



Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024

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**Commissioners Vote to
Cut Elected Treasurer**

**Outgoing School Board
Members Bid Farewell**

**Wildlife Refuge
Established in SoMD**

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“JUST BECAUSE YOU’RE ELECTED DOESN’T ALWAYS MEAN YOU’RE ACCOUNTABLE.”

COMMISSIONER PRESIDENT BUDDY HANCE ON AN ELECTED TREASURER

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LOCAL 5
Proposal wants to do away with elected county treasurer



LOCAL 6
Restrictions lifted at Breezy Point



ON THE COVER
Calvert prepares for yuletide cheer

WEEKLY FORECAST

<p>THU, DEC 19</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 46° Lo: 34°</p>	<p>FRI, DEC 20</p> <p>Cloudy Hi: 42° Lo: 33°</p>	<p>SAT, DEC 21</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 37° Lo: 22°</p>	<p>SUN, DEC 22</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 31° Lo: 19°</p>
<p>MON, DEC 23</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 32° Lo: 25°</p>	<p>TUE, DEC 24</p> <p>Cloudy Hi: 42° Lo: 31°</p>	<p>WED, DEC 25</p> <p>Showers Hi: 43° Lo: 37°</p>	<p>THU, DEC 26</p> <p>Mostly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 40°</p>

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Season's Greetings from Calvert County

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let's take a moment to appreciate the blessings of community and the love of family and friends. Enjoy the time with your family and friends this holiday season.

Commissioner President Earl F. "Buddy" Hance

In the new year, we will keep working to support our community and preserve what makes Calvert County special. I look forward to building on our successes and addressing our challenges with transparency and collaboration. Wishing you all a healthy and happy New Year.

Commissioner Vice President Todd Ireland

The holidays are a time to reflect, reconnect and be grateful for the blessings we have. Please enjoy your time with your loved ones this holiday season. From my family to yours, I wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a peaceful season surrounded by those you love.

As we begin 2025, I remain committed to serving the people of Calvert County. I look forward to working together to keep our community safe, strong and thriving. Wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

Commissioner Mark C. Cox Sr.

The holidays remind us to cherish the time we have with family and friends. As we celebrate this season, I hope each of you finds peace, joy and gratitude in the simple moments that mean the most. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all!

As we begin 2025, I am excited about the opportunities ahead for Calvert County. Together, we will continue working to strengthen our community, support our local businesses and improve the lives of all residents. I wish everyone a healthy, happy and successful New Year.

Commissioner Catherine M. Grasso

May we come together as a community this holiday season to celebrate our blessings and support one another. Calvert County is a special place because of the people who



live here, and I am grateful for each of you. Wishing you a Merry Christmas, happy holidays and a joyful season filled with love and laughter.

In 2025, I look forward to working together with my fellow commissioners and community leaders to address the needs of our residents and ensure a bright future for our county. May this New Year bring you good health, happiness and fulfillment.

Commissioner Mike Hart

The holidays are a special time for family, friends and community. We are fortunate to have all three in abundance in Calvert County. I hope you take time this season to share laughter, kindness and gratitude with those you love. From my family to yours, Merry Christmas and happy holidays! Wishing everyone a New Year filled with hope, health and opportunity.

Bob Branham, Director, Parks & Recreation

As we embrace the joy and wonder of the holiday season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible year we've shared and to express my heartfelt gratitude to our community.

At the Parks and Recreation Department, our mission goes beyond maintaining spaces and programs—it's about creating opportunities for connection, inspiration,

and belonging. Our five divisions—Parks, Recreation, Natural Resources, Aquatics and Special Facilities—have worked tirelessly to provide spaces and services that bring people together, spark joy and foster memories that last a lifetime.

Whether you've strolled through a park, attended a recreation program, enjoyed the beauty of our natural resources, made a splash at the pool or visited our special facilities like the beach, campground or golf course, you've helped make our community vibrant and full of life.

This holiday season, I encourage you to explore and enjoy these special places with your family and friends. They are here because of you and for you.

On behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department, I wish you a season filled with warmth, happiness and togetherness. May the holidays be a time to reflect on what brings us together and a reminder of the beauty and strength of our community.

Thank you for your support, your engagement and for allowing us to serve you. Here's to a wonderful holiday season and an even brighter year ahead!

Mary Beth Cook, Director, Planning & Zoning

It's been an honor and a privilege to serve the citizens of Calvert County for the past 31 years. Happy Holidays from the Calvert

County Department of Planning & Zoning!

JR Cosgrove, Director, Public Works

As the year comes to a close, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the residents of Calvert County and the dedicated Public Works team. Your partnership and hard work ensure that our roads, facilities and services remain strong and reliable year-round.

The holiday season is a time to reflect on our accomplishments, cherish those around us and look ahead to the opportunities of the New Year. Whether you're enjoying time with family, traveling or supporting our community, please stay safe and take a moment to appreciate the beauty of this season.

From all of us at Calvert County Public Works, we wish you a warm, safe and joyful holiday season and a bright and promising New Year.

Eryn Lowe, Director, Communications & Media Relations

This holiday season, the Calvert County Government Department of Communications & Media Relations celebrates not only the spirit of community but also the connections we've built with you, our residents.

In 2024, we made strides to enhance accessibility to government information, improve public engagement and create new ways to hear your voices. Your feedback and involvement continue to shape how we prioritize services and respond to the needs of our growing community. As we look toward 2025, we remain dedicated to building trust and keeping the lines of communication open.

Thank you for your engagement, trust and support throughout the year. We wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a New Year filled with peace, prosperity and continued collaboration.

Dave McDowell, Director, Public Safety

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety, we wish everyone a joyous – and safe – holiday season.

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Hance Re-elected Commissioner President

Ireland to Serve as Vice President

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

For the fifth consecutive year, Buddy Hance will serve as president of the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Hance has been president since the current board has been in office and he served two terms under the previous board.

County law requires the commissioner president to be elected yearly by the board. Under many previous boards, the president's position was rotated among the board members, but there is nothing in the law that requires that to happen.

Now in his second term as commissioner, Hance has thus become the face of the county commissioners to other county, state, and federal agencies. Hance previously served as Maryland Secretary of Agriculture. He is a farmer.

Hance was unanimously re-appointed president at the Dec. 17 BOCC meeting.

At the meeting there appeared to be the setting of a new precedent of rotating the vice presidency. Todd Ireland replaced Catherine Grasso in that position. Mike



Commissioner President Buddy Hance

Hart held it in the first year of the term.

Both Hance and Ireland thanked their fellow commissioners for the vote of confidence.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Proposal Would Eliminate Elected County Treasurer

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has unanimously voted to ask the county legislative delegation to introduce a bill that would eliminate the elected position of County Treasurer.

The idea was introduced at the Dec. 17 BOCC meeting by County Attorney John Norris. He said, "At the Maryland Association of County's most recent meeting, I was asked if we still had an elected treasurer in Calvert County. And I had to say we are one of the last five in the state of Maryland that had those statutory (positions)."

Norris said, "I have proposed that the current position be eliminated at the end of the current treasurer's term, so that the treasurer's office responsibilities would then be rolled into the Department of Finance and Budget's roles and responsibilities. And the director would make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to select. The treasurer would be a contract position. The most recent that I'm aware of was Charles County converted, and it's been about eight years ago. They had an individual that ran for the office with the sole purpose of converting it to an appointed position by the Board of County Commissioners."

Norris observed, "We have some insight that it's going to get a mixed reaction from our delegation and senators when it gets to Annapolis. Some are supportive of the concept; others are supportive of a different approach they've proposed a couple of different times."

Norris explained why the position would be by contract. He said, "It would be directly responsive to the Board of County Commissioners and not necessarily be a major position that's insulated. Part of that was to try and address some of the concerns that I've heard from one of our delegates that the position needs to be responsive to the public. It cannot be insulated and sit behind a desk and not be responsive and not take into consideration what may be presented to them."

Commissioner Catherine Grasso asked how such a person could be removed from office. Norris said, "There's always termination for convenience provisions in the contract where you purchase out the remainder of the contract."

He said, "Maryland employees have protections and there's processes in place and it's much harder to get rid of them."

Grasso said, "I do not like the payout concept. If you're not doing your job, if we've worked with them, I don't see rewarding them and putting the county under the fiscal responsibility of paying that person out and hiring someone else."

But Commissioner Mike Hart said, "With the contract employee though, to make sure that you get a decent person because if I was putting my livelihood out there, basically flying without a net, I would want to make sure, if I met my conditions, not because you just didn't like me, that I would not lose my job."

Grasso, who worked for the federal government, said, "I managed people that I personally did care for, but as long as they're doing their job, my personal feelings have no bearing. I don't like that in the workplace."

The current elected treasurer is Nova Tracy-Soper, a Republican, as are the five county commissioners.

Commissioner President Buddy Hance said, "The treasurer's position has changed a lot over time. It's not like it used to be. We have some issues today, which has brought this discussion to light if we're all being honest. I just want to reassure people that this isn't about a power grab. We're not trying to take over other people's responsibilities, but it's a matter of making sure that county functions are done appropriately and properly and that there aren't things going to the wayside. Just because you're elected doesn't always mean you're accountable."

Grasso added, "The citizens need to know that what we have in place now is not working for them."

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A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

In order to allow our staff to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones, the County Times will not publish on December 26. We will resume our normal publishing schedule on Thursday, January 2, 2025. We wish all our readers a happy holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in the new year.

Seasonal Camping Returns to Breezy Point



Breezy Point Campground

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

A year ago, the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) voted to restrict the use of the campground at Breezy Point Beach and Campground to daily use only, shutting down the historical seasonal use. Up to that time there had been 70 seasonal campsites and 17 daily campsites.

At their Dec. 17 meeting, the BOCC, on recommendation from Parks and Recreation staff, did a partial reversal and in the 2025 season will allow a hybrid model of both seasonal and daily campers.

