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Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025

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**School Budget Adds
Funding for New Hires**

**Changes Proposed to
Town Center Plan**

**School Audit
Finds No Savings**

A photograph of a man with a goatee, wearing a blue zip-up jacket, a tan bucket hat, and sunglasses. He is sitting on the deck of a boat, with his hands on a wooden steering wheel. The background shows a body of water and a distant shoreline with trees.

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“I’M LIVING IN THE MOMENT.”

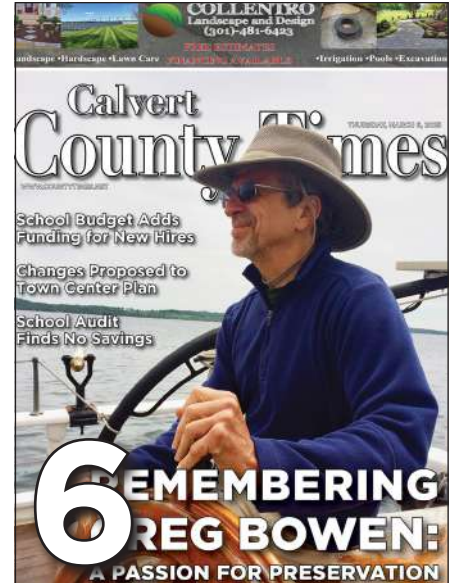
SCHOOL BOARD VICE PRESIDENT LISA GRENIS ON THE PASSAGE OF THEIR PRIORITY BUDGET ITEMS.



LOCAL 4
School board approves revised budget



LOCAL 7
Plan for Hallowing Point Park set for public hearing



ON THE COVER
Former land use director has died

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, MAR 6	FRI, MAR 7	SAT, MAR 8	SUN, MAR 9
 Partly Cloudy Hi: 49° Lo: 34°	 Mostly Sunny Hi: 55° Lo: 40°	 Partly Cloudy Hi: 50° Lo: 31°	 Partly Cloudy Hi: 55° Lo: 34°
MON, MAR 10	TUE, MAR 11	WED, MAR 12	THU, MAR 13
 Sunny Hi: 62° Lo: 39°	 Sunny Hi: 68° Lo: 48°	 Mostly Sunny Hi: 70° Lo: 50°	 PM Showers Hi: 66° Lo: 46°

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School Board Priorities Added to Budget

Increase Totals More Than \$2 Million

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of Education has approved a revised budget that adds \$2,225,000 to the superintendent's proposed budget for a variety of staff additions for more services. The extra money in the \$289,625,000 budget will come from the school system's fund balance. The budget now goes to the county commissioners for review.

School board Vice President Lisa Grenis at the Feb. 27 meeting detailed the additions:

- Funding for PIA (Public Information Act) software
- Funding for a Microsoft application consultant
- Funding for a fourth vice principal at Calvert High School and Patuxent High School
- Funding for two additional elementary GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) teachers
- Funding for an additional behavior specialist
- Funding for 12 behavior techs to support elementary schools

- Funding to hire six elementary literacy specialists
- Funding for one new budget specialist position
- Funding for one finance intern position
- Funding for one pre-K specialist
- Funding for one general education pre-K teacher
- Funding for one pre-K instructional assistant

Chief Operations Officer Dr. Susan Johnson said, "Both of these funds (general and restricted) for FY 26 versus FY 25 adopted represents an expenditure increase of less than one percent increase in expenditures for these two funds combined."

The budget includes the proposed restoration of \$22.5 million in state cuts made this year. Board member Paul Harrison urged caution in celebration of the budget approval. He said, "There are many numbers that are still subject to the legislative process. So, we didn't win yet. So, there's going to be many, many rounds of overtime, I suspect. So that's why I want to caution it. It's not a time to relax. And if you can send up a note to your delegate, to your senator,

to make sure that they honor the numbers that they've provided already. That will make the budget process a lot easier. And what we voted on today will be relevant. If it changes, we'll be back to square one."

Board member Melissa Goshorn said, "I really appreciate all of the work, not only my fellow board members have done during this process, but all the staff in the school system. I want to thank all of the staff and the parents that reached out to me and asked questions and made suggestions. I appreciated meeting with every single person that had a chance, the different department heads and everyone that spoke. The priorities that I personally included in this budget are only shared by things that people in the system have asked me to advocate for. And so, I feel very grateful to be able to do that."

"I'm going to celebrate today and I'm going to be really excited about the possibility of all the great things that we are going to be able to accomplish. I'm going to assume that we're getting all the funding that the state has already said so that we can continue to celebrate and continue to do great things."



School board member Paul Harrison

Grenis agreed: "I'm living in the moment."

But President Jana Post sided with Harrison's caution: "I'm not going to exhale just yet, but I'll let the glass-half-full ladies over here to celebrate. And Paul and I'll celebrate later."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Schools' Audit Reveals No Savings

Hance Defends \$100,000 Cost

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

A company hired by the state and paid for by the county to conduct a performance audit of Calvert County Public Schools released their finding on Feb. 25. The auditors were asked repeatedly if they uncovered any savings but were unable to do so. They said they would return with additional information.

The audit cost the county almost \$100,000.

Later in the meeting, Joseph Cormier, a school system advocate, blasted the commissioners for spending the money. He facetiously said, "Congratulations on your performance review results. A hundred thousand dollars well spent rehashing a regularly scheduled audit on policies and procedures from a previous superintendent. CFO and finance staff. Definitely in line with your fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers. A fishing expedition, based upon \$25,000 spent on retirement and staff awards because you stated time and again at public hearing that there was no claim of malfeasance, no criminal act. You just wanted to because you could."

Cormier also blasted the GOP commissioners for influencing the school board race through the Calvert County Republican Central Committee (CCRCC). He said, "It looks like the CCRCC doesn't have faith in the people to vote in who they want to vote in. They choose to manipulate the election instead of a nonpartisan BOE race."

Commissioner President Buddy Hance defended the action: "I don't think the jury's out on that yet because today we only got the vague findings. We don't know what it really says until we get into the details. And so, I don't dismiss it as wasted money like some

people want to say. Some people thought it was a waste when we started and didn't even know the outcome. So why don't we just wait and see where the outcome is before we start saying wasted taxpayer's dollars?"

Prior to the Zoom conference call with the auditors, County Attorney John Norris gave the background. He said, "The Department of Legislative Services reported on January 5, 2022, that the Calvert County Public Schools procurement policies are inadequate and inconsistently applied. Other contractor payments include unsupported and inaccurate costs. The report also found that CCPSS Calver County Public Schools need better internal controls and accountability and payroll information systems and healthcare claims processing."

"The Board of County commissioners asked the last Board of Education to agree to agree to a reasonable scope of work for a performance audit for issues beyond the county's control. Agreement could not be reached. The Board of County Commissioners exercised its independent authority for the State Department of Education to contract for a performance audit of the practices of Calver County Public Schools. A performance audit is an assessment of practices to determine whether the entity or program is operating economically and effectively and deficiently and whether corrective actions are appropriate."

"The State Department of Education solicited vendors to conduct a performance audit of Calver County Public Schools. December of 2023. In April of 2024, Premier Group Services Inc. was under contract to perform the work. Premier conducted the audit according to generally accepted government auditing standards as promulgated

by the government Accountability Office and Section f5-110 of the education article. Premier used a random sample of 40 procurements procurement actions by Calvert County Public Schools in fiscal year 2024. Procurement actions in fiscal year 2023 were analyzed and determined whether procurement actions were appropriate and aligned with the Calvert County Public School policies, local statutes, and regulations. As a result of the information Premier was provided, there were interviews and analysis."

The company's findings for the prior year were:

- CCPSS procurement policies did not incorporate certain requirements of State law and recognized the best practices when participating in intergovernmental cooperative purchasing agreements (ICPA). In addition, ICPA invoices were not always verified in related price lists.
- CCPSS did not always obtain Board approval for purchases exceeding \$25,000 as required by its policy, and its automated system did not have controls to prevent certain purchases from bypassing requirements for competitive bidding and Board approval.
- CCPSS did not ensure critical human resources and payroll transactions were independently reviewed for propriety, adequately controlled resulting in employees with unnecessary or incompatible access.
- CCPSS did not ensure employee access to its automated financial management system applications was appropriate.
- Sensitive personally identifiable information (PII) was maintained without adequate safeguards and being identified.

Some sensitive personally identifiable information was maintained without adequate safeguards and being identified.

- Certain servers were improperly located within the internal network, intrusion detection prevention system coverage did not exist for untrusted encrypted traffic, and remote access to the internal CCPSS network by faculty, staff, and students used a single authentication measure rather than the more secure multi-factor authentication (MFA). Transportation Services Management of Other risks.
 - Certain elements of the payments to bus contractors could not be supported.
 - CCPSS did not audit or adequately verify the propriety of health care claims, insurance premiums and administrative fees paid to the TPA, and the eligibility of enrolled dependents.
- Findings for the current year are:
- CCPSS procurement policies incorporate certain requirements of State law and recognized best practices when participating in intergovernmental cooperative purchasing agreements (ICPA). However, these were not put into practice.
 - CCPSS did not always obtain Board approval for purchases exceeding \$25,000 as required by its policy. The supporting executed contract, the competitive bidding, and the suspension and debarment check were not provided to all the samples selected. Food Services.
 - The CCPSS Child Nutrition (CN) Program could improve its financial outcomes.

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ACLT Head, Former Planning Director Passes Away

Greg Bowen Advocated for Land Preservation

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) executive director and former county planning director Gregory Bowen passed away Tuesday, Feb. 25 from complications related to stage 4 prostate cancer, pneumonia, and heart failure. He was 71.

Bowen retired in 2011 after having served as planning director since 2005 and before that the agency's long-time deputy director. He joined ACLT after his retirement.

Bowen's son Nathan said in a Facebook posting, "It happened so quickly and we are still reeling, but we are grateful that he was not struggling or in pain for long. Just late last week, he was still going in person to work at American Chestnut Land Trust, his great passion and exactly where he would want to be.

"We are so thankful for the excellent care he received from the team at CalvertHealth Medical Center, and for all of the people that have stepped up and helped our dad so much in supporting mom and then him when he was facing his own prognosis. We are working on organizing a Celebration of Life in the near future and will share information as it becomes available."

Bowen's last public appearance was just the week before he died when he spoke at a public hearing on the update of the coun-



Greg Bowen

ty's zoning ordinance. His passion was land preservation, and he praised the county for their work in that regard in the zoning ordinance update.

Commissioner President Buddy Hance said, "Oh man, that's a huge loss. You know, Greg spent his whole life trying to protect Calvert County and even into retirement until his last day, he was still trying to make sure that we preserved as much of Calvert

County as we could, and it's a huge loss."

Hance noted, "He started the TDR program in Calvert County, which was nationally recognized as one of the best preservation programs in the country. And that was all started when he was there."

ACLT said in a Facebook post, "ACLT is a strong organization with so many great people. We will continue to do impactful and important work that would make Greg

proud. In the meantime, let us all take time to mourn the loss of such a trusted and beloved friend."

Greg Bowen's wife Tamea passed away last year. Her obituary said, "The family moved to College Park, MD when her father became a professor at the University of Maryland in 1962. Tamea was attending the College of William and Mary in Virginia when the family moved to Lower Marlboro, MD in 1975. While summering there, Tamea met her future husband, Gregory Alvin Bowen, having been introduced by a friend and co-worker at her summer job at Calvert Memorial Hospital. Tamea graduated from the College of William and Mary in Spring of 1977 with a degree in Biology and married Greg that summer. The couple resided on Greg's family farm in Prince Frederick where they built their home in 1981.

"Tamea was employed at Calvert Country School at the time, working with children with special needs. Tamea and Greg's two children, Emily Elizabeth and Nathan Weaver Bowen were born in 1981 and 1985. Tamea was a loving and devoted mother. She stayed home with her children throughout their education and ensured that they were able to take advantage of many varied activities and opportunities."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Planners Approve Waiver for Lusby AutoZone

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Planning Commission has unanimously voted to clear a hurdle that will allow for a new AutoZone store in Lusby near the Giant grocery store.

Planner III Jessica Gaetano told the planners at their Feb. 27 meeting, "A pre-concept plan for Lusby AutoZone was accepted by the Technical Evaluation Group (TEG) on June 26, 2024. The proposed project is to construct a building in the Lusby Commons Shopping Center on a pad ready site near the NE corner of the intersection of HG Trueman Road and Rousby Hall Road. The identified address for the new construction is 11749 HG Trueman Road, Tax Map 42 Parcel 0411 in Lusby, MD. Most of the overall site improvement requirements were satisfied during the original development of Lusby Commons under SPR 03-3-R3. The project is located in the Neighborhood Commercial Subarea of the Lusby Town Center."

She explained the issue for the planning commission to decide. "An Architectural Review application was received on June 10, 2024. The proposed auto store was reviewed administratively by Planning & Zoning (P&Z) staff. The applicant proposes a primary front building façade of 100 feet in length. This façade will be broken up into smaller visual components through building profile insets, varying building materials, awnings, and frosted commercial store-



front windows. The Architectural Review Application and supplemental documents have been reviewed for compliance with Article 6, Architectural Requirements and Guidelines of the Lusby Town Center Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, Article 5-2.05, pertaining to buildings in the Lusby Town Center Zoning Ordinance indicates that for any building, the length of the primary building façade shall not exceed 50 feet. The planning commission may approve a primary building façade up to 150 feet in length provided that 4 conditions are met. i. If an Architectural Review Committee is in place, the Planning Commission receives and considers a recommendation regarding the extension; Lusby Architectural Review Committee lacks sufficient active members to achieve a quorum. Therefore, the project was reviewed administratively by P&Z staff. The ground floor of the building shall have some combination of the following features along no less than 70 percent of the

horizontal length: awnings, arcades, display windows, and/or entry areas."

