



Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023

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**Commuter Buses Could
Be on the Way Out**

**Dog Perishes, Family
Displaced in Lusby Fire**

**Budweiser Clydesdales
Coming to North Beach**

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CONTENTS

LOCAL NEWS	4	CALENDAR	9
COPS & COURTS	8		

“TO HAVE THE INMATES RUNNING THE ASYLUM IS SOMETHING I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD SEE...”
COMMISSIONER CATHERINE GRASSO ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE



LOCAL 4
Commissioners decry violence against teachers



LOCAL 5
Commuter buses may be on the chopping block



ON THE COVER
Prince Frederick hosts Christmas parade and tree lighting

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, DEC 14 Sunny Hi: 43° Lo: 28°	FRI, DEC 15 Sunny Hi: 53° Lo: 33°	SAT, DEC 16 Partly Cloudy Hi: 53° Lo: 36°	SUN, DEC 17 PM Showers Hi: 54° Lo: 45°
MON, DEC 18 Rain Hi: 54° Lo: 39°	TUE, DEC 19 Showers Hi: 46° Lo: 35°	WED, DEC 20 Partly Cloudy Hi: 46° Lo: 33°	THU, DEC 21 Partly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 33°



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Schools Blasted for Violence Against Teachers

Grasso: The Inmates are Running the Asylum

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

County Commissioner Buddy Hance was elected on Dec. 12 to serve as the board's president for the fourth consecutive year. And Catherine Grasso was elected vice president for the next year. Both used the occasion to strongly criticize the school system for its handling of violence by students against teachers.

Grasso listed a series of events she had attended recently and noted, "Not once, when I did any of this, this past couple of weeks, did I ever feel afraid or frightened for myself. I knew if anything were to happen, my fellow commissioners have my back, staff has my back. I've never had to dodge a punch."

Grasso added, "I've never been pushed, I've never been shoved to the ground. I've never been dragged around on the ground. I've never had somebody get in my face and say, 'F' you. You better 'F-ing' let go of me. I'm going to hurt/ kill you.' The teacher wasn't quite sure when she was on the ground if it was hurt or kill you. I've never had to take assault leave like some of our teachers have had to take. And this is going on in our county, and I hear it all the time.

"I was at a funeral and a teacher came up to me and she was enraged with the conditions that she has to teach under. We've lost a lot of teachers. Our teachers go into a combat zone every single day in a lot of our schools. And our principals are not holding the assailants responsible."

Grasso insisted, "We should have zero tolerance in our school system for the verbal and physical assaults that our teachers have to take. I'm appalled by it. I'm sickened for them because I get to come in a safe environment. I don't have that anxiety. I don't have to worry when I walk out the door. My husband doesn't have to worry. But just imagine how our teachers feel. We as parents are the first line of influence, of love, of care that we give our children and our grandchildren. Next to us are our teachers. They play such an important role. And to have the inmates running the asylum is something I never thought I would see in Calvert County."

Hance took up the call: "We got a very disheartening email from a teacher last week who is five years from retirement," adding, "She's contemplating leaving. She outlined, in this very lengthy email, the situation in the classrooms today. And she said it all escalated after Covid. And you need to know, she was an elementary school teacher. That's one through sixth grade. The students were so disrespectful to her last year, she

transferred to a middle school because she thought those students were a little older and maybe they had matured more. What she found out was that wasn't true. She was involved in a situation one day where there was a school event where the kids weren't in class. They were allowed to participate in activities. And the activity that she was a part of became overrun with students and out of control. And she was physically, verbally attacked, dragged into a corner, and beaten by a student. And the other students stood around and laughed and joked about it. The principal popped his head in there, before she got beaten, and gave her no support." She reported the principal said, "Just deal with it."

Hance added, "I did contact the superintendent last night and he said the student that attacked her was disciplined, although he can't talk about it because, that's what we do today. We protect our kids and can't talk about what happened to him. I also asked him what happened to the principal, because I think he bears responsibility because she knew what was coming and he walked out."

Hance noted, "She contacted the teacher's union and got no response from anybody. No support. She feels like she's out on an island by herself."

Hance observed, "I will give the new superintendent a little credit. I think he's trying to improve a little bit over the previous superintendent. But she mentions in her email that you can't teach a class anymore. The kids are on their phones, which should be banned, but apparently we still don't have the guts to do that."

Hance said, "This is just horrible. And I tell everybody I'm old and I grew up in a different school system and I just can't begin to comprehend how we put up with this. In my day your parents wouldn't put up with it. Apparently today, parents are different. They didn't take the same training my parents took, or they would not allow things to go on in the schools."

Hance praised school board members Lisa Grenis and Jana Post for seeking change, even though they are ignored by the majority.

Grasso added, "This is impeding the education of your children and your grandchildren. Our youngest son and our daughter-in-law took their children out of public school because our granddaughter in middle school was frightened to go to school because fights would break out and she'd get shoved into a wall and come home scared to death. They're now in private school and they're thriving and surviving. That's criminal. Our tax dollars pay for this, pay for every damn bit of it."

The board elections were a much more



Commissioner President Buddy Hance



Commissioner Vice President Catherine Grasso

pleasant affair. Hance said he was honored by the reappointment. "We have a great board. It's my second term and this board gets along better than any group I've seen to be honest. Everybody is focused on the same page and while we don't always agree on everything, we move on. And that's a pleasure."

Outgoing vice president Mike Hart said of Hance, "It's not a fun job. A lot of the hate mail goes right to the president of the board. If you're happy in life, you're good. You just

move on. But when you're mad, I want to see the president of the board."

Grasso said, "You represent us well. I've been very impressed this year. Very thankful to have you on board as our president."

Commissioner Mark Cox observed, "We have a great board here. We always don't agree, but we listen to one another, and we come to a conclusion."

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Transportation Budget Cuts Impact Calvert

Commuter Buses Could Be on the Way Out

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Maryland's budget deficit combined with declining transportation revenues are leading the state's transportation secretary to propose major cuts in the six-year Consolidated Transportation Plan that will have a ripple effect on proposed projects in Calvert County. This comes just weeks after officials from the Maryland Department of Transportation visited the county and said one project in particular, intersection improvements along Route 231, were moving forward.

Proposed cuts to the six-year transportation plan by the administration of Gov. Wes Moore are reported to be \$3.3 billion.

Commissioner President Buddy Hance presented the bad news at their Dec. 12 meeting. He said, "We talked about our projects that were coming up and they told us that they were working on (Route) 231 safety control efforts and different projects, and everything was on track, and all was good. Last Monday, Gov. Moore announced that they have a \$1.3 billion deficit and that no projects are moving forward that aren't bid out by this coming January 1. So, none of the projects in Calvert County are going

to be moving forward. We hope that they're going to at least finish paving Broomes Island Road because that's a nightmare."

Hance also raised another budget concern. "What was of great importance to our citizens is the commuter buses are going to end sometime between now and July 1. They say they're looking for grants, a federal grant maybe. The commuter bus system has been in trouble since Covid. I've been watching the numbers. Ridership is at the 30 percent range. People (are) working at home; nobody's riding the buses like they used to."

Hance insisted, "It's a vital service. And when those buses end, all those cars are going to be on the road again for those people that are going to work. Besides the fact that those people, I now have to find parking in DC and afford to pay for it."

Hance issued a call to action. "I would encourage everybody out there that uses the commuter bus system to start writing some letters because that's the only thing that's going to save the bus system. And it was very discouraging to hear that the buses may go away. So, we hope that everyone will take a little time and write a letter."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

State, County Swap Roads

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners has approved a road swap with the state. The approval came after a Sept. 12 public hearing at which no one spoke.

Public Works Director J.R. Cosgrove Jr. explained transfer involving MD 765A and Commerce Lane Road: "In August 2017, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and the State Highway Administration (SHA) of the Department of Transportation entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). According to the MOU, upon completion of construction of the project, SHA and the county shall immediately enter into a Road Transfer Agreement. This Road Transfer Agreement was executed in June of 2022, which spelled out the following: i) SHA shall convey the New Service Road and old MD 765A, including all the improvements made to those roadways, to the county; and ii) the county shall donate Commerce Lane including all the modification made to that roadway to SHA."

Cosgrove said of the location of the roads in question: "765a is basically from Outback in Prince Frederick down to Maryland 2/4, basically the grass strip where Main Street used to come out and intersect Route four. The service road is on the west side of Route



Public Works Director J.R. Cosgrove

4, which is basically across from Commerce Lane that now serves what used to be the old animal hospital and the flower shop. And then of course, Commerce Lane is a section from Outback out to Route 4 (that) we would transfer to the state."

There was no cost to either party as the result of the transfer which was unanimously approved by the county commissioners.

