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St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2026

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**School Board Receives
Proposed Budget**

**Public Comments Mixed
on Piney Point Terminal**

**Town Reacts to Criticism
Over APF Funds**

**'LIGHTING
THE WAY':
HONORING DR. KING'S LEGACY**

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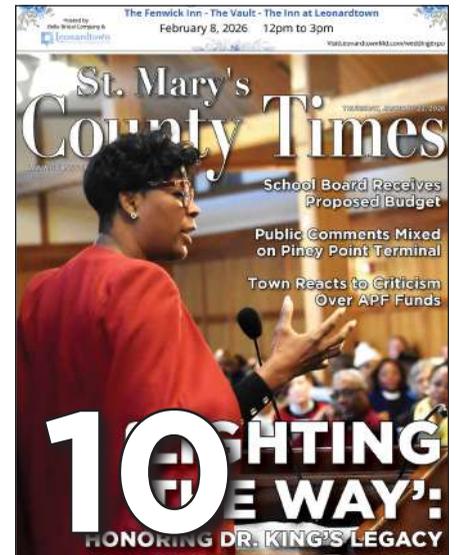
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“ONE THING THAT’S REALLY IMPORTANT IS \$6.5 MILLION OF COUNTY PROPERTY TAX COMES FROM JUST THE RESIDENTS ASSESSED IN TOWN.”

LEONARDTOWN ADMINISTRATOR LASCHELLE MCKAY ON THE COUNTY'S PITTING EDUCATION MONIES IN THE GENERAL FUND.



LOCAL 5
Residents express hope, concern over Piney Point terminal proposal



ON THE COVER 7
Olympian and St. Mary's native Tanya Hughes delivers keynote at MLK celebration



LOCAL 7
Town responds to criticism over APF funds

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 22 Sunny Hi: 55° Lo: 30°	FRI, JAN 23 Partly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 14°	SAT, JAN 24 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 22° Lo: 17°	SUN, JAN 25 Wintry Mix Hi: 26° Lo: 22°
MON, JAN 26 Partly Cloudy Hi: 29° Lo: 15°	TUE, JAN 27 Mostly Sunny Hi: 30° Lo: 19°	WED, JAN 28 Partly Cloudy Hi: 35° Lo: 18°	THU, JAN 29 Partly Cloudy Hi: 27° Lo: 13°



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School Board Receives Superintendent's Proposed Budget Includes \$9 Million Increase

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The St. Mary's County Board of Education was scheduled to go to public hearing on Jan. 19 (after press deadline) on a proposed Superintendent's Budget of \$307.1 million, which is \$9 million more than the current fiscal year's budget. The proposal calls for all of the increase to come from the county.

Chief Financial Officer Tammy McCort explained the budget to the school board at their Jan. 14 meeting. McCort explained that every line item of the budget has an 18-digit code which helps identify costs.

The code includes fund number, category, program, location number (school or department), project number, account number (10 for unrestricted fund), group (for example salaries and wages), and salary.

School Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith said, "People keep on saying things like, you need to be transparent. Well, this is transparent. That doesn't mean it's not complex, right? So, every single time we spend funds in St. Mary's County Public Schools, it's tracked back to an account number. That account number is 18 digits long, and it tells you the fund, category, program, location, project, and then ultimately the account."

He added, "We have a lot of very well-meaning souls outside of St. Mary's County Public Schools and outside of probably St. Mary's, who start talking about we want things to be transparent. We want things to be transparent. We send up reports, we send all this information. If you don't open your eyes, nothing is transparent. So, we want to make sure that everybody understands that there is absolutely a methodical system to the way we spend every single penny. Every single penny is accounted for all the way back. And ultimately, a person who wishes to take the time to do their homework coming forward with a question about something, we have a voluminous answer for everything."

He added, "Elected official, I really wish you would do a little homework on that end before you start making wide statements about how we're spending our money."

McCort said the negotiated agreement nets an \$8.5 million increase of which "the total cost of Steps is \$4.7 million. The Cola per the negotiated agreement for all three bargaining units totals \$3.5 million."

The Instructional category is the largest, McCort said. It has a \$3.4 million or 3.3 percent increase. "This represents funding for negotiations, the addition of three athletic trainers, the reduction of positions of 6.5 teachers due to enrollment decline, four paraeducators due to enrollment decline, one reallocation, two, concentration of poverty, and two and a half positions that were reallocated in the current fiscal year to the Department of Special Education."

She said, "Our budget priority is certainly on transportation, focus on our contracted bus driver attendant wage increases, bus driver retention stipend, and contract increases to include PVA operations and maintenance."

The board was told by Smith and McCort that the cost to implement the Blueprint for Special Education and Transportation has a \$1.6 billion shortfall statewide.

McCort said of the proposed budget, "It does reflect an increase request from the county government of \$9.5 million for a total of \$146.9 million or 6.9 percent increase in local county funding. It includes an estimated state aid amount of \$148.2 million, representing an increase of \$1.6 million, a decrease in federal funds tied to impact aid to \$1.6 million and other funding sources of \$3.7 million, totaling \$300.6 million or \$10.4 million increase in recurring components of the unrestricted fund budget."

McCort summed it up by telling the board, "You can clearly see categorically that it lines with your budget priorities, particularly with the instructional salaries and wages representing the largest increase of \$3.4 million as well as special education representing a 1.6 percent increase and student transportation (at) \$1 million increase and fixed charges at \$2 million increase. Again, overall total increase of \$9 million."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

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Hope Mixed with Many Fears Dominate Public Comment On Piney Point Facility

OAG Plans to Address Concerns Later This Week

By Tim Flaherty
Contributing Writer

Relief that the old Stuart Petroleum terminal in Piney Point is finally being transformed to other uses is mixed with much trepidation about what is to come. That is what has been expressed by neighbors of the property that was purchased last fall by Offshore Aviation Group (OAG), a Maryland-based defense contractor that has had offices in St. Mary's County for almost 10 years.

At last week's Commissioner's of St. Mary's County public forum, the repurposing of the property was the second-most-talked-about subject after the proposed Hollywood cannabis plant. OAG has already begun the transformation of the 320-acre parcel from a petroleum products delivery and storage facility into what they call, "a world-class center for unmanned systems development, testing, and operations, restoring the site's proud aviation and maritime heritage while positioning St. Mary's County as a global leader in next-generation technology," according to an OAG press release.

Removal of old petroleum storage tanks has already begun, and residents have reported seeing increased drone activity in the area. It has not been confirmed if that activity is related to OAG.

At the January 13th public forum in Leonardtown, several Piney Point residents expressed their worry about OAG's plans to re-activate an old aviation runway, plans to create a seaplane base along the Potomac River or along Piney Point Creek, and potential environmental harm from fiber optic lines that are sometimes used to control unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's).

"Fiber optic cable controls for UAVs are very likely to be environmentally unfriendly," Thomas Haine, of Tall Timbers, told the commissioners at the forum. "They may entangle sea life and will contaminate the neighboring area."

Several other speakers expressed similar belief that such fiber optic lines are subject to winds and current, and will be difficult or impossible to recover after testing. Shore erosion, the impacts of UAV flights on wild-fowl and other wildlife, noise from manned aircraft using both the runway and proposed seaplane landing zones, the safety of kayakers and boaters who use Piney Point creek for recreation, and increased road traffic from potential future tenants of OAG at the facility were all brought forth as concerns.

Kurt Engle of Tall Timbers, who said he is active with the homeowner's association at the Landings at Piney Point, summed up a variety of issues. "We are supportive of the redevelopment of the oil terminal," he read from prepared remarks, "but strongly oppose the creation of an airport and a seaplane base next door to our homes, and the use of fiber optic command and control lines for the OS (operating systems) to be built and tested. Our issue with the airport is that the planned runway is only 1500 feet from our neighborhood. Winds in our area are



Aerial view of Piney Point terminal. Photo courtesy of Offshore Aviation Group.

predominantly from the north-northwest direction much of the year. With normal general aviation operations, this would have the operations of the planned airport taking off towards our neighborhood and over many homes at slow speed and full power setting. We did not move here to be under the flight path of an airport."

In November, OAG hosted a public informational session about their new venture at the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum. There, company CEO Robert Hicks outlined plans for the facility and answered some concerns. A September press release noted that OAG would be completely removing storage tanks and removing the pipeline that essentially made Piney Point Creek a lagoon, reopening it to boaters.

"There was a lot of information (at the November meeting) that was presented," said Larry O'Brien, the vice president of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association, who spoke at last Tuesday's forum. "But it probably raised about as many questions as it answered. And there was a lot that was vague about it. And, you know, so now I'm hearing that some of the plans have changed. Now they're going to be keeping some of the storage tanks."

O'Brien, who said he lives near the OAG property, expressed the dichotomy of thoughts about OAG's intentions. "We really love the idea that these storage tanks are going to be eliminated," he said "and that was kind of my buy-in to the whole thing... that thank God somebody has come along that's going to solve that problem because it (leftover fuel tanks) could be an environmental catastrophe if it's not addressed at some point. However, what's really missing is information."

O'Brien told the commissioners that, "I think it's really your obligation as county commissioners to get the information and present it in a complete manner to the public."

The County Times emailed Paul Teas, a vice president with OAG who is listed as the media contact for OAG's Piney Point venture, and asked for clarification on the questions brought forth by Larry O'Brien and

others. He responded via email on Tuesday, saying OAG will issue a press release "at the end of the week that will address most if not all of these questions."

St. Mary's County Commissioner Eric Colvin, who lives nearby in Valley Lee and represents the Piney Point area, told the County Times via email yesterday morning that, "OAG appears to really be trying to be

a good neighbor. I know they have already been active in the area for almost a decade and they have good established partnerships with other organizations in the area."

"The environmental cleanup of the site is something that has needed to happen for years," Colvin wrote, "so I am glad that is going to finally move forward—I do not know the details of that, but my understanding is that it is a condition of the sale of the property to OAG. Safety is always the number one concern, and I look forward to hearing more about OAG's plans in the future. They have said that their goal is to help protect the airspace so that it is safe for the area and for the work they do. The business that OAG is in is a rapidly changing business, and they are on the cutting edge and it meshes well with the work already being done in the area. I am confident they are not going to leave fiber optic lines strewn about the area."

Colvin further expressed confidence that OAG's takeover of the property will be a positive experience for St. Mary's County. "OAG has a large piece of property that they can work with, and the timelines of future business endeavors are not clear, but I do believe they are trying to honestly be good neighbors and be forthright with the community."



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Town Reacts to Criticism Over APF Funds

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Town of Leonardtown has reacted to criticism that they aren't doing enough to help fund monies for school construction. Public criticism recently came from both the Board of Education and County Commissioner Mike Hewitt. They charge that the town isn't collecting Adequate Public Facilities funds from developers in the growing town to help defray the cost of the schools needed for those developments.

Town Administrator Laschelle McKay explained the town is doing everything they can to gather fees from developers but the funds need to be dedicated to the schools.

McKay told the County Times, "From when I came to work here the town has always collected the school portion of the impact fee. In 2023, the county decided to go with the excise tax so that they could have more flexibility with the funds they were collecting. The impact fee has to be put aside specifically for growth related projects, and they wanted to have more flexibility with that. So, they went to the legislators and got legislative authority to change to the excise tax instead of impact fee. Our ordinance is to collect the school portion of the impact fee only. We didn't ever collect the roads or the parks and recs fees that they had previously because we pay for our own

streets, roads, and parks."

She said now "anybody who gets a building permit outside of the Town, Land Use and Growth Management (LUGM) director has the final authority, and we don't. We have our own planning and zoning authority. We don't go through LUGM. I'm very clear that Leonardtown wasn't considered for this. So, when they stopped collecting an impact fee, we had to stop collecting an impact fee because we had nowhere to send the money."

She indicated, "At that time, I started trying to work with the school board to see if we could direct it directly to the school board."

There doesn't appear to be a mechanism for the town to send the monies directly to the schools. It has to go through the county. They are still working on a mechanism to do that. At the Jan. 15 school board meeting, Superintendent of Schools Dr. J. Scott Smith recognized the town's willingness to provide school funding and said it was still being worked out.

McKay said, "We're working together and he (Smith) went back to the school board and informed them that what had been stated was not necessarily what was happening."

McKay explained, "When a town annexes property, anyone in town still pays their full county tax bill. They pay their fire, rescue, and support solid waste.

All of that is still charged to them. And

then in addition pay the town tax. So, they're still footing their bill.

"As far as streets and roads, yes, our people drive on county roads and county people drive on town roads. They use our parks. We use the county parks. We have our own contract with Waste Management for trash collection and all residents in town get trash collection. So, we're footing our own bills, and we believe that just the school fee is what we should be responsible for, which we have been trying to start collecting again."

McKay said in meetings with Hewitt and county officials she told them, "We've been trying to, but we don't want it to go to the general fund. Mr. Hewitt stated that the commissioners know better how to spend the money than putting it in separate funds. And that's not how the town feels. We feel that if we collect a school impact fee, it needs to be set aside for the school."

McKay said, "In the meantime, the council has said that they're willing to institute the school fee. We're going to start that process and we'll put it into a fund just like we collect a water impact fee and a sewer impact fee, and we use it just for those growth-related projects in those departments. We'll collect the school fee and once we work with the school board and have a way to send it to the school board for capital projects, then we'll do that. But we'll set it aside if we have to on our own. I don't know what the county



Leonardtown Town Administrator Laschelle McKay

is going to pursue, but they would have to go back to the legislators to try to have them change the authority to include the town. Some counties do include the municipalities, but ours was not written that way."

