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# Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025

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**Zoning Ordinance Hearing Delayed**

**Calvert Has State's Lowest Crime Rate**

**Hospital Welcomes First Baby of 2025**



# LAWMAKERS TACKLE BUDGET WOES



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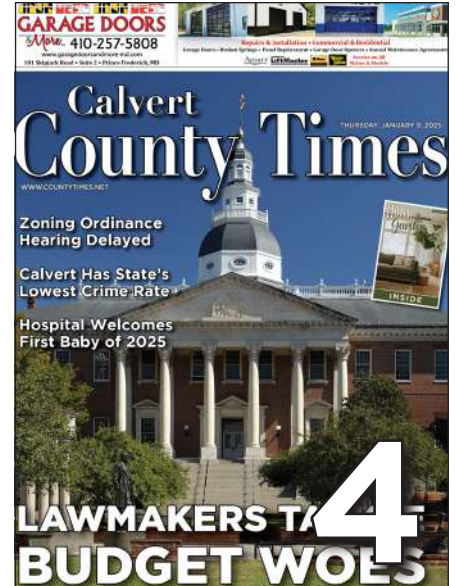
SEN. MICHAEL JACKSON ON THE 2024 MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**LOCAL 4**  
Calvert touts lowest crime rate



**LOCAL 5**  
Hearing on zoning ordinance delayed



**ON THE COVER 4**  
A new General Assembly session begins

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## WEEKLY FORECAST

<p>THU, JAN 9</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 31° Lo: 20°</p>	<p>FRI, JAN 10</p> <p>Mostly Cloudy Hi: 33° Lo: 27°</p>	<p>SAT, JAN 11</p> <p>AM Snow Showers Hi: 38° Lo: 23°</p>	<p>SUN, JAN 12</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 38° Lo: 21°</p>
<p>MON, JAN 13</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 42° Lo: 26°</p>	<p>TUE, JAN 14</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 37° Lo: 19°</p>	<p>WED, JAN 15</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 30° Lo: 18°</p>	<p>THU, JAN 16</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 29° Lo: 22°</p>



## LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWS

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# Fiscal Issues to Dominate 2025 Maryland General Assembly

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

As Maryland's state senators and delegates trekked to Annapolis over the state's snow-covered roads this week, they had fiscal matters on their minds.

In an email, Montgomery County Democrat, Sen. Cheryl Kagan succinctly summarized the problems: "Maryland is facing the most significant budget deficit in nearly 20 years. Projections indicate a \$2.7 billion shortfall for 2026 and nearly \$6 billion over the next five years. Passing a balanced budget will require tough choices, innovative strategies, and (hopefully!) bipartisan collaboration."

Those delegates and senators settled into their offices before entering the underground passageways that connect them to the historic state capital, where the 2025 session of the Maryland General Assembly was gavelled in by the House speaker and Senate president on Nov. 8.

Sen. Jack Bailey (R:29, Calvert, St. Mary's) told The County Times, "The budget shortfall is going to be the most significant issue of this session. Just like our constituents, the General Assembly is going to have to make difficult decisions on how to best live within our means. This will have to include conversation on how to reduce the spending required to implement the Blueprint for Education and the Climate Solutions Now Act. Maryland's economy is stagnant, and we have the second-worst job growth rate in the country—the solution is not to raise taxes on our state's citizens and businesses."

Bailey said, "The major Calvert County issues will revolve around energy, both nuclear and liquefied natural gas. Calvert Cliffs and Cove Point are critical parts of Maryland's energy strategy and the jobs that they bring to our area are vital to our local economy. We will need to ensure that any changes to our state's energy regulations protect these important institutions."

Bailey reported, "I have pre-filed nine bills including topics such as natural



Sen. Jack Bailey

resources, reducing regulations on small businesses, and tax relief for public safety, seniors and retirees. I look forward to introducing additional bills in the coming weeks, including two public safety measures to increase penalties for manslaughter by a vehicle or vessel and concealment of death."

Sen. Michael Jackson (D:29, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's) said, "Our major issues are all going to revolve around the budget deficit. We're going to have to make some difficult decisions regarding funding levels for state programs, services, and agencies."

Jackson noted, "The Calvert County Commissioners have sent the delegation a number of legislative requests. Several of those requests relate to tax authority and capital funding for county projects. We've also received a few requests relating to electoral and charter reform in the county."

Jackson related, "As a member of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, my priorities largely revolve around the budget and my subcommittee assignments. I'll have several bills focused on the State Pension System, public safety, transportation, and the environment. I'll also have several cap-



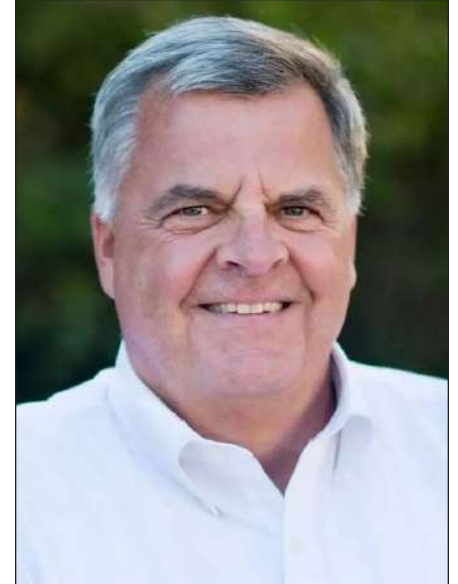
Sen. Michael Jackson

ital budget initiatives to provide funding for projects in the county."

Del. Todd Morgan (R:29C, Calvert, St. Mary's) agreed with his colleagues. "The obvious state issue will be the budget. It's \$3B short and the governor must propose a balanced budget on Jan. 14. However, under legislation enacted a couple of years ago, the governor doesn't have ultimate authority. That now resides in the legislature. The budget begins in the House this year and so far, I've not heard of any appetite to curb spending. Obviously there will be many competing priorities including education (aka Kirwan), environmental priorities, the transportation trust fund, housing reforms and more. That makes things very difficult. There is only so much money and after inheriting a \$5B surplus two years ago, I find it daunting. I will oppose new taxes and new fees."

Locally, Morgan said, "The Calvert BOCC (Board of County Commissioners) has forwarded to us their legislative package. We will review it early in session and make decisions accordingly. At first glance, I didn't see anything too hard."

Morgan relayed, "I will be focusing



Del. Todd Morgan

closely on, and supporting, the potential data center at Calvert Cliffs. I have one major bill I am sponsoring and a few other support bills. My bill would eliminate credit card swipe fees on sales taxes and tips. This would be a tremendous advantage for consumers and small businesses. Stay tuned for updates as the bill moves forward."

Gov. Wes Moore warned of the looming fiscal challenges at the winter meeting of the Maryland Association of Counties last month. Moore is expected to outline his legislative agenda during his State of the State address next Wednesday, Jan. 15.

"We appreciate Gov. Moore's commitment to enhancing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and ensuring counties have a voice in budget discussions," said Calvert County Commission President Earl "Buddy" Hance. "His presence at the Maryland Association of Counties Winter Conference underscores his dedication to working collaboratively with local governments, and we are grateful for the opportunity to engage on these important issues."

[dickmyers@countytimes.net](mailto:dickmyers@countytimes.net)

## Calvert County's Crime Rate Lowest in State

Calvert County State's Attorney Robert Harvey is pleased to report that in 2024, Calvert County experienced the lowest crime rate of any jurisdiction (23 counties and Baltimore City) in the State of Maryland. According to data published in the Maryland NIBRS Crime Dashboard, Calvert recorded 1,634 incidents per 100,000 population; the State-wide average was 3,771 incidents per 100,000.

Harvey said, "Some of the credit for this success goes to the women and men of the Calvert County State's Attorney's Office who, along with the Sheriff's Office, the Maryland

State Police, and the DNR Police, work diligently to combat crime and hold people accountable for their actions. But, frankly, most of the credit belongs to the citizens of Calvert County. Calvert is blessed with strong families, strong neighborhoods, and strong civic and religious organizations. When neighbors look out for one another, report suspicious activities, and refuse to tolerate criminal behavior, the crime rate goes down."

*Press Release from Calvert County State's Attorney*

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# Community Investment Tax Credit Awarded

## Project Echo is State Recipient

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development announced a Calvert County nonprofit will be supported as part of \$1.75 million in Fiscal Year 2025 tax credits through the Community Investment Tax Credit program.

The Community Investment Tax Credit (CITC) program supports nonprofit organizations involved in community and economic revitalization activities. Nonprofit organizations use the tax credits as incentives for individuals and businesses to donate money, goods or real property to support operational and programmatic costs associated with projects that serve communities across Maryland.

“The Community Investment Tax Credit program is an important tool for nonprofit organizations to build connections with the communities they serve on an everyday basis,” said Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Jake Day. “This tax credit encourages residents and business owners to directly invest with local nonprofit part-

ners to improve the places where they live and work.”

The Department will provide \$25,000 in tax credits to support Project Echo Inc. in Prince Frederick through the CITC program in Fiscal Year 2025. That support will go towards operating a trauma program targeted on bringing structure to its participants’ lives by teaching them how to develop lifestyle routines that foster independence.

Businesses and individuals that donate to a qualified organization’s approved project can earn tax credits equal to 50% of the value of the money, goods or real property contribution. These tax credits are in addition to the deductions on both Federal and State taxes as a result of the charitable contribution. The program has leveraged nearly \$31 million in charitable contributions to approximately 770 projects across the state since its inception.

*Press Release from Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development*

# Zoning Ordinance Update Hearing Delayed

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

With county offices closed due to the foot-deep snow that blanketed Calvert County, the scheduled public hearing on the updated county zoning ordinance by the county commissioners was postponed and has not yet been rescheduled.

Meanwhile, the planning commission meeting scheduled for Jan. 15 will have a discussion and planned final vote on that agency’s recommendation on the zoning ordinance to the county commissioners. The planners’ vote is only advisory; the commissioners have the final say.

At a special meeting of the planning commission on Dec. 30, a decision on the zoning ordinance recommendation was deferred.

