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Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2025

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**Zoning Ordinance
 Updates Finalized**

**Prince Frederick Assisted
 Living Approved**

**Chesapeake Beach Changes
 Waterpark Plan**

**AUTHOR SERVES UP
 SOMD TRUE CRIME**

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“WHAT KIND OF GOOFBALLS ARE WE THAT EVER THOUGHT THAT WAS A GOOD IDEA?”

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LOCAL 4
Police board makes annual report



ON THE COVER 3
Novelist details Southern Maryland crime and punishment

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 23	FRI, JAN 24	SAT, JAN 25	SUN, JAN 26
Partly Cloudy Hi: 32° Lo: 19°	Mostly Sunny Hi: 36° Lo: 18°	Sunny Hi: 37° Lo: 30°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 48° Lo: 29°
MON, JAN 27	TUE, JAN 28	WED, JAN 29	THU, JAN 30
Partly Cloudy Hi: 46° Lo: 32°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 48° Lo: 29°	Mostly Sunny Hi: 51° Lo: 33°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 44° Lo: 28°

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Calvert Author Pens Southern Maryland True Crime Story

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Two years shy of a century and a half ago, a young wife and mother was brutally murdered in a field while she was gathering vegetables for the noon meal. The murder is the focus of a new book called "The Farmer's Wife" by Calvert County author Carol Booker.

The incident took place on a tenant farm in the Anne Arundel County hamlet of Friendship, just north of the Calvert County line.

Sally Norfolk, a young mother of three children, was found on May 22, 1877, with "her skull crushed and one side of her face horribly mutilated." She and her husband Henry had left home in their separate ways, she to the vegetable field and he to the tobacco field.

There were no eyewitnesses but soon the finger pointed to Henry based on circumstantial evidence, such as his failing to appear at her funeral and asking strange questions relating to murder prior to the killing. Blood was also found on his clothes although in those days all that science was unreliable.

Henry was charged and he maintained his innocence through his incarceration at the Annapolis jail and through the trial at which he testified as to that innocence.

The story gets really interesting after the trial. Although we don't want to spoil the twists in the tale for readers, we can say that Henry's religious conversion, aided by jail visits to Henry from religious zealots, led to a surprising conclusion.

Along the way in the telling of the story, Booker sets the stage by relaying what it was like to have lived in 1877 in Southern Maryland, including details about weather and living in an alcohol dry county. And also, there are details about the lack of security at the hail in an era when it was not unusual for mobs to grab suspected crimi-

nals and hang them before trial.

Booker found out about the incident while doing research for a previous book, "The Waterman's Widow," about a murderer in Solomons. Booker has also penned a book about the history of the Cove Point community.

Booker said, "Given the decades long time span, one had no relevance to the other. And so, I put it aside until recently and then decided to write it up. I thought 1877 turned out to be a fascinating year. So much happened."

About weaving in what was happening in that era, she said, "I think it just worked out that way. It's kind of like opening a book to the first page and then chapter by chapter, a whole world opens to you. It was very much like that, especially The Farmer's Wife. I had no idea, for example, of the election of 1876 that we didn't know who the winner was until about 60 hours before he was to be sworn in on March 4th, when Ulysses S. Grant's term as president would expire at noon. And they put together a committee of congressmen, senators, and Supreme Court justices to figure out who had won the electoral college. I studied history at school, but I had never heard all of that."

Much of the book is set in Annapolis. While it is considered our big city now, it was very much a small town then. She said, "One thing that didn't surprise me was that the jail was very vulnerable, because that was the case with the Calvert County Jail in 1900 in 'The Waterman's Widow'."

But she added, "They didn't worry about Henry Norfolk being taken out. It seemed like a natural for a lynching, frankly, given what had gone on in southern Maryland and elsewhere until that point. But I think there was a sense that he was out of his mind, so they didn't attempt to lynch him."

Regarding the public's belief in Henry's guilt or innocence, Booker said, "He had

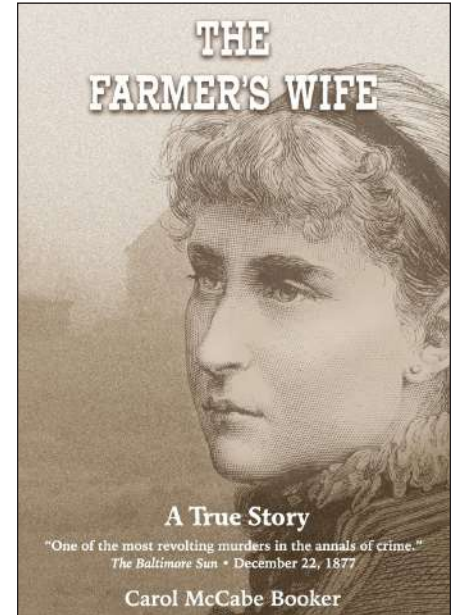
two of the best lawyers in the state at the time," and they believed in his innocence.

She said, "I thought they went to the absolute human limits in their defense of him, even trying to create suspicion that another farm worker might have done it, that being the key thing at the very last minute to put doubt into the mind of at least one juror so that you can get a hung jury."

Booker is working on an idea about another book about local history. "I'm looking at that decade of the 1870s. It was very interesting. I don't know if it was because of the unsettled nature of things still after the Civil War or what, but another interesting thing in that period is the lack of forensics. There's no fingerprinting. There's no gunpowder check on the hands, you know, and there's no DNA analysis, and even the blood analysis only showed that it was a mammal. It doesn't show what mammal. And so, the brain had to click in on all of these and be careful analysis of circumstances. And I guess that's why so many convictions are on the basis of circumstantial evidence, because you don't have the eyewitness and you don't have the confession. So, it's a fascinating decade."

Booker explained, "My husband was the famous reporter on the Civil Rights, Simeon Booker, the first Black reporter on the Washington Post, and the Washington Bureau chief for Ebony and Jet for 55 years. And we convinced him finally when he was in his late 80's to write about his coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. But he needed my help, so I retired and helped him." That included a lot of research, which has helped her with her current writing.

As to her writing habits, she noted, "I think Hemingway devoted the first two hours of every day to writing, and then he went out to the bar. I think I'm more disciplined by circumstances in that, at my age, I get tired in late afternoon. I want to just relax and watch some



TV. So, I start writing right after breakfast. And, if I have to go up to the archives, I go right after breakfast and work while the spirit moves me."

Her motive isn't the prospect of large sums of money. "I write it because I believe we learn from history. And that's another reason why I'm going back in history. I really believe that history repeats itself and that, as they say, in the inscription before the National Archives in Washington, 'The past is prologue.' Study the past. And I think if we don't know what's happened in the past, we're going to repeat the same errors, same mistakes, but at least if we know how it went down before, then we might be able to avoid making the same mistakes all over again."

Her publisher is New Bay Books, which she called "fantastic." The new book can be ordered through their website <https://www.newbaybooks.com/>

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Planners Finalize Zoning Ordinance Updates

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Planning Commission has approved a series of motions that finalize their recommendations to the county commissioners on the update of the county's zoning ordinance. The decisions pave the way for a joint public hearing on the update that has been several years in the making.

At the commission Jan. 15 meeting, most of the various votes were unanimous, although commission member Richard Holler did oppose several of them without comment.

In a memo to the planning commission, Acting Deputy Director Rachel O'Shea explained the process that led up to the planning commission decisions. O'Shea 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."

O'Shea added, "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 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. A special meeting was held by the Planning Commission on December 30th to review the additional public comments received. The Planning Commission voted to recommend the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance with conditions to the Board of County Commissioners. The other proposed amendments were not included."

The Dec. 30 decision includes the creation of a Community Development Agreement (CDA) that allows the commissioners to negotiate with developers variations to the zoning ordinance in exchange for something from the developer. An example given

during discussions was an increase in building height in exchange for land for a park.

During public comment, citizen, Theresa Ruman questioned the CDA's. She said, "I know it's been in there, but nobody really understands it and we really didn't talk about it."

She added, "You also speak about the CDA will allow a developer to take advantage of special site characteristics. You speak about providing relief from the strict application of the land use. So, does that mean you just disregard what the other things are as long as it falls in with the current zoning district? I'm not quite sure. And then it talks about other groups that would be involved in this, but it doesn't say who those groups would be or who they would be made up of."

The CDAs are believed to be targeted at proposals for data centers in the southern part of the county in newly created heavy industrial zones. CDAs are not allowed in residential areas.

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Assisted Living, Memory Care Facility OK'd

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Planning Commission has approved a site plan for a project in Prince Frederick that includes an assisted living and memory care facility and market rate rental duplexes for senior citizens. The project was approved at the Jan. 15 commission meeting.

The Prince Frederick Assisted Living and Memory Care Facility is on 22.18 acres on Armory Road between Dares Beach Road and Main Street. The assisted living and memory care facility is in one 41,300-square-foot connected building; There are also 20 age-restricted duplexes.

"The property is found in the Old-Town Transition Sub-Area of the Prince Frederick Town Center Zoning District," according to Principal Planner Christine Finamore.

There is no sidewalk in front of the property along Armory Road, so the staff rec-



Artist's rendering of Prince Frederick Assisted Living and Memory Care Facility

ommended a crosswalk to the opposite side where there is a sidewalk.

The commission, however, as part of the approval motion, required a sidewalk be constructed along the frontage. The developer said that would require a retaining wall to separate it from a storm-water facility.

There is no sidewalk on the adjacent property closest to Main St. That would have to be constructed if that property is developed.

During the public comment section of the meeting, Bob Estes, noting the crosswalk rendering showed a man with a cane, said, "When he gets to the other intersection it is deadly. Imagine what it would be for somebody trying to move on into town."

Estes added, "You've got to get those sidewalks on both sides. Find a way," adding, "How about the county just puts them in and then when somebody comes and devel-

ops the land, they've got to pay what the county did."

"Sidewalk, no sidewalk. Sidewalk, no sidewalk. That doesn't work. What kind of goofballs are we that ever thought that that was a good idea?"

In a memo, Finamore explained the process for the project's approval: "This development proposal meets the criteria to be designated as a Category I Site Plan which requires approval by the Calvert County Planning Commission. This three-step process corresponds with current Stormwater Management (SWM) and site plan review processes and requires applicants of both Category I and Category II applications to obtain a Conceptual Site Plan (CSPR) conditional approval, a Detailed Site Development Plan (DSDP) review, and a Final Detailed Site Development Plan (FSPR) approval prior to the issuance of building permits."

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Accountability Board Report Emphasizes Police Cooperation

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The number of complaints about law enforcement to the Calvert County Police Accountability Board (PAB) and the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC) declined slightly in 2024 from the previous year. That's according to the annual report presented Jan. 14 to the county commissions by PAB Chairman Wilson Parran and ACC Chairman Edward Bailor.

According to the report, 29 complaints were presented to the PAB in 2023 compared to 25 in 2024. Of those in 2024, 20 were reviewed by the ACC and five resulted in administrative charges. One of those charges was in opposition to Calvert County Sheriff's Office findings.

Parran noted, "The responsibility of the Police Accountability Board is we receive complaints from the public, and we have 72 hours to get those complaints to the local law enforcement agency, in our case is the Calvert County Sheriff's Office. Citizens can also complain directly to the sheriff's office. We have a website in place to make it easier for citizens to submit their complaints, and we do track those complaints, and they can see the status of their complaint on our website. We also appoint two members to the Administrative Charging Committee. The Board of County Commissioners appoint the other three, and we also appoint a member to the trial board."

Parren added, "We look at the results of decisions made by the Administrative Charging Committee. We are looking for trends. We are looking for opportunities to actually improve the police accountability with the citizens in our county."

Bailor said, "The responsibility of the ACC is first to look at the results of the investigation of a complaint. The sheriff's office will investigate the complaint, give all that information, written documents, audio and video to the ACC. And the ACC will review it all and determine whether there should be an administrative charge. If after reviewing all of that information, there is need to charge the officer involved, then we used an approved statewide matrix that we adopted for Calvert County to make sure that we are consistently charging that particular officer. Now, that means that with the statewide matrix, it's pretty much consistent across the whole state, that any different disciplinary action would pretty much be the same based on that information used in the matrix to facilitate making a decision. So, the ACC actually decides what the charge should be. They give it to the sheriff's office. The sheriff has an opportunity to increase it, but the sheriff office cannot decrease it."

The third entity, the trial board, has not yet been used.

Bailor said, "We are working with local law enforcement. I feel we have a very good working relationship. We're both open in terms of any issues around a particular complaint. If it looks like what we are deciding would be different from the sheriff's office, they don't receive that as a surprise. We actually meet with them and say, look, this is what we see. Is there other information that you are looking at that we're not seeing here? So that's been very helpful to clarify what we are doing in terms of the decisions made by the ACC."

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County Establishes Artificial Intelligence Committee

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has voted to establish an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Advisory Committee.

Department of Technology Services (TS) Director Stephen Pereira told the BOCC at their Jan. 14 meeting, "AI is something that's shaping our lives at the moment. The efficiency that we are seeing through AI tends to be a return on investment of an average of three times and up to 10 times when done effectively. For me, AI is something that we have a duty to taxpayers to implement, because of the efficiencies that we are seeing, the improvements in services. So, what we've done here is put together a policy which will be supported by the AI committee, is to work in tandem with each other. And the overall aim of this is to put guardrails in place. Reducing, mitigating the county from AI, but also to empower individuals."