McKay said, "One thing that's really important is \$6.5 million of county property tax comes from just the residents assessed in town."

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Identity Sought for Theft Suspect

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is seeking to identify and locate a suspect in connection with a theft.

On Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, at approximately 7 p.m., the subject seen in these surveillance camera images was recorded on video taking several bottles of alcoholic beverages from ABC Liquors in California, MD. The suspect was initially denied a sale because they lacked identification. The suspect left, returned shortly after, picked up the items, and left again, passing all points of sale.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Deputy First Class Austin Welch at 301-475-4200, ext. 8180, or by email at Austin.Welch@stmaryscountymd.gov. Please reference case #2026-2355.



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Press release from SMCSO

Tipsters can also submit tips anonymously and may be eligible for a cash reward if the information leads to an arrest.

- Text 847411, starting your message with "SMCSO", add a space, and then your tip.
- Online: Submit a tip through the Sheriff's Office website at www.FirstSheriff.com/tips.
- App: Send a tip directly through the

Pax River to Participate in Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain 2026



Naval Air Station Patuxent River will participate in the annual force protection exercise, Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain Jan. 26-Feb. 6.

Exercise Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain 2026 (CSSC26) is conducted by Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFFC) and Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) on all Navy installations in the continental U.S.

"Pax River joins Navy bases across the region and country in training to protect our personnel and mission from possible attack," said NAS Patuxent River Commanding Officer Capt. Mark Zematis. "Of note is that the scale of this year's CSSC exercise is expected to be bigger than the previous year, but our Security and Emergency personnel will try to mitigate impact to the base. Even so, traffic delays should be expected by all on base."

Citadel Shield, which occurs the first week, is the field training exercise portion led by CNIC. Solid Curtain occurs the following week and is the command post exercise led by USFFC. This two-part approach was designed to enhance the readiness of

Navy security forces and ensure seamless interoperability among the commands, other services and agency partners in order to protect life, equipment and facilities.

CSSC26 is a regularly scheduled exercise and is not being held in response to any specific threat. Measures have been taken to minimize disruptions within local communities and to normal base operations, but there may be times when the exercise causes increased traffic around bases or delays in base access. Brief gate closures are expected at NAS Patuxent River during the exercise. Area residents may also see or hear security activities associated with the exercise. Advanced coordination has taken place with local law enforcement and first responders.

Base residents and personnel are reminded to avoid posted exercise areas.

For information about potential impacts due to the exercise, follow NAS Pax River online at www.facebook.com/NASPaxRiver, www.twitter.com/NASPaxRiverPAO, and www.instagram.com/nas_patuxent_river/.

Press Release from NAS Patuxent River

Countywide Road Asset Inventory Underway

St. Mary's County Government (SMCG) will be conducting a countywide road asset inventory project over the coming months to capture video imagery to document county-owned and maintained road signs and other roadway-related assets.

As part of this effort, a county-marked vehicle equipped with a roof-mounted camera will be driving all State- and County-owned and maintained roads throughout St. Mary's County during January and February.

This project is intended for infrastructure inventory and planning purposes. No enforcement activities are associated with this effort, and the video capture will focus on roadway and right-of-way assets.

Private roads, identified by blue road

signs, will not be included in this project and will not be driven as part of the inventory.

Residents may see a county vehicle traveling slowly or making brief stops along roadways while data is collected. The county appreciates the public's patience and cooperation during this process.

For more information, residents may contact Bob Kelly, Chief Information Officer for SMCG at (301) 475-4200, extension 1013.

For more information on SMCG programs and operations, visit: www.stmaryscountymd.gov or follow St. Mary's County Government on Facebook, X, and Instagram for regular updates.

Press release from SMCG

Noise Advisory Issued for Jan. 21-23

Communities surrounding Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Webster Outlying Field, Smith Island, Maryland and residents of the Northern Neck of Virginia are advised of an inshore weapons separation testing event Wednesday, Jan. 21 to Friday, Jan. 23, 2026. This test flight has the potential to generate a sonic boom that could be heard and potential felt throughout the surrounding communities.

As with all operations, NAS Patuxent River takes precautions to lessen the impact of testing and training activities on the community. For more information call 1-866-819-9028.



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C-SMMPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting Public Notice

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Calvert – St. Mary's Metropolitan Planning Organization, C-SMMPO, will conduct a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting at the Walter Francis Duke Terminal Conference Room located at 44200 Airport Road, California, MD 20619 on **Monday, February 2, 2026**, beginning at **3:00 p.m.** to **receive an update from the MPO Boundary Working Group and to discuss 2027 UPWP Funding.** The agenda can be viewed at <https://www.calvert-stmarysmpo.com/>.

This public meeting is required by law to accept public and staff comments. All members of the public and interested parties will have an opportunity to provide public comments regarding the TAC meeting agenda.

Comments may be submitted on or before **Friday, January 30, 2026**, and should be addressed to the Long Range Planning Division, **P.O. Box 653, Leonardtown, MD 20650** or to **Karly Maltby, MPO Administrator** via email at **Karly.Maltby@stmaryscountymd.gov**.

This meeting can be attended virtually, the Meeting ID is **430 427 6617**, the call-in number is **(301) 715-8592**. Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/4304276617?omn=89904715192>

For questions or more information, please contact **Karly Maltby, MPO Administrator**, with St. Mary's County Government's Department of Land Use & Growth Management at **301-475-4200 ext. 1507** or via email at **Karly.Maltby@stmaryscountymd.gov** or visit <https://www.calvert-stmarysmpo.com/>.

Any person requiring special arrangements related to the Americans with Disabilities Act shall notify the C-SMMPO no less than 72 hours prior to the date of the scheduled meeting so that necessary special arrangements can be made in order to facilitate participation. All content of these proceedings is subject to disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act. Photographic and electronic audio and visual broadcasting and recording devices are used during the meetings. These are public meetings and attendance at these meetings automatically grants St. Mary's County Government permission to broadcast your audio and visual image.

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State Announces Community Development Projects Funding Included for Two in Leonardtown

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development today announced that Southern Maryland counties are set to receive a combined \$775,000 through the state's State Revitalization Programs for 3 projects and activities that promote community development and economic growth in the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

"These projects are ready to move forward and will play a role in communities achieving their visions, which supports a more resilient, economically competitive and affordable Maryland," said Gov. Moore. "The Moore-Miller Administration is committed to ensuring that every dollar awarded will help strengthen the places we call home."

The state's six State Revitalization Programs support revitalization and redevelopment projects and activities including: business expansion and retention; façade and streetscape improvements; homeownership and home rehabilitation incentives; commercial improvement programs; community facilities; mixed-use development, and demolition activities.

Projects in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties were selected through a competitively-scored, multi-agency review process used for the State Revitalization

Programs. These projects are:

- Acquisition and consolidation of lots outside of NSF Indian Head for future development (Indian Head, Charles County);
- Infrastructure and construction of expanded parking at the Leonardtown Wharf Public Park (Leonardtown, St. Mary's County);
- Continuation of minor improvements to properties within the downtown business district of Leonardtown (Leonardtown, St. Mary's County).

"Each one of these projects advances community-driven priorities tied to revitalization goals, and helps make great places – places that strengthen economic competitiveness and that people want to call home," said Jake Day, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. "That investment delivers real returns: For every dollar invested through the Department's revitalization programs, there's approximately \$17.90 in economic impact."

The Fiscal Year 2027 State Revitalization Program awards include 252 projects, awarded a total \$73.7 million.

Press release from State of Maryland

Fire Departments Awarded Wildfire Protection Grants

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service is providing Volunteer Fire Assistance grants to 55 volunteer fire departments in 17 counties across the state. The funded projects help volunteer fire companies enhance wildland fire protection in rural communities.

For the 2025 grant cycle, finalized in December, the Maryland Forest Service is providing \$167,314 in match funding to complete \$370,376 in total project cost. The grants match up to 50 percent of project cost with a maximum grant of \$3,500 per department. For this grant cycle, all but two Maryland applicants received a grant.

Funding for this program is provided by the USDA Forest Service.

Maryland Volunteer Fire Assistance grant recipients from Southern Maryland with the grant amount and total project cost in parentheses, are:

\$1,520 (\$3,040)

Charles County

- Bryans Road Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad \$750 (\$1,500)
- Cobb Island Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$8,055)
- Hughesville Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad \$570 (\$1,140)
- La Plata Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$7,650)
- Tenth District Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$34,403)

St. Mary's County

- Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$7,345)

Press release from MD DNR

Calvert County

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St. Mary's College of Maryland Honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) held its 21st annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Celebration on Monday, Jan. 19. The theme of the event was "Lighting the Way: Faith, Hope & Action."

This year's keynote speaker was Olympic athlete and Great Mills High School graduate Tanya Hughes. Highlighting the importance of action in local communities, Hughes said, "Coming home reminded me that light work happens in overlooked places, and it's needed now more than ever. I want to challenge this community—and especially our students—to be the light and remind them that greatness comes out of Great Mills. I'm living proof!"

The event also featured remarks from Rep. Steny Hoyer, as well as student musical performances and readings from Dr. King's speeches.

SMCM will also host its second annual MLK Day of Service on Saturday, Jan. 24., connecting volunteers with service projects at sites across St. Mary's County. Volunteers can sign up to participate at inside.smcm.edu/events/second-annual-mlk-day-service-jan-24.



Tanya Hughes delivers the keynote address at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Celebration on Jan. 19. Photos by Ceandra Scott.



St. Mary's County History Day Explores "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History"

Historic Sotterley, in partnership with St. Mary's County Library and Maryland Humanities, announces the upcoming St. Mary's County History Day, taking place on Saturday, April 18, 2026, at the Leonardtown branch of St. Mary's County Library. This year's theme, "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History," challenges students to investigate pivotal moments in history, differing perspectives on those moments, and how they impacted the events that came after.

St. Mary's County History Day is the district-level contest affiliated with Maryland History Day and National History Day, offering students in grades 4 through 12

the opportunity to conduct in-depth research and present their findings in one of five categories:

- Paper
- Exhibit
- Documentary
- Website
- Performance

Participants develop essential academic and real-world skills, including critical thinking, research, communication, and creativity. Winners from St. Mary's County History Day have the opportunity to advance to the Maryland History Day competition on May 2, 2026.

Call for Special Awards Sponsors

To help celebrate and reward outstanding student achievement, Historic Sotterley is seeking special awards sponsors for the 2026 contest. Community organizations, businesses, and individuals are invited to support specific categories and recognize exceptional student work.

Those interested in sponsoring a special award may contact Katherine Humphries at edteam@sotterley.org for more information.

Important Information

- Contest Date: Saturday, April 18th
- Deadline to Submit Project: Saturday, April 11th

- Theme: Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History
- Location: Leonardtown Public Library

St. Mary's County History Day continues to provide opportunities for students to engage in history and social studies in the ways that are meaningful to them while strengthening critical skills. Historic Sotterley and its partners look forward to another year of exceptional scholarship and creativity. For more information about the contest for students, parents, and teachers, visit our site at <https://tab.so/smchistoryday>

Press release from Historic Sotterley

Annual Cherry Blossom Festival Returns to Passive Park

Vendor & Sponsor Opportunities Available



The St. Mary's County Government Department of Recreation & Parks (R&P) will host Southern Maryland's very own Cherry Blossom Festival on Saturday, March 21 from noon – 4 p.m. at Lexington Manor Passive Park in Lexington Park.

Celebrate the start of spring at this free family event held at St. Mary's County's premiere arts park, featuring a variety of local vendors, food trucks, community organizations, activities, and entertainment options.

Lexington Manor Passive Park is home to dozens of cherry blossom trees growing throughout the 80-acre park.

Returning vendors from previous years can register right away using R&P's online registration system. First time vendors can register beginning February 23. A \$60 vendor fee is only required for vendors who wish to sell goods or provide certain additional activities.

To register as a vendor, visit www.stmaryscountymd.gov/Recreate, select *Online Registration*, and select the *Cherry Blossom Festival* under the *Events & Activities* tab.

A variety of sponsorship levels are also available for businesses and organizations to support the Cherry Blossom Festival. Perks and benefits include pre-event and onsite recognition, premiere booth space, and logo placement on event materials.

Sponsorship details can be found in the R&P Sponsorship and Partnership Overview: www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/SponsorshipPacket.pdf

For vendor questions or information, please contact R&P Parks Operations Manager, Marguerite Cardenuto, at marguerite.cardenuto@stmaryscountymd.gov. For assistance with online registration, contact the R&P Main Office at 301-475-4200 ext. 1800 or by email at RPinfo@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Never miss an update! Follow R&P on social media at: www.instagram.com/stmarysrecandparks and www.facebook.com/stmarysmdrecreation

Press release from St. Mary's County Department of Recreation & Parks

Appraiser Fair Taking a One-Year Break

Set to Return in 2027 at New Museum Facility

St. Mary's County Government's Museum Division will not hold the popular Appraiser Fair in 2026 due to construction of a brand-new museum facility at St. Clement's Island Museum. The long-running event will return in January 2027, in the new modern museum building.

