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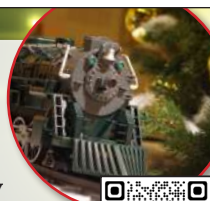
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St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2024

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**More Free Laptops
to Be Distributed**

**Work Underway on
Millison Plaza**

**Commissioners Want
More Bus Shelters**

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“IT’S AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE.”

J.D. RUSSELL ON TAKING A ROCKET RIDE INTO SPACE



LOCAL 5
Navy reminds on UAS restrictions



LOCAL 7
Commissioners get update on Pax River Village Center



ON THE COVER
Hollywood native goes to outer space

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, DEC 5	FRI, DEC 6	SAT, DEC 7	SUN, DEC 8
 AM Showers Hi: 42° Lo: 26°	 Mostly Sunny Hi: 39° Lo: 23°	 Sunny Hi: 41° Lo: 28°	 Sunny Hi: 53° Lo: 42°
MON, DEC 9	TUE, DEC 10	WED, DEC 11	THU, DEC 12
 Cloudy Hi: 58° Lo: 49°	 Showers Hi: 65° Lo: 49°	 Showers Hi: 57° Lo: 33°	 Partly Cloudy Hi: 43° Lo: 27°

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Base Command Warns Over Private Drone Use



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Private aerial drone use for work and play are a part of everyday life, but in St. Mary's County the Navy wants to remind residents that their use within a certain distance of Patuxent River Naval Air Station is prohibited without prior authorization.

During a joint meeting between base command staff and the Commissioners of St. Mary's County this week, the Navy reiterated that their pilots' operations are endangered by drones as they are not easily detected.

According to the Navy, pilots can only detect drones about 30 percent of the time when they are sharing the airspace; the Navy says drones are more difficult to spot when they are stationary as they more easily blend into the background.

At that point the success rate for spotting a drone drops to about 10 percent, according to the Navy.

Commissioner Eric Colvin put the crux of the Navy's position succinctly: "You can't fly a drone [without authorization] south of St. Andrews Church Road."

"I don't know how they enforce that," Colvin said.

Drones are prohibited over national security facilities and where they are allowed cannot go above a ceiling of 400 feet.

"Out on Great Mills Road that road lines up directly with our runways and when we have drones go up in that area it shuts down our flight operations," said Lt. Cmdr. Samuel Hughes. "The reason that was done was the safety of the aircraft."

Despite being military in nature, aircraft such as those stationed at Patuxent River Naval Air Station are still threatened by damage that could be caused by even small drones, much the same way one can be damaged by a wayward bird strike.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

School System Curbing Renovation Projects

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

For the past several years the St. Mary's County Board of Education has focused on repairing and renovating its current stock of school buildings rather than considering asking for money to build any new ones since their student enrollment has remained flat or declined.

But Kimberly Howe, the school system's chief capital development planner says that their efforts are still behind where they should be for keeping up with all the demands of maintenance on aging buildings.

"According to the state's records we have eight roof projects and 12 projects for [heating, ventilation and air conditioning] that we have put in [for funding consideration]," Howe told the school board at their Dec. 4 business meeting. "But we should be asking

for 15 roofs and 16 HVACs right now."

It was the product of much time and hard use of buildings, she said.

"The fleet is aging," said Howe. "We are closely monitoring what the governor [Wes Moore] does with his budget."

Howe said all of the combing through the budget meant she and others in the capital improvement section were trying to find ways to ensure the system had enough money to finish the project currently underway at Chopticon High School in Clements.

"I am excited to see Chopticon get refurbished," said newly sworn in at-large school board member Josh Guy "And I'm not just saying that because I went there."

The school board voted unanimously to approve the capital budget plan for review by the county commissioners.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

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County to Distribute More Laptops

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Starting this month, the county government will be able to provide free Hewlett Packard Chromebook laptop computers to qualified county residents; mirroring two prior events where several thousand of the computers were given away gratis.

The next event is set for Dec. 14 at the sheriff's office's District 4 station on Great Mills Road in Lexington Park from 10a.m to 4 p.m, according to a release from the county government.

The distribution of free laptops over the past two years has been made possible by grant funding from the Maryland Office of Statewide Broadband.

The program is focused on providing the tools for personal internet access to those whom it is otherwise unavailable, including the elderly and economically disadvantaged but also veterans and some who are disabled.

The program has changed from prior

events, though, as the event is open to qualified residents from throughout Southern Maryland, not just St. Mary's and qualified residents can still get a laptop even if someone else in their household has received one as well.

Residents must still provide proof of identification and eligibility and proof of address.

Applicants must meet one or more of the following qualifications: a household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty standard or participation in one of the following programs: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA) as well as veterans pension with survivors benefits, participation in Free and Reduced Price Meals for school students and Pell Grant recipients.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

First Phase of Millison Plaza Redevelopment Underway



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The shopping center at the heart of Lexington Park better known as Millison Plaza for decades but now operating at Pax River Village Center has been experiencing much change in the past few months.

Several buildings have been demolished, said Atlantic Realty President David Ross to the joint meeting of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County and the command staff of the Patuxent River Naval Air Station Dec. 3, and the first phase of the redevelopment, which includes a new grocery store, is expected to be completed by May of 2025.

The shopping center was first constructed back in the mid-1970s and has operated as one of the county's main commercial hubs until recently with interest having declined in the center along with the physical condition of many of the buildings and their commercial spaces.

The first phase will result in the construction of a new Aldi's grocery store,

Ross told Navy command staff and county commissioners.

"Phase 1 is a \$45 million endeavor," Ross said. "It's reorganizing some of the retail uses in the center."

"It's to make it more pedestrian friendly and to create some green space area around the property."

The second of two new properties at the site to be constructed, Ross said, is a military-themed Starbucks coffee shop, while there are plans to turn one of the older buildings there to a different use.

"AMC Theaters has elected to close their theater there," Ross said of the property located on FDR Boulevard. "We've filed an application with the county to pursue a daycare facility."

The entire facility is over 200,000 square feet.

"We're taking something that is 50 years old and reinventing it for the next few decades," Ross said.

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St. Mary's Man Heads to Space

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The Karman Line is the widely regarded defining line between the Earth's atmosphere and outer space, existing at about 62 miles above the Earth's surface.

James D. Russell, a Hollywood native and business entrepreneur with deep roots in St. Mary's County, became the 670th person last week to break that line when he and a group of fellow travelers climbed on board the New Shepherd sub-orbital rocket Nov. 22 and took off for a brief, 10-minute, mission into space.

"It's an amazing experience," Russell told The County Times of his trip into space. "In the next few decades there will be hundreds, even thousands more people making the trip into space.

"The costs will come down significantly." He had to go through a brief but intensive training program before taking the flight, which he reached out to Blue Origins in order to become a part of.

"You don't see any stars, it's completely black," Russell said. "The geographical boundaries between countries don't exist. "There was a real sense of quiet, a real sense of calm."

Russell carried seeds harvested from the grounds of Historic Sotterley Plantation. The seeds are part of an experiment to study the effects of space travel on plant growth. Upon his return, the seeds will be replanted at Sotterley, connecting his mission to the preservation of local heritage and advancing agricultural science.

"This experiment symbolizes the growth



Russell, back right, with the rest of the flight's crew

and resilience of our community. It's an honor to contribute to both science and the preservation of Historic Sotterley," Russell, 40, said. "I'm looking forward to getting those back to Sotterley."

The seeds he took with him were sunflower seeds and he is keen to replant them and reap more of the them to help raise funds for the place he used to work as a volunteer.

Preserving the Earth is something that took on more meaning for him as he watched it from close orbit.

"You can see how fragile our world is," Russell said. "It makes you want to take care of our planet more."

The reason Russell went to space was simple; he had always wanted to go.

"Everyone wants to go to space at least once in their life," Russell said. "When I saw the chance I took it."

The mode of travel used is manufactured



Russell in the capsule

by Blue Origin and uses a capsule sent up out of the atmosphere on top of a rocket that separates once it reaches the desired height and loiters for approximately 10 minutes while the booster module falls back to Earth before reigniting and making a controlled landing at the launch site.

The capsule containing the crew — the capsule has no pilots — then makes reentry into the atmosphere and comes back to Earth lofted by three parachutes slowing its descent.

The capsule and booster take off vertically from Blue Origin's launch site in West Texas. The capsule separates from the booster around 250,000 feet and continues on to space to reach an apogee of 350,000 feet. The booster autonomously makes its way back to Earth for a pinpoint landing on the pad about two miles (3.22 km) north of where the vehicle lifted off.

Russell is a graduate of Leonardtown



New Shepherd taking off

High School and the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center; he went on to a career in law enforcement before becoming an entrepreneur.

In the business world he has started his own company called InfoHOA, a mail processing center and flagship operation for his technology-based community management companies.