She said, "The proposed design meets this requirement. The front elevation proposes awnings, display windows and doors, and masonry features along 76 percent of the horizontal length. iii. Sidewalks, no less than eight feet in width shall be provided along the full length of the buildings along any façade featuring a customer entrance located at least six feet from the edge of the building to provide planting beds for foundation landscaping which shall include trees, shrubs, flower beds, and ground cover, except where features such as awnings, arcades or entry areas are part of the façade; and The conceptual site plan proposes eight-foot wide sidewalks along the full length of the building which is the only façade featuring a customer entrance. The sidewalk is not located six feet from the edge of the building. The sidewalk proposes to tie into existing pedestrian crossings and have sim-

ilar site features to the existing buildings. iv. Continuous internal pedestrian walkways, no less than 8 feet in width, shall be provided from all public or private rights-of-way, that adjoin the lot, to the principal building entrance. All such internal pedestrian walkways shall be distinguished from driving surfaces through the use of durable, low maintenance surface material such as pavers, bricks, or scored concrete to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort as well as the attractiveness of the walkways. The existing shopping center meets this requirement. The proposed construction will maintain and enhance the existing pedestrian walkways."

Although the commission approved the waiver without comment, one speaker later did question the need for another auto parts store in Lusby instead of some other perceived store needed.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Hallowing Point Park Plan Set for Hearing



By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Planning Commission has given the go ahead for a public hearing on May 20 on a proposed plan for Hallowing Point Park. The approval came Feb. 27 after a briefing from Park Planner Stephanie Sperling.

Hallowing Point Park (HPP) off Route 231 near the Benedict Bridge is on 81 acres and features athletic fields, walking paths, a playground, a basketball court, tennis courts, and pickleball courts. There is also a pavilion available for rental by the community.

Sperling said, “The most recent master plan was developed in 1998, and an update is needed to guide park improvements and growth over the next 15-20 years. In the fall of 2023, the Department of Parks &

Recreation began the process of updating the HPP Master Plan. They solicited public feedback and worked with Murphy & Dittenhafer Architects to complete a draft plan in September 2024.”

Sperling explained, “Desired improvements include constructing well-lit paved walking paths and natural surface trails, converting several multi-use athletic fields to synthetic turf, upgrading the baseball/softball fields, improving signage, and constructing a new inground skatepark, among others.”

She said more than 2,000 people responded to a survey of desired needs at the park.

The proposed plan will be circulated for comment for 60 days prior to the public hearing.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Changes Proposed for Town Center Plan Updates

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Staff of the Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning has proposed combining the various town center master plans into one document with separate chapters for each town center plus chapters that are common to all town centers.

The proposal was presented to the planning commission at their Feb. 27 meeting. In a memo to the commission, Long Range Planner Tay Harris explained, “On October 16, 2019, the planning commission endorsed a three-phase process to update the county’s Town Center Master Plans: (1) identify issues, (2) develop the plan, and (3) adopt the plan. The commission also directed staff to begin the process of updating the Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan. On February 17, 2021, the Planning Commission further directed staff to initiate the Dunkirk Town Center Master Plan Update. Since then, significant progress has been made toward completing the town center master plan updates. However, several factors have delayed completion, including proposed comprehensive plan amendments affecting the updates, the conversion of the updates to flipbook format, and several staffing transitions.”

Harris said, “The Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z) proposes a new approach to streamline the Town Center Master Plan Updates. Rather than preparing individual updates for each Town Center Master Plan, P&Z recommends consolidating them into a single document, The Master Plan of Town Centers. This new document would include a ‘Town Centers’ chapter that consolidates background information, eliminating redundancy across individual updates. Subsequent chapters of The Master Plan of Town Centers would be dedicated to the individual Town Centers, detailing each Town Center’s specific updates. The three-phased process will remain in place.”

Harris said, “Once a chapter of The Master Plan of Town Centers is adopted, the corresponding Town Center Zoning Ordinance would be updated accordingly.”

She said, “Staff recommends that the planning commission endorse the proposed format for The Master Plan of Town Centers to streamline updates, including the timeline for updating all Town Center

Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances to ensure alignment, while prioritizing the oldest plans first.”

The planning commission enthusiastically endorsed the concept and voted to distribute the proposal for comments from other agencies and then hold a public hearing in May.

Harris explained to the commission, “The proposed timeline for adopting the chapter in town centers and the Chapter 2 Prince Frederick Town Center Master plan would involve staff reviewing the draft chapters, and with the planning commission in March. Then staff would seek guidance from the planning commission on whether to hold a public hearing in April if the Planning Commission directs staff to do so. The commission public hearing would be held, followed by the Board of County Commissioners public hearing in June.

“The proposed process for adopting Chapter 3, Dunkirk Town Center Master Plan update would involve staff reviewing the draft chapter and seeking guidance from the Commission on next steps, which could be and ideally be initiating the 60-day comment period if the planning commission directs staff to do so. Once the 60-day comment period ends, staff present public comments to the planning commission for incorporation into the draft plan. Staff would then come back to the plan, incorporate the comments, and then come back to the planning commission and review the draft plan and seek guidance on whether to hold a public hearing. If the planning commission directs staff to do so, the planning commission public hearing would be held, followed by the Board of County Commissioners public Hearing.”

She said, “As the town center chapters are being adopted, the corresponding town center zoning ordinance would be updated accordingly. To assure alignment, P&Z recommends prioritizing up updates and proposes that the oldest town center master plans be addressed first, because it’s been 40 years since some of these town center master plans have been updated.”

The remaining updates, in order of the oldest existing plan first, would be: Owings, Huntingtown, Lusby, Solomons, and St. Leonard.

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CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of Feb. 17, 2025 – Feb. 23, 2025, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,106 calls for service throughout the community, including but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 55
- Disorderly: 9
- Domestic: 24
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 40
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 1065
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 32
- Traffic Complaints: 54
- Traffic Stops: 445
- 911 Hang-Ups: 52
- ARRESTS: 43



Calvin Wayne Blackwell, Jr.

for a reported assault. Investigation revealed that a Correctional Deputy was conducting a routine check of a cell block when inmate **Calvin Wayne Blackwell, Jr.**, 43, of Chesapeake Beach, spat through the crack of his cell door. The saliva landed on the deputy's shoulder and splattered onto his face. Deputy Angell observed a white substance on the victim. Later that night, at approximately 11:35 p.m., while Deputy Angell was serving Blackwell with paperwork related to the assault, Blackwell reportedly spat on a second Correctional Deputy through the crack of his cell door. As a result, Blackwell was charged with two counts of Second-Degree Assault on a Department of Corrections Employee.



Charles Edgar Thomas, III

Upon arrival, deputies found a gray passenger vehicle parked behind a residence near the water, with both the driver and passenger asleep inside. K9 Atlas conducted a scan of the vehicle, alerting positively to the presence of narcotics. A subsequent search revealed a clear bag containing a white powdery substance, along with two metal hollow tubes with white residue (suspected heroin or fentanyl). The male occupant, **Charles Edgar Thomas III**, 41, of Port Republic, admitted the bag contained a mixture of fentanyl and gabapentin. Thomas was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis and CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia.



Carlos Ernesto Hernandez

deputies spoke with the homeowners, who stated they were inside when they heard a loud bang outside and felt the house shake. A resident observed a Jeep Crossover up against the front of the residence which damaged the landscaping, but sped off. Deputies canvassed the area and located the suspect vehicle disabled in a drainage culvert in the 3800 block of Leafcrest Ct. The driver, **Carlos Ernesto Hernandez**, 34 of Lanham, was found passed out in the vehicle. Upon making contact with Hernandez, a strong odor of alcohol was emitting from his person. Hernandez was placed under arrest and transported to the Calvert County Sheriff's Office where he was charged with DUI, DWI, Negligent Driving, Reckless Driving, Malicious Destruction of Property, Failure to Remain at the Scene of an Accident and other traffic related charges.



Michelle Renee Merrill

A preliminary investigation revealed that two vehicles were involved in a rear-end collision. Upon making contact with the driver of the striking vehicle, **Michelle Renee Merrill**, 56 of Solomons, DFC Shoemaker detected a strong odor of alcohol emitting from her person. Field sobriety tests were conducted, during which Merrill exhibited signs of impairment. As Merrill was being taken into custody, she attempted to kick DFC Shoemaker and spat in the deputy's face. She was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with DUI, DWI, Reckless Driving, Negligent Driving, Resisting/Interfering with Arrest, and other traffic-related offenses.

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

Hit and Run: 25-14071 On February 18, 2025, DFC Claggett responded to a residence in the 3700 block of Larkview Ct. in Dunkirk, for the reported hit-and-run motor vehicle crash. Upon arrival,

Woman Sentenced for Impaired Driving, Child Neglect

Ronni Laine Davis, 34, of Lusby, was sentenced on March 3 in Calvert County Circuit Court to eight years incarceration, with 60 days of active time, followed by three years of supervised probation. The sentence was imposed by Judge Honorable Mark Chandlee.

Evidence revealed that Davis was observed by concerned citizens to be driving erratically on MD Rte. 4 on April 28, 2024, at approximately 8:50 p.m. She nearly struck a guardrail and drove into the median. When deputies from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office arrived, they immediately observed signs of impairment. Davis failed standardized field sobriety tests and was arrested. She had four young children in the car at the time of the incident.

Davis was found guilty of child neglect, possession of CDS (Oxycodone), and driving while impaired by drugs. Although this was Davis' first impaired driving offense, the state recommended a period of incarceration due to the fact that she was transporting minor children. Davis was taken from the courtroom



Ronni Laine Davis

in handcuffs. Her sentence will be served at the Calvert County Detention Center.

This case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant State's Attorney Rebecca N. Cordero.

Press Release from Calvert County State's Attorney

Social Media Hobbyist Arrested for Arson

A Prince Frederick man who films fire departments for social media content was arrested earlier today after investigators determined he was responsible for setting a vacant commercial building on fire on Feb. 22. During their investigation, they learned that he had set this fire and made false 911 calls to film firefighters responding to the calls for his social media accounts.

At around 8:30 p.m. on February 22, 2025, Newburg Volunteer Fire Company and surrounding departments responded to a reported commercial building fire at 12535 Crain Highway. When firefighters arrived, they discovered a fire inside the vacant structure and were able to extinguish it within minutes. The Office of the State Fire Marshal was requested to investigate and concluded the fire was intentionally set. Investigators learned the first 911 caller was Joshua Christian-Stanley Jackson. Jackson, 21, is known for filming emergency services responses for various social media sites.

In a social media post, investigators learned that Jackson said he was returning from a DoorDash in King George County, Virginia, when he discovered the fire on Crain Highway and described it and its progression in detail.

During their investigation, Deputy State Fire Marshals concluded that Jackson had not traveled to or from Virginia for DoorDash and discovered that he had made several 911 calls in the past in Charles, St. Mary's, and Calvert counties. During their interview with Jackson, he told investigators he had set the vacant building on fire. He explained how he had made profits on other videos he had filmed.



Joshua Christian-Stanley Jackson

"Arson is a serious crime that puts lives at risk and places an unnecessary burden on our first responders. I commend our Deputy State Fire Marshals who worked tirelessly in this case," said Acting State Fire Marshal Jason M. Mowbray. "We want to remind the public that making false 911 calls is a criminal offense, and anyone who engages in such reckless behavior will be held accountable." Mowbray continued.

Jackson was arrested and charged with second-degree arson, malicious burning, and causing a false fire alarm. Jackson is currently being held at Charles County Detention Center without bond.

Deputy State Fire Marshals will continue investigating additional cases that Jackson may have reported, and additional charges may follow.

Press Release from MD State Fire Marshal's Office

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, Mar 6

Awful Artworks: Copycat

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

Have you ever looked at an art project and thought "I could do that," but you in fact could not do that? Let your creativity flow without worrying about an end product! This will be all about copying a famous painting as terribly as possible! 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Song Circle

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

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

Fri, Mar 7

First Fossil Friday!

Calvert Marine Museum
1-4:30 p.m.

Fossil hunters, bring your fossil finds from Calvert Cliffs or other local areas to be identified! This service is provided for free; however, admission fees apply for access to CMM exhibits.

Sat, Mar 8

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 interpret-

ers, learn all kinds of fun possum facts, and visit the 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. Included with museum admission.

Sun, Mar 9

Creature Feature

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

Come to the museum for the Monthly Mystery Creature Feature. Every second Sunday of the month, the CMM Education team will feature an animal in the museum lobby that is not normally on display. Learn about a new animal and discover the wonderful variety of the creatures found in our local estuaries. Take-home educational coloring pages will be available! Included with museum admission.

Beyond the Displays: Artifact Stories

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

Join Lori for an insightful exploration of the museum's artifacts, uncovering their origins and significance. 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. Learn something new every tour. Included with museum admission.

The Art of Drawing Mammals

Calvert Marine Museum
2-4 p.m.

Learn about the lives and habits of our native mammals with a naturalist talk, followed by an art workshop where you can learn how to draw our local animals! Beginner and experienced artists, 16 years and older,

will enjoy this workshop! All supplies and instructions are included. Participants will be able to take home their original drawings at the end! \$15 per participant; Pre-registration is required at <https://calvert-marinemuseum.doubleknot.com/event/the-art-of-drawing-mammals/3085793>

Mon, Mar 10

Book Discussion

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

Join us this to discuss our current book selection, "Playground" by Richard Powers. Four lives are drawn together in a sweeping, panoramic new novel showcasing the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "The Overstory" at the height of his skills. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Tue, Mar 11

Social Security: Retirement Information

Calvert Library (Zoom)
1:30-2:30 p.m.

Learn more about retirement eligibility requirements, family benefits, options, and the application process. Presentation by Diana Varela, Public Affairs Specialist for the Social Security Administration followed by Q&A. This event will not be recorded. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Mar 12

Brain Games: Mahjongg, Scrabble & More

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

Games are a great way to keep your brain sharp while having fun! Join us! Please register. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862.

<https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Job Seeker Resources – Skillbuilders

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Maryland Department of Labor, Veterans Program, Senior Community Service Employment and Job Service representatives will be in person to meet with those seeking employment or career change. Walk-ins welcome on the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Bilingual Conversation Hour: Spanish-English

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

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

Resumes and Job Interviews Workshop

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

Offered by Maryland Department of Labor, American Job Center, this is an interactive workshop for resume and job interview help. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

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.