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Dog Perishes, Occupants Displaced in Lusby Fire



By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

A Dec. 10 house fire in Lusby has displaced a family and caused the loss of a family dog.

The fire on George Drive caused \$200,000 damage to the single-family residence and \$50,000 loss to its contents, according to the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office.

The fire was reported at 4:34 p.m. The fire marshal reports, "The fire was discovered by an occupant of the home. She then alerted other occupants in the home. There were no injuries as a result of the fire;

however, one dog perished. The occupants were displaced as a result of the fire and are being assisted by the American Red Cross. Anyone with any information regarding this incident is asked to contact the Office of the State Fire Marshal, Southern Regional Office, at 443-550-6835.

The owner/occupant was listed as Emad Dides, a county commissioner candidate in the last election.

The Solomons Volunteer Rescue Squad and Fire Department was the first responder. It took 45 firefighters 50 minutes to bring the blaze under control.

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Budget Amendment Approved for Specialty Attorneys

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has approved a budget amendment so they to "solicit professional services for legal services within specialty practice areas, and internal audits." The \$800,000 budget amendment will come from prior year's fund valances. The money will be in the county administrator's budget.

During a Dec. 12 public hearing before the unanimous approval, County Attorney John Norris explained, "Certain areas of the practice of law are so specialized they warrant hiring counsel with active knowledge in that area for the efficient use of taxpayer funds. That is, it can be more efficient, and less costly, and outcomes improved when the decision is made to hire outside counsel within specialty practice areas. Additional funds are also sought for the County Administrator to solicit internal audits of efficiency and alignment of job performance."

The county is currently pursuing an audit of the school board's budget.

During the public hearing, regular contributor, Joseph Cormier of Owings questioned the amount being set aside for attorneys. He said, "I'm not against this. I believe we do need expertise when we can get it. I'm a little concerned \$800,000 coming up as an emergency expense and not as part of the regular budget process. And I'm concerned that I didn't hear any controls on



County Attorney John Norris

the process that we're just going to allow the county administrator or the attorney's team to spend \$800,000 without checking in if they're going to spend over X amount. So, it's all taxpayer dollars. Again, anything we can do to improve services, increase workflow, productivity, synergistic, all those fun words, let's do it. But let's make sure we're doing everything above board."

Commissioner President Buddy Hance responded, "You know, even though it doesn't show in here, we do approve those expenditures, when necessary, when needed. And I can assure you we don't spend money that we don't need to."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

The Clydesdales Are Coming to Town

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Picture in your mind the image of majestic Clydesdale horse clomping through the snow in a classic holiday beer commercial. Then picture the same horses coming down the street of the "Jewell of the Chesapeake Bay," North Beach. That second image will come to real life on Sunday, Dec. 17 when the Budweiser Clydesdales visit North Beach.

The town says "They (will) parade around the Town of North Beach starting at 4 pm. You will have an opportunity to see the Clydesdales Team as they park on Bay Avenue in front of the town Christmas tree. This is the perfect occasion to take photos, experience the majesty of these iconic horses, and create cherished memories."

The town on their website says, "Don't miss the chance to be part of a heartwarming moment as deserving recipients are awarded scholarships from Folds of Honor. Additionally, be treated to a special appearance by members of the Washington Commanders entertainment team, the Command Force."

"As a nod to tradition, the Clydesdales Team will also carry on the legacy by delivering beer to various restaurants in town, just as



they did in the past," according to the town.

According to Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, "There are several 'hitches' or teams of horses, that travel around the United States and other countries that remain in their official homes at the company headquarters at the Anheuser-Busch brewery complex in St. Louis, Missouri, or at Merrimack, New Hampshire. At St. Louis, they are housed in a historic brick and stained-glass stable

built in 1885. There are eight horses driven at any one time, but ten horses are on each team to provide alternates for the hitch when needed. Assorted Clydesdales are also used as animal actors in television commercials for Budweiser beer, particularly in Super Bowl ads.

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Resolve to Make it to the New Year

Make Sure There's a Designated Driver

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

"I just want to emphasize the importance of having a designated driver since it is designated driver month. If you're going to a Christmas party, just make sure you have that driver available," said Calvert County Sheriff Ricky Cox.

The whole month of December through January 2 is when the designated driver campaign is in full swing in Calvert County in recognition that the holiday season is a time for more celebrating by drinking and then more driving drunk.

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) highlighted the campaign on Dec. 12 along with honoring deputies and troopers who had the most DUI arrests for the year.

Cox said in a Facebook post, "All Calvert County citizens must be aware of the importance of prevention programs and the impact citizen participation has on reducing impaired driving crashes in Calvert County. Citizens are urged to choose a designated driver for any upcoming holiday parties they may attend and not provide alcohol to those under the age of 21."

State's Attorney Bob Harvey said, "I join with everyone here in thanking the officers who are present today for these awards,

but also the other men and women who are not here today, who also help to protect our roads and keep us all safe. There's one truism about Calvert County. You can't go anywhere in Calvert County without having to drive there. So, these people are the ones that are keeping all of us safe. I can't say enough about the designated driver program. How simple is it to get a designated driver when you go out for the evening? The problem is that people think one drink, two drinks. I'm okay. You're not okay. It's a very simple thing to do to ask somebody. One of the things about being state's attorney, no more going to the restaurant and driving home. My wife is now the designated driver. She doesn't like it, but she does it."

Maryland State Police Prince Frederick Barrack Commander Lieutenant Jimmy Meurrens thanked all the partners in the room who help make the designated driver program a success.

Calvert Alliance Against Substance Abuse, Inc. (CAASA) Coordinator Candice D'Agostino announced this year's law enforcement winners: from the Sheriff's Office, Deputy Tyler Bowen, Deputy Brenna Hudson, Deputy Tyrell Claggett and Deputy Ryan Jones. From Maryland State Police Barrack U they were Trooper First Class Matthew Morman, Trooper First Class Justin Kohler (not in attendance) Trooper



Photo of those attending the Dec. 12 proclamation.

First class Kevin Bauer and Trooper First Class Andrew Smith

The proclamation read by Commissioner Todd Ireland said, "Whereas the Calvert Alliance Against Substance Abuse Inc is sponsoring a countywide impaired driving prevention campaign from December 1st, 2023, through January 2nd, 2024. Whereas the loss of life due to impaired driving is preventable. And whereas the designated driver campaign provides a unique opportunity for Calvert County restaurants, clubs, bars, civic and service organizations to join forces with the Calvert Alliance against sub-

stance abuse, local law enforcement, and Calvert County residents in promoting cooperative impaired driving prevention efforts. And whereas it is essential that all Calvert County citizens be aware of the importance of having a celebration plan in place, such as designated driver and understand that their participation can help reduce impaired driving crashes in Calvert County."

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CALVERT COUNTY CRIME BLOTTER

During the weeks of November 20 – December 3, 2023, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 3,573 calls for service throughout the community.

Burglary: 23-83183

On November 22, 2023, Deputy Tunnell responded to a residence on Mason Road in Prince Frederick, for the report of a burglary that had already occurred. Investigation revealed a window in the rear of the residence had been smashed out in a forced entry attempt. Nothing appears to have been stolen. The estimated value of damaged property is \$300.00.

Damaged Property: 23-83248

On November 22, 2023, Deputy Tunnell responded to the 3200 block of Huntsman Drive in Huntingtown, for the report of damaged property. The complainant advised an unknown suspect cut the wire to the victim's Christmas lights. The estimated value of damaged property is \$50.00.

Theft: 23-84820

On November 28, 2023, Deputy Gadwill responded to Ulta Beauty located at 845 N. Solomons Island Road in Prince Frederick, for the report of a theft. Investigation revealed that 3 black females, all ranging from 5'5" to -5'7" tall, weighing 130-160lbs, entered the store wearing surgical masks and stole multiple bottles of perfume from the fragrance department. Two of the females had braids and the third female was wearing a bookbag. The females were last seen fleeing the parking lot in a black SUV at a high rate of speed. The estimated value of stolen property is unknown at this time.

Shooting: 23-085460

On December 1, 2023, Calvert County Sheriff's Office responded to the 1300 block of Sark Court in Prince Frederick, for the report of a shooting. Officers arrived on scene and located a juvenile victim suffering from a gunshot wound to the upper body. The victim was treated and transported to an area trauma center in stable condition. Witnesses on the scene advised a masked male suspect was seen leaving the area in a black SUV. The investigation continues.

ARRESTS



Matthew Leo Greening

Leo Greening, 35 of no fixed address,

entered the Walmart and stole two Cinnamon Toast Crunch milks, two Pepperidge Farm Milano cookie boxes, and one ham and cheese Lunchable. Greening exited the store passing all final points of sale without paying for the items. Greening was charged with Theft: Less than \$100.00.