The Appraiser Fair provides an opportunity for the public to learn the value of their heirlooms and how to properly care for them. Appraisers are typically available

to offer appraisals in a variety of categories. The Museum Division looks forward to welcoming the community back for the first Appraiser Fair in the new facility in 2027!

For questions or more information, please call St. Clement's Island Museum at (301) 769-2222.

Press release from St. Mary's County Museum Division

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If your home has space, laughter, and a stash of indestructible toys, I'm all ready to move in. Adoption hours are Mon-Fri 11am-4pm and Sat 10am-3pm. To see more of my amazing friends also available for adoption, "like" us on Facebook @ Charles County Animal Care Center or at <https://www.charlescountymd.gov/services/animal-care-control/animal-care-center>

MEET JAXX



Jaxx is a 2.5-year-old Pit Bull Terrier who has been waiting far too long, and we truly don't understand why. He's sweet, affectionate, eager to learn, and has that perfect mix of playful energy and snuggly charm. If you've ever wanted a dog who can make you laugh, keep you company, and love you endlessly, Jaxx is your guy. If you are interested in meeting with Jaxx or learning more about him please contact Animal Relief Fund (ARF) at 301-866-0303 or visit www.animalrelieffund.org

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College President Releases Report on 100-Day Listening Tour



St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) President Rhonda Phillips, Ph.D., FAICP, has released a report that summarizes the perspectives of the broader College community gleaned from a series of events and meetings carried out during the first 100 days of her tenure.

Dubbed the "100-Day Listening Tour" (www.smcm.edu/100report), President Phillips met with hundreds of students, alumni, staff, faculty, College trustees, elected officials and members of the community at more than 250 meetings and events. Nearly 200 responses were also provided through an online form on the College website.

Phillips, who became SMCM's eighth president on July 1, 2025, says the listening tour was instrumental in shaping the direction of the College's strategic planning process. "I believe strongly in the value of listening and working together to achieve our goals and look forward to collaborating with each and every one of



you to actualize an even brighter future for St. Mary's College of Maryland," she said in an announcement to the campus. "Now we are starting the next phase of strategic planning, in alignment with the collective feedback shared these past few months. My next steps will prioritize the enhancement and building of our community's future."

Phillips emphasizes that a shared vision for moving forward is essential to maintaining the College's momentum. In addition to cementing its place as the fifth-ranked public liberal arts college – behind only four military academies – in 2025, SMCM completed a record-setting, \$23.3 million fundraising campaign; set participation records in attendance at Hawktoberfest, the College's family weekend; established a new donor mark for the day of giving on Giving Tuesday; and welcomed the most diverse first-year class in the College's history.

Press release from SMCM

National Heritage Area Launches Regional Passport Program

The Southern Maryland National Heritage Area has announced the launch of its new regional passport program, an interactive initiative designed to encourage residents and visitors to discover the region's storied past, abundant culture, and natural beauty across Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and Southern Prince George's Counties.

Fifteen designated heritage sites throughout the Area are now offering complimentary passport booklets to visitors. The passports feature space for unique stamps to commemorate visits to participating locations—visit a new heritage site, get a new stamp designed for that site.

The program highlights museums, historic sites, natural landscapes, and cultural destinations that collectively tell the story of Southern Maryland's enduring legacy.

"The passport program is a fun and engaging way to showcase the extraordinary heritage found in every corner of Southern Maryland," said Lucille Walker, executive director of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area. "Each site included in this program represents a chapter of our shared regional story, encompassing Indigenous, Black, and European history, maritime and agricultural traditions, and the creative spirit and groundbreaking innovations that continue to uplift and shape our communities. We hope this inspires visitors to explore, learn, and form deeper connections with the places that make Southern Maryland remarkable."

Participating sites include:

- Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center

- Calvert Cliffs (stamping opportunity available in the Spring)
- Calvert Marine Museum
- Darnall's Chance House Museum
- Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House
- Historic Sotterley
- Historic St. Mary's City
- Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum
- Maryland Veterans Museum
- Patuxent River Naval Air Museum
- Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Historic Park
- Piscataway Park
- Serenity Farm
- The Surratt House Museum
- Thomas Stone National Historic Site (stamping opportunity available in the Spring)

Visitors are encouraged to pick up a passport at any participating site and explore as many locations as they can, collecting stamps along the way. Some of the sites have winter hours, or are closed during the winter. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to determine hours of each site, if hours are not listed on partner websites.

To see photos of the passports, Ms. Walker's tours to participating sites, and site staff testing out their new stamps, visit the Heritage Area's Instagram or Facebook.

For general information about the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area and updates on programs and initiatives, please visit destinationsouthernmaryland.com.

Press release from Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Historic St. Mary's City Appoints New Executive Director

Historic St. Mary's City (HSMC), Maryland's first capital and a cornerstone of the state's heritage and archaeological research, announced today the appointment of David S. O'Donnell as its new Executive Director. O'Donnell will assume the role in early 2026.

A mission-driven nonprofit executive with more than two decades of leadership experience, O'Donnell brings a proven record of advancing complex public-facing institutions through strategic fundraising, board partnership, and inclusive organizational leadership. Over the course of his career, he has secured more than \$100 million in philanthropic, corporate, and government support while leading organizations through periods of growth, transition, and renewal.

O'Donnell most recently served as Director of Development for the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry, where he led a national fundraising strategy supporting healthcare education institutions across the country.

Previously, he held senior leadership roles at Baltimore Public Markets Corporation

and Lexington Market, Citizens for Tax Justice, and several national policy and education organizations. His work has consistently focused on aligning mission, impact, and sustainability while strengthening public trust and stakeholder engagement.

"Historic St. Mary's City stands at a pivotal moment," said RADM (Ret.) Tim Heely, Historic St. Mary's City Commission Chairman. "David brings the strategic vision, leadership experience, and collaborative approach needed to guide this institution forward. His background in complex organizations, capital projects, and public mission-driven work makes him exceptionally well-suited to lead HSMC into its next chapter, including preparations for Maryland's 400th anniversary."

O'Donnell succeeds a period of interim leadership during which the organization maintained operational momentum while advancing its core research, education, and visitor experience priorities.

Travis Parno, PhD, Director of Research and Collections and Acting Executive Director, emphasized the importance of

continuity and stewardship during the transition. "Historic St. Mary's City is a place where rigorous scholarship, public history, and living landscapes come together," Parno said. "David understands the responsibility that comes with stewarding a site of this significance. I am confident he will value the integrity of the research, the expertise of the staff, and the trust our audiences place in us."

As Executive Director, O'Donnell will oversee all aspects of Historic St. Mary's City's operations, including archaeological research, education programs, museum interpretation, fundraising, marketing, and partnerships with the State of Maryland and St. Mary's College of Maryland. His appointment comes as HSMC continues to expand its role as a regional tourism driver, educational resource, and center for understanding the many histories that shaped Maryland.

"I am honored to join Historic St. Mary's City," O'Donnell said. "This is a place of extraordinary historical importance with a powerful opportunity to connect the past to the present in meaningful ways. I look



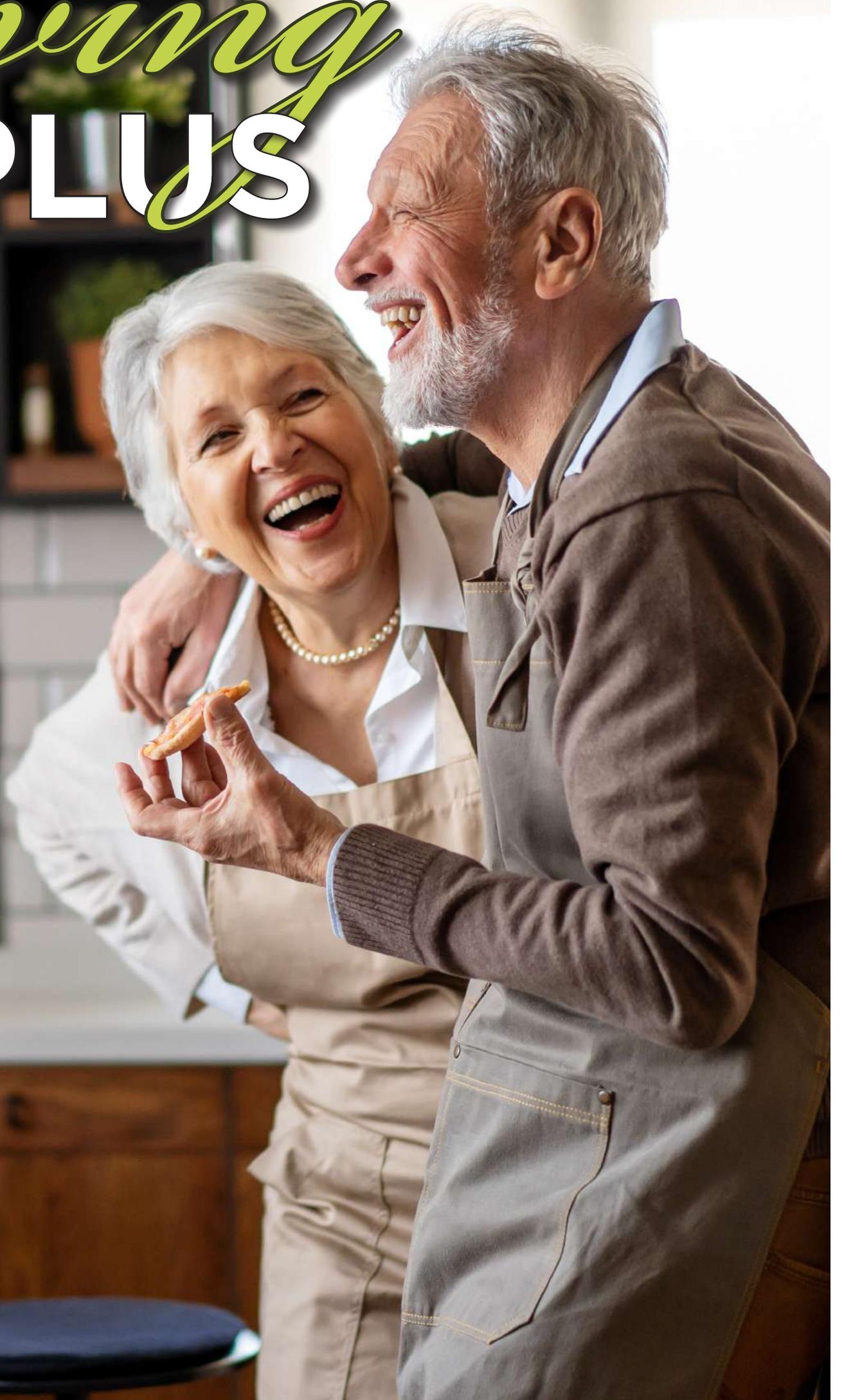
David O'Donnell

forward to working alongside the dedicated staff, commission, foundation, and community partners to strengthen HSMC's impact for generations to come."

Press release from HSMC

A Special Pull Out Section

SoMD *Living* 50 PLUS



Deacon Serves with Faith and Dedication

By Dave Spigler
Contributing Writer

Southern Maryland is blessed to have so many senior citizens who willingly continue to volunteer their special skills and talents to support their communities and neighbors long after they retire from their life occupations. These folks have much to give of themselves and their efforts go a long way in giving the region the title “the land of pleasant living.”

They do so much to make our lives more enjoyable and less worrisome through their positive assistance and friendly involvement. More than “just friends,” they often give of themselves to folks with special requirements once they become aware of their needs. Or they offer their time to organize efforts when circumstances occur or unexpected needs arise. They are our special citizens who give of themselves with no expectations for payment or remuneration.

One individual who epitomizes the term “Volunteer” is Deacon Anton “Andy” Geisz of Solomons who has given of himself in many ways since retiring following a distinguished 38-year career in systems engineering and program management. Born outside Philadelphia, Andy earned an Electrical Engineering degree from Drexel University in 1982 and an MBA from the University of Maryland in 2009. He supported the Department of Defense

as a contractor for ManTech and Bowhead here at Patuxent River. He later was hired by Spalding and retired as Vice President in 2004 after helping grow Spalding’s contracts and capabilities.

Andy was ordained as a Deacon in the Archdiocese of Washington in June, 2013. He has devoted his life to faith, service, his community, and his family. His 13-year journey to become a Deacon culminated in 2000 with his ordination and subsequent assignment as the first Deacon in the 300 year history of St. Aloysius Parish in Leonardtown. During his tenure, he served as a Sunday School teacher, a Lector at Mass, joining the Knights of Columbus, lead the Children’s Liturgy of the Word, founded the Parish Finance Counsel, and served on the Building Committee.

With his wife Mary Jo, he has led marriage preparation ministries since 2010

The Geisz family moved to Solomons in 2018 and Andy began serving as a Deacon at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish where he currently serves at daily mass, and oversees weddings, baptisms, and funerals. Additionally, he visits the sick, counsels parishioners, and provides wonderful homilies during services. Of great importance, Andy has twice led Parish volunteer teams to Belize to repair church facilities and a school, provide books and graduation caps and gowns, and offer clothing and food to the poor.