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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

P. O. Box 250 • Hollywood, MD 20636



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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Cut a little bit off
- 5. State with confidence
- 11. River in NE Scotland
- 14. Not narrow
- 15. Lacking social polish
- 16. Amount of time
- 17. Frame
- 19. Automobile
- 20. Toadstools
- 21. High school dances
- 22. Utilize
- 23. Challenged
- 25. One-sided
- 27. Showing extreme greed
- 31. Potted plants
- 34. Everyone has one
- 35. Lake in Botswana
- 38. E.T. rode in one
- 39. Juniors' parents
- 41. Small amount
- 42. Mother of Perseus
- 44. Ornamental box
- 45. Gov't investigators
- 46. Uncertain
- 49. A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
- 51. The vast grassy plains in S. America
- 55. Your consciousness of your own identity
- 56. Noted consumer advocate
- 60. Spanish sports club
- 61. Body part
- 62. Tractability
- 64. Woman (French)
- 65. Ready and willing to be taught
- 66. Muslim ruler title
- 67. Depressed
- 68. Gradually gave way
- 69. Clear-thinking

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Brushed aside
- 2. Water sprite
- 3. Ones to look up to
- 4. Monetary units
- 5. A number everyone has
- 6. Marine invertebrate
- 7. One who takes you to court
- 8. Indicates outer
- 9. Parallelograms
- 10. Strains
- 11. Cross
- 12. A way to remove
- 13. Some pages are dog-__
- 18. Ukraine city
- 24. A citizen of Denmark
- 26. Summer month (abbr.)
- 28. Hindu queens
- 29. Jewelry brand
- 30. Fictional rider of Rohan
- 31. Wet dirt
- 32. Russian city
- 33. Observed
- 36. Furious
- 37. Drivers' licenses
- 39. Musical composition
- 40. Auction
- 43. They __
- 45. Women
- 47. Inspire with love
- 48. Japanese ankle sock
- 49. Appears
- 50. Old World lizard
- 52. The leading performer
- 53. Type of protein
- 54. Pennsylvania town
- 57. Art __: around 1920
- 58. __ Blyton, children's author
- 59. Abnormal breathing
- 63. A place to sleep

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FEBRUARY 27 SOLUTIONS

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

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St. Mary's Community Calendar

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

Fri, Mar 7

Lenten Fish Fry

St. George Catholic Church
19199 St Georges Church Rd, Valley Lee
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Fresh fried catfish or Steamed Shrimp dinner with side of Pancit, French fries, soup or fried fritters! \$20 each, every Friday for lent! Hope to see you soon.

ELks Texas Holdem Tournament

St Mary's County Elks Lodge
45779 Fire Department Ln, California

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:

James Dean
240-577-0828
jdjuniorn@gmail.com

Sat, Mar 8

SMTMD Contra Dance

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

The evening starts at 7 pm with a half hour beginner's dance workshop followed by live music performed by the SOMD Open Band and dancing from 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Check the website calendar for the lineup of dances and callers. Admission: \$8 for members; \$12 for non-SMTMD members; children 17 and under (when accompanied by a paying adult) and band members are free. *See website for rescheduled or canceled events. Info: smtmd2@gmail.com, www.smtmd.org/new-events/

Sun, Mar 9

All-You-Can-Eat Home-Style Breakfast

2nd District Social Hall
45245 Drayden Rd., Valley Lee
8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Menu: scrambled eggs, home fried potatoes, pancakes, french toast, sausage links, ham, bacon, creamed chipped beef, sausage gravy, spiced applesauce, grits & biscuits. Assorted juices, milk and coffee will be available.

Adults—\$14.00; Children 6 to 12—\$7.00; Children 5 & under are free

Proceeds from this fundraiser go to the 2nd District Volunteer Fire Department & Rescue Squad to continue keeping our community safe.

Sponsored (and prepared) by the 2nd District Volunteer Fire Department & Rescue Squad Auxiliary.

Thank you for your support!

For more information call: 301-994-9999

Quarter Auction for Peter Reshetar

Mechanicsville Moose Lodge
27636 Mechanicsville Rd., Mechanicsville
Noon to 4 p.m.

Raising funds to help Peter and his wife with medical expenses due to kidney failure. There will be information about becoming a kidney donor available. There will also be a silent auction, leprechaun hunt (everyone wins) and food available. There will be

vendors also to shop from. \$35 for an All In paddle or \$3 for one paddle, \$5 for 2 paddles. Don't forget to wear green to receive a FREE paddle to bid with. www.facebook.com/events/1234425437856647

Mon, Mar 10

Pax River Quilters Guild

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

Pax River Quilters Guild will host its monthly meeting which will include a presentation by Catherine Thornton on the Laura Heine applique method. Meetings are the second Monday of every month and feature guest speakers, show and tells, and other fun activities. Pax River Quilters Guild is a non-profit organization devoted to philanthropic quilting projects and promoting the skill of quilting. New members of all skill levels are welcome. For questions, email: prqgsomd@gmail.com Website: <http://paxriverquiltguild.com/>

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library

UPCOMING EVENTS



Puzzle Club

Find your puzzle people! Join us for casual group jigsaw puzzles and puzzle games. Try out this new club to grow our adult puzzle loving community! Ages 16+. Leonardtown Library, Thursday, March 6 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. Each month we'll have a 1000 piece on-going jigsaw puzzle to work on plus a rotating puzzle activity. This month we'll try out several kinds of paper and pencil puzzles. Register to let us know you're coming and to get reminder emails before the event. Walk ins are also welcome. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Maryland Day: The Story of Maryland's Beginning

When did Maryland really begin? Henry M. Miller, Ph.D., has worked at Historic St. Mary's City for several decades trying to answer this very question! Although we teach about the colonies in early America, the founding of Maryland began far before the landing, or even the voyage. Learn how the critical the "Idea of Maryland" was to the beginning of our state. Leonardtown Library on Tuesday, March 11 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org

Shopping & Cooking on a Budget

Learn how to make the most of your resources with practical tips for shopping smart and cooking delicious, nutritious meals without breaking the bank! This program is designed to help participants develop essential skills such as meal planning, budget-friendly grocery shopping, and preparing simple, healthy recipes. Whether you're a student, a professional, or anyone looking to save money in the kitchen, this course will empower you to eat well while staying within your budget. Lexington Park Library on Wednesday, March 12 from 6 - 7 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Book Show & Tell

Looking for new books to read? Have a great book that you can't stop recommending to others? Come join us for our first Book Show & Tell for adult readers! Leonardtown Library on Thursday, March 13 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. Anyone who would like to share a book they've enjoyed is invited to speak for up to 5 minutes on a book of their choosing. Participants are also free to just listen and jot down new titles for their TBR list. No one is required

to share if they do not want to. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Citizen Science: Daytime Star Party

Enjoy a Saturday morning with Southern Maryland Astronomical Society (SMAS)! The members of SMAS volunteer their talent, time, and telescopes to spread a love of astronomy to Lexington Park Library on Saturday, March 15 from 10 - 11:30 a.m. We will have an observing start time of 10 a.m. The SMAS Program Coordinator will review "Daytime Star Party Tips." This event will be outside the whole time for solar and/or terrestrial views. Please prepare for spending the entire time outside. If it is actively raining, we will do indoor hands-on activities. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Puzzlemania! Jigsaw Puzzle Competition & Swap

Want to try speed puzzling? Form a team of two or three, and see how fast that team can be! Leonardtown Library on Saturday, March 15 from 1 - 3:30 p.m. All teams will go head-to-head to see who can complete their copy of a 500 piece puzzle first! Prizes awarded. Teams are made up of 2-3

people, all of which need to be age 16 or older, and registration is required for the team event. Only one team member should register for the team. In addition to the competition, we'll be having a puzzle swap and casual puzzle games and activities for all ages. Bring any puzzles you're ready to part with and pick up a new one here. No registration is required for the puzzle swap, just drop in when you can.

Perks Partners

St. Mary's County Library is excited to announce a partnership opportunity for businesses! Through our Perks Partners program, the Library will spread the word about your business through our network, including social media, in-library messaging, and email messaging. In return, your business will offer a 10% discount to library card holders. Perks Partners are welcome to sign up on the Library website: <https://www.stmalib.org/about-us/perks-partners/>. After you sign up online, a library staff person will contact you to bring you a window decal to display in your place of business.

In Remembrance

Continued from page 15

tion to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation at cbf.org to support their work.

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.

Fred Eckardt, 73



Frederick Arthur Eckardt (Fred), 73, of Leonardtown, MD, passed away peacefully on February 13, 2025, at St. Mary's Nursing Home, after battling

Parkinson's Disease. Born on October 02, 1951 in Pensacola, FL, he was the son of the late Arthur Joseph Eckardt and Joan Barbara (Singer) Eckardt. Fred is survived by his son Scott Eckardt of Melbourne, FL, and siblings Margaret Hammett (Anthony) of Coltons Point, MD, Jonthan Eckardt (Cheri) of Leonardtown, MD, and Mary Susan Sanders (Glenn) of Hughesville, along with numerous nieces and nephews.

Fred was a St. Mary's County resident from 1958 until he graduated from Great Mills High School in 1969. Following graduation, he joined the United States Navy and worked his way up to Aviation Structural Mechanic Chief (E-7) and became a P-3 Flight Engineer. He was stationed in multiple P-3 squadrons on the east and west coast, Hawaii, and Rota, Spain. He travelled all over the world as a P-3 flight engineer.

Fred enjoyed running and bicycling. He competed in a triathlon and numerous races. He retired from the Navy after 21 years of distinguished service receiving numerous commendations, metals and ribbons.

After his retirement, Fred lived in Northern California and started a hobby of carving water birds from driftwood he would find on the beach. It became his passion and he created over 60 water birds that many have admired and treasured.

Due to his Parkinson's disease, he spent his last year of life at the St. Mary's Nursing Home in Leonardtown, Md. He enjoyed watching the History Channel and playing bingo. He became friends with all the staff members and everyone enjoyed his company.

The family received friends on Monday, February 24, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM, with a prayer service officiated by Deacon Joe Lloyd, at 10:00 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD. Interment was followed at Holy Face Church cemetery, Great Mills, MD with military honors and taps. The American Flag was presented to his brother Jonathan Eckardt. Pallbearers were Danny Dixon, John Goldbach, Randy Morris and Lee Sides, who were Fred's former 1969 classmates from Great Mills High School.

Donations may be made to the Parkinson's Foundation.

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.

Margaret Mason, 86



Margaret Evelyn Mason, 86, of Scotland, Maryland passed away in Callaway, Maryland on February 19, 2025.

Born in Rhode Island on July 7, 1938, she was the loving daughter of the late Paul Dodge, Sr., and Margaret (nee: Veitch) Dodge.

Margaret was the wife of the late Edward Mason. Together they built a life of love and devotion for over 54 years until his passing in 2012.

She was an avid crafter and enjoyed knitting, cross stitching, crocheting, and sewing. At one point in her life, she was even responsible for sewing patches onto Military uniforms. She was an accomplished bowler and cherished her memories at the senior center and relishing in a game or two of bingo.

Margaret is survived by her children, Edward A. Mason (Kris), Evelyn J. Sexton (Kenneth), June Ann Fenhagen (Joseph), grandchildren, Dustin Mason, Karen Marie Finch (Donald), Elizabeth Mason, Amanda Renee Sennett (Phillip), Cody Pappendick (Ali), Vaughn Mason, as well as 8 great grandchildren. She is also survived by her brother William "Billy" Dodge.

Along with her parents and her beloved husband Edward Mason, she is preceded in death by her siblings, Pauline, Debra, Virginia, Paul, Jr., and Johnny.

Family will receive friends on Thursday March 6, 2025 for a visitation from 11am to 12pm with a service beginning at 12pm at Brinsfield Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD. Burial will immediately follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD.

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

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Joyce Gabrelcik, 101



Joyce K. Gabrelcik, 101, of Lexington Park, Maryland, passed away February 26, 2025 in Solomons, Maryland.

Born in Minnesota, she was the daughter of the late Joseph Richard Kivtchak and Annie Sophia (nee: Swartz) Kivtchak.

Joyce met her husband while he was stationed in Jacksonville, FL and they married on June 14, 1947. They celebrated 65 wonderful years of marriage before his passing in 2012.

She enjoyed beauty in nature. She had an eye for art, design, and fashion. She was a philanthropist and business owner. She had a quick wit and was deeply loved by all who knew her. Above all, she loved her family.

Joyce is survived by her sons, William J. Gabrelcik (Liz Wilde), James R. Gabrelcik (Kimberly), daughter in law, Kathleen Gabrelcik, six grandchildren, and 8

great-grandchildren.

Along with her parents and husband, she is preceded in death by her son Robert R. Gabrelcik, and her brother, James Kivtchak.

Family will receive friends for a Mass of Christian burial on March 6, 2025 starting at 1:00pm in the historical church of Our lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, 225 Alexander La, Solomons, MD 20688.

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

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

Chris Betz, 54



John William "Chris" Betz, Jr., 54, of Leonardtown, MD, passed away suddenly on Monday, December 23, 2024, at his home with his lov-

ing family at his side.

He was born on July 28, 1970, in Washington D.C. to the late John William Betz, Sr. and Marilynne (nee: Davies) Betz of Leonardtown, MD.

Chris was a 1989 graduate of Saint Stephens High School in Alexandria, VA, where he lettered as a member of the varsity tennis team. He graduated from the University of Virginia in 1993, where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science. He married the love of his life, Allison Harmon Betz, on October 9, 1995 in Blacksburg, VA. Together, they celebrated 29 wonderful years of marriage. In 1997, they relocated to St. Mary's County with the NAVAIR base realignment. He was employed as a Senior Manager at Deloitte Services, LP (and previously BearingPoint) for over 24 dedicated years.