Tyree Tyquonna Nolan

On November 27, 2023, Deputy Brown responded to the Calvert Village Shopping Center located on W. Dares Beach Road in Prince Frederick, for the report of trespassing. Upon arrival, contact was made with **Tyree Tyquonna Nolan**, 27 of no fixed address, who has been previously trespassed indefinitely from the Safeway. Nolan was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where she was charged with Trespassing: Private Property.



Matthew Leo Greening

On November 27, 2023, Deputy Baxter responded to 15 Duke Street in Prince Frederick, for the report of trespassing. Upon arrival, contact was made with **Matthew Leo Greening**, 35 of no fixed address, loitering on private property that is marked with 'No Trespassing' signs. Greening was arrested and charged with Trespassing: Private Property.



Keith Leroy Harrod

On November 30, 2023, DFC Rzepkowski initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle after having observed a traffic violation. Upon making contact with the driver, **Keith Leroy Harrod**, 51 of St. Leonard, Deputy Rzepkowski observed a small white object being thrown from the vehicle. Deputies located and identified the object thrown to be a cigarette containing Phencyclidine (PCP). Harrod was placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis and other traffic-related offenses.

On November 30, 2023, at 8:15 p.m., Deputy Sylver initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle with no headlights or taillights on, in the area of Rt. 4 and Hallowing Point Road in Prince Frederick. Deputy Sylver had



David Alexander Reifsnyder

emergency lights and sirens activated for a stretch of 3-4 miles and the driver refused to pull over. The driver, **David Alexander Reifsnyder**, 18 of St. Leonard, finally came to a stop along Broomes Island Road in the area of Yoes Corner. Reifsnyder was placed into custody and transported to the Detention Center where he was charged with Fleeing and Eluding, Negligent Driving, and other traffic-related charges.



Elaine Diane Ly Simpson

On November 30, 2023, DFC Shoemaker initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle for a traffic violation in the area of the Lusby Fastop located at 11790 H.G. Trueman Road in Lusby. The driver, **Elaine Diane Ly Simpson**, 40 of Lusby, had an active warrant through the Calvert County Sheriff's Office. Further investigation revealed multiple pills of Oxycodone were located inside the vehicle. Simpson was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where she

was charged with CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis.



Lionel Mackall Jr.

On December 2, 2023, Sgt. Livingston responded to the 3700 block of Hunting Creek Road in Huntingtown, for a disorderly subject. Upon arrival, contact was made with **Lionel Mackall Jr.**, 42 of Huntingtown, who had been previously trespassed indefinitely from the property. Mackall was placed under arrest and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Trespassing: Private Property.

Editor's Note: The above arrests are not an indication of guilt or innocence as the cases have not been adjudicated.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call the Sheriff's Office at (410) 535-2800 and reference the case number provided. Citizens may remain anonymous thru the 'Submit a Tip' feature on the Calvert County Sheriff's Office mobile app. To download, visit <https://apps.myocv.com/share/a39520678>. Tipsters may also email ccsotips@calvertcountymd.gov

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Calvert Community Calendar

To submit your event listing to go in our Community Calendar, please email timescalendar@countytimes.net with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

Thu, Dec 14

Calvert Conversations

Linden House
70 Church Street, Prince Frederick
10-11 a.m.

Please join Calvert Library for a walk down memory lane at the Linden House which will be decked out for an old fashioned "Christmas at Linden"! Diane Harrison will provide a tour of the house and Joanie Kilmon will share information from the Hulbert Footner room. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Teen Anime Night

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons
6-7:30 p.m.

Chill with friends for a few hours at the library - games, art, anime, books, and pizza! Details coming soon. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

World of Wonder

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
3819 Harbor Road, Chesapeake Beach
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Elementary students K-2 will have fun exploring a new topic each session through books, activities, and wonder, of course. This month's topic is geology rocks! Registration required. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Alzheimer's Caregivers Support

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way, and ZOOM
6:30-8 p.m.

Get tips and support from other caregivers. Facilitated by Jeannette Findley and JC Hooker. Please register to receive the Zoom link. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

Fri, Dec 15

On Pins & Needles

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
1-4 p.m.

Bring your quilting, needlework, knitting, crocheting or other project for an afternoon of conversation and shared creativity. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

Sat, Dec 16

Brain Games: Mahjongg, Scrabble & More

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
12-3 p.m.

Games are a great way to keep your brain sharp while having fun! Join us! Please register. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sun, Dec 17

Old-Fashioned Ice Cream Social

One-Room Schoolhouse
3080 Broomes Island Road, Port Republic
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Come and celebrate an Old Fashioned Christmas in the original Port Republic One-Room Schoolhouse, which will be decorated for the holidays. Visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Make popcorn/cranberry strings and Christmas stars, and help to decorate the Christmas tree. Have fun making seasonal Christmas crafts. Enjoy Christmas music and our guest flutist. Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive at 11 a.m. For more information, please visit our website at calvertoneroom-school.org/events

Mon, Dec 18

STEAMLab Jr.

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
6-7 p.m.

Become a scientist and explore topics related to STEAM on the first and third Monday each month! Build, code, count, and create with different activities each session. Registration required. Intended for scientists in grades K-2. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Tue, Dec 19

Book Discussion & Dine Out

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
6-8 p.m.

Join us this month to discuss "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Bronte. Come at 6pm if you want to order dinner. Discussion starts at 7pm. Let's talk about Jane's life in late 18th century England and how her commentary on class, sexuality, religion, and feminism can illuminate life today. Put it on hold here 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Book Discussion

Calvert Library (Online)
8-9 p.m.

Join us this month to discuss "Remarkably Bright Creatures" by Shelby Van Pelt. For fans of A Man Called Ove, a luminous debut novel about a widow's unlikely friendship with a giant Pacific octopus reluctantly residing at the local aquarium—and the truths she finally uncovers about her son's disappearance. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Dec 20

Dungeons & Dragons – ADULT

Calvert Library (Zoom/Roll20)
6-9 p.m.

Come have fun with D&D, a role playing game for adults of all experience levels. Registration required. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Thu, Dec 21

NARFE Meeting

Gateway Restaurant
5455 Broomes Island Rd., Port Republic
12 p.m.

The National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) Calvert County Chapter 1466 December meeting will be a holiday lunch. After lunch, Greg Bowen from Keep Calvert Country will speak on current happenings and proposals that could affect quality of life in the county. Canned foods and check donations will be collected for Chesapeake Cares Food Pantry. To enable the chapter to get an accurate head count for the lunch, RSVP's (via e-mail: NARFE14665@gmail.com or mail to NARFE PO Box 202 Port Republic, MD 20676-0202) are requested by Monday, December 18.

Little Minnows: Fossil Exploration

Calvert Marine Museum
10:15 & 11:15 a.m.

This month's theme is Fossil Exploration, for preschoolers ages 3 – 5, with an adult. This program focuses on one of the museum's three themes. Join us for story time and a craft, available while supplies last. Sessions are 25-40 minutes. The cost is free with museum admission. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive.

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The County Times is a weekly newspaper providing news and information for the residents of St. Mary's and Calvert County. The County Times will be available on newsstands every Thursday. The paper is published by Southern Maryland Publishing Company, which is responsible for the form, content, and policies of the newspaper. The County Times does not espouse any political belief or endorse any product or service in its news coverage.

To be considered for publication, articles and letters to the editor submitted must include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number. Submissions must be delivered by 4 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication to ensure placement for that week. After that deadline, the County Times will make every attempt possible to publish late content, but cannot guarantee so. Letters may be condensed/edited for clarity, although care is taken to preserve the core of the writer's argument. Copyright in material submitted to the newspaper and accepted for publication remains with the author, but the County Times and its licensees may freely reproduce it in print, electronic or other forms. We are unable to acknowledge receipt of letters. The County Times cannot guarantee that every letter or photo(s) submitted will be published, due to time or space constraints.



County Times

P. O. Box 250 • Hollywood, MD 20636

St. Mary's Community Calendar

To submit your event listing to go in our Community Calendar, please email timescalendar@countytimes.net with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

Thu, Dec 14

Kids' Workshop: Grief at the Holidays

Leonardtown Library
23630 Hayden Ln., Leonardtown
6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The holidays can be a confusing time for children experiencing grief. Join us for an interactive workshop to teach participants ages 7-17 about grief and help them connect with other children with similar experiences. This workshop will give them ideas for how to cope with feelings of grief, help them prepare for the holidays, and show them ways to honor their special person. Hospice of St. Mary's offers all bereavement services at no cost to the community, though donations are welcome. To register, please call 301-994-3023 or email Patricia.S.Watson@medstar.net.

