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“JUST AN OVERALL AMAZING SEASON.”

SUPERVISOR OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ATHLETICS MARCUS WATSON ON DUAL STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



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Commissioners request separate funding for fire and rescue



LOCAL 5
Governor names senate appointee



ON THE COVER
Two Calvert high schools win football state championships

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, DEC 11	FRI, DEC 12	SAT, DEC 13	SUN, DEC 14
Partly Cloudy Hi: 40° Lo: 29°	Cloudy Hi: 40° Lo: 31°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 48° Lo: 33°	AM Snow Hi: 36° Lo: 18°
MON, DEC 15	TUE, DEC 16	WED, DEC 17	THU, DEC 18
Mostly Sunny Hi: 29° Lo: 22°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 39° Lo: 27°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 38°	Showers Hi: 52° Lo: 39°



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A Championship Day for Calvert County

Patuxent, Huntingtown Win State Football Titles



By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

It was a Cinderella year for Calvert County high school football, capped this past weekend when two of the county's four high schools won state championships. Both games were played Dec. 6 at Navy-Marine Corps Stadium in Annapolis.

In one of those games, two county schools faced each other for the 2A championship, with Huntingtown outlasting Northern, 24-21.

In the state 1A championship, Patuxent defeated Flint Hill 35-28, overcoming a 28-7 first half deficit to earn the largest comeback in Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association playoff history.

The results were the first time in county football history that a team won two consecutive championships and the first time that three teams played in championship games.

For Supervisor of Physical Education, Health and Athletics Marcus Watson it was a professional and personal triumph, as he oversaw the successful year and as his son Brayden, Patuxent's freshman quarterback, led his team to that amazing comeback victory.

The proud father said, "He had an amazing year for a freshman, setting an all-time state record for completion percentage for the season. He threw for 31 touchdowns and 2,600 yards. He had an amazing year, and I am certainly proud of him, no doubt. But I'm just very proud of the community that he plays in and just very honored that he gets to play with Steve Crounse and the staff there. Just an overall amazing season."

He was asked what's in the water that leads to such success. Watson said, "I think when you look at the county athletics, there's been success in many sports," adding, "In all seasons we have individual state champions and team state champions. And I think it's really a testament to the communities. I think it's a testament to a lot of factors. The feeder systems that kids are involved in. I think that it's the commitment from these amazing coaching staffs, not just football, but all sports, where the coaches are so dedicated and they're supported by their high school administration, supported by the county. And all these teams play at a very tough conference, whether it be football or any other sport. And SMAC (Southern Maryland Athletic Conference) really gets you battle tested for the playoffs."

Watson observed, "If you look at playoff scores with SMAC football teams, a lot of times they're one sided unless a SMAC team's playing another SMAC team. Now, when you get into the state semifinals and state finals, those scores tend to become closer. But a lot of those early round games

are very much one away by SMAC teams. And I think it's because SMAC is probably the best conference in the state. I would say it's the best for football hands down."

He noted when the playoffs went to six divisions in football, "I think it brought SMAC a little bit even more to the forefront because last year there were six teams that played in the state semifinals. There were three teams that played in the state championship. And last year SMAC had two state champs. This year there were five teams in the state semifinals, four teams from SMAC played in the state championship game, including Lackey from Charles County. And there were two state champions again."

He talked about the coaches. Of Patuxent's Crounse, "He's a legendary coach, member of the Maryland High School Hall of Fame for football coaches."

Watson added, "He's just an amazing motivator, just an amazing guy who grows young men. He and his staff collectively impact the kids and the school and the community."

Watson said of Crounse, "Obviously his football mind, his x's and o's, are first class. He's just a great football coach and even better role model for the kids that are around him. And his staff's the same way."

Of Huntingtown's Pail Friel, Watson said, "This was Huntington's third consecutive state championship, and they lost the last two, before Saturday."

He added, "If you look at how they win games, they're kind of the throwback in a way. They run the ball, they're committed to their run, they play great defense, they tackle well, they don't commit penalties, and they're just solid in every way that you need a team to be solid, very fundamentally sound. You don't need to do a lot of talking out there. Just our performance in our place speaks for itself."

Of Friel, he added, "He runs a great program. Kids have a lot of respect for him, people in the community have a lot of respect for him. A great guy, a football guy his whole life."

Northern's Tom Abel is a first-year head coach in the county. Watson said,

"He came to us from, from Dundalk in Baltimore and had success at Dundalk. He actually was a Huntingtown grad. So, first year as a coach in SMAC but not a first-year head coach. I really think Tom did a great job this year. He really worked hard. A new coach comes in, which brings a new culture, new set of expectations, new way of doing business. And I think by the time the season began, the kids and community and staff had definitely bought into his process. And I think the evidence of that is simply the fact that you see where they ended their season playing in Annapolis. They had some

ups and downs. They had a losing streak in the middle of the season, but they circled the wagons and were three minutes away from winning a state championship."

The fan support was amazing, Watson said. "Just the environment, the energy that the crowds created for the three teams that they spent on Saturday was amazing," adding, "With Patuxent you could feel that energy of that crowd, like it became so impactful that the kids were feeding off that energy so much. It was just a really, really cool thing to be a part of. And not that it wasn't there when they were down 28-7 because the fans never lost faith."

The athletics director said, "I've never been a part of a game at the high school level where the crowd was a part of that comeback. Clearly they're not playing, but that energy, that adrenaline rush that I think not only the play gave the kids, but when they

heard that community behind them and the cheerleaders and the parents and the kids in the student section, and it just this thing you feed off of it and it just really brought another nice component to that Patuxent game.

"And, I have to tell you, how that Patuxent game ended with all that energy, that's how that Northern-Huntingtown game began. On both sides, it was just impressive from the beginning until the end. Both those fan bases were just there to cheer, be positive for their own team, not be negative in any way, just focus on their own team, on their own kids. And you know, from the cheerleaders to the people in the stands to the coaches on the side, just an amazing day for Calvert County to see how our community went up there and represented themselves, not only on the field, but in the stands."

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Governor Fills Jackson's Senate Seat

Governor Wes Moore on Dec. 5 announced the appointment of Delegate Kevin M. Harris to fill the Maryland District 27 Senate seat representing Calvert, Charles, and Prince George's counties. The seat was previously held by Acting Superintendent of the Maryland Department of State Police Michael A. Jackson, who was appointed by the governor in October.

"Kevin M. Harris is a decorated veteran and dedicated public servant who has represented Charles and Prince George's counties with distinction," said Gov. Moore. "His experience in the House of Delegates, combined with his service in uniform, demonstrates a deep commitment to our state and our country. I look forward to working with him in this new role in the Senate."

Harris has served as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates since January 2023 representing Maryland District 27A, where he has been a resident for 16 years. Over the last three legislative sessions, he has served as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, as vice chair of the House Education and Economic Development Subcommittee, and as chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. In addition to his legislative duties, Harris is a program manager for Leidos, LLC, working with the Defense Information System Agency.

Harris enlisted with the United States Navy in 1999, and deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan where he was awarded the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. Harris was later selected to serve at the White House Communication Agency, where he spent five years and was honored with the 2007 All Star Award for his performance—an honor reserved for the top 10 percent of the agency.



Senate appointee Del. Kevin Harris

Active in his community, Harris is a member of the Fort Washington alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Greater Saint John Church in Upper Marlboro.

Harris earned his undergraduate degree from Washington Bible College and his graduate degree from Walden University.

Harris was endorsed by the Calvert County Democratic Central Committee. District 27B Del. Jeffrie Long was also a candidate.

Even though he hadn't been officially appointed at that time, a representative of Harris virtually attended the joint meeting between the county commissioners and the county legislative delegation on Dec. 2.

Press release from Office of Gov. Wes Moore. Staff writer Dick Myers also contributed to this article.

Port Republic Woman Sentenced for Domestic Violence

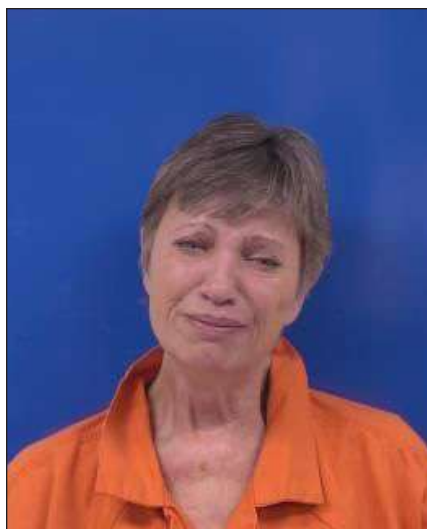
On December 8, Gail Lynne Hawkins, 68, of Port Republic, was sentenced to 25 years in prison, with four years active, by Calvert County Circuit Court Judge Andrew S. Rappaport.

Upon completion of her prison sentence, Hawkins will be required to undergo five years of supervised probation.

Hawkins was convicted of the crimes of first degree assault and obstruction of justice. The charges arose from a 2024 domestic violence incident in which Hawkins discharged a firearm multiple times at her husband. Fortunately, he was not injured.

After she was charged with the assault, Hawkins compounded her legal problems by attempting to arrange a monetary payment to her husband to compel him not to testify.

The case was prosecuted by Calvert County Deputy State's Attorney Timothy Maher and Assistant State's Attorney Anthony Navalaney.



Gail Lynne Hawkins

Press release from Calvert County State's Attorney

Funding Change Proposed for Fire/Rescue Companies



Prince Frederick VFD Engine 21

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has asked the county legislative delegation for authority to create a separate funding mechanism for fire departments and rescue squads.

At a joint meeting between the BOCC and the legislators on Dec. 2, County Attorney John Norris said the proposal would be "authorizing the Board of County Commissioners to set a separate emergency services tax rate in the two areas of Calvert County (fire and rescue) and establishing the maximum amount of 22 cents per hundred dollars for assessed real property value and I believe it's 10 cents for the personal property tax value in section four of this request."

Norris added, "It is required that the commissioners, if they do choose to impose a dedicated emergency services tax, simultaneously reduce the county's general real and personal property tax rates by an amount equal to the newly designated emergency services tax. So, it's simply taking a tax that's already paid and collected, allocating a portion of that rate to fire, rescue, EMS, dive team, and CALS (Calvert Advanced Life Support), and reducing the amount that they collect for the general fund at the same time."

Norris said the proposal will be similar to the fire and rescue taxes that have been in effect for quite some time in St. Mary's County.

Norris added, "We had some requests for apparatus at Huntingtown and Prince

Frederick and others, so moving forward, if this service tax would go forward, they would then use the money for those apparatus."

The proposal would give the companies more direct authority over their decision making. "The departments would be responsible for all their capital improvements just like in St. Mary's County," Norris said.

But Commissioner President Buddy Hance observed, "There's going to have to be a startup process, because they won't have the money to buy an ambulance or a tanker or a boat or a chase vehicle for CALS. And the county might fund it and get reimbursed as they start collecting. So, there's going to have to be an implementation period. But, at some point in time, they will be able to pay for their own buildings, their own vehicles, their own turnout gear."

Solomons is in his district, so Del. Todd Morgan (R: 29 C) wanted to know the status of Solomons Volunteer Rescue Squad and Fire Department's new building. He was told the project is not part of the \$80 million bond authority requested by the commissioners.