Pereira insisted, "We have a real duty to use AI and it's my hope that with this policy and the committee that we will do this."

Change Management and Communication Manager Jonathan Lee said, "AI is increasingly being involved in everything we do. You can't buy a TV, phone or VCR without having some sort of AI in it." He observed, "We want to make sure that we stay committed to ourselves, our community, and to our staff to lead the way for responsible AI usage. We kind of want to show people that we're serious about this. People I'm sure want to know how we're using it and how it's impacting the information that they give us through the services that we provide to them."

Lee said, "It's transforming very, very quickly. New tools are coming out every single day. With those new tools that come



Department of Technology Services (TS) Director Stephen Pereira

out, new features get released. It's moving so fast. They're saying that AI will never move this slowly again. We need to be prepared, and we need to have resources available to help shape how this county manages AI."

He said, "With these opportunities, there is good news. Microsoft recently did a study... that companies across many different industries are experiencing a return on investment between three-and-a-half times to 10 times the amount, where AI is implemented. So, there's definitely real benefits to be captured with the implementation of AI. When used responsibly and appropriately, it could be a real benefit to the county and cost savings."

Lee said, though, "there are challenges. There are ethical, legal, and operational challenges. So we want to make sure that when people are using AI, that they know what they're supposed to be doing, how they're using it, what it can be used with, what they can and cannot put into it."

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Town Switches to Waterpark Repair

Reopening Slated for 2026

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Chesapeake Beach Mayor Bruce Wahl has announced that he and the new town council are reversing the decision of the previous council and are moving ahead with repairing and reopening of the town's waterpark. The previous council planned to demolish it and create a new water facility.

Wahl said at the Jan. 16 council meeting that because of the time needed for planning and construction, the waterpark would remain closed for the upcoming season with plans to reopen it in 2026.

Town Engineer Wayne Newton told the council that the recent consultant's report was based on the assumption of a demolish and rebuild. So, he said, "I assume that we would have to re-scope and then probably look at a new report to respond to repair and rebuild versus what's leveraged in here."

Newton noted, "I think that's (the report's) good information to have. I think it confirms some things that at least (Public Works Administrator) Jay (Berry) and I have been talking about for a couple of years. And I think it provides insight into the change in the soil conditions out there since the park was built. So I think it was good information to have."

He added, "The next piece would be, based off of the sentiment of re repair and reopen, what are the next steps that we need to do to drive the next actions with either them (the consultant) or just us in general."

He said, "Jay and I need to go out and



Chesapeake Beach Mayor Bruce Wahl

figure out what our scope looks like for that renovation, and then come back to you guys with an action plan."

He said the study doesn't address rebuild and reopen. "That study doesn't really talk about that. That study really says if you're going to build something new, here's how you do it."

Wahl said, "Earlier today I had a conversation with the town treasurer and there are funds that are allocated. There are grant funds. I was able to see the legislation they came from. and so there are funds there that are meant for improvement of the waterpark as long as it's going to result in revenue of some sort."

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CalvertHealth Names Foundation's New Executive Director

CalvertHealth is pleased to announce Melissa Carnes has been named the new Executive Director of the CalvertHealth Foundation, effective December 29. This announcement follows an extensive search process to identify a leader who embodies the Foundation's mission and vision.

With more than nine years of dedicated service to CalvertHealth, Carnes has played a key role in some of the Foundation's most impactful achievements. Her unwavering commitment to advancing philanthropy and improving the health of our community made her the ideal choice for this vital role.

"Melissa's passion for philanthropy and her deep connection to both our mission and our community make her uniquely qualified to lead the CalvertHealth Foundation," said Jeremy Bradford, President and CEO of CalvertHealth. "Her ability to connect with donors and inspire meaningful support for our health system will undoubtedly help shape a bright future for our organization and the community we serve."

As Executive Director, Carnes will oversee the Foundation's fundraising efforts, strategic initiatives and community partnerships. Her leadership will drive philanthropic efforts that transform CalvertHealth Medical Center and enhance patient care for years to come.

"I'm honored to serve as Executive Director of the CalvertHealth Foundation," said Melissa Carnes. "Having spent nearly a decade supporting the Foundation's grant-seeking efforts and philanthropic programs, I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to lead. CalvertHealth is deeply rooted in our community, and I look forward to building on its legacy of kindness and generosity."

Melissa was born and raised in Calvert County, and resides in Port Republic with her husband, Joe. Outside of work, she enjoys RVing, exploring the Eastern Shore and volunteering with local animal rescue organizations.

For more information about the CalvertHealth Foundation and its initiatives, please visit CalvertHealthFoundation.org.

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CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of January 6, 2025 – January 12, 2025, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 1,548 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

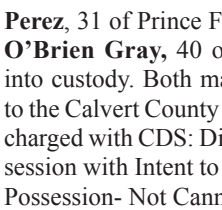
- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 49
- Disorderly: 13
- Domestic: 23
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 53
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 786
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 17
- Traffic Complaints: 52
- Traffic Stops: 203
- 911 Hang Ups: 56
- ARRESTS: 21



Anthony Arthur Perez

CDS Violation: 25-002531 and 002485 On January 10, 2025, detectives from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) observed a drug transaction occur in the parking lot of the Applebee's located at 555 N. Solomons Island Road in Prince Frederick. Investigation revealed detectives recovered pills of Oxycodone Hydrochloride along with US currency.

Delano O'Brien Gray



Anthony Arthur Perez, 31 of Prince Frederick, and **Delano O'Brien Gray**, 40 of Lusby, were taken into custody. Both males were transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with CDS: Distribution, CDS: Possession with Intent to Distribute, and CDS: Possession- Not Cannabis.



Marvin Charles Dickerson

Disorderly Conduct: 25-001976 On January 8, 2025, at approximately 5:30 p.m., Deputy Tunnell was dispatched to the Calvert Library at 860 Costley Way in Prince Frederick, for the report of a disorderly subject. The complainant advised that a male identified as **Marvin Charles Dickerson**, 40 of Prince Frederick, was consuming alcohol inside the library. He was observed removing his clothing and stumbling around. Upon arrival, Deputy Tunnell observed a bottle of liquor protruding from Dickerson's backpack. Dickerson, who was too intoxicated to walk without falling, continued to shout profanities in the library's foyer, disrupting the patrons. Dickerson was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Trespassing: Private Property, Disorderly Conduct, and Intoxicated Public Disturbance.

with the driver and sole occupant who failed to provide a driver's license and registration upon request. The driver later identified as **Quentin Leon Rice**, 50 of Lusby, was observed to have a blank stare and very lethargic movements displaying a 'cyclic' behavior. Deputies asked Rice to exit the vehicle as it was determined he was unable to safely operate a motor vehicle. Rice refused to comply and began resisting arrest. Rice was placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Reckless Driving, Negligent Driving, Resisting/Interfering with Arrest, Obstructing/Hindering an Arrest, DWI, and other traffic



Xavier Leron Jett

Motor Vehicle Theft: 25-002008

On January 8, 2025, at approximately 9:02 p.m., DFC Huy was alerted to a stolen vehicle entering Calvert County, traveling southbound on Southern Maryland Blvd. near Yellow Bank Road in Dunkirk. A Maryland State Trooper attempted a traffic stop on the suspect vehicle near Country Plaza Shopping Center. Although the vehicle briefly slowed, the driver continued southbound, ignoring deputies and troopers in marked police vehicles with lights and sirens activated. The suspect vehicle reached speeds of 120 mph, fleeing from law enforcement, passing other vehicles on the shoulder, and running a red light at Chaneyville Road. It eventually made a U-turn, heading northbound in the turn lane at Town Center Blvd., where it ran another red light, resulting in a crash. The vehicle became disabled, and the driver fled on foot into the woods behind the BP Gas Station in Dunkirk. Deputies established a perimeter, and S/DFC Idol, along with his K9 partner Stryker, tracked the suspect through the woods. They located the suspect, identified as **Xavier Leron Jett**, 26 of Alexandria, carrying a black bag. A search of the bag revealed several fraudulent driver's licenses and multiple manufactured VIN labels. Jett was taken into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center. He was charged with Fleeing and Eluding, Unlawful Taking of a Motor Vehicle, Failure to Remain at the Scene of an Accident, Possession of Serial Numbers for Fraudulent Purposes, Possession/Use of a False Government Identification Document, and other traffic-related offenses.



Quentin Leon Rice

Resisting Arrest: 25-002708

On January 11, 2025, Cpl. Shrawder initiated a traffic stop for multiple traffic violations on a vehicle in the area of Rt. 4 and Dowell Road in Solomons. Contact was made

related offenses.

related offenses.

Robbery: 25-002266 On January 9, 2025, at approximately 8:53 p.m., deputies from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office Patrol Bureau responded to R&J Liquors located at 2797 W. Chesapeake Beach Road in Dunkirk, for the report of an armed robbery. The complainant advised two suspects robbed the store at gunpoint and fled from the area. Calvert Detectives from the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) responded to the scene and assumed the investigation. A preliminary investigation revealed a motor vehicle collision in the area had caused a power outage. Approximately 15 minutes after the power went out, two suspects wearing dark clothing held the victims at gunpoint and demanded the contents of the cash register as well as the victim's phones. A broken bottle of liquor and a rack of miscellaneous products were observed on the floor inside the store. The suspects fled in unknown direction in an unknown vehicle. The estimated value of stolen property is \$1353. Detectives continue to investigate.

Theft: 25-001956 On January 8, 2025, Deputy MacWilliams responded to the District 1 office located at 10600 Southern Maryland Blvd. in Dunkirk, for the report of a theft. Contact was made with the com-

plainant who advised her black carpenter speed square had been stolen from her front porch. The complainant noticed the Carpenter square went missing on Dec. 18, 2024. The estimated value of stolen property is \$17.

Theft: 25-002510 On January 10, 2025, DFC Strong responded to a residence in the 3100 block of Cox Road in Chesapeake Beach, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised her wallet with credit card had been stolen from an unknown location. The victim was notified by her bank that her card was used at multiple establishments and large purchases had been made. The total sum of money purchased on the card was \$1,286.49.

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

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

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What's Coming to Calvert

The following list of pending Category 1 site plans was presented to the Calvert County Planning Commission at their Jan. 15 meeting. That means that the proposals are on the list for consideration by the planning commission at a future meeting. The meeting was in a hybrid form, both virtually and in person at the Harriet E. Brown Community Center (HEBCC), 901 Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick

1. CSPR-143116, 145 **Adelina Business Office**, located at 145 Adelina Road, Prince Frederick, combining Parcel 120 and Parcel 250, Lot 2 for a total of 2.44 acres zoned Rural Commercial. Proposed remodeling of existing structure for use as an office and construction of a new 7,400-sf, two-story building for business-related storage with associated parking area required for the two buildings. This project will utilize private well and septic. The concept submittal was accepted December 20, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett
2. CSPR-143112, located at 171 Skipjack Road, Prince Frederick, Lot 3R in the Calvert County Industrial Park, zoned Light Industrial. Proposed redevelopment of a portion of the 4.5-acre lot by

demolishing the existing office and constructing a new two-story office building in its place. It is further proposed to repave the southern portion of the site and to construct a storage warehouse and wall to segregate parking between the storage building yard & adjacent flex space tenants. A total of 6,524 sf of new construction with a total disturbance of 1.2-acres is proposed and the amenities will utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted December 20, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett

3. CSPR-143186, **CCIP Lot 37 – Flex Space**; located at 5241 Cutter Court, Prince Frederick, Lot 37 in the Calvert County Industrial Park, zoned Light Industrial. Proposed development of 34,000-sf flex space comprised of fourteen tenant spaces with disturbed acreage of 2.75 acres. The amenities will utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted August 28, 2024. Agent: COA Barrett
4. CSPR-143166, **Prince Frederick Assisted Living & Memory Care Facility**, located on the approx. 22-acre property adjacent to 3 Armory Road, in Prince Frederick, MD and is zoned

Prince Frederick Town Center/Old Town Transition Sub-Area. The project consists of a two story Assisted Living and a one-story Memory Care facility totaling 69,251 sq. ft. and 98 total beds, as well as 20 residential, age restricted cottages (10 duplex units). The development proposes to utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted September 25, 2024. Agent: COA Barrett

5. SPR-143255, **Armory Pavilion**, located on the 4.86-acre parcel at 175 Armory Road in Prince Frederick, MD and is zoned Prince Frederick Town Center/New Town Sub-Area. The project consists of adding an approximately 13,500-square-foot commercial pavilion and the associated infrastructure such as designated parking areas, stormwater management systems, utility services, and other necessary site enhancements. The project proposes to utilize public water and sewer. The detailed site plan submittal was accepted December 18, 2024. Agent: COA Barrett.



No **major subdivisions** are currently under review for Planning Commission consideration.