Chris was elated to welcome his son, Ryan to the world and take on his most loved job as Dad. Family was always his greatest love and what he valued most in life. In 2012, Ryan joined Cub Scout Pack 1203 and Chris began his long commitment with Scouts BSA (formerly Boy Scouts of America) as a Den Leader, then as an Assistant Cubmaster. When Ryan graduated to Troop 793, Chris became an Assistant Scoutmaster, then served a 3-year term as a Scoutmaster. He was extremely proud when Ryan earned Eagle Scout in December 2023. Chris recently began his term as the Committee Chair for Troop 793 and was looking forward to seeing a few more young men achieve Eagle Scout, as he had been with them from the time they joined the Troop. He was Ryan's biggest cheerleader and mentor and encouraged him in all his endeavors. He did not judge him and offered valued advice when needed and always loved him unconditionally.

Chris was a genuine person, humble and grateful for his family. He did not need or want fancy things; he had all he ever wanted when he had his family. He was content to spend time with them in whatever made them happy. Chris didn't let things bother him and began each day as a fresh start with a smile. He lit up a room when he walked in and enjoyed a good joke. He chose to fill his glass with love until it overflowed and you couldn't help but smile back. He lived and

breathed the importance of family and spending time together. He loved deeply and fully, touching so many others, not just his family.

In addition to his mother, Marilynne and beloved wife, Allison, Chris is survived by his son, John William "Ryan" Betz, III of Leonardtown, MD, brothers, Aulden Davies Snyder of Alexandria, VA and Richard George Snyder of Willow, TX; and extended family and friends. He is preceded in death by his father, John William Betz, Sr.

Family will receive friends for Chris' Life Celebration on Sunday, January 5, 2025 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., with a Memorial Service at 3:00 p.m., at Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., 22955 Hollywood Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. Interment will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Chris' name may be made out to Troop 793 noted for the Betz Memorial OA Scholarship Fund and mailed to 21822 Hazeltine Court, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

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

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Doris Tippet, 83



Doris Marie Tippet, 83, of Laurel, DE, formerly of Hollywood, MD, passed away on February 27, 2025, in Millsboro, DE. Born on June 18, 1941, in Brandywine, MD,

she was one of 11 children of the late Nellie O. Thompson and the late Richard E. Thompson. Doris was the loving wife of the late William Roger Tippet, whom she married April 23, 1960 in Baden, MD, and who preceded her in death on January 21, 1992. She is survived by her children, Gene Tippet of Laurel, DE, Andy Tippet of California, MD, Reese Tippet (Tracy) of Laurel, DE, and Timmy Tippet of Hollywood, MD, as well as her grandchildren, Drew Tippet of Lexington Park, MD, Jonathan Tippet of Lexington Park, MD, Crystal Tippet (Aaron Bishop), of Hagerstown, MD, and Brandon Tippet of Lexington Park, MD.

Doris worked in tax assessment for the State of Maryland and retired in 2000. She was a past member of the Hollywood Volunteer Rescue Squad.

The family will receive friends on Friday, March 7, 2025, from 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 AM, in St. John's Catholic Church, Hollywood, MD, with Father Ray Schmidt officiating. Interment will follow at the church cemetery. Serving as pallbearers will be Drew Tippet, Jonathan Tippet, Aaron Bishop, Jamie Tippet, Jerry Higgs, and Willie Gray.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Hollywood Volunteer Rescue Squad, P.O. Box 79, Hollywood, MD 20636.

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.

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.

Sal Raspa, 85



Lifelong educator and resident of St. Mary's County, Dr. Salvatore Raspa (Sal) passed away peacefully in La Plata at Green Acres Nursing Home on February 26, 2025 with his beloved family by his side.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Myra Ennis Raspa and five of their six children: Sal Raspa, Jr. (Debbie), Raymond Scott Raspa (John), Angela Lee Raspa, CDR Victor G. Raspa (Amanda), Capt. Anthony E. Raspa (Carolyn); Grandchildren, Heather Franklin (Scott), Nicole Raspa (Blake), Allyssa Raspa (Jacob), Alex Raspa, Elizabeth Raspa; Great Grandson, Isaiah, and Great Granddaughter, Ady. He is predeceased by their son Joseph Raspa (Davenport, Iowa).

Sal was born on January 31st, 1940 in New York City to Joseph Raspa and Angelina Alibrandi. He has one sister, Vicky Wilkes (Roger, deceased) in Columbia, TN. Sal's father, a pattern designer from New York City, moved his family to Martin TN, where he continued designing women's clothing in the surrounding factories. That is where Sal met Myra Ennis at Martin High School and later, while in college, they wed on October 24th, 1959 at a Catholic Church in Union City TN.

After graduation, Sal and Myra moved to St. Mary's County in 1961 where Sal taught Science and Math at Great Mills High School (GMHS). He continued teaching chemistry and math while earning his Masters Degree from George Washington University. As Sal earned degrees in higher education, he moved into administration as Assistant Principal at GMHS. Then in 1978 while principal of GMHS for eight years, Sal pursued his doctorate in education, administration and supervision. Upon completion of his doctorate from George Washington University, Sal sought positions in administration at the central office level and held several roles at the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Supervision. He became Supervisor of Science and Health for several years, Director of Transportation, and Assistant Superintendent of St. Mary's County Public Schools.

After Sal retired from the St. Mary's County Public School system, he served three four-year terms on the Board of Education and was Chairman of the Board for six of those twelve years. All together he served 53 years in some capacity with the St. Mary's County Public School system. His dedication and determination to make the St. Mary's County Public School System the best in the state of MD and possibly the nation was extraordinary. All six of their children graduated from GMHS and were handed their diplomas by Sal, who was principal at that time.

His love for his wife Myra and their six children was immeasurable. Myra was a high school English and Publications teacher in the St. Mary's School system and she advanced to the central office as well, becoming the Writing Specialist for high schools.

Sal was multi-talented; there wasn't much that Sal couldn't do. At one point he took Myra's 1984 Cadillac apart and spread parts

all over two large pieces of plywood sitting on saw horses. She just knew that was the end of her car. Miraculously, it purred like a kitten when he put it back together and she drove it for 8 more years. He owned several businesses either with a business partner or with the family: Atlantic Air HVAC, a hazardous waste removal business, a real estate venture, buying, renovating and building new homes.

Ever the scientist, Sal enlisted an experimental venture with the University of MD to find better ways to grow, harvest and cure So. MD tobacco. He and the whole family grew 40 acres of tobacco for 8 years at St. Richard's Manor in Esperanza on the Patuxent River. He also enjoyed politics and was active in many clubs and organizations. He served on the Democratic Central Committee for three terms and was Chair for several years.

Sal and Myra loved to travel and visited many places of interest over the years. A couple of their favorites were Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, the Andes Mountains in Ecuador, Iceland, many of the islands in the Caribbean, Hawaii, and Bermuda. They also loved traveling up and down the east coast from Maine to Florida, visiting family and to TN and CA.

Life was always busy for the Raspa family but Sal always made time every Wednesday in retirement to have lunch with friends at Linda's Cafe. Those same friends continued visiting him on Wednesdays whether in the hospital or nursing home.

Sal belonged to numerous organizations and committees during his lifetime and received many awards and recognitions from both local and state levels, the school community and community at large. In 2004, Sal and Myra were written into the Congressional Record for Leadership as Outstanding Educators and Service to their Community by the Hon. Steny H. Hoyer. Sal also received the Governor's Citation for Outstanding Commitment to Public Education, and the Joint Board of Science Engineering Education Award as an Outstanding Educator. He also was a recipient of the coveted Melvin Jones Fellow Award for dedicated Humanitarian Services-Lions Club International for a lifetime of service to Lions.

Sal's vocabulary never included the word "Can't". He always found a way and forged the path for many in his life. He was a leader in every sense of the word. From the chemistry classroom to Chairman of the Board, his life was always on a journey of excellence. Along the way, he was intent on seeing that others moved forward with him. Godspeed Sal and may your legacy continue to inspire others.

The family of Dr. Salvatore Raspa wishes to acknowledge with deep appreciation the many expressions of love, concern and kindness shown during this time of bereavement.

Family will receive friends for Sal's Life Celebration on Friday, March 7, 2025 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., with a Service celebrated by Reverend Raymond Schmidt at 4:00 p.m. at Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., 22955 Hollywood Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. A Graveside Service will be held on March 12 at East Side Cemetery in Martin, TN.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donations to the St. Mary's County Public Schools Retirement Association Scholarship Fund (Make checks to Lexington Park

Rotary Foundation of St. Mary's County), St. Mary's Caring (soup kitchen), or your local Lions Club Organization.

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

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

Tommy Courtney, 79



Thomas Leonard "Tommy" Courtney, 79, of Ridge, MD passed away March 2, 2025 at his home with his loving family at his side.

He was born in Leonardtown, MD on November 20, 1945 to the late John Abell Theodosius Courtney, Sr. and Dorothy Louise (nee: Moore) Courtney.

Tommy was raised on the water in St. Mary's County and began fishing at the young age of two. On November 8, 1965, just before his 20th birthday, he was drafted by the United States Army and deployed to Vietnam, where he served his country until his honorable discharge on September 23, 1967. During his service he earned the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and Sharpshooter Rifle (M-14). Upon his return home, he attended St. Mary's College and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biology. Tommy's infinity for the water brought him back to his boat and launched his lifelong career as a waterman. On May 3, 1999, he married the love of his life, Julie Gabriel Courtney. Together, they have celebrated over 26 wonderful years together. The two owned and operated Courtney's restaurant, where Tommy caught and cleaned the seafood and Julie cooked it fresh with her secret spice, "love." The restaurant was known for always having the freshest seafood and hospitality. Spending his entire life on the water and most of it on a boat, fishing and crabbing, he gained a wealth of knowledge on the many species of fish native to the Chesapeake Bay. He had great respect and admiration for nature, and enjoyed the beautiful sunrises as he went out to work, and the sunsets that ended his day.

Tommy is survived by his beloved wife, Julie, her children, Kathy Tayman of Ridge, MD and Henry Harrison (Leslie) of Woodbridge, VA; sister, Dorothy Joanne Thompson of McMinnville, OR; grandchildren, Alex Harrison and Nicholas Tayman; great granddaughter, Malaya Lewis; and many extended family and friends. In addition to his parents, he is also preceded in death by his siblings: Doug Courtney, David Courtney, Mary Louise Goodman, James F. Courtney, and John T. "Buck" Courtney, Jr.

Family will receive friends on Thursday, March 6, 2025 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., with Remembrances shared at 6:00 p.m., at Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., 22955 Hollywood Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650. A Funeral Service will be celebrated by Monsignor Karl Chimiak on Friday, March 7, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. at St. Michael's Catholic Church, 16566 Three Notch Road, Ridge, MD 20650. Interment will follow at Trinity Episcopal Church, 47477 Trinity

Church Road, St. Mary's City, MD 20686.

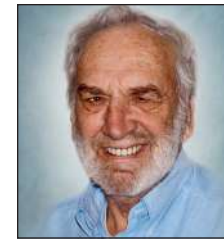
Serving as pallbearers will be: Joey Greenwell, Joe Wilkenson, Bob Mann, Willie Dean, Henry Harrison, Alex Harrison, Todd Yeatman, Charles Rainey.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made in Tommy's name to Ridge Volunteer Rescue Squad, P.O. Box 456, Ridge, MD 20680.

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

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

Joe Knott, 87



Joseph Edward Knott, "Joe", 87, of Great Mills, MD, passed away with family at his side on February 24, 2025, at Hospice of the Chesapeake

in Waldorf, MD. Born on June 23, 1937, in Hurry, MD, Joe was the son of the late Cora (Quade) Knott and Mark Knott. He is survived by his daughter, Cheryl Lea Knott, of Baltimore, MD, and his niece, Debbie (Knott) Heck, whom he raised as a daughter. Joe was married to Regina Ann (Combs) Knott for 58 years before her passing in 2021. He was preceded in death by his parents and siblings, Alfred Knott, Aubrey Knott, Louise (Knott) Petterson, Charles Aloysius Knott, Theresa (Knott) Cook, and Francis Knott. Joe was also preceded in death by his nephew, David Lee Knott, whom he raised as a son.

Joe was a lifelong, proud St. Mary's County, MD resident. The son of tobacco sharecroppers in the Seventh District, Joe transitioned to carpentry work in 1958, primarily working as a laborer for Jim Dobry Construction. While employed for Mr. Dobry, Joe helped to build many homes in the county, including the Greenview Knolls subdivision in Great Mills. Joe also worked for Loeffler Construction in the 1980s before starting his own company in the early 1990s. Joe Knott Construction built homes throughout Southern Maryland, including several homes in the Chesapeake Ranch Estates in Lusby.

After his retirement in 1999, Joe often spent time on the water. He hand-built a small wooden skiff that he launched out of St. Mary's City. He enjoyed crabbing, fishing, and oystering in the St. Mary's and Patuxent Rivers with friends and his daughter. He also tended a small vegetable garden at his home and was often seen watching NASCAR races, supporting the Orioles and Ravens, and he greatly enjoyed old country music, especially Hank Williams.

The family will receive friends and family to honor Joe on Thursday, March 6, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held at 10:00 AM in the funeral home chapel. He will be interred at Charles Memorial Gardens. Serving as pallbearers will be Aaron McMahon, Ken Brown, Mike Mattingly, Joe Cook, Ray Cook, and Brian Knott.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a dona-

Continued on page 16

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Remedies for Common Electrical Problems



Electricity is a modern convenience that's easily taken for granted until homes are plunged into darkness during power outages. Thomas Edison introduced electricity to the world in the late nineteenth century. After Edison's home received a private electric system, the first American home to be powered by hydroelectricity was in Appleton, Wisconsin in 1882. Despite that, just 50 percent all homes in the United States had electricity by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Electricity is now a standard home feature. And when something goes awry with a home's electrical components, homeowners may need to act fast to restore things to proper working order. Certain electrical problems are common in residential homes. Even homeowners with do-it-yourself skills should bring in an experienced electrician when their homes develop electrical problems, as electricity is nothing for novices to play with. Here's what to look for and how to remedy common issues, courtesy of East-West Electric, Inc., Safe and Sound Electric LLC, and American Home Shield.

