

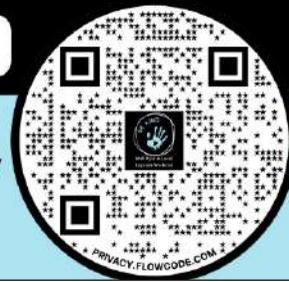


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St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

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**Hollywood Woman
Dies at Calvert Resort**

**County Shares Update
on CodeRED Breach**

**MedStar Highlights
Cardiac Rehab Center**

**STERLING WANTS TO STAY
TOUGH ON CRIME**

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“MY SISTER WOULDN'T COMMIT SUICIDE.”

KATRINA DOVE ON SARAH JORDAN'S DEATH



LOCAL 5
Hollywood woman's death under investigation



ON THE COVER 3
State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling files for re-election



COMMUNITY 11
Students get an opportunity to design the Navy's next jet

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, FEB 19 Rain Hi: 45° Lo: 41°	FRI, FEB 20 AM Showers Hi: 52° Lo: 39°	SAT, FEB 21 Partly Cloudy Hi: 51° Lo: 37°	SUN, FEB 22 Rain Hi: 39° Lo: 31°
MON, FEB 23 Cloudy Hi: 39° Lo: 28°	TUE, FEB 24 Mostly Sunny Hi: 40° Lo: 30°	WED, FEB 25 Partly Cloudy Hi: 49° Lo: 40°	THU, FEB 26 Showers Hi: 53° Lo: 37°

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Sterling Files for Re-election

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

St. Mary's County State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling has filed for re-election for a second term. The Republican as of Feb. 18 press deadline had no opponents.

Sterling said, "I am seeking re-election for the same reasons I originally decided to run for State's Attorney in 2022. When I was sworn into the position in January 2023, I promised to bring integrity to the office, technological advancements, accountability for crime victims, and to aggressively fight violent crime in our county. For the past three years, my team and I have worked tirelessly to deliver on these promises. If provided the opportunity to serve our community for a second term, I would build on the solid foundation my team and I created together to ensure safety for our communities and families.

Serving her home county is at the top of the list of what she likes about the job. "It is an incredible honor, and I take great pride in providing my community with the top-notch public service and high-level prosecution that I believe my team delivers and our community deserves. I am additionally passionate about assisting crime victims with legislative initiatives and bringing innovation to today's prosecutorial challenges."

But she added, "As the State's Attorney, I must ensure everyone on my team, from the paralegals to the victim advocates and prosecutors have the resources and tools necessary to put them in the best position to successfully litigate cases with positive results for our community. Given the incredible measurable success our team has produced, and continues to produce, navigating through bureaucratic red tape is a gauntlet

I do not enjoy.

Sterling was asked if the job was what she expected. She observed, "Not exactly, but I don't think any job is exactly as anticipated. The lack of technology in the office was a huge hindrance to our team. The office previously didn't have a unified modern case management system. My first six months in office were spent searching for missing cases and identifying hearings that needed coverage, a major complication that no one could have anticipated."

She added, "With the implementation of our new case management system in October 2023, we now have electronic files and fail safes to ensure nothing falls through the cracks. The case management system was just the first step of the resources needed in order to meet the positive changes I promised to provide to the people of our county."

She considers herself to be tough on crime. "Yes. I promised the county when I ran for State's Attorney that I would be tough on violent crime, and I have done my best to live up to that promise. In fact, even the judges in our county have acknowledged my administration's tough on crime stance, citing a 261 percent increase to criminal jury trials, requiring the creation of an additional courtroom, legislatively requesting an additional permanent judge position, and securing local funding for those requests. We have been, and will continue to be, committed to seeking higher penalties for violent offenders as we routinely choose to take on even the toughest trials versus unnecessarily pleading cases down."

As to changes in her office, she observed, "First, we eliminated all monies being paid to the State's Attorney's Office in exchange for the dismissal of cases. Additionally, we eliminated the payment of 'fees' to partici-

pate in community services. Almost immediately, we made strides to implement a digital case management system. In doing so, we increased efficiency, transparency, and accountability, and we can now provide a more customer service focused approach to achieve justice for crime victims."

She added, "I recognized that victims of crime deserved more adequate resources and support throughout the life of a case, so it became a priority for me to establish a Victim/Witness Services Unit. Additionally, with the advancement of technology and drastic increase in digital evidence, I knew that in order for our prosecutors to be able to prepare cases to the fullest extent, I wanted to create the Evidence Review Unit. The creation of both of these units was secured by my team and I through grant funding and allowed for the further modernization of the office."

She said the War on Drugs is going better, "but there is much work to be done. We will never be able to 'prosecute' our way out of this epidemic. We need to hit the war on drugs from every direction. Critically, we must also adequately identify and distinguish the dealers from users. Dealers must be held accountable. Users, within reason, should be met with opportunities for support such as drug court for those genuinely battling addiction. I pledge to continue to do my part in holding offenders accountable. But one thing must be clear, individuals who illegally bring drugs and guns into our community will be met with firm prosecutions



State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling

and stiff penalties."

For a second term, she said, "I would like to build on the foundational successes from the past three years. I am incredibly proud of my team for their unwavering dedication and unmatched work ethic. I recognize that my team has absolutely achieved incredible results, exceeded community expectations, and set a new standard. I would love the opportunity to continue to lead my incredible team, and build on our progress together to continue to keep St. Mary's County safe.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

McKay Announces Run for Commissioner

Former County Commission President and local business owner Thomas McKay has announced his candidacy for District 2 County Commissioner, saying the county needs to return to "common sense leadership and affordable fiscal policy."

McKay, who previously served as County Commission President, said his decision to run comes from growing concerns about rising costs, government spending, and the overall affordability of living and operating a business in the county.

"Our residents and small businesses are feeling the strain," McKay said. "We need practical, disciplined decision-making that puts affordability first and respects taxpayer dollars."

As a longtime local business owner, McKay says he understands firsthand the financial pressures facing families and entrepreneurs.

"In business, you can't spend what you don't have," he said. "County government should operate the same way — with transparency, accountability, and responsible

budgeting."

McKay indicated his campaign will focus on restoring fiscal discipline, supporting local economic growth, and ensuring essential services remain strong without expanding government unnecessarily.

Among his priorities:

- Responsible budgeting and spending oversight
- Protecting taxpayers from unnecessary increases
- Supporting local businesses and economic development
- Maintaining core services while controlling government growth

McKay said additional policy details will be released in the coming weeks as the campaign progresses.

"I believe District 2 deserves leadership that listens, makes practical decisions, and keeps our county affordable for future generations," he said.

See next week's edition of The County Times for a full interview and expanded coverage of McKay's campaign platform.

St. Mary's County

Caregivers' Support Group

The St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services Caregivers' Support Group is a safe space for caregivers to share their experiences and learn about resources.

February 24, 2026

6-7 p.m.

Garvey Senior Activity Center
23630 Hayden Farm Lane
Leonardtown, MD 20650

For more information or to register:

Call: 301-475-4200, ext. 1057

Visit: www.stmaryscountymd.gov/Aging/HCBS-Overview/

Walk-ins are Welcome!

Registration for the Caregivers' Support Group is encouraged, but not required.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Plan to join the vibrant St. Mary's College of Maryland community for a variety of events that bring people together for meaningful connections.



UPCOMING EVENTS

**MAR. 27
2026**

**FEB. 27
2026**

**APR. 24
2026**

“Science in the Pub” Series

New series starting on the 4th Friday of the month from 4:30 - 5:30 p.m., featuring a research presentation by a faculty member during happy hour at Call Signs in Lexington Park.

**MAR. 24
2026**

Career & Internship Fair - 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

At the Michael P. O'Brien Athletics & Recreation Center
Employers are invited to showcase their organizations to talented and rising professionals. Register on Handshake.



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Hollywood Woman Dies After Fall from Hotel Room Balcony

Calvert Sheriff's Office Investigating

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Sheriff's Office is investigating the death of a Hollywood woman at the Rod 'N Reel resort in Chesapeake Beach. The body of Sarah Jordan, 46, was found late on Dec. 15. She had been staying at the hotel with her long-time boyfriend.

"She fell from the balcony of her hotel room," Jordan's sister Katrinia Dove told The County Times.

In a release, the sheriff's office says the case is under active investigation. The release says, "Investigators are currently awaiting the results of the autopsy and additional information from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Once all relevant information, evidence, and findings have been fully gathered and reviewed, a formal meeting will be conducted with the Calvert County State's Attorney's Office to present the complete investigative findings."

Dove said it was her understanding that Sarah was at the resort to celebrate her anniversary with her boyfriend. "When my mother picked her belongings up from the police station there was an anniversary card for him in her suitcase," she said.

The family hasn't heard much, Dove said. "As of right now, they're telling us there



Sarah Jordan

really isn't much they can say because it's an ongoing investigation."

Dove said her sister was in good health and she bristles at the suggestion of one officer that it may have been suicide.

"She was perfectly healthy," Dove said.

She said their father's birthday was the day she checked into the hotel, and "she had just picked her son up from college, literally the day before."

"My sister wouldn't commit suicide," she insisted.



Rod 'N Reel resort

"At the time she was doing the Spark deliveries for Walmart," Dove said of her sister's job. She had been doing that for quite some time. Before that she worked for an online boutique.

"She was a wonderful person," Dove said of Jordan. "She was a hard worker. She was a single mother, so she was into anything for her son, in any sports, anything like that. She was always at a game, always at practice. She had just been baptized."