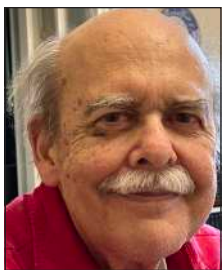
Please check next month's agenda for any new additions to this list

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

In Remembrance

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

Daniel Gross, 81



Daniel Lawrence Gross was born May 31, 1943 in Washington, DC, to Everett and Mildred (Foreman) Gross, and passed away January 16, 2025 at his home in

Solomons, MD, at the age of 81 years. He claims his birth certificate is inscribed in Mesopotamian cuneiform on a prehistoric stone tablet; this has yet to be independently verified. From an early age he grew taller than his hair, then double-majored in Math and Physics from Doane College. He spent most of his working life as a rocket scientist at Patuxent River Naval Air Station. He spent more years in post-retirement than he did working, striving always to live up to his longtime self-proclaimed pseudonym, Ornerly Pest. A vibrant hippie naturalist who named his backyard Gordon the Garden, and who firmly believed gun ownership to be a form of severe mental deficiency, Dan's lifetime passions included woodworking, bicycling, gardening, and raw vegetables. When not outside eating dandelions or building something useful from wood scraps in his workshop, he could be found cycling in Century Rides around Maryland on one of his six bicycles.

He is survived by his loving (and patient) wife of 48 years Anne of Solomons, MD; sister Donne Jaffe (Lyle) of Winston Salem, NC; niece Joy Irwin (Keith) of Winston Salem, NC; son Alden Gross (Ruth) of Severna Park, MD; and three grandchildren, Benjamin, Charlotte, and Anna. He is

predeceased by his brother Damon Gross. A memorial service will be at Middleham and St. Peter's Parish at 10am on Saturday, January 25, 2025. In lieu of flowers, please support the Henry George Foundation (<https://henrygeorgefoundation.org/>).

*Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me
And may there be no moaning at the bar
When I put out to sea.*

*For tho' from out our borne of time and place
The flood may bear me far
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.*

Carmel Balderson, 87



Carmel Lee Balderson, age 87, of Solomons, MD (formerly of Hopewell, PA) passed away peacefully on January 13, 2025.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Jack Balderson, and by her loving parents George and Genevieve Monks.

Carmel is survived by her children, Mark (Penny) Balderson, Keith (Vicky) Balderson, and Jeff (Robin) Balderson; grandchildren, Zoe Balderson, Daniel Balderson, Greg Balderson, Erin Albrecht, Nolan Balderson, Bailey Balderson, and Riley Balderson; as well as her brother Adam (Marianne) Monks, sister Jeannie Knotnick, and nieces and nephews.

Carmel was born on January 21, 1937 in Butler, PA, where she was raised in a loving

family. She was a member of St. Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Church and the Junior Catholic Daughters of America. She graduated from Butler Area Senior High School in 1954 and then from State Teachers College, Indiana, PA where she received her bachelor's and master's degrees in education. She married her husband, Jack Balderson, on June 3, 1961 in Butler, PA. Carmel resided in Hopewell, PA for 48 years and was a long-time member of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church. She moved to Solomons, MD in 2013 and became a member of Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church.

Carmel was a dedicated elementary school teacher and had a passion for helping her students learn. Math was her favorite subject to teach, and she offered additional math tutoring at her home. She was hard-working and really cared for her students, staying after hours each day to create meaningful lesson plans. She also liked to have fun in her classroom and sometimes gave her students 'Smarties' candies before a test. She was not only invested in teaching her students, but also in supporting them in life. She made many meaningful connections with her students, and this truly fulfilled her. Carmel taught for over 40 years across several school districts, and she completed her career as a fifth grade teacher at Hopewell Junior High School.

Family was the most important thing in the world to Carmel. She placed the happiness and well-being of her family above her own. One of her favorite things was hosting her family for Christmas. She loved carrying on her Italian heritage by cooking recipes passed down from her mother, singing Mitch Miller Christmas carols, and

reading 'Twas the Night Before Christmas' on Christmas Eve. She was always generous and enjoyed gifting lottery tickets and watching the family scratch them off. She was happiest when surrounded by her family and shone bright at family gatherings.

Carmel loved vacationing in the Outer Banks. Carmel and Jack owned a time-share at the Outer Banks Beach Club and enjoyed having their children and grandchildren come to the condo each summer. Carmel loved to sit on the beach, watch the ocean, read, and work crossword puzzles. She had a knack for finding the right crossword answers and delighted in her family chiming in on her puzzle as well. Carmel enjoyed many family dinners at her favorite restaurants, 'Millers' and 'Tale of the Whale', and would sometimes enjoy a piece of peanut butter pie for dessert. She loved to see her family spending quality time together and kept a journal of their times in the Outer Banks.

Family will receive friends on Wednesday, January 22, 2025 from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at Rausch Funeral Home, 20 American Lane, Lusby, MD 20657. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. at Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, Solomons, MD. Interment will follow in Immaculate Heart of Mary Cemetery, Lexington Park, MD.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington at <https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/> and the American Parkinson Disease Association at <https://www.apdaparkinson.org/>.

To leave the family a condolence please visit www.rauschfuneralhomes.com

Calvert Community Calendar

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

Thu, Jan 23

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.

JobSource Mobile Career Center

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons
10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Stop by for your job search needs! Get job counseling and resume help, search for jobs and connect with Southern Maryland JobSource. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Fri, Jan 24

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>.

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

Calvert Matine Museum
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.

Veteran Services Program

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

Are you a veteran or close family member looking for assistance? The Calvert County Office on Aging is partnering with ServingTogether to provide support twice a month, every second Wednesday and fourth Friday. Walk-ins are encouraged. No appointment is necessary. Visit <https://servingtogetherproject.org/calvert> for more information.

Sat, Jan 25

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.

Dungeons & Dragons – TEENS

Calvert Library Fairview Branch
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings
1-4 p.m.

Players ages 13-19 of all levels and interest are welcome. Registration is required. 410-257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sun, Jan 26

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 27

Silent Book Club

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
6-7:45 p.m.

Join us for an hour of complete silence and focus! What does a Silent Book Club look like? Bring your own book, or browse our shelves before quiet reading hour!

6-6:15pm - People arrive and share what they're reading
6:15-7:15pm - Quiet reading hour
7:15-7:45pm - Optional socializing, or just keep reading

Feel free to bring your favorite cozy blankets or cushions! 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Jan 29

Building Minds Through Play - Building Friendships

Barstow Elementary
5:30-6:30 p.m.

Join Calvert Library bus for a fun, engaging program for caregivers and kids (birth to 48 months)! This hands-on session will provide valuable tips and activities to support your child's development in key areas like language, social skills, and motor abilities. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

On Pins & Needles

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th 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>.

Upcoming

Southern Maryland Bluegrass

Calvert Elks Lodge
1015 Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick
Sunday Feb. 9
2 p.m.

The most widely admired and most influential Bluegrass recording artist, Lonesome River Band returns once again and will headline the 5th concert in the Southern Maryland Bluegrass series at the Elks. Tickets are available at the door. Although not required, if you prefer to pay in advance you may do so by going to www.somdbluegrass.com or call 301-737-3004.

Free Paper Shredding

Huntingtown High School
4125 Solomons Island Rd., Huntingtown
Saturday, Feb. 15
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Calvert County Department of Public Works, Solid Waste Division, will host free paper shredding events for county residents and businesses. Shredding documents helps prevent identity theft by destroying confidential and/or sensitive information.

Shred events will be held rain or shine. Proof of Calvert County residency or business location is required. Paper clips and staples are acceptable. Binders and binder clips are not acceptable.

Businesses are allowed up to five banker boxes of paper per business (or the equivalent volume of five banker boxes in alternate containers). There is no limit for residents. Certificates of destruction will be provided if requested.

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

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



County Times

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301-475-4200, ext. 3104

Loffler Senior Activity Center

21905 Chancellors Run Road
Great Mills, MD

301-475-4200, ext. 1654

St. Mary's Department of Aging & Human Services

Programs and Activities

Loffler Senior Activity Center 301-475-4200, ext. 1658
Garvey Senior Activity Center, 301-475-4200, ext. 1080
Northern Senior Activity Center, 301-475-4002, ext. 3101

Unless otherwise specified, all activities are open to Senior Activity Center participants ages 50+. Please call your local Senior Activity Center or visit StMarysCountyMD.gov/aging for the most up-to-date information. To register for activities online, visit StMarysCountyMD.gov/aging and click on the View & Sign Up for Activities & Programs button.

Making Connections: A Memory Café of St. Mary's

St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services is pleased to launch a new program *Making Connections: A Memory Café of St. Mary's*. Memory Cafés are a safe and engaging environment for those living with mild cognitive impairments, Alzheimer's Disease, or related dementia AND their care partners, family, and friends. Attend the launch event on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at the Garvey Senior Activity Center at 2 P.M. to learn more about Memory Cafés, get the upcoming meeting schedule, meet the staff, and enjoy light refreshments. This event is free and open to the public. RSVP preferred, but not required.

To learn more about the launch event, or to RSVP, call 301-475-4200 ext. 1062.

Health Watch: How to Seek Medical Care

Join our volunteers, Elaine & Kathy at Loffler Senior Activity Center on Wednesday, January 22 at 9:30 to discuss best practices to seek medical care for preventive, ongoing, and emergency situations. Advance registration is required. To register go to www.stmaryscountymd.gov/aging or

call 301-475-4200, ext. 1660.

Movement Safety Education: Be Your Injury Prevention Advocate

Join us for an empowering workshop at the Northern Senior Activity Center on Tuesday, January 28, from 1-3 p.m. This workshop, led by Judi Lyons, is designed to elevate your understanding of safe movement in all aspects of life. The two-hour session covers essential techniques for maintaining safety in various activities and fitness classes, as well as during daily routines. Invest in your health and well-being with this invaluable education on movement safety. Secure your spot today and take the first step toward lasting independence! Enroll for this event and pay the \$20 fee by visiting www.stmaryscountymd.gov/aging and click "View & Sign Up for Activities & Programs." If assistance is needed, leave a message at 301-475-4200, ext. 3115.

Cupid's Party Luncheon with Musician Bruce Thomas

Join us at the Northern Senior Activity Center on Wednesday, February 12, from 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Folks aged 50 & up are invited – singles, friends, neighbors, and couples –

all who will LOVE a fun day of lunch and live entertainment with Bruce Thomas. Mr. Thomas' music style has been described as "Michael Bubl  or Frank Sinatra with the gymnastics and vocal agility of Al Jarreau and the soulfulness of Gregory Porter." Door prizes, games, and a sweet treat should also hit the mark. There is no charge for the performance; supported by Senior Center Operating Funds. Lunch is \$7 for those under 60 years of age, and by donation otherwise; paid upon arrival. Enroll for this event by visiting www.stmaryscountymd.gov/aging and click "View & Sign Up for Activities & Programs." If assistance is needed, leave a message at 301-475-4200, ext. 3115.

Keys to Senior Independence

What are your plans for retirement? Do you know how to access Medicare, Medicaid, or other programs and services? Are you seeking volunteer opportunities within the St. Mary's County Community? Find all that and more with this four-week series!

- Monday, March 17 - Rethinking Aging: Join us to learn about programs offered through the St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human

Services.

- Monday, March 24 - Mental Health & Cognitive Decline: This evening will cover several facets of mental health, including a presentation on Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia.
- Monday, March 31 - Financial Health: Speakers this week will teach community members about scams directed toward the aging population and how to detect, avoid, and report scams, along with legal information and financial options for older adults!
- Monday, April 7 - Physical Health: Speakers this week will teach community members about cardiovascular health, prostate care, living well with Lyme disease, and about the importance of preventive care.

Presentations will take place at the College of Southern Maryland Leonardtown campus, Building C, room 206 from 6 to 9 p.m.

For more information or to register, contact Nicoletta Pollice, Outreach Specialist, at 301-475-4200, ext. 1074 or Nicoletta.Pollice@stmaryscountymd.gov

Home and Community-Based Services

- Aging & Disability Resource Center/ Maryland Access Point (MAP)
- Caregiver support and respite
- Community Options Waiver
- Community First Choice
- Long-term care rights and advocacy

Human Services

- Homelessness Prevention
- After School Programs
- Youth Services Bureau
- Teen Court
- Christmas Caring
- WARM Transportation
- Local Management Board
- Non-Profit Agency Monitoring
- Community Development

MAP/Senior Information and Assistance

- Financial Assistance Programs
- Senior Rides
- State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)
- Legal Assistance
- Maryland Access Point (MAP)



How may we help you?

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Leonardtown, MD 20650

301-475-4200, ext. 1050

www.stmaryscountymd.gov/aging

Facebook - www.facebook.com/SMCDAHS

YouTube - www.youtube.com/c/SMCAgingHumanServices

Schedule a Road Show Presentation to learn more about the St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services! Call 301-475-4200, ext. 1074, to schedule a presentation or to sign up for delivery of the Department's bi-monthly newsletter, *New Beginning*.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)

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Community Programs & Outreach

Keys to Senior Independence

Mondays, March 17-April 7

Law Enforcement Appreciation Day

Tuesday, May 6

Men's Health Day

Saturday, June 7

New Beginning newsletter

Road Show Presentations

Fitness Classes for the Over-50 Crowd

Exercise is a pillar of a healthy lifestyle. When individuals exercise regularly and pair physical activity with a healthy diet and smart lifestyle choices, they can extend their life expectancies and sleep well knowing they're doing everything they can to increase their chances of enjoying a limitless retirement.