According to Parks and Recreation Special Facilities Division Chief Kirsten Perry, “The hybrid camping model is implementing a combination of both seasonal and short-term camping. This approach would offer flexibility to retain long-term renters, while also capitalizing on increased turnover from daily rentals. Fiscal impact of each model presents unique fiscal implications for Breezy Point Beach and campground. Staff believes that aligning seasonal camping rates with comparable campgrounds and increasing revenue through additional short-term camping sites offers the best financial outcomes for Breezy Point Beach and Campground.”

Perry said of the reason for the switch to all-daily, “We were getting a lot of complaints from people that wanted to get into the campground and couldn’t because we had so many seasonal campgrounds.”

The BOCC was told by County Attorney John Norris that they couldn’t restrict camping to county residents because of regulations associated with accepting state grant funding for the facility.

In the year that the campground was restricted to daily use, with a 14-day maximum, the park generated \$279,439 in income compared to \$301,614 under the old model. And the campground was often not full, with weekends in the summer being the highest use.

Under the hybrid model, with 48 seasonal and 35 daily sites, Perry said, there was the potential for \$623,500 in annual revenue.

But for several of the commissioners, money wasn’t the issue. Commissioner Catherine Grasso asked, “Let’s put the money aside. Were you happy with the quality that was within the campground? Did you feel like it was more family oriented? Did you feel like the campers were more cognizant of that? There were other campers around them.”

Director of Parks and Recreation Bob Branham said, “From fielding concerns and having to reply to them when we get them through the county administrator’s office, I had significantly less, still some, but less last year than I’ve ever had in working with Breezy Point Beach and Campground.”

Facility Manager Mike Moradian said, “With going to all daily, we had obviously way more reservations than we normally would have under the previous model. So, we had a lot more camping, visitors and reservations than we’ve ever had before. And, with that being said...we probably had fewer problems than I’ve ever known.”

But staff said they would be proactive with the seasonal campers including mandatory meetings to ho over the requirements.

The commissioners unanimously approved the change for 2025.

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Departing School Board Members Bid Adieu

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The three outgoing Calvert County Board of Education members attended their last meeting on Dec. 11. Three newly elected members will be sworn in at the January 9 meeting that could involve a shift in philosophy for the entire school system.

At their last meeting, each departing member received a proclamation from the board, and each presented their farewells.

Dawn Balinski, with a prepared three-page statement, was by far the most extensive and she took the opportunity to offer advice to the new members. Balinski chose not to seek re-election after serving 12 years, including a year as president.

Balinski said, “for school board members, ‘It can be a lot of work that carries the heavy burden of being responsible for the livelihood of all of our employees and for the wellbeing of our students. When I first started in 2010, the issue at the time was that due to county and state deficits caused by the recession, we were forced into removing all planned raises and step increases for our staff. Our board meetings were filled to overflow capacity with teachers and support staff pleading for salary increases, telling us their stories of hardship and how unfair we were being. It was painful to have to put my name on those budgets that were universally detested by our employees. And it took years to be able to make our staff whole again and to provide annual increases that everyone deserved.’”

With things right again, Balinski observed, “Last year caught us off guard when the state dropped our funding allocation by \$22 million because of the Cove Point valuation issues. We had to drain every penny we had in reserve and implement spending freezes to make our budget for this year whole. But if the Department of Legislative Services does not readjust the funding levels in line with the new PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) agreement with Cove Point, then the new board in January will be in the unenviable position of having to pass a very restricted budget.”

She noted, “Other difficult issues have come up over the years, such as on the safety side, the board has had to answer questions of should we arm teachers in response to school shooting in St. Mary’s? Should we risk traumatizing students with active shooter drills? What’s the best way to invest our resources to shore up the physical security of our school buildings? And on the classroom side, we had to tackle the issue of how we can best protect our teachers from getting injured but still comply with the state ban on seclusion practices in our special ed population.”

She insisted, “I’ve learned from these issues that safety is a school system’s number one priority. Parents entrust their children with us for seven to eight hours a day and it is our responsibility to keep them safe and our employees expect us to do the same and to make the overall climate of CCPS be a place where they feel supported, safe, and where they want to come to work each day.”

She said “The mother of all difficult issues” was Covid. “It was horrendous, sitting in this chair, seeing community members dying and hearing of bed shortages at the hospital and coming to understand that no matter what decision we made, it would cause harm. Either we decide to reduce the time the kids are in school, thereby impeding their academic performance and impacting their mental health. Or do we bring them back into enclosed environments, thereby potentially exposing staff, students and in turn their entire families to a serious and at the time of potentially fatal disease.”

Balinski reported that, “Calvert County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, and ancestry or national origin, familial status, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.” All board members are required to be committed to this ideal and if they choose differently, will most certainly be subject to unpleasant calls for their removal.

She said, “Diversity and equity are defining principles in our state education code that make our community stronger. And that censorship meant to shield students from realities around them are detrimental to students understanding of the world and to their personal growth.”

“To the new board coming in, she said, “Please know that when you sit up here, words matter, proposals matter, actions matter. They have an impact that filters way beyond your own children and your

own circle of influence. Every decision you make should show that you understand the responsibility you shoulder for every child in our buildings.”

Board Vice President Inez Claggett, who served six years and chose not to seek re-election, was honored in the proclamation for advocating “for policy changes to limit the use of restraint and seclusion in Calvert County Public schools aiming to eliminate seclusion entirely. And...she played a crucial role in the approval of the policy statement on anti-racism, the anti-racism resolution, and the resolution in support of transgender non-binary and all LGBTQ plus students. As a result, Calvert County became one of the first in the state to establish important foundations for equitable educational opportunities for all students.”

Claggett said, “I thank you everyone for supporting me as I worked to make the school system better and ensure that every student had equal opportunity to succeed within our school system and to matriculate into the community and to be able to give back as an outstanding adult.”

Board President Antoine White, who served one term and list a re-election bid, in the proclamation was praised for meeting “all challenges with dignity, reflective thinking, collaboration, and measured decision making.”

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Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge Established

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams on Dec. 13 joined partners and community members to celebrate the establishment of Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge as the 573rd and newest unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. A newly acquired 31-acre parcel in Nanjemoy is the first of several donations that will become part of the new refuge and provide crucial protected habitat for threatened and endangered species and expand outdoor recreational opportunities for the 10 million people who visit, live and work in the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan region.

“Today, we mark an incredible milestone in locally led conservation efforts as we welcome the Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge into our National Wildlife Refuge System,” said Secretary Haaland. “Across the nation, the Biden-Harris administration has partnered with local communities, partners and Tribes to protect treasured places, bolster climate resilience, and ensure current and future generations have public lands and waters to enjoy and recreate. Our collective work will ensure the health and enduring legacy of the National Wildlife Refuge System.”

“Today’s announcement is a great example of the collaborative conservation that happens when longstanding partners work

together in support of community-led priorities to conserve and restore important landscapes,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams. “Thanks to these relationships, the Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge will help support the region’s outdoor economy, protect and restore threatened and endangered species, and sustain recreational opportunities for generations to come.”

This marks the sixth addition to the Refuge System by Secretary Haaland, who also established the Willamette Valley Conservation Area in Oregon, Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area in Florida, Wyoming Toad Conservation Area in Wyoming, Paint Rock River National Wildlife Refuge in Tennessee, and the Lost Trail Conservation Area in Montana. The Department has also announced the expansion of several existing national wildlife refuges, which will allow for the voluntary conservation of up to 1.13 million acres of important wildlife habitat.

Under the Biden-Harris administration, the Service has added over 610,000 acres through willing-seller acquisition (including fee-title and easements) and approved the potential to acquire more than 1.6 million acres in fee-title and easements across the Refuge System. These efforts are locally supported and showcase a commitment to a collaborative and inclusive approach to

voluntary conservation. Investing in and expanding the Refuge System furthers the Biden-Harris administration’s work to support community-driven efforts to conserve and restore the nation’s lands and waters through the President’s *America the Beautiful* Initiative.

The Service worked closely with the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance to establish priorities for habitat management and land acquisition for the new refuge, as reflected in the final Land Protection Plan.

The 31-acre parcel near Nanjemoy in Charles County, Maryland, is the first of several intended donations by The Nature Conservancy that over the next few months will permanently protect and conserve more than 300 acres of interior forest and riparian wetlands habitat, supporting northern long-eared bats, forest-interior songbirds, box turtles and several species of salamanders that are of conservation concern. The Service will continue working with partners and willing sellers to secure voluntary conservation of up to 40,000 acres of important wildlife habitat within four watershed-based focus areas in Anne Arundel, Prince George’s, Calvert, Charles and St. Mary’s counties. The areas identified for conservation through this new national wildlife refuge support a wide range of species including waterfowl, shorebirds, forest-interior and grassland-dependent birds, and

threatened and endangered species such as the dwarf wedgemussel, Atlantic and short-nose sturgeon, puritan and northeastern tiger beetles, and the northern long-eared bat.

More than half of Maryland’s forests and wetlands have been lost in the conversion of important natural areas to other land uses, with more than 1 million acres developed since 1973. The region’s population is projected to surpass 20 million people in the next 10 years. Such habitat loss represents the primary threat to Maryland’s fish and wildlife and the communities and local economies that depend upon them.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is an unparalleled network of 573 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts. There is a national wildlife refuge within an hour’s drive of most major metropolitan areas. More than 69 million Americans visit refuges every year. Refuges provide vital habitat for thousands of species and access to world-class recreation, from fishing, hunting, and boating to nature watching, photography and environmental education. This recreation on national wildlife refuges supports regional economies to the tune of \$3.2 billion per year and support more than 41,000 jobs.

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Graduation Ceremony Celebrates Emerging Entrepreneurs

The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland on Dec. 6 celebrated the graduation of participants in the New Start Grant Initiative, a groundbreaking program designed to empower justice-involved individuals through entrepreneurial training.