At the meeting, a memo from Zoning Planner Rachel O’Shea was introduced that said, “As mandated in the Comprehensive Plan, the Calvert County Zoning Ordinance (CCZO) is adopted to regulate land uses as part of the effort to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of Calvert County residents. Ordinance 35-06, approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), established the current CCZO in May of 2006. Following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan – Calvert 2040, staff initiated the process of developing zoning recommendations and a draft ordinance that would bring the Zoning Ordinance into compliance with the new Comprehensive Plan. Staff presented articles of the draft zoning ordinance to the BOCC and Planning Commission (PC) at joint work sessions from May 2023 to May of 2024. After addressing unresolved topics with the BOCC, staff completed the August 2024 draft. The draft was subsequently made available for public input, and staff reviewed comments and proposed changes with the BOCC and PC in October 2024 in preparation for public hearings.”

The memo goes on to say, “Staff updated the draft in response to direction from the BOCC and PC as well as the County Attorney’s review. The revised November 2024 draft was made available to the public at the time the public notice was printed in the newspaper on November 1, 2024. Also included for consideration at the public hearing with the Zoning Ordinance



Chris Gadway

Update, were proposals for amendments to the County’s Comprehensive Plan, amendments to the Huntingtown, St. Leonard and Solomon’s Master Plans, and Town Center Zoning Ordinance text amendments. The PC held its public hearing on November 20, 2024, and voted to leave the record open for 30 days, allowing for additional public input until close of business on December 20th, 2024.”

One of the new issues was the addition of Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) allowance, in which the commissioners could waive zoning requirements if a community benefit occurred, such as the developer donating land for a park. It is believed the CDA’s came about out of a desire to use them to attract data centers to the county.

The planners have not voted on the CDA’s. Presumably that will come at the Jan. 15 meeting. Regardless of the planning commission decision, the CFA concept will be included in what the commissioners take to their public hearing on the zoning ordinance update.

After a lengthy discussion, the planning commission at the Dec. 30 meeting at the insistence of member Chris Gadway decided that the potential motion to be voted on was not in the proper legal form and directed staff to come back with a revision.

[dickmyers@countytimes.net](mailto:dickmyers@countytimes.net)

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# CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of December 16, 2024 – December 22, 2024, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,151 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 60
- Disorderly: 13
- Domestic: 19
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 46
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 980
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 18
- Traffic Complaints: 67
- Traffic Stops: 432
- 911 Hang Ups: 47
- ARRESTS: 32



Ashley Claire Winger

**CDS Violation: 24-97618** On December 16, 2024, DFC Hudson responded to Walgreens located at 355 Market Square Drive in Prince Frederick, for a welfare check.

The complainant reported a female had been in the store for over an hour and had broken a ceramic mug. Deputies made contact with the female, identified as **Ashley Claire Winger**, 33 of Prince Frederick. During routine questioning, deputies observed store items protruding from Winger's bra. A search of her person revealed numerous hair and beauty products, as well as crack cocaine and a crack pipe with burnt residue. Further investigation revealed that the bag Winger was carrying contained over \$166 worth of stolen merchandise. Winger was taken into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia, CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis, Theft Scheme:

\$100 to Under \$1500, Theft: \$100 to Under \$1500-Shoplifting.



Tobias Trondelle Wilkins

**Trespassing: 24-97665** On December 16, 2024, Deputy First Class (DFC) McCourt responded to a reported trespassing incident at the Wawa located at 305 Market Square Drive in Prince Frederick.

**Tobias Trondelle Wilkins**, 23 of Prince Frederick, was observed on the property despite having been indefinitely trespassed from the location. Wilkins was arrested and charged with Trespassing: Private Property.



David Peter Lambert

**Disorderly Conduct: 24-97895** On December 17, 2024, Deputy Parrott responded to the Southern Community Center located at 20 Appeal Lane in Lusby, for a disorderly individual aboard a county bus. The complainant advised **David Peter Lambert**, 53 of Huntingtown, was acting disorderly. Witnessed observed Lambert was rummaging through passengers' bags, threatening them, taking personal belongings, and throwing items across the bus while behaving in a disorderly manner. Lambert was placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Disorderly Conduct.

**Theft: 24-97890** On December 17, 2024,



Khalaila Myasha Brown

Deputy Mister responded to the Prince Frederick Library located at 850 Costley Way in Prince Frederick, for a reported theft. Investigation revealed **Khalaila Myasha Brown**, 24 of Lusby, had stolen

a government-issued cell phone and left the library. As deputies were questioning Brown about the theft, Brown became irate while using vulgar language and refused to comply with deputies' commands. Brown was placed under arrest and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Theft: Less than \$100 and Resisting/Interfering with Arrest.

**Theft: 24-98410** On December 19, 2024, Deputy Zinn responded to a reported theft at Rolands located at 7875 Bayside Road in Chesapeake Beach. The investigation revealed that a black male with gray facial hair, wearing a flannel-style jacket with a hood, a hat, jeans, and white shoes, concealed a pork loin in his jacket. The suspect bypassed all points of sale without paying and fled the store. The estimated value of stolen property is \$10.

**Damaged Property: 24-98817** On December 20, 2024, Deputy Chase responded to the 1300 block of Fairwood Drive in Huntingtown, for a reported theft. The complainant reported that an unknown suspect had stolen a handicap placard from her unlocked vehicle. Additionally, the victim's mailbox had been struck and broken off its post. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$50, while the damage to the

mailbox is estimated at \$250.

**Destruction of Property: 24-99146** On December 21, 2024, Deputy Mister responded to the Calvert County Detention Center located at 325 Stafford Road in Prince Frederick, for the report of property destruction. The complainant advised inmate **David Peter Lambert**, 53 of Huntingtown, damaged a sprinkler located in a jail cell. Lambert was arrested and charged with Malicious Destruction of Property. The estimated value of damaged property is \$500.

**Theft: 24-99450** On December 22, 2024, Deputy MacWilliams responded to a reported theft at the Walmart located at 10600 Town Center Blvd. in Dunkirk. Investigation revealed that witnesses observed **Luis Emmanuel De La Torre Velazco**, 27, of Hyattsville, take two hooded jackets from the shelf, put them on, and walk past all points of sale. Velazco was confronted by asset protection before leaving the store. The total value of the stolen items was \$47.98. Velazco was arrested and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, where he was charged with Theft: Less than \$100-Shoplifting.

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

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

## Beware of 'Black Ice'



As temperatures remain below freezing, we want to remind everyone about the dangers of black ice on our roadways.

What is black ice? Black ice is a thin, transparent layer of ice that forms on the road, often blending in with the asphalt. It's nearly invisible, making it extremely dangerous for drivers.

Where to watch out:

- Shaded areas of the road
- Bridges and overpasses
- Intersections and less-traveled roads

Driving tips for black ice:

- Slow down: Reduce your speed and drive cautiously.

- Avoid sudden movements: Brake gently, steer smoothly, and avoid sudden turns.
- Increase following distance: Give extra space between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- Stay Alert: Keep your eyes on the road and be aware of changing conditions.

The Calvert County Sheriff's Office says, "Your safety is our top priority. Please take extra precautions when driving, and if you encounter black ice, remain calm and continue to drive with care. Stay safe, Calvert County!"

## Calvert's Finest Snow Patrol



K9 Atlas (left) and K9 Bruno (right) absolutely paws-ively love a good snow day. These dedicated deputies are always ready to serve and protect! With another chance of snow this weekend, our K9 team is ready for whatever Mother Nature has in store.



## SMECO Employees Raise \$60,000 For Local Hospitals



From left: Jennifer Klueh, University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, development and foundation operations coordinator; Sonja Cox, SMECO's president and CEO; Emily Cantrell-Stagner, MedStar St. Mary's, AVP-philanthropy; Melissa Carnes, CalvertHealth, database and grants manager; Amy Lutz, CalvertHealth, director of public relations & marketing; Natalie Cotton, SMECO's government and public affairs director; Brian Lazarchick, SMECO's vice president, electric operations & construction, engineering & operations; and Pam Rollins-Butler, University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, board member.

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) employees recently held a fund-raising event and donated \$60,000 to three hospitals in Southern Maryland: CalvertHealth Medical Center, University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, and MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

"Community hospitals provide care, comfort, and hope to those who need it most. These local organizations offer more than healthcare, they provide strength and connection for our community in the best and worst moments of their lives," said Sonja M. Cox, SMECO president and CEO. "Thanks to the hard work of our employees and the generosity of our vendors in making this annual event a success, we can continue to make meaningful contributions to our community."

"We are incredibly grateful to SMECO and its members for this generous support, which will make a meaningful impact on cancer care here in Southern Maryland. With these funds, CalvertHealth can continue to strengthen our affiliation with Duke Health, expanding access to clinical trials and advanced treatments for our community. SMECO's commitment to supporting local healthcare truly benefits all of us," said Jeremy Bradford, president and CEO of CalvertHealth.

"This generous donation will help provide screening, treatment, and other health support services, as well as education about lifestyle changes people can make to reduce their chances of being stricken by cancer," said Noel Cervino, president and CEO for the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center Foundation. "We are proud of our longstanding partnership with SMECO, and appreciate their commitment to helping address the health needs of the communities we both serve."

"This investment will go towards refreshing our Emergency Department—new flooring, cabinetry, and a nursing worksta-

tion. SMECO's generosity and commitment to our mission not only enhances our ability to deliver exceptional care, but also makes a meaningful difference in the lives of countless patients and families in our community," said Emily Cantrell-Stagner, assistant vice president of philanthropy for MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

SMECO employees raised the money through the Annual Charity Golf Outing in September. The event draws support from SMECO vendors, the cooperative's board and executive team, and employees who volunteer. The cooperative selects different organizations each year to benefit from its fundraising events. Contributions, which may be tax deductible, can be made to the SMECO Charitable Foundation.

"SMECO employee fund-raisers have contributed more than \$600,000 to local organizations over the last 12 years," said Natalie Cotton, SMECO's government and public affairs director. "We are especially grateful to our business partners who generously contribute by providing donations and participating in the event. This year's Presenting Sponsor was AUI Power. Diamond Sponsors include SMCIS, and ULCS. Platinum Sponsors include ACES, Altec, AV3, Beuchert, BF Joy, Booth & Associates LLC, Chick-Fil-A, CMI General Contractors, ConvergeOne, ICF, Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Milwaukee Tools, New River Electrical Corp, Nokia, OCC Location Services, PennLine, Rodgers Consulting, Sargent & Lundy, Scheibel Construction, Schneider Electric, Sumter Utilities, Super Salvage, The Okonite Company, TRC Companies, Utility Sales Associates, V-Energy Sales, WESCO, and The Willis Group/Southern Maryland Oil. We rely on Golf Tournament sponsors for their donations and we appreciate their assistance."