Fri, Dec 15

ALVFD Online Holiday Gift Basket Auction

<https://www.facebook.com/lvfd1auxiliary>
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The Auxiliary of the Leonardtown Volunteer Fire Department is hosting an online auction featuring holiday gifts and seasonal items! The online auction will run from 7am—7pm on December 15th. Individual photos and the description of each item will be shown under the "Discussion" tab of this event. Bids can be increased by multiples of \$5. The highest bid as of 7pm will be the winner of that item. Items must be picked up from 10am-12pm on December 16th at the Leonardtown Fire Department. We only take cash or check. Get your gift shopping completed! Happy Bidding! Thank you for your generous support!!!

***Pro tip: Make sure you have selected "All Comments" on the photo of the item you are bidding on to see all of the previous bids made.

Sat, Dec 16

Breakfast with Santa

St. Mary's County Elks Lodge #2092
45779 Fire Dept Ln., California
9 a.m. to Noon

All you can eat Buffet Breakfast Includes: Omelets to order, Scrambled Eggs, Waffles, Sausage, Bacon, Fried Potatoes, Biscuits and Gravy, Fruit, Juice, and Coffee. \$18 adults \$12 kids age 5-10 under 5 free. Get your picture taken with Santa!
301-863-7800

Mon, Dec 18

Help with Mike's Turkey Drive

Zion Methodist Church
21291 Three Notch Rd., Lexington Park
3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Volunteers are needed by Mike's Food Fund to help package and deliver holiday turkey dinners (a frozen turkey, bag of pota-

toes and canned veggies) to local families in need. We have over 1000 families in need this year, so any and all help is appreciated. We need volunteers to deliver dinners to addresses all over the county, and help to package up and load the dinners for the drivers and for walk-ins. Please come to Zion Methodist Church, 21291 Three Notch Road, Lexington Park, MD 20653 (Between Gates 2 and 3 of NAS Pax River). Doors open for packaging volunteers at 3:30 PM, and 4:00 PM for delivery drivers. Doors open at 4:30 for Walk-Ins. Help is needed until 6:00 each night or when the turkeys run out. Great opportunity for families and those students needing volunteer hours.

Also, Mike's Food Fund is in need of monetary donations if you can help out. Dinner costs have risen from \$20 to \$35 each. Please stop by Mike's Bikes or mail a check to:

Mike's Food Fund
21310 Great Mills Road
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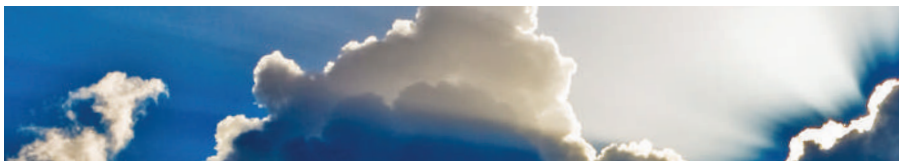
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Donna Norris, 76



Donna Pennisi Norris, 76, of Compton, died peacefully on December 5, 2023 in Leonardtown, MD.

Born December 20, 1946, in Troy, New York, she was

the daughter of the late Charles C. "Pennie" Pennisi and Priscilla A. "Boots" Davis Pennisi.

She is survived by her husband John E. "Jackie" Norris, whom she married August 9, 1964 in Leonardtown, MD. She is also survived by her daughter, Cindy Carroll, and husband Duane of Leonardtown, MD. Son, Gary Norris, wife Tina, of Clements, MD. Her siblings Charles A. "Andy" Pennisi of Leonardtown, MD, Catherine Ann Damoth Bohanan of Rockledge, FL and her precious grandchildren, Nick and Ben Carroll.

Donna graduated from St. Mary's Academy in 1964. She worked at the St. Mary's Sheriff's Office until she and her husband took over Pennies Bar from her parents in 1973. It was there, in running the bar alongside Jackie for several decades that she developed many lasting friendships and bonds with so many residents of St. Mary's County. She and Jackie continued to run the family business until retirement in December 2005.

Her life revolved around her children and grandchildren. She enjoyed spending time with them at all of the family gatherings. She also enjoyed watching sports, especially the ones that Gary, Nick and Ben played. You could also find her enjoying the monthly luncheons with the "Pennies" girls, where they would catch up on the many memories they shared.

The family will receive friends on December 14, 2023 from 10:00 AM to 12:30PM at the Mattingly Gardner Funeral Home in Leonardtown. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Aloysius Church in Leonardtown, December 14, 2023 at 1:00 PM by Father David Beaubien officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Leonardtown, MD. Pallbearers will be Ben Carroll, Nick Carroll, Tony Norris, John Pennisi, Donald Quade, and Brett Williar.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. Mary's Nursing Center, 21585 Peabody Street, Leonardtown, MD 20650; or Hospice of St. Mary's, P.O. Box 625, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.mgfh.com.

Arrangements provided by the Mattingly-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

Mollie Rea McKay, 97



Mollie Rea was born in Washington DC to Alice Rea and William Rustin Howard, the third of three children. She graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School with varsity letters in several sports. She attended Meredith College in North Carolina and got her teaching certificate in Maryland. In her twenties, Mollie Rea taught at Great Mills Elementary School, went sailing, played golf and tennis and went dancing at Tall Timbers Tavern.

Mollie Rea met local waterman, Reese McKay at her father's golf course. When she agreed to marry him, Reese built a house with three golf greens on his father's farm, but with 5 children in 9 years, she never had much time to play or sail. She learned early in her marriage at her mother-in-law's advice to leave the dishes, grab the children, get to the wharf and on the fishing boat if she wanted to see her husband in the evening.

Mollie Rea drove a school bus occasionally for Reese. She took classes at St. Mary's College and taught at Little Flower School. Until she retired, she drove the Bookmobile around the county helping folks find their perfect read. She enjoyed traveling, bowling, fishing, sports, golfing, bridge and singing. After Reese died in 2008, Mollie Rea wintered in Texas with her daughter, Mary Carolyn Prett. Mollie Rea knew how to have fun, share joy and always look on the bright side. As her health failed, she was cared for at home by her daughters, Linda Gateau and Sharon McKay and by Hospice the last few months. She passed peacefully in her sleep.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Roland Reese, parents, sister Carolyn Bayless Humes, brother Billy, daughter-in-law Barbara Wheeler McKay and two grandsons, Kevin Thomas McKay and Bradford Buie McKay.

As well as her daughters, she is survived by her sons Roland Rea McKay and Thomas Allan McKay, daughter-in-law Toni McKay, sons-in-law Chip Gateau and David Prett, grandchildren Beverly Rea McKay, Jason Roland McKay, Candace McKay St. Germain and Chad Reese McKay, great grandchildren Tyler, Trevor, Joshua, Olivia and Reese McKay.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to KevinStrongFoundation.com for Brain Cancer research or St. Mary's Hospice.

Family and friends are invited to visit on Dec. 20, 10:30- 12:00. Funeral mass at noon at St. George Catholic Church, Valley Lee, MD 20692.

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In Remembrance

To schedule an obituary in the County Times, submit text and picture to aldailey@countytimes.net by noon on Tuesdays for publication on Thursdays. Any submissions received after this deadline may run in the following week's edition.

Barb Fowler, 84



Barbara Ann Fowler (Founds) was born on December 20, 1938 and went to rest on December 4, 2023 while surrounded by her loving family. She grew up in Bensalem, PA and married her husband Richard C. Fowler on December 26, 1960. Rich was in the Navy and they traversed the country several times early in their marriage as they grew their family. In 1978 Rich was transferred to NAS Patuxent River and Barb and Rich settled down and allowed their roots to grow in Breton Bay. Barb poured her giant heart into this community. She was instrumental in establishing the Breton Bay Golf and Country Club and volunteered her time and energy for over 25 years to helping the organization grow. She loved being around kids and became the neighborhood mom to so many. She was selfless, kind, and always more concerned about others than herself. Mom made everyone feel welcome in her home. We never had to ask if it was ok to bring someone home; there was always room at our table and her motto was "you can always offer someone a grilled cheese sandwich".

Barb valued her community and was involved in the golf course ladies' group,

the garden club, and the civic association. She was also a dedicated Catholic and readily gave up her time to help at church.

She will be dearly missed and lovingly remembered by her extensive family. She is survived by her seven children: Terri Fowler, Ric Fowler (Deniece), Rita Hegeman (Jay), Mary Beth Lloyd (Brian), David Fowler (Mary), Tina Dotson (David), and Ann Marie Morgan (Paul). Her grandchildren Travis (Mary), Kevin, Colvin, Davis, and Vanessa Fowler, Quincy Malecki (John), Lucas, and Niven Hegeman, Kacie (Glyn), Hanna, Haley, and Cameron Lloyd, Olivia and Noah Fowler, Wayne Brooks and Danielle Malhotra (Sunny), and Myra and Owen Morgan. She is also survived by Rich's brothers Bill Fowler, Ed Fowler (Andrea), and Ray Kuznicki (Mary) and numerous nieces and nephews.