The initiative equips these individuals with the skills and resources needed to start their own businesses and achieve financial independence. It is funded by the Maryland Legislature through the Maryland Department of Labor and was awarded to the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland.

The graduation ceremony, which took place at the Southern Maryland American Job Center in Waldorf, honored the hard work and dedication of individuals who successfully completed the program. These participants now have the opportunity to apply for interest-free microloans from the Maryland Department of Commerce to fund their business ventures.

The program aims to create pathways for returning citizens to build successful careers through entrepreneurship. By providing comprehensive entrepreneurial training, the New Start Grant Initiative offers participants valuable business planning, financial management, and marketing knowledge, setting them up for success in the competitive business world.

Delegate Jazz Lewis, the House sponsor of the legislation that created the New Start Grant, delivered an inspiring speech at the ceremony, reaffirming his commitment to assisting returning citizens in their reintegration into society. Delegate Lewis emphasized the critical role that second chances and entrepreneurial opportunities play in reducing recidivism and helping individuals lead successful lives.

"We cannot talk about justice without creating real opportunities for returning citizens to thrive," Delegate Lewis said. "The New Start Grant Initiative is an investment not only in individuals but in the future of our communities. I am proud to be part of a program that gives these individuals the tools to succeed, and I can't wait to see how their businesses grow in the coming years."

Erin Roth, Assistant Secretary of the Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, also spoke at the event. Roth highlighted the importance of collaboration between state agencies, local organizations, and businesses in helping returning citizens build a foundation for long-term success.

"We are excited to see how these graduates will apply the skills they've learned to create businesses that contribute to their communities," Roth remarked. "This initiative not only transforms individual lives but will also create positive ripples in our economy through job creation and expanding opportunities to access work, wages, and wealth."



Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland Executive Director John F. Hartline and Graduate Damien Thomas (Photo provided by Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland)

John Hartline, Executive Director of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, shared his pride in the program's success and the participants' progress. "The New Start Grant has given these individuals the opportunity to build something meaningful, and I'm excited to see how their hard work will lead to thriving businesses in our region," Hartline said.

A key highlight of the event was the story of one successful graduate, Kelvin Dyson, a passionate entrepreneur who is in the process of launching a food truck business, Blue Bay Crabs. Dyson shared his journey from justice involvement to business ownership, emphasizing how the program's training and mentorship had been pivotal in turning his dream into a reality.

"As someone who faced the challenges of recidivism, the opportunity to start my own business has been life-changing," Dyson stated. "Thanks to the New Start Grant Initiative, I've inherited a strong support system and gained the knowledge and confidence to take my passion for cooking and turn it into a thriving food truck business. I'm excited for what the future holds."

The Maryland Department of Labor and the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland continue to work in close partnership to expand opportunities for returning citizens. By offering access to entrepreneurial training and financial support, this initiative is making a lasting impact on the lives of individuals and the communities they serve.

For more information about the New Start Grant Initiative and how to apply for future cohorts, please contact the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland at brcapuano@tccsmd.org.

Press Release from Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

Calvert Community Calendar

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

Thu, Dec 19

TACOS: Teen Advisory Council of Students

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

Teens! Calvert Library needs you! We want the library to be a safe space where teens can hang out and freely access books, information, and form community. TACOS meets monthly to help us with our events and services planning. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Social Security Administration: Medicare

Calvert Library (Zoom)
5:30-6:30 p.m.

Learn about Medicare eligibility requirements, enrollment periods, the application process, and resources. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sat, Dec 21

Dee of St. Mary's Dockside Tour

Calvert Marine Museum
Noon – 4 p.m.

Step aboard the museum's skipjack for an up-close tour with crew members of her 56 ft. deck. Learn how watermen dredge for oysters, hoist the sails, and navigate the waterways of the Chesapeake.

Christmas Scrimshaw

Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum
10515 Mackall Road, St. Leonard
6:30-8:30 p.m.
\$20/person

How did sailors keep from getting bored during the age of sail? Join us as we explore the history of scrimshaw and make beautiful pieces to decorate this holiday season. Appropriate for ages 9 and up.

Sun, Dec 22

Christmas Open House

Port Republic One Room Schoolhouse and Christ Church
11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Come and celebrate an Old Fashioned Christmas in the original Port Republic One-Room Schoolhouse, which will be decorated for the holidays on the grounds of historic Christ Church. Visit with Santa in the schoolhouse and enjoy making crafts. Enjoy Christmas music and our guest pianist. Within easy walking distance, the Parish Hall will be open for refreshments and additional seasonal crafts. Christmas Attic Treasures will be for sale at the Parish Hall. Historic Christ Church will offer tours and there will be a treat for children who find the church mouse. <https://calvertoneroomschool.org/events>

Campfire on the Beach

Town Beach
9023 Bay Avenue, North Beach
5:30-7 p.m.

Warm up by the fire, roast marshmallows and enjoy hot cocoa!. 301-855-6681.

Thu, Dec 26

Winter Break Programing: Chesapeake Oysters

Calvert Marine Museum
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Winter is peak harvesting season for *Crassostrea virginica*, the Eastern oyster. Programming will showcase "Rock E. Feller," the museum's giant oyster model, oystering boats in the museum collection, and Miocene epoch oyster fossils. Create your own craft to take home (limited, while supplies last). Activities are appropriate for ages 5-10. Program included with museum admission.

Fri, Dec 27

Winter Break Programing: Blizzards and Bones

Calvert Marine Museum
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

At the close of the Miocene Epoch, regional waters began to cool as the world entered a new age. Discover how scientists use fossils and geological evidence to study climate change. Create your own craft to take home (limited, while supplies last). Activities are appropriate for ages 5-10. Program included with museum admission.

Mon, Dec 30

Winter Break Programing: Winter Birds of the Chesapeake

Calvert Marine Museum
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

The Chesapeake Bay becomes home to many waterfowl during the winter months. Activities at the museum and a take-home craft (limited, while supplies last) will spark new appreciation for our wintertime feathered friends. Activities are appropriate for ages 5-10. Program included with museum admission.

Tue, Dec 31

Noon Year's Eve Storytime

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons

Fairview Branch
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings

Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way

11:15 a.m.-12 p.m.

We'll read stories, sing songs and most of all have fun! There will be a ball drop when the clock strikes 12 and dance party to follow after. Dress attire optional. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Jan 1

Polar Bear Plunge

North Beach
1 p.m.

The COOLEST event of the year! Plungers take a quick dip, splash or swim in the frigid Chesapeake Bay. Some feel the plunge is a way to cleanse their body and to welcome in the new year; others may have just lost a bet! This event is free but if you choose to pay to participate, you will help to support a local charity.

Ongoing

Annmarie Garden in Lights - Outdoor Holiday Light Show

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
13470 Dowell Road, Solomons
November 29, 2024 - January 1, 2025.

A must-see holiday tradition for the entire family! Enjoy a stroll through the gardens to see the magical holiday lights display. In addition there will be holiday shopping, festive exhibits and food available for purchase at food trucks on-site. Advanced times-entry tickets are required for members and non-members! Check website for special nights and food truck schedule TBD. Closed on some evenings, please check website for updated schedule. This is a rain or shine event!

Upcoming

Southern Maryland Bluegrass

Calvert Elks Lodge
1015 Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick;
Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025
2 p.m.

Grand Ole Opry Member and "Queen of Bluegrass" Music, Rhonda Vincent is coming to Southern Maryland. She's an "All-American Bluegrass Girl!", multi-award winner, star of Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, and a firecracker of talent that powers one of the hottest bands in any genre of music today.

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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.



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In Remembrance

figure to neighbors, friends, and all fortunate enough to cross her path. She embodied the most valuable virtues of kindness and respect, leaving a lasting impact on everyone who knew her.

Dot and her husband of 62 years would create a magically successful life together. One where they measured success not by what and how much they had, but by who and how well they were raised. They would come to raise three children of their own on their farm in Avenue, MD, William Jr. (Howie), Michael, and Virginia (Ginger), all would grow calling those lessons and this farm home; Ginger even building her home on the property just across the farm. Together they all worked the farm and eventually started a family business of their own, a local auto parts store in Clements, MD, still open today. All of this was made possible by Dot's incredible work ethic, enthusiastic mind, and cunning ability to read people.

Dot's years of caring for others lead to

unwavering support from all through her final days. Their support to the family allowed her to return from diagnosis to the farm with grace and dignity to peacefully find her path home to Mike and God. We thank all for their presence.

Through 62 years of marriage, Dot and Bill loved each other immeasurably and immovably. Their love withstood the test of time and the early loss of their son, Michael, but grew inseparably intertwined within that. From the hospital to her passing months later, Bill never left her side. His devotion to her will be a lasting and final memory for her, and for us.

She is survived by her devoted husband, William H. Guy, Sr. (I), her children, William H. Guy, Jr. (II) (Cynthia), and Virginia (Ginger) Richards, her grandchildren, William H. Guy III (Lauren), Danielle Guy Hughes (Sean), Samantha Richards (Nick), and Madison Richards, and four great-grandchildren, who will each carry forward her legacy of love, togetherness,

and kindness. She was preceded in death by her spirited and animated son, Michael Guy.

As we mourn her passing, we also celebrate in the remarkable way that she approached life. Her love will continue to guide her family and community, and her memory will live on in every meal shared, card game played, cottage gathering, and every act of kindness inspired by her example.

The family will receive friends on Monday, December 30, 2024, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with prayers recited at 7:00 PM in Holy Angels Catholic Church, Avenue, MD, where a Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Tuesday, December 31, 2024 at 10:00 AM with Father Kevin Fields officiating. Interment will follow at Sacred Heart Catholic Cemetery, Bushwood, MD, where Dot will be laid to rest next to her beloved son, Michael. Serving as pallbearers will be her nephews, Dale Tennyson, Timmy Tennyson, Gary Bowling, Steve Guy, and Stan Guy, and her grandson, Billy Guy. Honorary pallbearer will be her

nephew, Clarke Guy.