*Press Release from SMECO*

## CalvertHealth Medical Center Welcomes 2025's First Baby



It's a girl! Congratulations to parents Shelby and Jacob Camp of Prince Frederick on the birth of their daughter, Aurora on January 3, 2025. Aurora is the first baby to be born at CalvertHealth Medical Center in the new year. Photo courtesy of CalvertHealth.

## Winter Weather at Calvert Marine Museum



Monday's snow storm blanketed Calvert county with some of the highest snow totals in the state. Photo courtesy of Calvert Marine Museum.

# Calvert Community Calendar

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

## Thu, Jan 9

### Alzheimer's Caregivers Support

Calvert Library Prince Frederick  
850 Costley Way & Zoom  
6:30-8 p.m.

Get tips and support from other caregivers. Facilitated by Jeannette Findley & JC Hooker. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### TACOS Teen Advisory Council of Students

Calvert Library Southern Branch  
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons  
5-6 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. No registration or application required to join, just attend a meeting! We're super friendly and we have a lot of fun. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

## Fri, Jan 10

### Pins and Needles

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

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

## Sat, Jan 11

### Poetry Share

Calvert Library Prince Frederick  
850 Costley Way  
10:30am-12:30pm.

Join fellow poets and poetry-lovers to share poetry in a casual open mic-type setting. If you'd like to stay to workshop your poetry afterwards, you are welcome! 410-535-0291

or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### New Year's Resolution Guided Hike

1985 Scientists Cliffs Rd., Port Republic  
10-11:30 a.m.

Kick off your New Year's Resolution to get outside more! Enjoy a 1.5 hour guided hike on the Frog Pond, Ridge, and Flint trails at the American Chestnut Land Trust. The hike is mostly flat with one incline. Meet at the Southside Trailhead.

### Pop-in with Poppie

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

Make your Saturday afternoon memorable by coming to visit with our very own Pop Star "Poppie," our Virginia Opossum. You can join the Poppie paparazzi in the museum lobby with one of our educational interpreters, learn all kinds of fun possum facts, and visit our Museum Store for possum fan gear. Since the welfare of our animals is our primary concern, Poppie's ability to visit with her adoring public may occasionally be subject to change on short notice.

## Sun, Jan 12

### Creature Feature Celebrating the Chinese New Year: Year of the Snake!

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

This month, we're celebrating the Chinese New Year: Year of the Snake! Discover the fascinating world of snakes and learn about their role in the ecosystem. Take-home educational coloring pages will be available! Included with museum admission.

### Beyond the Displays: Artifact Stories

Calvert Marine Museum  
1:30 p.m.

Discover the history behind the emblem from a paddle wheel boat, the tools found in the blacksmith shop, and the Gov. R. M. McLane name board. Hear captivating stories about WWII's impact on the Solomons community and uncover hidden pictures

within the museum murals. It's a unique opportunity to delve into local history and see these artifacts in a new light. Included with museum admission.

## Mon, Jan 13

### Book Discussion

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

Join us this month to discuss our current book selection, *Lula Dean's Little Library of Banned Books* by Kirsten Miller. 410-535-0291. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

## Wed, Jan 15

### Reading Buddies

Calvert Library Fairview Branch  
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings  
6-7 p.m.

At this event, elementary-aged children will do fun activities and read out loud to teen volunteers. Teen volunteers can earn one service learning hour for participating. It's a great way to socialize and build reading confidence! 410-257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### On Pins & Needles

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch  
4100 5<sup>th</sup> St., North Beach  
1-4 p.m.

Bring your quilting, needlework, knitting, crocheting or other project for an afternoon of conversation and shared creativity. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### Tween Book Club

Calvert Library Southern Branch  
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons  
2-3 p.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m.

*Silverwing (Graphic)* by Kenneth Oppel  
Twens ages 9-12, join us for a fun book club! We will play a game, discuss the book, do an activity and choose a prize! 410-326-

5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### Book Discussion: *Americanah*

Calvert Library Fairview Branch  
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings  
& Zoom  
2-3 p.m.

Join us online or in person to discuss *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a modern classic about star-crossed lovers that explores questions of race and being Black in America. 410--257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

## Thu, Jan 16

### Little Minnows

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

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

## Upcoming

### Maritime Performance Series: Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer with Chao Tian From China to Appalachia

Calvert Matine Museum  
Friday, Jan. 24  
7 p.m.

Grammy Award-winning American roots artists Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer join Chinese classical hammered dulcimer player Chao Tian in a show that blends music from China to Appalachia and beyond. The performance will be held in the museum's Harms Gallery, starting at 7 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m., with beer and wine available for purchase. Tickets are \$20 online (up to one day prior) and \$25 on the day of the concert and at the door.

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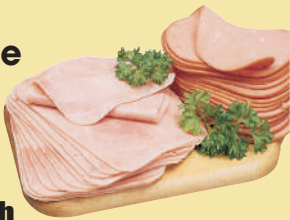
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**12.99**

750mL  
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**12.99**

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**9.49**

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Wines

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# St. Mary's Community Calendar

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

## Sat, Jan 11

### Unnecessary Farce Auditions

Three Notch Theater  
21744 South Coral Dr., Lexington Park  
3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

"Two cops. Three crooks. Eight doors. Go!" Unnecessary Farce is an award-winning stage comedy that combines all the elements of a classic farce with a contemporary American plot. In an economy motel room, an embezzling mayor is supposed to meet with his female accountant. In the room next door, two undercover cops are supposed to catch the meeting on videotape. But there's some confusion about who's in which room, who's watching the video, who's taken the money, who's hired a hitman, and why the accountant keeps taking off her clothes.

Auditions: Saturday, January 11th, 3 pm to 6 pm. Callback date (if needed): Sunday, January 12th 1:00pm-3:00pm

If you are unable to attend in-person auditions, please contact us at [auditions@newtowneplayers.org](mailto:auditions@newtowneplayers.org).

[towneplayers.org](http://towneplayers.org).

Performance Dates:

April 24th (Sponsor's Night)

April 25th—May 11th Performances

Every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday will be evening performances and Sundays will be afternoon matinee performances.

For more information, visit [newtowneplayers.org/auditions](http://newtowneplayers.org/auditions).

### Winter Qi Gong & Yin Yoga Workshop

Spice Studio  
22725 Washington St., Leonardtown  
9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

This class will use gentle exercises, meditation, and acupressure to balance the Water Element. These practices are rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine and are appropriate for newcomers to yoga and qi gong. There will be a Tea Ceremony and time for reflection at the end.

Sign up on the Mind Body App, or visit [somdspice.com](http://somdspice.com) for more details about the studio.

## Mon, Jan 13

### PaxRiver Quilters Guild Monthly Meeting

Hollywood United Methodist Church  
24422 Marvel Dean Rd., Hollywood  
6:30 p.m.

Please note the new meeting location. Meetings are the second Monday of every month and feature guest speakers, show and tells, and other fun activities. Pax River Quilters Guild is a non-profit organization devoted to philanthropic quilting projects and promoting the skill of quilting. New members of all skill levels are welcome. For questions, email: [prqgsomd@gmail.com](mailto:prqgsomd@gmail.com)

## Sat, Jan 18

### Poker at HVRS

Hollywood Volunteer Rescue Squad  
43256 Rescue Ln., Hollywood  
6 p.m. to midnight

Texas Hold'Em at Hollywood Vol Rescue Squad. \$85.00 buy-in for \$20k in chips. Rounds are 20 minutes each. Doors open at 5 pm, tournament starts at 6pm. BYOB, food and sodas will be available for purchase. Chance at 50/50 included in your buy-in. Tables deal their own cards, dealers are not provided. Late Entries permitted until 1st break, approx. 7 pm cut off. No rebuys allowed.

\*\*Please note this event is at the rescue squad, not the fire house\*\*

## Mon, Jan 20

### Blood Drive

United Methodist Church  
27108 Mt. Zion Church Rd.,  
Mechanicsville  
Noon to 6 p.m.

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# ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### Winter Reading

Be a Reading Machine this January! Register for Winter Reading with St. Mary's County Library! From January 1 - 31, read and track to fill in a bingo board on Beanstack to be entered to win gift cards.

### Kindles, Cookies & Cocoa

Bring your ereader and join us for hot drink and sweet treats! From downloading ebooks & audiobooks, to adjusting reading settings, to searching & borrowing titles on the three library apps (Palace, Libby, and Hoopla), and more!!! Sit down with us at the Lexington Park Library on Thursday, January 9 from 2-3:30pm and get cozy with your ereader for 2025. Registration recommended to be emailed notes from the workshop.

### Manifesting 2025: Create a Vision Board

Whether you are a seasoned vision board enthusiast or a beginner, this morning is going to be full of fun, reflection and connection. Get ready to unleash your imagination and create

a personalized vision board that is going to inspire and motivate you throughout the year. Come join us at Lexington Park Library on Saturday, January 11 from 10-11:30am to create your own vision board and put a concrete image to those big dreams of yours! Supplies will be available through the library. Register at [stmalib.org](http://stmalib.org)

### Introduction to 3D Printing

Have you ever wanted something 3D printed at the library, but weren't sure how? Now is your chance to learn at the Lexington Park Library on Sunday, January 12 from 2-3:30pm! This introductory course will cover the basics of how a 3D printer works and how to use PrusaSlicer software. Learn how to find ready-to-print files online and submit them to the Library for printing. No prior experience is needed. This is an in-person class held in the Computer Lab Makerspace. Register at [stmalib.org](http://stmalib.org)

### Build Your Budget

Want to feel in control of your money? Join us for an interactive workshop at the Lexington Park Library on Monday, January 13 from 6-7:30pm to build your own

budget! We'll start out by talking about what a budget is - and is not - before guiding you through the process to create a plan for where you want and need your dollars to go. You'll also receive tips for implementing your new budget successfully. To get the most out of this workshop, bring 3 months of checking account and credit card statements, a list of all income sources (with amounts), and your current budget or list of bills. Register at [stmalib.org](http://stmalib.org) to receive a reminder email; walk-ins welcome.