She said they were close. "She was my

only sibling," she said, adding, "My parents lived eight minutes down the road from us, so my husband's at work a lot, so my children and myself would be at my parents' house to have dinner with them."

She said the sheriff's office "can't tell us what he (the boyfriend) said to them or anything like that. There's just a lot of questions because my sister wouldn't commit suicide."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

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They Said Yes!

Congratulations to the happy couples who applied for marriage licenses in St. Mary's County during the month of January. Best wishes to all!

Mathew Alberto Catala, 25, Patuxent River, MD
Paulina Ruth Villalobos, 24, Lexington Park, MD

Delisha Joy Loyd, 32, Lexington Park, MD
Kevin Darnell Dyson, 32, Lexington Park, MD

Madison Joy Devries, 28, Leonardtown, MD
Jessica Lynn Sanders, 29, California, MD

Makayla Jean Mikesell, 24, Lexington Park, MD
Darian Matthew Shrawder, 24, Lexington Park, MD

Tracie Lynn Murphy, 38, Great Mills, MD
George Alowish Brooks, 38, Lexington Park, MD

Michaela Anne Kite, 28, California, MD
Aaron Michael Gwynn, 35, California, MD

Mary Elizabeth Dean, 46, Hollywood, MD
William Bernard Barnes, II, 37, Hollywood, MD

Diane Chrystine Stratton, 30, Mechanicsville, MD
Gage Tyler Perkins, 29, Mechanicsville, MD

Jaketta Roshell Stout, 48, Lexington Park, MD
Jesse Willard Boyd, IV, 60, Lexington Park, MD

Kailey Nicole Wathen, 23, Mechanicsville, MD
Steven Edward Thomas Haig, 26, Mechanicsville, MD

Kayleigh Marie Young, 21, Mechanicsville, MD
David Patrick Nickerson, 24, Mechanicsville, MD

Megan Michelle Mckenzie, 28, California, MD
Bryson Scott Kleeman, 39, California, MD

Sheila Juanita Somerville, 50, Mechanicsville, MD
Eric Darnell Holt, 55, Mechanicsville, MD

Kaitlin Cook Weathers, 27, Scotland, MD
Christian Hunter Jarboe, 30, Scotland, MD

Alex Manolo Hernandez Castro, 36, Lexington Park, MD
Maria Magdalena Malendres, 36, Lexington Park, MD

Catherine Marie Carter, 54, Lexington Park, MD
Almos Holland, 53, Lexington Park, MD

David Alexander Eakins, 28, Saint Inigoes, MD
Shanon Kay Lee, 29, Saint Inigoes, MD

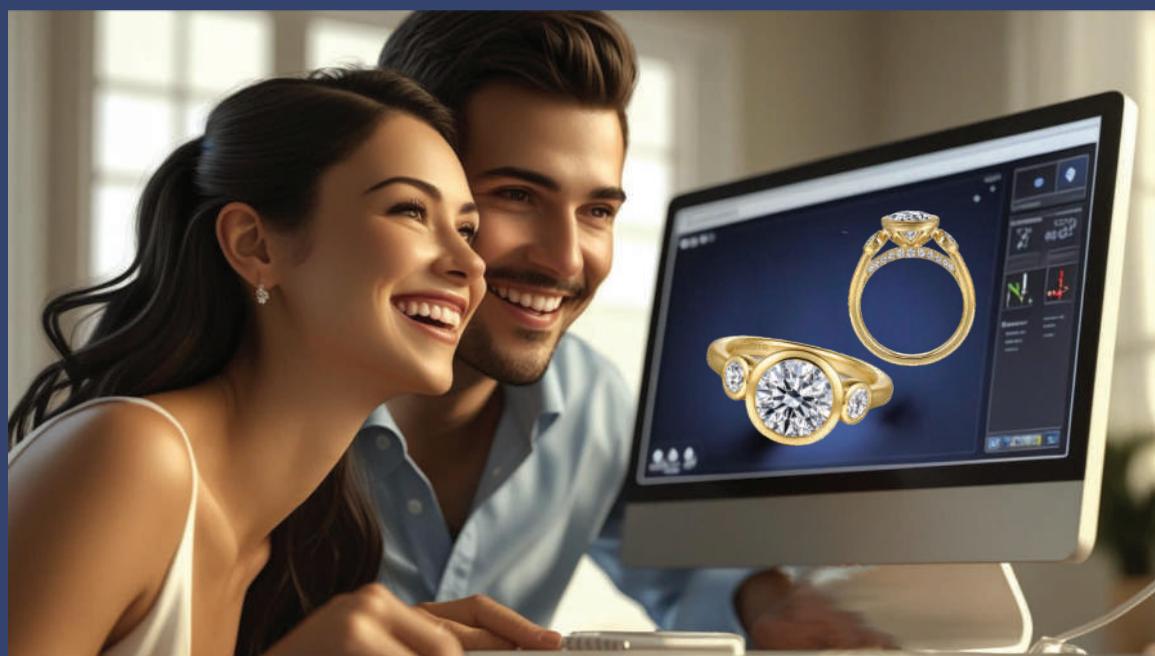
William Tyler Gotsch, 25, Clements, MD
Samantha Lynn Smith, 34, Clements, MD

Ted Tae Hwang, 34, Ellicott City, MD
Monica Eunkyeng Kwon, 31, Ellicott City, MD

Tiffany Nicole Nelson, 35, Great Mills, MD
Eugene Oliver Curtis, Jr., 49, Great Mills, MD

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MedStar St. Mary's Offers Cardiac Rehab

Unit Funded by Ted Koppel to Honor His Wife

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Grace Anne Dorney Pulmonary & Cardiac Rehabilitation Center at MedStar Health is named after Grace Anne Dorney Koppel, a Maryland attorney, business manager for husband and famous newsman Ted Koppel; and national patient advocate for the COPD Learn More Breathe Better® Campaign from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health.

In 2001, Grace Anne was diagnosed with a very severe case of COPD and given a few years to live. COPD is a group of lung diseases including emphysema, refractory asthma, chronic bronchitis, and bronchiectasis.

According to MedStar St. Mary's, "Instead of taking the prognosis as a death sentence, Grace Anne began pulmonary rehabilitation and through hard work and dedication increased her lung capacity from 26 percent to almost 60 percent today. Since 2007, she has shared her experiences on a national platform and is a testament to not letting her health slow her down.

"Former ABC News 'Nightline' anchor Ted Koppel had the idea for the creation of the center and donated funds as a gift to help open it in honor of his wife, Grace Anne. The Koppel family hopes to open a similar center in rural areas each year until they have opened a center in each state. This legacy will encourage individuals who are suffering to keep fighting and succeed in managing the illness."

James Farrar is the clinical lead for the center. He joined it soon after it opened in 2010.

Koppel and Dorney had a home in St. Mary's. In a Feb. 17 interview with The County Times, Farrar said, "We were actually the pilot center for them establishing pulmonary and cardiac rehab programs."

Farrar said, "It brought a great service to the community for patients suffering from heart surgery, lung transplants, and COPD. We've had heart transplants, and we've had



Karen Lanier with James Farrar at The Grace Anne Dorney Pulmonary & Cardiac Rehabilitation Center at MedStar St. Mary's.

thousands of patients just since I've been in the system. So, it's been really rewarding to the community as far as I'm concerned."

Farrar is anxious to get the word out for the so far still underutilized service. "I think it's very important to bring awareness that about less than 30 percent of people that are referred to cardiac rehab actually come. So, it's very underutilized as far as the nation. There are things that are in place that are trying to bring up these numbers so that there's more receptiveness. And so, patients can get the care they need after these surgeries or procedures or diagnosis that they get."

He added, "It's one of the prime benefits, not only do the patients feel better, have more energy, but it also helps to reduce the community costs or the hospital costs of reduced admissions. It's a science-based, evidence-based practices that is proven to work."

Some barriers for potential patients include lack of transportation, significant copay, or mobility issues. "Unfortunately, these driving factors do keep some of our volumes down, but yet they're just as in need as the patients that are capable of coming to our program."

They are working on ways, for instance,

to provide the needed transportation.

How does the program differ from a gym or other rehab programs? Farrar said, "Basically our patients are monitored by free EKGs. We have clinical exercise physiologists on staff. We have a nurse on staff. So basically they're monitored from the second they come in for getting their vital signs. We get blood pressure, we listen to their lungs, we get their EKG. We monitor them while they're exercising. We get various blood pressures and vitals throughout their session.

"And then while they're there, we go over education, whether it's medication, whether it's nutritional, anything that the patient has questions on or needs more information about, we help bring them the resources they need to get the understanding, whatever they're looking for generally."

Karen Lanier of Leonardtown is an enthusiastic fan of the program. She said, "I had a heart attack and a stent put in when I got to the hospital. And one of the recommendations as I was leaving was to go to rehab and try to get myself together the best I could."

She had her heart attack on October 4th

and was Medevacked out. Lanier, 78, said, "Never had any kind of a problem with my heart or a diagnosis of a heart problem."

She woke up in the emergency room. "When I got there, they put the stent in the one main artery that runs north to south in my heart. And then I ended up in ICU for a few days and ultimately in a regular hospital room. and then I was released under a cardiologist care and started the rehab and the whole nine yards."

"There was quite a bit of blockage in that main artery, and so the stent was pretty much a necessity."