Adults over 50 know it's not always so easy to exercise. Hectic schedules can make it seem like there's little time for exercise. And even when adults make time to break a sweat, they might find that traditional workouts combining strength training with cardiovascular exercise are too time-consuming and possibly even a little dull. In such instances, fitness classes can take the place of more traditional exercise regimens. Various classes provide a challenging workout, and many can do so in an hour or less.

- **Pilates:** Improving balance, core strength and flexibility are three goals of Pilates. Pilates has an interesting history, as it was created by Joseph Pilates, a German prisoner of war who was imprisoned off the coast of England during World War I. Pilates and the exercising phenomenon he created ultimately made their way to the United States, where the routine was embraced by dancers looking for a way to aid their injury recovery. Pilates is now part of millions of individuals' exercise regimens. This low-impact exercise is designed to strengthen



muscles and improve alignment and flexibility. Achieving greater balance after 50 pays untold dividends for older adults, who can decrease their risk for falls and fall-related injuries by increasing their steadiness.

- **Spin:** Spin classes are a wildly popular exercise program that utilizes cycling to help people break a sweat. Cardiovascular exercise is beneficial

for a number of reasons, including its connection to heart health and even cognitive health. But many people lament daily sessions on a treadmill or elliptical that they find boring. Spin classes involve the use of stationary bikes, but instructors typically guide class members through conditions that mimic outdoor cycling sessions. Resistance and pedaling speed changes

throughout a spin class, which serves to keep individuals engaged and burn lots of calories.

- **Kickboxing:** Sometimes referred to as Krav Maga, kickboxing is another unique and challenging class offered at many fitness facilities. Martial arts like kickboxing assist with weight loss and can help people improve their muscle tone, flexibility and stamina. Adults over 50 who are not accustomed to physical activity may find their energy levels are low, but a few kickboxing sessions may produce noticeable differences in stamina. The balance benefits of kickboxing are similar to those provided by Pilates, so this activity may be particularly beneficial for adults over 50 looking to reduce their vulnerability to falls as they grow older.
- **Dance:** Dancing is widely seen as a fun activity, and rightfully so, as few things can be as enjoyable as cutting a rug. But dancing also provides a great cardiovascular workout. Local community centers and even some fitness facilities offer age-specific dancing classes, which the AARP notes are great for individuals who want to build core strength, improve bone health and protect their heart.

Adults over 50 who want to be more physically active can look to any number of fitness classes to break a sweat, build strength and have fun all at once.

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The Impact of Reading on Cognitive Decline

Aging and change go hand in hand. Although some may bemoan the gray hairs that start to arrive or stiffness in the knees that seems to sneak up on a person in middle age, such concerns are not necessarily enough to lose sleep over. However, many people 50 or older are nervous about the potential for cognitive issues like dementia as they grow older.

The Alzheimer's Association estimates that 6.7 million people have Alzheimer's disease in the United States. The Alzheimer Society of Canada estimates that there were 733,040 people living with dementia in the country as of January 1, 2024. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can rob people of their memories, personalities and abilities to live satisfying, independent lives. While it may not be impossible to prevent all cognitive issues completely, there is reason to believe that reading could be an ally in cognitive care.

The American Academy of Neurology says that reading stimulates the brain and has been shown to slow down cognitive decline in old age. Reading also may help slow down memory loss.

The powers of reading were noticed more than 10 years ago when a 2013 study from researchers at Emory University measured readers' MRI scans as they read books. They found the deeper readers went into a story, the more areas of their brains were activated. This activity remained elevated for several



days after participants finished their books. The more a person reads, the stronger complex networks in the brain become.

Additional evidence that reading can help the brain was noted by researchers at the Texas A&M School of Public Health. A 2024 study suggests that older people with mild cognitive impairment who engage in high levels of activities like reading, hobbies and word games have better memory, working memory, attention, and processing speed than those who do not take part in such endeavors. Furthermore, a 2021 study published in Neurology found that high levels of cognitive activity, like reading and writing letters, can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by five years among those age 80 and over.

Reading can keep brains functioning optimally and potentially delay age-related cognitive decline.

Financial Strategies to Consider as You Approach Retirement



Freedom is often cited as a benefit of retirement. Many professionals look forward to the day when they retire and have more free time and the freedom to spend that time however they choose. Of course, the opportunity to spend retirement how one sees fit typically requires considerable financial freedom.

Financial planning for retirement is often emphasized to young professionals beginning their careers. But it's equally important that people on the cusp of retirement continue to look for ways to protect and grow their wealth. As retirement draws near, professionals can consider these strategies to ensure they have the financial freedom to make their golden years shine even brighter.

- Plan to grow your wealth in retirement. It's widely assumed that retirees need less income after calling it a career because the need to save for retirement is no longer present. However, some expenses, including health care, may rise in retirement, which underscores the need to continue growing your wealth. Cost-of-living also will increase over the course of your retirement years, which highlights the need to keep growing wealth in retirement. It can be tricky to protect your existing retirement savings as you approach the end of your career while also growing that wealth, so it is best to work with a financial planner to navigate that situation.

- Maintain a mix with your investments. A model from the Schwab Center for Financial Research indicated that a hypothetical retiree with a \$2 million portfolio in year one of retirement will have slightly less than \$1 million left 30 years later if her portfolio maintains a mix of 60 percent stocks and 40 percent bonds and cash. The model found

that a second hypothetical investor with the same size portfolio in year one of retirement will run out of funds prior to year 29 if his portfolio is 20 percent stocks and 80 percent bonds and cash. Though conventional wisdom suggests limiting risk as retirement nears and eliminating it entirely upon retiring, modern retirees are living longer and may therefore need to maintain a mix of investments to ensure they don't outlive their money.

- Make the maximum allowable contributions. Many aging professionals may not have saved as much for retirement as they might have hoped to upon starting their careers decades ago. In fact, a 2024 survey from Prudential Financial found that many 55-year-olds have fallen far short of establishing the level of financial security they will need in retirement. The Prudential survey found that 55-year-olds had a median retirement savings of less than \$50,000, a number that falls considerably short of the recommended goal of having eight times one's annual income saved by this age. If that situation sounds familiar for professionals nearing retirement age, then now is the time to begin catching up. Make the maximum allowable contributions to a 401(k) plan (\$23,000 in 2024) and/or an IRA (\$7,000). In addition, the Internal Revenue Service notes that IRA catch-up contributions remained \$1,000 for individuals age 50 and over in 2024.

Retirement can provide a sense of freedom professionals have worked hard to achieve over the course of their careers. Some simple strategies can help professionals on the cusp of retirement achieve the financial freedom they'll need to enjoy their golden years to the fullest extent.



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Five Activities for Modern Empty Nesters

The rewards of parenting are bittersweet. Raising children successfully means they will one day leave home and embark on lives of their own. Once the proverbial chicks leave the nest, individuals may be left with a lot of empty home and a lot of time to fill.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 22.5 million empty nesters in the country in 2020, with most having become empty nesters between the ages of 40 and 60. Statistics Canada says roughly one-third of adults between the ages of 20 and 34 lived with their parents in 2023. Although some parents whose children have reached adulthood still provide financial assistance to their grown children due to high costs of living, many empty nesters in their fifties have greater financial resources and much more time to fill their days with activities unrelated to parenting. But how does one spend those hours when they had been filled with parenting-related obligations and activities for so long?

The following are five unique ways empty nesters can stay busy and socially engaged as they seek to avoid empty nest syndrome.

1. Take care of yourself. After all those years of putting children first, now is the time to make yourself the priority. Explore all of the ways to engage in self-care. Maybe you were thinking about signing up for a monthly massage package at a nearby wellness clinic but procrastinated because of the added expense? Or you may have

wanted to splurge on a facial or new hair treatment? Now is the time to make those appointments.

2. Prioritize hobbies. Identify rewarding hobbies that might have been pushed to the back burner for years. If you always wanted to learn a new language, why not immerse yourself in it and the associated culture by spending a month or more in a country where that language is spoken? Now can be a great time to pick up new hobbies as well. Aim for activities that are social in nature, like the ever-popular pickleball.

3. Travel far and wide. Travel is a popular pastime among empty nesters and retirees. When you no longer have to coordinate travel around school schedules and holidays, you can take advantage of great deals on off-peak travel and really see the country or even the world.

4. Indulge your social life. If parenting made it hard to attend certain social functions, now you'll have the time to engage with friends more regularly. You can reach out to old friends and start a weekly walking group, join a

book club, sign up for a fitness class together, or even do a monthly wine and dine meet-up at new restaurants in the area.

5. Adopt a pet. When children were still at home you likely lavished attention on them each day. You can redirect some of that affection to a pet who needs a good home. Visit a nearby animal shelter and pick out a pup or kitten looking for a good home.

Empty nesters have more free time to redirect to their own passion projects and interests.



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Thompson Carries on Tradition of Service

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

At 67 years old, Howard Thompson is continuing to work as a facilities manager at the Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship in Piney Point while chairing the county's planning commission and serving as the president of the local chapter of Christmas In April.

It's a hefty workload for someone pushing into their seventh decade but Thompson, who comes from a large, extended family in St. Mary's with deep roots here, appears to love it.

He could have retired from his job 10 years ago, he said, but it continues to be enjoyable.

"I like to keep busy," Thompson told *The County Times*. "I love my job; I love the people there."

This is his 39th year employed at the merchant marine school and he has spent a little more than 30 years serving the public interest while holding a seat on either the planning commission or the zoning Board of Appeals, he said.

He counts his service on the several boards and commissions as giving back to the county that has nurtured him and been his home since his birth.

"The commissioners, if they need me, I'm here," Thompson said, noting that land use questions that the planning commission and the board of appeals deal with are among the most important to be made in the county.

"We steadily... have new businesses coming into the county," Thompson said. "But we have to keep the growth in our development areas."

The county has to grow, Thompson said, but its rural character has to be maintained as best as possible to keep a balance between prosperity and the pristine.

"It's a fine line," Thompson said. "It's a very thin rope to walk."

The county is going through its updating of the comprehensive plan, which guides growth and development in St. Mary's for the next decade and Thompson and the planning commission are deep into the work.

"The planning commission's job is to look forward," Thompson said. "Adequate public facilities [roads, schools, water and sewer] are a big thing."

The county government has hired a consultant to take the lead on the update and it is currently engaging the community in focus groups to gauge their desires on where they want development to go.

Thompson has continued to do all this while dealing with a serious threat to his health; he suffered from interstitial pulmonary fibrosis — a disease which runs in his family — until 2019 when he received a complete lung transplant.

There were times when he was so bereft of energy from being oxygen-depleted he could do nothing but stay in bed on a respirator, he said.

"I was just on oxygen 24-hours-a-day," Thompson told *The County Times*. "I breathe better now than I did 10 years ago."

At first, he counted his breathing problems with just getting older until he sought medical help when he fell ill with clubbing or the condition of the tips of his fingers and toes expanding significantly due to his lack of oxygen.

After he successfully made it through the transplant surgery and was taken off a respirator, he remembered what it meant to breath again.

"It was the best sensation in the world," Thompson said.

Thompson has adopted the philosophy of the former owner of the Olde Breton Inn in Leonardtown, Eddie Bailey, who passed away several years ago.

"Eddie Bailey told me if you stay still the man will come and get you," Thompson said. "Whenever I saw him, he was always busy doing something."

Aside from his work and volunteer service, what keeps him going now?

"My wife," Thompson said of Kerrie Thompson, with whom he has shared the last 44 years. "She keeps a good eye on me."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

St. Mary's Community Calendar

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

Fri, Jan 24

Poker at HVRS

Hollywood Volunteer Rescue Squad
43256 Rescue Ln., Hollywood
7 p.m. to Midnight

Texas Hold'em Bounty Tournament at Hollywood Vol Rescue Squad. \$65.00 buy-in for \$20k in chips. Rounds are 20 minutes each. Doors open at 6 pm, tournament starts at 7pm. BYOB, food and sodas will be available for purchase. Tables deal their own cards, dealers are not provided. Late Entries permitted until 1st break, approx. 8 pm cut off. No rebuys allowed.

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

Sat, Jan 25

Appraiser Fair

St. Clement's Island Museum
38370 Coltons Point Rd., Colton's Point
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

You may have a hidden treasure in your attic or garage and not even know it! Visit

with expert appraisers as they determine the value of your prized possessions at St. Clement's Island Museum.

Appraisers for various types of items will be available at the museum. Only items that can be hand-carried will be appraised. Space is limited and items will be viewed on a first come, first serve basis.

Appraisers will be available to offer oral appraisals to the public for the following categories: fine arts, dolls, jewelry, coins, and currency. The fine arts category includes ceramics, pottery, glassware, artwork/paintings, music boxes and small furniture pieces. Items in this category are limited to two items per person at a fee of \$5 per item. Other category fees are \$5 each. Cash, credit card, and check are accepted.

facebook.com/events/1590489635229822

Tue, Jan 28

Scouting America Cub Pack 560 Southern Maryland

Greenview Knolls Elementary School
45711 Military Ln., Great Mills
6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Join our meeting to find out what our pack can offer you. We're all about encouraging boys and girls to make friends, be helpful to others, and do their very best no matter the outcome. With the help of powerful learning projects and exciting outdoor activities, we aim to teach children that doing their best can be a fun and rewarding experience—no matter the difficulty of the challenge.