Director of Public Works JR Cosgrove said, "We've been in talks with them about their needs. We're looking at getting a proposal from some of our architects to move forward. We're currently in a negotiation as far as a building agreement, but we haven't settled on where we're completely at with that right now. But we do have funding, I believe we're proposing in FY 27 budget, for some design funding."

dickmyers@countytimes.net



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CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of November 17, 2025 – November 23, 2025, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,478 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 49
- Disorderly: 13
- Domestic: 15
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 45
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 1,198
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 35
- Traffic Complaints: 82
- Traffic Stops: 483
- 911 Hang Ups: 55
- ARRESTS: 40

Burglary: 25-98064 On November 19, 2025, Cpl. Buck responded to a report of a commercial burglary at a vacant office building located at 493 Main Street in Prince Frederick. Upon arrival, Cpl. Buck observed two broken windows on the side of the building. A check of the interior revealed that nothing appeared to have been taken. The estimated value of the damaged property is \$500. This case remains under investigation.

Burglary: 25-99160 On November 22, 2025, Senior Deputy Idol responded to the 8200 block of Power Drive in Lusby for the report of a burglary. The complainant reported returning home to find a motion light outside the residence had been broken. Upon entering the home, the interior was found in disarray, with items scattered throughout the rooms and a mirror damaged. Bags had also been emptied onto the floor. Nothing appears to have been taken. The estimated value of the damaged property is \$550.



Robert Wesley King

CDS Violation: 25-97646 On November 18, 2025, at approximately Sgt. Robshaw initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle for excessive speed in the area of Southern Maryland Blvd. and Drury Lane

in Dunkirk. Deputy Morgal responded to assist and made contact with the driver, identified as **Robert Wesley King**, 37 of Mechanicsville, who displayed slow movements and appeared lethargic. King submitted to standardized field sobriety tests and was determined to be unable to safely operate a motor vehicle. A search of the vehicle revealed an empty methadone bottle and a \$10 bill containing a yellow-

ish-green powder suspected to be Xanax. King was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Driving While Impaired by a Controlled Dangerous Substance, Reckless Driving, Negligent Driving, CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis, and additional traffic-related offenses.



Michael Edward Emmel

CDS Violation: 25-98689 On November 21, 2025, Deputy McIntosh responded to a traffic complaint regarding a vehicle traveling northbound on Rt. 4 in the Prince Frederick area, reportedly swerving across lanes and nearly striking multiple vehicles. Deputy McIntosh located the vehicle as it abruptly changed lanes and turned into a parking lot on Prince Frederick Blvd., where it came to rest straddling two parking spaces in front of the Urgent Care. The driver, identified as **Michael Edward Emmel**, 41 of Johnstown, PA, exited the vehicle and spoke with Deputy McIntosh. Emmel stated he had smoked marijuana earlier in the day and admitted there was approximately one eighth of an ounce of cocaine in the trunk. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed two tied plastic baggies containing approximately four grams of a white powdery substance suspected to be cocaine, as well as tightly rolled U.S. currency bills coated with white powder residue consistent with suspected cocaine. Emmel was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, where he was charged with CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis and CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia.

Damaged Property: 25-98722 On November 21, 2025, DFC T. Bowen responded to the 2800 block of Ivory Lane in Port Republic for the report of damaged property. The complainant advised an unknown suspect(s) damaged a set of Christmas lights at the end of the victim's driveway. The estimated value of damaged property is \$50.

Damaged Property: 25-99016 On November 22, 2025, DFC Bowen responded to the 3100 block of Burgess Road in Chesapeake Beach for a reported damaged property. The complainant advised that an unknown suspect(s) damaged a wooden fence. The fence was split and broken into multiple pieces, consistent with being struck by a vehicle. The estimated value of the damage is \$200.

Theft: 25-98070 On November 19, 2025, at approximately 9:33 a.m., DFC Sturdivant responded to Walmart, located at 10600 Southern Maryland Boulevard in Dunkirk, for a reported theft. Investigation revealed that a black female with long black hair, wearing a yellow hat, tie-dye shirt, green pants, and brown shoes, entered the store and placed multiple items into a shopping cart. She proceeded to the self-checkout and paid for some of the items using an EBT card. A store employee observed that not all items had been paid for and confronted the female. The suspect then began threatening the employee, took the cart outside, and fled to a waiting vehicle. The total value of stolen property is \$253.88. This incident remains under investigation.



Sandra Lavern Carter

Theft: 25-98255 On November 19, 2025, Cpl. Ward responded to Walmart, located at 10600 Town Center Blvd. in Dunkirk, for a reported theft. Loss Prevention personnel observed **Sandra Lavern Carter**, 53 of Front Royal, VA, bypass the registers with a fully loaded shopping cart containing various items without paying. When Loss Prevention attempted to stop her, Carter began yelling and refused to comply. Carter was later located hiding inside the nearby BP gas station. Stolen items including candles, Febreze, and skin lotion were recovered from a trash can at the BP. The items taken from Walmart were valued at approximately \$604, with the total amount of stolen property valued at \$667.61. Carter was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged Theft: \$100 to Under \$1500 – Shoplifting.

Theft: 25-98221 On November 19, 2025, Deputy Currie responded to the Hallmark store located at 10376 Southern Maryland Blvd. in Dunkirk for a reported theft. The complainant advised that an unknown suspect(s) stole a wallet containing multiple credit cards, a driver's license, a Social Security card, insurance information, and personal photographs. The suspects then attempted to purchase \$500 in gift cards using one of the victim's credit cards. The first suspect is described as a black male in his mid-to-late 40s, heavy set, wearing tan sweatpants, a lightweight gray hoodie, and a red baseball cap. The second suspect is described as a black male in his late 30s, with a short, skinny build, wearing blue

jeans, a black zip-up sweatshirt over a red hoodie, a red beanie, and having a black beard and mustache. The third suspect is described as a black male in his early 40s with a skinny build, dreadlocks, a black jacket, and dark pants. All three were last seen entering a dark-colored SUV. This case remains under investigation.

Theft: 25-98213 On November 19, Cpl. Buckler responded to Ulta Beauty, located at 845 N. Solomons Island Road in Prince Frederick, for a reported theft. Investigation revealed two black males entered the store and stole several hair styling tools. Suspect #1 is described as a black male, 18–25 years of age, average build, wearing a black jacket, black jeans, and white sneakers. Suspect #2 is described as a black male, 13–18 years of age, small build, wearing a black beanie, gray hooded 4 sweatshirt, gray sweatpants, and black sneakers. The total value of the stolen property is \$5,078.87. This case remains under investigation.



Rachael Nicole Wood

Trespassing: 25-98981 On November 22, 2025, at approximately 6:33 a.m., Deputy Grabill responded to the Wawa located at 10205 Kirksville Lane in Dunkirk for a report of an individual loitering

on the property. The complainant advised the subject had been on scene since around 3:30 a.m., wandering inside the store. Deputy Grabill made contact with **Rachael Nicole Wood**, 35 of Capitol Heights, who was instructed multiple times to leave the premises. Wood refused to comply and was taken into custody without incident. She was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Trespassing-Private Property.

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

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

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Road Closures Announced for Main Street Christmas

Calvert County announces several road closures for the upcoming Main Street Christmas events in Prince Frederick. The closures are necessary to ensure the safety of participants and spectators during the holiday festivities.

The parade will take place Saturday, Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to noon. The roadways surrounding the parade route will experience periodic closures throughout the morning of the parade from 6:30 a.m. until approximately 1 p.m. Please use alternate routes and allow for additional travel time.

Parade street closures will affect the following streets:

- Armory Road between Fairground Road and Main Street will be closed.
- Main Street between Armory Road and Duke Street will be closed.
- Main Street between Old Field Lane and Duke Street will be open for local traffic only.
- Duke Street (westbound) between Main Street and Prince Frederick Shopping Center will be closed.
- Church Street (eastbound between Route 4 and Main Street; westbound

between Heritage Boulevard and Main Street) will be closed.

- Prince Frederick Shopping Center: The main aisle nearest businesses will be closed.

Public parking locations for the parade are as follows:

- Calvert County Administration Building (150 Main St.)
- Calvert County District Courthouse (200 Duke St.)
- Calvert County Circuit Courthouse (175 Main St.)
- Accessible Parking at Calvert County Sheriff's Office Lot (30 Church St.)
- Prince Frederick Ford (15 Duke St.)

Event times and details, including parking and parade maps, are available at www.CalvertCountyMd.gov/SpecialEvents or by calling 410-535-1600, ext. 2649.

Find information on Calvert County Government services online at www.CalvertCountyMd.gov.

Press release from Calvert County Government

Sheriff's Office Hosts Calvert's 19th Annual Shop with a Cop



Family Matriarch Recieves Birthday Citation



On Saturday, December 6, hailing from Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties, a large turnout of family consisting of Brooks, Chambers, Grosses, Heards, Hollands, Jones, Morsells, Rays, Titus and Proctors gathered at the Prince Frederick Volunteer Rescue Squad to celebrate the 76th birthday of matriarch Theresa E. Holland. For the most part, the event was considered a family reunion.

To present a Commissioners' citation to Ms. Holland were Calvert Commissioner President Earl "Buddy" Hance, Calvert County Register of Wills Margaret Phipps, and Family Representative Edward Holland.

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Study Finds Oyster Larvae on Drugs Move Slowly and Are Stressed

The discharge and prevalence of psychoactive drugs in surface waters has raised concerns about potential risks to ecosystems and public health. Yet there is limited information on the ecotoxicity of these compounds in marine environments and aquaculture.

A study presented on Dec. 9 at the annual meeting of the Society for Risk Analysis in Washington, D.C., sheds light on the potential impacts of residual drug discharges on marine organisms. The findings suggest that traces of fentanyl, ketamine and benzoylecgonine (a byproduct of cocaine) can affect the swimming behavior and survival rates of oyster larvae living in contaminated saltwater environments.

"High drug consumption, continuous discharge and persistence contribute to the presence of drugs of abuse in surface waters, exposing aquatic organisms to chronic, low-level doses," says Gustavo Salcedo, lead author of the study and a PhD candidate in the Francis College of Engineering at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Researchers from the University of Massachusetts investigated the physiological and molecular effects of three commonly detected psychoactive drugs - fentanyl (a synthetic opioid), ketamine (an anesthetic



drug) and benzoylecgonine - on the larvae of *C. virginica* oysters (known as commonly farmed Eastern oysters). For the physiological assessment, three-day-old larvae were exposed to environmentally relevant concentrations of the drugs in saltwater over two weeks. Their survival and swimming behavior were monitored. For the molecular analysis, larvae were exposed to drugs for

12 hours, with changes in the expression of four stress biomarker genes (*mapk14*, *hsp70*, *sod1*, and *gst*) measured at different time points.

Key Findings:

- After two weeks of exposure, survival declined in all treatments and doses.
- Benzoylecgonine caused the greatest reduction in survival rate (62-76 per-

cent lower than normal)

- Larvae exposed to ketamine showed significantly decreased swimming speeds - most becoming completely motionless.
- Notable shifts in swimming behaviors were observed. Motion changed from predominantly rectilinear (normal movement) to circular (fentanyl) or motionless (benzoylecgonine and ketamine).
- Larvae exposed to benzoylecgonine showed a seven-fold increase in *sod1* expression after four hours -- indicating a stress response in the oyster larvae.

"Our findings highlight the need for ecological risk assessments of these emerging contaminants in marine ecosystems - an area much less studied than freshwater environments," adds Sheree Pagsuyoin, principal investigator of the study and associate professor in civil engineering at UMass Lowell.

More information on the study: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147651325009340>

Press release

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Calvert Community Calendar

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

Sat, Dec 13

COSMIC Symphony Concert

Huntingtown High School
4125 Solomons Island Rd., Huntingtown
3 p.m.