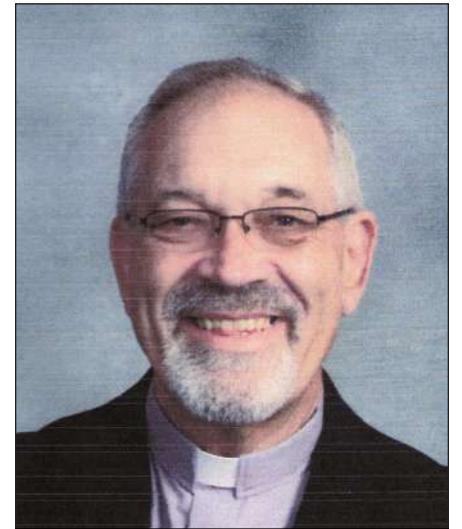
Amazingly, this group of volunteers paid for their airfare, lodging, and meals for both of these missions to this poorest of countries in Central America.

Andy currently serves as the OLSS Ministry and Liturgy Coordinator and Chairs the Parish’s annual Gala Dinner that raises needed funds for Parish and community needs.

This year’s Gala is dedicated to raising funds to build a new Parish Pre K/ Kindergarten building. The Parish has the largest Parochial school enrollment in Southern Maryland, and its school is bursting at the seams in its effort to educate our future saints!

Andy’s leadership and service extend beyond the church. While at St. Aloysius, Andy helped launch a special needs ministry which eventually formed the roots for the now tri-county, non-profit Southern Maryland Community Resources [SMCR]. As a founding member and longtime board member, serving as Treasurer, Vice Chair, currently the Chairman, he has helped SMCR grow into a thriving organization that provides a variety of social and recreational opportunities to people of differing abilities.

Additionally, Andy chairs the annual Solomons Dragon Boat Races. He regularly attends their Faith Nights, dances and cook-outs, and remains a steadfast advocate in our community for inclusively and opportunity for individuals of all abilities!



Deacon Andy Geisz

Finally, Andy’s long history of community service and support for the needy earned for him the Our Lady Star of the Sea “2026 Father Alexander Award” for exhibiting the virtues that typifies the example of the Parish’s first pastor, Father Alexander was able to overcome many obstacles to build a church in Solomons with very scarce financial assets and little to no resources nearly 100 years ago. Andy will be receiving this deserving, special recognition at the OLSS Gala planned for this Valentine’s Day at the Hollywood VFD Banquet Hall.

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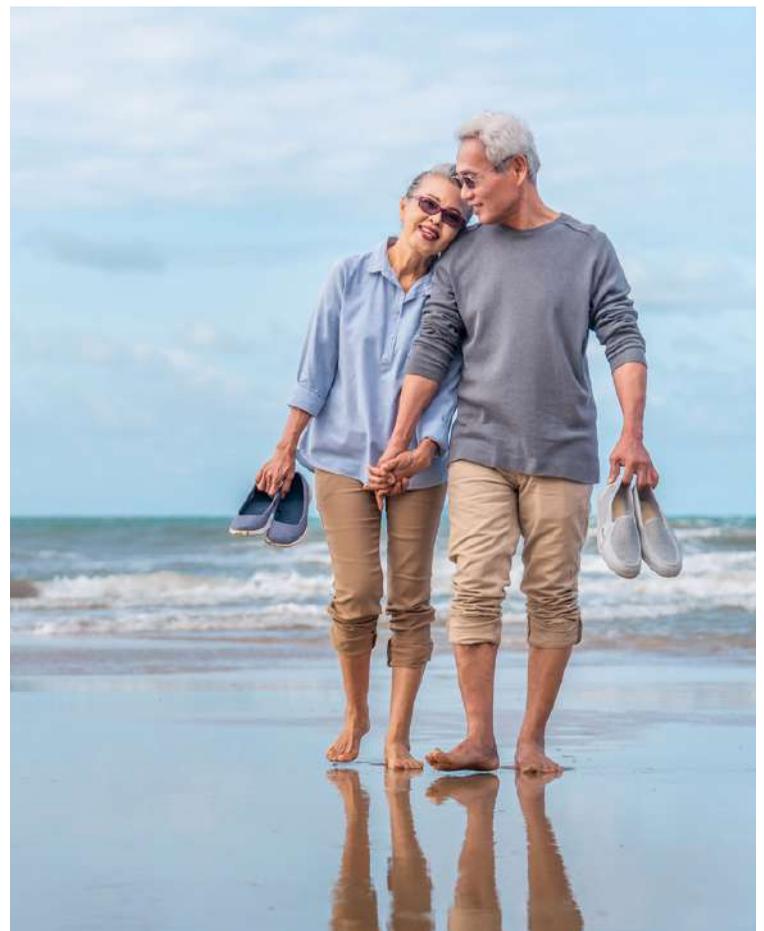
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Retired Principal Still Supporting Kids, Community Members

By Vada Mercer
Contributing Writer

At 81, George Kirby insists he's trying to slow down, but his continued involvement in local service organizations suggests otherwise.

A retired school principal, Kirby has spent over a decade of his retirement with the Leonardtown Lions Club, serving as newsletter editor, zone chairman, district board member and club president.

The Leonardtown Lions Club is a local chapter of Lions Clubs International that focuses on vision and hearing support through services such as free screenings and recycling used eyeglasses.

Although Kirby no longer holds a formal leadership title and instead chooses to train newer members to take on those roles, his dedication to the club has not taken a backseat.

He continues to volunteer with the organization's vision and hearing programs, coordinating the vision and hearing mobile bus for county festivals and helping conduct screenings at schools and fire departments.

Kirby also serves on the board of directors for Lions Club District 22-C, which oversees clubs in southern Maryland and Washington, D.C., as well as on the board



George Kirby (left) is the one to make this clown smile at the St. Mary's County Fair, giving him a free vision screening as part of the Leonardtown Lions Club's community outreach

of Lions Camp Merritt, which supports summer camps for children with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

From schools to service organizations, Kirby has long had a passion for helping children thrive. The free vision and hearing screenings are one of many ways he's been able to do this.

One memory he holds especially close

came from a screening at the county fair, where a young girl's grandparents brought her in for an exam. Since she was too young to read the alphabet, volunteers used a special camera designed for children who cannot identify letters.

The screening revealed a potential vision problem, and Kirby encouraged the family to follow up with a doctor.

Not long after, the family returned to thank the club, the child sporting her new pair of prescription glasses. The appointment had caught myopia, commonly known as nearsightedness, at an early stage.

Five years later, they returned to update the Lions and share their appreciation. Thanks to the condition being identified so early, their granddaughter no longer needed to wear glasses.

"If I could help one child, then I would have done my job. I've done my duty, I've met my goal," Kirby said. "As an educator and a people person who likes to work with kids, all of these things are another outlet for me outside of the classroom to do some of the same things."

For Kirby, retirement has simply meant continuing the same values that guided his career in education, connecting his passion for supporting children to his service experiences.

To seniors looking for ways to stay involved and give back to the community, Kirby encourages leaning on personal connections, whether that means joining a friend at a meeting or asking a neighbor to join you.

What keeps Kirby involved is not a sense of obligation, but that he enjoys the work he does and seeing its positive effects on the community.



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Ruth Dixon
Facilitator

Tips to Help Seniors Travel Safely

Travel was once a key component of the picture working professionals created of their ideal retirements. While the COVID-19 pandemic put many retirement travel plans on hold in recent years, jetting off to distant locales is once again on retirees' radars.

A 2022 survey from AARP found that individuals 50 and over were poised to not only get back on the road, but also spend significantly more money on travel. Prior to the pandemic, Americans 50 and over spent \$7,314 annually on travel, according to data from AARP. By spring 2022, individuals in that same age bracket indicated a readiness to spend \$8,369 on travel.

Eagerness to get back on the road, in the air or on the high seas could make it easy to overlook some principles of safe travel. However, such an oversight could lead to complications that could make it hard to enjoy time away from home. The following tips can reduce the likelihood that seniors encounter trouble while traveling.

- Determine if any health issues are affecting your desired destinations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a website devoted to travel vaccines ([cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-vaccines)), and that page can be an invaluable resource for individuals planning a vacation. What's more, the CDC even provides a specific list of destinations and the latest travel health notices for each of those nations. That list, accessible at

nations/list can help seniors determine if there are any health-related safety issues in countries they hope to visit.

- Speak to your physician. A pre-trip consultation with a physician can uncover any issues that might arise while you're away. Such issues may be easily managed for domestic travelers who are not planning to visit any especially remote

locations, but they will not necessarily be as easily navigated when traveling overseas. Physicians can recommend certain vaccinations or measures to ensure your health while away. In addition, a pre-trip doctor visit is a great time to refill prescriptions that you will need while you're away.

- Take financial precautions as well. Of

course, not all travel-related concerns are medical. Finances also require some pre-trip attention. Inflation has caused a sharp spike in the price of various commodities since the start of 2022, so travelers should study up on the cost of food and attractions at their destination to ensure they have enough money to enjoy themselves. Baggage costs have risen significantly in recent years, so seniors traveling on a budget may want to pack less and do laundry while traveling in an effort to save money. In addition, the unpredictable nature of travel since the onset of the pandemic has underscored the utility of travel insurance. Seniors can look into travel insurance that could reimburse them in the case of delays or cancellations.

- Privately share your itinerary. Prior to departing, share your itinerary with friends and family. Avoid sharing the itinerary on social media platforms, which can make you a target for criminals at home and at your destination. The itinerary should include where you're staying, the dates you're visiting certain locations and the dates of activities you'll be engaging in on your trip.

Seniors rediscovering the joy of traveling can take various measures to make their trips more safe.

Signs It Could Be Time to Consider an Assisted Living Facility

Assisted living facilities provide a vital service to families across the globe. In fact, more than 800,000 people in the United States are currently living in assisted living facilities, according to a 2023 report from Zippia, an online recruitment service that gathers information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and its own internal data.

The decision to move oneself or an aging relative into an assisted living facility is complicated. Though such facilities typically offer an excellent standard of care, it can still be bittersweet for an individual to leave his or her home. It also can be difficult to identify when is the best time to make such a transition. Though each individual case is unique, the following are some indicators that the time might be right to move oneself or an aging loved one into an assisted living facility.

- Emotional challenges: The National Council on Aging notes that certain emotional challenges may indicate the time is right for an individual to move into an assisted living facility. The NCOA encourages individuals making such a decision independent of others to ask themselves if they are experiencing feelings of loneliness or depression. Assisted living facilities can provide much-needed social interaction that seniors may not be getting

at home. If feelings of loneliness or depression are present, then the time might be right to make the move to an assisted living facility.

- Physical challenges: Many individuals move into assisted living facilities because the physical challenges of daily life have become too significant to handle alone. The NCOA notes that individuals who are feeling overwhelmed by tasks such as buying groceries, cooking and cleaning may benefit from moving into assisted living facilities that handle such tasks for them.
- Issues with hygiene: The presence of additional challenges related to hygiene also may suggest a move to an assisted living facility may be beneficial. Staff at assisted living facilities can help adults who are struggling to bathe, dress themselves or use a restroom on their own. Family members can look for signs that a loved one's personal hygiene has taken a turn for the worse. Issues with hygiene can be a byproduct of depression, and poor hygiene also can increase risk for infection and illness.
- Injuries: The NCOA notes that falls or near-falls are another potential sign that a person can benefit from moving to an assisted living facility. Falls can



hurt anyone, but they can be especially damaging to aging adults. For example, the National Institutes of Health report that falls may result in loss of independence, chronic pain and reduced quality of life. Assisted living facilities are often equipped with features to reduce risk of falls, such as grab bars in showers and bathrooms and even along corridor walls. In addition, assisted living facilities may be housed in single-story buildings or equipped with elevators,

which means residents won't be forced to navigate potentially dangerous staircases at any point during the day. Staff also can respond quickly if residents experience a fall, providing much-needed assistance that seniors living alone or with an aging spouse may not get at home.

Various signs may indicate that the time is right for individuals to move into an assisted living facility so they can more safely navigate daily life.

Senior-Friendly Interior Renovations



Grab bars in bathrooms can make homes safer for seniors with limited mobility.

Home is where the heart is. That sentiment may be especially true for seniors who have spent decades living in their homes. A lot of hard work goes into home ownership, and seniors who have lived in the same space for a while undoubtedly have countless memories within the walls of their homes.

A lifetime of experiences in a home can make it hard to leave, but many seniors experience diminished mobility as they age. Mobility issues can make it hard for seniors to traverse their homes, but aging homeowners can make various renovations to make a home more accessible.

- Revamp entryways and staircases. A 2020 study of 1,000 adults in the United Kingdom found that 28 percent of individuals age 65 and older who don't exercise regularly struggle with activities like walking up stairs. The study, commissioned by Total Fitness, also found that 14 percent of men and women over 65 who regularly engage in moderate exercise still find it challenging to climb up and down a flight of stairs. Seniors facing similar challenges can install a ramp at their home's entryway so they can comfortably go in and out. Inside, a chair lift can ensure seniors are not struggling to move from one floor to another.
- Raise the outlets throughout the home. They're easily overlooked, but outlets, particularly those outside the kitchen, tend to be close to the floor. AARP notes that's no accident, as outlets are generally placed at a height equal to the length of a hammer to save time with measuring when buildings are being constructed. Outlets close to the floor can be difficult for seniors with mobility issues to reach. Relocating the outlets a little higher off the floor is not an expensive renovation, but it

can make a home more accessible for seniors who have difficulty bending down or getting down on one knee.