Thu, Jan 30

Book Presentation — *Near and Far Waters: The Geopolitics of Seapower*

St. Mary's College of Maryland
Campus Center — Cole Cinema
5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Colin Flint is a Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Utah State University. He has published research on the topics of geopolitics, China's Belt and Road Initiative, World War II, world-systems analysis, and just war theory. Flint will present his book *Near and Far Waters: The Geopolitics of Seapower*.

Near and Far Waters examines the histories of three naval powers (the Netherlands,

Britain, and the United States), and distills the past and present patterns of seapower and their tendency to trigger repercussions of conflict and war. *Near and Far Waters* gives readers an appreciation for how geopolitics works, the importance of seapower in economic competition, the motivations behind China's desire to become a global naval force, and the risks of current and future wars.

Fri, Jan 31

Texas Hold'em Tournament

Elks Lodge
45779 Fire Department Ln., California
7 p.m. to midnight

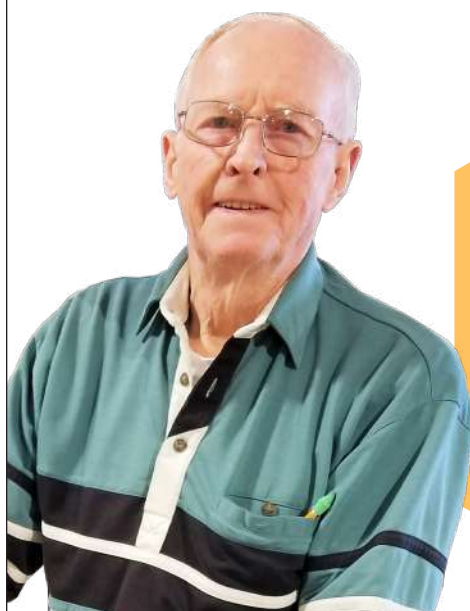
Buy-in: \$80.00. Starting Chips: 20,000 chips. Blinds will increase every 20 minutes

Please enter through the side of the building. No late entries allowed. Sign up before 7pm. For any question or additional details contact:

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In Remembrance

great-grandchildren.

The family will receive friends on Monday, January 27, 2025, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department, Hollywood, MD, where a funeral service will be held on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 11:00 AM. Interment will follow at Maryland Veterans Cemetery, Cheltenham, MD.

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

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

Johnny Norris, 77



John "Johnny" Carroll Norris, "Hoecake" to his closest friends, passed peacefully at age 77 after a long battle with dementia at his home in Dameron, MD surrounded by his loving family.

Johnny was a lifelong resident of St. Mary's County, born in Leonardtown, MD to Joseph Carroll and Mary Louise Sickle Norris on May 27, 1947. He was raised on their family farm in Dameron.

Johnny was married to and survived by Mildred "Millie" Ann Hill Norris Hall, and loved and celebrated by their children, Cindy Ann Norris Fritts Lang (Steve) and Francis "Frankie/Frank" Norris (Mary).

Johnny was also married to Phyllis Jones and loved by her children Michael and Angie.

Johnny was known as Granddaddy to many grand- and great-grandchildren: Steven Carroll Norris (Alyssa), George Carroll, Henry "Hank", and Luke; Jeffrey Norris (Melanie), Jase, Claire, Lauren, and Couly; Kevin Norris (Yesenia "Jesse"), Kiara and Isaac; Scott Dillion Fritts; Nicole Oliver, Natalie; John Fritts, Brandon, and Allyssa; Jacob "Jake" Fritts; Laura Abigail Green (Andrew); Matthew Gabriel Troy Green (Lea); Cate Winder, Veydah and Kyron; Jacob "Jake" Lang (Ashley); Lucas "Luke" Lang (Amy); Jessica "Jessie" Lang; Lydia "Lydi" Lang; Jasmine and Tyler Jones; and many loved ones.

He is also survived by his brother Thomas "Tommy/Tom" Norris (Karen), Joanne LeCompte (Otis "Butch"), Jeanne Costello (Craig) and their children.

Johnny was a brick mason by trade. He owned & operated Economy Contractor's Concrete Corp for many years. Johnny enjoyed hunting, fishing, and softball, and he truly loved his time with the Southern Maryland Antique Tractor Pull Association, where he won many trophies and plaques.

Johnny worked hard, played hard, and most of all, loved even harder. His family is honored to have received so many expressions of love and fond memories of Johnny.

The family will receive friends on Wednesday, January 29, 2025, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with prayers recited at 7:00 PM,

in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Thursday, January 30, 2025, at 11:00 AM in St. Michaels Catholic Church, Ridge MD, with Rev. Keith Burney officiating. Interment will follow in the church cemetery. Serving as pallbearers will be Charles "Chip", Ronald "Ronnie", and Thomas "Tommy" Raley [Charles & Mary Lee]; Kenneth "Kenny" Trossbach [Joe & Ann]; Wayne Hewitt [Franklin & Ellen]; and Connie Trossbach [Danny & Jane McHugh]. Honorary pallbearers will be his devoted niece, Angela Smith [Michael "Mickey" and Irene Hill] and cousin, Jessica Wheeler [Kathy and Walter], both of whom took care of "Granddaddy" with kindness and the patience of angels as his mental and physical health declined.

Donations can be made directly to family, or at: <https://gofund.me/d61894f0>

May he fly with angels!

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

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

Lydia Baker, 37



Lydia Louise Baker, age 37, of Millbury, Ohio, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, January 16th, 2025, at Mercy Health St. Vincent Medical Center. Born on July 10th,

1987, in Leonardtown, Maryland, Lydia was the beloved daughter of Hernando and Lilly (Ramirez) Orduña.

Lydia's life was a testament to love, resilience, and adventure. She married her high school sweetheart, Jeraime, on May 4th, 2007, in the beautiful setting of Honolulu, HI, beginning a journey filled with devotion and shared dreams. Together, they built a life centered around family, faith, and boundless love.

Lydia's greatest joy came from being a mother to her five wonderful children: Juakeen, Jacob, Lyla, Louisa, and Laudia. Her nurturing spirit, creativity, and unwavering support shaped their lives in profound ways. Lydia was a devoted wife and mother who found immense happiness in the everyday moments of family life—whether it was preparing meals, guiding her children through school, or planning family adventures.

An accomplished professional, Lydia dedicated her career to helping others through her work with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Her compassion and commitment to her role as an Immigration Specialist touched the lives of many and exemplified her dedication to making the world a better place.

Beyond her career, Lydia embraced life with passion and joy. She had a deep love for nature and the outdoors, spending countless hours exploring National Parks, camp-

ing, snowshoeing, and farming livestock, especially her cherished chickens and goats. Lydia was a talented artist, expressing her creativity through painting, sewing, and crocheting. She sang with a beautiful voice in the church choir, sharing her love of music with her community.

Lydia's journey took her family to many places, from the sun kissed shores of Hawaii to the quiet beauty of Maine's Northern Woods, and finally to Ohio, where they found solace among loved ones. Each move brought new adventures, memories, and the opportunity to explore the wonders of the world with her family.

She completed her education with determination, earning an Associate's Degree from the College of Southern Maryland, a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Baltimore, and a Master's Degree from the University of Maryland Global Campus. Her academic accomplishments were a source of pride, reflecting her commitment to personal growth and setting an example for her children.

Lydia's love for life and her family was endless. She was the heart of our home, creating a warm and loving environment where everyone felt cherished. Her legacy will live on in the laughter, love, and strength of her family.

Lydia is survived by her devoted husband, Jeraime M. Baker (37); her children, Juakeen (17), Jacob (14), Lyla (8), Louisa (7), and Laudia (1 month); her loving parents, Hernando and Lilly Orduña; her dear sister, Lindy Orduña; and many extended family members who adored her.

A funeral Mass celebrating Lydia's life will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at All Saints Catholic Church. The family will welcome guests from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Burial will follow at Lake Township Cemetery.

Ronnie Anderson, 88



Ronald Anderson, 88, of Chaptico, Maryland passed away January 16, 2025, at his home with his beloved wife, Margie at his side.

Born in Washington, DC, on November 1, 1936, he was the loving son of the late Earl R. Anderson and Elsie Louise (nee: Carlson) Anderson and the devoted brother to Patricia Kay King (Raymond) and then, Miriam DiSilvestri.

Ronnie met and married the love of his life Marjorie "Margie" Carol (nee: White) Anderson in Washington, DC on November 15, 1957. They spent the next 67 years building a life together that included raising four sons.

Ronnie was very proud to have served in Viet Nam from 1968-1969 in Phu Cat, as part of the Air National Guard's DC 113th Fight Wing Division, the Capital Guardians, as an aircraft mechanic for his treasured F100G, the "Gray Ghost". Ronnie served

his country proudly and retired from the Air Force as Master Sergeant in 1996.

During Ronnie's 15+ years with the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) system, he safely picked up and delivered 100's of school children on his big yellow school bus that he proudly parked in his driveway between runs to Sherwood Elementary, Farquhar Middle and Sherwood High Schools.

Ronnie was a member of the Sandy Spring and Mechanicsville Lions Clubs. He served as President for both Clubs and in 2017 he received the highest Lions Clubs International honor as being the recipient of the Melvin Jones Fellowship. During his 40+ years as a Lion and a Fellow, Ronnie represented dedication to humanitarian service in the highest degree.

After retiring from MCPS, Ronnie and Margie moved from Ashton, Maryland to Chaptico, Maryland once they found their dream home on the water (Wicomico River). Ronnie and Margie became members of the Mt. Zion Methodist Church in Mechanicsville, MD and thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the congregation. They would go out on their pontoon boat, cruising up and down the river, visiting Cobb Island (Captain John's was a favorite) and "The Birthplace of Maryland", St. Clements Island. Any new visitors to the Anderson Home would be greeted by a boisterous and lively Mr. Anderson providing an in-depth dissertation on the history of his beloved State of Maryland.

There were bushels upon bushels of crabs caught off Ronnie's pier, carried up the hill, and steamed in his (leveled) keg-steamer with Old Bay and Apple Cider Vinegar. All joyfully shared with friends and family under the Sunsetter Awning on the deck overlooking the water. Oh. And hot dogs. Don't forget the hot dogs.

Their day could end, sitting on their swing, watching the sunset bring beauty and contentment in a swath of reds, oranges and golden yellows. The sunsets were a favorite for Ronnie and he and Margie always enjoyed them together.

Along with his wife, Margie, Ronnie is survived by his four sons, John Wesley Anderson of Boonsboro, MD, David Earl Anderson (Suzette) of St. Leonard, MD, Ronald Earl Anderson, Jr. (Kim) of Rockville, MD and Timothy Lester Anderson (Sarah) of Hedgesville, WV.

He is also survived by six grandchildren whom he loved dearly; Ashley Zawislak (Joe), Sara Anderson, Amanda Anderson, Colin Anderson, Waylon Anderson and Autumn Anderson.

Family will receive friends on Saturday, January 25, 2025 from 10:30 to 12:00 with a funeral service at 12:00, at Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., 22955 Hollywood Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. Interment will be held at Maryland Veterans Cemetery at a later date.

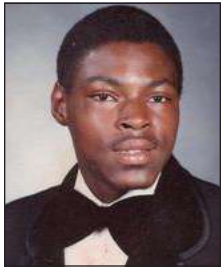
Condolences to the family may be made at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

In Remembrance

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

Leroy Berry, 60



James "Leroy" Berry, 60, of Compton, MD, passed away on December 24, 2024, at his home. Leroy was born on August 22, 1964, he was the oldest son of Henrietta Stewart (John I. Stewart) and the late Robert Baker (Mary Francis). Leroy was educated in St. Mary's County Public School system earning his diploma from Leonardtown High School in 1983. After high school Leroy was employed at the Department of Social Service for several years, ultimately retiring after 25 years working for St. Mary's County Department of Health due to his illness.

During Leroy's time with the St. Mary's County Health department, he received multiple awards such as the "Meritorious Public Health Service Award" displaying his character, personal work ethic, hard work and dedication. In his personal time, Leroy enjoyed playing cards with friends & family, and faithfully playing his Maryland lottery numbers. Leroy on occasion enjoyed having a drink of his favorite beer "Natty Daddy" while watching his beloved football team the "Washington Commanders". Leroy will

truly be missed by everyone who knew him during his time on earth.

Leroy leaves to cherish his memories, with his mother Henrietta Stewart, step mother Mary Francis Baker, sister Donna Stewart, brother Louis Berry; Uncle George Stewart (Mary Alice Stewart - Godmother); Aunts, Carrie Berry, Barbara (Michael Butler), Annie Baker, Mary "Eleanor" Douglas (Francis), Teresa Chase (Paul); One God-child Wynter Bush; Best friends Antonio Melendez, Joseph "Jeremiah" Kelly, John Greenwell; and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Leroy is preceded in death by his father Robert Andrew Baker, stepfather John I. Stewart; Siblings Catherine Walker, Tony Bush and sister-in-law Javara "Boss" Berry; Aunt Mary Berry (Robert Daily); Uncles Junior Milton Berry, William Hayes, James R. Baker Jr. Thomas F. Baker, William E. Baker, Joseph Baker Jr. Louis Jerome Sr.