Beyond his entrepreneurial success and historic spaceflight, Russell's other passion is in his philanthropy. He founded the Victoria Russell Foundation in honor of his late daughter, dedicating the organization to children's education and supporting the families of first responders. The foundation partners with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program that fosters a love of reading by gifting books free of charge to children.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Leonardtown Celebrates Christmas on the Square



Photos by Ron Bailey, courtesy of Leonardtown Main Street

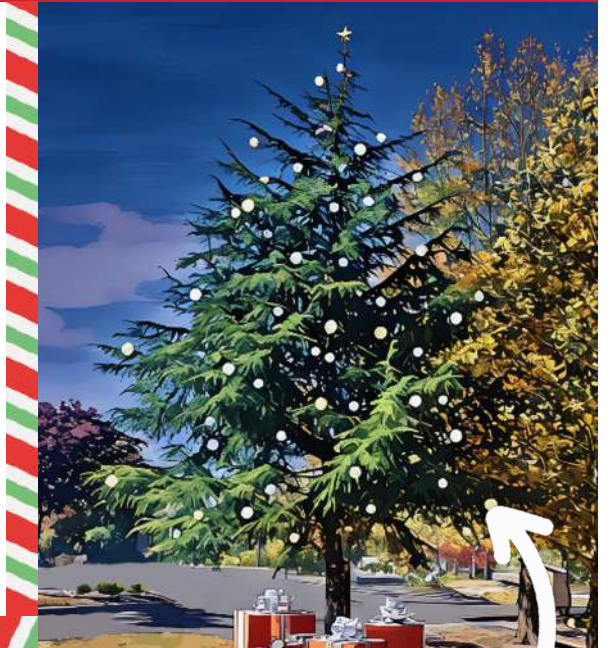


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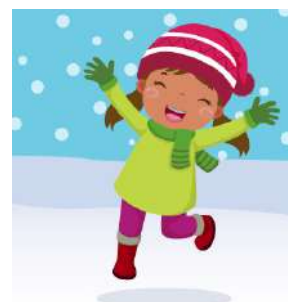
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Commissioners Look to Add More Bus Shelters

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

In approving the acceptance of state grant funding for the St. Mary's Transit System (STS) bus service, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County are also hoping to improve the waiting situation for people who use the bus system regularly by having more bus shelters for riders to use in inclement weather.

Commissioners approved \$626,619 in capital construction funding and \$3.1 million in operating funds for the STS bus system this week at their Dec. 3 business meeting in Leonardtown.

Public works chief Jim Gotsch said the capital funding would go to replacing one medium-sized bus and three small-sized buses.

"What about bus stops?" asked Commissioner Mike Hewitt. "Are we ever going to get more bus stops?"

Gotsch replied in the affirmative. "So we have 91 of the 119 bus stops already approved," said Gotsch. "If you drive up Route 235 and Great Mills Road you will already see signs in place."

Gotsch said the county was "piggy-back-

ing" on a Charles County contract to build bus shelters without lights or solar power generating capacity.

Gotsch said Charles County is looking to modify their contract to eventually bring on those amenities to bus shelters, but the county could go its own way and build them now without.

"We could do it today," Gotsch said.

"I'd just like to see us build them," Hewitt said. "I've been on this for years."

Gotsch estimated that the county, using its own resources, could put out six shelters now to aid waiting passengers.

Commissioner Eric Colvin asked what it would take to go a stop-only system away from the current flag system where riders would flag down a bus.

Alison Swint, Gotsch's deputy, said it would take a major educational campaign but said she did not believe the flag system would ever completely fade away.

"In our more rural areas... it would not be reasonable to want someone to walk five miles to the bus stop," Swint said.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

St. Mary's Honored with Distinguished Budget Award

St. Mary's County Government (SMCG) is proud to announce that our Finance team has been recognized with the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the FY2025 Budget Book. This prestigious recognition underscores our commitment to excellence in financial management.

Of note, the FY2025 Budget Book received special recognition for its Capital Improvement Program, earning the highest possible scores from all three independent reviewers. This exceptional achievement reflects the dedication and expertise of our Finance Team, whose hard work ensures the county's financial planning and reporting meet the highest standards.

"The Distinguished Budget Award represents more than a title—it's a testament to the diligence, precision, and collabora-

tion that drive the work of our amazing finance team," said County Administrator, David Weiskopf. "Their efforts continue to enhance public understanding and trust in the fiscal stewardship of St. Mary's County."

The GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award recognizes state and local governments that excel in meeting nationally recognized guidelines for effective budget presentation. These guidelines assess the budget's ability to serve as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communications device.

SMCG's Finance Team is currently working with the Commissioners, County Departments, and partners to prepare the FY2026 Budget. Community members are encouraged to visit <https://bit.ly/SMCG-FY26-Budget> to learn more about and follow the budget process.

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Murderer's Life Sentence to Endure

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling announced today that a convicted murderer's sentence of life without the possibility of parole will stand. Earlier this year, Dana Collins, 63, asked the Court to reconsider his sentence stemming from a 1995 murder. The State argued against Collins's motion. The Court agreed with the State, denied Collins's motion, and kept his sentence intact as life without the possibility of parole.

In 1995, Collins lured a man outside of his home in California, Maryland, before fatally shooting him with a crossbow. Collins then dismembered the victim's body and disposed of his remains in a dumpster at a nearby school.

In July 1996, Collins entered a plea of guilty to First-Degree Murder and was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole by the Honorable Marvin S. Kaminetz. After multiple post-conviction motions filed by Collins, in March 2002 the Court of Special Appeals (now the Appellate Court of Maryland) vacated the original judgment and ordered a new trial.

In 2003, at the new trial, Collins entered a plea of "not criminally responsible." On September 12, 2003, a jury found Collins criminally responsibly and guilty of first-degree murder. In February 2004, Collins was again sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

Since his 2003 trial, Collins has filed 15 motions, petitions, and appeals for relief. His most recent motion, filed in January 2024, was scheduled for a hearing in October of this year.



Dana Collins

During the October 2024 hearing, the State maintained that Collins has exhausted all legal avenues for reconsideration. The State successfully argued that there was no legal basis for granting Collins another reconsideration. The Court agreed with the State and denied Collins's motion, requiring Collins to continue to serve his life without the possibility of parole sentence.

Collectively, on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County, Senior Assistant State's Attorneys Fran Longwell and Lisa Ridge handled the 2024 matters, while former State's Attorney Richard Fritz prosecuted the case in 2003.

The Honorable Brooke Murdock presided over the 2024 hearing.

Home Invasion Suspect Arrested in Great Mills

St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Deputies arrested Robert Eric Hyatt Jr., 38, of Fort Washington, following a 911 report of a home invasion on Friday, November 29, 2024.

Deputies from the Patrol Division responded to the 45000 block of Military Lane after receiving a call from the victim, who reported that a male suspect was attempting to enter his residence forcibly. During the 911 call, a loud disturbance was heard as the suspect forced his way into the home.

Upon arrival, deputies entered the residence, where the suspect surrendered without incident. A search revealed that Hyatt was carrying a 9mm handgun, brass knuckles, and a large knife, and he was wearing body armor.

The victim was found on the balcony of the residence, suffering from a laceration to the head and a gunshot wound to the shoulder. He was transported to an area hospital by the Maryland State Police Aviation Command.

Hyatt faces ten charges, including attempted first- and second-degree murder, first- and second-degree assault, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, wearing bulletproof armor in the commission of a violent crime, concealing a dangerous weapon, and related burglary offenses.



Robert Eric Hyatt, Jr.

He was transported to the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center in Leonardtown.

The case is now being handled by the Criminal Investigations Division, with Detective Benjamin Raley serving as the lead investigator. Anyone with additional information is asked to contact Detective Raley at 301-475-4200, ext. 8076, or via email at Benjamin.Raley@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Identity Needed for Theft Suspect



The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office requests help to identify and locate the individual shown in this series of residential video screenshots. The subject entered a residence in Clements and was seen on video stealing checks and cash.

If you recognize this individual or have information about this incident, please contact Deputy Myles Chase-Johnson at Myles.ChaseJohnson@stmaryscountymd.gov or 301-475-4200, ext. 8175. Please reference case number 2024-62712.

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

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

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This month's special at the Good Earth Natural Food Store is the **Candy Cane Forest Smoothie** is a sweet holiday blend of zucchini, banana, peppermint, cocoa, and date syrup in a base of almond milk.

Specials and sales at Shepherd's Old Field Market



Friday, December 6

10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Visit the Old Jail Museum & Leonardtown Visitor Center for FREE tours and extended hours for First Friday

6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Movie night featuring The Polar Express at Town Market. Bring a chair and blanket

6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Gift Cards and Cider at the Escape Rooms Southern Maryland.

6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Tiny Art Show - Opening Reception at the St. Mary's County Arts Council curated by Elsewise Art and featuring the work of local artists. Free gift wrapping

6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Live music with Doc Lohn at St. Mary's County Arts Council

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NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER *News*

Santa Claus Visits Southern Maryland Dec. 10

Good boys and girls of all ages across Southern Maryland should keep their eyes on the skies as Adm. Saint Nicholas conducts pre-deployment mission planning over parts of Southern Maryland on Dec. 10 from 11:00 to 1:00 p.m. ET.

Regional residents looking up might spot Nicholas, known by his festive call sign "Claus," as he soars through the skies aboard a U.S. Navy MH-60S Knighthawk helicopter with his trusty elves and holiday helpers from NAWCAD's Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (HX) 21.

"Delivering toys to children around the world takes careful planning and strategic intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance," said Claus during a pre-flight brief with HX-21 rotary pilots and aircrew. "The aviation pros at NAWCAD make prepping for the big night a little easier."

Claus and the HX-21 crew will spread holiday cheer over the following regional locations:

11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

- Naval Air Station Patuxent River Beach House
- Driftwood Beach
- Patuxent Appeal Elementary School
- Dowell Elementary School



Adm. Santa Claus conducts pre-deployment planning near the Patuxent River in Southern Maryland during a reconnaissance mission ahead of Christmas Eve.

Solomons Island Pier

11:30 – 12:00 p.m.

- Hollywood Elementary School
- Saint John's Catholic School
- Captain Walter Francis Duke Elementary School
- Leonardtown Elementary School
- Leonardtown Wharf

12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

- Leonardtown Middle School
- Evergreen Elementary School
- Town Creek Elementary School
- Green Holly Elementary School
- Greenview Knolls Elementary School
- Lexington Park Elementary School

12:30 – 1:00 p.m.

- George Washington Carver Elementary

School

- Chesapeake Charter Public School
- Little Flower School
- Bay Montessori School
- Park Hall Elementary School
- Spring Ridge Middle School
- Naval Air Station Patuxent River Child Development Center

Children are advised to be on their best behavior as Claus finalizes his naughty list ahead of upcoming operations on Christmas Eve.