- Install door knob extensions. Verywell Health notes that nearly half of all people age 65 and older have arthritis or another rheumatic condition. Arthritis can make it difficult for seniors to grip and turn door knobs. Door knob extensions can make it easier for seniors with arthritis to open the doors in their homes. Such extensions are roughly five-inch levers that can be installed over an existing door knob, making it easier to grab and pull down. Extensions save seniors the hassle of turning the knob, which some may find painful and almost impossible.
- Renovate the bathroom. Bathroom renovation projects can be costly, but seniors with mobility issues should know that bathrooms can pose a particularly dangerous threat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that roughly three million older adults are treated for fall injuries in emergency departments each year. A 2019 analysis published in The Journals of Gerontology noted that 22 percent of in-home falls resulted in a change in the person's walking ability. Replacing a step-over shower with a zero-step alternative can make it easier for seniors with mobility issues to get in and out of the shower, thus reducing their risk for falls. Grab bars along shower walls and a chair inside the shower can make it easier to bathe and towel off safely.

Seniors with mobility issues can make their homes more accommodating through an assortment of simple, yet effective renovations.

What Dating Looks Like Later in Life

People are living longer, a reality that can be traced to a number of factors, including advancements in medicine and greater dissemination of information regarding preventive health care. According to data from the United Nations Population Division, the average life expectancy in the United States is 81.65 for women and 76.61 for men. Canada has even higher life expectancies, at 84.74 for women and 81.15 for men.

As people live longer, some may outlive their significant others and ultimately find themselves once again interested in sharing experiences with a special someone. Seniors ready to re-enter the dating pool may find that things are quite different from what they experienced as naïve teenagers or young adults. Dating used to be about hanging out with friends and meeting people at shared events, such as school dances or work parties or even while enjoying a night out with friends. Nowadays, dating often begins in cyberspace. This can be confusing and anxiety-inducing for adults who didn't grow up with technology guiding their every move.

According to a report in The Atlantic, more than one-third of baby boomers are not currently married, and this generation has had higher rates of separation and divorce and lower rates of marriage than the generations that preceded them. Many boomers have years ahead of them to devote to new relationships. Here's what they may want to know before navigating twenty-first century dating waters.

- You're not in this alone. While online dating may be portrayed as a young person's game, plenty of older adults are now finding connections online. In fact, many different dating apps are geared toward the senior set, including SeniorMatch, eHarmony, Singles50, OKCupid, and Silver Singles, among others.
- You have more time for fun. As a senior, you may have more time to devote to recreation and leisure. This can be a great opportunity to get out and meet someone who shares your passions and interests.
- Online dating has its advantages. While online dating apps and websites may have certain things working against them, particularly if their algorithms for pairing people are not fine-tuned, they also can be helpful. Online dating can expand social circles beyond local neighborhoods or even states, provinces or countries. You're casting your net over a much larger body of water. Furthermore, dating app profiles typically spell out exactly what another person is seeking, which can save seniors from having to revisit awkward dating moments from years past.

Seniors may have to navigate new waters in modern dating. But with a good mindset and a little persistence, it is possible for seniors to find a special someone in cyberspace.



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Changes That Could Arise from the 'Silver Tsunami'



A report from the International Monetary Fund in the summer of 2023 indicated that a new challenge awaits the world in the coming years. The global population increased by one billion people between 2010 and 2022. That remarkable increase saw the world surpass the eight billion people mark in November of 2022.

Despite a sharp increase in the global population in such a short period of time, the IMF asserts that the population boom is not the most formidable demographic challenge facing the world. The IMF defines population aging as the most formidable challenge.

Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate roughly 56 million Americans had reached age 65 by 2020, which marked a nearly 39 percent increase since 2010. Widely referred to as the "silver tsunami," a term credited to the AARP, the increase in the number of individuals age 65 and older could lead to some unique changes in countries across the globe.

- **Strain on public programs:** An aging population could stretch government resources thin in the decades to come. In fact, a 2018 report from the Hutchins Center on Fiscal and Monetary Policy noted that the federal government could face considerable challenges as more of its budget is allocated to age entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare. That problem may not prove unique to the United States, as the United Nations estimates that the elderly population in Europe is expected to account for around 30 percent of all residents by 2050. Though entitlement programs differ from country to country, finding ways to successfully manage the silver tsunami could be imperative to various nations' financial stability in the decades to come.
- **Increased recreation spending:** Sixty-five has traditionally been viewed as retirement age, and that remains an

unofficial bar for individuals living in countries like the United States that have increased their official retirement age. Though an uptick in the aging population is often framed in terms of the challenges countries will face, that increase also could present some opportunities. For example, a recent AARP Longevity Economy Outlook report noted that people 50 and older account for the most spending on recreation and culture of any demographic. That could prove beneficial to businesses and regions that cater to consumers interested in recreation.

- **Employment opportunities:** The AARP also noted the role the 50 and older population plays in supporting jobs. In 2020, the demographic of people 50 and older supported roughly one-third of the world's jobs and generated \$23 trillion in labor income with its spending on goods and services. Estimates from the AARP indicate that individuals age 50 and older will support 1.5 billion jobs across the globe by 2050. The labor income impact by then will more than double to \$53 billion.
- **Employment challenges:** Though the silver tsunami could help to maintain existing jobs and create plenty of new ones, employers might find it difficult to fill those positions. As more of the global population reaches retirement age, it bears noting that more workers will retire. Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute note that the manufacturing sector will need to fill 2.5 million job openings related to retirements between 2020 and 2030. That could prove a sizable challenge, as the aging population is increasing at a time when the young population is decreasing.

The aging population is increasing, which could lead to a number of opportunities and challenges in the decades to come.

Tips for Seniors to Safeguard Their Mental Health



The wide-ranging impact and reach of mental health issues garnered considerable attention during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the virus as well as mandates designed to reduce its spread led to increased feelings of anxiety and isolation. Since then, life has returned to normal for billions of people across the globe, but many people, including seniors, continue to experience mental health issues.

The Pan American Health Organization reports that at least one in four older adults experiences a mental disorder such as depression, anxiety or dementia. And those figures will likely only grow, as population estimates indicate seniors will make up a greater percentage of the global population in the years to come. Seniors dealing with mental health issues may feel helpless, but there's much they can do to safeguard their mental health.

- **Socialize regularly.** A 2019 study published in *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* found that older adults who socialized with people beyond their circle of family and close friends were more likely to have greater positive moods and fewer negative feelings. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of older adults report feeling isolated from others. According to the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging that was conducted in January 2023, one in three older adults reported infrequent contact (once a week or less) with people from outside their home.
- **Speak with a mental health professional.** Among the more troubling aspects of the mental health crisis affecting seniors is that the PAHO reports two-thirds of older adults with

mental health problems do not get the treatment they need. Speaking with a mental health professional can help older adults in myriad ways. Such professionals can identify the issue that is prompting seniors to seek help and offer suggestions that can improve overall health and quality of life. Roundstone Insurance notes that reliance on digital behavioral health tools, including telehealth, was turned to both during the pandemic and ever since, and seniors can utilize such services if they have limited mobility and/or no one to help them make it to in-person appointments.

- **Volunteer.** Many older adults are retired, and while ample free time may have seemed like the ultimate reward after a lifetime of working, many retirees experience a void once their life no longer has the structure that work can provide. According to the independent nonprofit HelpGuide.org, retirement depression can compel retirees to feel as though they miss the sense of identity, meaning and purpose that came with their jobs, which can make some feel depressed, aimless and isolated. Volunteering can help fill the void created by retirement, and the positive mental health effects of volunteering are well-documented. According to the Mayo Clinic, studies have shown volunteering increases positive, relaxed feelings and gives volunteers a sense of meaning and appreciation.

No one is immune to mental health issues, including seniors. But older adults can take various steps to address their mental health and improve their overall health as a result.

Considerations for Retirees Thinking of Working Part-Time

Retirement is an opportunity to wave goodbye to the daily grind. Retirees may focus on rest and relaxation, and many make travel a major component of their lifestyle.

According to a 2022 Gallup poll, Americans expect to retire at an average age of 66, up from 62 in 2022. However, most do not hold out that long; the average actual retirement age is 61. Canada used to have a mandatory retirement age of 65, but that mandate was overturned in 2009. Today, the average retirement age for Canadians is 64.4 for men and 63.8 for women, according to Statistics Canada.

Upon retiring, many retirees discover that they sorely miss getting out of the house and being productive through some sort of employment. Others may find it necessary to supplement their retirement incomes. There are a few things to know about working during retirement, particularly if a person is collecting government benefits.

- According to the Social Security Administration, those falling under full retirement age for the entire year (which was raised to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later) will be subjected to an SSA deduction of \$1 from your benefit payments for every \$2 you earn above the annual limit. For 2022, that limit



is \$19,560. In the year you reach full retirement age, SSA deducts \$1 in benefits for every \$3 you earn above a different limit, but they only count earnings before the month you reach your full retirement age. For full retirement age reached in 2022 your limit on earnings for the months before full retirement age is \$51,960. After full retirement age,

there is no limit on earnings.

- The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada reports that individuals between the ages of 60 and 65 who continue to work while receiving a Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) retirement benefit must still contribute to the CPP. Your CPP contributions will go toward post-retirement benefits.

These benefits increase your retirement income when you stop working. However, if you continue to work while getting a CPP retirement pension and are between the ages of 65 and 70 years old, you can choose not to make any more CPP contributions.

- Keep in mind that if you are on Medicare, extra income could potentially trigger surcharges for parts B and D. It's beneficial to speak with a financial consultant to weigh the pros and cons of part-time work during retirement.
- Part-time work does not need to be daily work. Many retirees work according to how they feel. Some options include seasonal jobs, such as driving shuttles in national parks or working during the holidays in retail stores. Or you may use your expertise to consult or start a business.
- A number of people work part-time during retirement simply to get out of the house. Jobs that help you interact with a number of people can be beneficial, as socialization has been shown to benefit the mental health of seniors. Working during retirement can supplement savings and provide structure that some retirees may be missing.

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5:45 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Mindset For Healthy Aging:

Learn practical strategies to support your mental well-being, manage stress, and stay resilient through life's transitions.

4/16

5:45 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Legal Preparedness:

Learn the key legal tools – wills, trusts, health care directives, and more – to safeguard your independence.

College of Southern Maryland, Leonardtown Campus
22950 Hollywood Rd, Leonardtown, MD 20650
Building C, Room 206

For More Info:
Nicoletta.Pollice@stmaryscountymd.gov
301-475-4200 ext. 1074



The Department of Aging & Human Services does not endorse any products, services, or organizations mentioned



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.

Kit Spalding, 99



Katherine Ann (Kit) Spalding of Leonardtown, Maryland died peacefully just hours after her 99th birthday in the early morning hours of January 14, 2026.

She was born January 13, 1927 to the late Francis Xavier and Elizabeth Claire (Thompson) Spalding. She was the oldest of 9 siblings and was also the first grandchild on the Thompson side and received lots of attention from her grandparents and older relatives. Her life changed drastically after her mother died from childbirth complications when she was 13. At that time, she had just graduated from 8th grade at St. John's and was ready to enter high school. Her mother's sudden death, left her father to raise her and her siblings by himself. He did so while working a job and farming and with the help of relatives who remained active and involved in their lives.

Kit was named after and influenced by her mother's sister, Kitty Thompson who was a very independent and skilled nursing professional. This set Kit on a trajectory to follow a nursing path. She applied to nursing school after high school and worked as a "pinkie" at St. Mary's Hospital giving her a jump start prior to her formal education in nursing. She became acquainted with the Sisters of Mercy and began her nursing training and her training as a Sister of Mercy simultaneously. Upon completion, she was sent as a nun (Sister Mary Celestine) and registered nurse to Alabama where she was the only registered nurse at a hospital opened by the church that served African Americans in a time when the south was still very segregated. From 1947 to 1948 she was a member of the Cadet Nurse Corps, America's first uniformed service corps for women initiated during World War II. She was very proud of her time as a cadet and her service to her country. Kit continued her nursing and her education with a Bachelor's in Nursing and a Masters in Psychiatric Nursing. She left the convent after 25 years and supported the state of Maryland where she supervised community mental health facilities focusing

on children and families until her retirement.

She always knew she'd return to her family and to St. Mary's County. She was pleased to live her "golden years" in Cedar Lane Apartments in Leonardtown where she continued to enjoy community style living where you looked out for your neighbors. She enjoyed quilting, playing cards, art classes, coffee get togethers and many other forms of socialization.

In the last 2 1/2 years, due to medical problems that left her unable to continue living independently, Kit was a resident of St. Mary's Nursing Home. She still had a sharp mind and many opinions and remained the family matriarch. She continued to keep up on all family happenings and still participated in many family events. She was in her glory when surrounded by the little ones. Her relationship with the Lord never wavered over the years. She remained a faithful servant of God and no matter what hand was dealt to her she knew the Lord would see her through. If you asked her how she was, 99.9% of the time, she was "good enough."

Kit is survived by her sister, Susan Miedzinski, many nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews, and great great nieces and nephews. She was extremely proud of her family and continued to know the names of all the little ones even though the number kept (and keeps) growing.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her brothers, James, Francis (Bunny), Samuel (Sam), Joseph (Sonny), and George and her sisters, Betty Jo, Helen, and Mary Jean.