She remembered, "One of the nurses came in and said you'll have to have a stent put in. And then he looked at my chart and said, wait a minute. It's already in. And I have no recollection of any of that at all."

As to the rehab, she said, "They do a lot, but you do most of it. There is exercise equipment there. It's like going to a gym, except that there are monitors kind of built into the equipment and the whole time you're doing the exercises, I think over there they probably have four or five different exercise machines, duplicates of some of it.

"When you get there, first of all, you have to put the little suction things on your chest. And there's one of the therapists in kind of a cage, monitoring everything that's going on. But you go to the different equipment, 10 minutes on each piece of equipment until your time is up, and while you're doing that, they're going around, taking blood pressure."

She added, "And everything's being charted on a computer in that back room."

She said she's had no problems but while there one day a gentleman had some blood sugar problem and they stopped his exercise.

Lanier said, "I go over there Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for one hour, and they right off the top give you suggestions for exercises that you can be doing the other days."

"I would stay over there forever if I could," she said. "It's going to kill me when I have to leave."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

County Shares Update on CodeRED Breach

The St. Mary's County Government (SMCG) Department of Emergency Services (DES) is providing an update regarding the previously reported cybersecurity incident involving the CodeRED Emergency Notification System.

CodeRED is a third-party emergency notification service used by local governments across the country to send emergency alerts.

CodeRED has completed a forensic investigation, conducted by internal security teams and external cybersecurity experts, into the incident that led to the suspension of the legacy platform in November 2025.

What Happened

According to CodeRED, an organized cybercriminal group gained unauthorized access to the legacy OnSolve CodeRED environment beginning as early as October 31, 2025, and deployed ransomware on November 10, 2025. The attack resulted in

the encryption of certain servers and significant damage to the legacy system.

While a data transfer tool was identified during the investigation, forensic experts found no evidence confirming that data was exfiltrated from the system.

Information Potentially Exposed

CodeRED reports that limited subscriber information affecting a small percentage of users was exposed across two data sets:

One data set contained usernames, phone numbers, and inactive, outdated passwords that were deactivated and changed in 2015 during a prior platform migration.

A second data set contained usernames with encrypted passwords that are unreadable and not identifiable. There is no evidence that encryption keys were accessed.

Importantly, CodeRED has confirmed that the exposed data did not include first

or last names, addresses, or other sensitive personal information, and did not include any active passwords.

Updated Guidance for Residents

Based on the findings of the investigation, CodeRED advises that no active passwords were compromised. While residents were previously encouraged to change passwords out of an abundance of caution, the newly confirmed information indicates that exposed passwords were inactive and outdated.

Residents are still encouraged to remain vigilant and cautious of unsolicited communications requesting personal or financial information.

Emergency Alert System Update

As previously announced, the legacy OnSolve CodeRED platform has been permanently decommissioned. On January 6,

2026, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County approved a new emergency notification system, *Regroup Mass Notification*, following review and recommendations by the Departments of Emergency Services and Information Technology. Additional information on this transition and the new system will be announced soon.

St. Mary's County Government remains committed to transparency and to safeguarding the safety, security, and privacy of the community.

Residents with questions or concerns about this incident or about emergency notifications in St. Mary's County may contact DES at EMA@stmaryscountymd.gov or (301)-475-4200 ext. 2125.

Press release from St. Mary's County Government

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR SAINT MARY'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

CASE NO: C-18-CV-26-000073

NAR Solutions, Inc.
c/o Steven Harding
PO Box 31700
Omaha, NE 68131

Plaintiff

v.

Robert E Richards
Christopher Hyson
GBIF, LLC
West 11, LLC

Defendants

and

St. Mary's County, Maryland
(for Maryland Annotated Code 14-1836(b)(1)(v) purposes only)

and

Any and all persons having or claiming to have any interest in the property and premises situate, lying and being in the County of St. Mary's described on the Tax Rolls of St. Mary's County Collector of State and County Taxes for said County known as:

48574 SMITH DR, RIDGE, MD 20680, District 1, described as follows:
28,314 SQ FT, W/S SMITH DR, NR ST INIGOES
and assessed to HYSON MARY E.

ORDER OF PUBLICATION

The object of this proceeding is to secure the foreclosure of all rights of redemption in the following property sold by the Collector of Taxes for St. Mary's County and the State of Maryland to the Plaintiff in this proceeding:

48574 SMITH DR, RIDGE, MD 20680 in St. Mary's County, Maryland,
described as:

All that lot of tract of ground, situate, lying and being in the First Election District of St. Mary's County, State of Maryland, aforesaid and described as follows, that is to say: Beginning for the same at a locust stake set on the shore of the Smith Creek and at the edge of a field, said stake marking the Westerly corner of the present lot of the grantee herein conveyed in 1957; thence leaving said Smith Creek and running with the Southeasterly line of said Hyson lot north 64 deg. 45' East 304.9 feet to a locust stake set on the Westerly line of a twenty-foot right-of-way leading from the entrance road to the residence of the grantors herein, thence with said right-of-way South 11 deg. 00' East 138.75 feet to a locust stake; thence leaving said right-of-way and running with the lands of the grantors herein South 73 deg. 17' West 169.0 feet to a locust stake and North 68 deg. 42' West 150.7 feet to the point of beginning containing 0.651 acres of land, more or less as surveyed June 19, 1958 by W.L. Bowman, Registered Land Surveyor;

and assessed to HYSON MARY E

(the "Property").

The Complaint states, among other things, that the amounts necessary for redemption have not been paid.

It is thereupon this 4th day of February, 2026, by the Circuit Court for St. Mary's County, ORDERED that notice be given by the insertion of a copy of this Order in some newspaper having general circulation in St. Mary's County once a week for three (3) successive weeks, warning all persons interested in the Property to appear in this Court by the 4th day of May, 2026, and redeem the Property and answer the Complaint, or thereafter a final judgment will be entered foreclosing all rights of redemption in the Property and vesting in the Plaintiff title to the Property free and clear of all encumbrances.

Debra J. Burch
Clerk of Court for St. Mary's County

Four Juveniles Apprehended Following Vehicle Theft

Deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office apprehended four juveniles on the evening of Feb. 9 following an investigation into a stolen vehicle, a theft from a business, and an attempted vehicle theft in Lexington Park.

On Feb. 9, 2026, at approximately 6:10 p.m., deputies responded to a residential area in Lexington Park for a reported stolen vehicle. The victims stated that their 2004 Honda Pilot had been taken from the street in front of their residence.

Deputies immediately canvassed the area and, through investigation, learned that three masked individuals in all-black clothing were seen near the Honda Pilot at the time of the theft. Shortly thereafter, surveillance footage showed the vehicle being driven out of the area with multiple occupants.

At approximately 9:53 p.m., deputies responded to Aspen Liquors in Lexington Park for a reported theft. The store owner reported that two unknown suspects entered the business, took a four-pack of mixed alcoholic beverages, and left without paying. Surveillance video from the store showed two suspects matching the descriptions from the earlier vehicle theft arriving in what appeared to be the stolen Honda Pilot.

A deputy conducting proactive patrol operations along Great Mills Road located the stolen Honda Pilot at approximately

10:45 p.m. and attempted to initiate a traffic stop. The driver refused to stop, and a pursuit into a residential neighborhood ensued for approximately one-half mile before the vehicle stopped and the occupants, four juvenile males, were apprehended and surrendered without incident. No injuries were reported.

"I'm thankful this ended safely," said Sheriff Steve Hall.

While speaking with witnesses at the scene of the stop, deputies took a report from a citizen who stated he was a victim of an earlier attempted vehicle theft. The witness identified the Honda Pilot's occupants as the individuals who allegedly attempted to steal his vehicle. The victim advised deputies that the suspects ran toward his truck while he stopped to dispose of trash from the back of the vehicle. When he returned to the truck, the suspects fled in the Honda Pilot.

The juveniles, three 14-year-olds and one 16-year-old, were referred to the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and released to their guardians.

Law enforcement agencies are prohibited from publicly identifying juveniles due to legal protections that safeguard their identities throughout the judicial process.

Press release from SMCSO.

Lexington Park Woman Indicted in Fatal Collision

Following an investigation into a fatal February 2025 motor vehicle collision, Zykeria Sharmae Shubrooks-Nunley, 21, of Lexington Park, was indicted and charged via Criminal Summons.

On Feb. 9, 2025, deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office responded to a collision in the 21000 block of Great Mills Road in Lexington Park to investigate a two-car collision involving a Nissan Armada and a Chevrolet Cobalt. The driver of the Cobalt, 59-year-old Kathy Mae Davis, was pronounced deceased at the scene.

Deputies served the Criminal Summons on Thursday, Feb. 12, in which Shubrooks-Nunley is charged with four counts, including

- Negligent manslaughter
- Criminally negligent manslaughter
- Reckless driving
- Negligent driving

The investigation was conducted by the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Reconstruction Unit.

Press release from SMCSO



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NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER *News*

Pax River Announces Sailors, Civilians of the Year 2025

NAS Patuxent River announces its Sailors and Civilians of the Year, marking the command's top military personnel and civil servants for 2025.

"Every day our 'Pax Pros' complete the necessary missions to make our air station the center for excellence in naval aviation we know it to be," said NAS Patuxent River Commanding Officer Capt. Mark Zematis. "And among those hard-chargers, the Sailors and civilians chosen for this recognition stand out as the best of the best. Their hard work and dedication earned them these accolades, and I am extremely proud to serve alongside them."