### Paws to Read

Therapy animals from Pets on Wheels are visiting the Leonardtown Library on Monday, January 13 from 6-7:30pm! Friends of all ages are invited to practice reading with a furry friend, or just enjoy some pets and snuggles. No registration necessary

### Gaming at the Library

It's time to game on! Swing by the Charlotte Hall Library on Tuesday, January 14 from 3:30-4:30pm for an afternoon packed with fun and games. Dive into video game showdowns on the Nin-

tendo Switch, conquer the competition in board games, or just chill with friends in a laid-back, game-filled vibe. Whether you're a gaming pro or just here for the snacks, there's something for everyone. Perfect for teens ages 13-18. Drop in and let the good times roll!

### Introduction to Apple (iOS) Mobile Device Basics

Do you have an Apple device and don't know what to do next? Complete this workshop at the Lexington Park Library on Thursday, January 16 from 10am-12pm to get a \$10 gift card! This in-person workshop is for those who have a new Apple mobile device, or are considering getting one, and want to learn more about the basic functions. It will help attendees get connected, identify common apps, and build confidence in using their device safely. Gift cards are available on a first-come, first-served basis. This event is provided with support from AT&T, Public Library Association, and Maria Barga, Tech Educator with the University of Maryland Extension. Register at [stmalib.org](http://stmalib.org).

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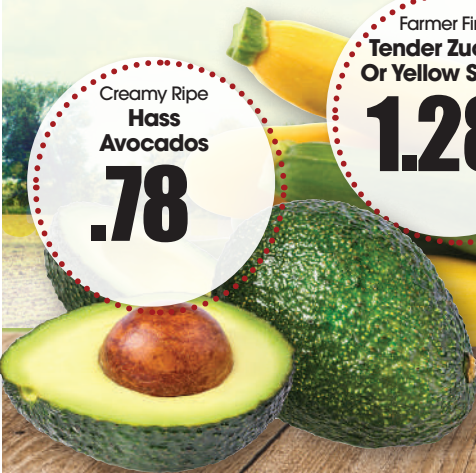
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# The Benefits of Adding Lighting to Your Landscape



Homeowners know there's no shortage of ways to tweak a property. Some homeowners may lament that the work associated with home ownership is never done, but owning a house also provide endless opportunities to upgrade the spaces people call home.

Landscape lighting has become increasingly popular in recent years. That popularity is undoubtedly due to a number of variables, and each highlights a benefit of installing landscape lighting around a property.

- **Affordability:** Some may think of big budget projects like kitchen remodels or room additions when pondering home renovations. Such projects can have a dramatic impact on the look and feel of a home, but landscape lighting can be equally transformative at a fraction of the cost of larger undertakings. The home renovation experts at Angi.com estimate the average landscape lighting project costs around \$4,000, making affordability a notable benefit of the project.
- **Appearance:** There's no denying the aesthetic appeal of a well-lit landscape at night. Landscape lighting can be utilized to draw attention to awe-inspiring components of a landscape, whether it's natural features like gardens and foliage or manmade components like architectural features. Improved appearance can increase curb appeal, which is often associated with how a home looks during daylight hours. But photographs of a well-lit nighttime landscape can impress buyers as well.
- **Cost savings:** Landscape lighting might help homeowners reduce the cost of their homeowners insurance.

Researchers at PolicyGenius.com found that insurance companies typically offer a discount of 2 to 5 percent to homeowners who install a home security system. Insurance providers may offer additional savings to homeowners who pair such systems with landscape lighting, which can be a deterrent to burglars who prefer to operate under a cloak of darkness.

- **Safety:** Insurance firms may discount premiums because of landscape lighting because they view it as a deterrent to potential criminals. But landscape lighting also makes moving around a property at night safer for residents and guests. Lighting can be used to illuminate walkways, outdoor living rooms, patios around pools, and other areas where residents and guests will be walking at night, which can reduce the risk of falls and injuries that may result from such spills.
- **Return on Investment:** Savvy homeowners consider a renovation's return on investment before deciding to go forward with a project. Studies vary, but the National Association of Realtors indicates landscape lighting can recoup as much as 70 percent of homeowners' investment in the project at resale. When viewed through the lens of ROI, the cost of installing landscape lighting is even less.

Landscape lighting adds notable aesthetic appeal to a home at a fraction of the cost of other renovation projects. The benefits such lighting provides make the project one every homeowner can consider.

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## How to Decide Between a Deck or Paved Patio



Outdoor living spaces have become sought-after commodities among homeowners. A 2022 survey of homeowners conducted by the New Home Trends Institute found that open yards are less appealing to home buyers than they once were. The survey noted that just 28 percent of respondents chose open yards, while 65 percent preferred patios and 55 percent chose decks. Green spaces remain popular, but the survey indicates that many would-be home buyers also want an outdoor living area to make the most of their home exteriors.

Homeowners aspiring to transform their home exterior spaces typically must decide between a deck or pavers when the time comes to plan such areas. That's a personal choice homeowners must make, but those without strong feelings on either option can consider these tips as they try to decide if a deck or pavers are for them.

- Determine your budget. Budget is a notable variable with any home renovation project, and the addition of an outdoor living space is no exception. The materials homeowners choose will ultimately determine the cost of each project. For example, composite decking materials tend to cost significantly more than wood decks, but that higher price tag also comes with less maintenance and typically a longer life span. Pavers may prove less expensive than composite decking, but those cost savings may be negligible if a yard requires extensive excavation to prepare an area for a new patio. It requires patience, but gathering estimates of the various materials can serve as a good starting point when planning an outdoor living space. In addition, homeowners must recognize that material costs can fluctuate considerably over time, as such prices are often contin-

gent on a range of variables, including supply chain issues. So it's best to gather estimates in a short period of time to make the most accurate price comparisons.

- Identify your vision for the space. Homeowners who have a vision for their outdoor living space, even if they are not sure about which material they prefer, may find the process goes more quickly and even more smoothly than those who are unsure about what they want. Those who prefer a flexible multi-use space may be best going with pavers, as the spaces can be easily converted and areas simply designated as one might differentiate between rooms inside the home. For example, an outdoor living room can be separated with the installation of a pavillion and fireplace, while kitchen and dining areas can be separate spaces on the same patio. Decks tend to be less flexible, which might make them ideal for homeowners who prefer an outdoor dining area but don't need a more expansive entertaining space. Of course, decks can be as big as homeowners choose, which can make the spaces more multi-functional.
- Recognize both may be in your best interest. Homeowners also should know that many outdoor living spaces feature both a deck and a paver patio. Homeowners may like an elevated deck that steps down to a patio, which can easily distinguish between the spaces and establish the area as a multifunctional space.

Homeowners planning outdoor living space projects may find themselves choosing between a deck and pavers. Each option can work, and homeowners may even want to combine the two.

# How to Get Your Home Organized in the New Year

The dawn of a new year marks a convenient time to turn over a new leaf. Much attention is paid to individuals' intentions to eat healthier and exercise more at the start of a new year, but those goals are not the only ways to embrace positive change come January.

A quick look around a home's interior may lead some to conclude that their home environments could benefit from a little less clutter and some improved organization. A more organized home may be easier to navigate and can even have a positive impact on residents' mental health. In fact, a 2021 study published in the journal *Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology* found that women who cared for infants in cluttered homes experienced higher levels of physical stress than those whose homes were more organized. That study suggests an organized home is a less stressful environment, which itself can pay numerous dividends, as the Mayo Clinic notes chronic stress increases a person's risk for various health problems, including anxiety, depression, digestive issues, heart disease, and weight gain, among others.

With so much to gain from an organized home, individuals can consider these strategies to make interior spaces around the house less cluttered.



- Avoid procrastinating. A weekly, if not daily, routine that involves cleaning up spaces like the kitchen and living room can ensure a home is not overtaken by clutter before residents even realize it. Each day, go through the mail and discard papers like grocery store circulars and junk mail so they don't pile up. Parents of school-aged children can

- organize papers kids return home with each day so all that homework and event announcements does not create clutter.
- Purchase an entryway shoe rack. It might seem simple, but an entryway shoe rack can set an organized tone in a home. Whether the primary entryway is through the front door or a side door, a shoe rack just inside the door can ensure

shoes are not strewn about and reduces the chances that floors are muddied.

- Consider furniture that doubles as storage. Many people utilize storage furniture so common spaces like living rooms are not overwhelmed by clutter. For example, a storage ottoman can hold blankets, pillows and other creature comforts so these rooms project a clutter-free vibe when not in use. Similarly, storage benches at the end of beds in each bedroom can help to establish a serene, clutter-free vibe, which can promote a better night's sleep.
- Discard older items. Clutter can pile up when storage areas like closets, dressers, nightstands, and home offices fill up with items people tend to accumulate over the years. For example, a linen closet can be overrun by bath towels that are rarely used, while nightstands can become junk drawers over the years. Periodically go through these areas and discard older items that are no longer used. These tasks won't take long, but can free up ample space throughout the home.

These are just a handful of the many ways individuals can effectively organize their home interiors and reap all the rewards that such efforts produce.



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## Tips to Use Your Gas Fireplace Safely



Few images capture the spirit of a season as well as a family gathered around a fireplace embodies winter. Winter is indeed a time when families spend more time together indoors, and there's no better gathering spot than around a warm fireplace.

Heartwarming scenes around a fireplace are even more enjoyable when safety has been prioritized. While natural fireplaces with roaring flames are notable safety risks, it's important that individuals with gas fireplaces embrace fire safety as well. The following are some gas fireplace safety strategies everyone can embrace.