Pallbearers will be her nephews.

Family will receive friends for a Memorial Gathering on Friday, January 23, 2026 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with a Memorial Mass beginning at 12:30 p.m. at St. Aloysius Catholic Church, 22800 Washington Street Leonardtown, MD 20650. Interment will immediately follow in the Church Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to ACTS (A Community That Shares), Cedar Lane Senior Living Apartments, St. Mary's Nursing Center, and/or any organization dealing with humanitarian issues, specifically dealing with children.

Condolences may be left for the family at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

Dick Gass, 89



Richard "Dick" Cornelius Gass passed away at his residence in Palm Coast, Florida on January 8, 2026. He was preceded in death by his wife, Juanita, and his son,

Christopher. Survivors include his son, William (Amy), and his daughters, Elisabeth Rushing (James) and Linda Molish (Robert). Dick had four grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

He was born in Colton's Point, MD on December 6, 1936. Dick was married to the love of his life, Juanita Hope Fallin, for 59 years. He spent his career working for American Airlines and retired as the Vice President of Marketing. Dick and Juanita spent their years together traveling the world, visiting family and friends across the country. In his retirement, Dick worked for over 30 years in the family business and was an integral part of its success. He was very involved in the St. Mary's County community, including being a founding member of the St. Clements 100 and the Osprey Gala. Instrumental in the rebuilding project of the Blackstone Lighthouse on St.

Clements Island. He was an active member of the Seventh District Optimist Club, served as President of the St. Mary's County Historical Society, as well as helping to form A.C.T.S. (A Community That Shares). He had the leadership skills and the unique ability to organize community events including raising funds for the various groups that he was involved in, and was a fantastic speaker.

Dick was the happiest when surrounded by his family and close friends. He was an avid Baltimore Colts/Ravens Fan. He loved boating, fishing, catching and eating crabs and oysters. His hobbies included gardening and maintaining his beautiful yard. Dick was a lifelong Christian with unwavering belief in his Lord and Savior. He will be remembered as a selfless husband, dedicated father, and loyal friend.

The funeral service will be private.

There will be a Memorial Mass held at Holy Angels Catholic Church in Avenue, MD, on Saturday, January 24, 2026, at 11:00 AM.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to any of the following: Holy Angels Catholic Church, St. Clements 100, 7th District Optimist Club.

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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UPCOMING EVENTS



StickerFest 2.0

Back by popular request! Stick, swap, and create at StickerFest! Trade stickers, get a free sticker book, and design your own. A perfect event for sticker lovers of all ages! Design your own custom creations with sticker paper and markers, watch Cricut machine sticker making demonstrations and take home one-of-a-kind sticker creations. Whether you're a collector, a creator, or just love stickers, there's something for everyone at StickerFest2.0. More swapping room and a larger designated space for grownups too! Lexington Park Library on Saturday, January 24, 1 - 3 p.m. No registration.

Introduction to Google Sheets

New to Google Sheets? Or would like to learn to use spreadsheets? Then this is the class for you! Google features much more than just a search

engine with Google Sheets you can keep track of finances, make lists, and calculate columns of numbers. We will get you started with the basics like creating, saving, and formatting the spreadsheets. Please bring your Gmail address, password, and cell phone. This class does not result in certification. Computer Skills needed for this class: Mouse and keyboard. Lexington Park Library on Sunday, January 25 from 2 - 3:30 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Introduction to Ancestry.com Library Edition

Interested in starting your genealogical research but do not know how to start? Join us as we provide an overview of Ancestry Library Edition, a free service available at St. Mary's County Library. During this introductory class, we will offer answers and clarification, along with a tutorial of how to use Ancestry to research one's own genealogy and family history.

We will cover understanding the sources provided, identifying where to acquire more information, and learning how to get started using Ancestry. Leonardtown Library on Friday, January 30 from 2 - 4 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Murder in the Library—with a Candlestick! Or a Wrench!

Solve a series of riddles, puzzles, and challenges to discover "whodunnit" in a casual, self-paced immersive experience. Choose to solve solo or in a small group! Lexington Park Library on Saturday, January 31 from 2 - 4 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Parachute Play!

Everyone loves parachute play! We will sing songs and play games on our giant parachute. This program is intended for individuals with toddler and preschool abilities and their caregivers. Charlotte Hall Library on Saturday, January 31 from

3 - 4 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Christylez Bacon: Black History Month Celebration

Join Grammy-nominated progressive hip-hop artist and multi-instrumentalist Christylez Bacon for a high-energy performance celebrating Black History Month! Lexington Park Library on Saturday, February 7 from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. Register on www.stmalib.org. Christylez combines rhyming, storytelling, and call and response choruses with diverse instruments (djembe, acoustic guitar, human beatbox) to deliver a message of cultural acceptance and unification blending traditional elements of musical styles from jazz to hip-hop. This Black History Month special event is presented in partnership with the NAACP St. Mary's County Branch 7025 and the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions.

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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.

Fri, Jan 23

SMTMD HomeSpun CoffeeHouse Open Mic

Christ Episcopal Church Parish Hall
37497 Zach Fowler Rd., Chaptico
7-9:30 p.m.

Acoustic musicians of all skill levels are welcome to perform their favorite tunes or enjoy a night out listening to some local talent. Contact Chris Dudley in advance (ccdudley@rocketmail.com) to sign up as a performer. Doors open at 7 pm with performances beginning promptly at 7:30 PM. Admission is \$8; children 17 and under (when accompanied by a paying adult) and performers are admitted free of charge. See website for rescheduled or canceled events. Info: smtmd2@gmail.com, www.smtmd.org/new-events/

A Night On Broadway: Broadway Backwards (Opening Night!)

The Newtowne Players
21744 South Coral Dr., Lexington Park
Fri., Jan. 23, 8–10:30 p.m.

A Night on Broadway: Broadway Backwards flips the script on everything you know about Broadway. Set in an abandoned warehouse, this unique production goes beyond simply swapping voice parts—it reimagines

iconic moments, challenging conventions and embracing the freedom of self-expression. Step into a world where the stage is a space for true authenticity and discovery.

Show times: Thursdays-Saturdays 8 PM, Sundays 3 PM. Tickets and more information at newtowneplayers.org

Sat, Jan 24

Spaghetti Dinner – Dine-In or Carry Out

2nd District VFD & RS Social Hall
45245 Drayden Rd, Valley Lee
5 to 7 p.m.

Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce or no meat sauce, Green Beans, Garden Salad, Garlic Bread & Dessert; Adults - \$15.00; Children 6 to 12 - \$7.00; Children 5 & under are free; For more information call: 240-925-2512(c)

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appointment. Our method is derived from our military experiences when we were surrounded by others who think and dressed as needed to work together to survive. Our members are supported by text, phone or personal interaction and are available at a moment's notice. For more information call 301-481-6752.

Mon, Jan 26

Republican Women Luncheon

The Pax River Ale House
46590 Corporate Dr., Lexington Park
11:30 a.n.

All Republican women are invited. Social Hour is from 11. Meeting will begin at 11:30.

Upcoming

COSMIC's "Symphonic Journeys"

Nancy R. and Norton T. Dodge
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St. Mary's College of Maryland
47855 College Dr, St. Mary's City
Feb 22, 3 p.m.

Cosmic Symphony Orchestra presents a musical voyage that will take you through the

works of Lalo, Rachmaninoff, and Dvořák! This concert will feature COSMIC's 2025 Young Artist Competition winners Henry Horst, piano (senior division) and Elizabeth Tober, violin (junior division) taking center stage with COSMIC accompaniment. As always, these concerts are presented free of charge with no tickets required, and donations are greatly appreciated.

North End Gallery's Invitational Show

Leonardtown
Month of February

2026 launches a new quarter century full of challenges and new perceptions in the world of art. North End, entering its 40th year, showcases a wonderfully talented group of artists, and for the month of February; they will be joined by over 40 regional artists from the area in the gallery's 16th Annual Invitational Show. This show is always exciting, presenting new work in all mediums, including glass, jewelry, fiber, sculptural, clay, scratchboard, metal, wood, photography, ink and watercolor, serigraphy, oil and acrylic, and more.

The gallery opens the show on Tuesday, February 3rd, with the reception and opportunity to meet the guest artists on Friday February 6th from 5 to 8 p.m. The show runs through Sunday March 1st.

Finding the Right College Fit: A Personalized Approach



WHO: High school students and/or their parents/guardians

WHAT: Navigating the college admissions process can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Join F. J. Talley, dedicated college success coach and author, for a free virtual workshop that will help students:

- Discover colleges that align with their unique strengths and passions.
- Craft stand-out applications that highlight individuality.
- Prepare for a smooth transition to college life.

WHEN: Thursday, January 29, 2026, from 6:00 – 7:30 pm.

HOW: Via Zoom from the comfort of your home!

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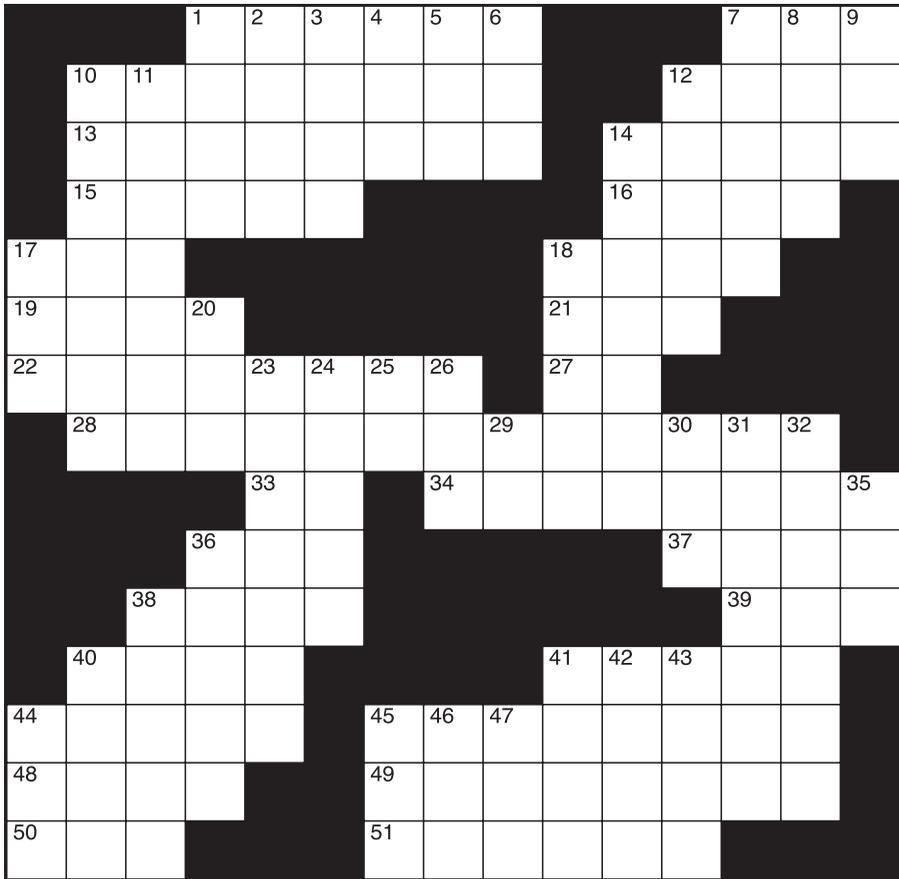
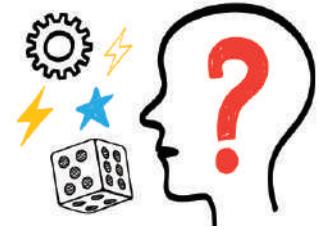


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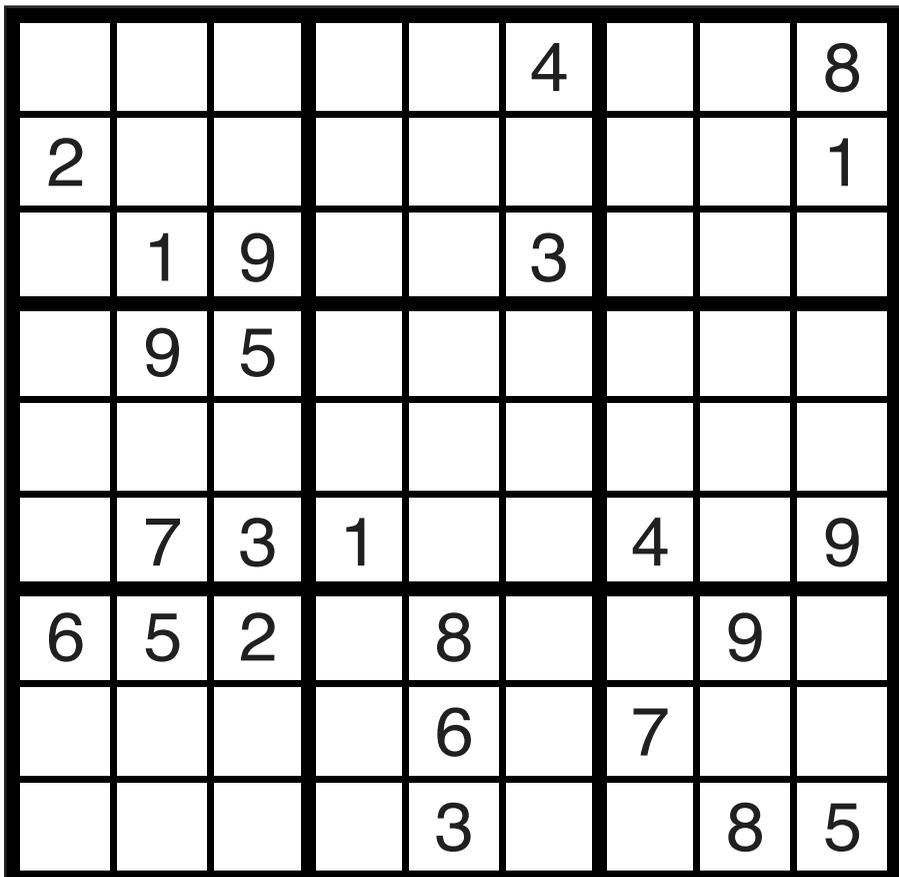