In Lieu of Flowers donation may be made to Hospice of St. Mary's and ACTS (A Community That Shares).

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

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

Bronson Sweeney, 80



On Sunday, July 28, 2024, Bronson "Bro" Wetherall Sweeney passed away. Services will be held on Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 10:45 am at Arlington National Cemetery. For full obituary and information if attending service please visit www.CharlesLStevensFuneralHome.com

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In Remembrance

Continued from page 19

Thanks to those that interacted with Dan making his experiences in life enjoyable.

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

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

Joe Brown, 84



Joseph Aloysius "Joe" Brown, of Hollywood, MD, formerly of Colton's Point, MD, passed away on December 13, 2024, at his home. Born on February 29, 1940, in Leonardtown, MD, he was the son of the late Grace Cecilia Herd Brown and George Edward Brown. Joe was the loving husband of late Esther Fogel Brown, whom he married on February 8, 1964, in McCoy Air Force Base, Florida, and who preceded him in death on February 1, 2023.

Joe is survived by his children, Christina Estenson (Dale) of Las Vegas, NV, Joseph Brown, Jr. of Hollywood, MD, Deborah Brown of Tall Timbers, MD, and Patricia Pomroy (Shawn) of Rockwall, Texas, his siblings, Rose Bailey of Colton's Point, MD, George Brown of Avenue, MD, T. Andrew

Brown of Hollywood, MD, Samuel Brown of Avenue, MD, and Susan Tippett of Loveville, MD. He was preceded in death by his brother, John Brown, and sister, Cecelia Nelson.

Joe was a lifelong St. Mary's County, MD resident. He graduated from Ryken High School in 1958 and went on to earn his BS Occupational Education in 1977 from Southern Illinois University.

Joe was a waterman and served in the United States Air Force as a Chief Master Sergeant for twenty-nine years, six months, and twenty two days, retiring in 1991. While serving in the Air Force, he earned the Vietnam Service Medal with 4 Bronze Service Stars and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm. He served in Vietnam, Operation Desert Shield, and Operation Desert Storm.

The family will receive friends on Tuesday, December 31, 2024, from 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM in Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, Solomons, MD, where a Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:30 AM with Deacon Andy Ghist officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens Leonardtown, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be Joseph Brown, Jr., Laura Estenson, Brian Estenson, Sarah Estenson, Nicholas Pomroy, Isaih Kuginskie, and Elvis Pomroy.

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

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

Dot Guy, 81



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Dorothy Ann Tennyson Guy on December 17, 2024. Dorothy peacefully passed in her sleep surrounded by family, after bravely choosing to embrace her diagnosis and live her days out on Twin Oaks farm, surrounded by the spirit of her life's greatest accomplishment – her family.

A beloved homemaker, an exceptional cook prepared to feed the masses, a skilled and wily card player, and a steadfast pillar of love in her family and community, she lived a life that defined kindness, compassion, and dedication to all those around her. These were not goals on how to act, but, simply, her character.

Born on February 3, 1943 to the family of Thelma and Raymond Tennyson on a beautiful southern Maryland farm in Clements, MD, she was brought into an already large family of six children, where three more would follow. Her home is a haven where family and friends would gather to share meals, laughter, and memories. Known for much, her extraordinary cooking and this open-door extension to all is something she would bring to her own farm with her husband, Bill. Around their table, they had

a way of bringing people together, solving the world's problems, and creating traditions that will be cherished for generations. These moments would extend to anywhere the family gathered, including a waterfront cottage that the siblings came together to be stewards of, as well as cherishing this small farm, this property would build memories beyond its years for multiple generations of siblings, cousins, and friends to gather and enjoy their company.

She had an incredibly sharp wit, and her wily competitive spirit made her a formidable card player. She and her siblings would often gather weekly to play, but more than a card game was being had. As many youngsters she would care for would come to find out, this card table was a school of learning. Life's small, but invaluable lessons were learned during those games – about strategy, patience, good humor, and sportsmanship, but, most importantly, the joy of connection. These lessons were not just reserved for her own children and grands. Dot welcomed all into her home with open arms, and helped to care for many nieces, nephews, cousins, and neighboring children that needed someplace to grow, and she would know exactly how to help them in their own ways, best. It is why enumerable people still value and remember that warm embrace and nurturing advice.

Beyond just her family, Dot was a cornerstone of her community. Her good nature, fairness, willingness, and instinct on when to lend a helping hand made her a beloved

Are you looking for a Volunteer Opportunity?

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of St. Mary's County is seeking volunteers like you! RSVP connects persons 55 years of age and older to rewarding, challenging, and fulfilling volunteer opportunities within 27 local county agencies, non-profit groups, and community organizations.

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In Remembrance

country he knew so well. Deacon Bill will be remembered for his steadfast devotion to his family, faith, church, and community.

The family will receive friends on Thursday, December 19, 2024, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial celebrated by Father Ted Hegnauer at St. Francis Xavier Church in Compton, MD. Interment will be at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Newtowne Manor House, 21370 Newtowne Neck Rd., Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Mary Gray, 84



Mary Virginia Gray, 84 of Hollywood, MD, passed away peacefully on December 10, 2024, following a brief illness. Born in Waldorf, MD to the late William Purcell

Gardiner and the late Agnes Cooksey Bean, she grew up on a farm, but Mary Virginia was never much of a farm girl, rather, she enjoyed working inside the home. Mary graduated from St. Mary's Catholic School, Bryantown, MD, where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She graduated in a class of six.

Mary married William Ray Boggs on

September 28, 1958, in St. Peter's Catholic Church, Waldorf MD. Together they celebrated 47 years of marriage. During that time, they enjoyed weekend trips visiting family, going for picnics, and spending time on the water. They were blessed with four children: Kathleen Woodington (David), Ray Boggs (Kate), Karen Buckler (Glenn), and Matthew Boggs (Kathy Jo). Mary and Bill started their life together in St. Clements Shores in Leonardtown, MD, moving to Hagerstown and Frederick, then returning to St. Mary's County, making their home in Hollywood, MD.

Mary worked in the catalog department at Sears in Lexington Park, MD, at Banneker Elementary in Loveville, MD as a teacher's aide, and at the St. Mary's County Public Defenders' Office in Leonardtown, MD as an administrative assistant.

Mary lived a life centered around her faith and family. She was a member of Catholic Daughters, and served as a Eucharistic minister and a lector at St. John's Church, Hollywood, MD. She was also a member of the St. Joseph Secular Carmelite order of Port Tobacco, MD.

Mary enjoyed duckpin bowling and was a member of T.O.P.S. and Weight Watchers. Most importantly, she was a loving and supportive mother.

In addition to her parents, Mary was preceded in death by her husband, Bill, her siblings, William Purcell Gardiner

Jr., Edward W. Gardiner, Kathleen Elaine Gardiner, George Henry Gardiner, James Nolan Gardiner, Carola Estevez, and Nancy Patricia Swann.

In 2011, Mary married Robert "David" Gray. Together they shared 13 years of marriage.

Mary is survived by her husband, her children, stepchildren, Diana Lewis (Mike), David Scott Gray (Jessica), 13 grandchildren, five great grandchildren, her sisters, Martha Ann McKean and Barbara Lee "Sue" Shelton, and many nieces and nephews.

The family will receive friends on Thursday, December 26, 2024 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM in St. John's Catholic Church, Hollywood, MD, where a Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 AM with Father Ray Schmidt officiating. Interment will follow in the church cemetery. Serving as pallbearers will be Brent Boggs, Christopher Boggs, Andrew Boggs, Michael Cantrell, Nicholas Boggs, and David Gardiner.

In lieu of flowers donations in her memory may be made to: Carmel of Port Tobacco, 5678 Mount Carmel Road, La Plata, MD 20646, Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department, or St. John's Church, Hollywood, MD.

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

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

Dan Hammett, 62



Daniel David Hammett, 62, of Lexington Park, MD, passed away unexpectedly on December 10, 2024. He was born September 8, 1962, in Leonardtown,

MD. Dan was preceded in death by his parents, Joyce and Thomas Hammett.

Dan served four years at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, OK after graduating from Great Mills High School in 1980. His passions were nature-related, and he was able to enjoy his passion in his work as grounds foreman at the golf course at Patuxent River Naval Air Station. Dan loved crabbing, fishing, camping, golfing, snowboarding, and his furry cat friends. He is survived by two sisters, Dolores Hammett of Clarksville, MD and Cindy Crane of Lucedale, MS, three nieces, three nephews, three grandnieces, and two grandnephews.

The family will receive friends on Friday, December 27, 2024, from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a memorial service will follow at 4:00 PM in the funeral home chapel. Interment will be private.

Continued on page 20

Jones Family

The remaining siblings of Marie and Edgar Jones hold in remembrance our parents and our siblings who have departed from us but live forever in our hearts. We miss you and love you still so dearly. Until we meet again.



*Merry Christmas to You
in Heaven
Mary Catherine Kane
Sept. 18, 1924–Nov. 22, 2019*

Christmas will never be the same since you went home to be with your Father in Heaven. We always enjoyed watching you looking at the Christmas lights. The glow in your eyes and the smile on your face will live with us forever. We miss you. Until we meet again, we love you Mama.

**Love,
Larry & Ellen**

In Remembrance

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

Jackie Dement, 67



Jacquelyn "Jackie" Dawn Dement of California, passed away on December 6, 2024 at St. Mary's Hospital. Born on May 31, 1957, she was the oldest daughter of Gladys

Katrine Dement and the late Leonard Chester Dement.

Jackie was a lifelong resident of St. Mary's County. She attended Great Mills Elementary, Esperanza Middle and Great Mills High School, graduating in 1975. She is survived by her mother Gladys Dement of California, MD, her sisters Virginia Jordan and Melanie Merchant (Josh) both of Lexington Park, her niece Mandi La Valle (Eddie) of California, her nephews Jimmy Jordan (Kayla) of Tall Timbers and Tank Merchant of Bealton, VA, aunts Mary Broadhurst (Mark), Melva Abell (Billy), Betty Tippet (Richard), all of California, MD, Beulah Bryant of Hollycock, OH, Marilyn Brown of Edmondton, KY, as well as numerous cousins.