Will be joined by St. Maries Choral Arts this holiday season to bring you “Gloria,” a joyful musical celebration! This concert will include individual performances by both the choir and orchestra, as well as several collaborations. Highlights include “Greensleeves,” “O Holy Night,” and of course, “Gloria,” as part of a program that is sure to leave you feeling festive. As always, these concerts are presented free of charge with no tickets required, and donations are greatly appreciated.

Solomons Christmas Walk

Calvert Marine Museum
6–9 p.m.

Celebrate the season at the museum during the Solomons Christmas Walk! The museum will be open and free to the public for an evening of festive fun. Enjoy live musical entertainment in the Harms Gallery, holiday crafts, and visits with Santa and the Otter mascot. Stop by Santa’s Cocoa House for complimentary hot cocoa and holiday cookies, and don’t forget to shop for unique gifts in the Museum Store, where Museum Members save 20 percent all day and during the event.

Creating Hope

Burnett Center for Hope and Healing
4559 Sixes Road, Prince Frederick
1 to 2:30 p.m.

Therapeutic Art Exercises in Griefwork. Creating can help us express things we have no words for, discover more about ourselves and glean beauty through our sorrow. In each session, people will participate in a therapeutic art project to help with personal grief work and connect with one another. Offered through Hospice of the Chesapeake’s Chesapeake Life Center,

this workshop is open to teens, as well as adults. Supplies are provided. No art skills are required. The cost is \$10 per session, which pays for supplies. Registration is required and can be completed by calling 888-501-7077 or emailing griefinfo@chesapeakelifecenter.org

Free Outdoor Holiday Concert

Storefront of Sneade’s Ace Hardware
11861 H G Trueman Road, Lusby
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Hosted by Eastern United Methodist Church and St. John United Methodist Church, will host “Sounds of the Season,” is presented by the Christmas Town in Lusby Fundraising Team. The program will feature performances from several local school, church, and community musical groups.” Sounds of the Season” is free and open to the public for individuals of all ages. Voluntary donations and proceeds from a baked goods sale will benefit East-John Youth Center, Inc., a nonprofit organization serving Southern Maryland youth and families.

Attendees are encouraged to dress appropriately for outdoor conditions. For information, call 443-985-2407.

20th Annual Christmas Market

All Saints Episcopal Church
100 Lower Marlboro Rd, Sunderland
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

The event will feature a variety of unique gifts, delicious treats, and handcrafted items from local artisans. You can find something for everyone on your list, from scrumptious baked goods to special ornaments. The silent auction will also offer exciting items to bid on, with proceeds benefiting Calvert County Charities.

This year, the market will introduce new family-oriented activities, including visits with Santa and his elves, framed photo opportunities, and a letter-writing station.

Holiday Harmony: A Community Singalong

Calvert Library Prince Frederick

850 Costley Way
3-4 p.m.

We’re reinstating a holiday tradition—Celebrate the season with music, laughter and community! Join beloved vocalists Emily Bowen Mudd, Anna Kleist, James Huchla and Nathan Bowen, accompanied by the talented Sandy Daelemans, for an uplifting concert of holiday favorites. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sun, Dec 14

Visit with Santa at Annmarie Garden in Lights

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
5-8 p.m.

Guests will be able to take a family photo with our festive characters. Please note that our characters may take occasional breaks—thank you for your understanding. Depending on the weather, the Holiday Characters might be inside the Arts Building or outside in the Holiday Tent. This is a first-come, first-served activity. Included with cost of admission. Advance tickets required. Plan your visit at www.annmariegarden.org.

Holly Hill Holiday Hike

American Chestnut Land Trust
676 Double Oak Road, Prince Frederick
10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Join Master Naturalists for a 5 mile hike on the Holly Hill Trail. Hike includes a 15-minute stop at Holly Hill barn with several inclines.

Holiday Open House

One-Room Schoolhouse
3080 Broomes Island Rd., Port Republic
11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Come and celebrate an Old-Fashioned Christmas in the original Port Republic One-Room Schoolhouse, which will be decorated for the holidays on the grounds

of historic Christ Church. Visit with Santa and have your picture taken and printed for you to take home in the frame you decorate. Enjoy making crafts. Get in the holiday spirit with Christmas music by our guest pianist. Within easy walking distance, the Parish Hall will be open for refreshments and additional seasonal crafts. Christmas Attic Treasures will be for sale at the Parish Hall. Historic Christ Church will offer tours, and there will be a treat for children who find the church mouse. Please visit our website at calvertoneroomschool.org/events

Tue, Dec 16

Dine Out Book Discussion

Neptune’s Seafood Pub
North Beach
6-8 p.m.

Pride and Prejudice is a Jane Austen novel about the spirited Elizabeth Bennet and the proud, wealthy Mr. Darcy, who must overcome their own initial biases and societal pressures to find love and happiness in 19th-century England. This year marks the 250th Anniversary of Jane Austen’s birth. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Dec 17

Book Discussion

Calvert Library Fairview Branch
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings
& Zoom
2-3:30 p.m.

Join us online or in person to discuss *The Lost Bookshop* by Evie Woods. In a vanishing bookshop in Dublin, three strangers will discover that their own stories are extraordinary enough to rival those found in the pages of their favorite books. Register in advance to receive the Zoom link via email if you wish to attend virtually. 410-257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

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

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

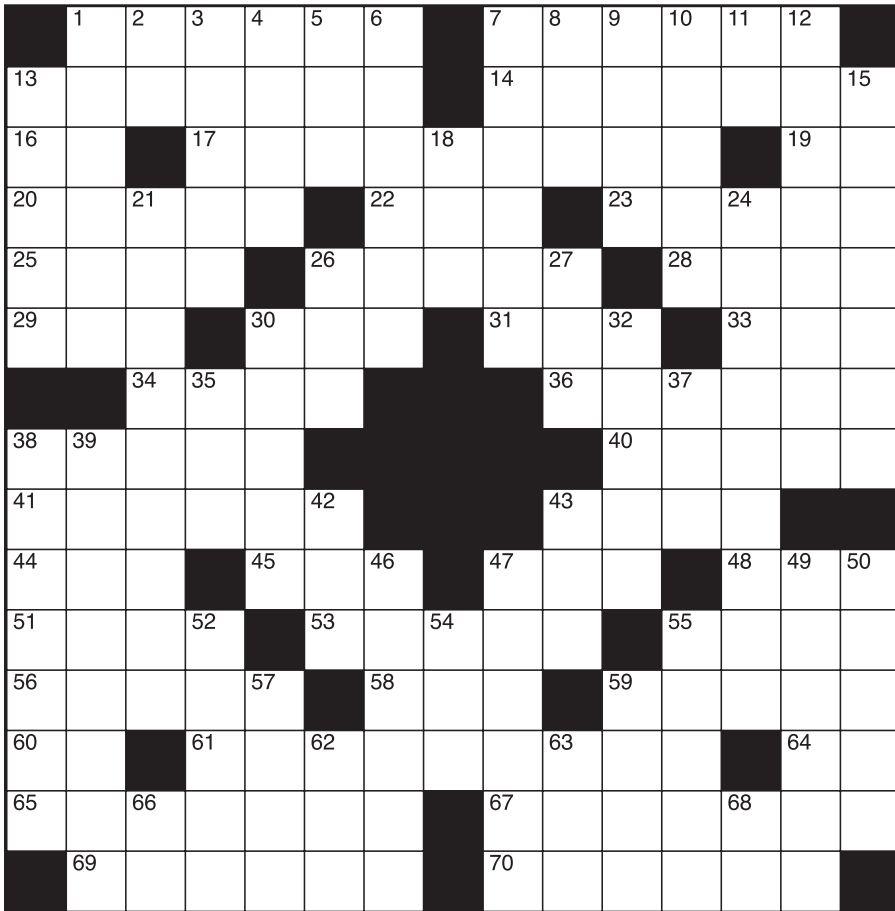
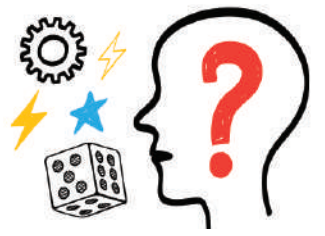


County Times

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FUN & GAMES

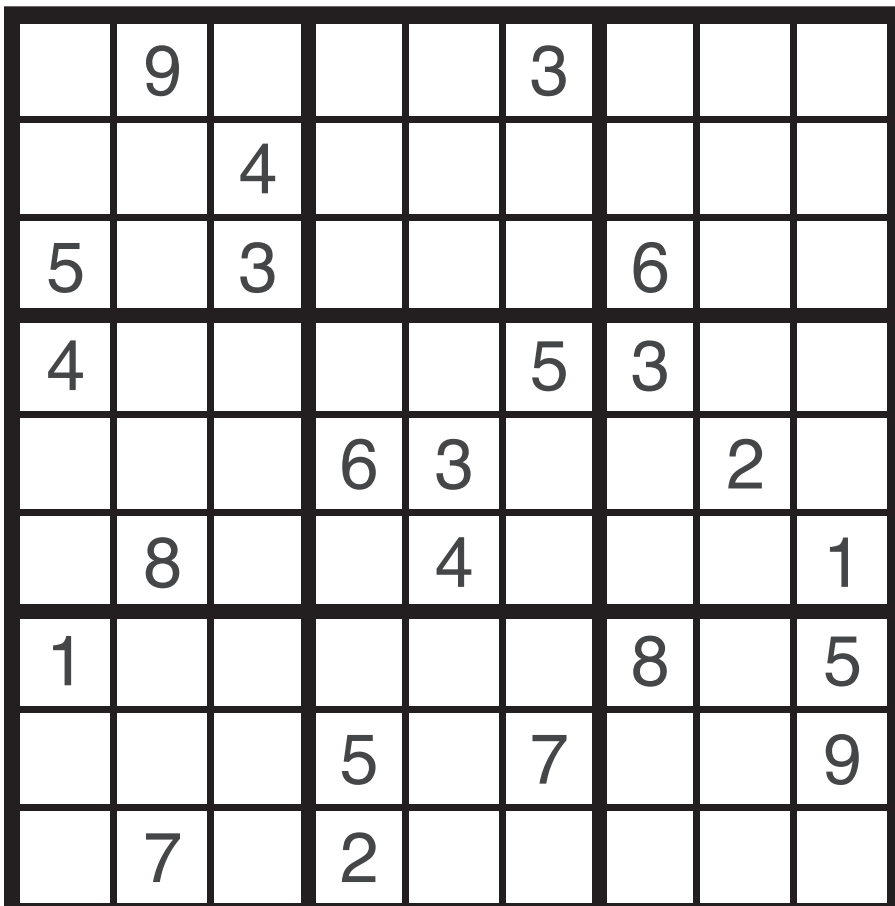


CLUES ACROSS

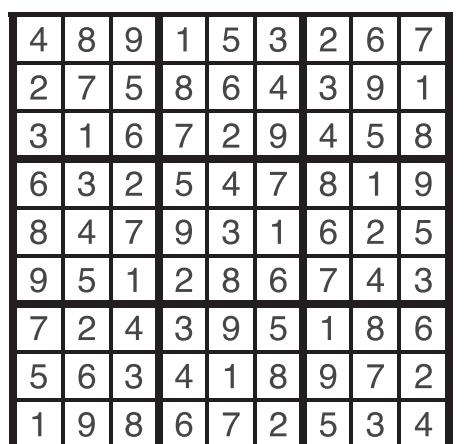
- Spiritual leaders
- Salt
- Fortified wine
- Edible mollusk
- It begins with them
- A way to compare
- Government lawyer
- Back parts
- 8th month (abbr.)
- Very willing
- ___ ex machina
- Satisfies
- Quebec river
- A doctrine
- Popular pickup truck
- Dekagram
- Naturally occurring solid material
- Company officer
- Villains
- Cricket frogs
- German founder of psychology
- Endured
- A female domestic
- A "place" to avoid
- Cigarette (slang)
- Canadian politician Josephine
- French ballet/acting dynasty
- Employee stock ownership plan
- Belonging to the bottom
- Sound
- Yankees' slugger Judge
- Dickens character
- More wise
- Flash memory card
- Exposing human vice or folly to ridicule
- Atomic #79
- Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
- Humor
- Shawl
- Preliminary assessment of patients

CLUES DOWN

- Animal disease
- Commercial
- Craft supply
- Storage units
- Investment vehicle
- Colorado Heisman winner
- In a way, sank
- Post-birth brain damage (abbr.)
- Lay about
- Intestinal
- The opposite of yes
- Caused to be loved
- Messianic in Islamic eschatology
- Showing since conviction
- Not safe
- The number above the line in a fraction
- Yard invader
- Pouch
- Swedish krona
- Start anew
- White white or yellow flower
- Fourteen
- Graphical user interface
- Up-to-date on the news
- Campaigns
- Touch softly
- "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
- Violent seizure of property
- One who supports the Pope
- Anxiety
- Body fluid
- Phony person
- Title of respect
- Chilean city
- City in central Japan
- Silk garment
- Draw from
- Automobile
- Man
- Legal bigwig (abbr.)