The Sailor of the Year Program was established by the Chief of Naval Operations to recognize the superior performance of enlisted personnel, pay grades E-1 to E-6, and emphasize outstanding achievement and professionalism, exemplary personal conduct, command impact, mission contribution, dedication to self-improvement and superb initiative. Similarly, federal civilian personnel are also recognized for their exemplary service.

Commandant, Naval District Washington (NDW) Rear Adm. David Faehnle personally congratulated the following personnel for their exceptional service throughout 2025:

- **Sailor of the Year** NC1 (SW/AW/SCW/NAC) Frederick Salazar, Command Career Counselor
- **Junior Sailor of the Year** MA2 (SW/AW) Zachary Johnson, Command Physical Security Specialist
- **Bluejacket of the Year** AO3 (AW/SW) Nicole Quintana, Command Pay and Personnel Clerk
- **Senior Civilian of the Year** Russel Bauer, Installation Training Officer
- **Junior Civilian of the Year** Daniel Garner, Airfield Services Division Subject Matter Expert
- **Supervisor of the Year** Stephanie Harris, Navy Housing Director for NAS Patuxent River
- **Group of the Year** Ground Electronics Maintenance Division

Press release from NAS Patuxent River



NC1 Frederick Salazar



MA2 Zachary Johnson



AO3 Nicole Quintana



Russel Bauer



Daniel Garner



Stephanie Harris



Ground Electronics Maintenance Division

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www.stmaryscountymd.gov/Aging/Health-Insurance-Program/

Local Author Publishes Second Book

Two More on the Way for Retiree

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Allen Troise is attacking retirement with a vengeance. The Wildewood resident has become an author as a second career. He has recently finished publishing his second book and is working on two more. They are dissimilar in many ways.

Troise's first book, as the County Times previously reported, was a compact novel with a surprise twist at the end. It is called *At 12:05 a.m.* and is available on Amazon.

His second book is a police procedural called *The Psychiatrist*. The psychiatrist and his cronies are the bad guys, and the rural New York cops and the FBI are the good guys.

Refreshingly, as is often not the case in modern mysteries, the locals and the feds willingly work together to solve the case. A local cop uses ingenuity to get the key piece of evidence that cracks the case.

Troise is proud of the fact that this second book is now available for everyone to read at the St. Mary's County libraries.

Troise explained of *The Psychiatrist*: "This one gentleman. He's a very popular psychiatrist in New York City. And as far as my storytelling, I needed to send a message about human nature. And this is how I wanted to do it, was to put it in writing. I wanted to bring out the ugly inhumanity and how they delve into utter defiance of the norms of society."

Troise said its "somewhat of a dark suspense tale with a hidden message of the hate mankind produces as normal. It's not isolated to only these types of crimes, but history will also testify to horrors humans bestow(ed) on each other."

He added, "They all know each other for many years. And it's a very secretive organization. They have hurt many, many women. And the book goes into detail about these women."

He explained, "One of the victims is in

such a bad state in her bodily condition that she could not speak. She was put into the hospital, and she was there for like five or six months. They had to bring her into a special area in the hospital because they didn't want her name to get out because this psychiatrist might have found her and finished her off.

"So, the book goes on about all of these various unfortunate situations that happened to these women, all of which, other than this first woman had all died either through rape or some other horrible experience from these five men."

Troise says he doesn't know how the original idea popped in his head. "I had to tell the story again in such a way that it bothers me that these kinds of things happen all the time. I wasn't comfortable doing it. I wasn't comfortable telling the story, but I wanted to put it in writing, so people understand that this is a hard thing to do and to tell in this society. We just continue to do this, and we just can't seem to find the answer."

The ideas for his books come to him in nits and pieces. A book comes to me randomly, but then I fuss over it for a long time."

He added, the book has to have the beginning, the middle, and the end. "The ending to me in the book is the most important part as far as I'm concerned."

He noted, "These are heinous crimes that go on and on. We try and solve them, but I think there is a bigger issue here, what I'm thinking, and that's that we have to try and find out with these individuals, how does it happen? Is it birth? How to find out what genes do, what they can do. Shouldn't we find out where this dark, aberrant gene is and if we did, what do we do with it?"

His third book will be called *The Healing of 10*. He explained, "It's me as a third person telling the story about what me, Allen would like to have done or do in society. I like to heal. That's my part. And I'm just

being honest. So, the only way I could do this was to do it as a third person and tell a story about the Allen Troise family. I used my name, last name, my two kids, my wife, use it throughout the story."

Troise explained, "I've always had the intense desire to heal children with birth defects who are unable to play with their peers in sports, et cetera. And it always bothered me. In this book, I use my actual family, the names I keep in there, I don't change them because it's my family. And it's goes into 10 different healings."

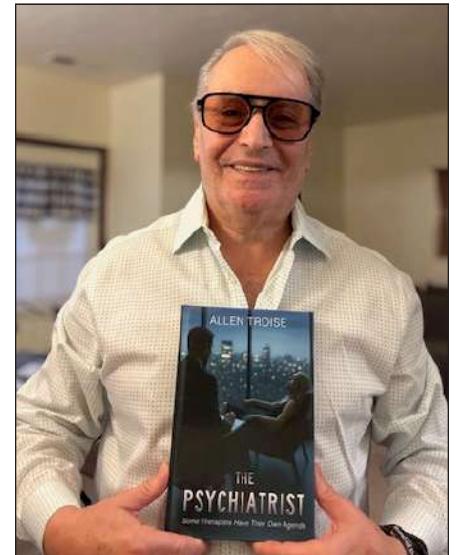
The story is all about the family going on a family vacation. They go for the main reason that dad, Allen, his family has a piece of property in Italy that he has to settle now."

While there they visit Torin where the shroud of Jesus is located. They go into the museum that holds the shroud. And he gets this strange feeling within him that Jesus is talking to him...and that's where the 10 healing blessings start."

His wife and son passed away several years ago. "I wanted to try and put them in the book to heal them, but I chose not to," adding, "It just that didn't fit within the book. But I do talk about them at the end."

For the 10th blessing, "I use it for another detail, but that's basically what the healing of 10 is all about. It's all about me and wanting, and it's a true thing. I'm not making it up. I really want to heal."

His fourth book is called, *A Museum*



Allen Troise with his new book

Tragedy, The Real Story.

He explained, "This is a true story about me. Moving south from New York following the passing of my wife and son, I found and joined a local small animal museum as a volunteer that brought my spirits up with two wonderful, rewarding, and happy years until one 60-second conversation changed everything. Now after a year plus of sleepless nights and medication, I'm compelled to put pen to paper and tell the real story in detail."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Navy Launches Student Jet Design Contest

The U.S. Navy calls on students across the Southern Maryland region to once again draw on their innovation and creativity to design Naval Aviation's next jet in a competition hosted by the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD).

"America's naval air superiority is forged in Southern Maryland thanks to the aviation pros who call this region home," said NAWCAD Commander Rear Adm. Todd Evans. "The Navy's Next Jet Competition is our commitment to helping its next generation of talent take flight."

The Navy's Next Jet Competition launched on Feb. 16, and invites K-12th graders across St. Mary's, Charles, and Calvert counties to submit their futuristic jet designs for a chance to win a tour of a NAWCAD squadron, meet the pilots, and experience Naval Aviation up close. The competition's top designs will be featured in an exhibit at the Patuxent River Naval Air Museum and showcase during Naval

Air Station Patuxent River's 2026 air show.

Naval Aviation leaders will judge student designs across the competition's three submission categories – K-5th, 6th-8th, and 9th-12th grades – based on creativity, feasibility, and innovation. The competition details, including design and judging criteria, submission requirements, and more can be found at <https://www.navair.navy.mil/nawcad/Navys-Next-Jet-Competition-2026>.

The Navy's Next Jet designs are due by March 13.

NAWCAD employs military, civilian, and contract personnel. It operates test ranges, laboratories, and aircraft in support of test, evaluation, research, development, and sustainment for all Navy and Marine Corps aviation platforms. Based in Patuxent River, Maryland, NAWCAD also has major sites in St. Ingoes, Maryland; Lakehurst, New Jersey; and Orlando, Florida.

Press Release from NAWCAD

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MEET ELEANOR

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If your home could use a distinguished lady with a PhD in Cozy, then I'm prepared to move in and begin my reign! 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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Museums Announce 2026 Cruise Series

The St. Mary's County Museum Division is pleased to announce that the 2026 Dinner & A Cruise series will kick off this spring with a brand-new water taxi vessel, expanded routes, and even more cruise types.

These themed cruises offer visitors the opportunity to enjoy a fun evening cruising on the St. Clement's Island Water Taxi, paired with dinner or other fare and special themes.

With the purchase of a much larger vessel, the St. Mary's County Museum Division will be able to expand cruise types, destinations, and routes, as the boat will now be capable of traveling farther along the Potomac.

This exciting opportunity allows for a full year of diverse cruise experiences, including:

- April 26, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: Between North & South
- May 16, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise (Picnic Style): Author Christine Trent
- May 31, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: Manor Houses along the Potomac & Patuxent River
- June 28, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: A Conversation with Local Historian Julia King
- August 9, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: Blackstone Lighthouse
- September 5, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise (Picnic Style): World War II

- September 27, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: An Ecological Look at the Potomac
- October 18, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: The Oyster Wars
- October 29, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise (Picnic Style): A Haunted River Cruise (Thursday)
- October 30, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise (Picnic Style): A Haunted River Cruise (Friday)
- October 31, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: A Haunted River Cruise
- November 19, 2026 – Dinner & a Cruise: Star Gazing

Please note that the regular dinner cruises include transportation to a local seafood restaurant for a sit-down meal. The "Picnic Style" cruises invite guests to bring their favorite food and drinks and create their own floating feast. Please remember to pack everything you'll need, as the boat will not have provisions available onboard.