She is preceded in death by her devoted husband, Richard C. Fowler, her brother Jack Founds and his wife Nance, and her sister-in-law Patricia Fowler.

Barb touched the hearts of everyone she met and her loss will be felt by many.

A gathering of friends and family will take place at the Brinsfield Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD on Friday, December 15, 2023 from 4:00 to 5:00 pm with prayers at 5:00 pm. In lieu of flowers please make donations to the Alzheimer's Association (ALZ.org/maryland) in her name, and/or

join us to celebrate her life over a drink at the Breton Bay Clubhouse (cash bar) from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Monday, December 18, 2023 at 10:00 am, Our Lady of Grace, Pennel, PA.

Condolences to the family may be made at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Mary Lou Ching Mattei, 88



Mary Louise Ching Mattei, "Mary Lou", 88, of Leonardtown, MD, passed away on December 8, 2023 in Leonardtown, MD. Born on March 12, 1935 in Pearson, St.

Mary's County, MD, she was the daughter of the late Calvert I. Norris and the late Mary Elizabeth (Gatton) Norris. Mary Lou was the loving wife of the late Robert Mattei, whom she married on January 17, 2002, and who preceded her in death on March 20, 2017. She is survived by her stepchildren Robin Beard (Jeff), Ronald Mattei (Lynn), Ricky Mattei (Roxanne), her siblings Joan Payne (George) of Mechanicsville, MD and Jackie Norris, of Compton, MD her sister-in-law, Emily Norris and Myrtle Ann Norris, as well as many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews, which were like her own children. In addition to her parents, Mary Lou was preceded in death by her first husband, John R. Ching, whom she married in November 1953, and her siblings, Betty Ann Beavan, Dickie Norris, Bobby Norris, and Billy Norris, and stepson Russell Mattei.

Mary Lou was a lifelong St. Mary's County, MD resident, and attended Our Lady's School in Medley's Neck and St. Mary's Academy in Leonardtown. She was a switchboard operator for C&P Telephone Company/Verizon in Leonardtown, LaPlata, and Brandywine for 32 1/2 years, retiring in 1985. After her retirement, she worked part time for St. Mary's County Government. Mary Lou enjoyed shopping, gambling, travelling with her husband, Bob, working in her yard, and going to lunch with friends. She did volunteer work with the Telephone Co. Pioneers and the St. Mary's Nursing Center Bingo.

The family would like to thank Mary Lou's very special niece, Donna Norris, for the loving care she so graciously gave her.

The family will receive friends on Tuesday, December 19, 2023 from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:30 AM in Our Lady's Church at Medley's Neck, Leonardtown, MD, with Father John Nguyen officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be Gary Norris, Tony Norris, Bob Norris, Jim Norris, George Payne and Bernie Beavan. Honorary pallbearers will be David Norris, Dennis Norris, Duane Carroll and Joey Beavan.

Contributions may be made to the Leonardtown Vol. Rescue Squad, P.O. Box 299, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.mgfh.com.

Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

Mike Woodall, 65



Michael "Mike" Anthony Woodall, Sr., 65, of Hughesville, MD, formerly of Avenue, MD, passed away surrounded by his loving family on December 1, 2023 at his home. Born on

December 9, 1957 in Leonardtown, MD, he was the son of the late Mary Frances Woodall and George Kelly Woodall. Mike was the loving husband of 46 years to Edith Marie Woodall (Bassford), whom he married on September 9, 1977 in Leonardtown, MD. He is survived by his children Michael Woodall, Jr. (April), Lisa Stephens (Billy), and Katie Woodall; grandchildren Hunter and Reagan Woodall, Conner and Ashlynn Stephens, and Kayci Barnes; and sisters Christine Kotowski (Ted), Ann Faunce (Dickie), and Ellen Woodall. He was preceded in death by his brothers John Irving Mattingly, Clarence Benjamin Mattingly, and James Ernest "Ernie" Woodall (Linda).

Mike was raised on St. Patrick's Creek and at an early age became a waterman for many years before moving on to work for other companies in various positions. He had recently retired in 2021 and spent most of his time at a friend's farm, a very special place to him. His passions were duck hunting with his son, grandchildren, and friends; his yearly hunting trip to Canada; crabbing; racing; and spending all free time with his wife and family.

The family will receive friends on Tuesday, December 12, 2023 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM with prayers being recited at 4:00 PM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home Leonardtown, MD. Interment will be private. Honorary pallbearers include Hunter and Reagan Woodall, Conner and Ashlynn Stephens, Kayci Barnes, Billy Stephens, John Blazer, Kelly Faunce, Jamie Woodall, Richie Faunce, Happy Wathen, Tony Bailey, Dennis Welch, Robert T. Brown, Junior Lathroum, Petie Griffin, Ricky Williams, and Jarred Norris.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to Mike's favorite event; Delta Waterfowl Southern Maryland Chapters youth hunt at <https://deltawaterfowl.org/donate/> and SOMD-Woodall in the notes section.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.mgfh.com.

Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

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of schools and they could meet with doctors at the hospital,” Finnacom said.

The coming of the 6,000 new high-tech, highly skilled professionals and their families meant an infusion of \$1 billion in payroll, Hodge said.

And, Finnacom added, it helped transform the base not only in size but in nature; it changed from more of a denim Navy operation to a research campus advancing cutting edge defense technologies.

“Now we really do have rocket scientists working here,” she said.

“Southern Maryland was once the poorest and least competitive region in the state,” Hodge said. “Now, we’re one of the strongest economies and one of the most competitive regions.”

When the other bases closed down to move to NAS Pax River all those years ago, Finnacom estimated that 70 percent of those jobs moved with those activities.

She said it was proof that their efforts had been successful in making the community ready to take on the consolidation.

It would make Patuxent River virtually indispensable to the future of defense technology progress.

NAS Pax River Leads The Way



Capt. Matt Scassero

Matt Scassero, another retired Navy captain, busies himself these days advancing autonomous machine technologies, many of them aviation related, working for the University System of Maryland’s UAS Research Operations Center right here in St. Mary’s.

Before that he was vice commander of NAWCAD from 2006 to 2009 and has witnessed the power of the work past and present at NAS Pax River both on military manned aircraft and unmanned systems.

He cut his teeth in the EA-6B Prowler, a four-seat electronic warfare aircraft retired from service since 2019 but it “took care” of him.

The base isn’t just a major nexus of research, development and technological advancement, Scassero said, its critical to the safety of the nation because of its service to the warfighter.

“It’s a critical lynchpin,” Scassero said. “It’s a critical node in the national security apparatus.”

“It’s critical for the creating of the fleet of the future.”

Taking Naval aviation into the future has been NAS Pax River’s mission since the beginning.

“The base saw the transition from analog to digital systems,” Scassero said. “When I was coming up pilots had to deal with more dials and buttons and you had to do a ton of manual inputs.”

“Now everything is digital and you have computers assisting you with everything.”

Naval aircraft used to be ruled by cables and hydraulics, Scassero said, but that gave way to fly-by-wire systems that had computers making flying combat aircraft much more nimble.

For example, the development of the Navy’s F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter is considered by some to be the pinnacle of aviation technology melded with the latest in digital advances to make it a stealthy and “smart” combatant on the modern battle field.

There was talk some years ago it would be the last manned combat fighter, but Scassero said thinking on that had changed.

The Navy is now considering a sixth-generation fighter design — known as next generation air dominance — which could push the boundaries of autonomy — and artificial intelligence — by paring a drone to fly with it on missions.

“What we’re finding is they’re better as team mates,” Scassero said.

The work being done at NAS Pax River is central to these developments, Scassero said.

“How do you incorporate AI in the cockpit?” Scassero said of the questions being considered here and elsewhere in the defense industry. “How do you trust AI autonomy? “It’s a really hard question.”

It’s just one of the many avenues for the advancement of Naval aviation that scientists, engineers and pilots are engaging in on base, he said.

“Patuxent River is a real bright spot not only for the DOD [Department of Defense] but for the local area,” Scassero said. “It’s a top tier facility for Naval aviation.”

“If it weren’t for Pax River, Naval aviation would not be what it is today.”

guyleonard@countytimes.net



A Grumman F6F Hellcat flies over Pax River

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02/29/24 Fredericksburg Nationals, VA	08/22/24 Andrews AFB, MD
03/21/24 Springfield, VA - American Legion Post 176	09/19/24 Stafford, VA
04/23/24 Patuxent River, MD	10/24/24 Dahlgren (King George), VA
04/25/24 Andrews AFB, MD	11/19/24 Patuxent River, MD
05/16/24 Stafford, VA	11/21/24 Andrews AFB, MD
	12/04/24 Fort Gregg-Adams Club, VA

Pax River

continued from page 5



Gary Hodge

The executive director there at the time, Gary Hodge, said the days of preparing for the arrival of so many were heady ones.