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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, Dec 12

Ballet Caliente: *The Nutcracker*

Nancy R. and Norton T. Dodge
Performing Arts Center
St. Mary's College of Maryland
47855 College Dr., St. Mary's City
December 12 & 13, 6 p.m.

Join us this holiday season as Ballet Caliente proudly presents *The Nutcracker*! This festive classical ballet is sure to delight audiences of all ages! From brave toy soldiers, to enchanting snowflakes to a magical land of sweets, this timeless ballet is perfect for the whole family. Tickets for all performances are \$30.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever! Movie Night

24710 Sotterley Road, Hollywood
6 p.m.

Bring the whole family and come watch last year's hit family Christmas movie, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!* Popcorn, drinks, and other snacks will be available.

This completely free event is sponsored by Compassion International.

Sat, Dec 13

Band of Brothers

Flashback Restaurant

21797 Coral Dr. N., Lexington Park
9 a.m.

PTSD/Suicide Prevention Group of So. Maryland, offers support for all Veterans in need of our services, as well as support for the local community. We provide help with VA Military Compensation Claims by appointment. Our method is derived from our military experiences when we were surrounded by others who think and dressed as needed to work together to survive.

Our members are supported by text, phone or personal interaction and are available at a moment's notice. For more information call 301-481-6752.

Santa Claus Flies into St. Mary's County

44200 Airport Rd., California
11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Santa arrives by plane at 11:30. Toys, gifts, crafts, face painting and pictures with Santa. All free! Food available at Bird Dog Bistro in the terminal.

Bring a present to donate for Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, St. Mary's Nursing Center, or Chesapeake Shore Nursing Home. Suggested items include pajamas, toiletries, socks.

SMTMD Contra Dance

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

The evening starts at 7 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. NOTE: This dance will be free admission for all as we will hold a brief annual meeting to vote in the 2026 Board and approve the Treasurer's Report. *See website for rescheduled or canceled events. Info: smtmd2@gmail.com www.smtmd.org/new-events/

Sun, Dec 14

All You Can Eat Breakfast with Santa

Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department
Social Hall
24801 Three Notch Rd. Hollywood
8-11 a.m.

Sponsored by Ladies Auxiliary, Santa will be attending the breakfast at about 8:30 AM Bring your camera to take a photo with Santa.

\$18 ages 13 & up; \$8 ages 4-12; 3 and under eat free. Cash or check only; ATM on site.

Breakfast with Santa

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

Menu: scrambled eggs, home fried pota-

toes, pancakes, French toast, sausage links, ham, bacon, creamed chipped beef, sausage gravy, spiced applesauce, grits & biscuits, assorted juices, milk and coffee. Adults \$14; children 6 to 12 \$7; children 5 & under are free. For more information call: 240-925-2512 (c)

Cosmic Holiday Concert

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

COSMIC will be joined by St. Maries Choral Arts this holiday season to bring you "Gloria," a joyful musical celebration! This concert will include individual performances by both the choir and orchestra, as well as several collaborations. Highlights include "Greensleeves," "O Holy Night," and of course, "Gloria," as part of a program that is sure to leave you feeling festive. As always, these concerts are presented free of charge with no tickets required, and donations are greatly appreciated.

Wed, Dec 17

Carols and Cookies

All Saints Episcopal Church
22598 Oakley Rd., Avenue
6 p.m.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library UPCOMING EVENTS

Holiday Hours

All locations of St. Mary's County Library will be closed on Wednesday, December 24 – Friday, December 26 for Christmas. All locations will be open regular business hours on Saturday, December 27. All locations will also be closed on Thursday, January 1 – Friday, January 2 for New Year. All locations will be open regular business hours on Saturday, January 3.

Jólabókaflóð (The Yule Book Flood)

Celebrate the Icelandic holiday of Jólabókaflóð, the Yule Book Flood, with us. Take a book and leave a book in our community book exchange, plus enjoy reading, snacks, and relaxing activities in our cozy space. Leonardtown Library on Friday, December 19, 2 - 4 p.m. No registration.

Lexington Park Chess Day

An all-ages chess social hang-out! Drop in and out to play as needed, no experience required. Staff will be available to assist those who haven't played before. Lexington Park Library on Saturday, December 20, 2 - 4 p.m. No registration.

Cardboard Cat Cabins & Castles

Use cardboard to make adorable and impressive castles or cabins for your feline friends to enjoy! Using the Library's ChompSaw, a child-safe specialized saw for cutting cardboard, and some other child-safe cutting tools, participants will be given a starter design and then be encouraged to improve and experiment with designs of their own. Through trial-and-error testing, learn what goes into engineering to create more effective supports, and work together to share and implement ideas. Lexington Park Library,

Sunday, December 21 from 1 - 3 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Robot Lab Drop-In

Kids and teens! Open-ended robot fun! Tinker, test, & create with Botley, Indi, & Ozobot. Solve mazes, tackle challenges, & build your own mini games. It's hands-on fun for all skill levels. No registration needed. Two sessions: Charlotte Hall Library on Monday, December 22, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. and Leonardtown Library on Tuesday, December 23, 1 - 4 p.m.

The Book Worm Club: A Kid's Book Club

Do you like reading? Do you like talking about what books your reading with people who love reading as much as you do? Do you like crafts and book related activities? Join us for our kids book club! Participants can bring in and discuss

whatever they're reading, whether it's novels, graphic novels, nonfiction books, audiobooks, etc., participate in a craft, and enjoy refreshments with peers. Leonardtown Library on Monday, December 29, 6 - 7 p.m.

Noon Year's Eve

All the fun of a New Year's Eve party for our young friends with early bed-times! Countdown to a Happy NOON Year with silly songs, creative crafts, and awesome activities. Attend at Charlotte Hall Library, Leonardtown Library, or Lexington Park Library! Wednesday, December 31 from 11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Please register to attend the event at Charlotte Hall Library, no registration required for Leonardtown Library or Lexington Park Library.



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.

Les Abell, 84



Joseph Leslie "Les" Abell, 84, of Orlando, Florida passed away on November 17, 2025. He was born on March 20, 1941, in Leonardtown, Maryland, and was

the son of the late Harry Benedict Abell, Sr., and Mary Catherine Guy Abell.

Les grew up and lived in St. Mary's County until 1977. In his younger years, he played softball and pool on County Leagues. Later he developed a love for throwing darts and played with his family before moving out of state. He was a machinist by trade, working with slot machines in the early 60's, and then at Minitac in Leonardtown. Les was known to be a jack of all trades and was able to fix almost anything.

Les is survived by his children, Leslie Thomas (Todd Groszer) of St. Mary's City, Maryland; Robin Abell of Van Nuys, California; Tim Abell (Diana) of Lusby, Maryland; and Shari Abell (Scot Rebello) of Oviedo, Florida. He had three granddaughters — Danielle (Nick), Tyler, (Marco), and Jordan, and three great grandchildren — Braelyn, Annie, and Alex. Les is also survived by his siblings — Harry Abell (Rita), Wayne Abell, Cathy Bos (Dick), and Bill Abell (Melva), along with many nieces, nephews, and cousins. He was preceded in death by his parents

and his brother, Gene Abell.

All services will be private.

Susan Reynolds, 77



Susan Betler Reynolds, 77, passed away December 3, 2025, in Owings, MD following an extended illness. Susan was born in Clarksburg, WV on February 16,

1948, the second child of Raymond George Betler and Mildred Hofer Betler.

She grew up with three sisters and one brother in a happy, caring home in Nutter Fort, WV where she lived her entire childhood, graduating from Roosevelt-Wilson High School with the class of 1966, the last class to attend the same school all 12 years.

Susan was very involved in the Nutter Fort Baptist church, assisting her mother in teaching Sunday school and attending youth activities. She was the favorite baby-sitter for her younger siblings and neighbors. In addition, Susan was a 4-H member, learning values along with problem solving skills that carried on throughout her life.

From her parents Susan learned important life skills. She was kind, considerate, and could sense when others needed help, thereby touching many lives with her generosity and passion for life. Susan was exuberant and fun loving with an infectious smile.

She was a natural conversationalist, and even in later years cheered many with her cards, letters, phone calls and coloring pages.

After graduating in 1966, Susan went to Washington, DC to work at the FBI when J. Edgar Hoover was director. She worked there for six years and resigned from the FBI six months after Hoover's death in 1972. Susan transferred to the IRS, working there until her marriage to Charles Reynolds in January 1975. Their son David was born in December 1975. Susan and Charles were active members of Allentown Baptist Church in Camp Springs, MD until moving to Hollywood, MD. In 1980 they purchased the Medicine Shoppe (later Reynolds Pharmacy) in Leonardtown, MD. For the next 34 years Susan was an active participant in the Reynolds Pharmacy, as a pharmacy technician enjoying daily interactions with the customers and the Leonardtown business community. Susan thoroughly loved delivering medicine for the pharmacy, especially to the Mennonite community in St. Mary's County. She cherished the long-lasting friendships that developed.

Outside the pharmacy, Susan was a dedicated volunteer at Hollywood Elementary School while David attended there. Susan also volunteered at the local chapter of the American Red Cross office when it was located in Leonardtown under the leadership of director Jack Duchesne. Susan was in the office when the 9/11 attack occurred and got to answer many of the phone calls that came in that day.

In joining Leonardtown Baptist Chapel in 1980, Susan became active in the Sunday School program and was a charter member when the Chapel was constituted as Leonardtown Baptist Church in October 1982. Susan was active in the Women's Missionary Union (WMU) and was involved with the first Girls Auxiliary group (GA's) at Leonardtown Baptist Church in 1983. She also participated in Bible studies and the prayer chain.

Susan could quickly whip up a delicious meal and freely shared her recipes. She was an accomplished seamstress and enjoyed upholstering furniture. She followed family tradition in collecting Hummel figurines, receiving many from her husband over the years. She also enjoyed crafting and making greeting cards.

Susan's joyful spirit allowed her to maintain loyal, faithful, lifelong friendships with schoolmates as well as contact with her family and friends far and wide.