She began her working life first on the family farm and as the nursery attendant at Church of the Ascension then as a cafeteria assistant at Great Mills High School. She moved on to become a machine operator

for J & J Mailing Company and Mintec, a floor assistant at The Yarn Barn, cashier at K-Mart and finally as Quality Controller Officer for Merkle Mailing until she retired due to health issues.

She enjoyed spending time with family and friends and thoroughly enjoyed spoiling her niece, nephew and baby sister, taking them to see numerous movies, trips to Solomon's Island to play on the beach, trips to Point Lookout for the annual Ghost Walks each Halloween and tours throughout St. Mary's County to see Christmas lights. She also enjoyed reading, crocheting, sewing, quilting and taking care of her cats. She loved to make clothing items for her niece and nephew, as well as her baby sister when they were younger, including an 8th grade dance dress for her sister. She belonged to Pax River Quilt Guild and had won prizes for her quilting. She loved working on jigsaw puzzles, watching true crime dramas, crafting and playing Rummy with the family, she was a bit of a card shark.

In addition to her father, she is preceded in death by her grandparents George "Lenny" Dement and Doris Dement Bradburn, grandparents Emory and Helen Bryant, several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Services and interment are private. A Life Celebration for Jackie to follow at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to ARF (Animal Relief

Fund), 21800 N. Shangri La Drive Unit 16, Lexington Park, MD 20653 or through animalrelieffund.org or to American Heart Association at heart.org.

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

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

John Flynn, 83



ET1 John Joseph Flynn, USN, (Ret.), 83, of Lexington Park, MD passed away on December 11, 2024 at St. Mary's Nursing Center in Leonardtown, MD.

John was born on June 17, 1941 in Newark, NJ to the late Thomas Joseph Flynn and Veronica (nee: Hooker) Flynn.

John enlisted in the U.S. Navy in June 1960 and proudly served his country until his retirement in May 1980. On May 7, 1966, he married his beloved wife, Mary Teresa McFadden in Northern Ireland. Together they celebrated over 58 wonderful years of marriage. During his service he was stationed in Scotland, Ireland, Norfolk and Charleston. After retiring from the Navy, he moved to St. Mary's County and was employed as a Production Manager for a Department of Defense sub-contractor for Naval Air Station, Patuxent River until he retired again in 2003.

John was an avid reader, and particularly enjoyed history and religion. In his more formable years, he enjoyed playing basketball and was an avid football fan. He and his wife liked to travel and like to go back to Ireland to visit. They have travelled extensively throughout the United States. He enjoyed spending time with his children and grandchildren; and often travelled to visit his sons, Tom and Patrick and their families. He is a long-time parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Lexington Park, MD.

In addition to his beloved wife, Mary, John is also survived by his children: Thomas Joseph Flynn (Melissa) of Newport, N.C., Kerry Ann Jones (John) of Bethesda, MD, Erin Veronica Corbin (Phillip) of Lexington Park, MD; and Patrick Flynn (Bridget) of Myrtle Beach, SC; siblings: Loretta O'Connor of Seabright, NJ and Thomas Francis Flynn (Farlie) of St. Petersburg, FL; 8 grandchildren; and extended family and friends. He is preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Veronica "Roni" Hewitt.

Family will receive friends on Friday, January 3, 2025 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., with a Prayer Service held at 5:00 p.m., at Brinsfield Funeral Home, 22955 Hollywood Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated by Reverend Marco Schad on Saturday, January 4, 2025 at 12:00 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 22375 Three Notch Rd, Lexington Park, MD 20653. Interment will follow in the church cemetery.

Serving as pallbearers will be: Patrick Flynn, Tom Flynn, Phil Corbin, John Jones,

Mark McFadden, John McFadden

Memorial contributions in John's name may be made to the Leukemia & Lymphoma society, give.LLS.org

Condolences to the family may be made at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com. Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Bill Nickerson, 89



William Jess "Deacon Bill" Nickerson, Sr. of Compton, MD, passed away on December 11, 2024, at the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. He was born

on December 25, 1934, in Livingston, Montana to his parents, the late Jess William Nickerson and Clara Wilde Nickerson.

Deacon Bill is predeceased by his loving wife of 65 years, Shirley Marie Mattingly Nickerson, and son, Mark Aloysius Nickerson. He is survived by his children, Valinda "Wendy" (Bob) Schaller, Mary (Tom) Shields, Barbara (Russ) Frazier, Nick (Maria) Nickerson, Jr., Vicky Nickerson, Margaret Nickerson Rorex, Michael (Betty) Nickerson, Tracey (Billy) Schrader, and Peter (Barbara) Nickerson. He is also survived by 27 grandchildren, 52 great grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

Bill was an only child who attended Catholic School and enlisted in the Navy at 17 while in high school. He was stationed at NAS Patuxent River and married the oldest child of a very large local family. He was later assigned to the USS Ranger (CV-61) in charge of missile ordnance. With four young children, he left active duty and continued in the Navy Reserves. His family grew and he continued in public service in the U.S. Government Printing Office, retiring as lead publication and printing officer responsible for multiple locations in Maryland, Washington DC, and the Pentagon.

Following government retirement, Bill became a Deacon in the Catholic Church and served as Deacon at St. Francis Xavier Church until his retirement in 2015. He continued to serve on the altar and support the parish until he became ill a few years ago.

Deacon Bill loved his large family more than anything else. He was the life partner and sole caregiver for his wife and love of his life, Shirley Marie. Aside from family, he always had a passion for race cars. He could build a race car from the ground up, and was an excellent mechanic, a skill he passed on to his sons. Bill remained an avid NASCAR fan, attending many races with his racing friends. He also followed his favorite team, the Washington Redskins.

His early life was challenging, but instructive. His father was blinded just before he was born. He said his father could plant a garden by feel. He never lost the connection to his birthplace in Montana. Both his parents are buried in the St. Francis Xavier Church cemetery. It took almost 40 years for Bill to return to his homestead. And over the succeeding years he visited several times with family members to show them the Big Sky

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Here are some of the basics:

- *What are they called?* Mandatory withdrawals are technically called required minimum distributions, or RMDs.
- *When must I take RMDs?* If you were born before 1951, you've probably already begun taking RMDs. If you were born between 1951 and 1959, your RMD age is 73. And if you were born in 1960 or later, your RMD age is 75. You can postpone accepting your first RMD until April 1 of the year after you reach your RMD age, but this will result in two RMDs for the year. After you take your first RMD, you must take subsequent ones by December 31 of each year.
- *What penalties will be assessed if I don't take all my RMDs?* For every dollar not withdrawn, the IRS will charge a 25% penalty, but this can drop to 10% if you subsequently withdraw the correct amount within two years.
- *Which accounts have RMDs?* RMDs apply to traditional IRAs, as well as other types of IRAs, including SIMPLE and SEP IRAs. RMDs don't apply to Roth IRAs. RMDs also apply to traditional 401(k)s, but not Roth 401(k)s.
- *Can I withdraw more than the RMD for any given year?* Yes, you are free to take out as much as you want. However, if you take out more than the RMD for one year, you can't apply the excess to the RMD for the next year.
- *How are RMDs calculated?* Typically, your RMDs are determined by dividing your account balance from the prior December 31 by a life expectancy factor published by the IRS. Your financial professional should be able to perform this calculation for you.
- *If I have multiple accounts, do I have to take an RMD from each one?* If you are taking RMDs from a traditional IRA, you must calculate each RMD individually, but you can take the total amount from one or more IRAs. If you're taking RMDs from a 401(k) or similar plan, you must take the RMD from each of your accounts.
- *How are RMDs taxed?* You are typically taxed at your income tax rate on the amount of the withdrawn RMD. You may be able to avoid taxes in a particular year if you transfer your RMDs to a qualified charity in what's known as a qualified charitable distribution.
- *If I inherit an IRA or 401(k), am I subject to RMDs?* Yes. When you take RMDs from an inherited account, you generally must withdraw all the funds within 10 years, as opposed to over your lifetime, which is the RMD window that applies to your own accounts. The rules are somewhat different if you inherit an IRA or 401(k) from your spouse. In any case, though, you'll want to consult with your tax advisor about how to take RMDs from an inherited account.

If you're already subject to RMDs, be sure you've taken them before the year ends. And if you haven't yet started taking RMDs, learn as much as you can about them — because the more you know, the more likely you'll make the right moves at the right time.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

Edward Jones, Member SIPC

Contributed by David McDonough

Financial Advisor at Edward Jones

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Wanderings of an Aimless Mind

by Shelby Oppermann



A Christmas Toast to You

Last night it was nearly 1 am and I couldn't sleep, like normal. I sat out on the couch in the living room, so I didn't disturb my sleeping husband. I began watching a movie on Great American Family called, A Christmas Less Traveled. It's a Candace Cameron Bure Christmas movie. The premise was that Candace's character Desi is running a struggling diner in her hometown after being abroad at culinary school for several years. Her mother had passed many years before and recently her father had passed, leaving her the family home and his treasured 1964 Red Ford pick-up truck. Desi's Aunt Paula encourages Desi to sell the old truck which would more than pay for the diner's debts.



After Desi lists the truck for sale that night she goes out to the garage to sit in her dad's truck to clean it out when she spots a cassette in the cassette player. It is a tape of her father's voice letting her know how sorry he is for shutting down after her mom's death and not being there for her as much as he should have. A mysterious man named Greyson has been following Desi, who is somehow tasked with finding out why his mother left half of her money to Desi's dad which now will belong to Desi. Greyson talks Desi into letting him travel with her so he can get to an important appointment. The cassette also sends Desi on a quest, along now with Greyson, to visit different people and places that have meant something to her dad over the years. Each stop she meets people that her dad had a profound effect upon, and she is also given a new cassette leading her to her next destination. I don't want to give away the ending, but the movie kept me watching until the end.