- **Flickering lights:** Flickering lights merit attention. While lights can flicker when bulbs are not screwed in tightly, this also could be a sign of a faulty connection that is creating arcing and overheating. A failure to address flickering lights might lead to a fire. An electrician can inspect wiring and fixtures to see where the problem may lie, and replace any necessary components.
- **Degraded electrical wiring:** Older homes may have aging electrical wiring that is worn out in places. This can cause arc faults, which occur when an electrical current veers off its intended path. Arc faults can cause electrical fires. Installing arc-fault circuit interrupters on the circuit panel can help. Traditional circuit breakers only trip

with overloads and short circuits. AFCIs continuously monitor flow and will only trip during unwanted arcing conditions.

- **Insufficient power:** Those who reside in older homes might experience insufficient electrical power. Electrical grids homes are built using the technology of that time and may not be capable of handling the many devices that homeowners plug in today. Circuits may trip often when one or more electrical devices are used on the same circuit. The only way to remedy this issue is to replace the existing electrical system with a restructured one that can handle the supply of power.
- **Buzzing sounds:** Electrical outlets and switches in a home should always operate silently. Buzzing or unusual sounds heard near switches and outlets indicates there is a problem. Turn off the power to that fixture and consult a professional electrician to see what might be the issue.
- **Warmth around light fixtures:** Hot ceiling lights or other lights could mean that a homeowner is exceeding the recommended bulb wattages for that fixture. Check the bulbs, and consider switching to compact fluorescent or LED bulbs that do not produce as much heat as incandescent bulbs.
- **Higher energy bills:** Energy bills can spike for a number of reasons. Outdated electrical devices that draw a lot of power or a leakage in the system are two potential causes of higher energy bills. Homeowners can call an electrician to assess the energy efficiency of a home and suggest changes.

Electrical problems might be common, but they should be dealt with promptly for safety's sake.



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How to Prepare for a Lengthy Renovation

Home renovations can increase resale value and outfit spaces to make them more accommodating to residents. Homeowners interested in remodeling projects understand that such undertakings are often a lengthy process. But the time spent waiting often is well worth it when the work is done and the finished product looks just as homeowners imagined.

Depending on the scope and scale of a project, home renovations can take anywhere from a day or two for minor cosmetic changes to nine months for a major project. The lender RenoFi says projects like remodeling a kitchen or bathroom have a lot of moving parts, including plumbing and electrical work, structural changes, flooring, and installation of appliances. Due to that complexity, such projects may take six to 12 weeks. A home addition can take months. Homeowners weary of such lengthy undertakings can implement strategies to make conditions at home more manageable.

- Get a rough estimate from contractors so that you can budget accordingly. A project will go nowhere without proper funding. Get detailed estimates that include labor and building materials. Then start saving and stash money away for the project so you're not caught off-guard later on.
- Clear out clutter. Remove any extraneous items from the room or rooms that will be remodeled. Although it will be an added expense, it is a good idea to rent a storage unit or have a storage



pod placed in the driveway or yard for the duration of the project. Move items that will not be needed into the unit. This will get them out of the way and protect them from damage.

- Consider starting in warm weather. Contractors will be going in and out of the home each day, and doors and windows may need to be propped open. Schedule a project during those months when temperatures are more comfortable. If the project involves limited

access to the kitchen to cook, utilizing an outdoor grill or kitchen is much easier when the weather is pleasant.

- Stay with relatives. While some people have no issues living in a residence during a renovation, others may find the work simply too inconvenient or distracting to be around. Time away from the property can help manage stress, and prevent kids, pets and others from getting in the way of work.
- Safeguard sensitive items. Take inven-

tory of items in the home and catalog them for insurance purposes. This way you're covered in the case of damage or theft. Remove documents, like birth certificates, passports, insurance policies, and other private papers, and keep them in a safety deposit box or fireproof safe.

Home renovations may stretch on for weeks or months. However, with adequate preparation, homeowners can see such projects through without facing too much adversity.

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What New Homeowners Should Know About Fertilizing A Lawn



Shortly after buying a home, many first-time homeowners recognize how challenging it can be to maintain a property. Many embrace that challenge and refashion their homes to reflect their personalities, interests and tastes.

First-time homeowners may direct the bulk of their attention to decorating the interiors of their homes upon moving in, but the work extends outside as well. Tending to a lawn is a responsibility worth taking seriously, as the American Society of Landscape Architects reports a well-groomed landscape can increase resale value by anywhere from 15 to 20 percent. First-time homeowners may not be thinking about resale value, but it's never too early to prioritize lawn care, which should include routine fertilization. Fertilizing can ensure a lawn grows in lush, green and healthy, but first-time homeowners may want to know a few things prior to taking a spreader for a spin for the first time.

- Identify what the lawn needs before purchasing fertilizer. No two lawns are the same, and that's something to keep in mind when shopping for fertilizer. Even neighboring properties may have different soil needs, so it's imperative that homeowners identify any nutrient deficiencies prior to fertilizing. A simple, inexpensive soil test can reveal what a lawn needs, and such results can help homeowners pick the right fertilizer for their properties.
- Get a handle on nitrogen needs. First-time homeowners will undoubtedly come across fertilizers promising to address nitrogen needs in a lawn, but it's important to avoid over-fertilizing with nitrogen. Nitrogen is absorbed quickly, particularly when homeowners remember to water each day

after fertilizing. So it's easy to add too much nitrogen, which can lead to the development of thatch that ultimately blocks sunlight, nutrients and water, thus leading to weaker roots and a lawn that looks nothing like the lush, green carpet homeowners are aiming for. Homeowners concerned about overdoing it with nitrogen can utilize a slow-release fertilizer that gives the lawn time to absorb nutrients and break them down.

- Apply evenly. Even application is an important component of successful fertilizing. Many find it easier to apply fertilizer evenly when using a spreader with a granule fertilization product. Spray fertilizers can work as well, but first-timers may find it difficult to apply products evenly when spraying. When using a spreader, read fertilizing packaging instructions carefully to ensure the spreader is on the right setting when starting. If the setting is not correct, you may end up spreading too much or too little fertilizer.
- Fertilize more than once. The lawn care experts at Lawn Doctor® note that strategic applications across the seasons will increase the chances a lawn comes in lush and green. Fertilizing more than once between spring and fall is a necessity no matter which type of grass is in the yard, but the timing may vary depending on grass type and local climate. Consult with a local lawn care professional to determine when and how often to fertilize.

Fertilizing a lawn can produce a home exterior homeowners can be proud of, even if they have little or no experience with lawn maintenance.

Five Reasons to Build a Retaining Wall



Retaining walls are typically recommended to eliminate soil erosion and improve drainage, says Design One Landscape Corporation. Over time, soil erosion or drainage issues can eat into the structural integrity of a home and cause cosmetic damage and unhealthy conditions, such as mold growth. Here's a look at six instances when installing a retaining wall can be advantageous.

1. Make the yard easier to traverse: A retaining wall can make it easier to walk around a sloped yard. Rather than contending with the hill both uphill and downhill, particularly if it's steep, the retaining wall can be installed to create flat areas that are easier to navigate.
2. Manage water runoff: Retaining walls can hold back or redirect water to help prevent flooding. A wall can be used to keep water away from the foundation, where it may enter the home.
3. Prevent soil erosion: Along with keeping water back, the retaining wall also will stop soil erosion and runoff so it

doesn't cause an unsightly condition in the yard, or prove dangerous during severe weather.

4. Prevent sink holes: By helping to manage water runoff, retaining walls can reduce the risk of sinkholes. According to Slaton Bros, Inc., a retaining wall service provider, sinkholes occur when enough water pools beneath the surface of the ground to weaken it to the point of not being capable of supporting the ground's surface weight.
5. Improve curb appeal: Retaining walls also may serve cosmetic functions. They provide additional surfaces upon which to place container plants or additional decorations. Retaining walls also can provide backdrops to shrubs and separate grassy areas from patios or swimming pools.

Retaining walls marry form and function. Homeowners with sloped yards or drainage issues should consider installing retaining walls to address these issues.



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Plan Ahead to Get the Most Out of Spring Planting

Many people view spring as a season of rejuvenation. That renewal may be somewhat metaphorical for human beings, but it's literal for lawns and gardens that begin to grow anew as temperatures rise and hours of daylight increase in spring.

Each spring presents an opportunity for homeowners to get back outside and tend to their gardens. As homeowners look ahead to the coming spring, they can consider these planning pointers to ensure their landscapes look lush and full in the months ahead.

- Start with the soil. Soil can serve as the starting point each spring. Winter can take its toll on a garden and even overwhelm the area with debris over the colder months. Clear rocks and other debris from the area before loosening the soil. The Farmer's Almanac recommends loosening soil to a depth of at least eight inches if planting a new garden. An existing garden may only need to be loosened to a depth of around six inches, after which homeowners can mix compost into the soil in early spring. Compost is organic matter that provides nutrients and helps to build strong plant roots.
- Consider a raised garden in colder climates. The Farmer's Almanac notes raised gardens can help homeowners



ers in colder climates dry out and warm up wet, cold soils more quickly. Homeowners in such regions also can cover their beds with black plastic or cardboard prior to planting. Doing so can protect the beds from late-season snow and spring rains and also helps to overcome erosion.

- Take soil temperatures. Unpredictable weather is among the noticeable effects of climate change in recent years. That lack of predictability can make spring planting a little more tricky than it once was. Experts note that soil temperatures around 50 F are best for cool-season crops, while soil should be 60 F or

warmer when planting warm-weather plants such as tomatoes.

- Work with a garden center to identify what to plant. The right plants for one region may not be ideal for another, so homeowners are urged to work with a local landscaper or garden center before planting. Such a consultation can be especially useful for homeowners planting a new garden. Landscapers and garden center professionals will know which plants work in the local climate.
- Consider planting vegetables in the spring. Various garden experts note that spring is an ideal time to plant a vegetable garden. If planted at the right time, a vegetable garden can save homeowners money on their grocery bills and provide a season's worth of fresh veggies. Lettuce and spinach are sun- and shade-friendly vegetables, which can make them good options for a spring garden. Cool-season root vegetables, which include beets, carrots and swiss chard, are some other notable veggies that can thrive in early spring.

Spring is a season of rejuvenation for gardens. That's even more true when homeowners consider some conventional planting wisdom in early spring.





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A Rundown on Scarifying

To those unfamiliar with lawn maintenance, the term “scarify” might sound like something horror movie directors hope to do to audiences who watch their films. But scarifying has nothing to do with frightening filmgoers, and everything to do with promoting a lush, green and healthy lawn.

What does it mean to scarify a lawn?

Scarifying a lawn involves the utilization of a scarifier to remove dead organic matter that can build up on a lawn over time. When such thatch develops and settles in on a lawn, it can hinder growth by blocking water and nutrients from reaching the soil. Scarifying with a scarifier, or a rake in a smaller lawn or one where thatch buildup is not significant, can help to ensure a lawn can benefit from water and nutrients, such as those which are often found in fertilizers.

Is a scarifier necessary?

Lawn and garden tools make yard work easier, and a scarifier is no exception. Scarifiers range in price, but many effective machines are relatively inexpensive when compared to more costly machines like lawn mowers and aerators. While a scarifier certainly can make dethatching easier, some homeowners might be able to get by with a spring-tined rake. However, it’s less labor-intensive to forgo a rake and use a scarifier on larger properties.

Are there additional reasons to scarify?

Thatch buildup also can promote the growth



of moss, so scarifying can decrease the chances that healthy grass is pushed to the side by sponge-like moss that can quickly overtake a property.

Is there anything I should know about scarifying?

A lawn that has never before been scarified is likely to produce a substantial amount of thatch, which can be made up of old grass clippings, leaves and moss. Though many scarifiers come with attachable buckets that collect the thatch, such baskets tend to

be rather small and fill up quickly, forcing frequent stopping that can add a considerable amount of time to the job. If possible, homeowners with lawns that have significant thatch buildup might want to scarify without the bucket attached. Doing so will leave lots of piles of dead organic matter strewn about the yard, but the job is likely to go more quickly if those heaps are gathered up with a rake after scarifying and then discarded. Constant stopping to empty a small bucket filled with thatch will compromise efficiency and that can be frustrating.

Homeowners also should not expect their lawns to stun after a scarifying session. The lawn will likely look worse, but that’s only temporary. Once the dethatched lawn gets some water and fertilizer, the soil beneath will be more ready to receive them, and the lawn will soon look much better.

Are all scarifiers the same?

Homeowners are urged to do their homework and read product reviews before choosing a scarifier. The majority of scarifiers now on the market are electric, so homeowners will need the ability to plug into a power source when using such products. They also will need to negotiate around the cord, which should be a lengthy extension designed for outdoor use. Homeowners with particularly large properties may want to purchase a gas-powered scarifier, but such products are harder to come by than their electric counterparts, and could be considerably more expensive as well.

When should I scarify?

Various lawn professionals recommend scarifying a lawn at least once per year, and springtime is a popular season to do so. Scarify prior to an initial fertilizer application so that does not block the lawn from getting the nutrients in the fertilizer. A second scarifying session may be necessary in fall.

Scarifying can be an important step in creating a stunning and healthy lawn.

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Common Questions and Answers About Carpeting



No two homeowners are the same, and that's perhaps most evident in the design decisions individuals make when decorating their homes. Flooring is among the first things a person notices when entering a home, and the array of options consumers have when choosing flooring materials underscores how unique each homeowner is.

Carpeting is a popular flooring option. Many homeowners prefer carpeting because they feel it helps to create a cozy, welcoming vibe in a home. Consumers considering carpet for their homes may have some common questions, and answers to those inquiries can help homeowners determine if carpeting is for them.

Is carpeting expensive?

Home renovations are expensive, and the cost of a project is often the first question homeowners have. The cost of carpeting varies widely and is contingent on an array of variables unique to each home and homeowner, including square footage, materials chosen by the homeowner and the cost of labor associated with installation, which can vary significantly between locations. According to the online renovation resource HomeAdvisor, the average cost to install or replace carpet is between \$782 and \$2,812. That wide range illustrates how much the cost of the project will be affected by variables unique to each project. However, even homeowners who come in around or above the high end of that estimate may find carpet installation is among the more affordable ways to give the interior of a home an entirely new look and feel.