Retirement came in 2014 with the closing of the pharmacy. Susan's declining health began to place limits on her activities. Over time, she required more medical care, becoming a resident of St. Mary's Nursing Center in the summer of 2021, where Charles was a faithful visitor and helpmate.

Susan received devoted care from her husband Charles, as well as brother-in-law, Kenneth Reynolds, and niece, Wendy Reynolds, at her end of life.

Susan is survived by husband Charles, son David, sisters Charlotte Hughes (Bill) and Nancy Maunz (Mike), brother-in-law Kenneth Reynolds, 3 nieces: Holly Reynolds Lee (Adam), Wendy Reynolds, and Shay Maunz Sherrard (Robert), and 1

nephew: Raymond Betler (Mercedes).

Susan was predeceased by her parents, brother Michael Betler and sister, Eileen Betler. She will be dearly missed by her family and friends and will be remembered by all who knew her as kind, caring and helpful.

All services will be private.

Condolences may be left for the family at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.

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

Bob Carle, 80



Robert "Bob" Andrew Carle, 80 years old, from California, MD. He was the son of Lloyd and Helen Shymansky. He passed away on November 30, 2025,

at Hospice House, Callaway, MD. Bob was born on November 24, 1945 in Cheverly, Md.

Survived by Donna Bradburn, his "Shugie" of 36 years, her sons, Ken (Ausra) and children, Ema and Kaira, and David (Jen), and children, Kaitlyn (Joe) and Sam (Shirly).

He is predeceased by his parents and his brother, Ted Carle. He is also survived by his sister, Kathy Carle, Ohio

Bob graduated from Northwestern High School in Hyattsville, Md. After high school, he joined the Naval Reserve, serving from 1963 to 1970. Bob spent his career as a public servant. He was a police officer during the 1960's riots, in Washington DC. He transitioned to firefighting for Prince George's County, MD. He retired on disability after 18 years of service. He was always so proud of having been a firefighter. He then trained to be an OSH (Occupational, Health and Safety) inspector. Bob worked as the OSH inspector at NSF Dahlgreen Base in Va, and Naval Air Station Patuxent River, MD.

Bob was an avid softball player. He played on the PGFD P Street team. He also played in the St. Mary's County league earning many trophies. Bob loved the water and was a waterman for many years. He was an avid outdoorsman. He would spend all day outdoors when possible. You could find Bob in the woods preparing for the hunt, cutting down trees and splitting wood for the woodstove or just working in the yard.

Deer hunting was his passion. Bob loved the thrill of preparing for the hunt and providing meat for his family. We lovingly referred to him as "The Buckmaster". He and Donna enjoyed riding his Harley Davidson motorcycles, boats and jet skis.

A Mass of Christian burial will be held in the Historic Catholic Church at Our Lady of the Sea, 50 Alexander Lane, Solomons MD. Visitation will be from 10am to 11am with a Mass beginning at 11am. Burial will follow in the church cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hospice of St. Mary's, or the Alzheimer's organization, researching vascular dementia.

Condolences may be left for the family at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.

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



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A View From The BLEACHERS



Misplaced Pride

By Ronald N. Guy
Contributing Writer

College football's offseason is off and running, months ahead of this season's end. The coaching carousel is spinning wildly, with several high-profile leading men flying off horses and landing on their backsides. Not to worry: It seems a few had their agents on the phone and new gigs cued up before their derrieres hit the ground. A keen eye spots a few still on the merry-go-round climbing over each other to claim the suddenly unoccupied premium equine.

To name a few, Penn State canned James Franklin, LSU divorced Brian Kelly, Florida fired Billy Napier and Auburn bid adieu to Hugh Freeze. I'd need a lot more words from the editor of this fine newspaper or a full-page diagram to provide a comprehensive account. Neither is necessary. Just a glance of that list – three SEC schools, one Big Ten school and all with multiple National Championships – should provide a hint as to the chaos underway and to come as the coaching dominoes fall in the lucrative sport/business of major college football.

Front and center in this year's game of coaching musical chairs, as is his habit, is Lane Kiffin. Check the back of Kiffin's coaching football card you'll see series of stops in college football and the NFL, both as an assistant and head coach. That's the suitcase living, professional gypsy life for most coaches. Nothing abnormal there. The dubious part of Kiffin's journey is his propensity to leave positions, either by choice or force, amidst considerable acrimony. In 2008, Oakland Raiders owner Al Davis fired Kiffin alleging the latter had "conned" him and "disgraced" the organization. In January 2010, Kiffin left the University of Tennessee after just one season as head coach for the same position at USC; the self-serving decision left vulgar epitaphs, burning mattresses and scorned recruits in its wake. Three years later, USC Athletic Director Pat Hayden fired Kiffin in a hastily called meeting on the tarmac at Los Angeles International airport after an embarrassing loss. As the story goes, Kiffin was left at the airport and the team bus departed...with his luggage.

Kiffin spent the next several seasons restoring his reputation as an Alabama assistant coach and head coach at Florida Atlantic. In December 2019, he accepted the head job at Mississippi; it wasn't a blueblood program, but Kiffin was back in the SEC and on college football's big stage. Kiffin posted four double-digit win seasons with Ole Miss, something the school did just once from 2004-2019, and led the Rebels to the college football playoff this year.

This is the point where Kiffin "Kiffins" the fairytale. Regarding those other vacated horses on the carousel, Kiffin, after a not-so-secret courting, jumped into the LSU saddle, Ole Miss' bitter conference rival. Despite leaving for Baton Rouge, Kiffin apparently wanted to continue coaching Ole Miss during the playoffs. The powers that be at Mississippi weren't having it. No chance someone else's coach was going to lead the University of Mississippi football team. So Kiffin is out, leaving his assistants to oversee the final chapter in Ole Miss' season.

Mississippi's decision would have made perfect sense with a different coach and in a different era of college football. With Lane Kiffin, it seems like embarrassing self-righteousness, a grab at honor that no longer exists. See, here's what Ole Miss knew in 2019: If Kiffin was successful, this was the ending – him departing on difficult terms. He was never going to be their forever coach. That's not in Kiffin's DNA. The university should be glad it didn't end with Kiffin disgracing them (see Al Davis) or on an airport tarmac (see USC). Moreover, college football is comprised of mercenaries now – coaches and players. Every offseason is a complete reset with all involved jockeying for the best opportunity – for football and financial success.

With his latest career move, Kiffin delivers a powerful tip for navigating life – personally and professionally. As uncomfortable as it can be, it is crucial to understand the carnival ride you're on and to not be surprised when the people you work with, play with or choose to love, end up being exactly as advertised.

Send comments to RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com

FINANCIAL FOCUS®

Is this a good year for tax-loss harvesting?

Thanks to market swings, evolving tax laws and new technology, it may be a good year to consider tax-loss harvesting – a strategy that can help reduce taxes and improve long-term returns.

What is tax-loss harvesting?

When you sell an investment for less than you paid, you may be able to use that loss to offset gains from other investments, potentially reducing your overall tax bill.

If your total capital losses exceed your gains, you can use up to \$3,000 of those losses to reduce ordinary income each year. You can carry any remaining losses forward to future tax years. The strategy doesn't eliminate taxes altogether; it simply defers them, which can free up money to reinvest elsewhere.

How it works

Imagine an investor who sold one stock for a \$10,000 gain and another for a \$10,000 loss. The two transactions cancel each other out, meaning no capital gains tax is owed for that year. The investor can then reinvest the proceeds while following the IRS's "wash-sale rule." This rule prevents you from claiming a loss if you, or your spouse or a related party, repurchase the same or a "substantially identical" investment within 30 days before or after the sale.

Because of this rule, you should consider how tax-loss harvesting will affect your investment strategy, as the benefit of holding on to that investment (and letting it grow over time) may outweigh the benefit of lowering your capital gains tax bill for a given year.

Good candidates for tax-loss harvesting include investments that no longer fit your strategy (when rebalancing your portfolio, for example), have poor investment potential or can be easily substituted with other investments.

Why 2025 may be favorable

Several factors suggest 2025 may be a good time to consider tax-loss harvesting.

First, market volatility has created more opportunities to realize losses. The first half of the year saw sharp market swings that left some portfolios uneven. Many large asset managers have already harvested billions in losses, using them to help lower clients' tax liability while keeping investment strategies on track.

Second, tax law changes are on the horizon. With major tax reform provisions scheduled to expire in the coming years, many investors are motivated to manage their gains and losses proactively. Those in higher tax brackets stand to benefit most, as the savings increase with your tax rate.

Finally, technology has made the process more efficient. In the past, investors typically harvested losses near year-end. Today, automation and direct indexing allow for continuous monitoring and harvesting throughout the year, capturing losses as they appear.

Putting it into practice

Tax-loss harvesting isn't right for everyone, and it's not a reason to overhaul your investment strategy. The approach works best for investors with taxable accounts, current or expected capital gains and a long-term perspective.

Consult your financial advisor and a tax professional before making decisions. When used thoughtfully, tax-loss harvesting can help you navigate a volatile market, reduce taxes and keep more of your money working toward your future goals.

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

Contributed by David McDonough, Financial Advisor at Edward Jones Office located at 41680 Miss Bessie Dr. Suite 302, Leonardtown, MD 20650 301 997 1707



Celebrate the Magic of the Season in Leonardtown!



Thursday Night Lights in Leonardtown

Dec. 4th

Dec. 11th

Dec. 18th

Take a holiday stroll through Leonardtown, enjoy the holiday lights and shop at your favorite retailers that are staying open late until 7pm.



Gingerbread Lane Holiday Stroll

Dec 5th - Jan 5th

Stroll through Downtown Leonardtown to see the nearly 100 decorated Gingerbread displays

Enjoy



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Thursday Night Lights in Leonardtown



December 4, 11 & 18, 2025

Most Retail Locations Open til 7pm

Take a stroll through Leonardtown, enjoy the Holiday lights and do a little late-night shopping at one of these locations.

- Old Jail Museum
- St. Mary's Arts Council Gallery
- Fenwick Street Books
- Crafts N Stitches
- The Craft Guild Shop
- New View Fiberworks
- Shepherds Old Field Market
- The Griffons Court
- Quality Street Kitchen
- Kings of Cards
- Sneades Ace Hardware
- Marie & Nash
- Happy and Zen
- Method Gym



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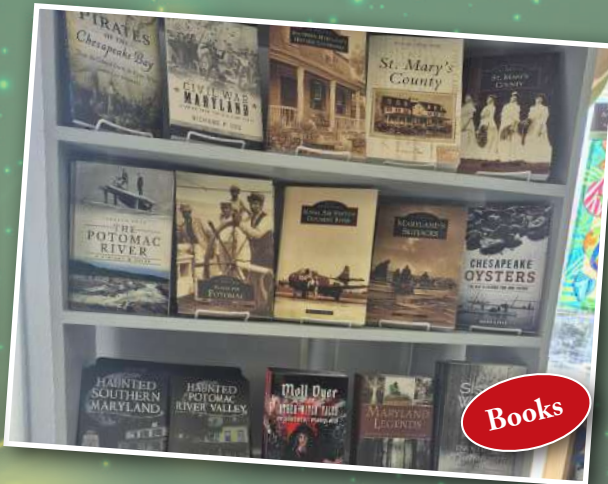
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SMECO Employees Raise Funds for Local Shelters

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) employees recently held a fund-raising event and donated \$63,000 to three shelters serving Southern Maryland: Lifestyles of Maryland, Inc.—Robert J. Fuller Transitional House of Charles County, Project Echo, Inc. of Calvert County, and Three Oaks Center of St. Mary's County.