The reason why I brought up this movie is because I loved the idea of a loved one leaving cassettes (or any type of method) for someone to hear and understand aspects of their life that were never spoken while living. Desi's dad at one point wonders aloud on the cassette why it was so much easier to talk into this recorder than it was to tell her about these things in person.

I think we all wondered about our parents' lives and what we may not know about their childhoods or friends or even crazy things that they did. So many of us have lost parents at a young age and didn't think to ask these questions. I'm wondering if I should make some sort of tape, mainly just so my sons and grandkids could hear again how much they mean to me and how much I love them. They know it of course, but I know that I would give anything to hear my father's and mother's voices again. Sorry, if I brought up maudlin thoughts, but they are good thoughts too. I wish I could find some old cassettes with a family quest to go on like in the movie.

Thinking of my father also reminded me that I had eggnog in the fridge. He and I would drink either apricot brandy and eggnog or apricot brandy and ginger ale when I was a teen during the holiday season. Eggnog has always seemed to have a comforting, calming effect on me. And that's exactly what I did towards the end of the movie to help me get back to sleep. I had a big glass of eggnog (without the brandy) which did indeed bring me a sense of calm and took my mind back to sitting with my father in the red chair in our old living room in Clinton. I have a photo of that along with the column. I was happy and felt so comforted being with my dad, even though I was probably still in pain from the tight pin curls my mother had me sleep in. (You can see the old Wigwam money tree my mother had won behind us.) Good memories.

I hope this year that we all let everyone in our lives know how much they mean to us now, and not leave anything left unsaid or unresolved — not to wait until the time has passed. Well, I think that now that I'm done writing my column, I will get another glass of eggnog for a comforting treat, and to raise it as a toast to all of you to have a happy, healthy, wonderful Christmas this year. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

To each new Christmas's and New Year's adventure, Shelby

Please send your comments or ideas to: shelbys.wanderings@yahoo.com or find me on Facebook

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Volunteers Deliver Toys to Western NC



The people of Asheville, NC see it as a miracle.

My wife Deborah drove 2,875 Christmas toys to Asheville, NC on Friday, December 13th. The devastation is horrific and heart-breaking. Interstate 40 has been cleared and repaired, but the communities are still suffering greatly. They have no clean water. News to the outside world has been curtailed by the citizens, who ran off reporters because of insensitivities and intrusions upon families of the deceased.

Here are the particulars:

SOMD PACERS (Proactive Alliance of Community Emergency Relief Services) concluded their relief item collection efforts at Dean Home Supply Warehouse C on October 24th. The next day, a truck loaded with 346 boxes of relief items, including 33 boxes of coats and 25 boxes of blankets, as well as 5,200 bottles of water and 500 Halloween bags of candy, was sent to Lions Club president George Suggs in Asheville, NC.

Beginning on October 25th the focus shifted to toys for Christmas for the flood victim children in Asheville.

PACERS, represented by Knights of Columbus Council 8159 in Mechanicsville, started a "10,000 Toys for Santa's Hurricane Christmas Train" campaign headquartered at Dean Home Supply main showroom as the collection point, with Tom Hodges Mitsubishi in Hollywood and Bank of America in Mechanicsville as drop off points.

The volunteers were me, Sir Knight Mearl Rusaw, Grand Knight of K of C Council 8159 and my wife Lady Deborah, former County Commissioner, Knight Dan Morris, Sir Knight Dave Adams, Debra Tucker and her husband Allan, Jolene Dubry, Ted & Rita Dent of First Choice Auto Repair & Uhaul in Charlotte Hall, Knight Brian Easter and his wife Carol, Missy Hobbs of St. Michael's Thrift Store in Ridge, Laura Poore, Chris Ric, Brandie Turnbull of SOMD Hurricane Relief, Sir Knight Charlie Tennyson, Sir Knight Chuck Schilling, Deputy Grand Knight Steve Vallandingham and his wife Chelsea, Ridge Lions Club president Leo Gillespie, and former MD Delegate Deb Rey, as well as Dean Home Supply president, Joanne Dillow, and her operations director, Eric Dean.

Council 8159 owes a big debt of gratitude and offers heartfelt thanks to the generous people of St. Mary's County and all the volunteers.

From October 25th to December 12th we collected 2,875 toys.

Deborah and Debra sorted and packed the toys into more than 100 boxes and 8 bags of stuffed animals.

Jolene rented a Uhaul trailer from Rita, and Deborah, Debra, and Allan loaded the trailer on December 12th. The next day, Debra and Deborah drove the toys, and 574 candy canes, to St. Eugene's Catholic Church in Asheville, NC. They were received by Mary Ellen Sheppard, Parish Life Coordinator, and North Carolina Knights of Columbus regional District Deputy, Tom Kotz, of St. Eugene Council 11911. He oversees 22 Councils. Tom had organized a crew of 6 Knights to unload the trailer. They were assisted by 4 ladies. The North Carolina Knights and ladies are in the attached photos. Deborah and Debra are center front. Mary Ellen and Tom provided a nice lasagna, bread, and salad lunch for everyone.

St. Eugene's was without clean water. The Church has been a relief center for the surrounding communities from the beginning of the disaster. They have provided over \$1 million in relief so far. They serve 2,000 children and 1,500 families, including 120 veterans. Tom Kotz' wife Paula is in charge of the Angel Tree. Their Angel Tree serves 798 families.

Mary Ellen, Tom, and everyone, were exceedingly grateful and overjoyed to receive the nearly 2,900 toys. They viewed it as a miracle that served to solve a problem of holiday despair and offered holiday hope.

No one in Asheville could have imagined or prepared for the devastation brought by hurricane Helene. It rained for three days prior to Helene delivering the brunt of her fury. The ground was saturated and the root systems of the trees weakened. When Helene's torrential rains and hurricane winds hit, whole mountainsides moved downward in an avalanche of uprooted trees, vehicles, boulders, buildings, and debris - and the bodies of Asheville's loved ones, many caught in trees and crushed by boulders. This was the motivation for shocked and grieving loved ones to run off reporters. What happened in the mountains of Asheville is actually indescribable. And this says nothing of the horrific flooding.

Mearland Rusaw
SOMD PACERS

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**NAVAL AIR STATION
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Test Pilot School Graduates Class 165



A graduation ceremony recognizing the 31 students from U.S. Naval Test Pilot School's Class 165 was held Friday, December 13, 2024 at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland. The new test pilots, flight officers, engineers, and international partners represent eight different military organizations and four government agencies worldwide. (U.S. Navy photo by Todd Frantom)

The United States Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) held a graduation ceremony for Class 165 on Dec. 13. Thirty-one students successfully completed the intense, 11-month course of instruction and received their designations as Engineering Test Pilots, Engineering Test Flight Officers and Test Project Engineer.

NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry Wilmore, both retired U.S. Navy captains, with a guest appearance by NASA Astronaut and U.S. Space Force Col. Nick Hague, delivered the keynote address in a recording sent from the International Space Station (ISS), preceded by a special address from USNTPS alumnus Commodore Chris Smallhorn, Royal Australian Navy (RAN), Commander Fleet Air Arm.

Williams graduated in 1993 from USNTPS with Class 104 and returned as a Rotary Wing Department instructor in 1995. So far, she has spent a cumulative total of over 510 days in space and currently commands Expedition 72 on the ISS.

Wilmore graduated from USNTPS in 1992 with Class 102 and also served on staff as a systems and fixed-wing flight test instructor. He is a veteran of two space-flights and has spent a cumulative total of over 370 days in space.

Both Williams and Wilmore have been in space since June 5, 2024, on their most recent mission. They are currently living and working aboard the space station as part of the Expedition 71/72 crew and will return home in February 2025 aboard the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft with NASA astronaut Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov on NASA's SpaceX Crew-9 mission.

Smallhorn joined USNTPS Class 115 and graduated in 1999. He has served as Commander Fleet Air Arm in the RAN since January 2016.

The graduation ceremony took place at the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department in Lexington Park, Maryland. Graduates included members of the Royal Australian

Air Force, Royal Norwegian Air Force, Israeli Air Force, Italian Navy, French Defense Procurement and Technology Agency, Norwegian Defense Material Agency, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force.

Capt. Elizabeth Somerville, Commander, Naval Test Wing Atlantic; Cmdr. Travis Hartman, U.S. Navy, Commanding Officer, USNTPS; and Dr. John Tritschler, Chief of Academics, USNTPS, presented diplomas and offered congratulations to the new testers.

Army Capt. Kenneth Dailey received the Empire Test Pilots School's Developmental Testing Thesis Award, recognizing his exceptional performance during the capstone exercise in Class 165. This prestigious award symbolizes the strong, longstanding partnership between the Empire Test Pilots' School in the United Kingdom and USNTPS.

Lt. Cmdr. Zachary Daniel received the Captain Willie McCool Outstanding Student Award for the top performing student in the categories of academics, flight performance and technical report writing. He was also recognized with the Developmental Testing Thesis Award for the best final capstone report.

Army Lt. Col. Mark Salvati received the Syd Sherby Leadership Award, named after Capt. Sydney Sherby, the founder of the test pilot training division, now USNTPS. The award recognizes the student who displays exemplary leadership in the class.

Nineteen students completed the requirements for the engineering test pilot course, seven students completed the engineering test flight officer course, and five students fulfilled the requirements for the test project engineer course.

USNTPS trains pilots and engineers for development test and evaluation of aircraft and aircraft systems. USNTPS is a component of Naval Test Wing Atlantic under Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) in Patuxent River, Maryland. NAWCAD advances capability and operational readiness for naval aviation.

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To All of You,
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St. Mary's Share Their Yuletide Traditions

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Christmas time is a time of celebration and family gathering but everyone has their own traditions and memories of the yuletide season. The County Times asked St. Mary's County residents about their Christmas traditions and memories and to share them.