Family will receive friends on Thursday, January 16, 2025 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., with Prayers at 6:00 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, 21370 Newtowne Neck Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. There will be a Mass of Christian Burial on January 17, 2025 celebrated at 11:00 a.m. by Rev. Edward Hegnauer, at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, P.A., 21370 Newtowne Neck Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. Interment will follow at the church cemetery.

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

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Mary Jo O'Connor, 93



Mary Jo O'Connor, 93, passed away peacefully surrounded by family on Thursday afternoon, January 9, 2025 at Sacred Heart Home, Hyattsville, MD. She was born

February 13, 1931 in Waynesburg, Greene County, PA, the daughter of the late Paul R. Randolph and Pearle (Roberts) Randolph.

In 1941 Mary Jo moved with her family to White Point Road in St. Mary's County, MD. After graduating from Great Mills High School in 1948, she worked as an operator for the C & P Telephone Company. It was while handling calls that a romance blossomed with a young sailor from Patuxent River NAS Patrick James O'Connor, and on September 15, 1950, Pat and Mary Jo (affectionately called "Babe" by Pat), were married at Our Lady's Catholic Church, Medleys Neck, in Leonardtown, MD. Together they celebrated 64 years of marriage, raising six children on the beautiful banks of the Potomac River where they shared so many lasting memories. Mary Jo created a loving home for her family and sustained and nurtured that loving bond of family throughout her life, grounded always in her deep Catholic faith which gave her strength in her successful battle with breast cancer. She shared her many talents as a housewife and was widely known for her cooking (famous hard candy and fudge), sewing, needlework, floral arranging, gardening, reading, and painting. Mary Jo took up painting in her 50's with her friend Mary Anne Hammett, proving you're never too old to learn something new. With Mary Anne she also delivered lunches for over 30 years with the "Meals on Wheels" program. Mary Jo was known and loved by so many for her listening ear, wise counsel, and her loving advice. Her phone was always ringing with someone seeking her warm motherly love. Mary Jo was dedicated to St. George Parish and to the Blessed Mother throughout her life. One of her dearest contributions was the construction of the pergola in a meditation garden next to the church, holding the Marian statue and grotto belonging to her parents. Her enduring hope was that everyone could turn to our Blessed Mother for all their needs.

Mary Jo is survived by her children, Michael O'Connor (Peg) of Green Valley, AZ, Danny O'Connor (Donna) of Valley Lee, MD, Kathy Shiring (Joe) of Stevensville, MD, Kelly Cropp (Lance) of Mansfield, OH, Kevin O'Connor of New Port Richey, FL, and Tim O'Connor of Falls Church, VA; her sister-in-law Jo Randolph of Falls Church, VA and brother-in-law Franklin "Bit" O'Connor, of Kingman, AZ; 14 grandchildren: Kellen, Kendall, Paige; Bobby Jo, Noelle; Becky, Matt, Glenn;

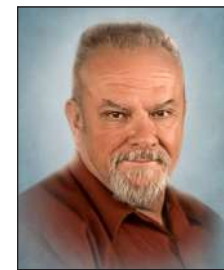
Nathan, Kate; Colin, Max; 7 great grandchildren, many nieces, nephews, cousins and extended family.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by her sisters Alice Jane (Dyson) McCall, Patty Ann (Duke) Muchow, brothers James Randolph and John Randolph, grandson Sean O'Connor and son-in-law Hugh Shiring.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated by Reverend Paul Nguyen on February 1, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. at St. George Catholic Church, 19199 St. George's Road, Valley Lee, MD 20692. Interment will follow in the church cemetery. Family will receive friends at a luncheon at the hall next to the church following interment.

Memorial contributions can be made to St. George Catholic Church, 19199 St. George's Church Road, Valley Lee, MD 20692 or Sacred Heart Home, 5805 Queens Chapel Rd, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

Randy Payne, 64



It is with heavy hearts, that we, as a family, announce the sudden passing of Randolph Eugene "Randy" Payne, Sr., 64, of Mechanicsville, MD, on January 4,

2025. Born on June 28, 1960, he was the beloved son of the late Lawrence Eugene Payne and the late Margaret Marie Simmons.

As a small child, Randy was raised in Morningside, Washington D.C. In his youth, he moved with his family to Chaptico, MD. His love of St. Mary's County had begun and never wavered. Countless bonds of love, friendship, and brotherhood were forged that will certainly last a lifetime. Randy graduated from Chopticon High School with the class of 1978. In the years since, he attended multiple class reunions with excitement for being able to catch up with everyone.

Randy proudly served in the United States Air Force with the determination to learn and attain the highest level of excellence. He openly displayed his awards and achievements from this time with the hope of inspiring patriotism and dedication to quality craftsmanship from future tradesman. As a master welder and custom metal fabricator, Randy's talent and skill will continue to be known far and wide. For more than 46 years, Randy's knowledge of metallurgical science was instrumental to his career working in multiple industries, including air and ground transportation, as well as marine and automotive performance.

A loving and devoted family man, Randy was always on the move for his crew. As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, our "Pop Pop" was the man.

Randy is survived by his partner, Kathy Boswell, his sister, Marsha Fleegle (Rodney Sr.), his son, Randolph Eugene Payne Jr. (Jennifer), his daughters, Stephanie Jo Payne (Paul) and Amanda Jo Fringer (David III), as well as 11 grandchildren and four

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A View From The BLEACHERS



LIKE IT WAS

By Ronald N. Guy
Contributing Writer

A loyal reader noted a conspicuous silence — an astute observation. The first edition of this column covered the second retirement of Washington head coach Joe Gibbs in January of 2008. In the seventeen years and over 400 “Views” since, it is safe to say that D.C.’s football team has been the most frequent subject. In that time, many coaches and quarterbacks have come gone, many more football games have been lost than won, and off the field the team devolved into a petri dish of unethical bacteria that eventually led to a merciful ownership change.

The road traveled by ardent Washington football fans over the last quarter century is unprecedented in professional sports. Normally statements like that include a dash of hyperbole; in this case it an undeniable fact. Washington was once not only among the league’s best on the field, it was model sports organization, an entity respected as much for its success as the way in which it conducted its business.

It took 25 years, but former owner Dan Snyder ruined it all. He destroyed a passionate fan base and wounded a second form of Sunday religion that had been passed through generations of fans and provided a shared passion that brought family members, friends, and even complete strangers from the DMV closer together. The Burgundy and Gold was more than a football team; it was the tightest of fraternities and a source of shared civic pride that was a bright light in the shared human experience of its loyalist.

Much of that has been lost: the passion has been sapped from many supporters, some completely abandoning the team, and a generation of new fans is adrift, wondering if they can or should adopt the team of their family’s elders.

Trust that this opening was typed with a heavy heart and lingering anger for the person who oversaw it all, his only consequence being that he was finally forced to sell the franchise for \$6 billion. That hardly feels like justice; but freedom from his darkest was a priceless gift.

Then a new owner arrived (Josh Harris). And a new General Manager (Adam Peters). And a new coach (Dan Quinn). Intriguing moves were made in the offseason – veteran free agents and a promising young quarterback via the draft. There was a detectable professionalism, decency and competence from the new leaders. Still, justified skepticism remained.

Then the season played out like a dream. The quarterback, Jayden Daniels, was a sensation. The parts all seemed to fit. And not once was the team or its quarterback featured in this column.

I was spooked; Snyder’s residual emotional scarring is thick. I watched waiting for the Thanos of football to deliver an inevitable demise. So, give me a minute, or a few years, to sort this out. My pessimism is entrenched after 25 years of programming.

Here’s what I will say: The last 18 months have exceeded even the optimist’s imagination. I take my kid to school in the mornings and during the winter months, the sun is blinding through the windshield. That’s what it feels like – from complete darkness and hopelessness to the brightest possible light.

Where this goes is anyone’s guess; sustained success in the NFL is an incredibly difficult reality to achieve. Every team is year to year. But what has happened in Washington is instructive. It’s not owner Harris’s handywork. Or Peters’s. Or Quinn’s. Or Daniels’s. It’s all of that. A team goes from 4-13 and completely adrift, to 14-5 and on the cusp of the Super Bowl, in one season, only through complete organizational alignment. Top to bottom. One vision. One mission. Every person supporting the success of the other - coaches, players, veterans and rookies. Complimentary parts fitting together like a puzzle. That’s a must-have formula for elite teams, regardless of professional endeavor.

The future, the great unknown, will write the ending to this magical year. Part of that story will include this: generations of families huddled together, passionately pulling for Old D.C. – like it was, like it is again. Snyder took a lot from us, but he didn’t get that. Hail!

Send comments to RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com

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When is a good time for Roth conversion?

In life, you often get second chances — and the same is true with investing. To illustrate: You might not have been able to contribute to a Roth IRA during your working years due to your income level, but you may get that opportunity as you near retirement, or even when you are retired — through a Roth conversion.

Why is a Roth IRA desirable for some people? Here are the key benefits:

- *Tax-free withdrawals* — You put in after-tax dollars to a Roth IRA, so you can withdraw your contributions at any time, free of taxes and penalties. And if you’ve had your account for at least five years and you’re at least 59½, you can also withdraw your earnings free of taxes.
- *No RMDs* — With a traditional IRA, you’ll have to start taking withdrawals — called required minimum distributions, or RMDs — when you turn 73, or 75 if you were born in 1960 or later. But there’s no RMD requirement with a Roth IRA — you can essentially leave the money intact as long as you like.
- *Tax-free legacy for your heirs* — When your heirs inherit your Roth IRA, they can withdraw the contributions without paying taxes or penalties, and if the account has been open at least five years, they can also withdraw earnings tax free.

But even if you were aware of these advantages, you might not have been able to invest in a Roth IRA for much of your life. For one thing, you might have earned too much money — a Roth IRA, unlike a traditional IRA, has income limits. Also, a Roth IRA has only been around since 1998, so, in the previous years, you were limited to a traditional IRA.

As you approach retirement, though, you might start thinking of just how much you’d like to benefit from a Roth IRA. And you can do so by converting your traditional IRA to a Roth. While this sounds simple, there’s a major caveat: taxes. You’ll be taxed on the amount in pre-tax dollars you contributed to a traditional IRA and then converted to a Roth IRA. (If you have both pre- and after-tax dollars in your traditional IRA, the taxable amount is based on the percentage of pre-tax dollars.)

If you have large amounts in a traditional IRA, the tax bill on conversion can be significant. The key to potentially lowering this tax bill is timing. Generally speaking, the lower your income in a given year, the more favorable it is for you to convert to a Roth IRA. So, for example, if you have already retired, but have not started collecting RMDs, your income may be down.

Timing also comes into play with the financial markets. When the market is going through a decline, and the value of your traditional IRA drops, you could convert the same number of shares of the underlying investments and receive a lower tax bill or convert more shares of these investments for what would have been the same tax bill.

Finally, you could lower your tax bill in any given year by stretching out your Roth IRA conversions over several years, rather than doing it all at once.

You’ll want to consult with your tax advisor before embarking on this conversion — but if it’s appropriate for your situation, you could find that owning a Roth IRA can benefit you and your family for 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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To inquire, call the Mt. Zion Office at (301) 884-4132 or email Pastor Corey Sharp at pastorcorey@mysixdays.com.

COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN INVITATION FOR BIDS Municipal Solid Waste and Recyclables Collection and Disposal

Sealed bids will be received by The Commissioners of Leonardtown located at 22670 Washington Street, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, Maryland, 20650 until 11:00 a.m. on Friday, February 28, 2025. All bids will then be publicly opened.

A pre-bid meeting will be held on Monday, February 10, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.

Bids must be made on the Bid Forms and in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders.

Envelopes containing the bids must be sealed and must clearly show the name and address of the bidder, the date and time of bid opening, and the statement "Bid for Municipal Solid Waste and Recyclables Collection and Disposal".

The scope of this contract consists of providing solid waste and recyclables collection and disposal for all residential and most commercial locations within the corporate limits of Leonardtown. Please note that some commercial customers are serviced through national/regional account contracts which supersede this municipal contract.

Copies of the bid documents may be examined and obtained, in person, from The Commissioners of Leonardtown, 22670 Washington Street, Leonardtown, MD 20650 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Bid documents may also be downloaded from the website www.leonardtown.somd.com. All questions pertaining to this Invitation for Bids must be submitted in writing or via email and directed to:

Beth Sandberg, Procurement Manager
 P.O. Box 1
 Leonardtown, MD 20650
beth.sandberg@leonardtownmd.gov

A written response will be faxed or emailed to all potential vendors.

The Commissioners of Leonardtown reserve the right to reject any or all bids, to waive irregularities and/or informalities in any bid, and to make an award in any manner, consistent with law, deemed in the best interest of the Town.

By Authority: Laschelle McKay, Town Administrator

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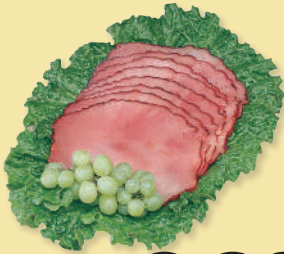
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Fill out an application at www.animalrelieffund.org Call 301-866-0303 or stop by during our adoption days at the Well Pet Clinic Saturdays 11am-2pm to meet her!