Tickets are \$95 per person for regular dinner cruises (seafood dinner included) and \$25 per person for picnic-style cruises.

For more information or to reserve tickets, please visit <https://bit.ly/DinnerCruise2026> or email Janet Cooper at Janet.Cooper@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Press Release from St. Mary's County Museum Division

VFW Names Maryland Teacher of the Year



Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2632 would like to congratulate the Veterans of Foreign Wars for Maryland Teacher of the Year Tylita D. Buttler from Esperanza Middle School.

Butler placed at the post level, District 1 level and she placed at the state level competing against 53 other VFW's statewide to move on for the prestigious award of Teacher of the Year at the national level for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Congratulations to Butler on this great achievement and our fingers are crossed

that she wins at national level.

Butlers has an outstanding list of accomplishments and education degrees that shows that she is well qualified in teaching our children at the highest level. We talked to some of the teachers from Esperanza Middle School and they told us that the staff and students just love her and that she takes pride in connecting with the students so that they better themselves for their future endeavors.

Press Release from VFW Post 2632



ST. MARY'S COUNTY HISTORY DAY

Organized by *Historic* **SOTTERLEY**
CIRCA 1703

A district level contest for 4th – 12th grade students to present a history research project!

- Create a project in one of 5 categories: paper, exhibit, documentary, website, or performance
- Practice critical research and presentation skills
- Explore the aspects of history that interest you the most
- Win awards for your work!

2026's theme: Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History

Contest Date: April 18, 2026

Scan the QR code or visit www.sotterley.org for more info!



St. Mary's County History Day is made possible with help from:



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Wanderings of an Aimless Mind



Time for Fish and Fasting



By Shelby Opperman
Contributing Writer

I was so happy this morning listening to the birds chirping happily and watching several squirrels chasing each other up and down and across the trees. Nature was feeling the coming spring, as was I until I turned on the news and heard that there was a possibility of snow. It has been so nice watching more and more of our lawn appear. The temperature today is pretty nice, though a little damp. I just spoke to my brother and sister-in-law out in Utah who are wishing for snow, since a good snowpack on the mountains above and around them is what fills their reservoirs. My husband and I listened to the weather earlier and it always surprises us when the weathercasters say we are in a drought. They just need to come to our yard down in the hollow. We have all of the moisture they need to erase the drought.

Last night, the men of our church outdid themselves with a delicious pancake supper for Fat Tuesday with the works: scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, fruit bowls, and of course the pancakes. My husband went to the parish hall early to help in the kitchen with me going over later at the start of the dinner. I almost went when he did, but then I'd have been smelling all that food cooking and been begging at the kitchen door like Oliver Twist saying, "Please sirs, may I have more bacon?". There was quite a turnout, and I believe that everyone agreed it was definitely a very Fat Tuesday, or maybe that was just me.

But after Fat Tuesday comes Ash Wednesday which is a somber holy day of prayer and fasting in many Western Christian denominations marking the first day of Lent and time of penitence before Easter on Sunday, April 5th. We will head down to Chaptico to our church this evening for the Ash Wednesday service. Lent is also the time when it is expected that you will give something up for the 40 days (Sundays are not included). Or as one of our priests said, "You can also make a change for the good". I will be thinking about this part.

What normally happens to me this week is that all the old McDonald's Filet O' Fish commercials and their jingles starting playing in my head because we are back to fish on Fridays (I think in Southern Maryland all fish and shellfish count). I'm sure many of you remember the mid 2000's McDonald's commercial with the talking fish on the wall. You can still find those mounted talking fish in stores and on eBay like in the photo. I had to look the commercial back up on YouTube and I still laugh seeing the one man seated in his garage eating the filet o' fish sandwich with the fish singing the tune below while another man walks into the garage wondering what the heck is going on.

"Give me back that filet o' fish, give me back that fish.

Give me back that filet o' fish, give me back that fish.

What if it were you hanging up on this wall?

What if it were you in that sandwich?

You wouldn't be laughing at all."

Well, it's probably one of those "you had to be there" things. I hope the jingle will get out of my head soon. Maybe it will jingle in your head now. Sorry. The commercial works though. I know what I will be wanting for the first Friday of Lent: a nice, juicy filet o' fish sandwich. No, that's not true, since it always figures that if I can't have meat on Friday of course what I really will be dreaming about will be a big, juicy burger. That might be what I need to give up – I'll be thinking about that part.

To each new day's adventure,
Shelby

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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.

Sat, Feb 21

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.

Poker @ HVRS

43256 Rescue Ln., Hollywood
6 p.m.-12 a.m.

Texas Hold'Em at Hollywood Vol Rescue Squad. \$85 buy-in for \$20k in chips. Rounds are 20 minutes each. Doors open at 5:30 pm, tournament starts at 6pm. BYOB, food and sodas will be available for purchase. Chance at 50/50 included in your buy-in. Tables deal their own cards, dealers are

not provided. Late Entries permitted until 1st break, approx. 7 pm cut off. No rebuys allowed.

Sun, Feb 22

COSMIC's "Symphonic Journeys"

Nancy R. and Norton T. Dodge
Performing Arts Center
St. Mary's College of Maryland
47855 College Dr, St. Mary's City
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.

Kids Bingo

2nd District VFD & RS Social Hall
45245 Drayden Rd, Valley Lee
Doors open at noon, bingo begins at 1 p.m.

Bingo is for kids Age 15 years and under –p.m., \$20 per child; Prizes include \$25 gift cards to various restaurants and stores + more! Food and drinks available for purchase!

Benefit Pitch Tournament

Potomac Gardens
Colton's Point
2 p.m.

Sponsored by Seventh District VRS Auxiliary. Entry fee \$25.

1ST place wins \$100; 2nd place \$50; 3rd place \$25. Prize money donated by Abell Auto Glass. 50/50 Raffle – Scratch Off Raffle, \$1 each 6/\$5. Maximum of 48 players. Contact Bobbie at 301-481-1510 for information or to make reservations.

Mon, Feb 23

Monday Night Poker

St. Mary's County Elks Lodge
45779 Fire Department Ln., California
7 p.m.

Buy-in: \$35. Blinds will start at 25-50 and progress every 20 minutes. No late entries will be accepted.

Please enter through the side of the building. For any question or additional details contact Linda Hill at 240-925-5697 or doxiemama1014@gmail.com

Republican Women of St Mary's County

The Call Signs
46580 Expedition Dr., Lexington Park
11 a.m.

Open to ALL Republican women. Social time begins at 11 a.m. Meeting will begin at 11:30 a.m. Speaker to be announced.

Upcoming

Community Yard Sale Inside

St. Mary's County Fair Grounds
42455 Fairgrounds Road, Leonardtown
March 7, 7 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Reserve a space for \$20.00 (size: 8 ft. X 9 ft.); NOTE: An additional fee of \$10 will be charged for each additional table purchased for space. Danny D's Food Truck will be selling Breakfast & Lunch!; For more information or to reserve a space(s) contact: Becky at dbksk@atlanticbb.net or call 301-904-1656; or Agnes at agnes.birch54@gmail.com or call 301-904-0946.

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1 Medicare Saving Programs

These programs pay the Medicare Part B premium and in some cases the Medicare Part A premium, Part A&B deductible and co-insurance. Eligibility is based on the gross annual income and value of assets such as CD's, IRA's, bank accounts, stocks, bonds, etc.

2 Social Security Extra Help Program

This program assists individuals enrolled in the Medicare Part D program with their Part D premium, co-insurance and deductible. Eligibility is based on the gross annual income and assets such as CD's, IRA's, bank accounts, stocks, bonds, etc.

3 Maryland Senior Prescription Drug Assistance Program

This program provides a monthly subsidy towards the Medicare Part D premium. Eligibility is based on the household gross annual income. Value of assets are excluded.



The St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services can assist you with applying for these programs.

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Calvert Community Calendar

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

Thu, Feb 19

Song Circle

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
6-7:30 p.m.

Whether you're a musician, singer, or just love to hum along, this event is for you. Lead or learn folk and acoustic tunes in a casual, welcoming jam session. Bring your instrument, voice, or enthusiasm. Spectators are welcome to come enjoy the music, energy, and community spirit! 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Fri, Feb 13

On Pins and Needles

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

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

Sat, Feb 21

COSMIC's "Symphonic Journeys"

Huntingtown High School
4125 N Solomons Island Rd, Huntingtown
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.

Canoe & Kayak Club Annual Meeting

Calvert Marine Museum
10 a.m.

The CMM Canoe & Kayak Club invites current and prospective members to its annual meeting to plan the 2026 paddling season. The club offers organized, leader-guided excursions exploring Southern Maryland's

creeks, marshes, and rivers, with trips typically held twice monthly during paddling season. The meeting will take place in the Waterfront Lounge at the museum. To RSVP or for more information, contact John Altomare at john.altomare2010@gmail.com

Revolution Era Attire: America's 250th

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
2-3:30 p.m.

Learn about the everyday clothing and accessories of American men and women c. 1770-1790, with emphasis on the durable hardware that survives in the archaeological record. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

On Pins and Needles

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons
2-4 p.m.