“It was the most transformative economic event in Southern Maryland history,” Hodge said. “And it was the most transformative economic development project in Maryland at the time.”

It required marshalling as much political muscle at the time, including U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer and then Senators Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski, as possible to ensure funding came down to St. Mary’s to fuel the transformation, particularly for transportation infrastructure improvements — like the widening of Route 235.

Hodge said political forces worked together closely to ensure the success of NAS Pax River in those days — and today.



Robin Finnacom

“One key element in our favor were the politicians worked together on shared strategic goals,” Hodge said.

Road improvements named on a 27-item long list approximately 30 years ago to make



The first flight to Pax River landed in 1943.

way for the consolidation are being completed to this day, Hodge said.

“FDR Boulevard was one of the projects on that priority list,” said Hodge.

Robin Finnacom, who was hired by the TCC as their chief economic development leader, said the BRAC process brought many jobs to the facility in Indian Head in neighboring Charles County for which the council also had to give their assistance in smoothing the transition.

“It would become the basis of our future

economy,” Finnacom said. “It supercharged our economy immediately.

“There was this huge ripple effect.”

Infrastructure growth and housing growth skyrocketed in preparation for the move; but there was much trepidation on the part of those in neighboring states about moving here.

Pax River’s isolation on the St. Mary’s peninsula was perfect for aviation testing but left it wanting for more cosmopolitan tastes.

“There was this reputation that we were

in the backwoods and without services,” Finnacom said.

Some worried that the county was without its own hospital and had to rely on doctors coming down from larger communities to treat patients.

Finnacom worked to set up open public meetings between incoming employees and civic leaders and public servants to help soothe the minds of those not happy leaving their longtime homes, she said.

“They could meet with the superintendent



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Pax River

continued from page 3

More Than Just A Base



Capt. Glen Ives

Glen Ives, a retired Navy captain, helicopter pilot, and base commanding officer in the mid 2000s, remembers when he had the option to take his first command assignment of an aviation unit.

He talked with his wife, Barbara Ives — also a Navy captain — about where they and their three boys should go for their next assignment.

He chose to be the skipper of VX-1, a testing squadron here on base.

“I had just made captain,” Ives said. “I told them we were going to be there a year, maybe a year-and-a-half.”

When Barbara asked them where they would be going, he told her Patuxent River.

“She said: ‘Where the heck is that,’” Ives said. “Twenty-plus years later, we’re still here.”

The Ives family are one of many families who have come from outside the St. Mary’s County community and found a home here because of the base’s seemingly gravity-like pull.

They have gone on to work in both the local defense industry and in community institutions like the Southern Maryland Navy Alliance and the College of Southern Maryland and become involved in many civic and philanthropic causes.

It seems that the combination of the U.S. Navy’s presence here coupled with the county’s unique location, way of life, deep rooted history but willingness to adapt and grow has produced something not often seen in other military communities.

“Pax River — and I’m talking about the base and St. Mary’s County, Southern Maryland — is a very special place.” Taking command at VX-1 was just a stepping stone to eventually taking over as base CO, Ives said.

But he wasn’t sure if he wanted the job; it took a higher-ranking officer to convince him to apply for the post and compete through the NAVAIR process.

He got the job, even though he was in

the running for command of installations in California and even Japan, his family helped him make the decision easy.

“This said ‘This is the best community we’ve ever lived,’” Ives said. “They made the best choice for me.”

Essentially, the base and the community have come to thrive off of each other.

Ives said the terror attacks of 9/11 changed everything; the more casual relationship with the outside community and the ability to bring them on board to see what was going on there went away.

The security requirements were just too stringent during the War on Terror for that, but Ives said he tried to maintain relations with community groups and elected leaders, which he considered key to the continued success of NAS Pax River.

“That was one of our biggest challenges, how to be secure but still keep that special interaction,” Ives said. “We worked on that every day.

“If someone wanted me to speak to their group or attend a meeting, I never turned down an invitation.”

The base was more than a military installation, Ives said, it was something that belonged to the St. Mary’s community just as much.

“Pax River NAS is their base,” Ives said. “They pay taxes; they support us.”

The Base Gets Bigger

By the 1990’s the base was about to experience a massive growth spurt. It was on the winning side of three rounds of the base realignment and closure effort that sometimes boils up in the Pentagon and Congress.

Naval activities in Trenton, New Jersey, Warminster, Pennsylvania and Crystal City, Virginia — NAVAIR itself — would all be consolidated and moved to Naval Air Station Patuxent River.

It was a herculean task getting ready for the arrival of thousands of new employees that would forever transform the base and the surrounding community.

Staff at the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland (TCC) was tasked with helping to smooth that transition.

See **Pax River**, page 6



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My good friend, Larry Brabec, is a Vietnam veteran who retired from the Navy as a Chief Petty Officer. His final and favorite duty station was Pax River, from 1971-'78. Larry is an avid outdoorsman and chose to stay in St. Mary's County after retirement. He began a second career at the Dr. James A. Forrest Technical Center, and was named our county's Teacher of the Year in 2003. He helped dozens of young people launch careers in metalworking/HVAC. Larry is a great example of the wonderful partnership between St. Mary's County and Pax River. Thank you Larry!

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NAS Pax River Looks Back on 80 Years of Naval Aviation

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Where Dreams Take Flight



Capt. Derrick Kingsley

Naval Air Station Patuxent River is more than the hub of research, development, test and evaluation for Naval aviation's present and future, said its current commanding officer Capt. Derrick Kingsley.

It's where dreams are brought to life.

"It's a city within a city," Kingsley said.

"Any given day is a wild card.

"There is no dull day on installation command."

The base is the home of Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) and the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) as well as numerous other tenant commands and programs offices working on every aspect of Naval aviation from the aircraft and their weapons systems to pilot survival gear and helmets, just to name a few.

There is very little dealing with Naval aviation that has not had at least some contact with NAS Patuxent River in the last 80 years.

"If it was thought about or dreamed of for a Naval aircraft, it probably started at Pax River," Kingsley said. "All the systems in Naval aviation, even the documents that go with them, start at Pax River."

The construction of the base, which started in 1942 to give the Navy a place to develop aviation technology quickly to fight the Japanese in the Pacific Theatre of



Construction of Naval Air Station Patuxent River began April 4, 1942.

Operations during World War II.

Its coming here necessitated the removal and relocation of many county residents from the communities of what were then known as Pearson and Jarboesville, but it would be perhaps the single most transformative event in the county's history since English colonists landed in 1634.

It turned perhaps the poorest and least educated county and region in Maryland into one of its wealthiest, fastest growing and most densely populated with scientists and aeronautics specialists in the country.

Base commanders like Kingsley have always strived to make the base not only attractive to different tenant commands and

program offices but maintain good relations and partnerships with the community at large outside the base main gate.

Kingsley said one of the key challenges of leading on Pax River was keeping up with aging infrastructure; he counts getting the new air traffic control tower at the adjunct activity in St. Inigoes — Webster Field — started as a real accomplishment as well as getting the funding for a room replacement for the installation's air traffic system.

"Every building has a lifespan," Kingsley said.

There is scarcely a time when some kind of aircraft undergoing development at NAS Pax River is not being flown for diagnostic

reasons, with both new aircraft like the 5th generation F-35 Lightning II strike fighter taking to local skies and legacy aircraft like the F/A 18 Super Hornet — which still serves as the strike and air superiority workhorse of the fleet around the world — joining it.

The key mission of the base is to provide the space and resources for all of those research, development, testing and evaluation activities on base to complete their missions to provide the best weapons for the warfighter.

"It supports both the mission and the sailor," Kingsley said.

See **Pax River**, page 5

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Commission on Public Health Sets First Meeting

Maryland's Commission on Public Health (CoPH) will hold its first meeting this Thursday, December 14, 2023 from 3-4:30 pm. Agenda and meeting information is available at smchd.org/CommissionOnPublicHealth. The meeting is open to members of the public; the CoPH asks those attending to pre-register by 9am EST on the day of the meeting in order to receive meeting information. Community members may indicate their intent to attend by emailing MD.CoPH@maryland.gov with full name and jurisdiction of residence.

The CoPH is charged with assessing and recommending improvements to Maryland's public health infrastructure, and

is currently seeking subject matter experts for five workgroups that will inform this work. Workgroups explore five key subjects relevant to public health services in Maryland: Funding; Governance and Organizational Capabilities; Workforce; Data and Information Technology; and Communications and Public Engagement. Applications are due by this Friday, December 15, 2023 at 5 pm Eastern Standard Time. Click here to apply or complete the application at: bit.ly/phcommissionworkgroup.