- Avoid the DIY installation route. Even the most skilled do-it-yourselfers are urged to let the professionals install a new gas fireplace. Gas lines are nothing to mess around with, and professional installation teams have ample experience setting up new gas fireplaces in a home.
- Be sure to install a carbon monoxide detector on the same floor as the fireplace. During the gas fireplace installation, ask that a carbon monoxide detector with battery backup is installed on the same floor. The detector alarm will alert individuals if something is amiss, like a gas leak. Periodically inspect the detector to ensure it's working properly.
- Periodically inspect your safety screen. Glass panels are standard features on many gas fireplaces. Such panels separate the fire within the fireplace from the people and items outside of it. Glass panels can become extremely hot, which is why most gas fireplaces come with safety screens as well. These mesh safety screens can keep curious kids and pets from touching hot glass panels, and also protect adults.

Inspect the safety screens periodically to ensure they're still intact and up to the job, replacing them if necessary.

- Keep objects a safe distance away from the fireplace. Experts advise keeping objects a minimum of three feet away from the fireplace at all times. Fabrics and other materials that contact the glass pose a fire hazard, so keep the area in front of the fireplace clear.
- Make the fireplace off limits to children and pets. Though the aforementioned safety screens are a vital safety feature that can keep kids and pets safe, it's still best that kids and pets are kept away from the fireplace at all times. Turn off the fireplace if kids are playing in the room, and use safety gates to keep kids and pets away when the fireplace is in use.
- Book annual fireplace inspections. Annual inspections of the fireplace can ensure everything is working properly. Professional inspections may detect potentially harmful gas leaks, and annual checkups also can help individuals extend the life of their fireplaces.
- Recognize outdoor gas fireplaces have their own safety protocols. Outdoor fireplaces have become wildly popular in recent years. Homeowners who install outdoor gas fireplaces on their properties must recognize these awe-inspiring features require their own unique safety measures, including turning off the gas supply at the end of outdoor entertaining season and protecting the fireplace from the elements when necessary.

Gas fireplace safety strategies can protect residents and also increase the life expectancy of these sought-after features.

# Upgrade Your Home for Modern Living



Modern home features like this smart thermostat can offer both convenience and cost savings.

Remodeling projects allow homeowners to put their personal stamps on a property. In addition to choosing a color and design scheme that fits a particular aesthetic, homeowners may want to outfit their homes with various features that can make them more accommodating to modern living. Homeowners can use these ideas as a springboard for remodeling projects designed to modernize their homes.

- **Open floor plans:** Open floor plans remain coveted characteristics of modern home architecture. An open layout enables occupants to feel like they are enjoying spaces together without having to be on top of one another. Since sightlines are not obstructed in open floor plans, homeowners can enjoy a cohesive design style across each level of the home.
- **Eco-friendly features:** Eco-friendly features modernize homes and may even earn homeowners rebates from the government. From positioning rooms to take advantage of natural sunlight to using environmentally responsible materials and more efficient appliances throughout a home, modern homes can function with a much smaller carbon footprint than older structures.
- **Smart home technology:** A smart home is equipped with appliances and other devices that can be controlled remotely, typically from a phone or computer connected to the internet. Investopedia notes that smart home technology offers homeowners convenience

and cost savings. Smart home technology is available across a wide range of budgets, ranging from thousands of dollars for a complete home automation to roughly \$100 for a small change like a smart thermostat.

- **Accessibility features:** A home that can grow with its residents is advantageous. When choosing renovations, features like slip-resistant flooring, stylish grab bars and low-threshold or barrier-free showers can enable homeowners to age in place more comfortably.
- **Dual owner's suites:** Dual owner's suites can be an asset for couples who choose to sleep separately. The Sleep Foundation says individuals choose to sleep in different rooms for a variety of reasons, notably reduced sleep interruptions and improved sleep quality. Plus, an extra bedroom can come in handy when one person is ill or in the event a partner snores. Rather than one person in the relationship getting the "lesser" space, certain homebuilders now offer plans for dual owner's suites so both people get the features they desire in a bedroom.
- **Three-season room:** Many homeowners aspire to bridge the gap between the indoors and outside. Three-season rooms help transition from the yard to the interior of a home, and offer a touch of nature without the bugs or unpleasant elements.

A number of home improvements can bring homes up to the standards of modern living.

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# Home & Garden



# In Remembrance

To schedule an obituary in the County Times, submit text and picture to [aldailey@countytimes.net](mailto: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.

## Butch Reithmeyer 88



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Charles "Butch" Edwin Reithmeyer Jr., age 88, on December 30, 2024. A devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather, Butch was deeply cherished by his family and community.

Butch was a life member and one of the pillars of the Gateway Lions Club, joining Lionism 59 years ago on April 1, 1965. Butch was a 9 Blue Sapphire Progressive Melvin Jones recipient, the highest in District 22-C. His kindness and service earned him awards over the years, but his greatest reward was the ability to make a difference in the lives of others.

Butch's legacy is one of love, generosity, and tireless devotion to his family. Born to Charles Edwin Reithmeyer Sr. and Marion Roberta (Kraft) on July 28, 1936, he was preceded in death by his parents, stepmother, Grace Mary (Fox), and siblings, Marie Elizabeth Reithmeyer Boteler and Francis Paul Reithmeyer. He leaves behind his beloved wife of 67 years, Rebecca Mae (Tippet), who was the love of his life and the best love story you'd ever hear.

He is also survived by his children: Charles "Chuck" Reithmeyer III and companion Nancy Mattingly, Constance "Connie" Broske and spouse Michael, Russell Reithmeyer and spouse Yvonne, and Carolyn Boxler and spouse James "Jim". Butch's legacy lives on in his 14 grandchildren: Jason Reithmeyer, Joshua Reithmeyer, Jeremy Reithmeyer, Justin Reithmeyer, Jonathan Broske, Daniel Broske, Michael Reithmeyer, Maura Enrriquez, Kenny Reithmeyer, Alex Reithmeyer, Angel High, Esther Russell, Charles Boxler, and Rebecca Sipko. He was also proud of his 20 great-grandchildren, with one more on the way.

Alongside his father, Butch built and operated Flower Village mobile home park. He dedicated much of his life to taking care of his family through his strong work ethic. Butch consistently donated blood for many years and gave multiple gallons throughout his lifetime. His warmth and willingness to help anyone in need endeared him to many, and he will be remembered for the positive impact he had on countless lives. Butch was a member of St. Vianney Catholic Church, where his faith in the Lord served as the foundation for the life he built. Butch professed Jesus Christ as his Savior, and his faith guided him in every aspect of his life, inspiring him to be a source of support, generosity, and love to all who knew him.

A proud 1955 graduate and longtime board member of Charlotte Hall Military Academy, Butch received an education that instilled in him a sense of discipline and punctuality that he carried with him throughout his life. Butch was a world traveler with his bride by his side. He had a love for rock-

fishing, was a long-time ticket holder of the Washington Redskins, and a member of the Elks Club in Prince Frederick, where he enjoyed playing cards and rarely missed a Friday night poker game. Butch also loved family camping and beach trips, where he created lasting memories.

A man of quiet strength and deep compassion, Butch Reithmeyer will be greatly missed, but his spirit of service, love for his family, and contributions to the community will continue to inspire those who knew him.

The family will receive friends on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the historic St. Francis Xavier Church, 21370 Newtowne Neck Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 12:00 pm. A private interment will follow at St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. The family invites all family and friends for a reception following the mass at the church hall.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Butch's memory to the Gateway Lions Club:

Gateway Lions Club  
15907 St. Thomas Church Road  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.mgfh.com](http://www.mgfh.com).

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

## Essie Wynn, 75



Esther Jane Wynn, "Essie", 75, of Lexington Park, MD, formerly of San Diego, CA, passed away on November 24, 2024, in Lexington Park, MD. Born on November 28, 1948, in Midland, MI, she was the daughter of the late Leonard "Jack" C. Chamberlain, Jr. and the late Esther Gage. Essie was the loving wife of Robert Jason Wynn whom she married in San Diego, CA on November 10, 1979. In addition to her husband, she is survived by her son, Jason Gage Wynn, of California, MD, her siblings, Leonard D. Chamberlain (Isabelle) of Ft. Pierce, FL, Elizabeth C. Patton (Bob) of Bellingham, WA, and her nephews and niece Leonard D. Chamberlain Jr., Henry W. Chamberlain, and Elizabeth M. Chamberlain.

Essie graduated from Midland Senior High School in 1966, and then went on to attend Michigan State University. She moved to St. Mary's County, MD from San Diego, CA in September 1992, and was a homemaker.

Competitive? Absolutely! Whether it was Wheel of Fortune, a game of hearts, ping pong, darts, badminton, sailing on Wixom Lake, or cheering for her Chargers and Padres; she was in it, to win it. Her true passion though, was Women's Team Tennis, as many can attest. For a period, she even served as an assistant tennis coach at Leonardtown High School. Esther was also a student of

the Bible, former member of St. Andrews Episcopal, and a founding member of the Anglican Mission of Southern Maryland.

The family will receive friends on Saturday, January 18, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a memorial service will be held at 10:00 AM in the chapel with Pastor Chris Whetlor officiating.

Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of St. Mary's, P.O. Box 625, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.mgfh.com](http://www.mgfh.com).

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

## Barbara Morris, 80



Barbara Jean Morris, born on June 19, 1944, entered eternal rest on December 21, 2024. Born to Lawrence and Geraldine in Pearson, Maryland, Barbara lived a life

of faith, family, and service. She graduated from Cardinal Gibbons High School in 1963 and soon embarked on a journey of love and dedication that would leave a lasting legacy.

Barbara married James Morris, and together they built a beautiful life in Chicago, Illinois, raising three children: Terrence Morris (Gisele), Tanya Cook (Greg), and Tara Rickard. Barbara pursued her passion for caring for others, earning her RN degree and dedicating 35 years to the nursing profession.

Barbara returned to her beloved Maryland in the late 1990s, settling at the cherished family home. She shared her talents and care with many at Bayside Assisted Living Center in Lexington Park, MD, and later found her true calling as the school nurse at Appeal Elementary School in Lusby, MD, where she was a steady source of comfort and kindness to students and staff alike.

Barbara was a woman of elegance, faith, and joy. She loved crocheting, cooking, traveling, visiting casinos, savoring seafood, and most of all, spending time with her beloved family. A prayer warrior, she found peace and strength in her daily prayers, faithfully praying the rosary twice a day. A lifelong commitment to self-care, Barbara maintained a standing appointment at the hair salon, upholding her trademark elegance for as long as she could.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, her sisters Laurice White, Marva Ann Glover, Marian Levina lee Chase, and her brother John Lenwood Chase.