How different are carpeting materials?

Carpeting materials differ in their look, feel

and function. The home renovation experts at Angi.com note that some carpet fibers are better suited to areas in a home that attract a lot of foot traffic, while others make for better options in areas with less use, such as a bedroom or home office. For example, Angi.com notes that polyester has a luxurious, soft feel, making it a strong option for bedroom floors. Nylon carpet fiber is resistant to stains and damage and maintains its height under heavy weight, making this a good option in heavily trafficked rooms. Homeowners can discuss each carpeting material with their flooring retailer to determine which suits their budget and which is best in each room of their homes.

Is carpet padding a must?

Carpet padding is one of the costs associated with carpeting. When shopping for carpeting for the first time, homeowners may notice carpet padding costs on their estimate and wonder what it is and if it's truly necessary. Carpet padding is necessary, as Flooring101.com notes that it keeps the underside of the carpet from wearing against the subfloor while absorbing the impact of foot traffic and furniture. That absorption helps to reduce stress on the carpet and thus extend its life expectancy. Carpet padding also can have an insulating effect and help to reduce sound in a room. So while carpet padding might be a costly expense on an itemized estimate, it's well worth the investment.

Carpeting can help make a home feel more cozy and welcoming. Homeowners can work with a local carpeting retailer to find a carpet that meets their needs and fits their budget.

Projects to Consider Before Moving into a New Home



The day homeowners move into a new home is a unique experience. First-time home buyers may see such a day as the culmination of years of hard work, while those who are not new to the experience may find their new home is where they'll spend the rest of their lives.

Move-in day is indeed a notable milestone, but there's much homeowners can do between closing on a home and backing the moving truck into the driveway. In fact, it may be best for homeowners to complete several home interior projects while the residence is still empty.

Painting

Painting home interiors is among the more logical projects to consider before moving into a home. Simply put, an empty home is far easier to paint than one filled with furniture and other items. Professional painters may even discount a project if they know they won't have to cover and/or move any furniture before and after applying paint. Painting before anyone has moved in also saves residents the discomfort of living in a home overcome by the lingering aroma of drying paint. Simply open the windows and let the home air out throughout each painting session.

Flooring

Flooring projects are another undertaking to consider before moving in. Whether you're tearing up old carpet and replacing it with new carpet, refinishing wood floors, or installing a wholly new floor, each task is considerably easier if there is nothing on the floor. Flooring projects are best left to the professionals, and labor costs may drop considerably if contractors don't have to pause to move furnishings or work around other items.

Deep cleaning

A professional cleaning service should be

among the first calls homeowners make after closing on a new home. A deep cleaning when the home is empty and all lingering dust and debris is visible to the naked eye can ensure no spots are missed before move-in day. Request that the cleaning service clean the interior of kitchen drawers and cabinets, which have a tendency to accumulate grime over the years.

Electrical work

Modern homes are plugged in, so addressing electrical issues prior to move-in day can ensure there are no interruptions to internet connectivity when everyone begins to settle into the home. This is also a great time to install additional electrical outlets, and homeowners are urged to take the time to draw up plans for how each room will look once all of their furniture is in the house. Doing so can identify where additional outlets should be installed. Homeowners also can visit their new home at night and turn on the lights to see if existing fixtures provide ample illumination. If not, installing new fixtures prior to moving in makes cleanup easier and ensures there are no dark nights once everyone is in the home.

Ceilings

Replacing ceilings prior to moving in is another savvy move. If the ceilings are dated or unsightly, removing, repainting or replacing them before anything is beneath them is a great way to protect valuables from damage. And contractors may not need as much time to complete such a project in empty rooms as they would in spaces where they need to negotiate their way around furniture and other valuables.

Various renovation projects can be conducted prior to moving into a new home. Such an approach can save both money and effort.



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Pros and Cons of Open Concept Floor Plans

Open floor plans that make it easy to move through primary living and entertaining areas have been popular for decades. Open concept floor plans join the dining room, kitchen and living (great) room into a communal space where sight lines are maximized and walls are minimal.

According to JJones Design Co., the origins of open concept floor plans may be traced to the deaf community. An open layout allows for better visual communication and awareness of one's surroundings, and some deaf individuals modified their kitchen and living spaces to facilitate more room for social gatherings and signing. Nowadays, it's nearly impossible to find a new construction with closed-off rooms. Here's a look at some of the pros and cons of having an open-concept home.



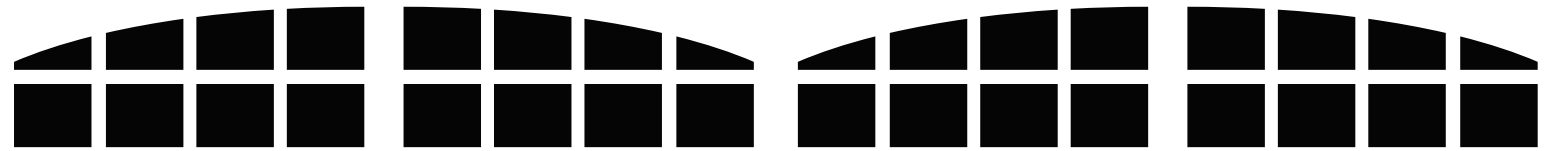
- **Benefit:** Open concept plans make small spaces feel bigger. When smaller homes are broken up by walls, they can seem even smaller. By tearing down walls, one can trick the mind into thinking there is more square footage.
- **Drawback:** The space may feel too large. An open concept floor plan in a large home can make interior spaces feel cavernous. A cozy home can be difficult to achieve with fewer walls.
- **Benefit:** Open concept plans facilitate the flow of natural light. Without walls to break up rooms, homeowners can maximize light coming in through their windows. This also may help to brighten darker rooms that do not get

- as much natural light.
- **Drawback:** Privacy can be hard to achieve. Unobstructed views from windows and doors can make it more challenging to create privacy when desired. When window shades are open, passersby can see into a home. Also, sunlight may end up wearing out flooring and furniture throughout the home.
- **Benefit:** Open floor plans allow more space to spread out when entertaining. One of the biggest pluses of open floor plans is that it makes it easier to host crowds. Guests can enjoy the communal space, while hosts can still interact

- with friends and family even while preparing meals in the kitchen.
- **Drawback:** Homeowners will likely need to do more cleaning ahead of hosting guests, as multiple rooms will be on display. Also, cleanup afterwards may be more arduous since guests have spent time in multiple spaces.
- **Benefit:** Open concept plans can improve property value. The home renovation experts at The Spruce note open floor plans are desirable and increase the value of a home by up to 7.4 percent a year.
- **Drawback:** Some home buyers are

beginning to shy away from open floor plans. This may have been prompted by stay-at-home requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, when multiple family members were working and doing school work at home. In that environment, an open-concept layout didn't provide the privacy or distraction-free spaces residents may have needed.

Open floor plans have been around for more than 30 years, but they aren't everyone's cup of tea. The pros and cons of this design style merits consideration when renovating or shopping for a home.



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Tips for the Gardening Beginner

Gardening is a popular hobby all over the world. Ruby Home Luxury Real Estate estimates there are 71.5 million gardening households in the United States alone. That translates to around 185.9 million people engaged in some form of gardening, which places the U.S. among other countries where gardening is wildly popular, including Australia and China.

A greater number of people are showing interest in gardening, which is a rewarding hobby that's good for the mind and the body. Those who are new to gardening may need a crash course to get started. These pointers can help anyone foster a newfound passion for gardening.

Choose the best location

Spend time in the yard and decide where to house a garden. A far-off corner may get the most sun, but will you forget about the garden if it is too far away? Ideally, the garden should be located where it will get at least six to eight hours of sun each day. There also should be a water source nearby. The spot also should be convenient so that it is easy to go and pick vegetables or prune flowers.

Start small

If you're new to gardening, begin with a small garden footprint so that you can get your feet wet. A raised garden bed can be a good starting point because it is contained



and easy to maintain. As your experience (and garden) grows, you can add to the garden size the next time around.

Amend the soil

It's possible but unlikely that the soil in the backyard is the perfect mix to grow healthy plants. It's more likely that the garden will need some soil modification. You can test the soil makeup with do-it-yourself kits or

work with a garden center. A garden typically requires a mix of compost to add nutrients to the dirt; peat moss or coconut coir to help with water retention and to make the soil lighter; and vermiculite that helps to retain water. A compost bin set up at the same time as the garden allows gardeners to continually produce nutrient-rich food to add to the garden.

Plant starter guide

It's best to keep a few things in mind when planning the garden. Think about what will grow well in your climate. Consider how big the garden will be and the size of mature plants. A small garden will not be able to accommodate corn, for example. Also, how would you like the space to look and what will be its function? Is this a purely aesthetic garden or one that will be food-bearing?

Start seeds inside

If you'll be starting a garden from seeds, it's best to start indoors before your region's frost-free date. This way the delicate plants will get the needed care and can establish before they go outdoors in the ground. Keep them humid by covering the seedlings in plastic wrap. You can start the seeds in different containers, even empty egg cartons. Transplant to larger containers after the seedlings grow a second set of leaves. Once you're free from overnight frost, you can place the established, strong seedlings in the ground.

An automatic watering system, such as a timer hooked up to the sprinkler, can keep the garden well watered, which increases the chances of success. Then it will only be a matter of weeks before the garden can be enjoyed throughout the season.

In addition to overhead lines, SMECO has many underground electric lines. Call Miss Utility at 811 before you dig.



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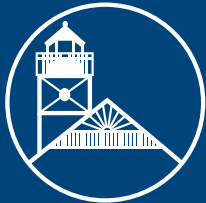
With the return of spring, many people are excited to head outdoors and get started on some projects around the house and yard. It's important to stay safe and be aware of overhead power lines. Look up.

- Never climb power poles or transmission towers.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- Keep equipment away from overhead lines when carrying ladders, pool skimmers, and pruning tools
- If you are doing work close to power lines—such as trimming trees, working on your roof, or doing exterior renovations—keep yourself, your ladder, and anything you are handling a safe distance from the power line.
- Contact SMECO to disconnect power if you are doing work that requires close contact with overhead lines attached to your home.
- Use a licensed electrician for all electrical work.
- Plant trees away from power lines.



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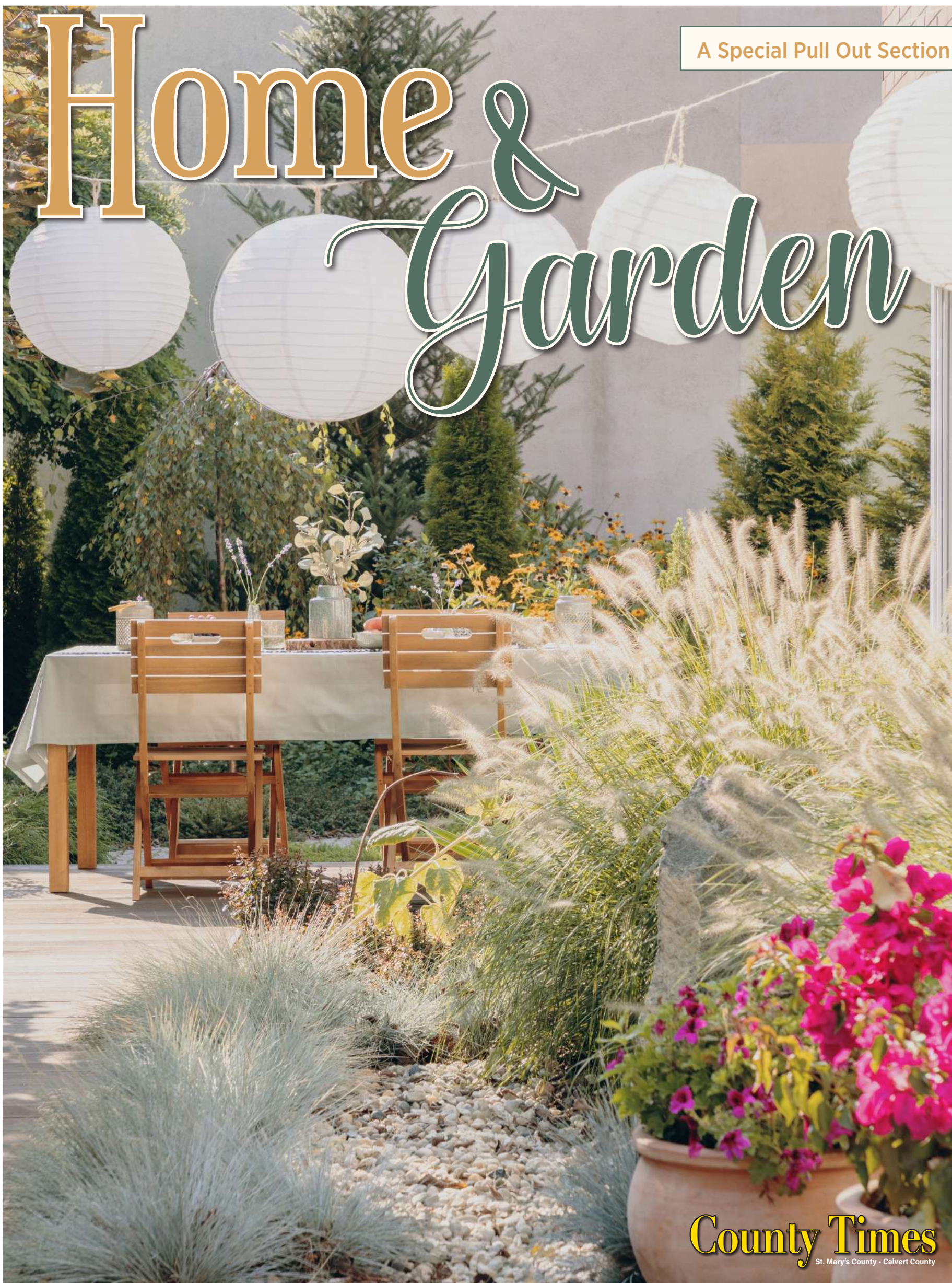
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Consider these moves when considering a career transition

If you are navigating a career transition, what financial moves should you consider? Here are five things you need to know before making a move.