Ganz Previews Historic Strathmore Concert in Free Piano Recital

St. Mary's College of MD Musician-in-Residence Brian Ganz will return to the Main Concert Hall of the Dodge Performing Arts Center on Monday, January 27 at 7 pm with a free program of rarely heard works of Fryderyk Chopin. The program will be a preview of the 14th concert of his "Extreme Chopin" project, to take place on February 28 at the Music Center at Strathmore. For that concert and the preview at St. Mary's College of MD he will be joined by superb pianist Alon Goldstein in two little known works for two pianists. He will also be joined by the Acting Principal Flutist of the National Philharmonic, Julietta Curenton, in Chopin's only work for flute and piano. The free program at the college will also include Chopin's rarely heard Sonata No. 1 in C minor and four beloved mazurkas. For more information call (240) 895-4498 or visit bit.ly/40nEVnn

Ganz began his quest to perform all of Frédéric Chopin's works in 2011. That recital marked the start of his ambitious endeavor to perform the approximately 240 works of Chopin by 2026. "Chopin's music is the language of my soul, and I have dreamed since childhood of someday performing all of his works," said Ganz, who is widely regarded as one of the leading pianists of his generation. He is expected to be the first to perform every piece of music Chopin ever wrote.

"I am thrilled to be joined by Alon and Julietta in Chopin gems that so few listeners ever get to hear," pianist Ganz said. "The Variations for one piano 4 hands on a theme by Thomas Moore are absolutely scintillating, the Rondo for two pianos is not only sparkingly virtuosic but also full of Chopin's celebrated lyricism. And the Rossini variations for flute and piano are delightful and charming. I am honored to introduce the St. Mary's College music loving community to these wonderful musicians and these rarely heard works."

Rounding out the program will be a short, deeply beautiful variation on a theme from Vincenzo Bellini's opera I Puritani. Chopin's friend and fellow pianist-composer Franz Liszt invited several luminaries of the day to contribute a variation on the theme "Suoni la Tromba" from the opera. Most of the contributions were full of pianistic fireworks and pyrotechnics. Chopin's was characteristically understated in its depth and lyricism.

Ganz has appeared as soloist with such orchestras as the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, the National Philharmonic, the Baltimore and the National Symphonies, the City of London Sinfonia, and L'Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo. He has performed in many of the world's major concert halls and has played under the baton of such conductors as Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Pinchas Zukerman, Jerzy Semkow and Yoel Levi. A critic for La Libre Belgique wrote of Ganz's work: "We don't have the words to speak of this fabulous musician who lives music with a generous urgency and brings his public into a state of intense joy."



Brian Ganz

Alon Goldstein's artistic vision and innovative programming have made him a favorite with audiences and critics internationally. He made his orchestral debut at the age of 18 with the Israel Philharmonic under the baton of Zubin Mehta. He has since played with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chicago, San Francisco, Baltimore, St. Louis, Dallas, Houston, Vancouver, and Kansas City Symphonies, as well as the London Philharmonic, Philharmonic Radio France, Orchestra National d'Île de France, Beijing Symphony among others. His festival appearances include Gilmore, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, Verbier, and Marlboro, and he has performed at Carnegie Hall, the Hollywood Bowl, and the Kremlin. Alon is the founder and Artistic Director for The Emerald Coast Music Alliance - an organization dedicated to bringing classical music to population that have less access and means. He is also artistic director of The Distinguished Artists Concert & Lecture Series in Santa Cruz, CA, the Mt. Angel Abbey Bach Festival in Oregon, and the Lieven international piano foundation in Vienna. He is the first Peabody alumni to receive the "society of scholars" award from the John Hopkins university, where he studied under the legendary musician Leon Fleisher.

Dr. Julietta Curenton has established herself as a leading flute soloist, chamber and orchestral player, professor and clinician. Known for her "bold and dramatically characterized playing" (Dallas Morning News), "great artistic sense" and "tone that draws in one's ear with sounds and ideas that simply cannot be resisted," (Philadelphia Inquirer). She won Premiere Prix at the Journées de les Harpes Competition in Arles, France and first prize at the National Flute Association young artist competition and Astral Artists' national auditions. Awards won have led to several solo guest appearances with The National Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, The Kennedy Center Institute Orchestra, Temple University Orchestra, Black Pearl Chamber Orchestra and others. Curenton is currently the acting principal flautist of the National Philharmonic, ensemble-in-residence at Strathmore Hall in Bethesda, Maryland. She is the Assistant Professor of Flute at Shenandoah Conservatory in Winchester, Virginia.



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Letters to the Editor

Adequate public facilities must be addressed

The process to revise the St. Mary's County Comprehensive Plan, five years overdue, has begun. The Comprehensive Plan identifies a vision for the county that should support a strong quality of life for our area. The plan focuses on topics like residential and commercial development, traffic, infrastructure, services, economic development and more.

Nearly two dozen areas are identified in the Comprehensive Plan as town, village, or rural service centers. These areas were listed as far back as the 1980s, and have been in each subsequent plan. Places like Charlotte Hall (town center), Callaway (village center), and Park Hall (rural service center), among others, are listed as areas where public infrastructure and commercial development, to varying levels, should be located.

All development hinges on Adequate Public Facilities. I've been advocating for years to update the APF ordinance to properly serve the county. The ordinance considers things like schools, roads, and public utilities. Based on my research the plan has, shockingly, never included public safety—medical care, police and fire departments, and rescue squads.

Medstar St. Mary's Hospital has seen yellow and red alert statuses a number of times recently, signaling a lack of bed availability and an overrun emergency room. Many residents find themselves visiting an urgent care facility for help, only to be sent to a packed hospital. Additionally, several rescue squads have asked for additional funding citing an increase in calls in areas like Leonardtown and California, two places booming with development.

A Comprehensive Plan includes many ideas and we rely on the County Commissioners as our elected representatives to execute, amend, or remove these actions. That's why, for the last four years, I've asked them to revise the APF ordinance. Their answer? "We need to wait for the Comprehensive Plan revision." In fact, according to Section 70.13 of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, the Commissioners are required to consider revisions

"on at least a biannual basis," or at least twice per year. That hasn't happened for more than six years.

In his January 20th letter to Southern Maryland News, Vernon Gray said I advocated for the "development of town, village and rural centers in 21 areas" when I ran for County Commissioner in 2022. What I advocated for was more resident involvement in the process, and the creation of plans to specifically direct development if it happens in these areas. Anyone who lives in Charlotte Hall, Leonardtown, or California can attest to the rapid development occurring without proper public infrastructure in place. As this continues, issues with traffic, school capacity, healthcare, and more will persist.

The county relies on developers to extend public infrastructure because of the enormous costs associated. When the Comprehensive Plan was revised in the past, the group of residents shepherding that process included developers and the lawyers who represent them. For the past 20 years, Republicans have held a majority of the Commissioner seats. So while Mr. Gray can suggest in his letter that overdevelopment is supported by Democrats, namely me, the truth reveals a different reality. Republicans agree with me on this, and other issues as evidenced by the St. Mary's County Republican Club citing my blog, Informed St. Mary's, to bring awareness and share information across several topics.

The impacts of overdevelopment, and a lack of adequate public facilities, affect everyone no matter their political party. What this is really about is the inaction of the Commissioners over the last 15 years. Residents can attend one of the many meetings soliciting feedback for revising the Comprehensive Plan. Those interested should visit stmaryscountymd.gov/StMarys2050/

Brandon Russell
Leonardtown, MD

'Spend your money on more important things'

A lot of people have been telling me for a long time how wrong I am and I take a lot of risks while fossil fuels are so reliable, but with my electric plug-in vehicle I did not have to rush to the gas station during the snow or now ever sweat gas prices. Also, with our solar panels and heat pump, we do not fear the electric bill or the price of oil. One step at a time employing these modern

technologies and calculating the financial returns, you get to the point of being a little more calm, a little more independent. You then have the opportunity to spend your money on less quickly consumed, maybe more important things.

Mike Thompson
Hollywood, MD

If you would like to submit a Letter to the Editor, please include your name & town of residence.

Email: aldailey@countytimes.net
P.O. Box 250 Hollywood, MD 20636

County Times
St. Mary's County - Calvert County

DNR Expands Dead Wild Bird Collection Efforts Due to Avian Influenza

Earlier this week, Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) expanded its long-term contract with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to provide more wildlife technicians in the state to dispose of dead waterfowl, raptors, and other birds that could be carrying Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

The federal agency specializes in eliminating and removing sick or dead wild birds. Their staff are trained and prepared to handle the biosecurity risks associated with these activities. The \$30,000 contract expansion will enable the agency to provide additional staff and services to the state for these operations through September.

Anyone who sees sick or dead birds in the wild should not handle or move the birds, but should report them to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service by calling 1-877-463-6497. USDA Wildlife Services operators are available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except on state holidays. Those with phone numbers outside of Maryland should call 410-349-8055. Voicemails will be promptly returned.

DNR's regular contract with USDA's APHIS is \$80,000 per year, which helps the state triage approximately 30,000 calls related to sick, injured, or dead wildlife. Key staff in DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service and Maryland Park Service are also

trained and equipped to dispose of dead birds that may have contracted the disease and will be supplementing the disposal efforts of APHIS. The federal agency will direct either their staff or state staff to the locations of reports based on availability.

Earlier this month, laboratory testing provided preliminary confirmation of Highly Pathogenic H5 Avian Influenza (HPAI) in seven dead snow geese found in Worcester and Dorchester counties, and subsequently in several Eastern Shore poultry farms. Avian influenza, often called "bird flu," is an airborne respiratory virus that spreads quickly among birds, and its presence should be considered endemic throughout Maryland's wild bird populations, especially waterfowl and raptors. Risk to human health is considered low, but people who may handle or encounter wild birds should take precautions (see below) to help limit the spread of this virus.

Hunting wild birds remains safe but some guidelines should be followed: Never harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead, wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer immediately after handling game; use disposable gloves when handling game and double-bag offal and feathers; and use dedicated clothing, boots and, tools for cleaning game that are not used around poultry or pet birds.

Anyone preparing harvested waterfowl should cook it to 165 degrees to kill any viruses or bacteria.

Anyone who fills birdfeeders for the winter should feel free to do so, as songbirds carry a very low risk of getting or spreading the virus.

Hiking, photography, and other outdoor activities in areas where wild birds congregate are safe, although as with hunting, precautions should be taken to avoid sick or dead birds.

More information on HPAI and how to mitigate exposure of domestic poultry to wild birds can be found on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is encouraging poultry farm and backyard flock owners are urged to follow these guidelines to prevent the spread of HPAI:

Restrict access to poultry by posting "Restricted Access" signage, securing the area with a gate, or both.

Take steps to ensure that contaminated materials on the ground are not transported into the poultry growing house or area.

Provide the following items to anyone entering or leaving any area where poultry are kept:

- Footbaths and foot mats with disinfectant;
- Boot washing and disinfectant station;



Snow geese on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, photo by Anthony Burrows, Maryland DNR.

- Footwear change or foot covers. Cover and secure feed to prevent wild birds, rodents or other animals from accessing it.

Cover and properly contain carcasses, used litter, or other disease-containing organic materials to prevent wild birds, rodents or other animals from accessing them and to keep them from being blown around by wind.

Allow MDA to enter the premises during normal working hours to inspect your biosecurity and sanitation practices.

Report any unusual bird deaths or sudden increases in very sick birds to the MDA Animal Health Program at 410-841-5810 or after-hours to 410-841-5971. Also contact the USDA at 866-536-7593.



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Assessment Approved for Affordable Housing Project



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's approved last week at their Jan. 14 business meeting an environmental assessment for an affordable housing project to be built in Lexington Park that will allow for the use of Section 8 housing rental assistance vouchers there.

The county commissioners had already approved a payment in lieu of taxes arrangement with the builders of the Villas at Lexwood — Green Street Housing LLC (GSH) — in the amount of \$400 per unit in September of 2024 for 20 years that would reduce the property taxes to make the units more affordable.

The project will consist of 40 new, affordable rental townhomes to be built on Lexwoods Drive in Lexington Park. GSH,

TM Associates Development Inc, and the county housing authority are the development and ownership team for Villas at Lexwoods.

The Villas will be located directly across the street from Lex Woods Apartments, which was renovated in 2019 by the same development team.

The project is designed to serve some of the lowest income families in St. Mary's specifically those at 30 to 40 percent of the average median income here.

Tom Ayd, of GSH LLC, told commissioners last week that only eight of the 40 units would be subsidized by Section 8 vouchers.

"It allows us to leverage additional private resources," Ayd said. "It's not new; it's been a portion of the deal since its inception."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Additional Community Visioning Sessions Announced

St. Mary's County Government's Department of Land Use & Growth Management (LUGM) is seeking input from the community on the vision, key planning themes, and goals to be considered as the county's Comprehensive Plan is updated. The "St. Mary's 2050" plan will establish a cohesive, countywide vision for land use, economic development, and other quality-of-life goals, and will outline an actionable strategy to achieve this vision.