"A home is more than shelter from the elements. It's a foundation for security, stability, and health," said Sonja M. Cox, SMECO president and CEO. "Our local organizations understand this and provide the services and resources essential in helping individuals move from crisis to independence. The continued growth of our annual charitable event, driven by the hard work of our employees and the generosity of our vendors, enables SMECO to support these three local shelters as they carry out their critical work in our community."

Project ECHO has served as Calvert County's only emergency homeless shelter for over 30 years.

"Project ECHO is deeply grateful to SMECO and its employees for their incredible generosity and community spirit. Their support helps us provide safe shelter, warm meals, and vital resources to individuals and families in crisis—keeping our doors open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This gift directly strengthens our mission to



From left Barbara Saylor, board president, Three Oaks Center of St. Mary's County; Natalie Cotton, SMECO's government and public affairs director; Sandy Washington, chief executive officer, Lifestyles of Maryland, Inc.; Kim Williams, executive assistant, Lifestyles of Maryland, Inc.; and David Whitaker, program director, Project Echo, Inc. of Calvert County.

serve Calvert County residents experiencing homelessness and reminds us that when our community comes together, hope truly shines," said Dave Whitaker, program director for Project Echo of Calvert County.

The Robert J. Fuller Transitional House serves Charles County through the Lifestyles of Maryland Foundation.

tial federal funding cuts threaten essential services, having committed partners like SMECO empowers us to continue supporting our most vulnerable neighbors, including elderly individuals, veterans, and single parents. Their support truly strengthens the fabric of our community."

SMECO employees raised the money through the Annual Charity Golf Outing in September. The event draws support from SMECO vendors, the cooperative's board and executive team, and employees who volunteer. The cooperative selects different organizations each year to benefit from its fundraising events.

Contributions, which may be tax deductible, can be made to the SMECO Charitable Foundation.

"SMECO employee fund-raisers have contributed more than \$665,000 to local organizations over the last 13 years," said Natalie Cotton, SMECO's government and public affairs director. "We are especially grateful to our business partners who generously contribute by providing donations and participating in the event. This year's Presenting Sponsors were Nokia and Wesco. Diamond Sponsors include SMCIS and Booth & Associates LLC. Platinum Sponsors include ACES, Altec, AUI Power, AV3, Beuchert Excavating, BF Joy and Larry Young, Black & Veatch, CEEUS, CMI General Contractors, ConvergeOne/Juniper Networks, Ensales/Virginia Transformer Corporation, G&S Technologies New Jersey, ICF, Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Milwaukee Tools, Mitsubishi Electric Power Products, National Transformer Sales, New River Electrical Corp, OCC Location Services, Preferred Sales, PennLine, Rodgers Consulting, Sargent & Lundy, Scheibel Construction, Schneider Electric, Sumter Utilities, Super Salvage, The Okonite Company, TRC Companies, Utility Line Construction Services, and The Wills Group/Southern Maryland Oil. We rely on Golf Tournament sponsors for their donations and we appreciate their assistance."

Press Release from SMECO

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Closed	21	10a-5p	22	10a-5p	23	9a-12p	24	Closed	25	Closed	26	Closed	27
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Time: 4:30-8 pm (until turkey's are gone)
Location: Bay District Fire Volunteer Department
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MEET AVA

This gorgeous 5-year-old Lab mix is as sweet as she is chatty — she loves to "talk" and share her opinions. Ava is a total people-lover, but she has a special soft spot for the fellas! She does well with most dogs and enjoys playtime, though her confident personality can come off a little bossy. Ava is also okay with cats and is learning great manners in her foster home. She's working on sharing food and treats with other animals — she's a little protective of her goodies sometimes, but she's improving every day. If you're looking for a loyal companion with lots of love (and personality!) to give, Ava might just be your perfect match. If you are interested in meeting with Ava or learning more about her please contact Animal Relief Fund (ARF) at 301-866-0303 or visit www.animalreliefund.org



St. Mary's Splash Raises Funds for Special Olympics



The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office held the coolest event in Southern Maryland, the 2025 St. Mary's Splash, on Saturday, Dec. 6 at Point Lookout State Park.

The plunge supported Special Olympics Maryland — St. Mary's County, which provides year-round sports training and competition for local athletes in 15 different sports.

Some dove in while others cheered from

the shore. Their participation helps create opportunities for inclusion, friendship, and achievement for individuals with intellectual disabilities right here in our community.

Everyone who participated was freezin' for a reason, the 2025 St. Mary's Splash!

Press release from SMCSO.

Two LHS State Champion Teams Honored



The Commissioners of St. Mary's County issued proclamations on Dec. 9 for the Leonardtown High School soccer and field hockey teams honoring their victories in state championships.



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Revised Bay Agreement Approved

Governor Wes Moore on Dec. 2 led the Chesapeake Bay Program's Executive Council in approving the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, which includes goals that will improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, increase access to nature, and support livelihoods that depend on this nationally treasured resource.

The revised agreement supports the environmental and economic future of the Chesapeake Bay, which in Maryland alone generates \$3.2 billion and 58,000 jobs a year in tourism and supports the 3,300 jobs in the state's seafood industry that nets \$600 million annually.

"Today we made a commitment to the Chesapeake Bay and a commitment to the people of Maryland and our neighboring states," said Gov. Moore. "The revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement will make our rivers and streams cleaner. It will bolster Maryland's seafood, tourism, and recreational businesses. Most importantly, it will ensure we protect the precious heirloom that is the Chesapeake Bay so we can pass it down to the next generations in a better condition than we received it."

Representatives from the Chesapeake Bay's six watershed states—Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, and New York—as well as from the EPA, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and Washington, D.C., reached consensus on the new agreement earlier this year, following more than two years of work with scientific advisors, community representatives, and Chesapeake Bay advocates. That work included a robust public feedback period that led to significant changes to the draft



Members of the the Chesapeake Bay Program's Executive Council, chaired by Maryland Governor Wes Moore, voted to approve the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. Photo by Joe Andrucyk, Office of the Governor.

agreement, which strengthened the document's overall environmental goals and outcomes.

The revised agreement commits states to reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution to the Bay by 2040. In addition to clean water, it also outlines goals for thriving habitat, fisheries, and wildlife; healthy landscapes; and engaged communities. These goals include specific objectives for oyster restoration, freshwater mussel restoration, wetlands preservation, waterbirds protection, land conservation, public access, and environmental workforce development, among many others. The revised agreement also sets a 2040 deadline for most of these outcomes with a midpoint check-in in 2033 that will align with 50 years of the partnerships' work to restore the Bay.

"The partners in the Chesapeake Bay agreement have put together goals that are ambitious but also achievable," said Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz. "Maryland fought to strengthen this agreement and we're proud

of what the partners signed onto today. The agreement ensures that this important partnership continues to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding watershed for the next 15 years."

Maryland has invested \$15.9 billion in Bay restoration since 2000 and the state met and surpassed many of its goals for the 2014 agreement. Maryland reached its goal to conserve 30% of state land, nearly 2 million acres, in 2024. Together with Virginia, Maryland completed the largest oyster restoration project in the world by restoring oyster habitat and populations in 11 tidal rivers. At the same time as these large-scale oyster restoration efforts, Maryland has seen a tripling of its overall adult oyster population and several years of above average oyster harvests, averaging 475,000 bushels and \$18 million annually in harvests during the previous five years.

Maryland also contributed to efforts that restored more than 2,500 miles of rivers to migrating fish. Though region-wide efforts to

reduce nutrient pollution will not be reached by the 2025 deadline, Maryland is on pace to meet its own nitrogen and phosphorus pollution reduction targets by the end of this year.

With these successes and with ongoing planning, Maryland is well positioned to meet the updated goals of the revised agreement. The state is preparing for the next three large-scale oyster restoration projects. Planning is also underway for mussel restoration in the state, with the state's mussel hatchery taking lessons from the oyster restoration projects and supported by funding through the Conowingo Dam settlement with Constellation.

The updated agreement aligns with Maryland's new strategy for Bay restoration, which focuses on improvements to shallow waterways, such as streams, coastlines, and rivers—areas where people tend to have the most interaction with their watershed and places where targeted action can have large impacts. The five waterways supported by the Whole Watershed Act in Maryland will be test cases in how focused water quality improvement projects in a specific area can benefit habitats, communities, and economic opportunities.

The Chesapeake Bay Executive Council met Dec. 2 at the National Aquarium in Baltimore to approve the revised agreement, setting the path for the next 15 years of environmental action in the Bay region, where the council selected Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro as the next chair of the Executive Council. Governor Shapiro will take over from Governor Moore, who led the Executive Council for the previous two years.

Press release from MD DNR



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Sheriff's Office Hosts 24th Annual Silent Angel Memorial



The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office held the 24th Annual Silent Angel Memorial on Sunday, December 7, bringing families, friends, and community members together to honor the lives of homicide victims who lived in St. Mary's County.

The ceremony took place at the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department, where attendees gathered as ornaments bearing the names, dates of birth, and dates each individual became a "Silent Angel" were presented and placed on the memorial tree.

Steve Bildman, husband of Eileen Bildman, who founded the Silent Angel Memorial, was in attendance, continuing the legacy of remembrance and healing she began.

Detective Jeff Gray of the Maryland Crime Victim's Resource Center was also present, offering support and resources to families throughout the evening.

In his welcoming remarks, Sheriff Steve Hall said, "This has become one of the most important traditions of the Office of the Sheriff. For over two decades, we've gathered together in our grief to support each other in bearing the loss of a loved one and to encourage each other while celebrating the lives and the light of our angels."

Chaplain Charlie Wharton delivered the address, reflecting on the enduring impact of loss. He called attention to the November 2021 homicides of Martina Lynn Patterson and Lyneasha Justice Greenwell, reminding families that "we will not forget," a sentiment that spoke to every life memorialized during the ceremony.

A recording of Chaplain Wharton's remarks, followed by the presentation of the Silent Angels' names, is available on the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office YouTube page at www.youtube.com/@first-sheriff.

The Sheriff's Office extended special appreciation to the cadets of the James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center Criminal Justice program, who assisted in presenting and displaying the ornaments for families throughout the evening.

The decorated memorial tree will remain on display in the lobby of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office District 3 Station in California through the first week of January.

For more information about the Silent Angel Memorial, please contact Mary Ross at 301-475-4200, ext. 1971, or Mary.Ross@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Press release from SMCSO

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County to Receive Two Awards from State Association

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County and leaders from across St. Mary's County Government will be attending the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Winter Conference from Dec. 10–12 in Cambridge. This year's conference is especially meaningful for St. Mary's County, as both Commissioner President James Randy Guy and the St. Mary's County Health Department will be honored with prestigious statewide awards.

Commissioner President Guy will receive the Marilyn J. Praisner Public Service Award, established to honor the legacy of former Montgomery County Council Member, MACo Past President, and beloved public servant Marilyn J. Praisner. The award recognizes a current or former elected county official who has demonstrated outstanding service to their county, constituents, and MACo.

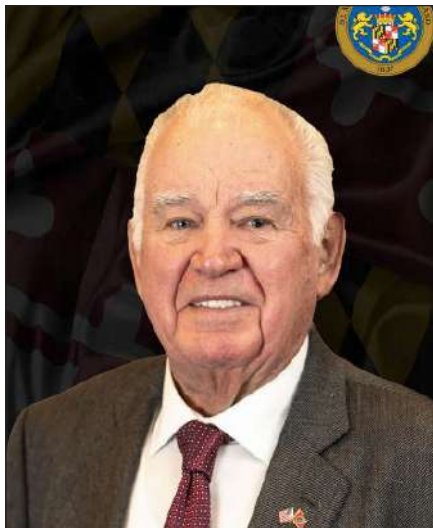
"This award is an incredible honor, and I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to have served St. Mary's County and to have contributed to MACo's important work over the years," said Commissioner President Guy. "As I near the end of my final term, I am proud of what we have accomplished together and thankful for the partnerships built in the spirit of strengthening our state and community."