For more information on the Maryland Commission on Public Health, please visit smchd.org/CommissionOnPublicHealth.

SMCPS to Host Virtual Job Fair

The St. Mary's County Public School System will host a virtual job fair on Thursday, December 14th from 2pm to 6pm EST. Candidates can speak with Human Resources Representatives and learn about the benefits of working for SMCPS.

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 - Middle School Teachers
 - High School Teachers
 - Special Education Teachers
 - Fine Arts Teachers

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applying. The quality of your application and evidence of a strong work ethic are critical considerations. Evidence of effective professional practice is weighted heavily in the review of applications for administrative and certificated or licensed positions.

St. Mary's County Public Schools utilizes an online application platform. You will receive updates to the status of your application as it changes (Received, Active, Inactive, Closed, etc.). References are sent electronically when your application has been submitted so please include accurate email addresses for the references you include on your application.

We would appreciate it if you would let us know if your employment status changes and you no longer wish to be considered for a position once you have submitted your application. You can do so by emailing hrd@smcps.org.

All offers of employment for certified teaching positions are contingent on eligibility for certification and the results of the background checks. All new employees must attend the New Employee Orientation program.

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Sheriff's Office Hosts Shop with a Cop

On Saturday, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office members got to go shopping with some of the cutest county residents for the annual Shop with a Cop Day.

Everyone met up at the Wildewood Shopping Center for coffee and donuts and then traveled to Walmart for a holiday extravaganza shopping spree with kiddos purchasing gifts for themselves and for their family members.

After all that shopping, everyone was hungry! So, we headed to the St. Mary's County Fairgrounds, where the Optimist Clubs cooked and served a scrumptious meal while several elves were hard at work wrapping presents.

It was a great day! Thank you to the many partners who gave generously of their time, talents, and resources to create a lifetime of beautiful memories and friendships.



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Person of Interest Sought in Grocery Theft

On Saturday, December 2, 2023, around 7:20 p.m., the person depicted in the photos entered Weis Market in Lexington Park, MD. They utilized the self-checkout lane but left the store in the pictured vehicle without paying for any items. St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Deputies are in the process of reaching out to the registered owner of the car. Public assistance is sought to locate both the individual and the vehicle.

Anyone with information about the identity of either the suspect or about this incident is asked to contact Deputy Bianca Melton at Bianca.Melton@stmarycountymd.gov or 301-475-4200, ext. 8185. Please reference case number 67925-23.

You can also call Crime Solvers 24/7 at 301-475-3333 or send a text to Crime Solvers at 274637.

Type "Tip239" in the message block and select SEND. After you get a response, continue your conversation.

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Identity Needed for Fraud Suspects

At approximately 7:30 p.m., on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, two people, including the person pictured below, entered the Kohls Department Store in Lexington Park, MD, and purchased several gift cards and other items, using fraudulent means. The two then left in a white Ford Mustang with unknown registration.

Anyone with information about the identity of either of the suspects or about this incident is asked to contact Deputy Christopher Truss at Christopher.truss@stmarycountymd.gov or 301-475-4200, ext. 8039. Please reference case number 69234-23.

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Deputies Investigating Collision Involving Horse and Buggy

St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to a motor vehicle collision involving a horse and buggy on Sunday, December 10, 2023, at 11:57 a.m. The accident occurred at the Point Lookout Road and Pin Cushion Road intersection in Leonardtown, MD. Upon arrival, deputies discovered a vehicle had collided with a horse and buggy, resulting in the ejection of all four occupants from the buggy and the death of the horse.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Collision Reconstruction Unit has taken charge of the investigation. Preliminary findings indicate that a juvenile was operating the horse and buggy, carrying three family members. The buggy was stationary at the Pin Cushion Road and Point Lookout Road intersection when the horse unexpect-

edly reared and bucked. This action caused the buggy to enter Point Lookout Road, where it was subsequently struck by a southbound 2021 Toyota Tundra.

The juvenile operator and one adult passenger from the buggy sustained life-threatening injuries and were transported by ground to the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center. Another passenger was taken to MedStar St Mary's Hospital, and an infant was transported to Children's Hospital for precautionary reasons.

At present, speed and alcohol do not appear to be contributing factors to the collision.

Anyone who may have witnessed the collision or any events leading up to the collision is asked to contact Corporal Dale Reppel at dale.reppel@stmaryscountymd.gov or by phone at 240-496-6694.



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County Approves Primary Care Facility for Employees

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County approved this week the use of a little more than \$167,000 to front costs for the construction of a primary medical care facility for county employees.

Senior county staff who presented the proposal to join with Everside Health, who would staff the facility, said it would help reduce health insurance costs incurred by the county for its employees and work as a retention bonus to keep labor here in St. Mary's.

But one commissioner was concerned that the proposal, which is ultimately paid for by residents' tax dollars, would not be of direct benefit to them.

Everside Health LLC is registered in Delaware but based in Colorado; the deal with the county would also provide primary care to eligible dependents of county employees and even retirees.

Deputy County Administrator David Yingling told county commissioners that the end result of the Everside deal would still result in county employees paying 15 of their medical costs while the county would pay 85 percent.

"We don't have enough doctors in St.

Mary's County providing primary health care," Yingling said as the primary reason for the deal. "Doctors are retiring, leaving practice, while a lot of specialists are coming into St. Mary's County.

"That is pushing our employees to providers outside our network, to urgent cares [facilities], to emergency rooms, which are overburdened."

These actions by employees are leading to increasing health care costs, said Yingling.

"It just seems like a nice benefit to have for us but for John Q. Public, he doesn't get the chance to get this same-day, next-day service," said Commissioner Mike Hewitt.

The representative for Everside Health, LLC, Mark Schubert, said that they have found that their services do not actually provide relief for local emergency rooms and urgent care facilities once they are open to their new clientele, in answering Hewitt's question.

"They're just as packed as normal," Schubert told Hewitt.

Though he questioned its fairness, Hewitt voted along with other commissioners to approve the measure to eventually build the employee health center.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Jury Convicts Man for Murder in 2022 Shooting

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling announced Wednesday that following a four-day jury trial, a St. Mary's County jury convicted Demetrius Rashud Puifory, 45, of California, Maryland, of second-degree murder and related firearm charges.

On April 28, 2022, at approximately 4:57 p.m., St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to the area of the 46700 block of Marshall Boulevard in Lexington Park for reports of shots fired. Upon arrival, deputies located the victim in the grass suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. Demetrius Puifory was later identified as the suspect who shot the victim.

The 21-year-old victim was pronounced deceased over a year later on August 8, 2023. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner certified the manner of death as "homicide" and the cause of death as "complications of quadriplegia due to gunshot wound of the neck."

"The facts surrounding this case are especially heart-wrenching. A young victim's life has been lost to senseless gun violence at the hands of a convicted felon who was prohibited from the possession of the firearm. I send my sincerest condolences to the victim's family," said Sterling. "Our office is committed to prosecuting gun violence



Demetrius Rashud Puifory

cases to the fullest extent possible and to put criminals on notice that these violent acts will not be tolerated in our County."

The defendant faces a maximum of up to 66 years in prison. He will remain held without bond pending the sentencing hearing.

Senior Assistant State's Attorney Sarah Proctor prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County.

Detective Tyler Payne of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office was the lead investigator.

The Honorable Joseph M. Staloni presided over the case.

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Distribution of Free Laptops Questioned

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The county's efforts to give away 4,500 free Chromebook laptops — made possible by state grant money — to eligible residents is widely seen as a successful bid to provide internet connectivity to those who have a difficult time affording it on their own.

But one elected leader questioned whether there was some waste endemic to the endeavor.

Commissioner Mike Hewitt said this week that he knew of instances where residents who met the qualifications to get a free laptop computer — usually lower income and on some sort of government assistance or faced with a disability — took the gratis device and sold it.

The issue came up for discussion at a briefing of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County Dec. 12 on the county's efforts to achieve total broadband connectivity for its citizens.

Hewitt asked if there was a way to track the use of the laptops — the answer was “no” — to ensure they were being used as intended and that the county “wasn't just throwing Chromebooks at people.”

“They're already receiving government benefits, such as the SNAP program,”

said county information technology chief Bob Kelly, who oversees the distribution program.

Hewitt said giving the computers out to people who resell them or won't use them as intended “seemed like waste.”

“I would think in the grand scheme, from what I've noted, it doesn't look like there's that many [resolved] compared to how many have been given out,” said Commissioner Eric Colvin.

Colvin noted, though, that he had no data to back up that assertion other than his own observations.