As Rudolph rests up with the reindeer crew ahead of the holiday, inclement weather may delay Santa's mission to Dec. 11 or Dec. 12, at the same time. Stay up-to-date on Santa Over Southern Maryland on the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division's Facebook page.

HX-21 is a component of Naval Test Wing Atlantic, the test wing for Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division. Nicknamed the "Blackjacks," the squadron provides developmental flight test and evaluation for all U.S. Navy and Marine Corps rotary-wing and tilt-rotor aircraft. The Blackjacks are personal favorites of Claus, who tries to visit his HX-21 friends every year. Naval Air Station Patuxent River has been home to HX-21 since 1949.



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Storytime with Santa at the USCT Interpretive Center

Experience the magic of the season with our Museum Division! Families are invited to don their coziest Christmas jammies or festive holiday outfits and head to the U.S. Colored Troops Interpretive Center on Sunday, December 15, 2024, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., for a joyful holiday Open House you won't want to miss! This special event will feature:

Two Polar Express Storytimes: Gather 'round for two special readings of the beloved holiday classic, *The Polar Express* at 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. Children and parents alike are encouraged to wear their pajamas to truly capture the spirit of the story!

Santa & Mrs. Claus: Meet the jolliest duo of the season – don't forget to smile and capture the perfect holiday card moment.

Holiday Treats: Enjoy delicious cookies and refreshments.

Festive Fun for All Ages: Holiday coloring activities will be provided, and guests are encouraged to explore the fascinating exhibits at the interpretive center while there.

The open house will take place at the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) Interpretive Center, located at 21675 S. Coral Drive in Lexington

Manor Passive Park, in Lexington Park, MD.

This free event is brought to you by St. Mary's County Government's Museum Division and the Friends of St. Clement's Island & Piney Point Museums. Mark your calendars and join us for this heartwarming celebration filled with holiday spirit, family fun, and a little Santa magic!

Our amazing museums offer holiday fun and local shopping all season long! Learn more: <https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/pio/docs/2024-198NewsReleaseMuseum-HolidayEvents.pdf>.

For more information on hours of operation, programs, events, admission prices, and more, following our museums on Facebook at:

- St. Clement's Island Museum: [Facebook.com/SCIMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/SCIMuseum)
- Old Jail Museum & Visitor Center: [Facebook.com/TheOldJailMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/TheOldJailMuseum)
- Piney Point Lighthouse Museum: [Facebook.com/1836Light](https://www.facebook.com/1836Light)
- U.S. Colored Troops Interpretive Center: [Facebook.com/USCTCenter](https://www.facebook.com/USCTCenter)

Pianist Brian Ganz to Play Free Recital



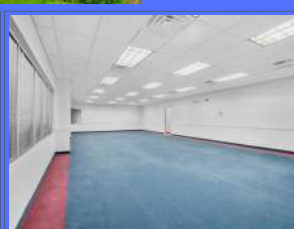
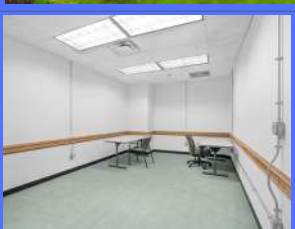
St. Mary's College of MD Musician-in-Residence Brian Ganz will perform his only full-length evening piano recital of the semester on Thursday, December 5 at 7 pm in the Main Concert Hall of the Dodge Performing Arts Center on the college campus. The free program will feature two great piano sonatas, Beethoven's beloved "Appassionata" Sonata and Chopin's virtually unknown Sonata No. 1 in C minor. Rounding out the program will be four popular mazurkas of Chopin. For more information call (240) 895-4498 or visit bit.ly/3C69OnR.

"I am thrilled to be playing these two sonatas back to back," pianist Ganz said recently. "The Beethoven is perhaps the greatest sonata ever composed for piano. It is universally revered as a masterpiece. The Chopin, on the other hand, is so rarely played it can honestly be considered unknown. Yet it has so much beauty, so much richness and excite-

ment to offer! And as it comes right after the Beethoven on the program, one hears the latter's influence on the young Chopin, who was only a teenager when he composed this first of his sonatas. I can promise listeners an amazing discovery of a work that deserves to be much better known than it is."

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

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Consider these year-end financial moves

As we enter the holiday season, your life may well become busier. Still, you might want to take the time to consider some financial moves before we turn the calendar to 2025.

Here are a few suggestions:

- *Review your investment portfolio.* As you look at your portfolio, ask these questions: Has its performance met my expectations this year? Does it still reflect my goals, risk tolerance and time horizon? Do I need to rebalance? You might find that working with a financial professional can help you answer these and other questions you may have about your investments.
- *Add to your 401(k) and HSA.* If you can afford it, and your employer allows it, consider putting more money into your 401(k) before the year ends — including “catch-up” contributions if you’re 50 or older. You might also want to add to your health savings account (HSA) by the tax-filing deadline in April.
- *Use your FSA dollars.* Unlike an HSA, a flexible spending account (FSA) works on a “use-it-or-lose-it” basis, meaning you lose any unspent funds at the end of the year. So, if you still have funds left in your account, try to use them up in 2024. (Employers may grant a 2½ month extension, so check with your human resources area to see if this is the case where you work.)
- *Contribute to a 529 plan.* If you haven’t opened a 529 education savings plan for your children, think about doing so this year. With a 529 plan, your earnings can grow tax deferred, and your withdrawals are federally tax free when used for qualified education expenses — tuition, fees, books and so on. And if you invest in your own state’s 529 plan, you might be able to deduct your contributions from your state income tax or receive a state tax credit.
- *Build your emergency fund.* It’s generally a good idea to keep up to six months’ worth of living expenses in an emergency fund, with the money held in a liquid, low-risk account. Without such a fund in place, you might be forced to dip into your retirement funds to pay for short-term needs, such as a major car or home repair.
- *Review your estate plans.* If you’ve experienced any changes in your family situation this year, such as marriage, remarriage or the birth of a child, you may want to update your estate-planning documents to reflect your new situation. It’s also important to look at the beneficiary designations on your investment accounts, retirement plans, IRAs and insurance policies, as these designations can sometimes even supersede the instructions you’ve left in your will. And if you haven’t started estate planning, there’s no time like the present.
- *Take your RMDs.* If you’re 73 or older, you will likely need to take withdrawals — called required minimum distributions, or RMDs — from some of your retirement accounts, such as your traditional IRA. If you don’t take these withdrawals each year, you could be subject to penalties.

These aren’t the only moves you can make, but they may prove helpful not only for 2024 but in the years to come.

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

Edward Jones, Member SIPC

Contributed by David McDonough

Financial Advisor at Edward Jones

Office located at 41680 Miss Bessie Dr. Suite 302

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Wanderings of an Aimless Mind

by Shelby Oppermann



Beautiful Distractions

When things get crazy, I try to notice and appreciate all the simple things in life like all the animals and nature around us. Right this minute for instance, Mindy is hopping around wanting to go outside with my husband. He said, “Mindy’s following me around just like a puppy”. I said, “Mindy do you want your jacket?”. Then she really started getting excited. Two weeks ago, we bought Mindy a pink quilted fleece lined jacket at Lowes. It was only \$20, so I figured if she didn’t like it that somebody in the neighborhood might buy it. I put it on her one chilly night when we were sitting outside and she loved it! In fact, it was hard to get it off of her because she would lay down and look at me with a look that said “No, I am not taking this off!”. Now, all I have to do is pick it up and show it to her, and she is wiggling her body and wagging her tail for me to put it on her. I really didn’t think she would be a clothes loving dog.



Maybe it will help keep some of Mindy’s joints warm since now she doesn’t really hop around its actually more like hobbling around. Her arthritis seems to be making it harder for her to get up and walk well. And we are now thinking about the recent injection for dogs called Librela. Mindy’s Vet has recommended it at the last two visits and says it has made a big difference in some of her canine patients’ quality of life. This is what the Caninearthritis.org states about Librela, “It is a monoclonal antibody (mAb) that targets nerve growth factor (NGF) and is used to control pain in dogs with osteoarthritis (OA)”. My husband asked if maybe I could switch to that injection too. I guess Mindy and I would both be barking at doorbells on TV, and anything and everything that makes a sound.

Yesterday we had to go back to Lowes to pick out our new basement doors which really need to be replaced after 30 or more years. They were the neighbors doors before they were put in this house. An estimator had already been to the house to take accurate measurements for the installation. Naturally, we walked around the store after that and bought things we didn’t know we needed. When we got to the bird seed bags for our bird feeders, I was mesmerized with the number of birds who were living, chirping, and feeding in that area. I imagine they were bossy house wrens. At times there would be 5 or more birds eating the seeds that were all around the bags; bags that I am sure they pecked until they reached the good stuff. I took some photos, but they were so fast with their swooping from the food to the rafters that the pictures were a bit blurry.

As to nature, just in the last few days, we have noticed that all of the beautiful Red Maples that we, and our neighbors have, have lost their leaves in one fell swoop. Each tree has a bright red puddle of leaves underneath them. All the other types of trees in our yard still have many leaves hanging on for dear life, though that will change later this week with the high winds that are expected. My husband has been trying to keep up with blowing leaves every day, but even he said this morning that he will wait until the last leaves are down.

I always worry about how the squirrels are able to keep in their nests (dreys) high in the trees on windy days. Squirrels must be great builders. The squirrels also have plenty of hollow holes in the trees where they can hide too. Lately I have been a bit upset with a few squirrels who have turned one of my bird houses upside down so they can sit on it and eat the corn left on the cornstalks. I don’t begrudge them the corn, its more of how they mess up the houses. My husband had one screw in the center of the house which apparently was perfect for the squirrels to turn it upside down. The next husband Honey-Do task is a second screw in that birdhouse. Last year they ate most of a birdhouse my son made for me. I do love to watch their antics though, just as I do with the birds or Mindy. You can’t worry about life, or the world, if you have nature and animals as such beautiful distractions. I hope you have lots of beautiful distractions in the coming hectic weeks.

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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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.

Tony Beakes, 82



Francis "Tony" Cleveland Beakes Jr, 82, of Lexington Park, MD, passed away on November 20, 2024. Born on September 10, 1942, in Hackensack, NJ, he was the son of the late Francis Cleveland Beakes Sr, and the late Eleanor Eagle Beakes.

Tony was the greatest, and most loving husband of Cindy Lou McKnew Beakes whom he married on April 30, 1988, in Fairfax County, VA.

Tony's father was a career Army man which offered him the opportunity to live in many locations. His favorites were Japan and Hawaii. While he lived in Hawaii he became an avid surfer. His parents sent him stateside to attend school. He attended high school and graduated from Staunton Military Academy, later obtaining his BS in Administration of Justice and MA in Special Studies.

In 1966 he became an Arlington County Virginia Police Officer, retiring in 1990 as a Lieutenant. A second career led him to Computer Programming for Police, Fire, Court and Jail systems, employed by Tiburon, based in the bay area of California.

He enjoyed cooking, work projects around his home, working on his computer and loved football. He was an avid Dallas Cowboy fan and yes, he did live in Texas for a time as a child where his love of the Cowboys began.

He and Cindy moved to St. Mary's County, MD in 2006, enjoying all that this beautiful area had to offer. They both became Hospice Volunteers, Tony cooking at the St. Mary's Hospice House, and helping with administrative tasks. Cindy working as a Hospice patient care volunteer.

He is survived by his children Tony Beakes, III (Kimberly) of the Outer Banks, NC and Matthew McKnew (Lara) of Frederick County, MD; three grandchildren, Zachary Beakes, Nathan McKnew, and Morgan McKnew. Many nieces and nephews. He is also survived by his cousins, Deming Cowles (Gail) of Florida and Louisa Cowles of PA, Henry Eagle (Shelby) GA, Ronald Eagle of VA, brothers-in-law Harry Pool (Deb) of St. Mary's County and Ed Carneal of Laurel, MD, Dan Franklin (Anne) of CA. In addition to his parents Tony was preceded in death by his son, Steven Arthur Beakes, and brother David Curtis Beakes, Aunt, Mary Cowles of Fla, cousin Ronald Eagle, Va. and his first wife Barbara Beakes (mother of his boys) of Virginia.

The family will receive friends on

Tuesday December 3, 2024, from 12 noon to 2PM with a service (video link on website) in the Brinsfield Funeral home from 2-3 PM officiated by Father John Ball. Burial for his cremains will be private, attended by his family.

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

Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Tracey Weeks, 49



Tracey Michelle Frazier Weeks, 49, of Hollywood, MD, passed away on November 21, 2024, in Washington, DC. Born on March 20, 1975, in Leonardtown, MD,

she was the daughter of the late Katherine Fayrene Mattingly Frazier and the late Terry Windell Frazier. Tracey is survived by her husband, Kelly Weeks, her son, David Alexander Mattingly of Leonardtown, MD and her brother, Jeffrey Scott Frazier of Piney Point, MD. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her brother, Terry Paul Frazier.

Tracey was a lifelong St. Mary's County, MD resident and graduated from Leonardtown High School in 1993. She then went on to earn her Master's Degree from Charles County College in 1997. Tracey was a Budget Finance Manager (BFM-GOV/CIV/CONT) at Patuxent River and Navy Yard, DC for 30 years, retiring on September 1, 2024.

Tracey enjoyed sewing, quilting, crabbing, and the outdoors.

The family will receive friends on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with prayers recited at 7:00 PM in the Mattingly-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held in the funeral home chapel on Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 10:00 AM with Father Joseph Cwik officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be John Andrew Mattingly, Jr., Jim Robrecht, Kyle Robrecht, and Max Wrenn.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to St. Jude Children's Research

Hospital, ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

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

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

George Lathroum, 71



George Wallace Lathroum, Jr., "Teenie Boy", passed away on November 23, 2024, in Washington, D.C., surrounded by his loving children.

Born on September 6, 1953, in Leonardtown, MD, he was the son of the late George Wallace and Violet Elizabeth Lathroum, Sr.

Teenie Boy is survived by his children, Deb Lathroum-Bacon (Steve) of Tall Timbers, MD and Kevin Lathroum (Beth) of Leonardtown, MD, grandchildren Kylie Duncan, Kennedy Bacon, and Lilly Lathroum, siblings Bubba Lathroum of Hollywood, MD, David Lee Lathroum (Paula) of Leonardtown, MD, Glen Lathroum of Clements, MD, Judy Adams (Brett) of Leonardtown, MD, and Sharon Woodburn (Bernie) of Leonardtown, MD, and bonus grandchildren Jaliya, Corinne and DJ Fuller. In addition to his parents, Teenie Boy was preceded in death by his siblings, Donna Woods and Johnny Lathroum.

A lifelong resident of St. Mary's County, MD, Teenie Boy worked as an Equipment Operator for Chalk Point Power Plant until retiring in 2000. After his retirement, Teenie Boy worked as a mechanic in his home body shop. He enjoyed spending time with family, dirt track racing at Potomac Speedway, watching NASCAR, and cheering on the Dallas Cowboys.

The family will receive friends on Monday, December 2, 2024, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with prayers recited at 7:00 PM, in the Mattingly-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at 10:00 AM in the funeral home chapel with Mary Dryden officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD. Serving as

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pullbearers will be DJ Lathroum, Corey Woodburn, Steve Knott, Brett Adams, Bernie Woodburn, and Gene Wathen.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Leonardtown Volunteer Rescue Squad, P.O. Box 299, Leonardtown, MD 20650 and/or Hospice of St. Mary's, P.O. Box 625, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

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.

William Kernozek, 94



William Michael Kernozek, 94, of Lusby, MD, passed away peacefully at his home on November 26, 2024. Born on August 16, 1930, in Springfield, MA, he was the son

of William and Mary Bohnak Kernozek of Groton, CT. William was the loving husband of his second wife, Ella Mae Pruitt Kernozek, whom he married on September 3, 2003, and who preceded him in death on December 6, 2020. William was also preceded in death by his first wife, Margaret Mahoney Kernozek, son Michael Kernozek, stepson, Selby Pruitt, stepdaughter, Debrah Ann Pruitt, and his brother, Frederick Kernozek. He is survived by his children, Deborah Anne Lamontagne and William Raymond Kernozek, stepchildren, William Pruitt, Frances (Connie) Putt, and Kelvin Pruitt, as well as five grandchildren, Danielle, Hannah Lynn, William Michael, Aubrianna, and Gregory, and numerous step-grandchildren.

Immediately after his birth, his family moved to Groton, CT, where the depression forced him out of school at the 5th grade to help the family survive. He took a job with Pfizer Pharmaceuticals at age 16, married Margaret Anne Mahoney, and purchased a home in Quaker Hill, CT, near the Thames River. They raised three children, Deborah Anne and twin boys, William Raymond and Michael Thomas. Pfizer was the only employment he would ever know. After rising in the ranks to foreman, William retired from Pfizer after 37 years of service while missing only six days. After retirement he moved to Lusby, MD on waterfront property and, after the passing of his first wife, he met and married Ella Mae Pruitt when he was 73. They enjoyed 17 years of a relaxed, loving marriage until Ella's passing in 2020. William spent his remaining days in his home with assistance from Ella's daughter, Connie, and son-in-law, Ed, whom he considered his close family and who supported him through the very end. He was a very strong individual and overcame a subdural hematoma, cataracts, and prostate cancer late in life, but succumbed recently to a hip fracture complicated by late-stage dementia.

William was completely self-taught, with his interests ranging from sailing, camping,

hiking, home remodeling, fine furniture making, gardening, metal detecting, coin and arrowhead collecting, and card playing. He was also a singer/songwriter from a young age and favored mostly backwoods bluegrass music. He played multiple instruments and loved singing old country and bluegrass music at local nursing homes and other venues around Southern Maryland with the love of his life, Ella Mae. In his 80s and 90s he shied away from Seniors Citizen Centers because he thought those places were for old people. His gentle demeanor and happy smile will be greatly missed, and he will be loved forever.

The family will receive friends on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held at 10:00 AM in the funeral home chapel. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD.

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

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

Jim Williams, 65



James William Williams, Jr., "Jim", 65, passed away on December 2, 2024, at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, Washington, D.C. Born on September 1, 1959, he was the

son of Eleanor Williams and the late James William Williams Sr., and the brother of the late Gary Edward Williams.

Jim was the proud owner of Cream of the Crop Plant Nursery in Charlotte Hall, MD for over a decade, where his love for nature and vast knowledge of plants inspired countless customers. His green thumb was legendary, but his warm, uplifting spirit is what truly set him apart. In honor of Jim, Cream of the Crop will continue to whole-heartedly serve the needs of the public. Beyond his love for plants, Jim was a devoted dog owner to two German Shepherds, Dakota and Gracie. They were his loyal companions and a constant source of joy. Jim loved time spent on the water, fishing in solitude alongside his son, Seth. He also had an undeniable love for classic rock, which could often be heard blaring through his box truck while he spent his days down at his nursery. Jim's infectious personality, good spirit, and upbeat energy made him a joy to be around. He had a knack for uplifting others with his humor. He will be remembered as a hardworking man who was loved deeply and lived his life to the fullest.

Jim leaves behind his mom, Eleanor Williams, his sons, Seth and Richard, his dogs, Dakota and Gracie, as well as countless customers and friends who will forever hold him in their hearts.

The family will receive friends on Friday,

December 13, 2024, from 11:00 AM to noon in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, 41590 Fenwick Street, Leonardtown MD, where a funeral service will be held at noon in the funeral home chapel with Deacon Joe Lloyd officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD.

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

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

Douglas Treat, 73



Douglas Veeder Treat, 73, of Hollywood, MD, formerly of Pine Top, AZ, passed away on November 21, 2024, in Washington, DC. Born on September

25, 1951, in Scottsdale, AZ, he was the son of the late Patricia Spidell and the stepson of the late Frank Spidell. Douglas is survived by his children, his son Tyler Treat and daughter-in-law Sarah Treat of Hollywood, MD, and his two grandchildren.

Douglas graduated from Camp Verde High School in 1968. Douglas would always

say he was a simple carpenter, despite starting a construction company, night vision company, and dabbling in real estate investments throughout his life. In his spare time, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, golfing, television, and in the last year of his life, getting the opportunity to be a fantastic grandpa to his two adored grandkids.

All services will be private.

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.

Charles Shorter, 91



Charles Kenneth Shorter of Broomes Island, MD passed away December 1, 2024 at his home surrounded by his family. Services will be on December 10, 2024 from 5-7pm

at Brinsfield Funeral Home with a Funeral Service on 12/11/2024 at 11am at St. George Episcopal Church in Valley Lee, MD, with interment to follow in the church cemetery. Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home: www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.



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Summerseat Farm, 26655 Three Notch Rd, Mechanicsville MD 20659

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.

Thu, Dec 5

American Legion Post 221 Meeting

American Legion Post 221
21690 Colton Point Rd., Avenue
7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

American Legion Post 221 invites all active duty personnel and veterans to join us for our monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00pm. E-mail us at alpost221@aol.com or call 301*481*6625 for more information. Tell them you saw the announcement on the SoMD Internet Calendar.

Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical

Three Notch Theatre
21744 South Coral Dr., Lexington Park
8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Inspired by the twisted genius of Roald Dahl, the Tony Award-winning Roald Dahl's Matilda The Musical is the captivating masterpiece from the Royal Shakespeare Company that revels in the anarchy of childhood, the power of imagination and the inspiring story of a girl who dreams of a better life. With book by Dennis Kelly and original songs by Tim Minchin, Matilda has won 47 international awards and continues to thrill sold-out audiences of all ages around the world.

Fri, Dec 6

3rd Annual Christmas Tree Lighting

Second District Volunteer Fire
Department Social Hall
45245 Drayden Rd., Valley Lee
5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Sat, Dec 7

Holiday Bazaar

Margaret Brent Middle School
29675 Point Lookout Rd., Mechanicsville
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Our annual Holiday Bazaar is held in our cafeteria and gym. Come shop with some amazingly talented crafters and vendors. Admissions are \$2/per person. All proceeds from admissions, concessions, and rented table space benefits the 6th grade team and their activities. Questions can be sent to Mrs. Kamp jmkamp@smcps.org

So. Md. Farm & Country Christmas Auction

Westfield Farm Arena & Auction Barn
26689 Laurel Grove Rd., Mechanicsville
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Southern Maryland Farm & Country Christmas Auction is a large community, live, in-person auction event that will offer

Locally-made, Live Evergreen Wreaths and Centerpieces; Locally-Grown Poinsettias; New Tools; New Toys; Handcrafted Quilts; Furniture & Crafts; Lawn/Garden Items; New Camping/Sporting Items and More. Selling in two Auction Rings. Auction begins on Saturday, December 7 2024 at 9 am with registration beginning at 7:45 am. Auction Preview and Early Bidder Registration will be on Friday, December 6, 2024 from 3 pm to 7 pm. A public auction event that supports our local craftsmen and producers. No fee to enter or to register for a bidder number. Payment terms for purchases are Cash, Good Check, and Credit Cards (credit cards incur an additional 3.5 percent fee). Ten percent buyer's premium on all purchases, MD Sales Tax as applicable.

For more information go to: farrellauctionservice.com/

Sun, Dec 8

Breakfast with Santa

St. Mary's County Elks Lodge
22649 FDR BLVD, Great Mills
9 a.m.

All you can eat breakfast buffet includes: omelets to order, scrambled eggs, waffles, sausage, bacon, fried potatoes, biscuits & gravy, creamed chipped beef, fruit, juice, and coffee. Mimosas & Bloody Mary's available for an additional charge.

Get your picture with Santa.

Mon, Dec 9

Pax River Quilters Guild Meeting

Good Samaritan Lutheran Church
20850 Langley Rd., Lexington Park
6 p.m.

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

Upcoming

Breakfast With Santa

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
27108 Mt. Zion Church Rd.,
Mechanicsville
Sun, Dec 15
9am to 11am

Breakfast is a FREE WILL offering. Photo with Santa for a fee. Fun crafts for the kids and fellowship. Event sponsored by Mt. Zion's Youth Group. For more information contact Amy Howell at 410-610-1828

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library UPCOMING EVENTS

St. Mary's County Library Closed for Staff Training

All locations of the St. Mary's County Library will be closed on Friday, December 6 for staff training. All locations will be open on Saturday, December 7.

Wayne Karlin Presents "The Genizah": Local Author Talk

Wayne Karlin will present his latest novel, "The Genizah," and discuss the Holocaust backgrounds of the novel at Lexington Park Library on Saturday, December 7 from 2 - 4 p.m. Wayne will reveal the process of turning family history into fiction for The Genizah. Karlin is the author of nine novels, a short story collection, and three non-fiction books. Register on www.stmalib.org.

SOMD Audubon Society: The Christmas Bird Count

The annual Christmas Bird Count

(CBC) has been held for well over a century and is conducted by National Audubon Society with help from thousands of volunteers. Lexington Park Library, Saturday, December 7 from 10 - 11:30 a.m. Molly Moore, President of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, Charles County Master Gardener, and MD Master Naturalist will teach participants how to contribute to the data collected between December 14 and January 5 for this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation actions. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Connect and Converse

Do you enjoy arts and crafts? Do you enjoy games? Do you want to make new friends? Connect and Converse might just be the event for you! Join us at the Charlotte Hall Library on Monday, December 9 from 12 - 1 p.m. for an op-

portunity to connect and converse with others. During this monthly program, we will gather in the meeting room to either create artwork or play a game. For the month of December, our art activity will be paper snowflakes. Our game will be Uno. This event is intended for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities as well as their friends, family, and caregivers. Connect and Converse usually meets on the second Monday of the month. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Using Google Lens for Holiday Shopping

Find exactly what you're looking for with Google Lens! Join Maria Barga, Tech Educator for the University of Maryland Extension, in this interactive class that introduces Google Lens - Google's software to "search what you see." Lexington Park Library on Tuesday, December 10 from 2 - 3:30 p.m. Learn all the fun and unique ways to use this visual search engine, including using Google Lens for online shopping ideas! To get the most out of this workshop, please plan to bring a smartphone if you have one. Individuals without smartphones will still be able to participate. Register on www.stmalib.org.

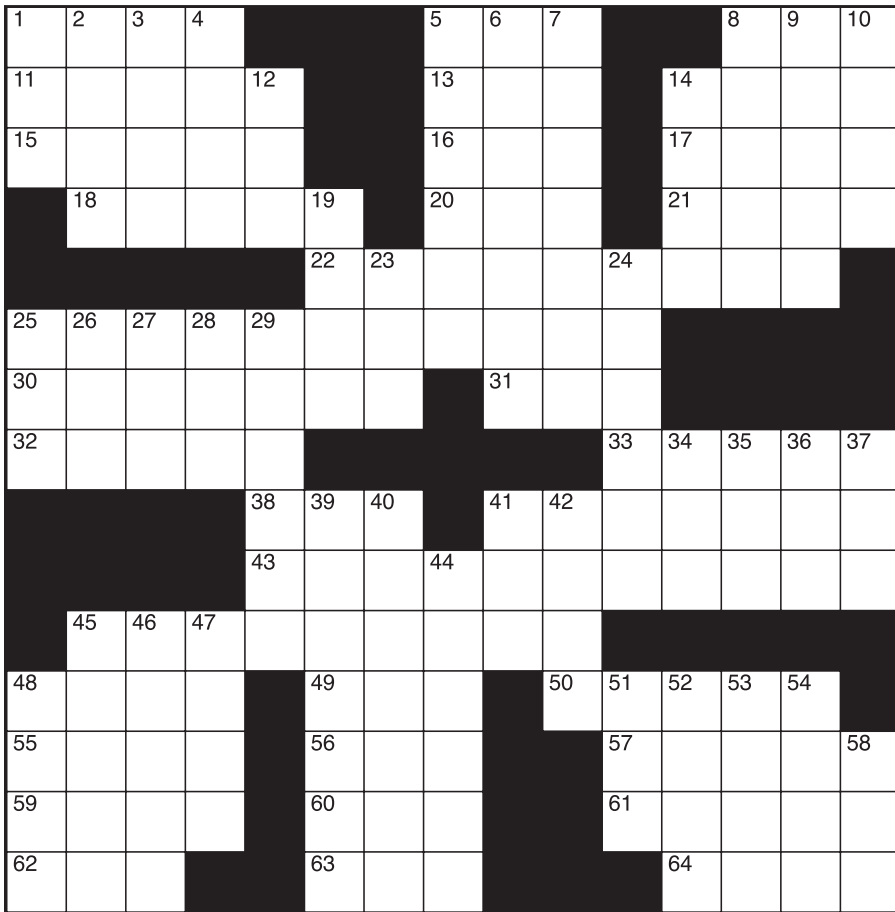
Introduction to Microsoft Word

Would you like to know how to use the

computer to write letters or other types of documents? Join us at Leonardtown Library on Saturday, December 14 from 10 - 11:30 a.m. for this introductory class to learn how to use Microsoft Word. We'll get you started with Word and cover the basics of creating documents. This class does not result in Microsoft certification. Computer Skills needed for this class: Advanced mouse and keyboard abilities. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Jólabókaflód (The Yule Book Flood)

Celebrate the Icelandic holiday of Jólabókaflód, the Yule Book Flood, with us at Leonardtown Library on Friday, December 20 from 2 - 4 p.m. Take a book and leave a book in our community book exchange, plus enjoy reading, snacks, and relaxing activities in our cozy space. The Jólabókaflód tradition started during World War II, when paper was one of the few commodities not rationed during the war. Icelanders exchanged books around the holidays, as gifts and other materials were hard to come by. For more information on this tradition, take a look at the Jólabókaflód website!

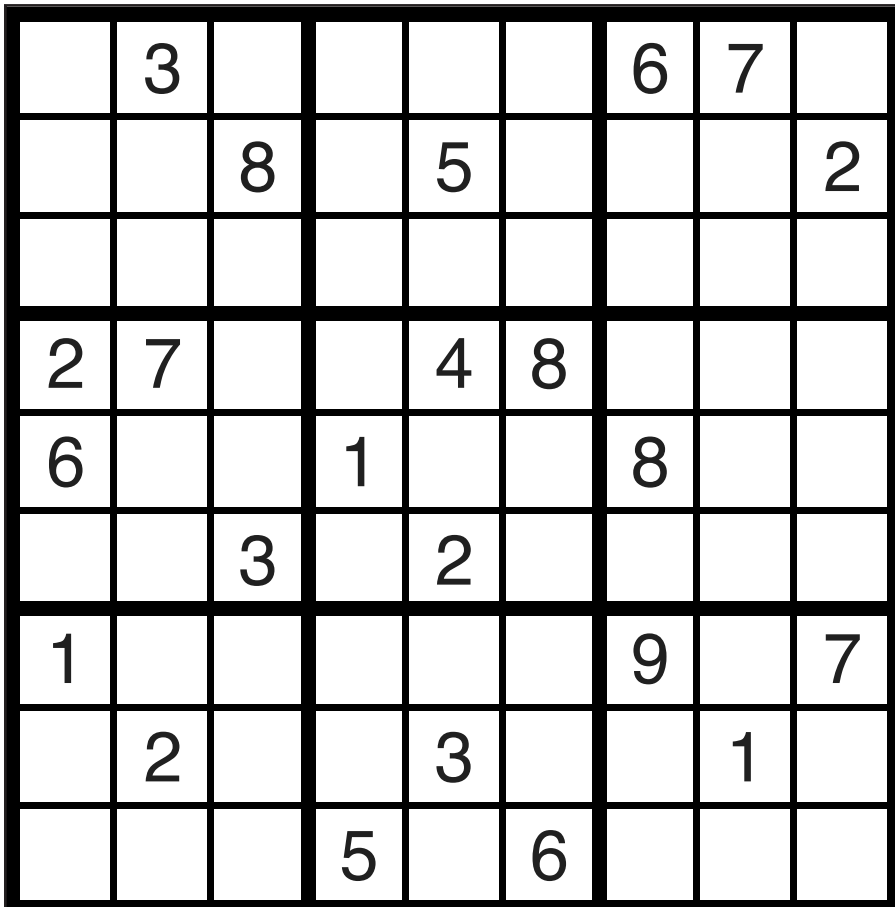


CLUES ACROSS

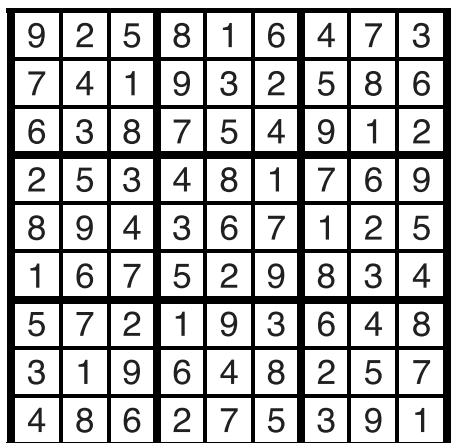
- 1. Bar bills
- 5. Recipe measurement (abbr.)
- 8. Swiss river
- 11. Czech Republic capital
- 13. "Officially known as"
- 14. A French abbot
- 15. Having a strong sharp smell or taste
- 16. Local area network
- 17. Data transmission speed measure
- 18. Embarrass
- 20. When you hope to get there
- 21. This (Spanish)
- 22. Gives up
- 25. Churchgoer
- 30. Current
- 31. Slang for gun
- 32. Small drum
- 33. Vanished union bigwig
- 38. Rocker's tool of the trade
- 41. Dearth
- 43. 2024 Olympics host
- 45. Excess blood in the vessels
- 48. Afrikaans
- 49. Agreement between provider and customer
- 50. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
- 55. Ancient Syrian city
- 56. Witch
- 57. Celebrations
- 59. Long period of time
- 60. A team's best pitcher
- 61. Current unit
- 62. One-time aerospace company
- 63. French/Belgian river
- 64. Swedish rock group

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
- 2. Genus of clams
- 3. Remark
- 4. Actor LaBeouf
- 5. Ohio town
- 6. Olympic sport
- 7. Cure
- 8. Behave in a way that belittles
- 9. Shares a boundary with
- 10. Give advice
- 12. Promotional materials
- 14. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing
- 19. "Agatha All Along" actress Kathryn
- 23. Small piece
- 24. King of Camelot
- 25. Parts per thousand (abbr.)
- 26. Small Milky Way constellation
- 27. One who challenges authority (abbr.)
- 28. Equal (prefix)
- 29. Shawl
- 34. S. American wood sorrel relative
- 35. The end
- 36. Supervises interstate commerce
- 37. Yes vote
- 39. Officer of high rank
- 40. Church office
- 41. Tire pressure measurement
- 42. From a distance
- 44. Photographs
- 45. Industrial process
- 46. Nobel Prize-winning physicist
- 47. Map out
- 48. Mammary gland part of female mammal
- 51. Honorable title (Turkish)
- 52. Spongelike cake leavened with yeast
- 53. Speak incessantly
- 54. Poetry term
- 58. Relaxing space



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Calvert Community Calendar

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

Fri, Dec 6

Home for the Holidays: Tree Lighting and Holiday Market

Downtown Prince Frederick
Main Street and at the Courthouse
Holiday market from 4-8 p.m.
Tree lighting ceremony at 6 p.m.

Enjoy supporting local vendors, food trucks, live music and more!

Sat, Dec 7

Annual Christmas Concert

Waters Memorial UMC
5400 Mackall Rd., St Leonard
6 p.m.

Featuring: The Unclouded Day & Guest Performers—Refreshments after the concert (FREE)

Breakfast with Santa and Vendor Shopping

Patuxent High School
12485 Southern Connector Blvd., Lusby
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

The NJROTC Boosters invite you to a delicious full breakfast with beverages before or after your visits with Santa and the Vendors. Have your picture taken with Santa. Bring your wish list or write a letter to Santa at one of the craft tables.

Adults \$10, Kids (3-12 years) \$5 and under 3 free. Max \$40 per family. Price includes breakfast, photo, Santa letters, games and crafts. VENDOR Table Rental \$25 (25 tables available). Call Chief Fairbourn at 541-556-9812 or email: fairbourn@calvertnet.k12.md.us

Christmas Town in Lusby

East-John Youth Center
11835 Mill Bridge Road, Lusby
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Holiday fun for the whole family! Santa, hayrides, vendors, music, food, silent auction, and more! Free admission. Call 443-

985-2407 for more information.

Pancakes with Santa

Calvert Career and Technology Academy
330 Dorsey Road, Prince Frederick
8 a.m.-1 p.m.

Join us for a delicious pancake breakfast prepared by our culinary students, crafts, fun, and of course photos with Santa! See event for ticket purchase link. Advance tickets: \$10/adult, \$8/child At the door: \$15/adult, \$10/child

Daytime Holiday Market

Annamarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
13470 Dowell Road, Solomons
9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Browse a festive display or unique gifts and wares - handmade, homemade or home-grown with love! Enjoy live music, holiday exhibits, holiday gift show and Ornament Show & Sale as well. Food and drink will be available for purchase. Market is rain or shine. 410-326-4640

Spirit of Calvert Christmas Market

Calvert County Fairgrounds
140 Calvert Fair Dr., Prince Frederick
9 a.m.-5 p.m.

We will have craft vendors, food vendors and much more.

ACLT Annual Wreath and Greens Sale

American Chestnut Land Trust
South Side Trailhead
1985 Scientist's Cliffs Rd., Port Republic
11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Stop by the southside trail head to purchase your holiday wreath, greens, and other goodies! Get there early as they sell out quickly! 410-414-3400

Old-Fashioned Christmas: Light Up Linden

Linden House
70 Church Street, Prince Frederick
11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Join us for a FREE family day of holiday fun on the historic grounds of Linden, home to Calvert County's Historical Society. You'll find live music, activities for all ages, food trucks, vendors, a visit and reading with Santa and closing the day with a tree lighting!

A Magical Christmas Parade

Bay Avenue from 1st St. to 7th St.,
North Beach
12 p.m.

This annual event will bring the streets to life with holiday spirit, festive floats, and of course, a special appearance from Santa Claus! 301-855-6681

COSMIC Symphony Presents: The More, The Merrier

Chesapeake Church
6201 Solomons Island Rd., Huntingtown
3-5 p.m.

Join COSMIC Symphony as we celebrate the holiday season with our concert titled, "The More, The Merrier," hosted by David W. Cook. This afternoon will be filled with all of your favorite Christmas classics, and plenty of surprises for the whole family to enjoy.

Crab Pot & Buoy Tree Lighting Ceremony

J.C. Lore Oyster House
Solomons
6:30 p.m.

Bring the family and check out the Crab Pot & Buoy Tree, a new Calvert County tradition! 301-672-3509

Sun, Dec 8

Christmas Caroling

St. Leonard Polling House
5095 St. Leonard Road, St. Leonard
4:30 pm

Join in the Spirit of the Season with Cookies, Cocoa, and Song. Santa will make a special appearance at 5 pm! This 23rd annual event is sponsored by the SLVG. For questions,

contact Nancy W. Zinn, 410-586-0682.

Holiday Wreathmaking Party!

Annamarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
13470 Dowell Road, Solomons
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Cost: \$55/participant

Join us for our popular outdoor wreathmaking extravaganza ! Learn how to create a wreath from an assortment of local greens and fun festive decorative elements from the artLAB! Enjoy music, a cash bar, assorted treats and good company. Coffee and hot drinks will be available from the Beanery. 410-326-4640

Mon, Dec 9

No Spend January

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Learn from Women's Commissioner Brandy Curtis Richards how to have a successful "No Spend Month!" Refreshments will be provided! This event is sponsored in partnership with Calvert Library, C4, and the Calvert County Commission for Women 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Dec 11

Veteran Services Program

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

Are you a veteran or close family member looking for assistance? The Calvert County Office on Aging is partnering with ServingTogether to provide support twice a month, every second Wednesday and fourth Friday (but not on 12/27). Walk-ins are encouraged. No appointment is necessary. Visit <https://servingtogetherproject.org/calvert> for more information.

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

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



County Times

P. O. Box 250 • Hollywood, MD 20636

CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of November 18, 2024 – November 24, 2024, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,055 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health 55
- Disorderly 16 Domestic 38
- Motor Vehicle Crashes 57
- Patrol Checks / School Checks 888
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles 29
- Traffic Complaints 64
- Traffic Stops 455
- 911 Hang Ups 45
- ARRESTS 58

Damaged Property: 24-90148 On November 21, 2024, DFC Grierson responded to the Ball Road Convenience-Compactor Site, located at 1045 Ball Road in St. Leonard, for the report of damaged property. The complainant reported that an unknown suspect cut the perimeter fence to gain access to the compactor site and stole items from the electronic waste bin. The estimated value of the damaged fence is \$800. The estimated value of stolen property is unknown at this time.



Louis Edward Harrod

Disorderly: 24-90881 On November 23, 2024, Deputy Tunnell responded to Calvert Library, located at 850 Costley Way in Prince Frederick, for a report of trespassing. Upon arrival, **Louis Edward Harrod**, 30 of Prince Frederick, was identified as the suspect. Harrod had been trespassed from the library the previous day. When informed he was under arrest for trespassing, Harrod became aggressive and resisted. A brief struggle ensued in a grassy area observed by several bystanders. Harrod was eventually placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center. While en route, Harrod spit inside Deputy Lewis's patrol vehicle, leaving saliva that temporarily defaced government property. Harrod was charged with Trespassing: Private Property, Resisting Arrest, Disorderly Conduct, Malicious Destruction of Property, Obstructing/Hindering, and Failure to Obey a Lawful Order.

Weapons Violation: 24-91019 On November 24, 2024, Deputy Fleenor responded to assist deputies with a traffic stop in the 3400 block of Cox Road in Huntingtown. The stop involved a vehicle operating without front or rear lights and eluding deputies. The driver, **Jessica Camile Young**, 21, of Capitol Heights, was arrested for DUI. The passengers were released from the scene. During the investigation, deputies learned that a handgun may have been discarded from the vehicle during the initial pursuit. Young's vehicle was observed stopped in the middle of the



Jamil Joseph Neal

roadway on Cox Road, with the driver's door open. A male passenger from Young's vehicle, later identified as **Jamil Joseph Neal**, 22 of Temple Hills, was seen walking along the roadside and searching through bushes. Upon noticing deputies, Neal fled into the woods. K9 units conducted an article search of the area, locating a Glock 19 handgun in the flower bed of a nearby residence. Additional parts of the handgun and live ammunition were discovered in the front yard. Neal was detained and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Loaded Handgun on a Person, Illegal Possession of Ammunition, Obstructing and Hindering, and Resisting/Interfering with Arrest.



Brian Michael Bellosi

Theft: 24-89332 On November 18, 2024, Deputy Newton responded to the Walmart located at 10600 Town Center Blvd. in Dunkirk, for the report of a theft. Investigation revealed **Brian Michael Bellosi**, 54 of Dunkirk, was observed placing merchandise into his pockets and into his mouth. Bellosi originally provided deputies with a false name. Bellosi was placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center. During a search incident to arrest, additional stolen merchandise to include Tick Removers and a strip of Suboxone were located. Bellosi was charged with Obstructing and Hindering and Theft: Less than \$100.

Theft: 24-90892 On November 23, 2024, Deputy DeSantis responded to the 600 block of Grenada Lane in Lusby, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised his Diamondback Carbon Bicycle had been stolen. The bicycle is described as gray with full suspension, Fox 32 RCL Fork Control. The estimated value of stolen property is \$5,000.

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

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

Animal Rescue Operator Convicted of Animal Cruelty

On December 2, 2024, Marliana Zahedi-Mullis of Chesapeake Beach was convicted of animal cruelty in the District Court for Calvert County.

An investigation conducted by Calvert County Animal Control in May of 2024 revealed that Ms. Zahedi-Mullis was operating "3 Acres Rescue" out of her residence at 3910 Breezy Point Road. A search warrant was executed with assistance from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office during which time 73 dogs were located within the residence. The dogs were housed in cages covered in urine and feces. Many of the dogs lacked clean food and water. Several of the dogs were found lacking necessary veterinary care.

Ms. Zahedi-Mullis was sentenced to 150 days incarceration, which was suspended, and placed on three years of probation. As a condition of her probation, Ms. Zahedi-Mullis is prohibited from engaging in animal rescue operations at her residence and is subject to routine inspection by Calvert County Animal Control.

The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant State's Attorney Christopher Monte. State's Attorney Harvey wishes to commend the members of Calvert County Animal Control for their efforts in investigating and securing a conviction in this case.

Press Release from Calvert County State's Attorney

Calvert Deputies Gifted Guardian Angel Safety Devices



On November 25 and 27, 2024, eighty patrol deputies and district supervisors within the Calvert County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Patrol Division were presented with Guardian Angel Safety Devices by Honor the Blue, a Calvert County-based non-profit corporation.

The Guardian Angel, a wearable electronic device, has several safety features for Patrol deputies, including a bright red and blue LED strobe light visible from up to three miles away, day or night. It also has a runtime of up to 60 hours before the unit may be quickly recharged using a USB-C cable. The units are distributed by SafeWear, Inc., a nationally recognized provider of safety gear for first responders.

CCSO Chaplain Dave Mohler, founder, and Executive Director of Honor the Blue, stated, "These safety devices are given to CCSO Patrol Deputies and supervisors at Thanksgiving because we are indeed thankful for the men and women within our community who stand upon the Thin Blue Line. We hope and pray that the Guardian Angel devices will provide another layer of protection to our law enforcement Patrol

Deputies to help ensure that each of them completes his or her shift and arrives home safely."

Sheriff Ricky Cox expressed his gratitude, saying, "We are incredibly thankful to Chaplain Mohler and Honor The Blue for their generosity and continued support of our deputies. These Guardian Angel devices are a thoughtful gift that enhances the safety of our team. Our deputies are the best around, and they work tirelessly to protect and serve our community. It's heartening to see their efforts recognized in such a meaningful way."

Honor The Blue exists to support, encourage, and celebrate the dedicated men and women who serve as police officers. For more information about how Honor The Blue supports, encourages, and celebrates our CCSO deputies, Correctional Deputies, and Maryland State Troopers, and to learn how you may become a supporting partner of Honor The Blue, please visit honortheblue.us. #SafeWear #CalvertCountySheriff #HonorTheBlue #guardianangel

Press Release from CCSO

Zoning Ordinance Update Nears the Homestretch

Densities 'Reduced' or 'Equivalent'

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

With a Nov. 20 planning commission public hearing completed and a Jan. 7 county commissioners' public hearing scheduled, the county is nearing adoption of a revised zoning ordinance after several years of staff work.

That revision reflects lower or equal growth projected in the various parts of the ordinance, according to staff at the planning commission public hearing.

Planner III/Zoning Will Hager told the planners, "Broadly speaking in terms of permitted density with the provision of TDRs, every zoning district in the draft either reduces permitted residential density as compared with current regulations or equivalent."

Hager noted, "One thing that remains is a clear hierarchy where the highest permitted densities are found in the town centers, the next highest in the areas immediately surrounding town centers and then lower densities once you get out into the rural community and farm and forest districts."

He explained, "In current regulations, how much density is permitted on a parcel in the rural community district is determined

by whether that parcel is inside or outside of the one-mile radius from town centers."

He further explained, "So, under current regulations, the rural community district areas outside of the one-mile radius are permitted a density of one dwelling unit per four acres with the purchase of TDRs. And within the on-mile radius, they're permitted a density of one dwelling unit per acre with the purchase of TDRs. In the draft, the one-mile radius polity has been removed and in its place is the new rural neighborhood district surrounding the town centers of Dunkirk, Owings, Huntingtown, and St. Leonard, and a reconfigured residential district surrounding the town centers of Prince Frederick, Lusby, Solomons and Chesapeake Beach."

Leonard, and a reconfigured residential district surrounding the town centers of Prince Frederick, Lusby, Solomons and Chesapeake Beach."

Hager observed, "This isn't a dramatic change. What's being changed is we're removing a flawed policy, the one-mile radius policy that...dissects parcels rather arbitrarily and replacing it with zoning districts that follow parcel boundaries."

Town center densities, based on a commissioner vote, have been reduced to four units per acre. That and some subdivision regulation changes have led Hager to conclude, "What we're looking at is a rather

significant reduction in density compared to what can be done under current regulations."

Hager also clarified some of the provisions of the new Heavy Industrial Zone (I-2) in the Lusby area, in part eyeing the possibility of data centers there. He said the zone "is intended to provide for a variety of energy production and associated uses as well as light manufacturing, fabricating, processing, distributing and warehousing uses."

Hager added, "And so, in regard to what the vision is for these areas, zoned Heavy Industrial, the intent is to provide flexibility for appropriate industrial businesses that generate little traffic, create high paying jobs, and substantially contribute to the county tax base with minimal, if any, impact to residential and commercial uses. So, we're not talking about uses that you might traditionally associate with a heavy industrial area, like heavy manufacturing, asphalt plants, fossil fuel refineries, etc. But we are talking about data centers..." an establishment, facility, building or series of buildings which are part of a unified development and arranged in campus setting, engaging in the storage, management, processing or transmission of digital data and housing, computer or network equipment

systems, servers, appliances, and other associated components related to digital data operations."

Hager added, "So in regards to the November 2024 draft, data center is a conditional use in the I-2 district and no longer requires special exception. Approval and conditions for data centers have been revised as well in the November draft. The conditions now read as follows: 'The data center shall be set back 200 feet from a property lines and 400 feet from any lot or parcel with a residential building or active residential building permit except for adjacent properties. under comment, ownership. Primary building facades shall include at least two of the following treatments: fenestration recesses in the building facade and broken plain or changes in building material pattern text or color or accent materials. Any noise generated by the dentist data center, including any accessory mechanical equipment, must comply with chapter 80 of the noise control ordinance of the county code."

The only testimony at the public hearing was on the proposed Community Benefit Agreements (see separate story).

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Staggered Commissioner Terms Suggested

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

When the new Chesapeake Beach mayor and town council are sworn in later this month, all the faces will be new. Although Bruce Wahl has served before as mayor and on the council, and Eric Reinhardt has previously served on the council, the rest of the members will be new to the job.

That situation prompted Calvert County Board of County Commissioners President Buddy Hance to comment at their Dec. 3 meeting.

Hance presented a proclamation to outgoing Chesapeake Beach Mayor Pat Mahoney at the town's Nov. 21 meeting, the outgoing council's final regular session.

Hance told his board on Dec. 3, "Based on the recent election, they have an entirely new council. Mahoney stepped down. Mayor Mahoney worked in public service for over 30 years. So, we want to thank Mayor Mahoney for all this time. And as I said that night to the new incoming council, it's not as easy as it looks. You have to make tough decisions, and you get a lot of questions and calls and people want what they want and don't understand why they can't get it.

"So, I want to wish them all the best and certainly want to thank Mayor Mahoney and the outgoing counsel for their work."

Hance said the situation reiterated for him some earlier discussion about staggered terms.

"We did talk about staggered terms because Mayor Wall is the new incoming mayor of Chesapeake Beach. I want to wish him all the best. But Mayor Wall did serve on the council, was a previous mayor, but when you have a whole new board coming in, as I think that our new members will attest to, it's quite a learning curve. And it could be a shock to have five brand new commissioners that have never served come in all at one time. So maybe we will talk more about in the future how we might stagger terms on the board just to keep some continuity moving forward."

The commissioners did reject a proposal from J.C. Hooker to have three of the five commissioners be voted on just by residents of their commissioner district. Currently there is only a residency requirement for those three commissioners representing dis-



Commissioner President Buddy Hance

tricts, but they are voted on by all county residents. The other two are at-large positions.

Hance said at the Nov. 21 town council meeting, "Tonight is the mayor's last meeting. And my last four years I've spent as president of the Board of County Commissioners, and I'm here tonight to recognize the mayor for the great working relationship that we've had. We've had great open communications, and I can tell all the mayor always had the best interest of Chesapeake Beach, always."

In the proclamation, Hance said, "Throughout his tenure, he championed local causes, enriched community life, and worked tirelessly to ensure a brighter future for all. Known as a strong advocate for open space programs and recreation, he prioritized accessible, vibrant outdoor spaces that residents and visitors alike could enjoy. His legacy includes numerous achievements from bolstering downtown development to enhancing public services. And his unwavering dedication has left a lasting impact on Chesapeake Beach."

During the town meeting, the council finalized the naming of the baseball field at Kellam's Field after Mahoney.

The current mayor and council did have a special meeting scheduled for Dec. 4 to approve a budget amendment for repairs to the tennis courts at Beach Elementary School.

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County Times

Development Flexibility Raises Concerns

Part of Zoning Ordinance Update

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

A proposal to create “Community Benefit Agreements” (CBAs) has raised concerns from community groups and individuals. The proposal is one of the changes proposed for the update of the county’s zoning ordinance. During the Nov. 20 planning commission public hearing on the update, all four of the persons who spoke addressed the CBAs. Based on the concerns, the commission kept the hearing record open until Dec. 20. The county commissioners have a public hearing on the zoning ordinance update scheduled for Jan. 7.

At the Dec. 3 commissioner meeting, as he had done at the planning commission public hearing, Planner III/Zoning Will Hager explained what a CBA is. “A Community Benefit Agreement or CBA is a planning tool for commercial, industrial, and institutional developments to provide flexibility in design elements. The CBA is like other land use development projects, but requires planning commission and Board of County Commissioner approval to achieve substantially higher quality development. That provides a public benefit that would otherwise not be obtained. CBA permits creative and innovative approaches to the development of commercial, industrial, and institutional uses and in growth areas encourages mixed development patterns. To avoid monotony in large developments allows the developer to take advantage of special site characteristics, locations, or land uses.

“It provides for relief from the strict application of land use standards, development regulations and performance standards found in the base zoning districts, decreases the burden created by new development on utilities and other infrastructure systems, provides a mechanism for increasing development in growth areas without adversely affecting traffic, circulation, infrastructure and public services or existing or planned adjacent development.”

Hager said the CBA’s had to be consistent with the zoning ordinance. They require county commissioner’s approval after a recommendation from the planning commission.

Hager explained that CBAs could not be used for residential development.

Commissioner Mike Hart pressed staff as to what could happen with a CBA. He wanted to know if they could circumvent the property’s zoning.

Director of Planning and Zoning Mary Beth Cook noted, “If a development wanted to exceed the size limitation of a building, say in a town center, it’s set at hypothetically a hundred thousand square feet and they wanted to do 120, they could enter into a CBA offering, providing some public benefit to kind of offset that.”

Commissioner President Buddy Hance said, “They could make sure if they wanted to go above the size limit that’s currently required, (for) that exemption we could say in return for that, we want a public park in this vicinity that would serve those residents that live near this development.”

Hart insisted, “I just don’t want to be labeled of enabling more density.”

Hager explained the CBA process. He said, “Prior to submittal, the applicant shall hold a public meeting with affected property owners, county staff, representatives of business and community organizations to discuss the CBA project’s potential concerns and/or site design alternatives. The purpose of the public meeting is to generate ideas and provide assistance. Decisions are non-binding and cannot overrule the provisions of the ordinance or town center ordinances and submission requirements for CBA proposal shall include an explanation of how the project meets the CBA criteria, a statement of benefit to the community, and a statement outlining how the CBA process is superior in this instance to base zoning.”

The proposal appears to be aimed at the possibility of luring data centers to the county. But speakers at the planning commission public hearing were skeptical.

Susan Dzurec, speaking for Keep Calvert Country, said more time was needed for review. “While we are pleased to see it does not include residential development, it is completely unacceptable to introduce such a new concept at this late date. It was our understanding that if the county does move forward with two data centers to be located in Lusby, citizens were told the county won’t need to worry about tax increases. However, the strong argument for, as Commissioner Hart stated, the need for circumventing the

process to favor commercial, industrial, and institutional development in the name of supposed tax revenue contradicts the reasoning for the data centers. Any process such as the proposed CBA process which circumvent existing processes in the revised zoning ordinance, could be abused in ways not currently understood and which would not respect the will of the people.”

David Bury of Breezy Point said, “I ask that the planning commission defer on whether to include CBAs in the new zoning ordinance until the public has a much better understanding of the implications for the county.”

Myra Gowans of Calvert Citizens United, said, “CBAs have a place, they do have place because they are good for business and tax income.” But she added, “There is a board when you have a CBA. You have rules and regulations and they’re mandated by an authority. You have to be sure the authority is making these decisions for our very tiny fragile county.”

“A CBA takes a long time to come to fruition,” she added. “There’s a lot of discussion, like three, four years of discussion, and then that wouldn’t even help the county to have that happen and get stayed in the process.”

Bob Estes said he was concerned about the effect on the environment. “A small environmental issue, in a small plot of land, maybe you could ignore, but when the



Director of Planning and Zoning Mary Beth Cook

development becomes large to the problems, they don’t scale. It’s a little bit like rocket fuel or bombs. Each class of them, they do not scale from small to big. You have to consider them on their own. And the same is true with environmental issues.”

The concept will be considered as part of the county commissioners hearing on the zoning ordinance updates on Jan. 7.

dickmyers@countytimes.net



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“THIS ISN'T A DRAMATIC CHANGE.”

PLANNER WIL HAGER ON REMOVING THE ONE-MILE RADIUS AROUND TOWN CENTERS



LOCAL 5
Commissioners mull staggered terms



ON THE COVER 6
Calvert celebrates the holiday season



LOCAL 6
Zoning update coming to a close

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, DEC 5 AM Showers Hi: 43° Lo: 27°	FRI, DEC 6 Mostly Sunny Hi: 39° Lo: 25°	SAT, DEC 7 Sunny Hi: 41° Lo: 28°	SUN, DEC 8 Sunny Hi: 52° Lo: 41°
MON, DEC 9 PM Showers Hi: 57° Lo: 49°	TUE, DEC 10 AM Showers Hi: 63° Lo: 48°	WED, DEC 11 Showers Hi: 56° Lo: 33°	THU, DEC 12 Partly Cloudy Hi: 43° Lo: 29°



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Community Benefit Agreements Cause Concern

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Commissioners Consider Staggered Terms

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