In addition, the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) will receive the County Innovation Award for the St. Mary's County Health Hub. This award recognizes superb and leading-edge county programs that improve the overall quality of life and service delivery for residents.

"Our team is deeply honored to receive the County Innovation Award on behalf of the St. Mary's County Health Department and the many partners who bring the Health Hub to life," said Dr. Meena Brewster, Health Officer for St. Mary's County. "This recognition celebrates the commitment of our incredible staff and community partners who work every day to ensure residents have access to compassionate and coordinated care."

The MACo Winter Conference leads into Maryland's General Assembly Session—the intensive 90 days of law-making that affect all residents of our state. This year, more than 1,000 leaders representing various levels of the state's public and private sectors will convene to discuss the top issues facing local leaders.

The 2025 conference theme, "Local Leadership, Lasting Impact: Shaping What's Next," will cover the fiscal and operational challenges being seen across all county service areas. The MACo Winter Conference aims to equip county decision-makers and participants with tools for effective leadership, offering a comprehensive perspective



St. Mary's County Commissioner President Randy Guy



St. Mary's County Health Office Dr. Meena Brewster

on the pressing issues anticipated during the upcoming Maryland General Assembly Session.

With 30+ educational sessions, general sessions, meetings, and special events taking place at this multi-day event, participants will leave the conference with a deeper understanding of the issues shaping Maryland's counties and communities. This year's discussions will tackle emerging challenges in housing, transportation, and infrastructure, as well as modernizing local government operations through technology, workforce development, and partnerships.

Participants will dive into the latest on state education funding, environmental mandates, and fiscal priorities as counties prepare for the 2026 legislative session.

With the MACo Winter Conference comes the annual installation of Officers and Board of Directors, including Commissioner President Guy, who will continue to serve.

Press release from St. Mary's County Government

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Identity Sought for Assault Suspect

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is seeking to identify and locate a suspect in an assault case that took place on Monday, December 1, 2025, at Food Lion in Charlotte Hall.

The suspect, described as a white male in his mid-50s, and seen in this surveillance camera still shot, approached a young female, touched her inappropriately, and then also propositioned her.

The victim was able to walk away with no further interaction.

Anyone with information about this case is asked to contact Corporal Timothy White, #200, at 301-475-4200, ext. 2307, or by email at Timothy.White@stmaryscountymd.gov. Please reference case #2025-72952.

Tipsters can also submit tips anonymously:

- Text 847411, starting your message with "SMCSO", add a space, and then your tip.
- Online: Submit a tip through the Sheriff's Office website at www.FirstSheriff.com/tips.
- App: Send a tip directly through the SMCSO app. Download the free app from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.



For those who prefer to make a phone call, tips can also be shared through the Crime Solvers line at 301-475-3333. 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.

Press release from SMCSO

Sheriff's Office Launches Redesigned Website

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office has launched a newly redesigned website at www.FirstSheriff.com, offering the community a clearer, more accessible, and user-friendly way to find important public safety information.

The updated site features improved navigation, a cleaner layout, and a modern design that is easier to read on both desktop and mobile devices. Community members can now more quickly locate commonly searched information, including news releases, employment opportunities, services for incarcerated individuals, and contact information for divisions across the agency.

The redesign supports the Sheriff's Office's ongoing commitment to open, transparent, and effective communication with the community. The improved layout simplifies how residents connect with the Office, stay informed, and learn more about the

work being done across St. Mary's County.

Key improvements include:

- A mobile-friendly design that adapts to all screen sizes
- Streamlined menus that help visitors find information more quickly
- Refreshed pages featuring a more straightforward layout and readability
- Enhanced organization of public resources, including forms, services and updates

The Sheriff's Office will continue to update additional sections of the website in the coming weeks. Community members are encouraged to explore the new site and provide feedback via the Public Information Office to support continued improvement. For information or to give suggestions, please email SMCSO.PIO@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Press release from SMCSO

NAS Patuxent River Sets Noise Advisory

Communities surrounding the naval air station are advised that noise-generating testing events are scheduled to take place Dec. 8, 2025 – Jan. 30, 2026 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. for Open Air Engine Test Cell (OAETC) operations.

Residents may notice increased noise levels due to these operations.

As with all operations, NAS Patuxent River takes precautions to lessen the impact of testing activities on the community. For more information, call 1-866-819-9028. To view all current NAS PAX noise advisories please visit <https://www.cnic.navy.mil/PaxRiverNoise>.

Press release from NAS Patuxent River

County Audit Shows Increasing Fund Balance

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The audit for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2025, shows St. Mary's County with an \$88 million fund balance, \$17 million more than the 15 percent required by county regulations.

Commissioner Mile Hewitt usually closely scrutinizes the audit. At the Dec. 9 commissioner meeting, Hewitt entered into a dialogue with auditor Chris Lehman about the state of the budget.

Hewitt said, "I'm always concerned about fund balances. We raised our income taxes because we're concerned about the cost of what we call the Blueprint. And it seems like we are far ahead of what the state requires for the Blueprint, but I also understand there's other things that go into running a school system more than just what the Blueprint is. So, where I'm going with this is fund balance. We keep a 15 percent policy of fund balance. I think I read in here that the fund balance total was \$88 million. Would you know if that's correct or not?"

Lehman agreed.

Hewitt asked, "Now we had a general revenue of what?"

Revenues were \$334 million in the general fund," Lehman said.

"Okay. So...that's about \$51 million is going to be 15 percent. But it talks here about a fund balance of \$18.9 million that's over the 15 percent policy. I call that the unassigned fund balance," Hewitt said.

Lehman agreed.

Hewitt then asked, "You do other counties and other parts of the state I'm sure. How do we stack up compared to them?"

Lehman answered, "I would say that a lot of the counties for this fiscal year. So, the fund balance did grow year over year. There's roughly a \$9 million growth in fund balance. We've seen income taxes coming over budget. We have seen growth in fund balances across the counties. Not to say every fund balance is the same result. We have seen growth in...unassigned fund category, the 15 percent that you referenced as that policy sitting in the committed line. So, the \$50 million of your fund balance is sitting in that committed. Once you take away the other types of commitments, the assigned fund balance for encumbrances and things of that nature, the residual is at the 18 percent. And I would say that is comparable to what we've seen across other counties, a little bit better positioned as well."

Hewitt said, "It's good to know that we're least as good if not better than somebody else."

Lehman said, "I do think it's a healthy fund balance."

Hewitt also pointed out that retirement fund balances were at a sufficient level.

He noted, "I'm a firm fan of as we're generating revenues that we used to spend for something else. And we can commit to things like turf fields that you just heard about when you were just in the audience here a bit ago (during proclamations for Leonardtown High School champion teams)."

Lehman said, "Someone could look at your budget to actually show that the rev-

enues were over budget, the expenditures were under budget, and that also led to a positive fund balance change."

Later, during commissioner time, Hewitt noted about the volunteer length of service plan (LOSAP), "We'll be able to pay out, but we don't need to put any more in, the trust will grow. And with that said, we can do more to help our first responders. I'm hopeful in this budget season coming up, that we can increase our LOSAP benefits for those who are 60 years old and have 20 years of service from \$300 to \$400 a month. The reason I think that's important is because that's what Calvert County does, and I never like to be compared with another county nearby that's doing a better job than we are."

Hewitt said that at the upcoming Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) winter conference, "I've made an appointment with some people from MACO to talk about the Blueprint process. And we've all heard how expensive the Blueprint is going to be. How many counties are having a hard time meeting those financial requirements. I'm glad to report that St. Mary's County, because we've put so much money above maintenance of effort to our schools, is actually funding our schools at 2031 levels in this 2026 year. We're five years ahead of funding. But then you hear things like, they don't pay for transportation. You know, they don't pay for extracurricular. And that's important. So, I really want to get our head around what is the Blueprint going to do this year?"

"Hopefully, we'll get some legislative updates that'll give us an idea what the gov-

ernor intends to do because we've seen that the state legislature is having its own issues with funding. They've got a big deficit looking at the state, and they're going to have to find ways to save money."

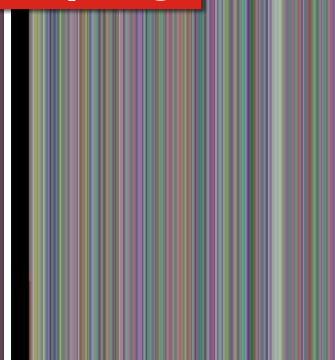
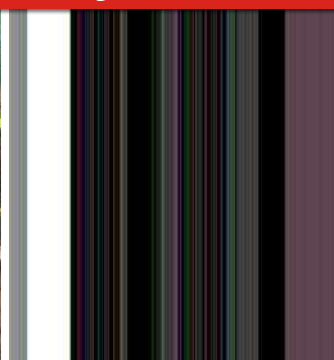
Hewitt observed, "The bottom line is this, we have continued to have metrics that allow us to underestimate revenues and overestimate expenses. And that continually builds in these fund balances of \$88.9 million this time. And while we have a reserve of 15 percent, which is very important, we continually go over that. We need to find a way to correct that somehow. We put a tax increase through, and currently this year we're about \$10 and a half million in income tax returns ahead of what we expected it to be at this point in the year. We're running way ahead. And I'm a big fan of government should collect enough money to provide services and take care of citizens who have needs, but we don't need more than we need. At some point in time you have to give some back. So, I'm looking forward to hopefully finding some tax relief."

Lehman reported to the commissioners, "We've issued a clean or unmodified opinion on the financial statements. We did not discover any instances of fraud. Our audit is not a forensic audit, but we are required to have a healthy skepticism that fraud could happen at any time. We did not propose any journal entries through the audit process."

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Planning Commission Delays Major Subdivision

Navy Opposed Over Noise Concerns

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Amid opposition from the Navy and concerns over traffic and its single entrance, the St. Mary's County Planning Commission has postponed a decision on a major project planned for Willows Road.

Called Bradley Brook, it is planned to contain 150 townhouse units and 73 single family detached dwelling units.

The commission continued the hearing to Jan. 12 to give the developer's representatives a chance to respond to the concerns.

Patuxent River Naval Air Station Commanding Officer Capt. Mark Zematis said, "NAS Pax River seeks a mutually beneficial outcome that will support operations and ensure the health and safety of our community in Southern Maryland. NAS Pax River is an active member of St. Mary's County community and the largest employer in the county. According to St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development, 72 percent of the 25,000 NAS Pax River employees reside within St. Mary's County, and the installation contribute contributes \$6.2 billion to state and local economies."

The commanding officer noted the AICUZ, or Air Installation Compatibility Use Zone "aims to protect both military operations and public safety by recommending compatible land use and mitigating encroachment that could negatively impact critical national security missions."

The AICUZ is an area of high noise and accident potential. In 2019 the Navy revised the noise potential area, and a study is now underway to update the AICUZ.

Zematis said county staff were advised of the new noise area and said it would be included in the comprehensive plan revision now underway. But county staff told the planners they were not immediately able to confirm that.

There is an area of the new development, the portion that includes single family homes, that is in the new noise area. The developer has agreed to include noise attenuation in construction and provide a disclosure, but the Navy isn't convinced that's enough.