- *Know the money involved.* If your transition is due to a layoff or early retirement package, you need to understand how much money you'll receive and for how long. Will the money stop if you accept a new role, will you accrue sick leave and vacation time during your transition and will you be paid for unused leave at your final resignation date. You should also investigate if you qualify for any programs that would support you during your transition.
- *Know your benefits package.* Many companies and organizations offer extended benefit packages for those transitioning into retirement or being laid off. For example, the Federal government may offer coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program, or you can research programs like the Temporary Continuation of Coverage, which can last up to 18 months for separating employees. Regardless of your situation, doing your research and asking questions about understanding what programs and support is available to you is key.
- *Know your retirement plan options.* Many Americans have retirement savings in 401Ks and similar programs. Government employees use the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). You should work with a financial professional who can explain how you'll be taxed on withdrawals from these accounts, should you need them. In some cases, you can qualify for early retirement and can avoid the 10% early withdrawal penalties. If you're transitioning to a new role, you may have the option to transfer past accounts like your TSP to a new employer's 401(k) if the plan accepts transfers. Finally, you could roll over your existing savings plan into an IRA allowing you to avoid immediate taxes and potentially providing you with some attractive investment options.
- *Review your finances and budget.* What sources of income can you count on during this transition? If you have built an emergency fund containing several months' worth of living expenses, you may need to tap into it. If you were already nearing retirement age, you might start drawing on Social Security, even if it's earlier than you planned. If you aren't near retirement age, you may be able to find some part-time work until you land your next full-time job. At the same time, you may want to closely examine your budget to find areas in which you can cut back. One of the many free budgeting apps available online can prove useful in this area.
- *Get some answers — and some help.* You may want to consult with a financial professional, who can provide advice and guidance and help you work toward your short- and long-term goals.

This can unquestionably be a challenging time for you. But by looking at all your options, drawing on all your resources and getting some financial advice and guidance, you can make decisions that can help you be prepared for whatever life throws at you.

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A View From The BLEACHERS



FINDING FOOTING

By Ronald N. Guy
Contributing Writer

The line it is drawn. The curse it is cast. The slow one now will later be fast. As the present now will later be past. The order is rapidly fading. And the first one now will later be last.

Those words, the last verse of an iconic song, were written by a famous poet from Minnesota over fifty years ago and released to the world in 1964. While many Bob Dylan's songs are abstract word paintings that evolve over time and leave the meaning in any moment to the listener, "Times They Are A-Changin'" clearly speaks to a world and a current reality shifting under foot. The gist of Dylan's musical sermon is this: The old order is done, the present is strange and new, and the future remains a great unknown.

At the core of the song's timelessness is its lyrical wisdom. The ground is always moving under our feet. Change is the only constant. Control and stasis are but an illusion. But there are certainly times that are more fluid than others. In 1964, America was processing the recent death of John F. Kennedy, escalating commitments in Vietnam, the Civil Rights Act and desegregation. The currents of change flowed briskly. Enter Bob Dylan to capture, in song, a moment in history that stirred a spectrum of human emotions.

With that opening, what happened in D.C. sports last fall seems insignificant. Historically, it is, but for fans of Washington football - a lot that covers the gamut from blinded-by-love forever-fans, graybeards whose interest succumbed to decades of losing and off-field atrocities, and youth who have known no success - last season is as big as anything experienced since the burgundy and gold last hoisted the Lombardi Trophy in early 1992.

In roughly a four-month period, the competence of new leadership was confirmed, the seeds of cultural change were planted, sowed and sprouted, and, most importantly, a franchise quarterback, indisputably the most important asset in any sport across the globe, was found.

"Jayden Daniels", the concept not specifically the player, happens in other places. Patrick Mahomes rewrites Kansas City history. Lamar Jackson, Josh Allen and Joe Burrough make Baltimore, Buffalo and Cincinnati perennial contenders. Jordan Love, Justin Herbert and C.J. Stroud make Packers, Chargers and Texans fans rightfully hopeful. Such things never occur in D.C. Heath Shuler, Gus Frerotte, Trent Green, Brad Johnson, Patrick Ramsey, Jason Campbell, Donovan McNabb, Robert Griffin, Kirk Cousins and Alex Smith all delivered only false hope. Jayden Daniels feels different.

With one epic season in the books, the present for Washington football, unlike Dylan's long-ago suggestion of never-ending uncertainty, has painted a crystal clear future, dictated by finance. Daniels is signed through the 2027 season (with a club option for 2028). His cap hits for those seasons range from \$8M to just over \$12M; these figures are a quarter of that of other elite quarterbacks. Translation: Washington is now all-in. The team has four seasons to capitalize on its quarterback bargain and spend wildly across its roster.

It feels like "Times They Are A-Changin'" has been playing in a constant loop since at least the pandemic. To grab a metaphor from nature, life over the last five years has been less deep-rooted, steadfast oak and much more like occupying a boat on rough seas or being a leaf in a brisk autumn breeze. Superficially the world looks familiar, but much has changed on a global, national and personal level. That the Commanders are suddenly competent, have a foundation for long-term success and just played for a spot in the Super Bowl - crazy talk just 18 months ago - is more evidence of a world flipped on its head. It also indicates how quickly fortunes can change, even after a lengthy, hope-sapping malaise. One supposes the take-away is to seek moments of footing, remain confident in their arrival and be poised to capitalize. It might not be as obvious and impactful as drafting Jayden Daniels, and it could get lost in the flow of life, but opportunity will wash ashore. And even Dylan would agree that while change is constant, progress need not be flat.

Send comments to RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com

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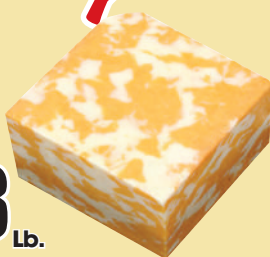
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Carmenere

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750mL
Centorri
Moscato Di Pavia

11.49



750mL
Santa Margherita
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750mL
Force & Grace
Cabernet Sauvignon
Paso Robles

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Wine of the Month

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Dark Horse
Wine

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MARCH MADNESS

MARCH 7



Maryland Day at St. Clements Island Museum

March 25, 2025
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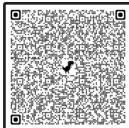
10AM - 5PM

Celebrate the founding of Maryland with free museum admission, boat rides, kids activities, food truck, and more!



Official Ceremony at 2pm (FREE)

More Info: [Facebook.com/SCIMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/SCIMuseum) or 301-769-2222



First Friday Itinerary

10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Visit the Old Jail Museum for FREE tours with extended hours for First Friday

5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Opening reception for St. Mary's County Arts Council's "Youth in Arts" month. Come visit with local young artists

5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Meet and Greet with Hayden Williams local youth entrepreneur at the St. Mary's Arts Council as part of their Youth in Arts Month

5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Opening reception at North End Gallery featuring "Local Perspectives" by new artists Karen Chambers and Lauri Bruce

5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Live music at the Port of Leonardtown Winery featuring Recycled Hearts

9:00 p.m. Karaoke at The Rex Theatre featuring DJ Ernie and SammySams



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WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUES
5	6	7	8	9	10	11

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MEET PETUNIA

This sweet 8 month old kitty is looking for her Furever home. She enjoys a good nap in the sunlight. Petunia is looking for a place to curl up on a cozy lap while you're watching tv or reading a good book. I may be a little shy at first but once I get to know you I greet you when you enter a room. Are you interested in adopting Petunia? Go to www.animalrelieffund.org to fill out an application, Call 301-866-0303 with questions, or stop by during our adoption days at the Well Pet Clinic in Lexington Park, Saturdays 11am-2pm.



Recreation & Parks Announces Annual Easter Egg Festival

Advance Ticket Sales Start March 10

On Saturday, April 12, 2025, St. Mary's County Government's Department of Recreation & Parks (R&P) will host the 42nd Annual Easter Egg Festival at the St. Mary's County Fairgrounds. This rain or shine event will be held from 11:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. and is open to the entire community! Don't miss this Southern Maryland spring staple, featuring the Easter Bunny, egg hunts for ages up to 12, live entertainment, free arts and crafts, face painting, delicious local food options, and shopping from area vendors.

For a \$7.00 fee, attendees can participate in the egg hunt, visit with the Easter Bunny and Mrs. Cottontail, enjoy face painting, and participate in a variety of other bunny approved activities.

Vendor applications are available at: www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/eas-tervendor.pdf. As vendors apply and are approved, they will be contacted by the event coordinator to secure space. Vendor types include craft vendors, merchandise vendors, and food trucks.

Sponsorship applications are available at: www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/easter-

[sponsor.pdf](http://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/easter-sponsor.pdf). A variety of sponsorship levels and donation opportunities are available to support this event. Each level includes promotional benefits for your business, such as recognition in event marketing, the R&P program guide, or on social media, reaching over 12,000 households.

Tickets for this event can be purchased online, in advance, beginning March 10, 2025, at www.stmaryscountymd.gov/easter. Tickets may also be purchased in-person at the Recreation & Parks main office in Leonardtown, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Net proceeds from the Easter Festival, along with the department's annual golf tournament, support the R&P Scholarship Program which provides qualified individuals with the opportunity to participate in an activity at an up to 50% prorated amount of the registration fee.

For questions or assistance, please contact Recreation & Parks at (301) 475-4200 ext. 1800. For more information, please visit www.stmaryscountymd.gov/recreate.

St. Mary's Gymnastics Academy Shines

St. Mary's County Government's Department of Recreation & Parks (R&P) is proud to announce successful meet performances by the St. Mary's Gymnastics Academy (SMGA) USAG team at two recent gymnastics competitions.

Twenty-five gymnasts represented SMGA in Levels 2 through Xcel Silver at the Win-Win Classic on February 15-16, 2025, hosted by Win-Win Gymnastics in Anne Arundel County. SMGA gymnasts in Levels Xcel Platinum through Level 6 competed at the Excalibur Cup on February 14-16, 2025, hosted by Excalibur Gymnastics USA located in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

St. Mary's County Recreation & Parks

and SMGA are proud of the achievements of all who competed. At the Win-Win Classic, Level 2 took 2nd place overall and Xcel Bronze took 3rd overall. At the Excalibur Cup, Platinum took 2nd place overall. Thank you to the families, coaches, and gymnasts for their dedication.

For more information on SMGA or the recreational gymnastics program, please visit www.stmaryscountymd.gov/gymnastics or call (301) 475-4200 ext. 1750.

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

COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Ordinance No. 227

The Leonardtown Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Monday, March 17, 2025, at 4:15 p.m. in the Town Office located at 22670 Washington Street, Leonardtown, MD. The purpose of the hearing is to present for public review the Leonardtown 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. Copies of the documents are available for public review at the Leonardtown Town Office on the Town website at <https://leonardtown.somd.com/> under the Government tab.

All interested parties are encouraged to attend or to submit written comments by 3:00 p.m. on March 17, 2025, to the Commissioners of Leonardtown, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, MD 20650. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

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Woman Arrested on Drug Distribution, Vulnerable Adult Abuse Charges

Deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Patrol Division, in coordination with the Vice Narcotics Unit, arrested Judy Marie Smith, 45, of California, MD, early Wednesday morning on an open warrant for drug distribution and other charges.

At approximately 4:12 a.m., deputies took Smith into custody and transported her to the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center in Leonardtown. Smith was served with an open warrant charging her with the following offenses:

- Fourteen counts of CDS – Possession with Intent to Distribute
- Ten counts of Vulnerable Adult Abuse
- Ten counts of Obtaining Property of a Vulnerable Adult
- One count of Theft Scheme (\$100 to under \$1,000)

The charges stem from an investigation at the Taylor Farms Assisted Living facility in Bushwood where Smith, an employee, was suspected of diverting controlled prescrip-



Judy Marie Smith

tion medication from patients. Anyone with additional information about this case is asked to contact Deputy First Class Travis Wimberly at 301-475-4200, ext. 8086, or by email at Travis.Wimberly@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Sheriff's Office Investigating Shooting in Lexington Park

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is investigating a shooting that occurred early Wednesday morning in Lexington Park.

At approximately 1 a.m. on March 5, 2025, deputies responded to the 46000 block of Marshall Boulevard following 911 reports of shots fired. Upon arrival, deputies located a male victim suffering from a gunshot wound to the face. They immediately rendered aid until emergency medical personnel arrived. The victim was transported to a regional hospital, where he is listed in stable condition.

Detectives from the Criminal Investigations Division have assumed the case and are actively pursuing leads.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Detective Warren Forinash at 301-475-4200, ext. 8072 or by email at Warren.Forinash@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Tipsters can also call Crime Solvers 24/7 at 301-475-3333 or text Crime Solvers at 274637. In the message block, type "Tip239" and select SEND. After you get a response, continue your conversation.

Note: Tip239 is case-sensitive and must be typed in the message block as shown. With Crime Solvers, you never have to give your name. You may be eligible for a cash reward if your information leads to an arrest.

Routine Inspection of Johnson Bridge March 9

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration will conduct a routine inspection on the MD 4 (Governor Thomas Johnson Bridge) at the Calvert and St. Mary's County line. The inspection will occur between 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. Sunday, March 9, weather permitting.

One of the bridge's two lanes will be closed and a flagging operation will be in place. Portable variable message signs will be

placed along area state routes to make travelers aware of the closure. Drivers should plan extra time traveling on MD 4 at the Thomas Johnson Bridge.

Customers who have questions about this work may contact the District 5 Office at 410-841-1000 or toll-free at 1-800-331-5603. Motorists in need may dial #77 on their mobile device for roadside assistance.



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Board of Education Adjusts School Calendar

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The county school board voted last week to use three days later this summer as make up days for the three days already used in January as snow days, and approved the use of another this week — March 7 — which was a professional development day, to make up for the fourth inclement weather closure on Feb. 12.