“I'm amazed at the number of folks in our community who meet our eligibility requirements,” Kelly said. “It's very frustrating because there have been some folks who've tried to come back and get another unit.

“We do prevent that.”

But those prevention measures weren't necessarily perfect.

“Are there folks who slip through the cracks? Maybe,” Kelly said. “But that is significantly offset by the folks who have come, and with tears in their eyes... the lady this weekend came and said ‘I can now apply for a job.’”

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Attorney General Challenges Court's HQL Ruling

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The Office of the Attorney General has filed a petition for a rehearing of the federal case in which the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled unconstitutional Maryland's law requiring most citizens to obtain a license before acquiring a handgun.

On November 21 a three-judge panel of the Fourth Circuit Court ruled 2-1 that Maryland's law violated the Second Amendment. Attorney General Brown is asking for a rehearing of the case en banc, which means that the case would be heard again before the full 15-judge appellate court.

“The Second Amendment does not prohibit states from enacting common-sense gun laws like Maryland's handgun licensing law,” said Attorney General Brown. “My office will continue to defend laws that are designed to protect Marylanders from gun violence.”

Maryland's HQL requirement stemmed from the 2013 passage of the Firearm Safety Act, which banned the sale of many military-style, semi-automatic rifles and restricted ammunition magazine capaci-

ties to 10 rounds.

That law was enacted in response to the Sandy Hook massacre of 20 elementary school children and six teachers in Connecticut the year prior by a shooter wielding an AR-15 rifle he killed his own mother to get.

The act was one of the most hotly contested in the Maryland General Assembly that year and passed on party line votes, heavily favored by Democrats and lambasted by Republicans as unconstitutional and punitive to law-abiding gun owners.

The ruling that called the law unconstitutional noted the extreme length to which citizens must go to get a handgun.

“Plaintiffs' challenge must succeed,” the court ruled. “The challenged law restricts the ability of law-abiding adult citizens to possess handguns, and the state has not presented a historical analogue that justifies its restriction; indeed, it has seemingly admitted that it couldn't find one. Under the Supreme Court's new burden-shifting test for these claims, Maryland's law thus fails, and we must enjoy its enforcement.”

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Board of Education Approves Cell Towers on School Land

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Looking to boost cell phone reception at school sites and increase revenues to boost school athletics programs, the St. Mary's County Board of Education voted unanimously this week to approve the construction of commercial communications towers on school sites.

Kimberly Howe, Director of Capital Planning for the school system, told the school board that the system had been approached a year ago by communications companies inquiring after whether such towers could be constructed on school athletic fields.

"The whole premise of this is that if vendors are interested in this... that means there's an additional need in that community for additional service," Howe said at the Dec. 13 meeting in Leonardtown. "That

could benefit our surrounding communities so it was of interest to us to look into that."

Howe explained that, after a vendor successfully completed an application process with the system, they would construct a pole that matched those used for lighting fixtures at an athletic field and post the communication equipment upon it.

"This isn't something new," Howe said. "This has been done across the state for many years."

Neighboring Charles County has had such towers in place for more than 20 years, Howe told board members.

Sites that could be suitable for commercial communication towers include Esperanza, Leonardtown, Margaret Brent and Spring Ridge middle schools and Chopticon, Great Mills and Leonardtown high schools, according to Howe's presentation.

The school system would begin the process with a request for proposals from ven-

dors, Howe said, and once agreed upon the system would lease a pad site on the school property to the vendor.

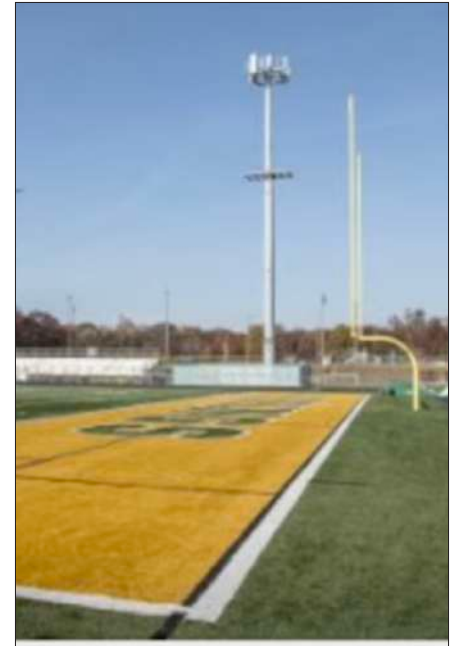
"This would typically be for 10 years with two options of extension for five years," said Howe. "St. Mary's County public schools would not be out any funds because the vendor would be responsible for all capital costs."

Part of any agreement, she said, would be the addition of county communication equipment, for example emergency management, to hang there for free.

The school system would be paid monthly by the vendor for using the school site land, Howe explained.

Charles County has eight towers spread among four school sites, according to Howe's presentation, with the leasing agreements there bringing in between \$11,490 to \$46,879 per year.

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Gov. Moore Shares Vision with St. Mary's Commissioners



Gov. Wes Moore, right, speaks with county service interns and county commissioners

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Gov. Wes Moore praised St. Mary's County on his trip here Monday, particularly for the recent victory of Leonardtown High School's boys' soccer team at the state championship and for Tobacco Barn Distillery in Mechanicsville for winning a top national award.

"It's so good to be back," Moore said during a public meeting with the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. "St. Mary's produces champions."

"You all continue to lead the way."

Moore received much applause from residents gathered in the commissioners meeting room to support him and from commissioners for his visit of Dec. 11.

Moore said his administration is holding fast to his vision of leaving no Marylander behind, he pledged to find ways to streamline regulations and paper work to allow small businesses to function better.

"These regulations are detrimental," Commissioner Eric Colvin said of certain rules impeding small businesses. "It's very hard for old buildings to be rebuilt and refurbished."

"We need to be unapologetically pro-business," Moore said. "The amount of regulations and red tape... it's taking them three years to get their permitting."

"We have to stop getting in the way so much."

Moore, who supports the Blueprint for Education that proposes to push hundreds of millions of dollars into school systems, said the state also needs to focus on giving opportunities to students to explore apprenticeships and technical education;

he called it a "lie" that students had to attend college or university to create eco-

nomie prosperity for themselves.

Moore was positive and upbeat for his talk with commissioners but all there knew that the state faces a nearly \$2 billion budget deficit after the prior administration left the state with a \$5 billion surplus.

To combat this Moore has proposed cutting \$2 billion from the state's transportation construction budget.

"We need to be thoughtful on how to sustainably get there," Moore said of finding a funding formula for the Blueprint.

The key, he said, was encouraging business growth, which he said had slowed badly before the took office.

"I'm new to politics," Moore said of his first year as an elected official. "But I'm not new to balance sheets."

"Our state economy wasn't growing." He said the state would also have to reform how it would fund transportation projects, since the increasing number of electric cars meant that gas tax revenue would drop.

"You have to fix that business model," Moore said, who heard continued calls from local officials to do something about replacing the Gov. Thomas Johnson Bridge.

Commissioners brought to his attention the plight of residents on St. George Island who experience continual flooding of Route 249, leaving them stranded in difficult weather or high tide circumstances.

Commissioner Mike Hewitt said he wanted to partner with the governor's administration to find a solution to the rising sea levels there in the form of enhanced infrastructure for the island residents.

"We want to give you a victory sir," Hewitt said.

"We want to give them a victory," Moore replied.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

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CONTENTS

LOCAL NEWS	5	OBITUARIES	20
COPS & COURTS	11	CALENDARS	23
COMMUNITY	12		

“ST. MARY’S PRODUCES CHAMPIONS.”

GOV. WES MOORE ON HIS VISIT TO THE MOTHER COUNTY



LOCAL 5
Gov. Moore visits St. Mary's



ON THE COVER 9
Naval Air Station Patuxent River continues to push the boundaries of Naval aviation



LOCAL 9
County wants employee health center

WEEKLY FORECAST

<p>THU, DEC 14</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 44° Lo: 28°</p>	<p>FRI, DEC 15</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 53° Lo: 32°</p>	<p>SAT, DEC 16</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 54° Lo: 35°</p>	<p>SUN, DEC 17</p> <p>PM Showers Hi: 54° Lo: 45°</p>
<p>MON, DEC 18</p> <p>Rain Hi: 56° Lo: 39°</p>	<p>TUE, DEC 19</p> <p>Showers Hi: 47° Lo: 34°</p>	<p>WED, DEC 20</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 32°</p>	<p>THU, DEC 21</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 32°</p>

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023

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**County Wants
Employee Health Center**

**School Board
Approves Cell Towers**

**Governor Moore
Comes to St. Mary's**



NAS PAX RIVER: 80 YEARS OF AVIATION EXCELLENCE