Two additional Community Visioning Sessions have been scheduled to the previously announced sessions. The format for these sessions will be identical; attendees are asked to attend only one 90-minute session:

- New! Sunday, January 26, 2025, at 2 p.m. at the Ridge Volunteer Fire Department, located at 13820 Point Lookout Road in Ridge, Maryland
- New! Monday, February 3, 2025, at 5 p.m. at St. Mary's College of Maryland, Campus Center, located at 47600 Mill Field Drive in St. Mary's City.
- Sesión en español! Thursday, January 30, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. in Meeting Room A of the Lexington Park

Library located at 21677 FDR Blvd. in Lexington Park. This session, along with all exhibits and activities will be conducted entirely in Spanish [Esta sesión, junto con todas las exhibiciones y actividades, se llevará a cabo completamente en español].

LUGM is working with local partner organizations to schedule additional sessions, to be announced as they are confirmed. For questions or additional information, please contact LUGM via email to: stmarys2050@stmaryscountymd.gov.

About St. Mary's 2050

St. Mary's 2050: Charting Our Tomorrow is an update to the County's existing Comprehensive Plan, which will guide future land use in the County through 2050 and beyond. St. Mary's 2050 will chart the course for ensuring St. Mary's County continues to be a great place to live, work, and play. Visit <https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/StMarys2050> today to learn more, stay engaged, and add your voice in shaping the future of St. Mary's County.

Public Warming Centers Available January 23

Due to the cold temperatures expected this week, St. Mary's County Government is announcing the availability of warming centers for the public Thursday, January 23. Residents who need to take refuge in a warm place can go to one of the following locations:

- Charlotte Hall Library
37600 New Market Road, Charlotte Hall
9 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- Garvey Senior Activity Center
23630 Hayden Farm Lane, Leonardtown
8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- Leonardtown Library
23600 Hayden Farm Lane, Leonardtown
9 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- Lexington Park Library
21677 FDR Blvd, Lexington Park
9 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- Loffler Senior Activity Center
21905 Chancellor's Run Road, Great Mills

8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

- Northern Senior Activity Center
29655 Charlotte Hall Road, Charlotte Hall
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Three Oaks Center
46905 Lei Drive, Lexington Park
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Times listed above are normal business hours and may change.

St. Mary's County is currently under a Cold Weather Advisory until Thursday, January 23, 2025. Visit www.ready.gov/winter-weather for tips on staying safe during extreme cold. Always remember to check on your neighbors and loved ones, especially if they are elderly or have functional needs.

Knowing what to do before, during, and after an emergency is a critical part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count. To learn about potential disasters and hazards, and how to be prepared and stay informed, please visit: www.stmaryscountymd.gov/es.

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Veterans Expo Coming to Lexington Park

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Veterans who are looking for help with getting benefits or learning more about the benefits for which they qualify, health care screenings, job training, employment assistance and many other services can find what they need Jan. 25 at the Southern Maryland Veterans Empowerment Expo in Lexington Park.

Set to take place at the Lexington Park United Methodist Church, the expo is a cooperative venture between the organizations Serving Together, the Veterans Health and Wellness Foundation and Maryland's Commitment to Veterans to provide a single source for veterans to get assistance.

"When we got together, we thought that instead of them coming to us, let's come to them," said Donny Williams, regional manager for Serving Together, which focuses on assisting veterans as its mission.

The service providers at the expo will be able to provide assistance in getting housing, employment, training, education and access to mental health resources, Williams said.

Staff with the veterans' commissions for both Charles and Calvert counties will be there as well to counsel veterans on questions they may have about getting services or navigating the bureaucracy.

St. Mary's County Health Department will also be available, Williams said, as will



Donny Williams

The Greenwell Foundation, which is widely known for providing horse-riding lessons for therapy, including for recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

A "claims clinic" will also be available for veterans to get direct help in getting benefits due them or find out what benefits for which they might be eligible.

"There's a lot that's going to be going on," Williams said.

The event will be held from 10a.m. to 3p.m. For more information on the event visit www.somdvetexpo.com.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Sheriff's Office Releases Deputies' Personal Information

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

In an apparent breach of employee privacy, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office has made public the social security numbers of more than 100 of its deputies.

The breach occurred when the sheriff's office provided information to John O'Connor — a former county commissioner — as part of a Maryland Public Information Act request.

The release of the information appears to be inadvertent; O'Connor now writes as a journalist for the on-line newspaper known as Chesapeake Today.

On the website, O'Connor posted pages of the information obtained from the sheriff's agency with most of the social security numbers of deputies redacted.

The last two numbers of certain social security numbers were left visible, O'Connor said in his article, to ensure that Sheriff Steve Hall could not claim that the personal employee information had not been released.

ALisa Casas, sheriff's office public information officer confirmed that the release affected 113 current and former employees.

"They only were released to this entity [Chesapeake Today]," Casas told The County Times. "We absolutely regret that this occurred."

"We have immediately put measures in place to prevent this from occurring again."

In 2022 O'Connor failed in his bid to become sheriff when he lost to Hall during the general election.

O'Connor also posted a letter from the Maryland Attorney General's Office stating that the breach should not have occurred.

"It has come to our attention that these documents included personal information that should have been redacted prior to disclosure, as its dissemination would result in an unwarranted invasion of privacy," the letter dated Jan. 22 reads. "While the sheriff's office remains committed to the principles of transparency and the public's general right to access records under the [Maryland Public Information Act], it is crucial to balance this right with the protection of individual privacy."

"The inclusion of personal details does not serve the public interest and should not have been disclosed."

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Governor's Bill Slows Education Funding

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Since before the beginning of this year's Maryland General Assembly, elected officials were speculating whether Gov. Wes Moore would make proposals to modify the Blueprint for Education — the state's billion-dollar schools reform plan — to make it easier to bridle the state's \$3 billion budget deficit.

It appears the governor has made his decision with the Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act, entered into consideration for him by state Senate President Bill Ferguson.

The bill, if passed, would include cuts to per pupil funding amounts, as well as compensatory funding to the St. Mary's public schools for special education and it would also impact funding for multi-language learners, according to a briefing document for the school board released this week by Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith.

The board of education is continuing with its work sessions on the school operating budget, which is built significantly on state funding sources along with county and federal sources, and this latest legislative proposal figures heavily in that equation.

According to the data released by Smith to The County Times the total decrease in foundational funding for county schools from the state would be a drop of \$78.8 million from fiscal 2026 through fiscal 2033.

The initial amount to be removed would

Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act										
Impact to Foundation Formula										
	Excellence in Education				Current Blueprint					
	\$	\$ PPA	% Inc	SMCPS Foundation	Current	\$ PPA	% Inc	SMCPS Foundation	Dec. in Foundation Funding	
2025	\$ 8,789	\$								
2026	\$ 9,063	\$ 274	3%	\$ 148,361,310	\$ 9,226	\$ 437	5%	\$ 151,029,620	\$ (2,668,310)	
2027	\$ 9,398	\$ 335	4%	\$ 153,845,260	\$ 9,732	\$ 506	6%	\$ 159,312,840	\$ (5,467,580)	
2028	\$ 9,626	\$ 228	2%	\$ 157,577,620	\$ 10,138	\$ 406	4%	\$ 165,959,060	\$ (8,381,440)	
2029	\$ 9,866	\$ 240	2%	\$ 161,506,420	\$ 10,564	\$ 426	4%	\$ 172,932,680	\$ (11,426,260)	
2030	\$ 10,276	\$ 410	4%	\$ 168,218,120	\$ 11,004	\$ 440	4%	\$ 180,135,480	\$ (11,917,360)	
2031	\$ 10,683	\$ 407	4%	\$ 174,880,710	\$ 11,442	\$ 438	4%	\$ 187,305,540	\$ (12,424,830)	
2032	\$ 11,104	\$ 421	4%	\$ 181,772,480	\$ 11,898	\$ 456	4%	\$ 194,770,260	\$ (12,997,780)	
2033	\$ 11,536	\$ 432	4%	\$ 188,844,320	\$ 12,365	\$ 467	4%	\$ 202,415,050	\$ (13,570,730)	
								Cumulative	\$ (78,854,290)	

be \$2.6 million in fiscal 2026 and \$13.6 million by fiscal 2033, the school system's projections show.

Compensatory special education funding would drop over the next eight fiscal years by \$23.1 million, the projections showed, while funding for multi-language learners is projected to decrease by \$2.1 million locally for the same time period.

In all for fiscal 2026 the overall state aid package for St. Mary's would dwindle from \$147.5 million — which was the anticipated amount — to \$145.3 million, local projections show.

St. Mary's is already near the bottom of the list when it comes to per pupil spending at \$17,772 in 2025.

It outpaces only Washington, Cecil, Queen Anne's and Carroll counties out of all 24 Maryland jurisdictions, according to data from the Maryland Department of Legislative Services.

"The governor faces an uphill battle if he plans to challenge the Democrats' costly, one-size-fits-all approach to education reform," said Senate Minority Leader Steve Hershey in a statement. "However, he can take comfort in knowing that outside

of Democratic caucus rooms, support for the Blueprint is lacking. Counties cannot afford it, the state cannot afford it, and parents want school choice—the opportunity to send their children to schools that best meet their needs, just as their representatives in Annapolis do.

"Unfortunately, the proposed \$1.6 billion in savings over four years falls woefully short when the state is facing a \$4 billion annual budget shortfall to fully implement the Blueprint."

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Audit Shows Contract, Ethics Failings at St. Mary's College



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

An audit released before the turn of the new year found that St. Mary's College of Maryland had multiple problems ensuring that their procurement practices were above board.

The audit took place over a considerable period of time — from late August of 2019 to mid-July of 2023 — and also found that one of the employees of the college who was in a management position was engaged in secondary employment with a vendor providing services to the college at the same time.

The college could not justify and did not properly document significant increases to the cost of a project implementation contract," the audit released by the Department of Legislative Services stated. "As of October 31, 2023, payments on the contract were \$1.4 million (or 40 percent) more than the base contract cost of \$3.5 million.

"In addition, we noted certain questionable activity related to the College's procurement of a contract with a vendor affiliated with a state university to assist with the ERP (enterprise resource planning) implementation, which raised questions about the propriety of the award. The College also did not adequately monitor this contract and could not justify or support modifications to the contract payment terms and pricing."

The question of the college management employees ties with a vendor to the college centered on two construction projects, the report showed.

"Our review of the procurements for the two athletic contracts awarded to the vendor totaling \$187,700 disclosed that there was no competitive procurement for one contract totaling \$90,100, and for the other contract totaling \$97,600, there was no public solicitation of the bids."

The college was also lax in collecting funds from students who were scowflaw in paying their balances.

"The college permitted students with outstanding balances totaling \$691,000 to register for classes without adequate justification and did not refer delinquent student accounts to the State's Central Collection Unit timely," the audit reported, noting that the audit team found several cybersecurity-related problems but had to redact those

in the public document due to state law.

The college's annual operating budget is \$85.6 million.

The ERP system the college purchased was designed to replace its aging financial tracking system, the report stated, with a cloud-based system to manage admissions, academic, financial and human resources activities.

The report showed that the costs of the procurement originally were about \$4 million but quickly ballooned to \$6.4 million between three separate contracts.

In the notes of the audit, the team stated that the same vendor to St. Mary's College of Maryland was involved in setting up an information technology project for University of Maryland Global Campus that was found to be "unusable" and was abandoned, causing the loss of \$25.7 million.

The college found that it did not have the human resources to implement the ERP and so went to UMGC for technical assistance; the audit found numerous accountability problems with this arrangement, including a lack of monitoring by the college, late completion by about two years and cost overruns.

The audit disclosed that the Office of Attorney General's criminal division had been notified of the findings in the report.

The college released the following statement:

"The college has expeditiously implemented corrective actions bringing all areas into compliance or making substantive progress toward compliance. These include enhancing internal controls and procedures that will ensure relevant state laws & regulations and College policies are correctly followed," a statement to The County Times reads.

"The period in question overlaps the implementation of a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) software suite, which was interrupted by COVID. In addition, the business office saw a complete turnover in top leadership — vice president & CFO, assistant VP of finance, comptroller and procurement officer — due to an untimely death, retirements & personnel actions. Efforts to enhance accountability for these findings include the personnel actions outlined above."

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“WE ABSOLUTELY REGRET THAT THIS OCCURRED.”

SHERIFF'S PIO ALISA CASAS ON THE MISTAKEN RELEASE OF DEPUTIES' SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS.



LOCAL 3
Audit chides college contract management



LOCAL 5
Veterans expo coming to Lexington Park



ON THE COVER 4
Sheriff's Office personnel information was recently leaked by mistake

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 23 Partly Cloudy Hi: 32° Lo: 18°	FRI, JAN 24 Mostly Sunny Hi: 36° Lo: 17°	SAT, JAN 25 Sunny Hi: 38° Lo: 30°	SUN, JAN 26 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 28°
MON, JAN 27 Mostly Sunny Hi: 47° Lo: 32°	TUE, JAN 28 Partly Cloudy Hi: 48° Lo: 28°	WED, JAN 29 Sunny Hi: 52° Lo: 33°	THU, JAN 30 Partly Cloudy Hi: 45° Lo: 29°

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Audit Finds Contract Failings at SMCM

Governor's Bill Slows Education Funding

Veterans Expo Coming to Lexington Park

DEPUTIES' PERSONAL DATA LEAKED BY MISTAKE

