

Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2026

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**Property Value Growth
Slows Statewide**

**Dunkirk Town Center
Plan Set for Hearing**

**Students Raise Funds
for Fire Victims**

**WHAT'S COMING
IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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CONTENTS

LOCAL NEWS	4	CALENDAR	7
COMMUNITY	6		

“I REMAIN STRONGLY OPPOSED TO INCREASING TAXES ON MARYLANDERS TO BALANCE THE BUDGET.”

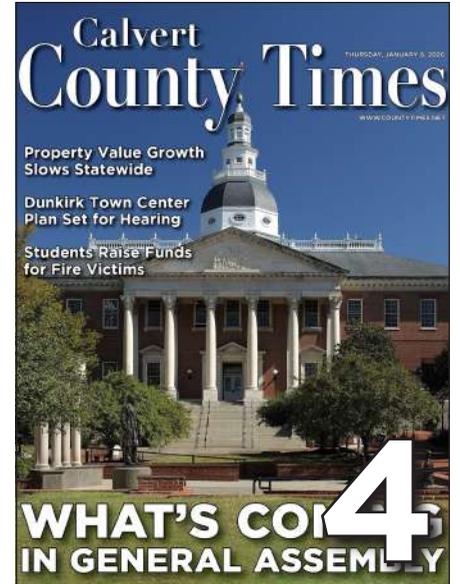
SEN. JACK BAILEY



COMMUNITY 6
CalvertHealth welcomes first baby of 2026



COMMUNITY 6
Annamarie Garden awards MLK residency



ON THE COVER
Senator predicts a budget-driven year in Annapolis

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 8 Mostly Sunny Hi: 54° Lo: 39°	FRI, JAN 9 Cloudy Hi: 59° Lo: 52°	SAT, JAN 10 Rain Hi: 56° Lo: 47°	SUN, JAN 11 AM Showers Hi: 50° Lo: 32°
MON, JAN 12 Sunny Hi: 44° Lo: 31°	TUE, JAN 13 Sunny Hi: 51° Lo: 40°	WED, JAN 14 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 52° Lo: 38°	THU, JAN 15 AM Showers Hi: 43° Lo: 24°

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Senator Sees a Budget-Driven Legislature

Governor's Housing Initiative Stirs Controversy

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

It's going to be another pocketbook year for the Maryland General Assembly when it convenes on Jan 14. Senator Jack Bailey, who represents lower Calvert and St. Mary's County, told the County Times, "This year, Maryland is once again facing a substantial budget deficit. This is despite the state enacting significant tax increases last year – increases which I voted against. I remain strongly opposed to increasing taxes on Marylanders to balance the budget. Instead, the General Assembly should take the opportunity this session to reconsider future spending mandates, such as the Blueprint for Education, as well as policies that have driven up costs for Marylanders, particularly policies and mandates which have increased the cost of energy.

"I am still finalizing my legislative package for this upcoming session. One of the bills that I am working on is a bill that we hope will make it easier for shoreline property owners in Calvert and St. Mary's Counties to protect their property from erosion. In addition, I hope to pass various legislation that supports our public safety officers."

Gov. Wes Moore will release his budget on Jan. 21, which will give an indication how he plans on balancing the budget given that projected \$1.5 million deficit, the gorilla in the statehouse.

The Calvert commissioners, as their counterparts around the state, are fearful the governor will attempt to balance the budget by passing down unfunded mandates on the counties.

Governor Moore on Jan. 6 also issued his Housing Growth and Affordability Agenda for 2026 Legislative Session.

A press release said, "Governor Wes Moore today unveiled his housing growth and affordability agenda during a joint development announcement at Metro's Capitol Heights station in Prince George's County. The agenda includes three pieces of legislation that will help break down barriers to buying and building housing across the state, with a focus on transit-oriented development to expedite the revitalization of communities around transit stations to create housing, grow the economy, and increase transit ridership.

"Finding an affordable place to live is

one of the greatest barriers Marylanders face to being successful and choosing to stay in Maryland," said Gov. Moore. "My housing growth and affordability agenda accelerates our administration's momentum to move faster in building new homes, lowering costs, and creating a housing market that Leaves No One Behind."

"The governor's Maryland Transit & Housing Opportunity Act of 2026 addresses zoning and financing barriers to create more jobs and housing near transit. The legislation would eliminate minimum parking requirements for certain transit-oriented developments, promote mixed-use development around key stations, and give the State more authority over the development of land adjacent to transit stations. To address economic barriers to implementing more projects, the legislation expands existing financial incentives for projects located near high-quality transit stations.

"The Maryland Transit & Housing Opportunity Act will also unlock more than 300 acres of State-owned land adjacent to existing transit stations for transit-oriented development, resulting in more than 7,000 housing units and almost \$1.4 billion in tax revenue for the State and its communities, leveraging the state's multi-billion-dollar transit investments by speeding up the development process while generating a strong economic output, creating housing, and increasing transit ridership.

"The Maryland Transit & Housing Opportunity Act will help the Maryland Department of Transportation expedite our work in transforming underutilized land around transit stations into dense, thriving, and inclusive developments that will better connect our communities and grow our economy," said Maryland Department of Transportation Acting Secretary Samantha J. Biddle. "We are breaking down barriers in deploying MDOT's state-owned land to provide economic mobility for families across our state."

"During the event, Governor Moore also highlighted two other critical pieces of upcoming housing legislation: the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026, and Senator Malcolm Augustine and Delegate Dylan Behler's Housing Certainty Act of 2026.

"The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Starter and

Silver Homes Act of 2026 proposes actions to increase housing options by allowing smaller, more affordable homes. The legislation allows for smaller single-family homes on smaller lots and townhouses in residential areas statewide.

"With fewer homes available and high interest rates locking out new generations of homebuyers, too many young families and seniors are left with few viable options to call Maryland home," said Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Jake Day. "The Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026 would expand housing choices by enabling homes that are up to 30 percent less expensive than what's currently available, unlocking homeownership for more Maryland families."

"The governor also expressed strong support for the Housing Certainty Act of 2026, sponsored by Senator Malcolm Augustine and Delegate Dylan Behler, to address regulatory uncertainty, delays and impact fees that drive up the cost of housing and prevent important projects from being implemented.

"The Housing Certainty Act ensures that once a housing project is approved, the rules can't change and derail it, forcing Marylanders to pay the price with higher housing costs," said Senator Malcolm Augustine. "This bill creates the certainty needed to address the state's housing shortage and improve affordability."

"Marylanders are struggling – and we must do everything we can to bring down the cost of Housing in the State. The Housing Certainty Act will ensure that housing can be built as approved, preventing delays, rising project costs, and the cancellation of already approved projects," said Delegate Dylan Behler. "By ensuring rules can't change after construction is approved, and streamlining the fee collection process, we can reduce the cost of housing to make it more affordable for families to live and work in Maryland."

"The Governor's Housing Growth and Affordability Agenda builds on his Housing Starts Here Executive Order to increase housing production and address the housing shortage across the state. Taken together, these measures will help to revitalize areas around transit, leverage State-owned land for economic development and housing growth, and create more opportunities for new housing options for more Marylanders. The Moore-Miller Administration looks



Sen. Jack Bailey

forward to working with the Maryland General Assembly and local stakeholders to implement these critical bills."

It is the Housing Certainty Act of 2026 that appears to have the most potential impact on rural counties, with fears that it would usurp some local planning authority.

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners only met in executive session this week, but the legislative proposal did draw concern during a briefing for the Commissioners of St. Mary's County.

That commissioner board was told by the county attorney who tracks legislation, "The idea is a developer goes out and hires 'expert plan reviewers' outside the local planning and growth office. Maybe they were trained by them (county staff), maybe they had some experience there. But ultimately you're talking about an outside consultant who professes and is registered to have the kind of expertise and certainty with local laws. That third party reviewer reviews the project for you, makes a recommendation to the local planning office whether it can be approved or disapproved and the way some of the drafts of the bill are looking, that's kind of it."

The process, it was feared, would take away some of the subtleties that local planning commissions are able to detect in a development proposal and instead of streamlining things would add another bureaucratic level.

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Tax Reassessments Show Slower Property Value Growth

The Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) has completed its 2026 “Group 2” reassessment of 789,178 residential and commercial properties statewide. Property tax assessment notices for properties in “Group 2” have been mailed; all 23 counties and Baltimore City experienced an increase in property values, and overall, 92.7 percent of Group 2 residential properties experienced an increase in value.

In Calvert, residential Group 2 properties have increase 8.8 percent since the last reassessment. Commercial properties have increased 10.8 percent.

Maryland has more than two million property accounts divided into three groups. SDAT reassesses each group once every three years. The 2026 assessments for “Group 2” properties were based on an evaluation of 57,543 sales that occurred within the group. The overall statewide value increase for “Group 2” properties was 12.7 percent, which represents an average increase in value

of 13.2 percent for residential properties and 11 percent for commercial properties during this period. Though property values continue to rise, the pace of growth slowed significantly compared to recent years. By comparison, statewide reassessments reflected increases of 20.1 percent last year and 23.4 percent in 2023, representing a 7.4 percentage-point decline in value growth from last year—nearly a 37 percent slowdown.

And compared to 2023, the growth rate declined by 10.7 percentage points, reflecting an almost 46 percent slowdown.

Since January 2023, the Moore-Miller Administration has focused on strengthening housing affordability, significantly increasing the amount of relief delivered through the Homeowners’ Property Tax Credit program. Payments to eligible homeowners totaled \$48.6 million in FY 2023, increased to \$62.4 million in FY 2024, and reached \$63.9 million in FY 2025. The increases reflect a continued commitment

to directing targeted relief to homeowners most impacted by rising housing costs. The moderation in assessment growth, combined with strong homeowner support, reflects progress toward stabilizing housing costs and supporting long-term affordability for Maryland families.

Per Census American Community Survey data, 68 percent of Maryland households are homeowners. “Property values are still rising, but at a more sustainable pace,” said SDAT Director Bob Yeager. “After the rapid increases seen during the post-COVID recovery, this moderation is an important step toward balancing household wealth growth with housing affordability.”

To support housing affordability, each reassessment notice indicates whether the property is the owner’s principal residence and provides the status of the Homestead Tax Credit application. The Homestead Tax Credit limits how much the taxable assessment of a homeowner’s principal res-

idence can increase each year, regardless of income. State law caps the annual increase at 10 percent, and many local governments have adopted even lower limits.

Homeowners must submit a one-time application and meet program requirements to receive the credit. The Homeowners’ Property Tax Credit program offers additional relief to limited-income homeowners by capping the amount of property taxes owed each year based on income. Eligible homeowners must apply annually, and SDAT calculates credits in accordance with state law. Any increase in assessed value will be phased in evenly over the next three years, while any decrease will be fully implemented in the 2026 tax year.

Property owners are encouraged to visit SDAT’s Maryland Property Tax Credit Programs webpage to learn more about available assistance.

Press release from SDAT

County Awarded \$300,000 for Transitional Housing

The Calvert County Department of Community Resources announces that Calvert County has been awarded funding through the State Revitalization Programs to support projects that promote community development and economic growth.

As part of this funding, Calvert County will receive \$300,000 to support planning for a new transitional housing project for survivors of domestic violence.

The funding will be used to develop a site plan for the Safe Transitional Housing for Survivors of Domestic Violence project. The project includes transitional housing units, and a resource center designed to support individuals and families as they work toward long-term stability and independence.

“This investment supports one of our com-

munity’s most critical needs,” said Jennifer Moreland, director of community resources. “Safe, stable housing and access to services are essential for survivors of domestic violence as they rebuild their lives.”

The State Revitalization Programs help local governments and organizations strengthen communities, improve quality of life, and encourage economic growth across Maryland. For more information about the state revitalization program visit news.maryland.gov/dhcd/2025/12/17/state-of-maryland-announces-600000-in-awards-to-community-development-projects-in-southern-region/.

Press release from Calvert County Government

Treasurer’s Office Moves to New Admin Building

Calvert Treasurer’s Office Moves to County Administration Building Jan. 6

The Calvert County Treasurer’s Office has relocated from the Calvert County Circuit Courthouse at 175 Main St. to the new County Administration Building (CAB) at 150 Main St. in Prince Frederick effective Tuesday, Jan. 6.

The Treasurer’s Office payment drop box will also move to the CAB on the same day. Residents who use the drop box are encouraged to plan ahead and ensure payments are placed at the new location beginning Jan. 6.

In addition to the move, the Treasurer’s Office will adjust its business hours. Beginning Jan. 6, the office is operating from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office previously closed at 4:30 p.m.

The relocation is part of Calvert County

Government’s continued effort to improve customer service and better align county offices within the County Administration Building. The Treasurer’s Office collects the majority of local funds, including county property and personal property taxes, permit fees, landfill revenue, water and sewer payments, gambling and liquor license fees, dog tag sales and other fees. The office also researches and validates deeds prior to recordation at the Clerk of the Circuit Court and administers the annual Calvert County Tax Sale.

For more information, contact the Treasurer’s Office at 410-535-1600, ext. 2630 or visit www.calvertcountymd.gov/174/Treasurers-Office.

Press release from Calvert County Government

Dunkirk Plan Set for Planning Commission Hearing

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Unlike the Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan, which is in its sixth year of revision, the update of the Dunkirk Town Center Master Plan has been relatively smooth and noncontroversial. Now that revision is the subject of a Jan. 21 public hearing by the Calvert County Planning Commission.

All of the county’s town centers have been incorporated into one section of the county code, with each town center a separate chapter and an all-encompassing lead chapter that includes regulations that apply to all town centers. Some revisions to that Chapter 1 will also be incorporated into the Jan. 21 public hearing.

Long-range Planner II Kat Lockwood told the planning commission on Dec. 17 that the following changes are included in the proposed Dunkirk plan:

- Update impervious surface and riparian buffer percentages in sub-watersheds—Recommend assessing impervious surface and establishing a threshold
- Revise the housing affordability assessment to be consistent with Chapter 1
- Recommend working with the Maryland Transit Administration for commuter bus services to Annapolis, New Carrollton and College Park
- Discuss benefits of treating stormwater due to increased intensity and frequency of rain events
- Include the number of vacant properties of 10 acres or more with development potential.
- Lockwood said the following changes to Chapter 1 will be presented:

- Address the Planning Principles Act (HB286)
- Add Census Designated Places and town center maps and descriptions
- Revise the housing affordability assessment (HB1045)
- Address Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (HB90) requirements
- Update homeless counts
- Address EV charger requirements for new single-family construction (HB 830)
- Broadband infrastructure update per the Planning Commission direction.

Lockwood said in Dunkirk, “There are currently two parcels 10 acres or larger that may be developed, but these parcels are encumbered with a septic drainage field, forest retention area, stormwater management facility, and planned road and associated right of way. Approximately eight to 10 acres are developable on these parcels. Additionally, there are two parcels in the north that are developable. One is eight plus acres and the other is four plus acres.”

Long-range Planner Tay Harris said the information on vacant land in Dunkirk will be presented to the county commissioners as well.

The main unresolved issue in Dunkirk remains the failing or near failing septic systems, particularly in the legacy shopping centers. No public water and sewer is planned for Dunkirk and residents there are resisting it for fear it would lead to additional residential development, exacerbating traffic there.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Students Raise Funds for Fire Victims

My name is Tom Alexander and I drive school bus #89 for Reid & Reid, Inc. in Calvert County, MD. On the morning of November 17th there was a devastating fire at the Fishing Creek Apartments in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland. The fire actually started sometime around 6:30 a.m. I was scheduled to pick up middle school students at that complex at 7:40 a.m. When I arrived in the area, I noticed smoke and then observed a large fire at those Apartments. The road to get there was closed off, and many fire trucks and rescue vehicles were on the scene. I continued picking up other students which total about 35. The route out of town took us in full view of the fire, and what we saw affected us all. We were worried about the families, our riders, and friends in those apartments. Later in the day we learned that everyone got out safely, mainly due to a person who knocked on apartment doors to warn them of the fire. Several people were treated for smoke inhalation. We also found out that more than 13 families were displaced from their homes and among them were bus riders Alyssa Tyer and Terrance & Alyiah Thompson. They lost everything including one pet.

In early December, the middle school students approached me about doing something nice for their friends for the holidays who were affected by the fire. The idea was to bring a little joy in their lives after this terrible event, and let them know how much we all cared about them. Hence, a fundraiser was launched and in quick fashion, donations started coming in.

Harper Cullins volunteered to be the

spokesperson for bus #89, and the two of us accepted donations. Harper's mother, Abby volunteered to do the accounting and keep track of everything. Donations came in from Bus #89 riders which included students from Northern HS, Windy Hill Middle School, Beach Elementary School, and Windy Hill Elementary School. Other donations came in from parents, friends of bus #89, Carolyn Sandros the driver on bus #66, and others who found out about the fundraiser. Ms. Sheri's Daycare, and Ms. Heather's Learning Club Daycare, both of Chesapeake Beach helped a great deal with spreading the word. This fundraiser was a great success and raised a total of \$2,645 which was split between the two families. Harper Cullins and students on bus #89 presented the two families with their gifts on December 16th. This was truly a wonderful day for everyone.

I am so proud of the students on bus #89. It was through their caring and thoughtfulness that made this a wonderful heart felt event. Thank you to all that donated and participated.

NOTE: This terrible fire brought to our attention the importance of having working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in our homes. We actually had a discussion about this on the bus, and talked about the need for every family to have a plan in case of fire. We also talked about the importance of having family fire drills on a regular basis. As the Scout Motto says "Be Prepared".

Submitted story

Sculpture Garden & Arts Center Awards Short-Term Residency

Annmurie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center is pleased to announce that fiber artist Felicia Reed has been selected for its 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Exhibit and Short-Term Residency.

As part of her residency, Reed will lead a community art project, *A Bouquet for MLK*, inviting visitors of all ages and abilities to create wet-felted flowers that will be assembled into a collaborative mural honoring Dr. King's vision of the Beloved Community.

Additionally, Reed will be curating a small group show that will coincide with this event, *Felicia and Friends: A Togetherness Tribute to MLK*. The community art project and the *Togetherness* group show will be on display in the Main Gallery starting January 17.

MLK Days: A Community Event

MLK Days is a three-day Community Art Event pm January 17-19 from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily.

During this three-day event, visitors are invited to watch Felicia Reed's wet-felting process in action, then create their own

blooms to add to a collaborative community mural. The installation celebrates unity, compassion, and collective creativity, with hundreds of flowers coming together to form a vibrant tribute to Dr. King's enduring ideals. Felicia's work embodies the principles of collaboration, transformation, and inclusivity, and this residency provides a unique opportunity for our community to experience the artistic process while reflecting on the values Dr. King championed.

About Felicia Reed

Felicia Reed is a fiber artist specializing in wet felting, using layers, textures, and colors to explore themes of connection and shared purpose. Her work transforms simple fibers into complex, layered compositions that invite reflection and interaction. *A Bouquet for MLK* community project extends her artistic vision, allowing visitors to participate directly in creating a collaborative artwork that celebrates unity and belonging.

Press release from Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center

CalvertHealth Welcomes First Baby of 2026



It's a boy! CalvertHealth Medical Center welcomed its first baby of the New Year at 7:56 a.m. on January 1, 2026, with the arrival of Lincoln Errol Prinsen. Born to parents Jessica and Kirk Prinsen of Lusby, Lincoln is a healthy baby boy, weighing 8 pounds, 3.1 ounces and measuring 19 inches long. His arrival marked a joyful start to the New Year for his family and for the care team who had the privilege of welcoming CalvertHealth's New Year's baby.

Shelter Launches 'New Year, New Chapter' Adoption Promotion



A few of the animals currently available for adoption. Clockwise from top left are Angelo, Hermione, Mr. Grayface, and Nutter Butter.

The Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter will kick off the new year by waiving adoption fees during its New Year, New Chapter adoption promotion, running through Saturday, Jan. 31.

Adoption fees will be waived for all animals that entered the shelter in 2025, identified by intake numbers beginning with "25." Animals of all ages and species are available for adoption, including dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, roosters, pigs and more.

Adoptions include spay or neuter surgery, microchipping, age-appropriate vaccinations and a starter care package to help pets transition into their new homes. All potential adopters will go through the shelter's usual screening process to ensure

each animal is placed in a safe, loving and appropriate home.

The shelter is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To schedule an intake appointment, call 410-535-7387. The shelter is located at 5055 Hallowing Point Rd. in Prince Frederick. Follow the Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter on Instagram at @calvertcountyanimalshelter and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CalvertCountyAnimalShelter.

For more information about adopting from the Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter and to view adoptable pets, visit www.calvertcountyanimalshelter.com.

Press release from Calvert County Government

Calvert Community Calendar

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

Thu, Jan 8

Sea Squirts

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

This month's theme is Lighthouse. Children 18 months to 3 years, with an adult, are invited to discover the museum together through music, stories, and special activities. Join us for story time and a craft, available while supplies last. Sessions are 25 to 40 minutes. Cost is free with museum admission. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive.

Fri, Jan 9

Pins and Needles

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

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

Sat, Jan 10

Band of Brothers and Sisters

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.

Texas Hold'Em

St. Leonard Vol Rescue Squad
6-11 p.m.

\$85 buy-in for \$20k in chips. Rounds are 20 minutes each. Doors open at 5 pm, tournament starts at 6pm. BYOB, food and sodas will be available for purchase. See www.slvfd.org or Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/500115481937635/ for more info.

Chance for 50/50 included in your buy-in. Tables deal their own cards, dealers are not provided. Dealer provided for final table. Late Entries permitted until end of the 1st break, approx. 7:10 pm cut off. No rebuys. ATM service on site has been restored.

Sun, Jan 11

Creature Feature

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

Meet a mystery animal not normally on display at the museum. Each month, the CMM Education team highlights a different creature found in local estuaries. Take-home coloring pages available. Included with museum admission.

Beyond the Displays: Artifact Stories

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

Join museum educator Lori to explore the museum's artifacts, uncovering their origins and significance. Hear how World War II shaped Solomons and discover hidden details in the museum murals. Learn something new every tour. Included with museum admission.

Wed, Jan 14

Veteran Services Program

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

Are you a veteran or close family member looking for assistance? ServingTogether will be on hand to provide support for Calvert County service members, veterans and military families. Walk-ins are encouraged. No appointment is necessary. Visit <https://servingtogetherproject.org/calvert> for more information.

NAMI Family Support Group

St John Vianney Catholic Church.
105 Vianney Lane, Pr Frederick
7- 8:30 p.m.

National Alliance on Mental Illness-Southern Maryland offers a free, confidential, and safe support group for individuals and families who have a loved one living with mental illness challenges. Group participants help each other by utilizing their collective lived experiences and learned wis-

dom. Participants may achieve a renewed sense of hope for their loved one living with mental health challenges. No registration required. Walk-ins are welcome. (This group is not faith-based or affiliated with the church.)

Thu, Jan 15

Little Minnows

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

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

Upcoming

Black Watermen & Oystermen of the Chesapeake

Calvert Marine Museum
Monday, Jan. 19
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Join us as we share the stories of Black Oystermen and Watermen along the Chesapeake. Learn about the Eastern Oyster, Chesapeake boat types, and what it was like to make a living working on the water or in a historic oyster packing house. Make your own oyster craft and take away a bit of inspiration on this annual Day of Service. Included in museum admission.

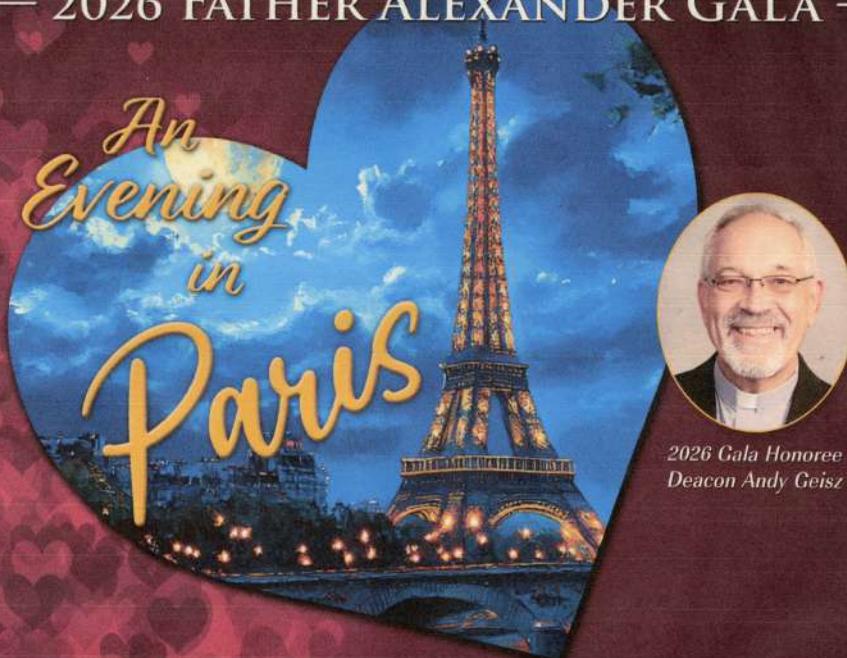
Maritime Performance Series: Ken Kolodner Quartet

Calvert Marine Museum
Friday, Jan. 30
7 to 9 p.m.

Experience the acclaimed father-son duo Ken and Brad Kolodner as they blend hammered dulcimer and clawhammer banjo into a fresh take on old-time bluegrass and American roots music. Joined by bassist Alex Lacquement and multi-instrumentalist Rachel Eddy, the quartet delivers a driving, innovative acoustic sound. Doors open at 6 p.m. with beverages available for purchase. Tickets are \$20 online up to one day in advance, and \$25 online or at the door on concert day.

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA
— 2026 FATHER ALEXANDER GALA —

An Evening in Paris



2026 Gala Honoree
Deacon Andy Geisz

HOLLYWOOD FIREHOUSE BANQUET HALL
SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 14 | 6:00 PM-10:30 PM

TICKET PRICING
EARLY BIRD (DEC 1-31, 2025) - \$100 PER TICKET | \$700 PER TABLE
REGULAR (JAN 1-FEB 1, 2026) - \$110 PER TICKET | \$770 PER TABLE

Wine Pull and Valentine's Day Celebration available at additional costs

Proceeds to benefit the construction of the Pre-K Building
For more information visit: olss.org/gala
or call the parish office at 410.326.3535

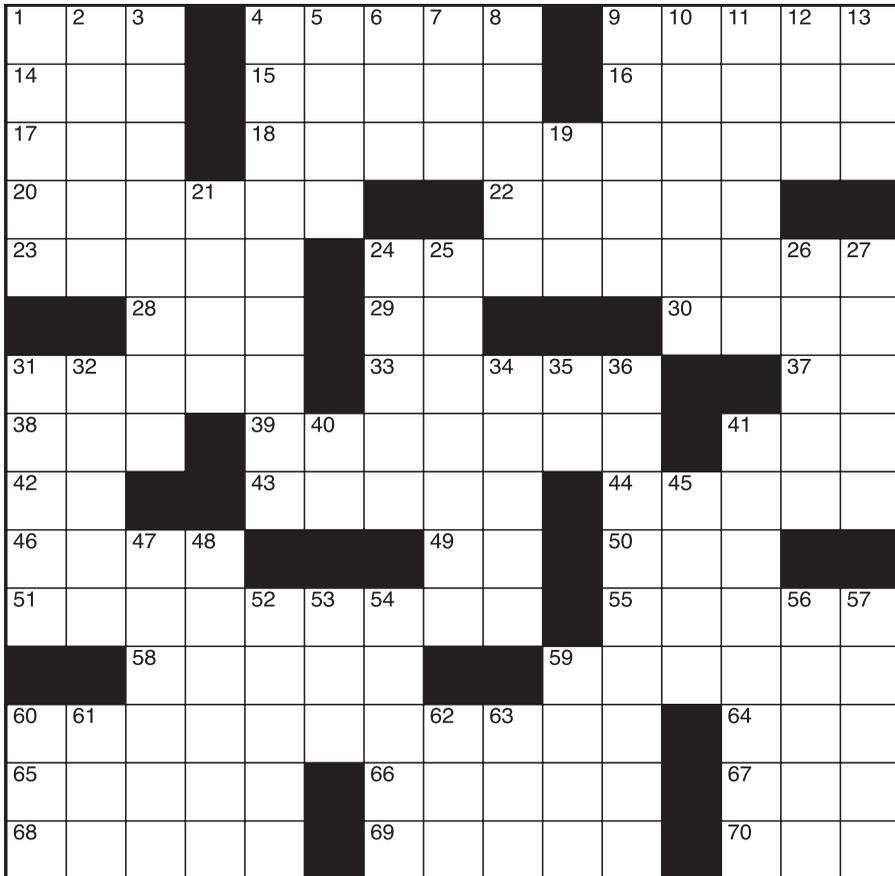
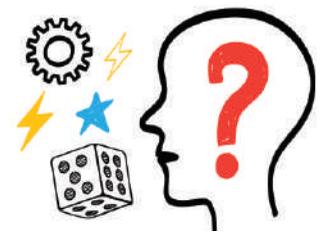


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FUN & GAMES

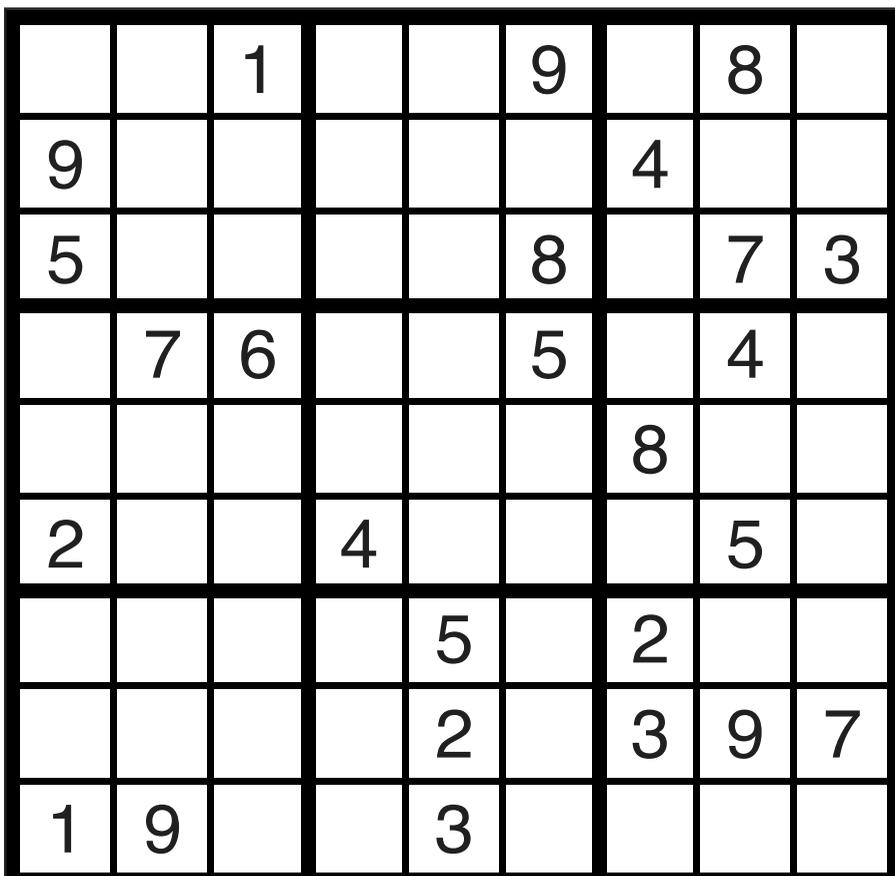


CLUES ACROSS

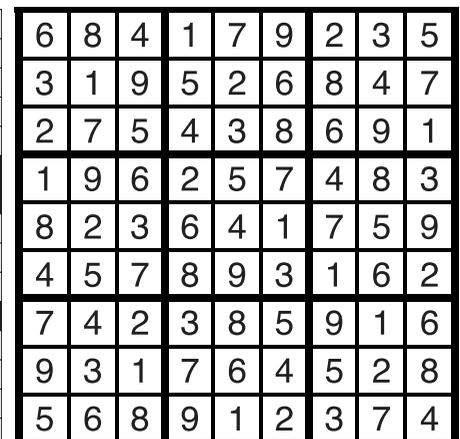
1. Defensive nuclear weapon
4. Moved back and forth
9. One-time coach of the Cowboys
14. Last letter
15. Cause to become less intense
16. Genus of tree bugs
17. Body art
18. Romance novelist
20. Be filled with love for
22. City
23. Make vivid
24. Horses
28. Mauna ____, Hawaiian volcano
29. Atomic #18
30. Shortly
31. A type of prejudice
33. Whirls
37. Six
38. Old world, new
39. __ Hess, oil company
41. Talk
42. Not off
43. Begets
44. Cars need them
46. Computing architecture (abbr.)
49. Of I
50. Journalist, activist Wells
51. Takes apart
55. Lists
58. Positively charged electrode
59. Hard, colorless compound
60. Inflammation of the peritoneum
64. Trent Reznor's band
65. Simply dry fruit
66. "Ivanhoe" author
67. Google certification
68. French commune
69. Medieval circuit courts
70. Soviet Socialist Republic

CLUES DOWN

1. Indigenous people of Mexico
2. Dietary supplement
3. Having a particular sheen or luster
4. Views
5. Academic Bill of Rights
6. Automobile
7. When you anticipate arriving
8. Beef or chicken intestine
9. Conspiracy
10. Blood disorder
11. Long-time NBAer Shawn
12. Time zone
13. US, Latin America, Canada belong to
19. Upton Sinclair novel
21. What a cow does
24. Cavalry-sword
25. Ancient Greek war galley
26. Stars
27. Rebukes
31. Billion year periods
32. Some are in a bottle
34. Tears down
35. Lethal dose
36. Humorists
40. Midwestern US state (abbr.)
41. Frameworks
45. Rocker Billy
47. More thin
48. Dog
52. Habitual repetitions
53. State of fuss
54. Uneasy
56. Chemical compounds
57. More cognizant of reality
59. A place to build
60. Exclamation that denotes disgust
61. Supplement with difficulty
62. Very slick
63. Hill or rocky peak



DECEMBER 31 SOLUTIONS



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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,

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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.

Sat, Jan 10

Band of Brothers and Sisters

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.

Weed Warriors Work

Historic St. Mary's City (HSMC)
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Join Friends of PTLT at to remove English ivy and invasive plants to help save the trees. We meet winter months on the SECOND Saturday. Bring your friends and family, loppers, clippers, saw, or favorite tool. Eye protection and work gloves recommended. Bottled water and snacks courtesy of The Good Earth Natural Foods Company, Leonardtown. Questions? Frank@ptlt.org 301-862-3421 301-247-3285

Southern Maryland Traditional Music and Dance Contra Dance

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

2nd Saturday of the month. The evening starts at 7 pm with a half hour beginner's dance workshop followed by live music performed by the SOMD Open Band and dancing from 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Check the website calendar for the lineup of dances and callers. Admission: \$8 for members; \$12 for non-SMTMD members; children 17 and under (when accompanied by a paying adult) and band members are free. See website for rescheduled or canceled events. Info: smtmd2@gmail.com, www.smtmd.org/new-events/

Sun, Jan 11

Creature Feature

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

Meet a mystery animal not normally on display at the museum. Each month, the CMM Education team highlights a different creature found in local estuaries. Take-home coloring pages available. Included with museum admission.

Beyond the Displays: Artifact Stories

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

Join museum educator Lori to explore the museum's artifacts, uncovering their origins and significance. Hear how World War II shaped Solomons and discover hidden details in the museum murals. Learn something new every tour. Included with museum admission.

Upcoming

Black Watermen & Oystermen of the Chesapeake

Calvert Marine Museum
Monday, Jan. 19
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Join us as we share the stories of Black Oystermen and Watermen along the Chesapeake. Learn about the Eastern Oyster, Chesapeake boat types, and what it was like to make a living working on the water or in a historic oyster packing house. Make your own oyster craft and take away a bit of inspiration on this annual Day of Service. Included in museum admission.

Maritime Performance Series: Ken Kolodner Quartet

Calvert Marine Museum
Friday, Jan. 30

7 to 9 p.m.

Experience the acclaimed father-son duo Ken and Brad Kolodner as they blend hammered dulcimer and clawhammer banjo into a fresh take on old-time bluegrass and American roots music. Joined by bassist Alex Lacquement and multi-instrumentalist Rachel Eddy, the quartet delivers a driving, innovative acoustic sound. Doors open at 6 p.m. with beverages available for purchase. Tickets are \$20 online up to one day in advance, and \$25 online or at the door on concert day.

13th Annual 'Pitch Card Parties'

Knights of Columbus Hall
16441 Three Notch Road, Ridge
January 16, March 20, June 19, July 17, August 21, an September 18
Doors open at 6 p.m. with games beginning promptly at 7 p.m.

Sponsored by Ridge Lions Club. There is a \$10 entrance fee per person and you are guaranteed to go home with at least one prize. There will be door prizes, a 50/50 raffle, a food basket raffle, and more. Food will be available for purchase, but dessert and beverage are free. All proceeds go to helping those in need in our community. For more information contact: Kim Carter, (240) 925-7664, kimcarter@ridgelionsclub@yahoo.com, or Bobbie Bell (301) 872-5114, or go to <https://www.facebook.com/RidgeLionsClub>.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library

UPCOMING EVENTS



Origami Workshop

Learn how to fold cats, cranes, frogs, hearts, and more! Origami paper and instructions will be available. Lexington Park Library on Saturday, January 10, 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. No registration.

All the Dirt on Winter Sowing: Veggies, Herbs, & Native Plants

Get a head start on your garden this year with winter seed starting! Master Gardener & Master Naturalist Molly Moore will introduce the 10 simple steps to winter sowing, discuss the benefits of this unique seed-starting method—including some serious cost-savings—and walk participants through creating and seeding their own mini greenhouses to take home!

Participants are invited to donate plastic gallon jugs (milk jugs) to refresh our supply of mini greenhouses. This program is made possible with support from the Lexington Manor Passive Park Community Garden and the University of Maryland Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs. Lexington Park Library on Saturday, January 10, 2 - 4 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Connect and Converse

Do you enjoy doing arts & crafts, playing board games, and making new friends? Connect and Converse might be the event for you! We meet on the second Monday of the month to make a craft, play a game, and listen to music. Our activities for this month are paper snowflakes and Uno. This event is intended for

adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities as well as their friends, family, and caregivers. Charlotte Hall Library on Monday, January 12, 12 - 1 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Open Art Hour

Everyone needs a bit of time to relax and create. Come and paint with your fellow library users. Chat and make friends, or paint on your own - however you feel that day. All supplies provided by the library. Lexington Park Library on Wednesday, January 14, 1 - 2:30 p.m. No registration.

Adult Afternoon Craft Club

Get together with fellow craft-lovers and create something simple but satisfying. We will meet once a month and craft something new each session. All projects should be able to be completed in

a 1-2 hour timeframe. Lexington Park Library on Thursday, January 15, 1 - 3 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Expungement Day

Williams, McClernan & Stack LLC will offer free legal help to those seeking Maryland expungements of criminal records. Appointments will be at Lexington Park Library and will last approximately 20 minutes. Please bring any paperwork relating to the case if the case was dismissed because the lawyers will be unable to see it on CaseSearch. Lexington Park Library on Friday, January 16, 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Maryland expungements only. Register on www.stmalib.org.

In Remembrance

Continued from page 13

service beginning at 11am officiated by Reverend Joe Orlando. Interment will be at Smithland Baptist Church in Heathsville, VA. The family will receive friends at the church one hour before the service. Interment date and time are pending.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of St. Mary's and the Shriners Children's Hospital.

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

Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Agnes Poe, 101



Agnes Celestine Greenwell Poe passed peacefully in her sleep on December 29, 2025, after a long life and a short illness. She had just celebrated her 101st birthday.

Born on December 24, 1924 in Hollywood, MD, she was the daughter of the late Valley Ignatius and Blanche Elizabeth (Jones) Greenwell. Agnes was preceded in death by all of her siblings; Evelyn, Nace, Mary, Chester, Elmer, Dorothy, Margaret and Sonny.

She grew up working on the family farm and at a family business at Town Creek. As a young woman fresh out of high school, Agnes ventured to Washington DC where she and a girlfriend lived, after taking a job working at the Veterans Administration. She enjoyed life in 'the big city' taking in the sites, meeting new people, and dancing.

She married Franklin "Toadie" Poe in August 1944 after first meeting him at a dance. They had two children, Donnie and Darlene, and lived and built their life on St. George's Island, MD. Agnes and Toadie shared 52 years together before his passing in 1996.

Agnes relocated to Valley Lee, MD in 2005, where she was closer to family. She was an avid bingo hall queen, a challenging Rummikub player (had to watch her creating her own rules), a great southern food cook (duck and dumplings was a specialty), and a devout Catholic. She absolutely loved singing in the church choir (even if sometimes a bit off-key), rocking her great and great-great grandbabies, and enjoyed planting flowers to enjoy their beauty. Agnes loved having visitors drop in to check on her and catch up on all the latest happenings close to home.

Agnes was preceded in death by her husband Toadie, and grandson Donnie Poe, Jr. She is survived by her children, Donnie Poe (Betty) and Darlene Janiszewski (Tom); grandchildren Chandra Poe Goddard, Jeff Janiszewski (Tammy), Karen Poe, and Todd Janiszewski (Marcie); great-grandchildren Mitchell Goddard (Morgan Thompson), Dominic Janiszewski (Chloe), Tori Kidd (Winston), Mason Goddard, and Alex Kearns and great-great grandchildren Gauge Goddard, Oakley Goddard, and Bodhi Kidd.

Agnes was a constant presence in the

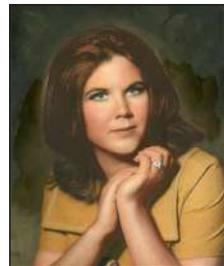
lives of her family and friends and will be missed beyond words.

Interment with a graveside service will be held at a later date.

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

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

Darcy Gray, 77



Darcy Arline List Gray, age 77, of Great Mills, MD, died on January 5, 2026, at the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home.

Born on July 26, 1948, in Des Moines, Iowa, she was the daughter of the late Roy E. List Jr. and the late Jeanette Powers List.

She was married for 56 years to Walter Vernon Gray III, whom she married on June 14, 1969, at Nativity Episcopal Church, Camp Springs, MD; and is survived by her husband; sons, Walter V. Gray IV and Rebecca, and David R. Gray; five grandchildren, and her sister Delcy Newell of Northford, CT.

She graduated from Surrattsville Senior High, Clinton, MD, in 1966; and attended nursing school in Washington DC.

During her husband's military and civilian careers, she was a homemaker and resided in Lakehurst, NJ; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Long Beach, CA; Barber's Point, HI; California, MD; Okeechobee, FL; New Hartford, NY, and Great Mills, MD.

She was a stalwart "Navy wife," who faithfully shouldered the sacrifices of military life.

From 1985 to 2005 she was a substitute teacher in the St. Mary's County Public Schools, most frequently at Leonardtown High School, and was highly respected and liked.

She excelled in arts & crafts, and culinary.

Funeral proceedings will be private with future interment at Arlington National Cemetery.

Sharlene Sloan, 31

Sharlene Renae Sloan, 31, of Mechanicsville, MD, went home to be with her Savior on Monday, January 5, 2026, after a long battle with cancer. Born on October 10, 1994, in Huntingtown, MD, she was the daughter of Rhoda and Curtis Grice, of Mechanicsville, MD. Sharlene was the loving wife of Brandon Sloan, whom she married on September 28, 2019, at Mechanicsville Mennonite Church.

In addition to her parents and husband, Sharlene is survived by her siblings, Sheldon Grice of Mechanicsville, MD, Sharon (Grice) Sensenig of Flatgap, KY, Stephen Grice of Mechanicsville, MD, and Shannon Grice of Mechanicsville, MD.

Sharlene was a lifelong St. Mary's County, MD resident. She was a faithful member of the Mechanicsville Mennonite Church, and was a quiet, gentle person who enjoyed serving others and spending time with her husband and family. Sharlene especially enjoyed

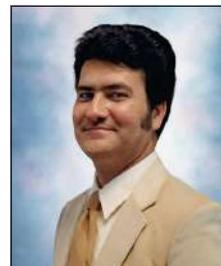
cooking, sewing, and caring for children. She will be greatly missed by all who have had the pleasure of knowing her.

The family will receive friends on Monday, January 12, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, at the Mechanicsville Mennonite Church, where a funeral service will be held on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 10:00 AM, with Wilmer Weaver, Merle Torkelson, Nelson Nolt, and Daryl Huber officiating. Interment will follow at the Mechanicsville Mennonite Church Cemetery. Serving as pallbearers will be Sheldon Grice, Stephen Grice, Shannon Grice, Lyndon Sensenig, Timothy Miller, and Kelvin Weaver.

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

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

David Buckler, 78



David Arnold Buckler Sr. 78 of Mechanicsville MD passed away peacefully on December 29th, 2025, with his family by his side.

David was born on November 8th, 1947 to the late William Jennings (Charlie) & Eleanora (Pilkerton) Buckler. David was the 6th born of 15 children. Raised on the farm from sawmills to tobacco fields to raising hogs in Laurel Grove/Oraville.

David married his one and only Violet L (Sissie Copsy) on June 2nd, 1966 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church. Together they were blessed with & raised three children. Sons Troy D. Buckler, David A. Buckler Jr. and their daughter Margaret L. (Monkey) Buckler-Ford.

David proudly grew up farming and supporting his family. From his early years of tractors which he never got too old for and farm fields to driving oil trucks for Burch Oil and onto the nights of driving the big rigs hauling for R.E. Buckler Trucking. Hard work was never an issue for David after all "Nobody beats ya when you work hard, you just gotta work hard at it"!

David and Sissie in 1980 purchased Sandgates Inn Restaurant where their hard work and love of the customers family and friends far and wide still goes strong and they have remained for 45 years. David would tell you it's Sissie's world. I'm just living in it and the restaurant business became his life. Nothing was more important than his family and proudly steaming crabs working alongside his wife and children and his loving goddaughter/niece Tracey Fowler, his loving niece Bonnie Jo Payne and his beautiful niece Marlene Saldana (decd.)

Our restaurant became home and our customers became family. David could always be found at the restaurant doing one or all of his many jobs whether he was remodeling, or repairing or building new piers after a storm David's pride and love of the business always showed along with his support and generosity of all those he sponsored shuffle-

board, pool, horseshoes, darts. David in later years could be found in the back where his friends, family and employees happily had their chats and were surely left with David's most notable "AND MAY GOD BLESS".

The memories are now treasures and to know David you know he lived his life to the fullest whether he was working hard or playing harder. David's strength and love, determination and devotion was unmatched and his love for his family was his proudest possession.

On David's off time he enjoyed his tractors, golfing and other shenanigans with his boyz (Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles) (favorite nephew) (Mr. Corvette) (turkey) (bull) (tom tom) you all know who you are and brother jimmy too what channel is the race on? David together with his wife loved their time spent at home in Florida with family and friends.

David is survived by his wife of 59 years Sissie Buckler along with his children: Troy D. Buckler, David A. Buckler Jr. (Debbie), Margaret L. (Monkey) Buckler-Ford. (Robbie McKay) Grandchildren; Wyatt Buckler, Amber Hunter (Brandon) Courtney Buckler (Samantha), Carlie Buckler, Josie Buckler-Ford, Starr Buckler-Ford and Moon Buckler-Ford. Along with one great grandson Levi Hunter.

David is also survived by his Siblings: Loretta Alvey, Ronald Buckler Sr. (Pearl), Lafayette Buckler, Wayne Buckler (Tammy), Glenn Buckler (Karen), Mark Buckler (Wanda) Myron Buckler, Shelia Buckler, Kevin Buckler (Jackie), Debbie Johnson (Mitch) Jimmy Buckler (Eleanor) & Betty Weddle. Sister in law's Tinka Buckler and Melva Rita Buckler.

David is preceded in death by his parents, along with his siblings Robert Vernon (Joe) Buckler, William Bryan (Sonny) Buckler, Brenda Tucker, and Minor Buckler.

Pallbearers will be his two sons Troy and David Buckler, his grandson Wyatt Buckler, his son-in-law Dexter Ford and his three nephews Ralph Gray Jr., Ronnie Buckler and Jeff Buckler. Honorary pallbearers will be his daughter Monkey, his daughter-in-law Debbie, his goddaughter Tracey, niece Bonnie Jo Payne along with his six granddaughters Josie, Courtney, Amber, Starr, Carlie, and Moon. Oh how he loved his girls. And May God Bless.

Family will receive friends for a visitation on Thursday, January 8, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at Brinsfield Funeral Home, 22955 Hollywood Rd. Leonardtown, MD 20650 with Prayers at 6:00 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Friday, January 9, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 29119 Point Lookout Rd. Morganza, MD 20660, celebrated by Father Drew. Interment will follow at Mt. Zion United Methodist Cemetery, 27108 Mt. Zion Church Rd. Mechanicsville, MD 20659.

In lieu of flowers contributions can be made to Clements Cuties Foundation Supporting local families in their fight against childhood cancer.

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

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

In Remembrance

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

Seth Abelson, 55



Seth Alan Abelson passed away on January 2, 2026, in Leonardtown, Maryland.

He was born in Philadelphia on March 16, 1970, and was adopted by Leonard and Phyllis Abelson of Queens, NY, their daughters Janet Meri, and later, Deena Elyse. He loved sports, and especially music. He wrote songs, played guitar and piano, sang, recorded, opened for Metallica, had a professional recording contract, released several albums, and toured the US. He was incredibly creative and brilliant. He held many jobs in his life, but the ones that he was most proud of were as a musician, handyman, and more recently as a farmer. He loved his chickens and his ducks, and was so proud of the improvements he had made at the home, as well as the property on Fresh Pond Neck.

He married Marti on February 1st, 2025, at the Creekside Hideaway in Ridge, MD, surrounded by family and the closest of friends. Their life, although just beginning together, was full of love and dreams, crazy dogs, wonderful music, and lots of really awesome food. He was the best and will be horribly missed forever.

Seth was predeceased by his parents and his sister, Janet.

He leaves behind his beloved wife, Martha Middleton Lloyd Abelson, his sister, Deena Abelson Williams, and her partner Gary Campbell, and nephew Jake Williams of Long Island, NY. He is also survived by his biological mom, Renee Bankes Merkel of Wellsville NY, some cousins, and some very cherished friends.

Visitation will be held on January 15, 2026 at Brinsfield Funeral Home, 22955 Hollywood Rd. Leonardtown, MD 20650, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with a service beginning at 6:00 p.m. Interment will be private.

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

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

Kenneth Sebra, 90



Kenneth Hopkins Sebra, age 90, of Dameron, MD formerly of Perry Hall, MD passed away at his home Saturday, January 3, 2026. He was born February 26, 1935 in Baltimore, MD. He was the son of the late William Hugh Sebra and Almeda Hundley Sebra. He was the husband of the late Charlotte Duvall Sebra. They were married at Perry Hall United Methodist Church on January 28, 1961.

Kenneth was born in Baltimore Maryland growing up on Curley Street. He would spend his summers working on his grandmother's farm in Heathsville, VA. He attended Baltimore City College graduating in 1953. He received his bachelor's in electrical engineering from the Johns Hopkins University in 1964 and a masters in engineering science from the Loyola College of Maryland in 1981. Kenneth worked at the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company for 46 years. He worked from the BG&E Lexington Street building and moved to the Calvert Cliff Nuclear Power Plant in 1986. He retired in March 2000.

Kenneth was a mason and a member of Warren Lodge #51 Baltimore and Thomas J Shryock Lodge #223 Hollywood. He joined Boumi Temple in 1957 where he was a member of both the oriental band and the string band. He was a member of the Pa-Po-Peake Shrine Club where he was a past president. Kenneth was also a member of the Scottish Rite the valley of Southern Maryland and Baltimore. He was a Scottish Rite 33rd mason.

Kenneth was a member of IEEE, the Baltimore Chapter IEEE and the Baltimore IEEE Power Engineering Society where he serviced on several committees and taught classes on Power Generation. He contributed to the IEEE 666 standard which is the Design Guide for Electric Power Service System for Generating Stations. He was a past Chairman of the Baltimore chapter. He contributed to many publications on power generation and transmission. In 1999 he was

the recipient of the Baltimore Chapter IEEE Power Engineering Society Outstanding Engineer Award.

As a child Kenneth was paid to sing in the Baltimore Grace and St Peter's Church boys' choir. Kenneth started piano lessons when he was six years old. He played the trombone in both the Baltimore City College and University of Maryland marching bands. He played during the halftime show when the Maryland football team played in the 1953 Orange Bowl. He played both the acoustic and bass guitar. While residing in Perry Hall Kenneth was an active member of the Perry Hall United Methodist Church teaching Sunday school, often played piano and guitar for his Sunday school class and for many children's programs. He was the bass player of the dance band, Bay City Four. The band members were masons and donated all earnings to the Shriners Hospital. Kenneth also transported children in the Southern Maryland area to the Shriners Hospital in Philadelphia so they could receive treatment.

Kenneth was a member of the Society of American Magicians. He incorporated magic into his Sunday school lessons, performed illusions and fire eating for many Boumi Temple events and was the Stage Manager for the Goebel Magical Revue.

In 1998 his grandson Ethan was born and in 2000 his granddaughter Danielle was born. After retirement Kenneth enjoyed watching Ethan and Danielle fulltime

and then during the summers when they attended school. He took his grandchildren to many activities including Mommy and Me Gymnastics and Tae Kwan Do.

With his wife Charlotte, Kenneth enjoyed traveling throughout the United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. One highlight was when he played the grand piano while aboard a cruise ship. He enjoyed meeting masons throughout his travels.

Surviving is his children Susan Anne Sebra of Towson MD, Charlotte Sebra Gore (Daniel) of Leonardtown MD, Kenneth Hopkins Sebra Jr of Philadelphia PA and William Hugh Sebra II of Lancaster PA, grandchildren Ethan Robert Gore, Danielle Susan Gore, Ryan Gore, Christopher Gore, Alissa Gardiner (Starke) and three great grandchild Aela Gardiner, Arlo Gardiner and Kiki Gore.

He is also survived by his sister Sara Jolly and a sister-in-law Gloria Sebra both of Fallston MD. He was predeceased by his brother James Sebra.

The family would like to thank Hospice of St Mary's for helping us bring Kenneth home for his last days.

A service to celebrate his life will be held on Saturday, January 10th, 2026, at Brinsfield Funeral Home, 22955 Hollywood Rd, Leonardtown, MD, with a visitation from 10:00am to 11:00am with a funeral

Continued on page 14

*A Tribute to the Loved One
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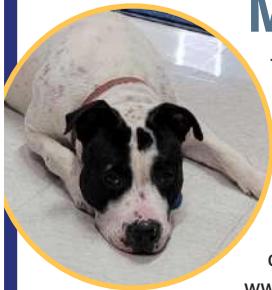
Hi there, I'm Leon, a handsome Siberian Husky mix, about 4 years old and 59 pounds of winter-ready charm! I'm past the puppy phase but still full of festive energy, personality, fluff, and good looks. Once out of the shelter, I will turn into a house-trained charmer who is a sweet, playful pup spreading cheer and earning compliments everywhere I go. On my day out adventure, I recently met dogs big and small and wagged my tail like I'd just spotted Santa's sleigh!

My adoption fee is sponsored, making me the perfect addition for an active, husky-savvy family ready for exercise, structure, and love! Adoption hours are Mon-Fri 11am-4pm and Sat 10am-3pm. To see more of my amazing friends also available for adoption, "like" us on Facebook @ Charles County Animal Care Center or at <https://www.charlescountymd.gov/services/animal-care-control/animal-care-center>



MEET JAXX

Jaxx is a 2.5-year-old Pit Bull Terrier who has been waiting far too long, and we truly don't understand why. He's sweet, affectionate, eager to learn, and has that perfect mix of playful energy and snuggly charm. If you've ever wanted a dog who can make you laugh, keep you company, and love you endlessly, Jaxx is your guy. If you are interested in meeting with Jaxx or learning more about him please contact Animal Relief Fund (ARF) at 301-866-0303 or visit www.animalrelieffund.org



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Wanderings of an Aimless Mind



Living Her Best Life

By Shelby Opperman
Contributing Writer

Happy New Year to everyone. What a whirlwind it has been from Halloween through the beginning of the New Year. I felt like I just put the Christmas tree up and yesterday I was taking it down. I thought I might leave the tree up for a little while longer since Mindy has always loved to stare at the lights, and she isn't feeling well. Her doggie bed is right next to the Christmas tree. Mindy received a new, really soft furry blanket to go on top of her bed, plus lots of presents and



doggie treats from her God Dog parents this Christmas. That new blanket is so soft that, yes, Robert and I have both stretched out on it with her. And she has two other fluffy blankets that she can snuggle into during naps or at night.

But yesterday I took the tree down because Robert and our grandson had insulated the closet under the steps and put plastic sheeting and a special floorboard down on the concrete, so we already had all the seasonal totes out in the downstairs den. I figured I might as well take the tree down and get all the ornaments back in their boxes now and put all the totes back in the closet. Christmas has to go in the back then Halloween, and Easter is now in the front.

I might put my small wrought iron tree on the floor near Mindy's bed for her to stare at. All the vintage ornaments were taken off yesterday, and now I'll put small cardinals on the branches. It's wrapped in a battery operated light string which Mindy will love.

This will probably be Mindy's last Christmas with us since it looks like she has two tumors. They did x-rays at Three Notch Vet, but Mindy was so filled with fluid that they/we could barely see any of her organs. Mindy is on a diuretic to relieve the fluid which means she and I both are up in the middle of the night a lot, with me trying to do my "potty breaks" quickly so I can get her out for hers. I have been taking my dogs to Three Notch Vet since they opened 35 years ago. Three Notch Veterinary have such kind and gentle doctors and staff. Dr. O'Connor has kindly answered all of my many questions whenever I call or bring Mindy in for her appointments.

Dr. O'Connor sent all of Mindy's notes/info to Dogs and Cats Emergency and Specialty in Bowie before I even called them. We have an oncology appointment for her there on the 13th. Mindy is still eating well and will chase a cat or deer if she sees one, but she is losing weight despite all the food and treats. We are just trying to let Mindy live her best life. I would never want a pet to suffer because I selfishly want them to stay on earth for me, but she is doing what she enjoys, and it doesn't hurt to see what is available to make her time here easier. Mindy's 10th birthday is January 27th. I, of course, hope she will be here for her birthday, but I'm considering whether to have an earlier birthday party for her. I suppose the results of her oncology appointment next week will help decide that. In my heart I keep hoping that maybe the fluid is a bad respiratory infection, but my head knows that probably isn't the case... though I'm hoping for a doggie miracle anyway.

I've had dogs my whole life and I have loved every one of them, but Mindy has got to be the most special, sweetest, gentlest dog I've ever had, so Robert and I want to do whatever we can for her. But right now, she is happy. I am watching her from the upstairs office window while she lays outside, stretched out under the warm sun. Occasionally, Mindy moves off of her waterproof outside doggie bed and lays in the grass. I yell out to her that the ground and grass are still damp though she doesn't seem to care. And as I said, we are just letting Mindy live her life, her best life, the way she wants to. We love her so much – which I know that all pet owners will understand. Please give your pets a hug from me.

To each new day's adventure,
Shelby

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

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Farm Share Equipment Rental Grants Available

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland (TCCSMD), is again offering grant funds to the community to support the purchase of farm equipment for the benefit of farmers in the Southern Maryland region.

SMADC invites agricultural entities (like County Farm Bureaus and Soil Conservation Districts) who run local low-cost farm equipment rental programs to identify their needs for equipment that would be available to be rented by farmers across the Southern Maryland region.

Priority will be placed on equipment that promotes long-term environmental benefit to the Chesapeake Bay, supports new farm initiatives, is easily transportable and that may not be otherwise available.

Funding for the purchase of the equipment will be provided by the SMADC grant. Once purchased, equipment will be managed by the local agricultural entities and their programs; fees generated by the rentals are expected to cover routine maintenance and other costs of the program

(such as insurance, etc.).

Proposals will be accepted from regional entities managing the farm equipment rental programs within the five Southern Maryland counties (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's).

To be considered, proposals must be submitted no later than Saturday, January 31st, 2026. All proposals/requests must include the following:

- Cover memo that includes: the name of entity making request, demonstrated proven need for equipment, estimate of projected use and verification that equipment can be easily transported
- Three bids with price included
- If requesting more than one piece of equipment, indicate priority preference.

Please submit proposals no later than January 31 via email to sdobbins@smadc.com. Any questions may be directed to Sabrina Dobbins at sdobbins@smadc.com.

Press release from SMADC

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Welcomes First Baby of 2026



Pictured with baby Ariella are parents Kaylynn Moore and James Stone, and MedStar staff members Polly Hansen, RN; Anne Banfield, MD, FACOG; Julie Marcos, RN; Alyssa Robertson, RN; and Jennifer Waytashek, CNM

Born at the start of a brand-new year, Ariella Melody Stone is the first baby born at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital in 2026! Ariella was born at 12:15 p.m. weighing 8 pounds, 2 ounces, and measuring 20 inches long.

Congratulations to proud parents Kaylynn Moore and James Stone on welcoming their little one. Ariella's arrival marks a moment

of joy, hope, and new beginnings for her family and our entire hospital community.

Join us in wishing Ariella and her family a lifetime filled with health, love, and unforgettable firsts.

Press release from MedStar St. Mary's Hospital

Learn a New Skill in 2026 with CSM Community Education



Students try new dance moves during a Personal Enrichment Hand Dancing course.

The new year is a chance to set fresh goals and invest in new ambitions. The College of Southern Maryland's (CSM) Personal Enrichment programs offer opportunities to learn new skills and set New Year's resolutions into motion.

Personal Enrichment courses are tailored to a variety of community interests, including travel, food, arts and crafts, dog training, language learning, IT skill development, and more. The courses open the door for Southern Maryland residents to try something new or revisit a life-long interest.

The Makerspace at the CSM Velocity Center at Indian Head is one place to start the new year with purpose. This collaborative workspace provides community access to advanced, professional-grade equipment for designers and creators, including 3D printers, laser cutters, soldering irons, and vinyl printers. The space also offers hardware and software for gaming, robotics, and app development.

"The Makerspace is a unique place which empowers Southern Maryland residents to bring ideas to life or try their hand at creating something new," said Makerspace Coordinator Jack Gaskins. "Staying inspired and motivated to try new things fuels personal growth, and the beginning of a new year is a great time to start."

Gaskins instructs monthly equipment training courses for aspiring creators. The courses cover how to create designs, and how to bring designs into reality using the laser cutters, and the vinyl printer and cutter. Training courses are scheduled for each of these in January.

Students design and create T-shirts and tote bags during the Holiday Crafts Make and Take Workshop. In December, CSM hosted a youth enrichment workshop for holiday gift making. Students learned to use software to design and create an image, which was then printed, cut, and heat pressed onto T-shirts and tote bags.

"We want to expand access to the

Makerspace and give students the opportunity to develop creative skills that have a positive impact on the community," Gaskins said. "That kind of hands-on experience fosters curiosity, creativity, and innovation well beyond the classroom."

The Makerspace workshops are open to the public, however some of the Makerspace courses require memberships. Annual and monthly memberships are available for those who have completed the Introduction to Makerspace class, which is offered on a regular basis.

In addition to the Makerspace, Personal Enrichment classes are offered at the CSM La Plata, Leonardtown, and Prince Frederick Campuses. Tony Warrick, Director of Community Enrichment, said these community-focused courses are developed to foster a love for life-long learning.

"It's never too late to chase a new dream, follow a new inspiration, or pursue a new opportunity," Warrick said. "The Personal Enrichment courses are built to meet the needs of our community and help residents grow the talents they want to develop."

Last fall, CSM Community Education launched Thrive 60+, a program offering courses for community members age 60 and older to try something new in a supportive environment. The courses are offered for free or at low-cost through support from the CSM Foundation.

"The new year is the perfect time to invest in yourself," Warrick said. "The Thrive 60+ and Personal Enrichment courses offer a practical way to begin the year strong, make meaningful progress towards your goals, and continue on the path of lifelong learning."

The Spring 2026 Community Education catalog is available online, which includes a full list of the Personal Enrichment courses offered in the coming months.

Press release from CSM

Virginia Man Sentenced for 1980s Sexual Abuse of Child

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling has announced that Cecil John Dunlap, 79, of Chesapeake, Virginia was sentenced to prison for sexually assaulting a seven-year-old-child in 1981 and 1982.

During this timeframe, Dunlap's wife was a prominent schoolteacher serving the Tall Timbers/Valley Lee area and privately tutored children at her home. It was during a tutoring session that Dunlap abused the seven-year-old-victim who had accompanied her brother to his tutoring session at Dunlap's home, located on what is now known as Blake Creek Road."

Dunlap and his wife were also close neighbors of the victim and her family.

"The defendant served in the military and frequently relocated throughout the country for his military service. He was previously convicted of sexually assaulting two children in Virginia in the 2010s," said Sterling. "For over 40 years the defendant lived without consequence for the crimes he committed against a seven-year-old-child in St. Mary's County. Thanks to the bravery of this victim, the defendant was subsequently located, prosecuted, and brought to justice."

The Maryland State Sentencing Guideline Range for this case recommended a sentence between 18 and 20 years in prison. The State sought the maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. The court imposed a sentence of 20 years in prison, with 15 years of active incarceration.



Cecil John Dunlap

Dunlap was placed on lifetime supervision for sexual offenders and ordered to register as a sexual offender for life.

Senior Assistant State's Attorney Alena Moiser prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County, Maryland.

Detective Allison Mattera of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office was the lead investigator.

The Honorable Joseph Stanalonis presided over the case.

Press release from St. Mary's County State's Attorney

Driver Arrested After Fleeing Traffic Stop

On Monday, Jan. 5, 2026, while conducting proactive patrol operations in Lexington Park, a deputy with the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office observed a gray Ford Fusion fail to stop at a stop sign at the intersection of Fox Ridge Road and Spring Valley Road. The deputy attempted to initiate a traffic stop, but the vehicle fled.

Deputies did not pursue the Ford Fusion. While fleeing, the Ford Fusion was struck by a 2024 Nissan Sentra.

Following the crash, the driver of the Ford Fusion exited the vehicle and fled on foot. After a brief foot chase, the subject surrendered to deputies and was taken into custody without further incident.

Both drivers were transported to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

The driver of the Ford Fusion was identified as Osirus Holmes, 28, of Lexington Park. Further investigation determined Holmes was wanted by the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office for escape after cutting off his ankle monitor and absconding on July 12, 2025. Holmes had been on pretrial release, Level 3 supervision, in connection with an armed robbery charge.

Following his release from medical care, Holmes was issued 11 traffic citations, includ-



Osirus Holmes

ing reckless driving, negligent driving, and related violations. He was then transported to the Detention and Rehabilitation Center, charged with escape-second-degree-condition of release, assault, second-degree, and failure to appear, and remains incarcerated pending a bond hearing.

Press release from SMCSO

Edward Jones

> edwardjones.com | Member SIPC



Cheers to a new year!

As the calendar turns the page, we wish you the very best in the year ahead.



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Congratulations to the happy couples who applied for marriage licenses in St. Mary's County during the month of December. Best wishes to all!

Wesley Thurman Cochran, 30, Hollywood, MD
Ingrid Steiring Haslerud, 24, Hollywood, MD

Xin Lu, 37, Lexington Park, MD
Yalin Zhang, 25, Lexington Park, MD

Margot Enriquez, 57, Hollywood, MD
Bradley Robert Schieferdecker, 58, Hollywood, MD

Ray Keefe Jones, 61, Huntingtown, MD
Katherine Margaret Teacher, 44, Prince Frederick, MD

Nicholas Parker Shelton, 27, Lexington Park, MD
Katelin Olivia Lindsay, 28, Lexington Park, MD

Joshua Michael Sherman, 23, Mechanicsville, MD
Faith Elizabeth Leggett, 20, Waldorf, MD

Francisco Sanchez, 23, Solomons, MD
Yaneri Rashell Romero Luna, 18, Baltimore, MD

James William Gardner, 67, Leonardtown, MD
Madeline Cano Geralla, 44, Leonardtown, MD

Lindsey Nicole Shifflett, 26, Damascus, MD
Tyler Duane Thomas Mims, 25, Lexington Park, MD

Brittany Lynn Lyon, 27, Mechanicsville, MD
Stephen Wyte Quade, 31, Mechanicsville, MD

Sara Katherine Oliver, 35, Mechanicsville, MD
Donald Garnett Quade, 40, Mechanicsville, MD

Alyssa Nicole Ryan, 20, Lusby, MD
John Jared Adam Sobola, 19, Lusby, MD

Michelle Denise Wilson, 56, Waldorf, MD
Norbert Patrick Butler, 55, Waldorf, MD

Emily Nicole Dove, 22, Lexington Park, MD
Dylan Jacob Mccann, 25, Virginia Beach, VA

Asha Talise Gaines, 25, Lexington Park, MD
John Jacob Hall, 28, Lexington Park, MD

Robin Lynn Hartman, 50, Mechanicsville, MD
Jevon Dimitri Proctor, 54, Mechanicsville, MD

Sara Kathleen Downs, 35, Hollywood, MD
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Jacob Allen Carpenter, 25, Mechanicsville, MD

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John Paul Kelly, Jr, 61, Hollywood, MD

Paola Scarlett Briones Bonilla, 33, California, MD
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Property Tax Incentive Approved for Defense Contractor

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County have unanimously issued a "Property Tax Credit Incentive" for defense contractor KIHOMAC, Inc. It is the second such credit approved by the commissioners under the program.

The tax break will go towards the renovation of the company's headquarters at 46930 South Shangri-La Drive in Lexington Park, the former Maryland Bank and Trust building.

According to their website, "KIHOMAC is a veteran owned small business with nationwide offices designed to service an array of capabilities. Our leadership is comprised of seasoned military and business professionals who bring together sound business practices and leading-edge innovation. KIHOMAC has earned a stellar reputation for professional, knowledgeable, self-starting support everywhere we operate."

According to new Director of Economic Development Cynthia Greb, the company plans on pouring more than \$1 million into renovating the building. It was built in 1953.

She said, "(It's) one of the tools we have in our toolbox, which is a tax incentive program for improvements on exterior and interior structures."

Company representative Frank Griffo said they have two people in the building now, but

plans are up to 20 to 25 eventually. They also have a half dozen currently working on base.

Greb said, "The tax incentive that we have available for them is if they put capital money up to improve the structure over a percentage of the assessed value, then they are eligible for either a consistent tax rate for seven years, if it's below 15 percent of their tax assessment, or if it's over 15 percent of their tax assessment, they're eligible for a 10-year hold on their tax rate. Just the county portion of the taxes, not anything else, but it will not exceed 25 percent of the value of the tax assessment, the tax bill."

Greb explained, "Currently their tax rate for the county portion is a little over \$6,000...and they're assessed at \$715,000. So, if they do a million-dollar improvement, which they're saying they're going to do a million and a half..."

"Which is incredible for Lexington Park," Commissioner Mike Hewitt interjected,

Greb added, "They'll be eligible for up to not to exceed 25 percent of that tax assessment."

That would amount to a tax savings of about \$3,300 to \$3,600, Greb said.

Grippe said, "We bought that company in 2012 and we've been working here a while."

Hewitt said he used to bank there. "God bless you. So, you're going to take that property and put it back to work."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Deputies Investigating Stabbing, Assault

Deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office responded to a 911 call reporting a stabbing early Monday morning Dec. 29 at a Royal Farms convenience store in Lexington Park.

At approximately 1 a.m., deputies were dispatched to the Royal Farms located at 21779 Tulagi Place. Upon arrival, deputies located a 20-year-old male victim suffering from lacerations to his hand and face.

The preliminary investigation determined the victim was involved in an altercation with Lavonte Draven Solomon, during which Solomon allegedly produced a knife, causing the victim's injuries. Solomon fled the scene immediately following the incident.

Shortly afterward, deputies located Solomon in the area of South Coral Drive suffering from life-threatening injuries after being struck by a vehicle. Solomon was transported to a regional trauma center, where he remains in critical condition.

Detectives from the Criminal Investigations Division assumed the investigation and, through further inquiry, identified and located the driver involved in the vehicular assault. Brian Labar Taylor, 39, of Lexington Park, was arrested and transported to the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center. Taylor was charged with attempted first-de-

gree murder, attempted second-degree murder, first-degree assault, and second-degree assault. He remains incarcerated pending a bond hearing.

The investigation remains ongoing. Anyone with additional information related to this incident is asked to contact Detective Helen Deitrich at 301-475-4200, ext. 8066, or by email at Helen.Deitrich@stmary-countymd.gov.

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

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John Deere 40-C Crawler (Runs & Operates); NH 55 Rake; Komatsu FG25 Propane 3 Stage Mast Forklift (4800 lbs, w/ 46" Forks); Ford 5000 Diesel Tractor (runs & operates); Papec Silage Cutter (w/6 new knives, runs & operates); New Holland 77 Baler; 2022 NH BC5060 Baler (w/ 29 hp Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Engine, baler like new); 20' Portable Hay Feeder; McCormick W-9 (Gas); 10' Box Blade; International Side Delivery Hay Rake; Pioneer Spike Tooth Drag Harrow; 14'x60' Office Trailer; (2) Sheds (approximately 10'x24' & 12'x28'); Hay Elevator; McCormick Deering Corn Binder (Ground Drive); International Cub LoBoy Tractor w/ Mower (not in running condition); New Idea 40' Elevator; Diesel Generator; MultiQuip 3" Water Pump; International Pop Engine; Frick Thrashing Machine (partial rebuilt) w/ HART Feeder; Ammo Reloading Tools & related items; Forklift Propane Tanks; Lawn/Garden & Small Engine Parts (Pulleys; Spindles; Belts; Blades, Etc.); Riding Mowers (parts/scrap); Household Items (furniture, glassware, canning jars, etc.); Assortment of Books & Magazines (incl. Fur, Fish & Game Magazines, mid 90's -present); Jacob Zook 2-horse wagon; Montgomery Ward wagon; Cultivators; Peachey Culti-mulcher; Cultipacker; Harrow; Scaffolding; Steel Plates; Hacksaw w/ stand; Misc. Hand Tools; and More

(Subject to additions and deletions).

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Tax Reassessments Show Slower Property Value Growth

The Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) has completed its 2026 "Group 2" reassessment of 789,178 residential and commercial properties statewide. Property tax assessment notices for properties in "Group 2" have been mailed; all 23 counties and Baltimore City experienced an increase in property values, and overall, 92.7 percent of Group 2 residential properties experienced an increase in value.

In St. Mary's, residential Group 2 properties have increase 10.5 percent since the last reassessment. Commercial properties have increased 13 percent.

Maryland has more than two million property accounts divided into three groups. SDAT reassesses each group once every three years. The 2026 assessments for "Group 2" properties were based on an evaluation of 57,543 sales that occurred within the group. The overall statewide value increase for "Group 2" properties was 12.7 percent, which represents an average increase in value of 13.2 percent for residential properties and 11 percent for commercial properties during this period. Though property values continue to rise, the pace of growth slowed significantly compared to recent years. By comparison, statewide reassessments reflected increases of 20.1 percent last year and 23.4 percent in 2023, representing a 7.4 percentage-point decline in value growth from last year—nearly a 37 percent slowdown.

And compared to 2023, the growth rate declined by 10.7 percentage points, reflecting an almost 46 percent slowdown.

Since January 2023, the Moore-Miller Administration has focused on strengthening housing affordability, significantly increasing the amount of relief delivered through the Homeowners' Property Tax Credit program. Payments to eligible homeowners totaled \$48.6 million in FY 2023, increased to \$62.4 million in FY 2024, and reached \$63.9 million in FY 2025. The increases reflect a continued commitment

to directing targeted relief to homeowners most impacted by rising housing costs. The moderation in assessment growth, combined with strong homeowner support, reflects progress toward stabilizing housing costs and supporting long-term affordability for Maryland families.

Per Census American Community Survey data, 68 percent of Maryland households are homeowners. "Property values are still rising, but at a more sustainable pace," said SDAT Director Bob Yeager. "After the rapid increases seen during the post-COVID recovery, this moderation is an important step toward balancing household wealth growth with housing affordability."

To support housing affordability, each reassessment notice indicates whether the property is the owner's principal residence and provides the status of the Homestead Tax Credit application. The Homestead Tax Credit limits how much the taxable assessment of a homeowner's principal residence can increase each year, regardless of income. State law caps the annual increase at 10 percent, and many local governments have adopted even lower limits.

Homeowners must submit a one-time application and meet program requirements to receive the credit. The Homeowners' Property Tax Credit program offers additional relief to limited-income homeowners by capping the amount of property taxes owed each year based on income. Eligible homeowners must apply annually, and SDAT calculates credits in accordance with state law. Any increase in assessed value will be phased in evenly over the next three years, while any decrease will be fully implemented in the 2026 tax year.

Property owners are encouraged to visit SDAT's Maryland Property Tax Credit Programs webpage to learn more about available assistance.

Press release from SDAT

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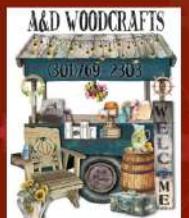


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Commissioners Briefed on Upcoming Legislative Session

Lawmakers Override Governor's Veto of Crosby Bill

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

With the start of the 2026 Maryland General Assembly (the 449th) set to begin on Wednesday, Jan. 14, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County received a briefing on the just concluded special session and an outlook for the new session. During the discussion with Deputy County Attorney John Sterling Houser, the commissioners took a stance on one pending piece of legislation.

The commissioners were informed that St. Mary's County Del. Brian Crosby's data center bill from the last session that was vetoed by Gov. Morre, had that veto overturned in the special session.

Houser said, "HB 270 calls for a report that would be a joint effort of the Maryland Energy Administration, the Maryland Department of Environment, and the University of Maryland School of Business, in conjunction with industry experts on the economic, environmental and energy impacts of data centers being developed in the state of Maryland.

"It's a report only, no regulations. When that report comes out it will not have any binding effect. It won't have any direct impact costs for St. Mary's County government. The report is due in 2027, I believe, January 1st, 2027."

Houser said one of Gov. Moore's initiatives is on housing affordability. He said the Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) is tracking four parts of that initiative. One of them is especially troubling

to the commissioners.

Houser prefaced the governor's initiatives by saying, "The governor's budget is subject to heavy modification and change, as he said a \$1.5 billion deficit is projected. He pledged no new taxes to meet that shortfall this year. Obviously, that means certain things. I think he's been silent on fees and fines and just because the governor says something doesn't mean the general assembly goes along with it. But the reality is you could be looking at reductions in spending, cuts in spending, shifting expenses and kind of one time draws from reserve accounts probably will be a reality."

He added, "To keep things in perspective, we know last year, difficult as it was, the overall budget deficit projected last year was about...\$2.5 to \$2.7 billion and the projections right now are \$1.5 (billion). It's not as heavy with the top line deficit this year as we faced last year."

Houser observed that last year's cuts were also made to "low hanging fruit."

Moore's second agenda item is affordable housing. One of the potential issues, Houser said, "is something to keep an eye on because it would be a major change for St. Mary's County if it actually makes its way through what they're calling third party review of housing projects. And in some of the larger counties, Prince George's, Montgomery, they kind of been pioneering this. The idea is a developer goes out and hires 'expert plan reviewers' outside the local planning and growth office. Maybe they were trained

by them, maybe they had some experience there. But ultimately you're talking about an outside consultant who professes and is registered to have the kind of expertise and certainty with local laws. That third party reviewer reviews the project for you, makes a recommendation to the local planning office whether it can be approved or disapproved and the way some of the drafts of the bill are looking, that's kind of it."

There was concern the proposal would usurp local planning authority. Houser said about modeling in local planning, "That's waters that state level officials typically do not tread in. So, there are things that they do not think of. There are things they are not familiar with. There's going to be a lot of friction in anything that comes out of Annapolis and adapting it to local circumstances."

Commissioner Mike Alderson said, "The governor has vowed we're going to make housing show up faster. All right, so adding another layer of bureaucracy, it's going to slow more people down. It's going to run up costs of housing by putting these people (third party consultants) in."

During the meeting three of the commissioners approved support for a bill, with Commissioner Mike Hewitt abstaining.

Houser said, "There's going to be an effort afoot this year by Carroll County, Frederick County and Montgomery County to create what are called Class L Beer, Wine, and Liquor licenses in those counties. This would be a copy or at least take its inspiration from existing authorization for these Class

L licenses in Allegheny County. And what the Class L license is, it is a separate license that can be given to craft beverage or any alcohol manufacturers who have an existing manufacturer's license from the state. And this Class L license, which is locally issued, allows that manufacturer to not only sell and give away samples of their own products, but also sell or give out samples of other manufacturer's products as well."

"How it works in practice is you have a craft brewery here in St. Mary's County. That craft brewery has its own product.

That craft brewery right now is limited to only offering patrons its own product. What the Class L or the idea behind it is to get something like this on the books and get that license in the hands of a manufacturer. They'd be able to not just offer their own product, but also the winery that's down the street or down the road or on the other side of the county."

The proposal is only enabling legislation so the county Alcohol Beverage Board would have to create its own regulations.

Although the local board has not had time to consider the legislation, the commissioners, due to time constraints, decided to hop on the bandwagon to give them that authority.

At the meeting Houser reported that no legislator from St. Mary's will have either a committee or subcommittee chairmanship although several Charles County legislators are in those roles.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

County Institutes New Emergency Notification System

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County have approved a change in the method of emergency notification for county residents. The change is from the CodeRed system to the Regroup Emergency Notification System. Those already signed up for CodeRed will see no change.

Director of Emergency Services Jennifer Utz told the commissioners at their Jan. 6 meeting, "The Department of Emergency Services has utilized CodeRed for emergency notifications since 2016. On November 10, 2025, we were notified that the CodeRed platform experienced a cyber-attack that was limited to the vendor. No indication of any compromise of St. Mary's County system's networks or databases were impacted as a result of that

cyber-attack. CodeRed's response was to decommission permanently that platform, which impacted our iPaws certificate, which is our ability to notify the public of an emergency to the public awareness system until we're able to resolve this and get on a new platform."

She said they have "researched and reviewed multiple alternative vendors and have identified Regroup as an optimal solution. The costs are considerably lower than what we already have budgeted for CodeRed for the next year or three years if we do a three-year agreement with them, the cost comes down."

The Regroup platform will cost \$11,500 annually or \$27,600 for a discounted three-year package. CodeRED cost for FY25 was \$24,842.40 and FY26 will cost \$26,581.36.

The DES team member that joined Director Utz during the discussion yesterday

on CodeRed/transitioning our emergency notification system was:

Department of Emergency Service Emergency Management Specialist Quinn Teston said, "We typically used the CodeRed system as a reverse 911, to contact specific located areas, for say there was like a heavy police presence in an area or a water main break affecting a specific neighborhood. We'll use that to notify them with a phone call and text message and Regroup will do the same thing."

Utz said, "The system will look a little different on our backend. It's actually a lot easier to use on our end, so that'll be good for us. It's a little bit more user friendly and a little more updated."

She added, "Even though CodeRed went down, we do still maintain the ability to send an IP alert even during this interim period through the main and joint operations center.

So, we aren't without capability just to let everybody know."

Teston said, "Technically everybody that calls our 911 system through the backend is enrolled in this because it is a reverse 911. But if you haven't called 911 before, you do have the opportunity to sign up. You can also sign up and opt in for weather alerts, which come direct from the National Weather Service."

She added, "It's exactly the same really as CodeRed, how the signup works. So, either you get automatically enrolled because you were enrolled in CodeRed or because you've called 9 1 1 before, or you can sign up... through their website. You can go online and make a little account."

The commissioners unanimously approved the new agreement.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Correction

In our St. Mary's Year in Review in the Dec. 31 issue, based on inaccurate information, we reported that the Commissioners of St. Mary's County raised the income tax rate for the FY 2026 budget. Actually, that was raised in a previous year. The County Times apologizes for the error.



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CONTENTS

LOCAL NEWS	3	OBITUARIES	13
COMMUNITY	10	CALENDARS	15
COLUMNISTS	12		

“LOW HANGING FRUIT”

DEPUTY COUNTY ATTORNEY JOHN HOUSER DESCRIBING THE DEEP CUTS IN LAST YEAR'S STATE BUDGET



LOCAL 3
County attorney briefs commissioners on upcoming legislation



ON THE COVER 10
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital delivers first baby of 2026



COMMUNITY 10
SMADC offers grants for farm share equipment rentals

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 8 Mostly Sunny Hi: 55° Lo: 40°	FRI, JAN 9 Cloudy Hi: 60° Lo: 53°	SAT, JAN 10 Rain Hi: 57° Lo: 48°	SUN, JAN 11 AM Showers Hi: 51° Lo: 32°
MON, JAN 12 Sunny Hi: 45° Lo: 31°	TUE, JAN 13 Sunny Hi: 52° Lo: 40°	WED, JAN 14 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 53° Lo: 38°	THU, JAN 15 Cloudy Hi: 44° Lo: 24°



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**Property Value Growth
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