If you knit, embroider or crochet, or would like to learn, join us. Get together with other fiber crafters to learn or develop your skills. Work on projects in progress or start something new! Registration requested. BYOY! (Bring Your Own Yarn!)

Sun, Feb 22

Quarter Auction Benefit

North Beach VFD,
8536 Bayside Road, Chesapeake Beach
1-3

Doors open at noon. Auction starts at 1 p.m. Regular bidding paddles are \$3 each, two for \$5, or three for \$7. Please bring your quarters for bidding. All in paddles will be available for \$45 each and include a bid on every program item.

Concessions available on site. For more information or reservations please call 240-416-4224. Proceeds support The North Beach Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary.

Mon, Feb 23

Mindfulness Series: Meditation with LJ

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Discover the power of presence with a

Sound Bath Meditation led by LJ of Dusk and Willow Designs in North Beach. The combination of meditation, sounds, and vibrations produced by different instruments such as crystal bowls, drums, chimes, and other instruments allows your mind to enter a meditative and relaxed state that will instill ultimate peace and relaxation to your body, mind, and spirit. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Tue, Feb 24

Writers by the Bay

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
6:30-7:30 p.m.

All writers and would-be writers are welcome to come for critique & camaraderie. If you're new to writing or looking to rekindle your writing habits, this monthly in-person writers' group will help you explore creative writing. Each workshop includes time for a creative free-write based on prompts and additional prompts to work on between workshops. Sharing your work is optional but encouraged, as it provides an opportunity to receive feedback from other writers. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Job Seeker Resources

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

MD Labor Workforce—Veterans Services will be available (in person) to meet with those seeking employment-related support and community service information. This event focuses on Veteran's Services, but all jobseekers are welcome! 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Tech Help Drop-in Hour

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Learn how to troubleshoot and fix your tech problems with Calvert Library! Need help with your devices? Drop in to Calvert Library's open tech hours! We are pleased to offer personalized assistance with basic tech requests, computer and internet basics, e-Readers, Libby, Microsoft Office or Google apps, personal devices and more! 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

CalvertLibrary.info.

Bilingual Conversation Hour: Spanish-English

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Come join us for a fun hour of bilingual conversation! 30 minutes in English and 30 minutes in Spanish! We will get to practice our English and Spanish Conversation Skills! 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Upgrading Credit

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way & Zoom
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Learn how to build your credit score. Offered both in person and on Zoom. Session will be recorded and later posted on YouTube. Your credit score is more than a number, it's a financial tool. In this workshop, we will break down what actually impacts your score and move into Credit 2.0. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Upcoming

Maritime Performance Series: The Burnett Sisters Band

Calvert Marine Museum
Friday, Feb. 27
7-9 p.m.

The Burnett Sisters Band—siblings Anissa, Sophia, and Anneli of Boone, North Carolina, joined by Geary Allen from Minster, England—are gifted multi-instrumentalists beloved on the traditional music circuit. To assign a genre to The Burnett Sisters Band would be to oversimplify the breadth of their musical influences—at a typical show, a driving bluegrass standard might be followed by an old-time fiddle tune, a classic Hank Williams song, a recognizable Geary Allen original, or a soaring gospel melody, all topped off with a flatfooting dance number by Anneli. 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.

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

To be considered for publication, articles and letters to the editor submitted must include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number. Submissions must be delivered by 4 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication to ensure placement for that week. After that deadline, the County Times will make every attempt possible to publish late content, but cannot guarantee so. Letters may be condensed/edited for clarity,

although care is taken to preserve the core of the writer's argument. Copyright in material submitted to the newspaper and accepted for publication remains with the author, but the County Times and its licensees may freely reproduce it in print, electronic or other forms. We are unable to acknowledge receipt of letters. The County Times cannot guarantee that every letter or photo(s) submitted will be published, due to time or space constraints.

ArtWorks Presents Feathers, Fins, and Fur



In March the artists at Artworks are providing work to showcase feathers, fins and fur. From an artist's perspective, feathers, fins, and fur represent the three fundamental textures of the animal kingdom, each requiring a distinct technical approach to light, movement, and layering.

- Feathers: structural complexity and iridescence.
- Fins: translucency and fluidity. Fins are defined by their relationship with water and light refraction. They are often treated as "veils".
- Fur: mass, flow, and tactility.

Our guest artist this month is Sara Hyder. Sara is a Southern Maryland based multi-media, abstract painter. She earned a Bachelor of Fine and Commercial Art Degree with a concentration in photography from the University of Saint Francis. In her current body of work Sara uses primarily acrylic paint and oil pastels, she occasionally uses color pencils and crayons for added dimension.

Sara finds inspiration for her paintings in the array of vibrant colors found in nature. Her work can be influenced by a bright field of wildflowers, a glowing sunset, or a rich

landscape. Sara loves to bring forth what her eye interprets in her paintings in an abstract manner, whether that be a specific flower or entire landscape. Her goal is to portray a feeling of delight through bold colors and energetic movement.

Please join us on March 7 from 1 - 4 for our opening reception and meet the artists. Light refreshments will be provided. The show runs March 5-29/

Money spent locally stays in the local economy and continues to strengthen the economic base of the entire community. Small local businesses make indispensable contributions to communities and neighborhoods. Supporting local artists allows them the opportunity to continue to serve their communities. You will often see members of Artworks@7th supporting local charities and organizations by participating in art shows, teaching workshops, and donating items for fundraisers.

ArtWorks@7th is located at 8905 Chesapeake Avenue (near 2nd street) in North Beach. Hours are Thursday through Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Press release from ArtWorks@7th

CSM Student Voices Heard During Advocacy Day



From left: Logan Pring, Semaj Thomas, Sanaa Thomas, CSM President Dr. Yolanda Wilson, Ashley Wilson, and Mia Iampieri

College of Southern Maryland (CSM) students traveled to Annapolis on February 5 to share their stories of the college's impact during Student Advocacy Day.

Student Advocacy Day is hosted annually by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC). The event brings together hundreds of community college students to advocate for state support of high-quality, affordable community college education.

"Our students' commitment to advocacy speaks to their leadership, but also to the deep connection CSM shares with the Southern Maryland community," said CSM President Dr. Yolanda Wilson. "Their voices and stories show the true impact community colleges have on students' lives and the bright futures they are working toward."

Mia Iampieri, a CSM civil engineering student, said it was an eye-opening experience to see the value of her voice in action.

"We can speak up," Iampieri said. "We have an effect and we can help build support for community colleges. I think it's amazing to see how people care, they want us to have a voice, and they want to prioritize our success."

Before meeting with legislators, students kicked off the day with a MACC-hosted rally where they heard remarks encouraging them to share why they chose community colleges and why these institutions matter. Senator Paul Corderman and Delegates Jessica Feldmark and Sarah Wolek led a panel discussion on the value of community colleges and the power of student voices.

"The single most important thing you can do is share your story," said Feldmark. "There are a lot of unique needs and important programs that need funding, but what you have that no one else has is your story."

The students detailed how their academic journeys are shaped by the access and support at CSM during meetings with legislators. Students met with the offices of Delegates Darrell Odom, Mark Fisher, Brian Crosby, Matt Morgan, C.T. Wilson, Edith Patterson, Debra Davis, Jeffrie Long, Todd Morgan, and Senators Arthur Ellis, Jack Bailey, and Kevin Harris.

Twin CSM students Sanaa and Semaj Thomas are in their second year of the Early College Program. They will graduate from high school in 2026 with an

Associate of Science degree in Business Administration and plan to pursue bachelor's degrees in engineering.

Sanaa spoke to the delegates about her experience as a high school student attending CSM full time. She is the founder of the Early College Club, an effort to create greater community among early college students to stay engaged and share support.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to meet my delegates and the people who can actually make changes in my community and the programs that affect me and my peers," Sanaa said. "It was a cool experience to be in that space where decisions are being made."

"It was a great experience to better understand the legislative process and help make our senators and delegates aware of the Early College Programs," Semaj said.

Semaj will be traveling back to Annapolis this spring as one of four students selected to serve as a page in the Maryland General Assembly Page Program representing Charles County. Students spend two weeks working with the General Assembly to experience the legislative session.

Logan Pring is a communications student at CSM with hopes of continuing his education to pursue a bachelor's degree in sports journalism. He said he's proud to have the special opportunity to participate in Student Advocacy Day.

"It's a blessing to go to the government and try to make change and have my voice heard," said Pring.

Returning to school after starting a family, CSM student Ashley Wilson is pursuing a degree in Pre-Professional Health Science with goals of working in pharmacy. As a recipient of the Kevin Harris Delegate Scholarship, Wilson encourages other students to seek out scholarship opportunities.

"It was a great experience getting to meet Delegate Harris having received his scholarship," Wilson said. "It was enlightening to be able to meet the people who make the decisions that surround our school and its affordability."

Student Advocacy Day is hosted by MACC, which serves as an advocate for Maryland's 16 community colleges and the needs of the students they serve.

Press release from CSM

In Remembrance

Tom Wikoff, 64



Thomas (Tom) Oren Wikoff, born July 21, 1961, passed away on February 14, 2026 at the age of 64. He is survived by a daughter, Julia (Wikoff) Barker (husband Mike), son David Wikoff and two beautiful granddaughters. He also leaves behind his sister, Jill Worley (husband Jim), his brother, John Wikoff (wife Tanya), and

his beloved mother, Joy Wikoff. He is also lovingly remembered by his extended family and friends, whose lives were enriched by knowing him.