The captain said, "After careful deliberation, NAS Pax River determined that the proposed residential development poses significant encroachment threat to military mission of the Naval Air Station."

He said, "The subject property is located directly under the approach and departure runway 624, which currently involves approximately 11,000 flight operations per year."

He added, "The proximity of this development to the installation poses inherent risk to resident safety and wellbeing while potentially impacting the NAS Patuxent River mission Development and such close proximity to the installations fence line could hinder the expansion and implementation of emerging technologies and programs."

"Furthermore, this development may result in an increase in noise complaints. Similar challenges at other installations



Artist's rendering of Bradley Brook entrance

and necessitated establishment of avoidance areas, and in some cases relocations of programs to more suitable testing environments. This parcel is suitable for other permitted land uses that do not include residential. Furthermore, alternative tracks exist within St. Mary's County for residential development that are not located within the high noise contour."

The base commander said, "A comprehensive housing study providing justification for residential development within the high noise contour has not been presented, highlighting the absence of evidence to support the critical need for such subdivisions in these high noise areas."

He said, "Disclosures alone cannot eliminate the inherent incompatibility of residential land use in these zones. Sound attenuating construction does not mitigate noise generated by helicopters and outdoor activities may be substantially affected by aircraft noise."

Planning commission member Gerald A Cousineau, III wanted to know about the Glen Forrest housing for base personnel that is near the proposed development and is within the AICUZ and also about the noise impact for housing on base.

Community Planning Liaison Officer for NAS Pax River Hannah Esky said, "What's slowly happening, and it's hard to do with limited money, is the military will eliminate incompatible land uses the same that thing that we're doing outside the fence now."

Planning commission member Patty Robrecht expressed concern. "It's not just a risk to the folks that are going to buy in that area. It's also a risk to the base itself. If we go through another BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure), that's one of the biggest things they look at is encroachment. We could be rated very, very low if there's a lot of safety issues in and around that base."

Developer's attorney Chris Longmore, being made aware of the Navy's concerns, insisted, "All residences are also within the allowable noise contours of our zoning ordinance in the map that's been adopted there."

He added, "The Navy base is our main driver. We want to support it in every way

that we can with this development and everything we do. It's our livelihood for all of us probably in this room and we think that the unique challenge of that is it's nice to have the housing closer in near the base because that's less traffic on our roads that other people complain about on 235 or Route 5 going out from the base. And at the same time, we want to respect and not do any encroachment that's going to harm

the base. And that's what we've tried here, given the fact that my client understandably would have no idea this may be a concern because there's no way to find it out until you get a letter in July after you've done all your engineering and you've already purchased the site."

Before the Navy representatives spoke the commission, led by Co-Chair Joseph Van Kirk, grilled the developer's traffic consultant about their traffic study, repudiating some of the findings and challenging that it was done a year ago when many of the base personnel were working at home.

The development has only one entrance. The zoning ordinance wants at least two, but there was a disagreement whether or not that was advisory and can be waived by the commission.

But Longmore said his client was advised it was discretionary, otherwise they wouldn't have proceeded with the development.

He said the impact would be lessened by having a divided entrance and a good internal road system.

Those issues will be discussed along with the Navy concerns when the hearing reconvenes on Jan. 12 at 6:30 p.m.

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Lindsay Louise Robeson, 33, Mechanicsville, MD
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Alan Michael Quade, 33, Abell, MD

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John Christopher Lachkovic, 64, Lexington Park, MD
Kathy Marie Wheeler, 58, Lexington Park, MD

Tracy Lee White, 37, Lusby, MD
Joshua Paul Scrader, 42, Lusby, MD

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Abreeonna Nicole Gonzalez, 30, Great Mills, MD
Tyler Eli Dent, 24, Smithfield, VA

Almayca Castillo Calangi, 33, California, MD
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Danielle Marie Mccann, 25, Leonardtown, MD

Sandry Yulieth Osso Naranjo, 23, California, MD
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Redistricting Proposal: Close White Marsh, Current LHS Students Stay

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The St. Mary's County Board of Education has made some tentative decisions after their first public discussion about redistricting on Dec. 10. Although they will need additional information before a final decision that goes to public hearing, the board tentatively decided to close White Marsh Elementary School in Mechanicsville, and stagger the shift of students to Chopticon in which current Leonardtown High School students will remain there and incoming freshmen next year making the switch.

Board of Education Chair Karin Bailey said, "Because all of the options that were presented by Canon (the consultant) were based on what they gathered, it really didn't have the St. Mary's County finesse touch on it. So, that's what we need to do now, is to take all of that into account and provide direction to see what we want it to look like at the end."

Superintendent of Schools Dr. J. Scott Smith set the stage for the discussion. He said, "We had four basic drivers behind what we wanted them (consultant The Cannon Group) to come in and do.

One was, we wanted the effective and efficient use of capital resources in a fiscally responsible manner. That means how are we doing with all of our buildings, recognizing how much it costs to maintain and operate them in an effective way.

"Second, was to optimize use of all our facilities. Are we really doing what we need to do best with each one of these buildings?

"The third was to maximize what's available to children to the best instructional program across all of our buildings when we consider that against facility and financial resources. So, are we really able to be delivering this exact same educational program at all of our facilities?

"And then the last was to relieve overcrowding."

He added, "The overcrowding right now is most acutely being experienced in just the localized area of Leonardtown High School and Leonardtown High School's enrollment is substantially over capacity. Great Mills' rated at capacity and Chopticon High School is below."

Information was gathered through community forums and online surveys.

Smith said, "It's really going to be basically a balancing between Leonardtown and Chopticon."

Cannon's plan options, in addition to the previously presented switches from Leonardtown to Chopticon, included multiple elementary and middle school changes. Five-thousand kids would be impacted.

As to the proposal to close White Marsh, Smith explained, "Why specifically this is in here is because if you'll remember last year as we were going through a very challenging budget cycle, as we look forward to next year's very challenging budget cycle... unfortunately we're always going to come up short."

He said the county considers adequate public facilities "as long as there's capacity at the elementary level, you don't need to build a new elementary school." The same for middle and high schools.

"So, all of these things come together to recognize that there are practical, purposeful, sustainable reasons to look at closing White Marsh Elementary School," he said, "and in the closing of White Marsh Elementary School to redistrict those kids. Now it's only 230 students, but in doing so, it cascades and then redistrict the boundary redoing it all the way down."

He said White Marsh has not had a major renovation in years. He said, "So looking forward to what it will need ultimately to get it up to exactly where it needs to be is gonna be about \$8.8 million. And that's for just roof and HVAC and going in and making sure that we have everything that we need, as well as removing the relocatables that are there on site. A full renovation similar to something that we might have seen, where we get a real refresh and we go in and we make sure that it is ADA accessible, exactly as it needs to be, it's more than \$16.8 million."

He said the current size is not sustainable as recognized by the state. "Currently at that school there are two kindergarten teachers. There are eight 1 through five. There's one special ed teacher. There are a total of 11 teaching positions in 11 rooms in that building.

"It's a small building. It's a very small building."

He said at White Marsh, "Last year's operating costs were a little over \$3.7 million. If we are to close that school, we will save \$1.2 million. Most of that will be in staffing because we'll no longer need a principal, a secretary to the principal, a guidance counselor, a media specialist, an IRTA paraeducator, a nurse, a safety and security assistant, and the building service staff related to that building that will save us \$866,000 in recurring costs. In addition to that, if we lose those people completely and they're absorbed someplace else, we spend another \$289,000 in benefits for those employees for insurance, retirement, and health benefits."

He said there's \$100,000 yearly to operate the school.

Bailey shared her opinions which in the end appeared to be the board's general consensus. "So, I have a couple things I think in order to frame this whole discussion.

The initial two reasons why we started this whole process, number one is because... Leonardtown High School is approximately 400 to 450 students over what the capacity is, which is an entire grade level class, if not more. I know at one of the community forums we had, how it affects extracurriculars, how it affects AP classes, just pure volume of students in classes that are there."

She added, "Secondly, when we went through, as Scott alluded to during the budget work sessions with the county commissioners and also at the public hearing, we had two county commissioners that definitely gave us the very specific direction to evaluate everything and close schools because the enrollment is declining. So that's how we got here."

Noting that they were her own opinions, Bailey said some direction from the board was needed for the Cannon Group to continue.

She said, "I'm not really a big fan of like blowing up every single elementary, middle, and high school right across the whole county, because our original intent was to look at what was happening at Leonardtown High School and spread those students out."

"An intended part of this whole thing is the absolute incredible capital outlay that we will possibly have at White Marsh High or Elementary School over the next five years."

She continued, "We heard clearly through emails, even just from what the Cannon Group put together, I can't say I was ever a big fan of plucking students out of their current high schools that are in there right now and moving them somewhere else. I think that is not fair. Just from a sports team, from leadership, from clubs and organizations. I wouldn't like that to happen to my children."

She added, "I think we need more of a phased-in approach of where it is. So maybe the kids that are in there right now... in each of the high schools from nine to 11th grade, they stay where they are. And now maybe we look at an eighth-grade cohort and even farther down the fifth-grade cohorts. And if we need to move children and students between middle schools, rather than blowing up the ninth, 10th, and 11th graders at Leonardtown this year."

She observed, "We have the renovation at Chopticon that's starting next spring. So, I don't know if we want 200 to 300 new students rolling through those doors next year when we have everything ceiling level and above."

She said, "There's all of this buzz around about the additional developments... in Leonardtown proper. And I personally know of at least three large tracks that they are looking at and identifying to put more houses on and in the range of 300 to 500 more houses. I don't think it is fair at all that we set up a plan based on what we know



School Board Chair Karin Bailey

now, and then this development comes online, and then in five years we've made Leonardtown High School 'fat again.'"

She added, "So my suggestion, and from my understanding, the town of Leonardtown doesn't pay impact fees. They aren't paying for parks and rec, they're not contributing to the schools, they're not contributing to the roads. They just say, hey, we're going to put all these houses in here. You guys all take care of it. So, I think what we need to do is have meetings with the mayor and the town council and find out what their development plan is for the next five to 10 years, and take into account those developments that are going to come online."

Board Vice Chair Cathy Allen said if White Marsh is closed she would prefer for those students to be transferred to schools in north county.

But Chief Operating Officer Michael Watson said, "If you were to close White Marsh Elementary School and reallocate only 230 students just across the Northern elementary schools, that would put the other four northern elementary schools over a hundred percent capacity."

Board member Mary Washington expressed concern for families who might have an incoming first-year student redistricted to one school while their sibling or siblings are at another. Bailey said that was a detail to be addressed by the consultant.

Board member Josh Guy had some concerns about a White Marsh closing. He said, "I would like to see what it's going to look like if we did choose to close White Marsh."

Another unaddressed detail is transportation. The phased-in approach could lead to a situation where one bus would have to go into a community to go to Chopticon and another to pick up for Leonardtown.

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LOCAL 11
Chesapeake Bay Program approves revised
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ON THE COVER
Sheriff's office raises funds for Special
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WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, DEC 11	FRI, DEC 12	SAT, DEC 13	SUN, DEC 14
Partly Cloudy Hi: 40° Lo: 28°	Cloudy Hi: 39° Lo: 31°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 48° Lo: 33°	AM Snow Hi: 36° Lo: 17°
MON, DEC 15	TUE, DEC 16	WED, DEC 17	THU, DEC 18
Mostly Sunny Hi: 31° Lo: 22°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 39° Lo: 27°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 38°	Showers Hi: 54° Lo: 38°



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