday program following the MLK holiday as a celebration of the Civil Rights leader. This year's tribute also honors King's legacy by introducing iBelong, a new mentoring initiative for minority males offered by the University's Student Success Division. Guest speaker Juan Cherry is an alumnus and one of the mentors for the program.

Cherry's message, "Is There Not A Cause?" reflects on King's devotion to his dream for equality. "Dr. King was thrust into the forefront as a leader of the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 at the age of 26," Cherry explained. "He found his cause. It was his life's work. We must each find our cause."



▲ Juan Cherry

Cherry received his master's in school counseling from Gardner-Webb and is a counselor at Shelby (N.C.) High School. He also serves as pastor of New Creation Christian Center, and he is the founder of Wired for Success Communications and Consulting. He has written two books, "Wired For Success," a guide that helps readers discover and engage God's purpose for their lives, and "So You Want To Be A Mentor," a resource for those who desire to help others become their best selves. He also wrote and designed an interactive curriculum that empowers young males to take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities. On his Instagram, Facebook and YouTube channels, Cherry offers [#bowtime](https://www.facebook.com/juan.cherry.3386) (<https://www.facebook.com/juan.cherry.3386>), a brief video of him wearing a bow tie and offering a motivational tip for the day.

Gardner-Webb's [iBelong](https://gardner-webb.edu/news/ncicu-grant-provides-minority-male-mentoring/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/news/ncicu-grant-provides-minority-male-mentoring/>) program is provided through a \$5,000 Minority Male Mentoring Grant from North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU). In addition to matching minority male students with mentors and peer tutors, GWU is making a financial commitment to the program by helping to purchase Student Lingo, a tutoring software that offers a variety of information for students, such as workshops on stress management, academic skills, finances and scholarship opportunities.

Cherry is excited to volunteer for the program and believes Jesus provides the best example of mentorship. "Jesus didn't just teach the disciples. He invested time with them. He trained them. He modeled behavior. He served them," Cherry asserted. "Mentoring makes a difference because of its design. It puts people together to help the mentee develop the skills necessary to be successful. In addition to skill development, relationships are formed that benefit the mentee and the mentor. Serving as a mentor is not about being an expert. It's about availability. We can all offer something that will make a difference in the lives of others."

More importantly, Cherry was a first-generation college student who benefited from the mentors in his life. He received his undergraduate degree from North Carolina A&T. "A historically black university, which had built-in mentors because my professors looked like me, but there were still unique adjustment challenges," he informed. "I knew I wanted to be in college, but I had no idea what field I

wanted to study and found it hard to navigate. This is my chance to help others and to be what so many were to me.”

The first meeting of iBelong will be on Jan. 25. Other mentors in the program are:

- Maurice York—Chief Supply Chain Officer, Gathered Foods Corporation; GWU Board of Trustees member.
- Omar Porter—Recruiter, Cleveland Community College.
- Ricky Alston—Music teacher, 2021 Beginning Teacher of the Year for Cleveland County Schools.

Minority males who are interested in connecting with a mentor, may contact Dee Pettis at (704) 406-2254 or dpettis@gardner-webb.edu.

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina’s recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.