CLUES ACROSS

1. Winged nut
7. ___ Humbug!
10. One who sets apart
12. Circle above a saint's head
13. Unpleasantly loud and harsh
14. Expressed pleasure
15. Feminine given name
16. Company of badgers
17. Popular Dodge pickup truck
18. Witty sayings
19. Leader
21. Autonomic nervous system
22. Premolar
27. Atomic #28
28. Holiday decorative item
33. Exclamation of surprise
34. Rusk or cracker
36. Returned material authorization (abbr.)
37. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language
38. Eat
39. Marxist economics theory (abbr.)
40. Ceases to exist
41. Male Arabic name
44. Series of ridges on an organ wall
45. Places where bees are kept
48. One-time Yankees sensation Kevin
49. Church office
50. Single lens reflex
51. Pieces of fibrous tissue

CLUES DOWN

1. Classify
2. Dismounted
3. Produced
4. Consumed
5. Director Howard
6. The products of human creativity
7. Thai monetary units
8. Away from wind
9. Builder's trough
10. Relating to Islam
11. It can sometimes ache
12. Small quantities (Scot.)
14. Poisonous plant
17. Laugh at
18. Vogul
20. C. European river
23. Type of cat
24. Exclamation of disgust
25. Stephen King novel
26. Without armies
29. Expression of sympathy
30. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
31. Previously
32. Illegal drug
35. Kiloelectronvolt
36. Large, flightless birds
38. For smoking
40. Binary
41. Competition
42. Mark resembling an arrow
43. Containers
44. Root mean square (abbr.)
45. Commercial
46. I.M. ___, architect
47. 007's creator



JANUARY 8 SOLUTIONS

A	B	M	P	A	C	E	D	C	A	M	P	O	
Z	E	E	A	B	A	T	E	A	N	A	S	A	
T	A	T	N	O	R	A	R	O	B	E	R	T	S
E	N	A	M	O	R	M	I	A	M	I			
C	O	L	O	R	S	T	A	L	L	I	O	N	S
L	O	A	A	R	A	N	O	N					
A	G	I	S	M	B	I	R	L	S	V	I		
E	E	C	A	M	E	R	A	D	A	G	A	B	
O	N	S	I	R	E	S	T	I	R	E	S		
N	I	S	C	M	E	I	D	A					
S	E	P	A	R	A	T	E	S	R	O	T	A	S
A	N	O	D	E	S	I	L	I	C	A			
P	E	R	I	T	O	N	I	T	I	S	N	I	N
A	K	E	N	E	S	C	O	T	G	D	E		
H	E	R	E	S	E	Y	R	E	S	S	S	R	

3	2	1	7	4	9	6	8	5
9	8	7	5	6	3	4	2	1
5	6	4	2	1	8	9	7	3
8	7	6	3	9	5	1	4	2
4	1	5	6	7	2	8	3	9
2	3	9	4	8	1	7	5	6
7	4	3	9	5	6	2	1	8
6	5	8	1	2	4	3	9	7
1	9	2	8	3	7	5	6	4

P. O. Box 250 • Hollywood, MD 20636

Publisher Thomas McKay
Associate Publisher Eric McKay
General Manager Al Dailey
 aldailey@countytimes.net

Advertising Jen Stotler
 jen@countytimes.net

Staff Writer Dick Myers
 dickmyers@countytimes.net

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.

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, Jan 22

Little Minnows

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

This month's theme is Lighthouse. 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 craft, available while supplies last. Sessions are 25 – 40 minutes. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive. Included with museum admission.

Fri, Jan 23

Veteran Services Program

Southern Pines Senior Center
20 Appeal Lane, Lusby
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Are you a veteran or close family member looking for assistance? ServingTogether will be on hand to provide support for Calvert County service members, veterans and military families. Walk-ins are encouraged. No appointment is necessary. Visit <https://servingtogetherproject.org/calvert> for more information.

Sat, Jan 24

Band of Brothers and Sisters

Showtime Deli
21905 Three Notch Rd., Lexington Park
9 a.m..

PTSD/Suicide Prevention Group of So. Maryland, offers support for all Veterans in need of our services, as well as support for the local community. We provide help with VA Military Compensation Claims by appointment. Our method is derived from our military experiences when we were surrounded by others who think and dressed as needed to work together to survive. Our members are supported by text, phone or personal interaction and are available at a moment's notice. For more information call 301-481-6752.

Sun, Jan 25

Fossil Club Meeting & Free Public Lecture

Calvert Marine Museum
1:30 & 2:30 p.m.

Join us in the museum's Harms Gallery for the CMM Fossil Club meeting at 1:30

p.m., followed by a free lecture at 2:30 p.m. Dr. Briana Pobiner of the Smithsonian Institution will present "The Role of Scavenging in Human Evolution."

Beyond the Displays: Artifact Stories

Calvert Marine Museum
1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Join museum educator Lori to explore the museum's artifacts, uncovering their origins and significance. Hear how World War II shaped Solomons and discover hidden details in the museum murals. Learn something new every tour. Included with museum admission.

Upcoming

Maritime Performance Series: Ken Kolodner Quartet

Calvert Marine Museum
Friday, Jan. 30
7 to 9 p.m.

Experience the acclaimed father-son duo Ken and Brad Kolodner as they blend hammered dulcimer and clawhammer banjo into a fresh take on old-time bluegrass and American roots music. Joined by bassist

Alex Lacquement and multi-instrumentalist Rachel Eddy, the quartet delivers a driving, innovative acoustic sound. Doors open at 6 p.m. with beverages available for purchase. Tickets are \$20 online up to one day in advance, and \$25 online or at the door on concert day.

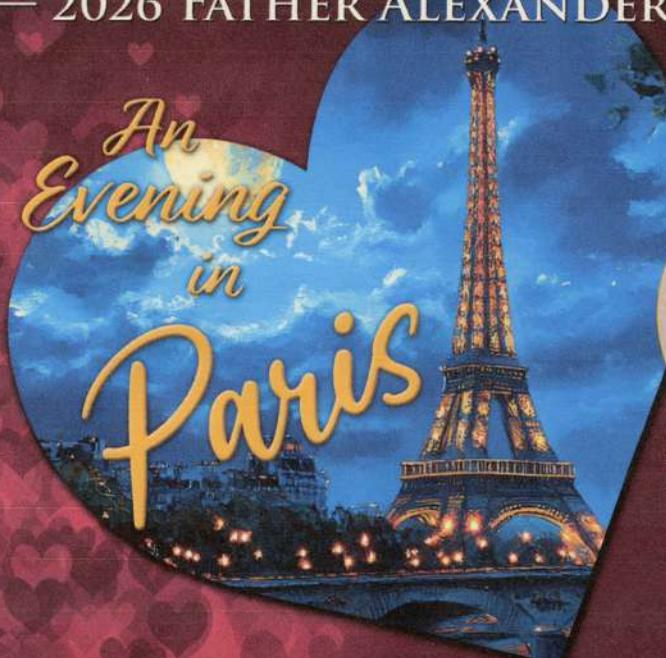
COSMIC's "Symphonic Journeys"

Huntingtown High School
4125 North Solomons Island Rd.,
Huntingtown
Feb 21
3 p.m.

Cosmic Symphony Orchestra presents a musical voyage that will take you through the works of Lalo, Rachmaninoff, and Dvořák! This concert will feature COSMIC's 2025 Young Artist Competition winners Henry Horst, piano (senior division) and Elizabeth Tober, violin (junior division) taking center stage with COSMIC accompaniment. As always, these concerts are presented free of charge with no tickets required, and donations are greatly appreciated.

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National Heritage Area Launches Regional Passport Program

The Southern Maryland National Heritage Area has announced the launch of its new regional passport program, an interactive initiative designed to encourage residents and visitors to discover the region's storied past, abundant culture, and natural beauty across Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and Southern Prince George's Counties.

Fifteen designated heritage sites throughout the Area are now offering complimentary passport booklets to visitors. The passports feature space for unique stamps to commemorate visits to participating locations—visit a new heritage site, get a new stamp designed for that site.

The program highlights museums, historic sites, natural landscapes, and cultural destinations that collectively tell the story of Southern Maryland's enduring legacy.

"The passport program is a fun and engaging way to showcase the extraordinary heritage found in every corner of Southern Maryland," said Lucille Walker, executive director of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area. "Each site included in this program represents a chapter of our shared regional story, encompassing Indigenous, Black, and European history, maritime and agricultural traditions, and the creative spirit and groundbreaking innovations that continue to uplift and shape our communities. We hope this inspires visitors to explore, learn, and form deeper connections with the places that make Southern Maryland remarkable."

Participating sites include:

- Annamarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center

- Calvert Cliffs (stamping opportunity available in the Spring)
- Calvert Marine Museum
- Darnall's Chance House Museum
- Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House
- Historic Sotterley
- Historic St. Mary's City
- Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum
- Maryland Veterans Museum
- Patuxent River Naval Air Museum
- Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Historic Park
- Piscataway Park
- Serenity Farm
- The Surratt House Museum
- Thomas Stone National Historic Site (stamping opportunity available in the Spring)

Visitors are encouraged to pick up a passport at any participating site and explore as many locations as they can, collecting stamps along the way. Some of the sites have winter hours, or are closed during the winter. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to determine hours of each site, if hours are not listed on partner websites.

To see photos of the passports, Ms. Walker's tours to participating sites, and site staff testing out their new stamps, visit the Heritage Area's Instagram or Facebook.

For general information about the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area and updates on programs and initiatives, please visit [destinationsouthernmaryland.com](https://www.destinationsouthernmaryland.com).

Press release from Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Optimist Club Sponsors Student Essay Contest

The Optimist Club of Calvert is encouraging area students to contemplate the phrase "How My Acts of Service Help Me Understand What My Community Means to Me" as part of the Optimist International Essay Contest for the 2025/26 school year. The contest is open to students (1) under age 19 (as of October 1, 2025) who have not yet graduated from high school, and (2) who attend a school in Calvert County (public, private, or homeschool co-op).

Entries are due at 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 13, 2026. Cash prizes for first place (\$150), second place (\$100), and third place (\$75) will be awarded by the Optimist Club of Calvert. The first-place winner will advance to the Maryland South Delaware District contest to compete for a \$2,500 college scholarship.

"Young students today have so many fresh ideas about the world and their future," Club President Joe Endy said. "As Optimists, it

is our goal to encourage them and do what we can to bring out the best in each of them. This gives them a wonderful opportunity to tap into their creativity and pursue possible scholarships at the same time."

The Optimist Club of Calvert has been participating in the Optimist Essay Contest for many years and has been active in our community since 1968. The club also sponsors an Oratorical Contest, offers College and Career Scholarships, recognizes students during Youth Appreciation Week, and hosts annual events for youth, including Trunk or Treat, Santa Night, Fishing Derby, and Photos with the Easter Bunny.

Students wishing to participate in the essay contest can find out more about the contest by visiting www.CalvertOptimists.org.

Press release from Optimist Club of Calvert

CSM Receives \$100K to Launch Radiation Therapy Program



From left, Samantha Stratchko '18, CSM Foundation Chair; Susan Mudd Vogel, Foundation Executive Director; Dr. Yolanda Wilson, CSM President, Julian "Blackie" Wills III, President and CEO, Wills Group; and Brittany Cavanaugh, Corporate Communications and Engagement, Wills Group.

The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) Foundation received a \$100K gift from the Wills Group to support a new career pathway in radiation therapy.

The Radiation Therapy Program will train students to administer radiation treatments and operate industry standard laboratory equipment to provide high-quality healthcare while helping to meet a critical need in the healthcare workforce.

CSM President Dr. Yolanda Wilson said this investment will have a significant impact by opening new career pathways for students while advancing the college's mission to address evolving regional workforce needs.

"At CSM we are committed to listening to our community partners and creating academic pathways that align with workforce demands," Wilson said. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with the Wills Group to support our students' academic and economic success while strengthening care services for those in need across Southern Maryland."

According to the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT), a 2024 national staffing survey indicates the vacancy rate for radiation therapists is more than 13 percent, an increase of about three percent from 2022.

The program will train and prepare the next generation of radiation therapists and assistants to support hospitals and outpatient cancer care centers with patient care and administering treatments.

Jeremy Bradford, CEO of CalvertHealth, said having a radiation therapy program in

the region will make a significant impact on a critical healthcare need.