Barbara's memory lives on through her children: Terrence Morris (Gisele), Tanya Cook (Greg), and Tara Rickard; her siblings Beatrice Bryant, Diane Mays, Lawrence Chase, Thomas Chase, and Alice Crute (deceased); her grandchildren De'Ja Morris, Terrence Morris Jr., Phillip Morris,

Summer Curtis, Greg Cook Jr. (Mae), Jalen Cook, Kalimah Rickard, Riyad Rickard, and Yusuf Rickard; and her great-grandchildren Jeremiah, Micah, Jayce, and Elijah. She is also survived by numerous godchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws and dear friends.

Barbara Jean Morris was a loving matriarch, and a beacon of kindness. Her unwavering faith, gentle spirit, and devotion to family will be deeply missed but forever cherished.

A visitation will be held on Friday, January 17, 2025 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. with a prayer service at 6:00 p.m., celebrated by Deacon Juan Ortiz, at Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., 22955 Hollywood Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. A Mass of Christian Burial service will be celebrated by Father Marco Schad on Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 12:00 p.m., at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 22375 Three Notch Road, Lexington Park, MD 20653. Interment will follow immediately after mass at the church cemetery.

Condolences to the family may be made at [www.brinsfieldfuneral.com](http://www.brinsfieldfuneral.com).

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

## Holly Ollom, 60



Holly Gay Gordon Ollom, 60, of Leonardtown, MD, passed away on January 3, 2025, in Leonardtown, MD. Born on February 2, 1964, in Leonardtown, MD,

she was the daughter of the late Nancy Brown and the late Neil Gordon. Holly was the loving wife of Jeffery Mark Ollom, Sr. She is survived by her children, Felicia Olmeda of California, MD, Sulaine Rosario Ollom of Lexington Park, MD, Jeffery Ollom, Jr. of Phoenix, AZ, Joshua Ollom of Leonardtown, MD, Daniel Ollom of Lancaster, PA, Makayla Ollom Flynn of California, MD, Elizabeth Ollom of Leonardtown, MD, Rebecca Ollom of Leonardtown, MD, Rachael Ollom of Lexington Park, MD, and Skylar Alvey Ollom of Leonardtown, MD, her brother, Leo Gordon, of Jacksonville, FL, and 11 grandchildren.

Holly was a lifelong St. Mary's County, MD resident and graduated from Leonardtown High School. She graduated from College University of Maryland in 1986 with her B.S. Computer Science, and then went on to earn her Master of S.S.M. in 1991 from the Florida Institute of Technology. In addition to being a mother and grandmother, Holly was an office manager for Bay State Vending, Mechanicsville, MD.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 7:00 PM at SAYSF Bible Church, Lexington Park, MD.

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.mgfh.com](http://www.mgfh.com).

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

## *A View From The* **BLEACHERS**



# OF RAVENS AND COMMANDERS

By Ronald N. Guy  
Contributing Writer

New owner. All new coaches. Massive roster changes, including a shiny new quarterback. It's normally a formula for hope. Deep psychological scars prevented any such normalcy. A quarter of a century of losing and an incomparable organizational meltdown will do that to you. And others. Or an entire fan base. Across an entire region. To include a lost generation of fans.

Dramatic, yes. Appropriate? Completely.

Then, way back in September, Jayden Daniels, Dan Quinn, Kliff Kingsbury, a totally new coaching staff and front office, and a roster full of strangers, took the field in Tampa for a Week 1 game against the Buccaneers. What every Washington football fan was thinking: Here we go...let's see if the organizational exorcism worked and if this team is worth my time. On the first offensive play, Daniels threw a quick screen to running back Brian Robinson. Good thought: Get the rookie quarterback an easy completion to calm the nerves and into the flow of the game. Or not. The pass, maybe a mere 15 feet in distance, sailed over Robinson's head. A scramble ensued and the ball bounced out of bounds. Worse than an incompleting, it was a lateral, so Washington was fortunate the ball reached the sidelines. Somewhere the definition of a brutal play is when a loss of 5-6 yards was the best possible outcome. I'm watching this thinking, "He's a total bust (Daniels). Completely overwhelmed by the moment. More of the same for this bleeping team. My fall weekend calendar just became available for other activities."

Fans major in overreactions. It's a lifestyle, bruh.

A few days earlier, the Ravens had opened the NFL season in primetime, at Arrowhead Stadium, against the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs. This was personal. The Chiefs ended the top-seeded Ravens' season in a playoff upset the previous season. The Ravens lost again on this night by an inch – literally. Down 27-20, Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson completed an apparent game-tying touchdown to tight end Isaiah Likely on the last play of regulation. Upon further review (the best or worst words for a sports fan), Likely's left foot was down, but his right foot landed an inch...maybe...out of bounds. Game over. Chiefs win.

The Ravens returned home the following week to get well against a Raiders team that promised to be competing more for draft position than a playoff spot in 2024. Yeah. The Raiders, ultimately winners of just four games all season, hadn't yet subscribed that bleak forecast; they left Baltimore with a win and the Super Bowl hopeful Ravens in a 0-2 hole.

Needless to say, not great starts for either team.

Undeterred, the Ravens ripped off five straight wins and were 7-3 after ten games. Similarly, after the Week 1 loss to Tampa, Washington won seven of its next eight to whip a long-hibernating fan base into a frenzy.

There were more bumps to navigate, though. The Ravens lost to the inferior Cleveland Browns and were swept by Pennsylvania - losses to both the Steelers and Eagles. Washington, meanwhile, saw Daniels sustain an injury and lost three straight games in the middle of the season. But in the end, the teams combined for an impressive 24 wins, a division title (Baltimore) and surprising playoff berth (Washington).

That's how the 2024 season went for the locals. It was, at any moment, surprising, challenging, rewarding, disappointing, exhilarating (thinking of Daniels' Hail Mary to beat Chicago), unfair and just. And through all of those emotions and wild week-to-week ride, the 2024 journeys of the Ravens and Commanders have been instructive for 2025. A team's schedule is a rough outline of how a season will execute. The details, many presenting unimaginable variables and situations, are filled in along the way. Sounds like life, right? The calendar, holidays, birthdays and the seasons – all predictable. Beyond that, well, who knows. Navigational recommendations? Stick to your fundamentals, prepare, take it day-to-day, maintain discipline, make adjustments as needed, stay "medium", trust your teammates (family, friends, colleagues), capitalize on breaks – lots of cheesy sports clichés! True, but I'm confident the Ravens and Commanders would approve this message.

Send comments to [RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com](mailto:RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com)

## FINANCIAL FOCUS®

### Time for New Year's financial resolutions

Now that the calendar has flipped, it's time for some New Year's resolutions. You could decide you're going to exercise more, lose weight, learn a new skill, reconnect with old friends — the possibilities are almost limitless. This year, why not add a few financial resolutions to your list?

Here are a few to consider:

- Reduce your debts. It may be easier said than done, but if you can cut down on your debt load, you'll increase your cash flow and have more money available to invest for your future. So, look for ways to lower your expenses and spending. You might find it helpful to use one of the budgeting apps available online.
- Boost your retirement savings. Try to put in as much as you can afford to your IRA and your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. If your salary goes up this year, you've got a good opportunity to increase your contributions to these retirement accounts. And once you turn 50, you can make pre-tax catch-up contributions for your 401(k) and traditional IRA. You might also want to review the investment mix within your 401(k) or similar plan to determine whether it's still providing the growth potential you need, given your risk tolerance and time horizon.
- Build an emergency fund. It's generally a good idea to maintain an emergency fund containing up to six months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account. Without such a fund, you might be forced to dip into your long-term investments to pay for short-term needs, such as an expensive auto or home repair.
- Keep funding your non-retirement goals. Your traditional IRA and 401(k) are good ways to save for retirement — but you likely have other goals, too, and you'll need to save and invest for them. So, for example, if you want your children to go to college or receive some other type of post-secondary training, you might want to invest in a tax-advantaged 529 education savings plan. And if you have short-term goals, such as saving for a wedding or taking an overseas vacation, you might want to put some money away in a liquid account. For a short-term goal, you don't necessarily need to invest aggressively for growth — you just want the money to be there for you when you need it.
- Review your estate plans. If you haven't already created your estate plans, you may want to do so in 2025. Of course, if you're relatively young, you might not think you need to have estate plans in place just yet, but life is unpredictable, and the future is not ours to see. If you have already drawn up estate plans, you may want to review them, especially if you've recently experienced changes in your life and family situation, such as marriage, remarriage or the addition of a new child. Because estate planning can be complex, you'll want to work with a qualified legal professional.

You may not be able to tackle all these resolutions in 2025. But by addressing as many of them as you can, you may find that, by the end of the year, you have made progress toward your goals and set yourself on a positive course for all the years to come.

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

*Edward Jones, Member SIPC*

*Contributed by David McDonough*

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# Couple from Belgium Welcomes New Year's First Baby

Alvine N. and Mukoh L. wanted one more adventure before they welcomed their first child in December. Eight months pregnant and feeling healthy, Alvine received permission from her doctor to leave their home in Belgium for a month-long trip. Married in June, the trip was the couple's honeymoon and included stops in the United Kingdom, Las Vegas, and, finally, Waldorf, Maryland, to visit family.

However, their travels took an unexpected turn when they prepared to board their return flight home.

"The OB/GYN said it was ok; we were clear to travel, so we thought, 'Ok, everything is good,'" said Mukoh, "So we came, had our fun, and were about to go back, and we are told 'No, it is too risky for the baby because it is a long flight.'"

Unable to fly home, the couple quickly faced the reality that their daughter would be born in the United States. But the adventure wasn't over because baby Racheal had one more surprise for her parents.

"I was over the 40-week mark, so I was originally scheduled to be induced on Dec. 31," said Alvine, who went into labor at 2 a.m. Dec. 31. "After 26 hours of labor, she came at 4:05 a.m. New Year's Day."

"Having to get a provider, it was kind of stressful, but our nurse took that away when we came in," said Mukoh. "She made us feel at home, and that was really nice."