Delegate Matt Morgan

"My favorite tradition is just a family gathering. As far back as I can remember, everyone would come over to our house."

"I just like that it's traditional. I like that it's been a major holiday since Christ was born. I like going to church, the family aspect and even just getting ready for it."

"My favorite Christmas memory is with my daughter about 11 years ago and she totally believed in Santa Clause and I surprised my daughter with a puppy. She woke up to it yapping and thought 'That's my puppy!' That's my best Christmas memory."



Del. Matt Morgan



K.C. Schnitker



Commissioner Scott Ostrow



Sherry and Dale Antosh

K.C. Schnitker, Director of Development, G.K. Chesterton Academy

"Our family likes to get our tree on Christmas Eve and decorate it and then go to midnight mass. Christmas morning, we have crepes and open presents!"

County Commissioner Scott Ostrow

"As a County Commissioner, I truly enjoy seeing our community come together during the holiday season. The joy of families gathering, neighborhoods lit up with festive decorations, and the spirit of giving remind us all of what makes our county so special."

"One of my favorite memories is attending Christmas Eve services with my family, reflecting on the true meaning of the season. Spending time with loved ones, sharing a meal, and embracing our faith has always been central to our celebrations."

"Every year, my family and I focus on giving back to the community that has given us so much. Whether it's volunteering at local food drives, supporting small businesses during the holiday shopping season, or attending county holiday events, we strive to keep the season about gratitude and service."

"This holiday season, I wish everyone in

our county peace, joy, and the blessings of the season."

Dale and Sherry Antosh, Golden Beach Civic Association

"Most of our fond memories are from our Christmas Bazaar in the community; this year we held a Christmas Craftmas. A lot of what we do is for the kids in the community. We do what we can to make them happy and that makes up happy."

"We all go to our son's house for Christmas, too and visit with our family. We have a nice fried turkey, too."

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Happy New Year

2025

Stephanie Roper's Murderer Requests Release

Prosecutors Object

Prosecutors were back in court last week in response to a request filed by one of the men who kidnapped, raped, and murdered Stephanie Roper in 1982. Jerry Lee Beatty, 59, petitioned the Court for release pursuant to the Juvenile Restoration Act, citing he was only 17 years old at the time of the offense, among other reasons.

Arguments from the defense and the State were presented in Anne Arundel County Circuit Court over a two-day period. Also present in court was Stephanie's mother, Roberta Roper, who provided an impassioned victim impact statement after being denied that opportunity for over 40 years.

"Roberta Roper's unwavering resilience in the face of profound tragedy is a testament to her strength," said State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling. "Her powerful statement marked a victory she secured for all crime victims and a fulfillment of her relentless advocacy in Stephanie's name."

On April 3, 1982, Stephanie Ann Roper, a 22-year-old college senior, was abducted in Prince George's County after her car broke down. Beatty and Jack Ronald Jones raped her and eventually took Stephanie across multiple county lines to an abandoned house in Oakville, Maryland. After arriving in St. Mary's County, Beatty and Jones raped Stephanie again, tortured her, and murdered her, before setting her body on fire and dismembering her.

Although the case was originally charged in St. Mary's County in 1982, it was subsequently transferred to Anne Arundel County



Stephanie Roper

after prosecutors sought the death penalty. The Juvenile Restoration Act, which was enacted in 2021, permits defendants who were juveniles at the time of their offense to petition for a reduced sentence after serving 20 years of incarceration.

St. Mary's County State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling and Special Assistant State's Attorney Gavin Patashnick represented the State on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County.

The Honorable Elizabeth S. Morris presided. A written opinion will be issued by the Court.

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling thanks Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess and Cecil County State's Attorney James Dellmyer for their support in this matter.

Sheriff's Office Seeking Identities



The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office requests help to identify and locate the individuals shown in these photos in connection with an altercation and suspected burglary at a residence in Lexington Park.

If you recognize this individual or have information about this incident, please contact Deputy First Class Andrew Budd at Andrew.Budd@stmaryscountymd.gov or by phone at 301-475-4200, ext. 8013. Please reference case number 32632-24.

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NAS Pax River Reports No Drones in Airspace

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

With mass sightings of drones rising all along the East Coast, from New Jersey now down to Maryland, officials at Patuxent River Naval Air Station say they have not had any incursions of their operational space yet, but they remain vigilant.

Our counter UAS (unmanned aerial systems) system hasn't seen anything," said Patrick Gordon, base public information officer. "We haven't had any drone incursions since all of this began."

The sightings of masses of drones began in mid-November in and around a military installation in New Jersey and federal authorities have said simultaneously that they do not know who is operating them and that they pose no threat.

Similar sightings have been reported in Pennsylvania and late last week former Gov. Larry Hogan publicly called for federal government intervention and transparency when he filmed what he said were a swarm of drones over his home in Davidsonville.

John Slaughter, director of the University of Maryland's UAS Research and Operations Center (UROC) in California said that while there may not have been any local drone incursions of military airspace, that sort of thing happens all the time.

"And they have the authority to do something about it if they consider it a threat," Slaughter told The County Times. "There are techniques by which you can take over

a drone, make it go back to where it came from, force it to land or make it stay away.

"It's just not legal to use in this country because it's illegal to hack a computer and a drone is a computer."

Only the military can use such technology, Slaughter said, and only if the drone violates the installation's territory or operations.

"It's used in combat all the time," Slaughter said of the counter drone systems. "It's just not legal to use in the states."

"The laws need to be updated."

If military installation commanders were not taking action to down the drones that were in their operation space, Slaughter said, they likely did not believe they were a threat, else they would have acted to disable them.

With all the talk of simply shooting down a drone to ascertain who is operating it and finding out where it is coming from, Slaughter was quick to point out that shooting at an aircraft — which, under the law, includes drones — is a federal offense.

"The fines are pretty steep for that and you can go to jail," Slaughter said. "According to the law shooting at a 747 is the same as a 250 gram Best Buy special."

Slaughter said he was dubious of the many reports of mass drone encounters, particularly the accounts of their size.

Some have reported that the drones in question are the size of an SUV.

"I'm 99 percent sure they don't exist," Slaughter said. "Big drones stay at higher

altitudes where it's safer to operate."

He also did not believe the drones allegedly flying in and around the Eastern seaboard were necessarily a threat.

"If I wanted to do something nefarious with my drones... why would I keep their lights on?," Slaughter asked. "There are more than one million registered drones in the United States and it's perfectly legal to fly them, as long as you follow the rules, even at night."

Slaughter said people may be mistaking planes, helicopters or even satellites in the night sky for drones and reporting it; this in turn could help fuel a kind of mania to confuse objects in the night sky as drones.

"You probably are getting a lot more people who are looking up at the sky now who usually are not," Slaughter said, noting there are people flying their drones in an attempt to add to the hysteria.

"I'm sure that's going on as well," he said.

It may be fashionable to think that the U.S. government knows exactly what is being flown and where all throughout its airspace, Slaughter said, but that is not the case.

Gordon confirmed that despite the counter UAS system around the base, drones that are flown at heights of just about 20 feet in a resident's back yard for recreation are not going to be detected.

Base officials in meeting with the Commissioners of St. Marys' County recently reminded that most of the airspace south of St. Andrews Church Road/Route 4



John Slaughter

was prohibited as drone-flying space unless cleared prior with base authorities; all of the airspace over Patuxent River Naval Air Station was completely restricted from drone flights.

There was still much to be done to change the laws regarding the operation of drones, but lawmakers have done little so far, said Slaughter.

"I'm hoping all of this brouhaha causes them to do something," Slaughter said.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Mechanicsville Bar's License Revoked

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Due to multiple violations, some of which were found as a result of a homicide resulting from a shooting in the parking lot of the bar in March of 2023, the county's Alcohol Beverage Board revoked the liquor license for Big Dog's Paradise in Mechanicsville last week.

Brian Atkins, the owner of the bar and holder of the license, offered no resistance to the board's decision at their Dec. 12 business meeting in Leonardtown.

He told the board he no longer wanted to be involved in the business following the killing of a transgender woman at his establishment.

"I decided to leave the business," Atkins said. "One way or another I was going to leave anyway. After that incident, it was time for me to go."

The victim in that case was legally known as Isaiah Alexander Woodland, 18, of Lexington Park; the victim was alternately known as Tasiyah.

Days later a Washington, D.C. man — Darryl Carlton Parks, Jr. — was arrested and charged for the crime.

Police reports at the time stated the victim and alleged shooter had a physical altercation at the business the month prior.

Atkins faced five different citations; including three for selling alcohol through



a drive-thru window on March 24, 2023 — the day of the homicide — an instance of selling alcohol through the drive-thru window in June of this year and one charge of selling alcohol to a minor.

The sale of alcohol to a minor was the result of a undercover operation by the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office in which an employee of Atkins, who was not present at the hearing, had been charged with providing the alcohol to the underage informant.

The sheriff's office was able to find evidence of the drive-thru sales on the day of the homicide from surveillance footage provided by Atkins to aid the investigation into Woodland's death.

The board voted unanimously to suspend the license for 30 days first, which would allow Atkins to make his final business arrangements, and then institute the revocation of his license.

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Leaders Warn of State's Tax and Spend Agenda

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County attended the Maryland Association of Counties (MaCO) winter conference over the weekend where Gov. Wes Moore outlined his vision for his administration's actions for the coming year.

Local elected leaders said tough times are ahead economically based on what the state's chief executive said.

Commissioner Scott Ostrow said he came away from the governor's speech disappointed.

"What this commissioner took away from his speech was 'Hold on to your wallets,' because there are going to be a lot more unfunded mandates being pushed down on the counties," Ostrow said. "We're going to be ones to bear the brunt of this [\$2.7] billion structural deficit that they're talking about."

The state is also forging ahead with its commitment to green energy, Ostrow said, but likely without any serious consideration of boosting nuclear energy.

"They're not really interested in having broader conversations [about energy sustainability]," Ostrow said during the Dec. 17 business meeting. "Everything is focused on solar and wind... [which] is very much coming after tax payers to fund all that."

Commissioner Mike Alderson called some of the informational sessions at the winter conference "a lot of lipstick on a pig."

"This is our point of view and this is the point of view you will accept," Alderson continued, talking about the talks the state officials gave to county leaders, particularly on energy. "Whenever you start talking about climate resiliency and green, the green is always tax payer money."

"I don't think this administration is serious about green energy if they're not willing to talk about nuclear energy."

Though Moore has spoken openly about holding back on some of the more expensive and effort-consuming portions of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the massive education spending plan, he still plans to continue with early childhood education expenditures such as prekindergarten.

"That's one of the more expensive aspects of the Blueprint," Alderson said.

Commissioner Eric Colvin was worried that the state would cut into the counties' authority on land use and zoning issues in an effort to quickly stimulate economic development against the state's looming budget crisis.

"He is going to be signing an executive order sometime soon... to streamline zoning and permitting," Colvin said. "Now who does the majority of zoning and permitting?"

"Local governments; I don't know what that's going to look like but it makes me nervous."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Commissioners Want More Debt Authority

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

At last week's budget work session, on a split vote, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County agreed to seek authority to pursue more debt — \$85.7 million — for capital construction projects.

The commissioners sent a letter to the District 29 delegation saying they were seeking the authority from the state legislature when it reconvenes in January and asked for their support in moving the request forward.

The funds would be allocated to the upcoming fiscal 2026 budget, the missive dated Dec. 10 stated, and for the following fiscal 2027 budget.

The measure was opposed by Commissioner Eric Colvin and Commissioner Mike Alderson.

The projects the new bonding authority would be used to fund include improvements to the county's regional airport, renovations to the Charlotte Hall Library, improvements to several county parks and recreational facilities, the major renovation

project for Chopticon High School at about \$7.5 million.

Projects such as the new headquarters facility for the sheriff's office, which had \$2.5 million in funds to begin in fiscal 2026 were moved out to fiscal 2027.

In all the bond authority would be divided with about \$58 million for fiscal 2026 and \$27 million for the following fiscal year.

Colvin later said he voted against the measure because he believed the commissioners should have only asked for one year of funding and should have used some of their \$15 million in unassigned fund balance to fund some of the projects.

Alderson said seeking just one year's funding avoided presenting the delegation with "sticker shock."

Commissioner Mike Hewitt argued that asking for the money two years in advance streamlined the process for the state lawmakers, burdening them just once with the job of getting the votes to support the allocation.

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Two Rescue Squads Want Tax Increases



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Both the Leonardtown and Hollywood volunteer rescue squads are seeking increases in the rate of their portion of the fire and rescue tax; the Leonardtown company says their costs are exceeding their ability to bring in operating revenue, while the Hollywood squad wants to do major renovations to their aging facility on Rescue Lane.

Both rescue squads' requests take their fire and rescue tax rates to the legal limit.

Joseph Daniel Bowles, president of the Leonardtown squad, said the cost inclines of doing business had been a burden for several years.

"We've noticed a trend recently of... increases in our expenditures are exceeding inflation," Bowles told the county's Emergency Services Board at their Dec. 11 meeting in Leonardtown. "We have aging infrastructure, insurance, supplies, all of that is still a considerable cost to the rescue squad."

"We want to ask for help before it becomes a bigger problem."

Bowles request was to increase the rate from nine cents to 13 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

Barbara Wible, president of the Hollywood company asked for a tax increase that would more than double the current rate.

"Currently it is at 14 cents and we are asking for the full rate of 30 cents [per \$100

of assessed value,] Wible said, noting the goal was to effectively remodel their small, aging squad headquarters.

"We've actually outgrown what we have," Wible said. "Regular maintenance and repairs is not going to fix what we have."

"Just renovating the station and putting on a new addition is \$3.4 million," Wible said of a construction estimate obtained by the squad's leadership in May.

"At this point we just don't have the funding," she said.

Wible said the squad had plans to build an entirely new station further south on Route 235 in Hollywood near the prominent water tower but those plans are now defunct as they had to sell the parcel of land they had purchased back to the county.

She explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had effectively put an end to those earlier plans.

The bid that came in then for a new facility was \$4.2 million; the money from the resale to the county went to purchase a needed new ambulance, she said.

County funding and community donations keep the squad running "but there's nothing extra," Wible explained.

The emergency services board voted unanimously to support both tax increase requests.

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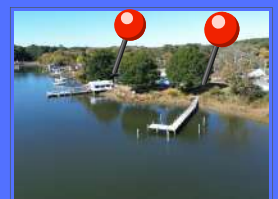
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A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

In order to allow our staff to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones, the County Times will not publish on December 26. We will resume our normal publishing schedule on Thursday, January 2, 2025. We wish all our readers a happy holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in the new year.



TOM HODGES
MITSUBISHI

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“WE HAVEN'T HAD ANY DRONE INCURSIONS SINCE ALL OF THIS BEGAN.”

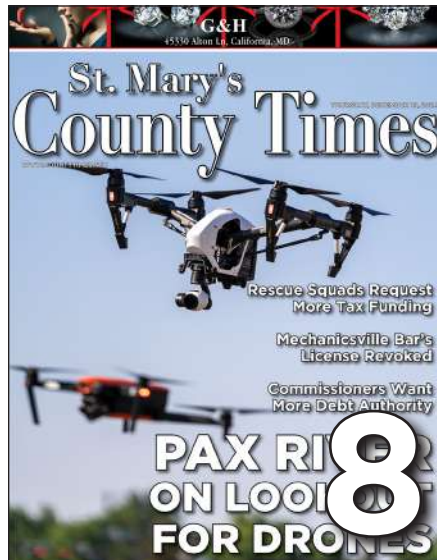
NAS PAX RIVER PIO PATRICK GORDON



LOCAL 5
Two rescue squads want higher taxes



LOCAL 8
Bar's liquor license revoked



ON THE COVER
NAS Pax River hasn't seen any drone incursions

WEEKLY FORECAST

<p>THU, DEC 19</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 47° Lo: 33°</p>	<p>FRI, DEC 20</p> <p>Cloudy Hi: 43° Lo: 33°</p>	<p>SAT, DEC 21</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 38° Lo: 23°</p>	<p>SUN, DEC 22</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 32° Lo: 19°</p>
<p>MON, DEC 23</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 34° Lo: 25°</p>	<p>TUE, DEC 24</p> <p>Cloudy Hi: 42° Lo: 32°</p>	<p>WED, DEC 25</p> <p>Showers Hi: 43° Lo: 37°</p>	<p>THU, DEC 26</p> <p>Mostly Cloudy Hi: 46° Lo: 39°</p>

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THE STAR THAT GLOWED, GLITTERED, AND SOARED
TO ALLURE MANKIND FROM OVER THE EARTH
TO THE PRINCE OF PEACE AT OUR SAVIOR'S BIRTH

I BELIEVE THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM
THE STAR FROM WHENCE LOVE BEGAN
IS THAT STAR IN DREAM I SEE
FOR LOVE OF GOD, MANKIND, AND THEE

NOW THE END OF NIGHT HAS COME
SOON I SHALL ARISE AS ONE
WHO KNOWS THROUGH DREAM THOUGH IT HAS PASSED
THE LUSTER OF THE STAR SHALL LAST

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS

Created By: Richard Lord, MPA, BYU Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics; Analyst-in-Charge, Criminal Alien Division, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (retired); Publisher of www.7thDistrict.org Bushwood, Maryland; and author of the ISBN novel www.BoonDOGgle.dog With Inspiration From

Read more of the extensive poetry in the novel [BoonDOGgle](http://www.BoonDOGgle.dog) available in all three St. Mary's County Libraries and from all online booksellers including Amazon and Barnes and Noble as noted in www.BoonDOGgle.dog

Spouse Nancy Lord Zearfoss, Ph.D. in Public Policy and Management, THE Ohio State University, member of a classic rock band KungFuzion, who last played at the St. Mary's County Oyster Festival and Port of Leonardtown Winery, is available for government sponsored & non-profit organization events; private parties Contact Nancy at 703-455-6616 & nzearfoss@gmail.com or EJ Allen at 423-483-1115 & 123ejallen@gmail.com

Band Pictured Above includes Dr. Nancy Zearfoss, St. Mary's County, keyboards & lead female vocals, EJ. Allen, Calvert County; A+ lead guitar & lead male vocals; Brian Sullivan, Calvert County, bass guitar & male vocals, & George Miles, Charles County, drums

Song List Includes: Hound Dog, Blue Suede Shoes, Kansas City, On The Road Again, Tulsa Time, Mustang Sally, Leroy Brown, Dock Of The Bay, Wagon Wheel, Black Velvet, Heartbreak Hotel, Pride And Joy, You Can't Always Get What You Want, Little Wing, Another Brick In The Wall, People Get Ready, Soul Shine, Honky Tonk Woman, Rainy Day Woman, I Shall Be Released, Heatwave, Maybelline, Can't You See, Before You Accuse Me, Over My Head, Gimme Shelter, Spooky, Dreams, You Ain't Going Nowhere, House Of The Rising Sun, Long Train Runin', Like A Rolling Stone, Folsom Prison, The Thrill Is Gone, Knockin' On Heaven's Door, Hey Joe, Black Magic Woman, Love Me Like A Man, Seminole Wind, My Dog Got Drunk And Stole My Pickup Truck (EJ Allen), and many more of your choice



St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024

WWW.COUNTYTIMES.NET



**Rescue Squads Request
More Tax Funding**

**Mechanicsville Bar's
License Revoked**

**Commissioners Want
More Debt Authority**

PAX RIVER ON LOOKOUT FOR DRONES