"Radiation therapists play a critical role in cancer care, and like many healthcare professions, the demand for these highly skilled clinicians continues to grow," Bradford said. "Launching a Radiation Therapy program in Southern Maryland is an important step toward addressing a regional workforce shortage while creating meaningful career pathways for students who want to serve their community."

The gift will further support the establishment of the Anne and Blackie Wills Radiation Lab, a state-of-the-art facility located in the Health Sciences Building on the Regional Hughesville Campus.

Julian "Blackie" Wills III, President and CEO of the Wills Group, said this gift reflects a long-standing commitment to giving back to Southern Maryland.

"At the Wills Group, we've always believed that investing in people is one of the most meaningful ways to strengthen our community," said Wills. "CSM has a long history of creating access to education and career opportunities right here in Southern Maryland. We're proud to support a program that not only prepares students for meaningful, in-demand careers, but also helps ensure our region has the skilled healthcare professionals needed to care for our neighbors."

CSM is preparing to launch the radiation therapy program in FY27.

Press release from CSM

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C-SMMPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting Public Notice

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Calvert – St. Mary's Metropolitan Planning Organization, C-SMMPO, will conduct a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting at the Walter Francis Duke Terminal Conference Room located at 44200 Airport Road, California, MD 20619 on **Monday, February 2, 2026**, beginning at **3:00 p.m.** to **receive an update from the MPO Boundary Working Group and to discuss 2027 UPWP Funding.** The agenda can be viewed at <https://www.calvert-stmarysmpo.com/>.

This public meeting is required by law to accept public and staff comments. All members of the public and interested parties will have an opportunity to provide public comments regarding the TAC meeting agenda.

Comments may be submitted on or before **Friday, January 30, 2026**, and should be addressed to the Long Range Planning Division, **P.O. Box 653, Leonardtown, MD 20650** or to **Karly Maltby, MPO Administrator** via email at **Karly.Maltby@stmaryscountymd.gov**.

This meeting can be attended virtually, the Meeting ID is **430 427 6617**, the call-in number is **(301) 715-8592**. Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/4304276617?omn=89904715192>

For questions or more information, please contact **Karly Maltby, MPO Administrator**, with St. Mary's County Government's Department of Land Use & Growth Management at **301-475-4200 ext. 1507** or via email at **Karly.Maltby@stmaryscountymd.gov** or visit <https://www.calvert-stmarysmpo.com/>.

Any person requiring special arrangements related to the Americans with Disabilities Act shall notify the C-SMMPO no less than 72 hours prior to the date of the scheduled meeting so that necessary special arrangements can be made in order to facilitate participation. All content of these proceedings is subject to disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act. Photographic and electronic audio and visual broadcasting and recording devices are used during the meetings. These are public meetings and attendance at these meetings automatically grants St. Mary's County Government permission to broadcast your audio and visual image.

What's Coming to Calvert

The following list of pending Category 1 site plans was presented to the Calvert County Planning Commission at their Jan 21 meeting. That means that the proposals are on the list for consideration by the planning commission at a future meeting. The meeting was in a hybrid form, both virtually and in person. Virtual (Teams) To Join by Phone: 1-872-216-2953 Meeting ID: 299 248 548 964 4 Passcode: PX2gm3vA In person at 150 Main Street, Ground Floor/Chesapeake Room Prince Frederick.

1. CSPR-143112, **Calvert County Industrial Park Lot 3R**, located at 171 Skipjack Road, Prince Frederick, Lot 3R in the Calvert County Industrial Park, zoned Light Industrial. Proposed redevelopment of a portion of the 4.5-acre lot by demolishing the existing office and constructing a new two-story office building in its place. It is further proposed to repave the southern portion of the site and to construct a storage warehouse and wall to segregate parking between the storage building yard & adjacent flex space tenants. A total of 6,524 sf of new construction with a total disturbance of 1.2-acres is proposed and the amenities will utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted December 20, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett
2. CSPR-143253, **Calvert Gateway Business Center, Lot 12R**, located on the 4.04-acre parcel at 10380 Town Center Blvd. in Dunkirk, MD and is zoned Dunkirk Town Center. Proposed development of two shell buildings containing 18,075 sf of proposed of retail space and 15,835 sf of flex space with disturbed acreage of 2.52 acres. The project proposes to utilize private water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted January 22, 2025. Agent: Atwell Group
3. CSPR-143260, **Westside on Main**, located on more or less 3.8-acres of combined parcels at 305 & 445 Main Street in Prince Frederick, MD and is zoned Town Center. The project consists of 66,680 sf of newly constructed townhomes and office building with disturbed acreage of 3.05 acres. The project proposes to utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted January 22, 2025. Agent: COA Barrett
4. CSPR-143276, **Meadow Run Gun Range**, located on the 11.86-acre parcel at 7625 Meadow Run Lane in Owings, MD and is zoned Light Industrial. The project consists of an



approximately 61,000 sf indoor gun range with disturbed acreage of 10 acres. The project proposes to utilize private water and septic. The concept submittal was accepted February 26, 2025. Agent: COA Barrett

5. SPR-143476, **Calvert Cliffs Substation Project**, located on the 780.59-acre parcel at 1650 Calvert Cliffs Parkway, Lusby, MD and is zoned Heavy Industrial. The project consists of an approximately 543,000 sf substation with disturbed acreage of 72 acres. The project proposes to utilize private well and septic. The Detailed Site Development Plan submittal was accepted December 29, 2025. Agent: AECOM

Concept submittals being reviewed under the March 2025 Development Review Process have been excluded from this list. There is no assurance that those projects will reach Step 2 of the process. If/when they do, they will be placed on this list under their Detailed Site Development Plan project.

The following Major Subdivisions were presented at the same meeting for Uoming Review (No action proposed)

1. SD-143478, **Westside on Main**, located on Main Street in Prince Frederick. A Mixed-Use project consisting of 24 town homes, 1 commercial office building and an existing commercial building to remain proposed on two parcels consisting of 11,724 sf & 3.8 acres, Zoned Prince Frederick Town Center, Old Town District, Tier I. The Preliminary Plan submittal was accepted October 23, 2025. Agent: COA Barrett.

Concept submittals have been removed from this list. There is no assurance that those projects will reach Preliminary Plan status. If/when they do, they will be placed on this list under their Preliminary Plan project number.

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Post Re-Elected School Board President

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Jana Smith Post has been re-elected president of the Calvert County Board of Education. Lisa Grenis has been re-elected vice president. The vote is held yearly.

The unanimous vote of confidence came at the board's Jan. 15 meeting.

Post has guided the board through a tumultuous year, with repeated criticism, largely over the board's DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) policies, including removing the board's Anti-Racism Policy.

The school board website says of Post, "Jana Post grew up in Calvert County and is a graduate of Northern High School. She has four children enrolled in CCPS and is an active member of the community. Jana currently serves as the President of the Calvert Aquatics Club and has previously served as the President of the PTSO and as Treasurer of a local Girl Scout Troop. Her education and experience include project management, human resource management, budget development, as well as expertise in procurement and contracts at both the federal and local levels of government.

"Jana's goals are to foster strong relationships between the Board of Education (BOE) members, parents, teachers, and staff by ensuring that their ideas are considered and their concerns addressed to enhance the educational experience. During her time as a board member, she aims to build relationships with other BOE members at the local and state levels and to refocus on academics in education."

Post is up for re-election this year. She has not yet announced her intentions.

The website says of Grenis, "Lisa Grenis is a retired educator who taught for 26 years, the majority of which were spent in Calvert County. In addition to teaching, she served as a Learning Specialist, where she collaborated with teachers and students to provide targeted instruction aimed at increasing academic achievement. She was also an active parent volunteer and has two children who gradu-



School Board President Jana Smith Post

ated from Calvert County Public Schools. "During her career, Lisa Grenis held several leadership roles, including serving as a grade-level team leader. She organized academic after-school programs for students and parents, served as President of the Southern Maryland Reading Council, and presented at both local and state teacher conferences. She was nominated for Teacher of the Year by the staff at Huntingtown Elementary and co-authored an article for the *Literacy Issues and Practices* journal.

"In the wake of the pandemic, Lisa Grenis's goals are to ensure that students get back on track academically, with a focus on excelling in the basics and preparing for future paths in either college or technical training. She advocates for full transparency across the school system for parents, teachers, and students.

"Additionally, Lisa is committed to fiscal responsibility and represents a common-sense approach to education, one that promotes a curriculum with high standards."

Grenis is also up for re-election this year. She has filed for re-election, and so far has no opposition.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Body-Worn Camera Footage from Fatal Police-Involved Collision Released

The Independent Investigations Division (IID) of the Maryland Office of the Attorney General today released the body-worn camera footage from the fatal police-involved collision involving the Calvert County Sheriff's Office that occurred on Friday, December 12, 2025, in Prince Frederick. The footage can be viewed on IID's YouTube channel at youtube.com/@MarylandOAGIID.

The decedent was previously identified as 58-year-old Servon Gatewood of Lusby.

The IID continues to investigate the cir-

cumstances of the fatal police-involved collision. Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact the IID at (410) 576-7070 or by email at IID@oag.maryland.gov

To read the original news release, visit oag.maryland.gov/News/Pages/Independent-Investigations-Division-Investigating-Fatal-Police-Involved-Collision-in-Calvert-County.aspx

Press release from MD Attorney General

Schools Efficiency Report Released

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marcus Newsome and school board members are trying to get their heads around a 500-page Efficiency Report released last week by a consultant. The report, ordered by the board to do just what the title implies, will be discussed by the board on Feb. 12.

Newsome told the board at their Jan. 15 meeting that he considers the outcome a report on steroids.

Newsome said, "The board voted to contract with Public Works to do a comprehensive efficiency assessment of the school district in the areas of finance, human resources, information technology, instruction, special education, and student transportation. Pupil services and facilities were not part of that package, but they added that in the fourth week of December. They conducted over 200 face-to-face interviews, and they posted a survey where we had over 800 of our employees who responded. Today I actually received the first draft of that report. It's well over 500 pages. It is more detailed than we can get our arms around in a short period of time. We'll have the project manager, Dr. Joanne Cox, who will be here on your board



Interim Superintendent Dr. Marcus Newsome

meeting on February 12th to present the final report," he said.

Newsome added, "Then our team will get together and start to develop a particular plan to begin implementing the recommendations. This was specifically targeted for the central office so that we can determine more efficient and effective ways to support our schools and our students."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Fire Departments Awarded Wildfire Protection Grants

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service is providing Volunteer Fire Assistance grants to 55 volunteer fire departments in 17 counties across the state. The funded projects help volunteer fire companies enhance wildland fire protection in rural communities.

For the 2025 grant cycle, finalized in December, the Maryland Forest Service is providing \$167,314 in match funding to complete \$370,376 in total project cost. The grants match up to 50 percent of project cost with a maximum grant of \$3,500 per department. For this grant cycle, all but two Maryland applicants received a grant.

Funding for this program is provided by the USDA Forest Service.

Maryland Volunteer Fire Assistance grant recipients from Southern Maryland with the grant amount and total project cost in parentheses, are:

- Calvert County**
- North Beach Volunteer Fire Department

\$1,520 (\$3,040)

- Charles County**
- Bryans Road Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad \$750 (\$1,500)
 - Cobb Island Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$8,055)
 - Hughesville Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad \$570 (\$1,140)
 - La Plata Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$7,650)
 - Tenth District Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$34,403)

- St. Mary's County**
- Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department \$3,500 (\$7,345)

Press release from MD DNR

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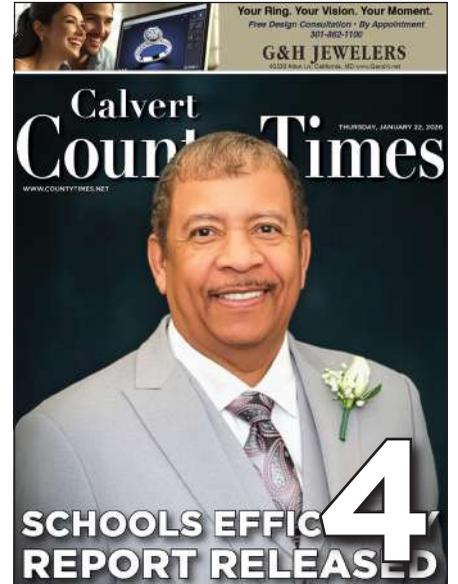
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT DR. MARCUS NEWSOME ON NEW SCHOOLS EFFICIENCY REPORT



LOCAL 4
Post re-elected school board president



COMMUNITY 6
CSM receives gift to launch Radiation Therapy program



ON THE COVER 4
School board presented with 500-page efficiency report

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 22 Mostly Sunny Hi: 54° Lo: 30°	FRI, JAN 23 Partly Cloudy Hi: 46° Lo: 14°	SAT, JAN 24 Cloudy Hi: 22° Lo: 17°	SUN, JAN 25 Wintry Mix Hi: 24° Lo: 22°
MON, JAN 26 Partly Cloudy Hi: 28° Lo: 15°	TUE, JAN 27 Mostly Sunny Hi: 29° Lo: 18°	WED, JAN 28 Partly Cloudy Hi: 34° Lo: 18°	THU, JAN 29 Partly Cloudy Hi: 26° Lo: 13°

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