The first baby born at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital in 2025, Racheal weighed 6 pounds, 8 ounces and was 20.2 inches long, and her parents are thrilled she has such a special birthday.

"It's awesome," said Alvine. "The whole nation and everyone will get to celebrate her birthday with her!"

Once Racheal and Alvine are cleared to travel, the couple will return to Belgium to begin their next adventure: parenthood.

# St. Mary's Woman Celebrates 94th Birthday



Agnes Queen recently celebrated her 94th birthday. Mrs. Queen was born January 2, 1931. She is the last living child out of 12 children. Agnes was married to George A. Queen and together they had 12 children, with 10 still living. Agnes held many domestic jobs throughout the years including at Charlotte Hall Veterans Home and Placid Harbor. Agnes is a lifetime member of St. Joseph's Church in Morganza.

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# NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER *News*

## Navy Declares Initial Operational Capability for the Next Generation Jammer Mid-Band System

The U.S. Navy declared initial operational capability for the Next Generation Jammer Mid-Band (NGJ-MB) system in December, bringing a quantum leap in capability over legacy systems with drastic increases in power, target flexibility and jamming technique for naval aviation operations worldwide.

“Next Generation Jammer Mid-Band improves our fleet’s warfighting advantage in the electromagnetic spectrum,” said Rear Adm. John Lemmon, Program Executive Officer for Tactical Aircraft Programs. “This system provides enhanced capabilities to deny, distract and disorient adversaries’ radars, protecting our naval aviators and allowing them to carry out their missions in contested airspace.”

The fleet got a preview of the jammer’s high-end capabilities during Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group’s five-month deployment this year. Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 133 deployed with the system aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), marking the first time Next Generation Jammer Mid-Band was used both deployed and in combat.

IOC signals that the design, testing



An EA-18G Growler from VAW-133 launches from USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). (U.S. Navy photo)

and production of this capability meet the logistical needs of the carrier air wings and EA-18G Growler squadrons.

“What an incredible day for the U.S. Navy, our Australian partners, and the Airborne Electronic Attack (AEA) community,” said

Capt. David Rueter, Airborne Electronic Attack Systems (PMA-234) program manager. “The achievement of NGJ-MB IOC is a positive reflection on the hard work, innovation and resilience from a dedicated team of government and industry professionals

who have developed and fielded this critical capability to the warfighters.”

The NGJ-MB system, developed by Raytheon, an RTX business, is part of a larger NGJ system that will augment and ultimately replace the legacy ALQ-99 Tactical Jamming System currently used on the EA-18G Growler. NGJ-MB uses the latest digital, software-based and electronically scanned array technologies and provides enhanced AEA capabilities to disrupt, deny, and degrade enemy air defense and ground communication systems.

“NGJ-MB will boost our fleet’s ability to maintain spectrum dominance. Yielding new capabilities is critical for addressing current and future threats. The era of isolated surface-to-air missile systems, which operate within a non-agile and limited frequency range, is behind us.” stated Lt. Cmdr. Michael Bedwell, EA-18G Naval Flight Officer and NGJ-MB Deputy Integrated Product Team Lead.

PMA-234 is responsible for acquiring, delivering and sustaining AEA systems, providing combatant commanders with capabilities that enable mission success.



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## Small Businesses Worry Over Beer, Wine in Grocery Stores

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

Gov. Wes Moore has expressed interest in allowing liquor licenses for the sale of beer and wine from grocery stores but small businesses who have been selling alcohol for decades fear the bill would result in the decimation of their livelihoods, if passed in this year's General Assembly.

"They have 80 years invested in this three-tier system," said District 29A Del. Matt Morgan, who said he is not in favor of the legislation. "I worry deeply... that this would adversely affect small business."

Aside from the potential to drain profits from locally owned businesses, Morgan said, he did not believe that the allowance would produce real economic benefit in the state nor St. Mary's County, where grocery stores were relatively few.

"You'd be taking away a complete aisle in a grocery store just to sell beer and wine," Morgan said. "Shelf space is a valuable commodity."

The current inflated cost of necessary groceries could also be a factor, Morgan said, that could contribute to declining alcohol sales as consumers may decide to forego beer and wine from a supermarket to ensure they can afford essential food stuffs.

Morgan contended that the bill, if passed into law, would not really spur economic growth, rather only pit big business against

smaller proprietorships.

"You're just taking from one and giving to the other," Morgan said. "You're not adding more [businesses]."

Moore has defended his position as necessary to put Maryland on a footing with so many other states that allow the sale of beer and wine from grocery stores, restoring the state's competitive edge in that portion of the market.

"Maryland is one of a handful of states in the nation where consumers can only buy beer and wine from specialized stores—resulting in less consumer choice and putting our stores at a disadvantage," Moore said in a statement. "Lifting this ban puts the consumers first, and ensures fair competition in the marketplace."

"As other states have done, I am confident that the General Assembly will be able to address the concerns from opponents of this policy change that more than 40 states have adopted in a thoughtful manner. I look forward to working with our legislative partners to advance this overdue change in policy to advance consumer choice and economic competitiveness that enjoys the support of the vast majority of Marylanders across political parties and regions across the state."

The governor's request does not cover the sale of liquor.

[guyleonard@countytimes.net](mailto:guyleonard@countytimes.net)

## Maryland State Police Investigating Homicide in St. Mary's County

The Maryland State Police continue to investigate a homicide that occurred Jan. 3 in St. Mary's County.

The victim has been identified as Chaquanda Latise Odom, 36, of California, Maryland. She was pronounced deceased at the scene by emergency medical services.

At approximately 11:10 a.m. on Jan. 3, 2025, troopers from the Leonardtown Barrack responded to a report of a shooting in the 21000 block of Liberty Street in Lexington Park. Troopers discovered Odom at the scene with multiple gunshot wounds.

According to a preliminary investigation, police arrested Odom's ex-husband, Jayson David Pressley, 38, also of Lexington Park, after he turned himself in at the St. Mary's County Detention Center. Pressley is charged with first- and second-degree murder. He is being held at the St. Mary's County Detention Center without bond.

The Maryland State Police Homicide Unit is leading the investigation, with support from the state police Criminal Enforcement



Jayson David Pressley

Division South, Crash Team and Forensic Sciences Division, as well as the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office and the St. Mary's County State's Attorney's Office.

The investigation continues.

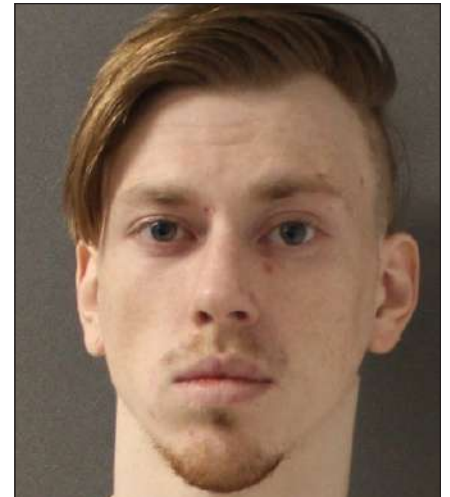
## Lexington Park Man Charged with First-Degree Assault

On Wednesday, January 1, 2025, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office patrol deputies responded to a report of a subject with a firearm following an assault. Deputies arrived at approximately 7:52 p.m. at a residence in the 22000 block of Oxford Court in Lexington Park.

Witnesses reported that Timothy Ignatius Gattton, 22, had assaulted a female juvenile by kicking her in the ribs. Witnesses also informed deputies that a firearm was inside the residence. During the investigation, deputies located an unserialized 9mm handgun inside the home and confirmed it was unregistered and belonged to Gattton.

The juvenile victim's mother reported that Gattton kicked the child in the ribs after being kicked in the face during horseplay. Emergency medical personnel treated the juvenile at the scene.

A male witness, who also resides at the Oxford Court home, reported a verbal altercation between himself and Gattton. During the argument, Gattton allegedly pulled the 9mm handgun from his waistband, pointed it, and pulled the trigger. The weapon did



Timothy Ignatius Gattton

not discharge.

Gattton was arrested and charged with first-degree assault, child abuse, and unlawful possession of an unserialized firearm. He was transported to the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center in Leonardtown.

## Juvenile Charged as Adult with Assault and Robbery

On December 31, 2024, a Deputy from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office was conducting proactive patrol duties along Great Mills Road in Lexington Park when a juvenile victim approached and reported that his bicycle had been taken while he was in the Patuxent Crossing neighborhood playing football with friends. The victim also said the suspect had displayed what appeared to be a handgun in the waistband of his pants when demanding the bicycle.

The victim described the suspect to deputies, and another deputy observed an individual matching the suspect's description in the Patuxent Crossing area. Upon being approached, the juvenile suspect denied

taking the bike but was positively identified by the victim shortly thereafter.

The suspect was taken into custody and charged as an adult with the following offenses:

- Armed robbery
- Robbery
- First-degree assault
- Second-degree assault
- Theft of less than \$100

Law enforcement agencies are prohibited from publicly identifying a juvenile, even when charged as an adult, due to legal protections safeguarding the juvenile's identity throughout the judicial process.

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# Committee Will Help Select New Judge

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

Just before the new year, Gov. Wes Moore appointed 12 people from St. Mary's and Calvert counties to choose judicial nominees to fill local court vacancies; their first job will be to select a replacement for St. Mary's Circuit Court Judge Michael J. Stamm, who passed away suddenly Oct. 2.

"Our Judicial Nominating Commissions are critical to our justice system," said Gov. Moore. "I thank each of our appointees for raising their hands to serve and for helping us ensure that our state lives up to the full promise of promoting equal justice under law."

Kelsey Bush, community affairs liaison with the Office of Student Affairs at St. Mary's College of Maryland, is one of those appointees.

Bush told The County Times the committee did not know when it would begin its work but knew the method.

"Applicants will meet with the local bar association and they will interview them, we [the committee members] both will, and we'll send the top three candidates to the governor," Bush said. "That's traditionally how it's been done."

There are 16 Trial Court Judicial Nominating Commissions established by executive order.