Tom lived a life of strength, kindness, humor, and deep love of his family. The memories he created while here with us will continue to bring comfort and smiles in the years ahead.

Tom's legacy lives on in the hearts of those he loved. He will be missed and forever remembered.

A celebration of Tom's life will be held at a later date.

CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of January 26, 2026 – February 1, 2026, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 1,954 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 61
- Disorderly: 7
- Domestic: 27
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 30
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 1153
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 21
- Traffic Complaints: 36
- Traffic Stops: 189
- 911 Hang Ups: 48
- ARRESTS: 27



Christopher Allen Gasch

CDS Violation: 26-09788 On January 30, 2026, DFC Lewis initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle being operated by a driver with a suspended license in the area of Dares Beach and Wilson

Rd in Prince Frederick. Contact was made with the driver, identified as **Christopher Allen Gasch**, 45, of Owings, who acknowledged that he was driving on a suspended license. An open-air sniff of the vehicle was conducted, during which K9 Benji positively alerted for the presence of narcotics. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed a glass vial containing suspected methamphetamine, six hypodermic syringes, and a paper fold containing suspected methamphetamine. Gasch was placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, where he was charged with CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis and CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia.



Dominick Tarzia

CDS Violation: 26-10058 On January 31, 2026, Deputy Contic initiated a traffic stop in the parking lot of Weis, located at 13300 H.G. Trueman Road in Solomons, after

identifying the driver as having an active warrant. The driver was identified as **Dominick Tarzia**, 56, of Martinton, Illinois. During the subsequent investigation, a search of the vehicle revealed approximately 14.4 ounces of cannabis packaged in four vacuum-sealed bags and one open zip-lock bag. Tarzia was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, where he was arrested on the outstanding warrant and charged with CDS: Possession of Cannabis Over Civil Use.

CDS Violation: 26-09898 On January 31, 2026, Deputy Grabill initiated a traffic stop for an equipment violation. Contact was made with the driver, **Emanuel Greenwell Guy, Jr.**, 61, of Lusby, who advised he did not possess a valid driver's license and that the vehicle was not insured. A search of the vehicle revealed



Emanuel Greenwell Guy, Jr.



Jeffrey Paul Voiers



Joclynn Madisynn Tamar Jay

Suboxone strips for which Guy did not have a valid prescription. Guy was placed under arrest and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, where he was charged with CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis.

Fleeing and Eluding: 26-08565

On January 26, 2026, at approximately 5:05 p.m., DFC Huy attempted a traffic stop on a stolen vehicle traveling southbound on Rt. 4 in the area of Ponds Wood Road in Huntingtown. The vehicle failed to stop and continued southbound at speeds exceeding 91 mph. The pursuit was terminated for public safety reasons. The vehicle

was later observed traveling eastbound on Rt. 231 in Prince Frederick, driving into oncoming traffic. The vehicle entered a traffic circle in the wrong direction and continued onto Calvert Hill Road, where it reached a dead end and became disabled. The driver exited the vehicle and fled on foot. DFC Hill apprehended the driver, identified as **Jeffrey Paul Voiers**, 41, of Glen Burnie, who was found to have multiple outstanding warrants from various jurisdictions. A passenger, **Joclynn Madisynn Tamar Jay**, 21, of Glen Burnie, was located inside the vehicle. Jay reported she repeatedly told Voiers to stop the vehicle during the incident. A search of the vehicle incident to arrest revealed three glass smoking devices containing suspected cocaine residue. A search of Jay's person revealed three Suboxone strips. Both individuals were transported to the Calvert County Detention Center. Voiers was charged with Unlawful Taking of a Motor Vehicle, CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia, Kidnapping, Theft (\$1,500 to under \$25,000), and Fleeing and Eluding. Jay was charged with CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis.

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

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

Arrest Made in Cell Phone Store Robberies

The Calvert County Sheriff's Office has arrested Melsun Shamel Perry, 34 of District Heights, in connection with multiple crimes targeting cell phone retail businesses in Calvert County.

The charges stem from incidents that occurred on December 29, 2025, at the Verizon Wireless store in Dunkirk, and on February 3, 2026, at the Verizon Wireless store in Lusby.

Perry has been charged in Calvert County with:

- Armed Robbery
- Robbery
- First- and Second-Degree Assault
- Organized Retail Theft
- Malicious Destruction of Property (over \$1,000)
- Fourth-Degree Burglary (Tools and Theft)
- Theft (\$1,500 to under \$25,000)

Perry was apprehended and taken into custody on February 10, 2026. In addition to the Calvert County charges, Perry had more than 20 outstanding warrants from



Melsun Shamel Perry

jurisdictions in Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland for similar offenses.

Press release from CCSO

Detectives Make Arrest in Multijurisdictional Skimming Investigation

The Calvert County Sheriff's Office (CCSO), in coordination with federal and regional law enforcement partners, has arrested Becam CiuCiu, 20 of Baltimore, MD, following an extensive, multijurisdictional investigation into the installation of illegal "skimming devices" at retail locations throughout Maryland.

Since October 2025, CCSO deputies have investigated multiple incidents involving skimming devices discovered on point-of-sale pin pads at 7-Eleven stores in Calvert County. Skimming devices are used to unlawfully capture debit and credit card information and associated PIN numbers, allowing suspects to create counterfeit cards and fraudulently obtain cash and merchandise.

Through coordinated investigative efforts, surveillance review, interagency collaboration, and the execution of search warrants, investigators identified Becam CiuCiu as a suspect responsible for installing skimming devices at numerous 7-Eleven locations across multiple Maryland jurisdictions.

On February 5, 2026, CCSO deputies executed search and arrest warrants at residences in Baltimore City.

As a result of the operation, investigators recovered:

- 15 skimming devices
- 71 encoded "cash-out" cards
- Skimming device manufacturing equipment
- \$21,264 in U.S. currency



Becam CiuCiu

Becam CiuCiu was taken into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Possession of Skimming Device (x2) and ID Fraud with Intent to Manufacture/Distribute (x2).

This remains an active investigation. Additional charges and arrests may follow.

Anyone who believes they may have been a victim of debit or credit card fraud is encouraged to contact their financial institution immediately and report suspicious activity to local law enforcement.

Press release from CCSO

Woman Dies After Fall from Hotel Balcony



Sarah Jordan



Rod 'N Reel resort

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Sheriff's Office is investigating the death of a Hollywood woman at the Rod 'N Reel resort in Chesapeake Beach. The body of Sarah Jordan, 46, was found late on Dec. 15. She had been staying at the hotel with her long-time boyfriend.

"She fell from the balcony of her hotel room," Jordan's sister Katrinia Dove told The County Times.

In a release, the sheriff's office says the case is under active investigation. The release says, "Investigators are currently awaiting the results of the autopsy and additional information from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Once all relevant information, evidence, and findings have been fully gathered and reviewed, a formal meeting will be conducted with the Calvert County State's Attorney's Office to present the complete investigative findings."

Dove said it was her understanding that Sarah was at the resort to celebrate her anniversary with her boyfriend. "When my mother picked her belongings up from the police station there was an anniversary card for him in her suitcase," she said.

The family hasn't heard much, Dove said. "As of right now, they're telling us there really isn't much they can say because it's an ongoing investigation."

Dove said her sister was in good health and she bristles at the suggestion of one officer that it may have been suicide.

"She was perfectly healthy," Dove said. She said their father's birthday was the day she checked into the hotel, and "she had just picked her son up from college, literally the day before."

"My sister wouldn't commit suicide," she insisted.

"At the time she was doing the Spark deliveries for Walmart," Dove said of her sister's job. She had been doing that for quite some time. Before that she worked for an online boutique.

"She was a wonderful person," Dove said of Jordan. "She was a hard worker. She was a single mother, so she was into anything for her son, in any sports, anything like that. She was always at a game, always at practice. She had just been baptized."

She said they were close. "She was my only sibling," she said, adding, "My parents lived eight minutes down the road from us, so my husband's at work a lot, so my children and myself would be at my parents' house to have dinner with them."

She said the sheriff's office "can't tell us what he (the boyfriend) said to them or anything like that. There's just a lot of questions because my sister wouldn't commit suicide."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

School System Appoints Chief Financial Officer

Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) has appointed Christine Jewett as Chief Financial Officer, bringing extensive public-sector financial expertise and a deep understanding of the school system's operations and fiscal priorities.

Jewett most recently served as Supervisor of Finance for St. Mary's County Public Schools, a position she held since 2021. Prior to that role, she worked as a Budget Analyst and Accountant in St. Mary's County beginning in 2019.

She is well known to Calvert County Public Schools, having previously served the district from 2007 through 2018 as Supervisor of Finance, Staff Accountant, and Internal Auditor.

Her professional experience also includes service as a Financial Reporting Manager with American Community Properties Trust.

Jewett began her career as a Financial Auditor with Ernst & Young, where she developed a strong foundation in financial accountability and compliance.

Jewett holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting from La Salle University and a Master of Science in Management from the University of Maryland Global Campus. She is actively involved in the Calvert County community through the Calvert High School Athletics Boosters and has previously served on both mid-



Christine Jewett

dle and elementary school Parent-Teacher Associations.

"Calvert County Public Schools is fortunate to welcome back a leader of Ms. Jewett's experience, integrity, and institutional knowledge," said Dr. Marcus J. Newsome, Superintendent of Schools. "Her expertise and commitment to public education will be invaluable as we continue to strengthen fiscal stewardship in support of student success."

Press release from CCPS

Lusby Man Pleads Guilty to Attempted Murder

On February 13, Khiantae Rai-Vaughn Marquez Robinson, 20, of Lusby, pleaded guilty in Calvert County Circuit Court to attempted second degree murder, first degree assault, use of a firearm in the commission of a crime of violence, and concealing evidence of a crime.

The charges stemmed from a drive-by shooting that occurred on September 16, 2025, on Golden West Way in Lusby. Investigators from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office determined that Robinson fired 2 shots from a vehicle at Nicholas Derick Dwayne Smith, 25, and Timothy William White, Jr., 25, as they were changing a tire. Neither individual was wounded.

Robinson was identified as the perpetrator and taken into custody after a seven-day search. Robinson is currently detained at the Calvert County Detention Center. Sentencing is scheduled for May 15, 2026.

Robinson is facing a maximum sentence of 78 years in prison.

This case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant State's Attorney Christopher J. Monte.

Calvert County State's Attorney Robert



Khiantae Rai-Vaughn Marquez Robinson

Harvey would like to recognize Detective William Freeland and other members of the Calvert County Sheriff's Office for their diligent work in identifying and apprehending the defendant.

Press release from Calvert County State's Attorney

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Newsome Appointed Permanent Superintendent

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

When Dr. Marcus Newsome joined Calvert County Public Schools last August, the retired educator thought it would be a one-year assignment as interim superintendent for the school system in his new home.

Then the school board liked him and he liked the job. So, on Feb. 19 Newsome signed a four-year contract to run the school system full-time.

He said at the board meeting, "I'm quite humbled. When I first met you back in July, I had no idea that we'd be at this place in time. I thought that at best I would be here for this year to try to serve as a bridge."

He added, "But over the last six months, the opportunity to work with you, your commitment to dedication."

He added, "This is important to you, and so it's important to me. I've come to appreciate and respect and even love the staff that we have here. We have tremendous leaders and teachers, and I've met so many wonderful students."

He stated, "I'm ready to roll my sleeves up, and work with this wonderful team that we have here and face our challenges head on, and to do everything necessary to provide the education that the children of Calvert County deserve."

And he added, "It was a hard sell, but my wife gave me permission to come back to work."

The next day the school system released the following press release:

Dr. Newsome has served as Interim Superintendent during the 2025–2026 school year, leading the district with distinction during a period of transition and growth.

"Dr. Newsome's extensive experience, calm and steady leadership, professionalism and community engagement have earned the respect of our education community," said Jana Smith Post, President of the Calvert County Board of Education. "He has been embraced by educators, families, and stakeholders alike, and we are confident he is the right leader to guide our schools into the future."

An award-winning educator, Dr.

Newsome brings a history of executive leadership experience guiding school systems through academic improvement and organizational transformation. He has served as superintendent in multiple school districts and is nationally recognized for advancing digital learning, leadership development, and instructional excellence.

His leadership has been featured in national publications and recognized at White House ceremonies, and his work mentoring current and aspiring superintendents has influenced educational leaders across the country.

Dr. Newsome's impact is also highlighted in the internationally acclaimed movie documentary Petersburg Rising.

"It is an honor to serve the Calvert County community," said Dr. Newsome. "I believe every decision must be made in the best interest of students, and I look forward to working alongside our educators, families, and community partners to build an even stronger future for Calvert County Public Schools."

Dr. Newsome holds two doctoral degrees and has served as an associate professor at both Harvard University and Virginia



Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marcus Newsome

Commonwealth University. He is the author of multiple leadership books and an ordained minister. He and his family are deeply committed to service, faith, education, and the Calvert County community.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

School Efficiency Report Highlights Staff Needs, Savings

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of Education has a lot of homework to do – 450 pages worth. The school board ordered an efficiency report and consulting firm Public Works complied in four months. The board received a briefing on the final report at their Feb. 12 meeting.

At first blush the report seems to present recommendations, including staff additions, that will cost the system more budgetary expenses. But under the theory you have to spend money to make money, project manager Dr. Joanne Cook insisted the report includes \$29 million in savings over five years.

Throughout the presentation the consultants were laudatory of the school system and its employees. Cook said, "I have participated or led at least 150 of these types of efficiency reviews in 37 different states. And I'll say the commitment that I found in Calvert County was very refreshing."

The report used five "benchmark" counties to compare Calvert to: Carroll, Cecil, Charles, St. Mary's, and Wicomico.

Why the study? Cook said, "With a decline in student enrollment, decline in local, state, and federal funding, coupled with the rising needs of students, not to mention the stringent mandates of your Blueprint for Maryland's Future, (Superintendent)

Dr. Newsom and his team had the forward thinking and right on target to look for ways that this district could remain resilient and student centered and fiscally sound."

Cook said, "The recommendations should be looked upon as something the district is not doing really wrong. It's just what you could do to improve practices that you already have."

She added, "The nearly universal complaint that we hear when we go into these central office studies is that the central office is top

heavy. Nothing could be less than accurate for CCPS. A credible and defensible case can be made that your central office structure is understaffed. Relative to benchmark districts, the staffing gaps are the most evident in executive leadership, instructional supervision, legal services, and communication services."

Key survey takeaways, Cook reported: "CCPS benefits from a highly committed and student-centered workforce. Staffing shortages and capacity limits are most pressing system wide. Employees are looking for vision and direction with assurance and support as to CCPS' future over the next three to five years. And I will share with you in many of the interviews, they indicated that with all of Dr. Newsom's visits, and he's very visible in the district and going out into the classrooms. We even interviewed a lot of paraprofessionals who said, 'We've never seen the superintendent before'."

She added, "Staff seek alignment, clarity, resources and support rather than additional initiatives that are beyond their capacity to perform. Another theme is improvement and enhancement opportunities are mostly organizational and operational and operational systems are the primary hurdles to gaining efficiencies."

"There's one more theme that I wanted to share with you, she said, "We heard a repetitive theme throughout our interviews and focus groups that we seem to be a system of schools, not a school system. And by that, many of the interviewees meant that it seems that things are not consistent from school to school. And there aren't a set of non-negotiables that all schools must follow."

One of the findings, she said, is "The discipline behavior incidents have shown a decline, but...if you dig a little bit deeper into that data, it shows in some schools fighting as well as adult assaults have increased."

She added, "There may be a need for additional student mental health support," noting, "Nearly one in five respondents disagreed that they feel safe in their school environment."

One of the recommendations, according to former Somerset County Superintendent Dr. John Gaddis, who began his career at the then new Plum Point Elementary School: Try to expand the Career and Technology Academy.

He said the academy works well. "That is something that we see would be a big benefit for the school system."

Regarding administrative reorganization, Gaddis said, "Right now, you operate with three chief officers. They manage a wide portfolio of departments. You have a chief academic officer directly supervising all elementary principals, while also overseeing system-wide curriculum assessment and special ed. You have your chief operations officer handling that side of the house, but also with secondary principals reporting to her. This creates some problems. Principals receive insufficient instructional coaching and support. Senior leaders lack the bandwidth for strategic planning and continuous improvement, and you can't respond quickly to emerging instructional or operational challenges. So, the solution is the reorganization creates an executive director for elementary and secondary education who will provide a focused day-to-day instructional leadership model to principals. This will allow the deputy superintendent for schools and learning to concentrate on the system-wide strategy, curriculum coherence, and performance improvement. What will happen, the critical problems, hopefully the outcomes become more consistent. Instructional coaching for your principals, who are your curriculum leaders in your buildings. Faster identification and resolution of school level challenges, stronger alignment between the district priorities and classroom practice.

"And then something that's very important across the state of Maryland, if not the country, but definitely in Maryland, principal retention, and development. There needs to be a pipeline."

The report also recommends the board hire its own legal counsel and a communications director. The district is reportedly the only one in the state without a communications director.

Superintendent Dr. (Marcus) Newsome said, "This efficiency assessment allows the entire community to see the operations of every major department and central office. We don't have anything to hide."

Board member Paul Harrison threw out some caution. He noted, "Now we're getting into the real nuts and bolts of things. And I'm concerned...we have opportunities, but some of these opportunities also have costs before we can save. And there's got to be some degree of discount on the savings. I don't expect to realize a hundred percent."

Harrison praised the staff and said they needed to be supported. But he added, "The elephant in the room, though, is that funding is flat (that) I expect from the state and from the county. So, I would say we probably have to take a tact where we tell them what this number gets them, and then we put in the things that we may be able to save, and we give the commissioners the choice to help us out beyond that flat funding."

He said investment in kids is expensive, with a cost of \$300,000 per child for their years in school.

He added, "We have to balance the needs here with the folks that are in this county trying to live every day with 12 percent in assessment increases."

The board is expected to tackle their next year's budget at their next meeting.

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WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, FEB 19 Rain Hi: 44° Lo: 40°	FRI, FEB 20 AM Showers Hi: 49° Lo: 40°	SAT, FEB 21 Partly Cloudy Hi: 51° Lo: 35°	SUN, FEB 22 Rain Hi: 39° Lo: 31°
MON, FEB 23 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 39° Lo: 29°	TUE, FEB 24 Mostly Sunny Hi: 40° Lo: 31°	WED, FEB 25 Partly Cloudy Hi: 49° Lo: 42°	THU, FEB 26 Showers Hi: 55° Lo: 37°

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