That day, though, would have a two-hour early dismissal.

School officials briefing the members of the school board cautioned them by saying that the county may not be out of the season yet for inclement weather, even though spring seems to be coming around the corner.

“We never know what will happen over the next few weeks,” said Dr. Jeffrey Maher, chief strategic officer. “We need to be prepared for all those elements.”

The school board approve the use of June 9, 10 and 11, which normally would have been during the summer vacation season as snow make up days.

On average, Maher said, the school system historically has used 3 to 4 closure days for inclement weather; the system has used



Dr. Jeffrey Maher

four days so far, Jan. 6, 7, 8 and February 12.

Maher was adamant that the system should continue to prepare to have more inclement weather days available beyond the five it has been allotted.

“We’ve had snow in the middle of March before,” Maher said. “We want to be ready, no matter what.”

The board approved holding April 21 as a potential snow makeup day; the current plan calls for using June 12 and June 13 as additional snow make days if more than the five allotted are used.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Jury Convicts Man for Firing Gun During Neighbor Dispute

State’s Attorney Jaymi Sterling announces that a St. Mary’s County jury found Christopher Michael Sherman, 36, of Mechanicsville, Maryland, guilty of two counts of felony first-degree assault and two counts of the use of a firearm in the commission of a violent crime.

On June 18, 2024, Sherman, in the presence of the victims’ children, brandished and fired his handgun during a heated verbal altercation with his neighbors over their dogs. Deputies from the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office responded promptly and their investigation led to Sherman’s arrest.

“I want to thank the jury for their diligence and attention. The jury carefully listened to testimony and reviewed the relevant evidence over the span of two-days before convicting the Defendant,” said State’s Attorney Jaymi Sterling. “The successful investigation and prosecution of this case reflects our commitment to prosecuting offenders who commit violent crimes and ensuring the safety of our community.”

Sherman faces a maximum penalty of 90 years in prison.



Christopher Michael Sherman

Senior Assistant State’s Attorney Alena Mosier prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary’s County.

Detective Andrew Burgess of the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office was the lead investigator.

The Honorable Joseph M. Stalonis presided over the case.

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10K/5K RUN/WALK FOR HOSPICE

County Mourns Loss of Long-Time Educator, School Board Chair

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Dr. Salvatore Raspa, who worked for years in the public school system before rising to become the chair of the St. Mary's County Board of Education, passed away Feb. 26 in La Plata while staying at a nursing home.

He was 85.

Raspa and his wife Myra first moved to St. Mary's County in 1961 and began to work as a science and mathematics teacher at Great Mills High School.

He rose through the ranks of the school system to administration while pursuing degrees in higher education.

In 1978 while principal of Great Mills High School, a post he held for eight years, Raspa pursued his doctorate in education, administration and supervision. Upon completion of his doctorate from George Washington University, Raspa came to hold several roles at the school system involved in curriculum and instruction. He became supervisor of science and health for several years as well as director of transportation. He finally ascended to assistant superintendent of St. Mary's County Public Schools.

After his retirement from public schools, Raspa continued his public service with a

total of 12 years on the school board, half of that time sitting as the chairman.

Raspa, along with his wife Myra, were also involved in numerous charitable causes, often benefitting children through education and scholarships.

Raspa was also deeply involved in county politics, being a lifelong Democrat who also served on the Democratic Central Committee for St. Mary's.

School board member Cathy Allen remembered Raspa fondly as a dedicated family man who, once he retired from the school system could only bear to be away for a couple of years before coming back as an elected official to shepherd the institution he had come to love so dearly.

"He absolutely adored his family, there was nothing he would not do for them," Allen said. "He was passionate about education, especially science.

"He was always asking questions; 'Are we doing enough for our students?' 'Are we taking care of our staff?'"

Raspa was a proponent of fully funding the school system's budget each year it was submitted to the county commissioners for approval.

Allen remembered taking trips to the General Assembly with Raspa each year to

advocate for local education funding needs; she remembered he would talk about what the county was like when he first arrived or the many people he had met and connected with locally.

"He loved telling stories," Allen said. "Our trips to and from Annapolis were always interesting.

"And he loved his dog beyond measure. Where ever he went he had to get a toy to bring back for his dog."

Commissioner Mike Hewitt remembered meeting Raspa when he was just a sophomore in high school.

"I met him in the 10th grade," Hewitt said, noting he was told to go to Raspa's office for some sort of infraction. "I don't remember what the reason was, but I was sent down to see vice principal Raspa."

Raspa told Hewitt to bend over and put his hands on the desk, at which point Raspa produced a long wooden paddle with holes in it which he called "the board of education" and proceeded to use it on Hewitt.

"He swatted my backside two times," Hewitt said. "That second one really hurt."

After that incident, Hewitt said, he never had to be called to the vice principal's office for a disciplinary infraction.

"I never got swatted again," Hewitt said.



Sal Raspa

"He was a wonderful man and he will be missed."

Allen remembered a man dedicated to his work in education and to the community he loved.

"He loved the work," Allen said. "He was a very social individual.

"He was happiest when others were around."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

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LOCAL FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED



Waterman, Restaurateur of 70 Years Dies

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

A renowned South County waterman and entrepreneur who fished the local water ways for more than seven decades died this week.

Tommy Courtney passed away March 2 at the age of 79.

Courtney, proprietor of Courtney's Seafood Restaurant nestled away in Ridge in South County, spent his days on the water, hooking in fresh seafood each day to bring back to the restaurant he bought in the late 1980s to be prepared for customers.

Courtney was famous for bringing in the daily catch to be prepared by his wife, Julie, at their family-owned restaurant on Wynne Road.

Courtney was featured prominently several years ago, in an episode of the television show Maryland Farm and Harvest showing how watermen catch rockfish.

"There's two things I think about when I leave the dock," Courtney said in a thick local accent. "Money and women."

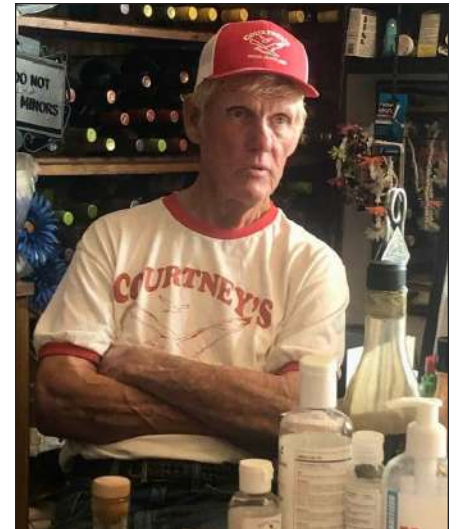
"I'm thinking about having fun fishing."

Courtney said he started working on the water when he was little more than 2 years old.

"I started with my father, bailing the boat out," Courtney said on the feature episode.

Courtney had been fishing local waters for more than 70 years.

In the segment, Courtney was also featured felling saplings to be used as poles to hold up the large pound nets he used to catch fish; the episode showed him taking the



Tommy Courtney

poles out on his boat and driving them into the floor of the Chesapeake Bay by hand.

In another video recorded interview posted on social media, Courtney said he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1965 and served during the Vietnam War.

When he returned, he continued plying the trade he had been raised with as a child. In that interview, posted by on-line content creator Tara Bray, Courtney said of the approximately 300 different species of marine life present in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, he had caught about 100 of them in his life on the water.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Commissioners Call for EMS Billing Review

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

This week two county commissioners called for a review of the way the county collects payment for ambulance services after two prior articles by The County Times revealed how patients were being billed for an ambulance visit despite the county supposedly following a policy of so-called "soft billing."

"We need to revisit this whole EMS billing policy," said Commissioner Mike Hewitt at the March 4 meeting of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County.

Several weeks ago, a resident presented The County Times with several billing statements from a third-party billing company employed by the county, saying the resident was responsible for paying a portion of the cost that their insurance had not paid.

For the past several years, since the county began employing paid emergency medical personnel to augment the volunteer rescue squads, the county has been charging the insurance policies of patients to pay for ambulance services to help pay for career personnel.

Any portion the insurance companies did

not pay would be absorbed by the county, county commissioners have said repeatedly over the years. But the billing statements shown to The County Times did not say the county would absorb the remainder of the cost, rather that the recipient of the ambulance service was responsible for the payment.

Hewitt said residents should not have received a bill in the first place.

"If we're not going to require you to pay it, why spend a stamp to send it [the bill,]" Hewitt said.

Last week, Jennifer Aubert-Utz, the county's director of the Department of Emergency Services, spoke to members of the Commission on Aging about the problem.

Utz said she had been apprised of the situation last summer and that the department was working to solve it.

Utz and Hewitt, this week, reiterated that no county resident should hesitate to call an ambulance if they are facing a medical emergency.

"If you get a bill, report it to us but don't pay it," said Commissioner President James "Randy" Guy. "Don't be afraid to call 911."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

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Candidates Vie for Empty Judge Seat

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The state judiciary has revealed that six attorneys have cast their names into consideration to fill the St. Mary's County Circuit Court seat left vacant by the sudden death last October of Judge Michael J. Stamm.

They include the current county attorney and former local prosecutor Buffy Giddens, long-time Leonardtown attorney with a private practice Daniel Slade, Sue Ann Armitage, who recently lost her bid to succeed sitting Judge Amy Lorenzini in last year's election, Kevin Hill, who currently serves as a magistrate in the local court system, Marsha Lynette Williams, another Leonardtown-based attorney with a private practice in family and criminal law and John Andrew Mattingly, Jr., who currently serves as the associate county attorney for Calvert County government.

Governor Wes Moore recently appointed 12 people from St. Mary's and Calvert coun-

ties to choose judicial nominees to fill local court vacancies.

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

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

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

The committee is expected to begin its interviewing and deliberation process April 8.

guyleonard@countytimes.net



Sue Ann Armitage



Buffy Giddens



Kevin Hill



John Mattingly



Daniel Slade



Marsha Williams

Commissioners Seek Federal Funding for YMCA



Artist's rendering of the new YMCA

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County approved a request this week from county public works staff to seek congressionally directed funding — known as an earmark — to support the construction of the new YMCA facility currently being built next to public pool on Great Mills Road.

The request to the federal delegation was for an additional \$2 million on top of \$1.5 million already requested in state aid by the YMCA of the Chesapeake, which will run the facility while the county takes actual ownership once finished.

The total estimated cost of the project is approximately \$22 million, of which the county has posted \$15 million to begin the project.

The new 63,000 square foot facility will include a state-of-the-art wellness center a six-lane pool with easy entry and space for swim lesson and young swimmers, a double gymnasium including two full size basketball courts, four basketball half courts, six pickleball courts, two volleyball courts an elevated indoor walking track five indoor multiple purpose spaces a "stay and play" area for young children, community meeting spaces a teaching kitchen and social spaces.

To date the project has received \$850,000 in earmark spending and officials expect it was receive an additional \$1.25 million once the current federal budget is passed.

The earmark current requested by the county commissioners would apply to fiscal 2026.

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Sheriff, State's Attorney Seek Extra Funding

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

For fiscal 2026 the county sheriff's office is seeking \$68 million from the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, which represents a small increase of a little over two percent compared to the current budget, but the State's Attorney Office is seeking \$7.4 million for the coming fiscal year, which is an increase of about 26 percent, according to county budgeting documents.

Both Sheriff Steve Hall and State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling made their requests for additional funding this week at the March 4 budget work session before the county commissioners.

The request for money comes at a time when the county is uncertain of what the state will do to cover its own \$3 billion budget shortfall; Commissioner President James "Randy" Guy warned those county elected officials looking for more money this year should temper their expectations.

"I'd like to remind everybody that the state and federal government are still in turmoil about budgets so we...are trying to track it as best we can," Guy said at the beginning of the work session. "We'll do our best to make some decisions but it's going to be tough."

The county is already anticipating approximately \$2 million in additional costs in teacher pensions being pushed down upon it by the state.

There is talk in Annapolis of pushing the state budget's formalization deadline out to May 7, increasing the time the county is uncertain of what the state's spending and taxation plans are.

"This was heavily scrutinized and prioritized," Hall said of his agency's budget proposal. "Our requests reflect trying to get absolute best service to the community."

"It takes care of our programs we're offering now [and] the ones that we could potentially be offering in the future."

"We're very happy with the budget that was submitted but, we're also very cognizant of the situation that you all are in."

Sterling said her office has made strides in securing outside grant funding during her first two years in office — this one is the beginning of her third — and continues to aggressively pursue criminal prosecutions.

She noted her office has brought in \$1.5 million in grant funding over the past two years, which funded an evidence review unit and a victim/witness services unit.

"That's something we did not have before I started here," she said. Her office continues to focus on prosecuting violent criminals, said Sterling.

"We're going after them," she told commissioners. "There are no free passes and we're having a significant number of jury trials."

"We're holding them accountable."

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“WE NEED TO REVISIT THIS WHOLE EMS BILLING POLICY.”

COUNTY COMMISSIONER MIKE HEWITT



LOCAL 5
Judge candidates named



LOCAL 5
Sheriff, State's Attorney want more funding



ON THE COVER
Former school board chair Dr. Salvatore Raspa passed away

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, MAR 6	FRI, MAR 7	SAT, MAR 8	SUN, MAR 9
 Partly Cloudy Hi: 50° Lo: 34°	 Mostly Sunny Hi: 55° Lo: 41°	 AM Clouds/PM Sun Hi: 50° Lo: 32°	 Partly Cloudy Hi: 55° Lo: 34°
MON, MAR 10	TUE, MAR 11	WED, MAR 12	THU, MAR 13
 Sunny Hi: 62° Lo: 39°	 Sunny Hi: 68° Lo: 48°	 Mostly Sunny Hi: 71° Lo: 51°	 PM Showers Hi: 67° Lo: 47°

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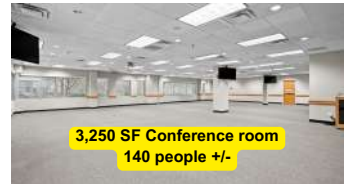
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