The commissions advertise judicial vacancies; seek recommendations for judi-



Kelsey Bush

cial candidates from their own membership, bar associations, and members of the general public; set closing dates for the submission of judicial applications; and evaluate applicants based on a variety of factors including their integrity, temperament, legal knowledge, and professional experience.

The recently raised committee has six people from St. Mary's and six from Calvert.

Despite the committee being fully staffed, the Maryland judiciary website states that currently applicants for Stamm's vacancy are not being accepted.

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# Poll: Marylanders Oppose Tax Increases to Solve Deficit

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

The state faces an approximately \$3 billion budget deficit and a recent poll shows residents want elected leaders to find a way to clean up the budget mess without taking more out of their wallets.

The latest poll from Gonzales Research and Media Services shows that 76 percent of those queried opposed raising taxes to solve the deficit crisis, while 60 percent strongly opposed the idea.

Just 17 percent of residents polled said they would support such a move.

A full 73 percent oppose a sales tax hike with 55 percent of those asked strongly opposing a tax increase on sales of goods and services.

"Voters constantly express a willingness to pay taxes for needed services like transportation and public safety, but not for a problem they believe their elected representatives created," the summary of the poll stated.

Maryland voters are even more sensitive to the prospect of lawmakers raising property tax rates; 77 percent of those polled oppose that idea while 65 percent

are strongly against it.

Only 18 percent said they would support such an increase to relieve the deficit problem.

Marylanders already face higher property taxes even if rates do not go up as the assessments on residential and business properties have gone up about 20 percent in the last three years, the state announced last week.

Sen. Jack Bailey (R-Dist. 29) said tax increases on top of those already passed last year, were not the solution.

"The budget shortfall is going to be the most significant issue of this session," Bailey said in a statement. "Just like our constituents, the General Assembly is going to have to make difficult decisions on how to best live within our means. "This will have to include a conversation on how to reduce the spending required to implement the Blueprint for Education and the Climate Solutions Now Act. Maryland's economy is stagnant, and we have the second-worst job growth rate in the country - the solution is not to raise taxes on our state's citizens and businesses."

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# Study: Blue Catfish Could Bring Windfall

## Market Challenges Remain



By Guy Leonard  
 Staff Writer

A species of catfish introduced to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in the 1970s to improve biodiversity and support fishing opportunities but later grew to such numbers that they are pushing out native species could become a successful part of a growing seafood market share, a study released by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, states.

The blue catfish has been wreaking havoc for years in local and regional waters, consuming young blue crab and other fish, such as striped bass, that are commercially vital to the watershed.

“Blue catfish are known for their hardiness and adaptability, thriving in a variety of freshwater and brackish environments,” the study just released this week stated. “In the Chesapeake Bay, they found an ideal habitat with abundant food sources and few natural predators.

“This allowed their populations to grow rapidly. By the 1990s, blue catfish had established significant populations in the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, spreading far beyond their initial introduction points.”

Attempts to manage the species have proven unsuccessful through normal fishing activities, the study showed, so pushing the public demand for blue catfish as a food source is thought to be a way to mitigate their rapidly growing numbers.

Currently fillets, steaks, nuggets and whole catches of the blue catfish are prov-

ing to be the most valuable in the market, according to the study, but other uses include animal feed and fish oil are other valuable products.

But consumer awareness of the product, its taste and appeal — which is comparable to other catfish — and competing with already established fish products are possible challenges to blue catfish becoming popular here, the study found.

However, its position as an invasive species gives it an important advantage in establishing its own market share.

“Blue catfish offers a unique narrative as an invasive species, which helps mitigate ecological damage when harvested,” the study concluded. “This positions it favorably in the sustainability-focused segment of the seafood market.

“However, marketing and education campaigns will be required to communicate this message effectively.”

By highlighting blue catfish as an invasive species, support could grow for its harvesting, the study said.

The study said encouraging incentives for commercial fishers to harvest the blue catfish was important as they had many other catches from which to chose.

“Without these incentives, there is little motivation for harvesters to invest time and resources into catching a species that, despite its ecological significance, may not guarantee consistent financial returns,” the study showed.

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# Sheriff to Reach Out for Help Curbing Gun Violence

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

A townhall meeting set for later this month will continue the sheriff's office's outreach to the public in the continued fight against gun violence, said agency spokesperson ALisa Casas.

"We're going to present out statistics, we're going to present what we're doing and continuing to do against gun violence," she told The County Times this week.

The sheriff's office has relied heavily in the past year on their so-called Group Violence Initiative, which has deputies of the county sheriff's office going out in the community, knocking on doors of those they believe who are engaged in the continuing epidemic of gun violence, and telling them they face steep consequences — either death, severe injury or arrest and incarceration.

But they also have another message; that they are also valued and don't have to engage in that kind of life.

"This town hall meeting is our way of communicating directly with residents about the things that concern us and are of concern to community members," said Sheriff Steve Hall. "We want to talk about what we've done and what we continue to do to suppress gun violence in St. Mary's County.

"I've said it before: complex issues like



Ghost guns seized in a recent investigation

gun violence are best-addressed face-to-face and in settings where conversations can effect real change."

This time, Casas said, there will be a particular focus on "ghost guns" that have been used in some violent crimes locally.

Ghost guns are guns that are lacking serial numbers; this is often done in an effort to trace them back to their original owners.

Some guns that lack serial numbers have them removed by the person who possess them, while others are assembled from kits legally available in other jurisdictions as kits without a serial number on the frame — essentially the portion where the weapon is gripped — and assembled from other legally purchased parts that can be obtained from the internet.



The frame that contains the firing mechanism of the weapon in most guns is the federally regulated portion of the firearm; ghost gun frames must now be serialized by a law enacted by the outgoing Biden Administration.

There was a singular case earlier last year in November where deputies found 80 guns that had had their frames, in some cases, manufactured by a 3D printer.

During that investigation, detectives seized a variety of weapons and equipment from the property an AK-47, a fully automatic rifle, a short-barreled rifle, large-capacity magazines, suppressors, auto sears, more than 1,300 rounds of ammunition, body armor, and various gun manufacturing tools.

"After that investigation there were a lot

of questions in the community about how we recognize what an unserialized gun is," Casas said.

The town hall meeting will be held at the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department on Shangri-La Drive in Lexington Park at the Braddock Hall facility Jan. 27 at 6 p.m.

Attendees will be able to get information on local gun violence trends and statistics from deputies with the Criminal Investigations Division as well as the scope and impact of gun violence incidents in the county.

Agency officials will also give an overview of currently incarcerated individuals charged with gun-related crimes.

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# Three Notch Road Set for Pedestrian Improvements

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

The State Highway Administration (SHA) has included a section of Route 235, otherwise known as Three Notch Road, for pedestrian improvements but first wants community engagement and comment on the project before moving ahead.

The work is part of SHA's Pedestrian Safety Action Plan for road improvements throughout Maryland and would encompass the section of Route 235 between the intersections of Chancellors Run Road [Route 237] and Great Mills Road [Route 246] from Great Mills to Lexington Park.

"Working with community residents, officials and other stakeholders, the State Highway Administration is developing strategies to enhance safety for all roadway users along these corridors by increasing safety and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists," the SHA reported in a statement.

County residents will get a chance to talk about the improvements at an informational workshop at Great Mills High School set for the evening of Jan. 16.


At the informational workshop, State Highway Administration staff will be available to discuss project-specific details. There



will be no formal presentation. Attendees may arrive at any time during the workshop to view displays, ask questions and provide feedback.

The safety action plan has identified numerous ways to make roadways safer for pedestrians and bicyclists alike including bike lanes separated from travel paths by visible barrier stakes, traffic signals that forbid right turns on red by vehicles, decreased lane widths for automobiles making larger walking and biking lanes possible and centerline hardening — the use of bollards and rubber curbs to prevent drivers from cutting diagonally across intersections on left hand turns — to name a few.


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# St. Mary's Gets High Snow Totals



Photo courtesy of Town of Leonardtown



Photo courtesy of Ceandra Scott



By Guy Leonard  
 Staff Writer

The first major snow storm in years for St. Mary's County continued to keep schools closed as of Jan. 8 — three days after it hit the region — with county government just starting to reopen.

Public works chief Jim Gotsch reported that the snowstorm caused few problems that he was aware of countywide.

In all there were about 100 snow clearing apparatus out on county roads in the past few days, he said, with county vehicles plowing and clearing snow emergency routes and main thoroughfares while contractors plowed subdivisions the county was responsible for.

Gotsch said the snowfall was comparable to that experienced in 2022.

The only damage that he was aware of was the occasional mailbox that had been knocked down.

"There's always mailbox damage," Gotsch said. "If we're plowing and we back into it with a piece of equipment, we'll replace it."

"If it gets knocked over by some snow, then that's on the homeowner."

Despite the heavy amounts of snow countywide, Gotsch said, removal of snow presented less of a challenge than prior years.

"It was really nice this time," Gotsch said.

"We urged people to stay off the roads and they did; that made clearing roads much easier."

Snow totals for the county were high with Leonardtown getting at least nine inches by the time the snow stopped in the early morning hours of Jan. 7, some estimates in Hollywood and Lexington Park were as high as eight to nine inches.

Leonardtown made regional news for the amount of snowfall it received.

"Lucky us," said Town Administrator Laschelle McKay as town public works crews were busy plowing out town public spaces.

The National Weather Service (NWS) shows that for a 36-hour period of storm activity that St. Mary's and the entire Southern Maryland region received between eight to 12 inches of snow.

These are among the highest totals over the greatest amount of land area in the entire state, according to the National Weather Service.

The official totals from the NWS show that Benedict in Calvert received 12.2 inches of snow, while Sandgates in Mechanicsville received 9.8 inches, as did California.

The lowest totals were for Ridge, with a still-significant seven inches.

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“WE URGED PEOPLE TO STAY OFF THE ROADS AND THEY DID; THAT MADE CLEARING ROADS MUCH EASIER.”

PUBLIC WORKS CHIEF JIM GOTSCH ON THE RECENT SNOW FALL



**LOCAL 5**  
Gun violence town hall set



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Plan for Route 235 pedestrian improvements



**4 ON THE COVER**  
St. Mary's digs out from the first snow of the year

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# ST. MARY'S GETS A SNOWY NEW YEAR

Photo courtesy of State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling